

St. Mary Bourne Parish Council

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## **Chair's Report for Annual Parish Assembly 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Good evening and welcome to all - parishioners and representatives of local organisations and local politicians. This an important annual opportunity to explain , raise profile etc, much more publicity this year thanks to our clerk, with leafletting and banners.

A general resume of the Parish Council year: may I start by thanking my fellow members for their collaborative spirit and contributions to our work during the year and the exceptional support that we receive from Maxine our clerk. Our priorities have been similar to last year in that water and its management has played a large part in our activity.

The work that Southern Water have been carrying out has taken place mostly through a winter almost as wet as the year before but it must be a tribute to their success , however belated that we have escaped the constant tankering that plagued us last year and SW are now embarking on what they ( and all of us ) hope is the final stage in their campaign to repair and improve the sewer along the valley, with the installation of an underground pump outside the houses at Applegate. I am happy to express my appreciation on behalf of all of us to the Flood and Emergency team which includes Clem Jones . the fount of so much accumulated knowledge and statistics, and our Clerk, Dave Burlison and Ed Makgill for the consistent liaison that they have maintained with Southern Water and their sub contractors. While I know that the ill specified road closures that have been such a feature of the past few months have been frustrating for us all they would have been much worse I am sure without the degree of cooperation and understanding that has been established, and the very well attended meeting that Southern Water put on at the end of March I think demonstrated the success of a new era of partnership that we must hang on to in the future,

The other main area of concentration for the Council has been continuing the process started the year before of trying to maximise the value of the Recreation Ground and all its elements. Thanks to much hard work by a small team of volunteers and councillors we have now reached the stage of waiting for planning consent to the rearrangement of the children's play area, the MUGA and the current car park in such a way that we can provide better facilities for small children, maintain the MUGA for the purpose for which it was designed and acquire some limited additional parking space. Please note that I say additional, but we must all recognise that we will never have enough parking space when there is a lot happening on and around the Rec, but I hope we can educate and encourage regular users to ask their members to share cars where possible. The Boundary and the Village Centre of which we are all justifiably proud and for which we should be grateful nonetheless bring cars into the village in numbers unsuited to our historic layout so this will continue to be pressure point. When the work is complete I believe that the whole areas will look a lot smarter as well as being more useful, and I hope you will all have noticed the first stage in smartening in our new flagpole!

Maintenance around the lake continues, we had a very effective working party last month and will have another later in the year, and I think there is general agreement that from every perspective it is much improved.

Changing the subject, at the beginning of this year we said goodbye to Bridget Culley as a councillor after many years as a conscientious and dedicated member and we would like to show our gratitude for this and the many other things she does within our community.

As a result of Bridget's resignation the council adopted Robbie Henderson to replace her at its March meeting where he will be following family tradition and will be our first member from Stoke for some time.

As many of you will know , the government is planning major changes in the organisation of local government and this is likely to lead to the disappearance of Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane as authorities in their current form but as far as we know Parish Councils are likely to continue unchanged, and around this time next year we will have elections at the end of our current four year term.

We have always had an election, unlike some other councils, but we need people to put themselves forward for this in order to ensure that democratic process.  
If any of you think you might be interested and could manage the time to play a part in looking after this place that we all love and helping to plan its future I would encourage you to talk to any of us over the next twelve months . It is important that we have a competent body of useful people, so please give it some thought.