

Chase Hotel to close

Owners have plans to develop site for housing

By Jo Scrivvin

AFTER nearly three decades of running the Chase Hotel, in the centre of Ross-on-Wye, the owners, Camanoe Estates Limited, have decided to close the hotel later this year. They blame the changes in visitors' preferences, coupled with the very substantial cost of the upkeep of the premises, which means that it is no longer possible to trade profitably.

The hotel will close to guests on September 30th, 2019 but until then the owners told the *Ross Gazette* that it is very much business as usual. They said: "We will continue to offer the full facilities and services until September 30th, 2019 and we are committed to fulfilling all the function and hotel room bookings over the next nine months."

The *Gazette* understands that the owners were informing all members of staff about the closure, and their plans for the future of the site, at a special meeting on Tuesday, January 8th.

The owners are looking to put forward a detailed planning application for development on the site this summer. They said: "It is hoped that by summer, and following consultation with both

the Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group and the local community a full and detailed planning application will be submitted to Herefordshire Council so that, consent permitting, redevelopment can start during the latter part of the year.

The Chase sits in 11 acres of grounds and, following a meeting with the Area Principal Planning Officer, and consultation with the Chairman of the Ross-on-Wye NDP Steering Group, a way forward has been agreed, in principle, for the redevelopment of the hotel and parts of the adjoining grounds. Initial plans have been prepared to include three blocks of apartments to the rear of the main building and grounds and five detached houses along the tree lined boundary with Gloucester Road. The owners are also hoping to restore the original house and convert it into apartments.

The scheme will include affordable housing, as well as properties for sale and rent on the open market, ensuring a balanced community.

All the new apartments will have underground car parking spaces and only visitor parking will be visible at ground level. Virtually all the existing hotel parking will be replaced by borders, grassed areas and parkland.

Camanoe Estates Ltd told the *Gazette* that the entire 11 acres of grounds will be retained to form a landscaped setting for the apartments, converted hotel building and new housing. The centrepiece of this will be an area equating to approximately two acres as open parkland with a pathway around its entire perimeter. A long-term tree management plan will ensure the preservation of the fine specimen indigenous trees on the site and the enhancement of those trees and their setting with further planting in the future.

A public drop-in event has been organised to take place at the hotel from 2pm to 8pm on January 17th, 2019 for anyone who would like to view the plans and comment on them. There is also a website www.consultingyou.co.uk/chasehotel if you are unable to attend, but wish to make comments online.

In the meantime, the management told the *Ross Gazette* that they would like to thank all of their guests for their continued support and they are con-

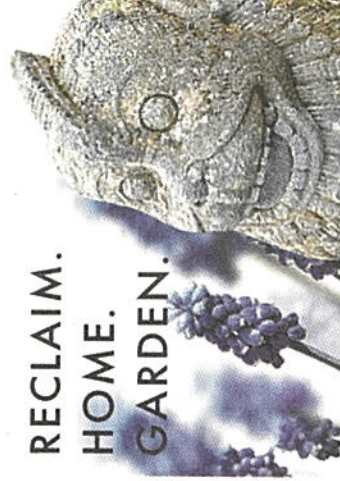


The front of the Chase Hotel

this transition period.

Responding to the announcement of the proposals for the Chase Hotel site, Melvin Reynolds, Chair of the Ross' Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group, told the *Ross Gazette*: "The draft Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan that went through its first formal consultation late in 2018 included a proposal for some houses towards the north and south of The Chase Hotel site."

We now know that these proposals are no longer valid because the hotel is no longer viable and that plans are being prepared by the owner to develop housing on the site.



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Reaction to Chase closure

THE news that The Chase Hotel in Ross-on-Wye is to close in September was greeted with sadness by many residents but there was also concern about the housing development which will replace the hotel.

The company which owns The Chase told the *Ross Gazette* that they hope to have a detailed planning application ready to be submitted to Herefordshire Council in the summer so that, consent permitting, redevelopment can start during the latter part of the year. Initial plans have been prepared which include building three blocks of apartments which will be around 100/120 apartments. Five detached houses will be built and the original house will be restored and converted into apartments. The scheme will include affordable housing, as well as properties for sale and rent.

A drop-in event at the hotel from 2pm to 8pm will take place on January 17th for anyone who would like to view the plans and comment. Camanoe also have a website www.consultingyou.co.uk/chasehotel if you are unable to attend, but wish to make comments online.

Many people responded to the breaking news on the *Ross Gazette's* Facebook page. Most remarked that it was sad news for the town but others recalled special family events such as weddings or large parties such as the annual John Kyrle High School prom. They also questioned where such events would take place in Ross in the future.

Sue Harding said: "Had our wedding reception 50 yrs past." Anne Wadeley added: "Such a shame the Chase has been part of Ross for so many years, but there you go it's a sign of the times unfortunately." Helen Rowberry said: "Aww no such a shame! We've had many functions there! Leavers ball, 25th wedding anniversary, birthdays, weddings xx" and Susan Wilding said: "Needs accessible bedrooms and a spa. Then it would be a great prospect for holidays, breaks and functions. Sad that it is being closed for redevelopment rather than sold as a going concern." Liz Wright said: "That's a shame. I guess the grounds will make huge profits for houses and the building for apartments. Takes the guts out of small towns."

