

## PCAP Annual Report 2023-2024

For those individuals and parish councils who wonder who we are and what we do, here is a summary of the work undertaken for the benefit of all across the Vale of Pewsey, by Pewsey Community Area Partnership volunteers, its supporters and members in 2023. PCAP has survived for over 20 years quietly going about this business and I hope to see it continue for many more. If after reading this, you feel inclined to offer us financial support we would gratefully accept any donations.

### January

The year began with fuel prices being extortionately high and a cost-of-living crisis that none had foreseen due to the war in Ukraine. PCAP immediately identified a fund that was designed to be delivered at grass root level and alleviate financial stress. This fund from Wiltshire Community Foundation and with match funds from Pewsey Area Board's Health and Wellbeing Fund was used to provide financial support to over 70 people within The Vale, until it ran out in May. Each family or person supported was required to be referred by another agency or organisation. It also supported the increased costs for our own Community Memory Cafe that supports 16 individuals and couples once a month and the fortnightly Movement to Music Together sessions, attended by another dozen or so, both held in the Bouverie Hall.

### February

This saw PCAP working to find other health related organisations to apply for the remaining Health and Well-being Funds which we successfully did. Arts Together and the Gateway Club at Woodborough Social Club both benefited from this fund. PCAP organises and provides the admin for this Area Board Group with a budget of £7,500. We also support the Area Board with the Local Youth Network and its funds that supported the Blue Bus to attend Upavon and Burbage as well as the work Community First's Youth team had been tasked to complete.

### March

This was a month of our regular meetings with the Pewsey Rail User Group meeting which looks to lobby for an improved timetable for Pewsey by working with GWR and Network Rail. Indeed this was the month that a meeting organised by Wiltshire Council and Danny Kruger MP announced that the Devizes Gateway Station had not succeeded to the next step, due mainly to a lack of capacity until the new fourth platform at Westbury is built. PCAP did succeed in being invited, along with Great Bedwyn's representatives, to join the Strategic Rail Working Party looking at the timetables for 2029. This was also when we discovered the perfidy of TransWilts and a proposed new Community Rail Partnership, which we and others had supported, would mean slower trains to London. We immediately began to discuss the impact of this decision and withdrew support for the project. GWR later declined to fund the new CRP stating it was incomplete.

### April

The new financial year saw the accounts looking reasonably healthy to cover our core costs of £2,700 thanks to regular contributions from supportive parishes and contributions toward those costs from other projects. We also hold funds, provide banking and insurance cover for small groups such as Shalbourne Connect, a social and crafting group in their village hall.

PCAP sister organisation Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership wrote an application to GWR for bike stands and new professionally-produced video worth £30k. We had written one pre-pandemic that we were informed would may have been successful if the funds had not closed. We also received and managed a health and well-being grant for tools and gates for three different walking groups. The remainder of the month was spent lobbying again as threats arose, post Wiltshire Council budget, to VisitWiltshire and their plans to become a Local Visitor Economy Partner, the new government structure set up for such entities to access funds. Without local authority funding VisitWiltshire, has been left out.

### **May**

Great Green Bedwyn joined PCAP as a member group and took up the position vacated by a North Newton resident to chair our Environment Group. PCAP produces a Community Plan, and has done for years, which follows Wiltshire Council themes and helps inform their decisions on funding projects. With climate change high on the agenda we were keen to see this position filled to the benefit of both organisations. This also led to PCAP once again providing banking support to the parish tree planting project in Wexcombe to replace their lost ash trees.

### **June**

Always a fun month when we take our Memory Cafe regulars on a canal trip with the Bruce Boat Trust. This was also the month for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty walking festival supported by walks from the Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership in line with our Walkers are Welcome accreditation commitments.

### **July**

At the height of summer and in the middle of all the strikes, GWR announced the plan to close the station ticket offices so PCAP and linked agencies began lobbying to save them. The draft Local Plan was shared by Wiltshire Council and the issues identified were taken to cabinet. Principally this was about Pewsey and Bedwyn stations being omitted again but Devizes Gateway, that now flawed project, was included. We also raised the years' long issue of there being no freight plan for HGVs - an issue PCAP is passionate about for the A345, A342 and Mr Kruger's campaign for the A338. We also had the wonderfully named Design Statement's briefings and supported the Pewsey Community Land Trust's open house and consultation on the future plans for the old Police House in the centre of Pewsey. It proved to be a busy month with us providing support setting up new weekly Youth Cafe in the Foyer of the Leisure Centre in Pewsey.

### **August**

Representatives of PCAP had been working for months with Wiltshire Council of the new Demand Responsive Bus launch. This project was taken from an idea that PCAP had outlined some years before and that Wiltshire Council had developed into a project in a bid for DfT funding. This was successful and this launch was the product of months of meetings and work by all concerned, expertly led by the experienced project manager. At the time of writing this, November 2023, there have been 10,000 journeys, with 2000 downloads of the brand new App. A further bus has been added on a Thursday to meet increasing demand! It should be said that the bus fares being capped at £2 may have helped somewhat. However, PCAP are immensely proud of this project and everyone who has helped to make it a success. Work on educating residents on how to use this "dual" service continues,

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with the timetabled service running together with a bookable service for those residents not on a timetabled route.

### **September**

PCAP celebrated Pewsey Carnival by providing a family craft session for the Family Funday at the start of the festivities. The Youth Cafe was progressing towards its launch and there were more bus communications to share via our social media links. The Community Land Trust gave a presentation to Pewsey PC and PCAP attended the online GWR communities event. The Area Board granted funds for the first bike repair stand, after the news that we had not been successful with the GWR Communities Fund bid. We also heard that our Access for All bid for Pewsey Stations lift, held over from the year previous, had also not been successful.

### **October**

We attended a Rall User meeting with an update on CRP from GWR and more lobbying on the ticket office closure. The Youth Cafe opened for its first Friday night session with 25 young people attending. The numbers have held steady around 25-30 each week. This is primarily a Wiltshire Council project supported by Pewsey PC and with PCAP providing safeguarding and volunteer management. More cost-of-living funds arrived thanks to Wiltshire Community Foundation in readiness for the winter. This included providing cookery sessions with Phunky Foods of Devizes. PCAP has provided more cost-of-living support for families via the area's Primary Schools and other local agencies. We also supported the excellent Great Green Bedwyn event where residents thinking about green technology could visit and talk to those who already had it. The work with the Community Land Trust also continues.

### **November**

The first weekend of November is the AGM for Walkers are Welcome – a national initiative to promote and maintain public rights of way. Bedwyn Footpaths Group (who also benefit from PCAP insurance for their walks and rights of way work) very kindly represented the Pewsey Community Area at this event. November will also see the Area Board Highways Matters meeting, which I am REALLY looking forward to and I encourage my fellow parish councillors to do the same and anyone else sick of the state of our roads. The Area Boards are public meetings and November's meeting is on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November at Bouverie Hall from 7pm.

So, as the end of another year draws closer, I ask you all to reflect on what PCAP and its partners have achieved and commit to supporting us again financially if you can - with your support if nothing else. Our core costs are not, I feel, outrageous at £2,700. I have sadly seen an unnamed local group waste 4 times that amount on a still undelivered well publicised project now over 2 years in the making. The number of volunteers willing to get stuck in dwindles every year as, our older stalwarts take more time for themselves and slow down a bit. We need some younger blood and enthusiasm. So please join us, help us with our projects and campaigns, attend our meetings - but above all support us with a donation or we, too, may "walk quietly into the sunset" like so many others trying to fund their good cause.

Dawn Wilson  
Chair, PCAP