



## **Chairman Statement: Annual electors meeting May 2024**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

The Parish Council has continued to invest in facilities within our village in the last year. We have replaced the noticeboard by Great Croft as the original was rotten beyond repair.

We have installed a new information lectern by the play area which not only provides details of local footpaths but also highlights the varied flora and fauna in our area. Many thanks to councilor Beavan for designing the artwork.

We have continued to make accessibility improvements to the facilities in our parish. A new basket swing in the play area has now been installed. This provides safe play for children of a wider age group and abilities than the life expired swings that it replaced.

We have levelled the ground of the footpath from Firs Rd to the play area to make it easier for users of push chairs.

Concrete that has been removed from works in the play area has been broken up and recycled to improve the soft ground conditions of the footpath next to Firs Rd, from the woods to the A30. We have also recycled spoil from within the parish to fill in the most deeply rutted sections of the byway down to the Pitton Rd.

Unfortunately, the installation of a new dropped kerb at the A30/Firs Road junction, has been delayed as clarification is required of the ownership of the land before work can start.

Work should start shortly on establishing the Roundbarrow Farm nature reserve. This is being led by Wiltshire Council but the Parish Council and the public have been consulted on what will be provided.

The Parish Council are looking at the options available to safeguard the byway following the regrettable damage earlier this year caused by inappropriate use of motorised vehicles. We aim to remove the Byway Open to All Traffic designation and for it to be replaced with a more suitable classification. We are in the early stages of discussions with the land owner, Wiltshire Council.

Firsdon has continued to build relationships with the neighboring villages of Pitton and Winterslow. We continue to support the setting up of a community shop in Pitton. In Winterslow we are supporting the work of the Youth Group - which has attendance from 10–15-year old's from Firsdon - as well as the recent Time and Talents initiative.

Several years ago, the Parish Council lobbied the Stagecoach bus company to reroute the Salisbury Winchester, no 68 service through Firs Road rather than travelling direct via the A30. Stagecoach refused our request. However local residents have continued to lobby Stagecoach and we are pleased to report that the no 68 now travels via Firs Rd. The service is twice daily in each direction (during college term time) and predominately aimed at students travelling to Peter Symonds college, but is available for travel to members of the public. The new routing is much safer and more accessible for users boarding and alighting than the A30.

The Parish Council requested that Wiltshire Council undertake a speed limit assessment of the A30 through the parish, in order to understand what options are available to reduce the accident rate, particularly at the Firs Rd junction. The assessment recommends a speed limit reduction to 50mph at this location. The Parish Council are now looking at how this scheme can be implemented.

Another example of closer working with Pitton and Winterslow, is for further safety improvements at the Dunstable crossroads. Despite provision of a traffic mirror to aid visibility, accidents have still occurred. We have agreed with Wiltshire Highways for a formal topographic survey to be undertaken, that will

enable land boundaries and drainage levels to be determined. This is the precursor to potential changes to the kerb/verges and lining layout at the junction.

The wettest winter for many years has made the poor surface of Firs Rd even worse. The highway maintenance contractor was changed by Wiltshire Council in April 2023 and we are struggling to get repairs carried out. Whilst some potholes have been addressed in the last few weeks, a longer-term solution involving a more comprehensive repair is still needed. We thank our unitary councilor Rich Rogers for continuing to press this matter.

Finally, I thank our clerk for her continued good advice and support, and my fellow councilors for their contributions over the last year.

**Simon Brown**

**Chairman Firsdown Parish Council.**