The show will go on thanks to Co-op



Pictured with Store Manager, Jason Edwards, are members of the Community Panto, Jackie Savage, Victoria Craig as Cinderella and Ugly Sister, John Harrington.

by Aliya Shibli

MEMBERS of staff at the Co-op in Ross-on-Wye handed a £250 cheque to The Community Panto group on Monday, January 14th. The money given to the local group came from a community fund that the Co-op use to help local groups and organisations in the community. The Co-op local community fund gives money to local organisations to fund projects that help to bring people together and make a difference. It was raised in the store and came from the sales of carrier bags and customers swiping

Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) charity.

Strong Young Minds is a Big Lottery funded project designed to improve the mental health and well-being of young people in Herefordshire.

SHYPP provides 16 to 25 year olds across Herefordshire with housing, training and employment opportunities. They also provide a range of accommodation suitable for young people at different stages of their lives.

The Pantomime production has a twist, and will be expressing the

Letters to the Editor

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The Editor
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Sincere thanks from volunteers

Dear Editor

Through your pages I would like to pass on the sincere thanks of the Thomas Blake Garden Volunteers for all the support they have received from the local community over the last 12 months.

We have been very grateful to be presented with generous cheques by both the Rotary Club of Ross-on-Wye and the Ross-on-Wye Horticultural Society.

The money is a big help and is being used to buy equipment and plants for the garden.

We have also been delighted to welcome volunteers from Two Rivers Housing on a couple of occasions, who have done a wonderful job painting railings and other street furniture, and The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Mens' Shed who have refurbished three of the benches here.

In addition to this, we have also enjoyed having a visit from the Ross-on-Wye Community Clean Up Crew, and have had support from local residents and donations of plants and many compliments from those who walk through the gardens.

If anyone is interested in volunteering with our friendly group we meet (weather permitting), on Sunday mornings in the gardens.

Councillor Caroline Utting
Ross-on-Wye

Merrivale meeting

Dear Editor

Further to my letter in the *Ross Gazette* on Wednesday, January 9th, 2019, regarding the fact that a Town Council planning meeting was held on December 18th, 2018, two days prior to the due date people were requested to submit their comments on the Merrivale plans.

The kindest remark that could be said about it, is that it was a fiasco.

Even if the comments on the plans were not received until December 20th, there should still be a period

after that date to allow the public to inspect them before the meeting could be held. Whether it was the planning officer or the council members or both who arranged the date of the meeting, their action could not be seen as democratic and must be regarded as an error.

Surely because of this situation the whole thing should be deleted and declared void, and a new meeting be arranged as due democratic process was not permitted to occur.

No discussion was allowed on other items raised at the meeting, not least that the original application was for 22 houses.

Also, because of the opposition to the siting of the entrance to the site, a member of the planning team suggested it could be moved further down towards Alton Street. In my humble opinion, this would cause even greater congestion. Any further entrance from the site could cause more danger to children walking to and from schools up the lane adjacent to the site was raised and appeared to be accepted by the Chairman.

In my opinion any entrance onto the site from Merrivale Lane is not viable and consequently before any planning permission for houses to be granted the issue of the entrance should be resolved.

David J Open
Ross-on-Wye

Editors note: as The Town Council is only consulted by Herefordshire Council on planning applications, it has no decision-making power, the dates of meetings can sometimes be an issue. Ross Town Councillors have frequently asked for more notice to allow them to discuss and respond to an application before the consultation process closes.

The Chase Hotel

Dear Editor

If any planning application needs to be nipped in the bud before it shoots, it is this one.

If the Town Council, and those who represent us on Herefordshire Council don't oppose this as a body, then in my humble opinion they

don't have the town's future at heart.

For decades Ross-on-Wye, and I stress Wye, a river that was, not too long ago, given the accolade of the most scenic and beautiful river in the country, and in my lifetime I have seen many attractive rivers.

This closure, headlined in your last issue must have shaken the minds of many people, particularly locals. When I moved here over 30 years ago, this hotel had been the flagship of not just the town but the area, for many years.

Before moving here Ross and The Chase were synonymous with a thriving tourist attraction and known up and down the land. Are we to see this precious asset disappear into oblivion.

More housing is needed, but not here, and what kind of message does it send to other hotels?

Their claims for closure are somewhat weak in substance, ie visitors' preference, other similar establishments seem to cope well enough. Warners at Holme Lacey, whilst a much larger company, do very well and clearly know how to attract visitors.

Whilst much smaller in area they have similar features ie the buildings and the Chase has so much potential. As for maintenance, it is always a factor and is ongoing, as it is for any structure.

I know it is in its very early stages, planning wise but in housing terms 11 acres is substantial and heaven knows how many units will eventually be on the site.

I will be most interested to read the responses from your readers. With Brexit in mind more people could be spending their holidays closer to home.

Ken Downham
Ross-on-Wye

Minor Injuries Unit closure

Dear Editor

Ross-on-Wye Community Hospital Minor Injuries Units (MIU) is temporarily closed due to winter pressures being faced by the Trust.

According to the Trust, 'The Hospital's MIUs, run by Wye Valley NHS Trust, has been temporarily closed with immediate effect for a brief period.

This will boost the resources at Hereford County Hospital's Accident and

Your Unnecess

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Wednesday January 23rd 2019

Price 50p

Development divides opinion

By Jo Scrivin

DOZENS of local residents took the opportunity to view the plans the owners of The Chase Hotel have for the site, which they would like to see approved by Herefordshire Council later this year.

Many people were shocked when the news was broken by the *Ross Gazette* that the owners of the hotel, Camanoe Estates Limited, are to close it in September and are not intending to sell it to a company which would continue to run it as a hotel or function venue.

There was a huge amount of interest in the plans which were displayed at the Drop-in event on Thursday, January 17th. They showed the location for the five houses and three apartment blocks

in the grounds as well as the intention to leave the parkland and green space in the centre of the site undeveloped.

In addition to Simon Porter, the company's accountants, architects and tree specialists were in attendance at the meeting to give their opinions on the development. Several people made it clear they were interested in the site as a future home or as a property investment. Many people were concerned about the trees and wildlife on the site but seemed reassured by the aboriginalist who stated that most of the trees would be untouched unless they needed maintenance.

One resident who lives close to the hotel, Linda Billinger, told the *Ross Gazette*: "The proximity of our property to the back of The Chase Hotel is

close, but we have a wonderful barrier of various mature trees which screens us from them and visa versa. What is going to happen to these trees was my main concern." She is very worried that the wildlife, including badgers, foxes, owls, and a large variety of other birds which will just disappear if this scheme goes ahead.

She added: "The scheme is a nonsense, and will just add more pressure on our already pressurised services" and appealed to the planning officers to: "listen to your residents and let's save this wonderful green space in our town, for our town, and come up with an alternative plan that benefit us all."

Continued on page 3

Inside this week

Death in Broad Street



See page 3

Death in Broad Street

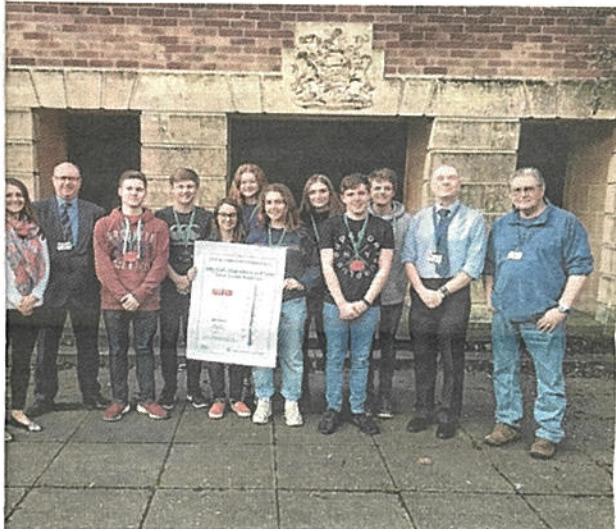
TRAFFIC in Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, was brought to a standstill at about 5pm, on Friday, January 18th as emergency vehicles rushed to a flat where an unconscious man had been reported.

The West Midlands Ambulance Service told the *Ross Gazette* that they were called at 4.28pm and two ambulances and a paramedic officer attended. They discovered the patient, a man, was dead. They requested that the police attend the scene and several officers and vehicles were seen to arrive. One police vehicle had to drive on the pavement in New Street and the crew from an ambulance had to leave their vehicle in the road as they were unable to pass other traffic.



A police officer in Broad Street on Friday evening

the top 5% or A-levels



Mr Griffiths, headteacher; is pictured with Rob Wallace, head of Bethan Lambourn, deputy head of sixth form; Year 13 Mr Griffiths; Adam Middlecote; Isla Kendall; Jenny Bell; Mrs Lambourn; Daisy Clements; Marcus Bailey; Barnaby Wardale; Mr Griffiths, operational headteacher and David Potter, vice chair of

Chase Hotel development

Continued from page 1

LINDSAY Wise, another local resident who has commented on the developer's own website, also contacted the *Gazette* to say: "The draft Ross Neighbourhood Development Plan reflects many views of the public and makes a great effort to balance the needs of housing and infrastructure development against retaining the character and the attractiveness of Ross as a town which people would want to visit. This proposal flies in the face of many of the statements made in the NDP. Even though it is still only in a draft form, I trust that the planning committee will take its proposals and findings into account and throw out this plan."

She added: "I appreciate that some development is probably inevitable on the site, given that the present owners are determined to close the hotel. I am appalled at the scale of what is being proposed. The impact of between 100 and 120 flats in three, three storey blocks as well as a few houses on the Gloucester Road side of the land will have a huge impact on the infrastructure and ecology of the area."

Other residents also mentioned the increase in traffic on Gloucester Road, as the access to the development will remain as it is at present. Many people are already concerned about the volume and speed of traffic which passes along this road and the neighbouring roads of Alton Street

and Chase Road and they told the *Gazette* they are worried about the extra traffic generated at peak times.

Constance Edwards, who lives on Alton Street, has also written a letter to the *Gazette* expressing her wish that the plans are rejected.

She said: "The Chase Hotel is the only large venue in Ross where important events can be held with many meetings, conferences, fairs and balls held there. The open space around the building also gives the people of Ross some respite from air and light pollution. The number of new residences that are proposed will add to these local problems."

Melvin Reynolds from the Neighbourhood Development Plan was at the consultation. He said that in the current draft plan for Ross, there are five houses on the Gloucester Road side and seven on the south side of the site. The new proposals are not included in the NDP and due to the time scales the hotel owners are hoping to achieve, it is unlikely that the NDP will be finalised before the proposal comes before the County planning committee.

Nicholas Tomlin commented on the *Ross Gazette* Facebook page: "Local residents are working hard to ensure their best interests - and those of the town are taken into consideration. Camanoe Estates can expect a well organised and strongly supported campaign against any development which is detrimental to the community."

isolation, product of a environment ers know r students toral sup- dents and e of cur- ortunities es allows appy and

Mr Grif-

fiths of the school's success, Mary Ahern, Chief Executive officer of the A-Level Performance Service wrote: "This is a fantastic effort and well worth celebrating, keep up the good work."

Mr Griffiths said he has sent information on John Kyrle's A-level success to partner

primary school head-teachers. He said that without the excellent foundations gained at primary school, students would not be able to flourish at secondary school. He thanked all primary school leaders, governors and staff for their excellent work in supporting young people in the community.

Do you have a story for the Ross Gazette? Email jo@rossgazette.com

**Les Morgan Travel
in Agent for Saga**

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Letters to the Editor

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Boar 'no cause for celebration'



THE advent of the Chinese New Year is in February: this year is the year of the Pig.

But for many people in and around Ross-on-Wye, the rapid rise in the number of feral pigs and boar is no cause

for celebration.

These animals are a menace: they are very big, very intelligent and often aggressive.

They invade property, damage fencing, destroy farm crops and spread disease. Road accidents are a serious potential hazard.

There are many hundreds of them, and with the mild conditions their numbers are bound to grow.

What is the point of expensive measures to improve bio-security and disease control

Chase Hotel

Dear Editor

PLANNING applications for change of use from public houses to domestic structures are rarely approved as councils regard pubs as essential local amenities.

The amenities offered by The Chase Hotel are infinitely greater than any supplied by pubs and it is to be hoped that this application for change of use will be rejected.

The Chase Hotel is the only large venue in Ross-on-Wye where important events can be held with many meetings, conferences, fairs and balls held there.

The open space around the building also gives the people of Ross-on-Wye some respite from air and light pollution.

The number of new residences that are proposed will add to these local problems.

More effort should be put into making the hotel and restaurant successful rather than closing The Chase Hotel down. This will be an incalculable

loss to Ross-on-Wye.

Constance Edwards
Alton Street

A eulogy for The Chase

Dear Editor,

I WAS saddened to hear of the impending closure of The Chase Hotel. Ross will lose a vital amenity.

The Chase has played a key role in the evolution of Chronos Technology since we started using it regularly some 15 years ago. This last year, between staff and direct booking guests, we have used at least 250 beds. Some years it's been many more.

For a start it's a home-from-home for many of our staff. In this Internet enabled age, living close to one's place of work is not a prerequisite. We have home-office staff who travel in, as and when required. They live as far away as places like Shannon in Ireland, Falmouth, Ipswich, Stratford-upon-Avon, Southport, Southampton and Southend-on-Sea. For them, the hospitality at the Chase and the friendly greeting when they check in will be a hard act to follow.

There is apparently a sort of room bingo competition with some of our staff having stayed in every bedroom. One past staffer was even presented with a bottle of champagne when he stayed for the last time after his notice period.

Then we have all our business visitors. We are based in the Forest of Dean and have many guests from far and wide who need to stay over - collaborators, suppliers and customers. For our overseas guests, particularly those from the USA, The Chase represents quintessential English elegance when compared to copy-and-paste, left-hand or right-hand rooms from some global hotel chain in a big city. When we host training and masterclass sessions for typically 12 delegates, it's a base to gather in and enjoy the comfort and conviviality of the bar before dining either at The Chase or in Ross. Parking, which is a nightmare in Ross, and difficult at the best of times at other Ross hotels, is never a problem at The Chase, however large the group. The Chase always adds a professional wrap to their experience of visiting Chronos.

The Chase has also hosted us for big functions. Back in 2011 we celebrated 25 years in business with over 120 staff and guests enjoying a splendid evening in the function room. Our traveling staff, their partners and all our guests and their partners stayed at The Chase. Guests included senior engineers representing a broad cross-section of the UK Telecom industry from BT, Orange/EE, T-Mobile, O2 and Vodafone as well as professional colleagues and Academia. The Chase was the only hotel for many miles around that could offer a function room, beds and ambiance to accommodate us.

My grateful thanks also goes to

Colin Parcell, who, as general manager, has run The Chase since shortly before we transferred our allegiances. My condition for using The Chase on a regular basis, agreed with Colin in my office, was that Colin would put a Guinness tap on the bar. He did! He also sorted out a spat when a house manager made a fuss about the lounge menu being served in the bar. This when we were entertaining important guests from a large corporate customer based in the USA. Needless to say, we had our way and Colin agreed to have a word after my phone call the following morning. Colin, I wish you well in your next assignment.

The Chase. A home-from-home for our staff, English elegance for our overseas guests, big functions, bar meals and Guinness. We will miss you. RIP.

*Charles Curry
Founder and Managing Director
Chronos Technology Ltd*

Closure of MS Support Group

Dear Editor

ON behalf of the Ross MS Support Group I would like to let anyone interested know that we have made the decision to close the group.

Due to the lack of members and volunteers, we have decided we can no longer continue. We would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the last 17 - 18 years. It has been much appreciated.

If anyone affected by MS in the Ross area needs support or information they can contact the Hereford MS branch who will willingly help. Thank you all once again.

*Rosemary Tingle
Upton Bishop*

Grave concerns about Chase site

WE are gravely concerned by the plans announced for the future development of the historic Chase Hotel and surrounding land.

The Core Plan for Ross makes clear that this development must conform to the principles and policies contained in the national guidelines for Neighbourhood Development Planning. In particular, The Chase Hotel development must guarantee the protection, conservation and enhancement of a valued habitat including protected wildlife species in the Chase Hotel grounds (bats, small mammals and birds).

The local NDP plan requires that the development of the hotel must

ensure the continuation and sustainability of its open spaces and enhance their intrinsic character and attractiveness. The plan also mandates the development of, and investment in, infrastructure and amenities that will support the growth in quality tourism in this beautiful part of the Wye Valley.

The growing challenge from air pollution and carbon emissions will become more severe with the building of the planned 900 houses in and around Ross that has already been granted. The additional congestion and pollution would be particularly felt on the Gloucester Road, Chase Road and Alton Street quadrant, intensifying the increasingly dangerous traffic flows on Alton Street that are an ever-present threat to the health and well-being of pedestrians (older people and children especially) and nearby residents.

Within the proposals, the plan to build three 3-storey buildings housing 110 residential units of a height no less than the main hotel building, together with the construction of underground parking, will be highly destructive to the surrounding neighbourhood. The loss of this precious green space within the town of Ross, the increasing noise, negative impact on wildlife, trees and shrubs and the pressures imposed on drainage, sewage and other infrastructure, will all greatly damage the well being of the local and nearby population.

The financial challenges for the owners of The Chase Hotel are real and serious but the proposals outlined highlight the overwhelming costs to both hotel and the community from the absence of a strategic plan to remedy inadequate, deteriorating infrastructure and the lack of an integrated vision and plan for Ross and its hotels, shops, housing, hospital, doctors surgeries and other important facilities, that will properly serve the growing population and increase the attractiveness of Ross to visitors.

*The Kendryss
Ross-on-Wye*

Council approval for The Chase plans

Dear Editor

SUCH strong feelings are being expressed by all but everyone should be prepared for this County Council and Ross Town Council to approve the development. The Councils do not have much of a track record in supporting views of their electorate. But elections are coming. Find out where your local councillors and county councillors stand on this controversial issue.

The owners clearly can't make enough money out of this hotel so it makes sense for them to try and dispose of it and capitalise on the investment they have made over the years - we would all do the same.

If the application is approved there is no question it will add to the congestion in the centre of Ross and we lose the remaining green area.

I wonder if all efforts to sell it to hotel groups have been exhausted? Or nursing homes etc?

My daughter's wedding was at The

locking roads, making Ross even more undesirable for visitors and residents.

We need the support services infrastructure before more housing residents.

Everyone is aware this town needs more school capacity, doctors, supermarkets and town centre refurbishment anyone looked at the state of the built above Mountain Warehouse/Boots la - a disgrace).

Ross central is a mess in the Area Outstanding Natural Beauty - how did it get this way? Who has been running Ross?

It's amazing that the Ross neighbourhood development plan is still moving away from being completed. The plan is so important and it's worth noting that the council have already suggested housing on The Chase site in the NPD as reported in *Ross Gazette* Jan 23rd, page 3.

We don't need more housing accommodation for "out of our area" Housing Associations. We need to see more imagination and analysis of the town requirements. This development does not add anything to Ross-on-Wye improve the increasingly shabby appearance of Ross town centre.

*Doug Skelton
Weston under Penryn*

Merrivale development

Dear Editor

Further to my previous two letters regarding the confusion of the dates of the public announcements regarding the Council meeting dates, I have informed by Councillor Caroline that there should be at least four days space between the meeting dates and comments submitted to the Council.

This means that the date the comments should have been submitted should have been no later than December 14th meeting to be held on December 15th and therefore the date given to the for publication of December 20th is an error!

I understand Councillor Paul Sykes has suggested that the entrance development should be positioned at the South Eastern corner of the site, probably adjacent to the path where cars will have to cross the road to go to the path to the school and then have a potential danger from the traffic leaving the development entrance.

Also, I would point out that the entrance would be only approximately 50 yards from the entrance road that serves the 50 odd properties going to Blake Avenue and a little further the entrance comes down from Penryn Way.

However, I am sure the roads highway departments will consider advise the planning officer of any safety issues, because of the proximity of these entrances, he will make a decision regarding the application.

*David
Ross*

Jesse Norman's

Most read online stories this week

Letters to the Editor

Send your views about local issues

54a Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, Hereford

@ editorial@rossgazette.com

The Ross

The Editor welcomes letters on any topical subject. Please restrict letters to about 200 words. All letters should include a return address and address even when submitting by email.

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Also, I would point out that this entrance would be only approximately 50 yards from the entrance road which serves the 50 odd properties going into Blake Avenue and a little further along the entrance comes down from Princess Way.

However, I am sure the roads and a highway departments will consider and advise the planning officer of any danger and safety issues, because of the close proximity of these entrances, before he makes a decision regarding the planning application.

David J. Open
Ross-on-Wye

Council approval for The Chase plans

Dear Editor

SUCH strong feelings are being expressed by all but everyone should be prepared for this County Council and Ross Town Council to approve the development. The Councils do not have much of a track record in supporting views of their electorate. But elections are coming. Find out where your local councillors and county councillors stand on this controversial issue.

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I wonder if all efforts to sell it to hotel groups have been exhausted? Or nursing homes etc?

My daughter's wedding was at The Chase over a decade ago and I have attended many events over the years. However, I do object to the proposed residential development plans.

Councillors please bear in mind all the many hundreds of houses surrounding Ross in development or planning stages which will bring thousands more adults and children requiring services and grid-

Jesse Norman's letter

Dear Editor

OUR Member of Parliament's letter that was published in the last issue of the *Ross Gazette* encourages me to comment that mankind is the greatest threat to man-

Most read online stories this week

1. Emergency services called to Broad Street
2. Ross-on-Wye stationery shop is closing
3. Death of much loved Ross lady
4. Councillor recovering from emergency surgery
5. Closure of The Chase Hotel sparks huge reaction in Ross-on-Wye

Campaign to save the Chase Hotel

THE Mayor of Ross-on-Wye, Harry Bramer, a Town and County Councillor, as well as a business man who owns and runs wedding venues, is calling on the owners of the Chase Hotel, Camanoe Estates Ltd to rethink their plans to close and redevelop the hotel site. And he wants residents who think that the Chase Hotel should be saved to join in him a campaign to persuade the owners to change their minds.

Councillor Bramer told the *Ross Gazette* that since this paper broke the news on January 9th that the Chase Hotel is to close in September 2019 his post bag has swelled with letters from local residents deeply concerned about the potential loss of the Hotel as a local valued asset.

He said: "To me and to those that have written to me – it is unthinkable that the Hotel be allowed to close – and as the Mayor of Ross – I consider it my duty to take exception with the current owners Camanoe Estates Limited when they say 'changing visitor preferences, coupled with high costs of upkeep have made it impossible to trade profitably'."

He added: "I would point out that these are my personal thoughts and not those of Herefordshire Council or its Cabinet or Ross Town Council where I am currently its Mayor."

The 36 Bedroom Chase Hotel has in recent years become iconic for this town – being at the very Gateway to The Wye and Cllr Bramer said: "To lose it to redevelopment would be staggeringly detrimental for this town."

He thinks a better option might be to seek a

The owners of the Chase Hotel published a report following the consultation they held in January which was attended by over 160 people and 70 completed comment forms were returned.

The biggest concern raised was about the potential loss of the hotel as a locally valued facility. The next most common issue of concern was the impact of extra vehicles on local roads.

Some people commented on the scale of the development and the site

is clearly valued by nearby residents for its wildlife and ecology.

One aspect that attracted a number of comments was about the effect of possibly overloading local services, notably doctors and schools.

At the same time, some people were very positive about the proposals and a few even expressed an interest in purchasing a property if the development proceeds.

The full report (with all comments) is available on the project website: consultingyou.co.uk/chasehotel



Harry Bramer is spearheading a campaign to save the Chase Hotel from redevelopment as housing

change of ownership to enable the hotel to become a major player as a 'destination' hotel in the Wye Valley. However, he told the *Gazette* that he is not planning on becoming the new owner himself.

Cllr Bramer told the *Ross Gazette*: "The Localism Act – under which Camanoe Estates Limited will be recording their consultation with the residents of Ross regarding the closure of the Chase Hotel does give me a further suggestion that we in Ross might investigate the possibility that the hotel be added to the list of Assets of Community Value – so that if closed and threatened with disposal – the community will be informed and given the opportunity to have a say in its future."

He issued a rallying call for residents who want the Chase Hotel to be saved to contact him. He said: "Please do not think that all is lost – if you feel as I do that The Chase Hotel should be saved as an hotel and for the town of Ross on Wye – please feel free to write to me at The Corn Exchange - and let's see what we can do."

New use for former NatWest

By Jo Scrivin

EVER since the NatWest Bank branch closed in Ross-on Wye last year, speculation has been rife about what this prestigious building centre of town, could be used for.

Many suggestions have been made a strip club or a charity shop. How thought it would make an ideal location for McDonalds and several people have understood that it was being bought by a company which runs the popular Estero Lounge in the country.

The *Ross Gazette* contacted the company which runs Estero Lounge. An Assistant told the *Gazette* that is not us."

The *Gazette* also contacted the company and told that they have not purchased the former NatWest building. The person said: "I can confirm the rumour I'm afraid."

However, they did not have an idea that the company is planning to use the site in the area.

They said: "Ross-on-Wye is an area being considered for a new drive restaurant. If a new restaurant was opened in the community as well as a part-time job




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Letters to the Editor

Send your views about local issues

✉ 54a Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, He
@ editorial@rossgazette.com  The R
The Editor welcomes letters on any topical sub
Please restrict letters to about 200 words. All
and address even when s

who come to the Day Centre will sweep out all the old straw, clean the floor and fill it up with lovely new fresh-smelling bedding. I like the Day Centre people, they always smile when they see us and they help each other with the work.

They work with all the animals, but I think they like us best as we are so friendly and gentle. Would you like to come and visit us?

Find out more on our website <http://www.orchard-trust.org.uk/learning-centre/smallholding/>

Nuala's notes



where diabetes can do no harm.
To sign up, just visit www.diabetes.org.uk/swim22. There is no registration fee and no minimum sponsorship.

Siobhan Clifford
West Midlands Regional Fund-raiser
Diabetes UK

Free parking day

Dear Editor

I READ, with interest, your article in the *Ross Gazette* of February 13th regarding the free parking event.

It was a well intentioned exercise by Herefordshire Council to agree to four hours free parking in the County, on Saturday, February 9th, but I think any conclusions from it will be very limited for the following reasons:

1. It did not appear to be well publicised in advance - for such an event such as this, adequate advance advertising is a must.

I only knew because I have signed up to info, by e-mail, from Herefordshire Council

I then took it upon myself to send a website link to the Ross-on-Wye Notice Board Facebook page

Online comments

Chase Hotel Closure

IT will be a very, very sad day for Ross-on-Wye when the Chase Hotel closes it's doors. It's the main hotel in Ross for functions and the thought of it being replaced with housing makes me feel sad and annoyed. The Chase Hotel is Ross-on-Wye!!

Robert Brain

Council Tax increase

FOR most of us this equates to a pay cut as wages won't be increasing, a very sad blow to the hard working person.

Sharon Hodges

THE important bit people need to read - "Central government's Revenue Support Grant has reduced from £60.1m in 2010/11 to £0.6m in 2019/20, forcing Herefordshire Council to deliver £90m of

Letters to the Editor

Send your views about local issues

Brexit



VERY soon Parliament will—at last—have to make its mind up on Brexit. The Prime Minister has set out a timetable: a vote on the Withdrawal Agreement by March 12th (with a reported Labour amendment in favour of a second referendum); a vote on whether the UK should press ahead without a deal on the 13th; and a vote on a possible “limited extension” to Article 50 on the 14th.

There are too many different possibilities to explore here. But several things are clear. First, if it comes to it, Parliament as a whole is very likely to vote for some form of extension rather than allow a no-deal Brexit. Secondly, the different groupings opposed to the Withdrawal Agreement are having to recognise this political reality. If the Labour party is determined to scupper Brexit, it risks being severely punished by voters. Equally, no-deal Brexiteers are having to face the serious possibility that if they vote against, then Brexit may not take place at all. Thirdly, if there is genuine movement on the proposed backstop, then Parliament is likely to support the Withdrawal Agreement.

It is famously true of the EU that they never agree any deal until the very last moment. We are close to that point, so we must see what they have to offer.

My own view remains the same. The Withdrawal Agreement provides a sensible basis for a future long-term relationship with the EU, especially if the backstop is amended. And a second referendum, which in effect re-ran the vote in 2016, would be highly unwise. A no-deal Brexit would almost certainly be extremely painful in the short term. But the possibility of no-deal has very usefully focused minds both at home and in the EU.

As I have seen, it is highly unlikely that we would have seen the rapid recent improvement in Brexit preparations on the other side of the Channel without it. But the key point is surely this. People are

Stop The Chase re-development

Dear Editor

I WAS shocked to learn of the current owners' plans to close The Chase Hotel for redevelopment.

I agree with the Mayor of Ross, Councillor Harry Bramer when he says that The Chase Hotel could “achieve the status of a leading destination hotel”.

Councillor Harry Bramer suggested that the current owners could apply to the local planning authority for the erection of a Spa facility, ‘which would provide such facilities for hotel guests as well as residents of Ross and, if prepared sympathetically, rival others in other nearby towns.’

I also agree with Councillor Harry Bramer's suggestion to increase the number of bedrooms. He said: “Some say that 36 bedrooms is not enough to make ends meet, since at peak times the revenue taken is not enough to offset the quieter times.”

“I would also suggest to the owners that to apply for planning permission for a further 20 (incredibly well appointed) new bedrooms is something that the planners and the town would be delighted to see.”

There is so much concern by local residents about the possible closure of The Chase Hotel, and I certainly feel very strongly about this.

I hope that those who do have concerns voice their opinions and make them known to the Mayor, the planners and anyone who could possibly influence the decision,

Mrs Joyce Thomas
Ross-on-Wye

Nature will be lost

Dear Editor

A FEW evenings ago, with dusk falling fast, I heard the unmistakable, hauntingly beautiful call of a tawny owl among the trees that fringe the eleven acre Chase Hotel grounds.

If the proposed development plan is allowed to go ahead (*Ross Gazette*, January 9th), the natural habitat will be reduced to just two acres of what is described as ‘open parkland’ including some ‘specimen, indigenous trees’.

Unless action is taken to reverse this proposal a significant slice of nature in the middle of Ross Town will be lost - forever.

Jon Wise
Ross-on-Wye



Chase Hotel not in Town Plan

By Jo Scrivin

PLANS for development at The Chase Hotel almost derailed progress of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Ross-on-Wye.

Although the site was originally included in the NDP it was for a much lower housing allocation than the owners, Camanoe Estates Ltd, have revealed they intend to apply to Herefordshire Council for planning permission for.

Melvyn Reynolds, the Chair of Ross-on-Wye Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, told members of Ross Town Council that because the final stage of the Plan, which it is hoped to be reached by autumn of this year, involves a Referendum, it was decided to remove the Chase Hotel and the surrounding land from the Plan.

The NDP, which will form the blueprint for future development in Ross, has now been passed to Herefordshire Council for their checks, before it goes out for the final consultation.

Mr Reynolds told the Councillors that originally the Steering Group decided to leave the Chase Hotel site, with the larger number of dwellings, in the Plan, but during February the group became aware 'that within the town there was considera-

ble disquiet about the proposals involving closure of The Chase Hotel.'

He explained: "Because the final stage of the NDP approval process involves a Referendum (approve the Plan – or not) it was judged that the risks of overall failure were too great if the site is included. This decision was reached in spite of rehearsing the risks of the Plan being silent about the site. The plan submitted to Herefordshire Council therefore makes no mention of The Chase Hotel or the surrounding land."

After the next consultation all comments will again be addressed, after which the NDP is submitted for Examination by an external planning expert; again any requests for changes must be made. After which the final Plan enters the pre-referendum period of a further six weeks. Depending how many comments are made through those processes the Referendum is now expected in early autumn 2019.

Councillor Nigel Gibbs said: "It is regrettable that there have had to be last minute changes, but

the Plan does give a vision for the future of Ross." The Town Council voted to accept the plan.

Also at the Town Council meeting a member of the public, Caroline Hopkins, asked for clarification about the wording of the petition which is being circulated around the town.

The Mayor passed around a copy of the petition, which asks people to sign if they believe the Chase Hotel should be saved from redevelopment as flats but should remain as an hotel and an asset to Ross.

Another member of the public, Joyce Thomas, who has been collecting signatures on the petition, asked the Town Councillors if they would say whether they back the development or not. She said a lot of residents feel very strongly about the Chase and it has been a focal point to many occasions enjoyed by local people.

Councillor Jane Roberts said: "We cannot preempt the decision making process by giving an opinion before an application has been made and is discussed by the Council."

Ready for World Book Day

THE ROSS GAZETTE'S CHARITY OF THE YEAR 2019

New Start Cat Rescue is a non-profit organisation who help rescue unwanted cats and kittens of any age, and where they can, find suitable homes for any that come into their care.

The charity relies on donations, whether financial, or items such as blankets, towels, wet or dry cat food.

The Ross Gazette is a drop off point for any donations people would like to make.

Please bring donations to the office; 54a Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7DY. Any cheques should be made payable to New Start Cat Rescue.



The Ross Gazette

Stopping Chase plans

by Aliya Shibli

JOYCE Thomas and Marie Ward were out and about in Ross-on-Wye on Thursday, February 28th, gathering support for Councillor Harry Bramer's campaign to protect The Chase Hotel from redevelopment. In an hour, they received 149 signatures.

Councillor Harry Bramer told the *Ross Gazette*: "I am at a loss to understand the proposed closure of the Chase Hotel for the reasons stated by the directors of Camanoe Estates Limited, namely, the change in customer preferences and the high cost of running the business."

The Chase Hotel accounts filed are non audited and are abbreviated; a balance sheet shows that the company was incorporated in 1962. Councillor Bramer said that the last accounts filed were to March 31st, 2018 and a loss was made of £60,000 after depreciation of £51,000. Thus, the loss prior to depreciation was £9000. Its net assets were £3.4m, consisting of freehold property of £1.4m, and investment property of £470,000 and a loan to a connected company (Alan Porter Ltd) of £1.4m.

Councillor Bramer said: "In summary, the company, with a loss of just £9000, is perfectly viable and the company is certainly asset rich. Having looked at this publicly available information I can see no justification for closing the hotel."

Councillor Bramer set up an online petition on Monday, March 11th to continue the effort to save The Chase Hotel from redevelopment. It can be found here: https://www.change.org/p/camanoe-estates-limited-save-the-chase-hotel-ross-on-wye-6e5de45a-d185-40fa-ab9e-dd3417822f93?referrer=941304088&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition

Letters to the Editor

Send your views about local issues

54a Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire

@ editorial@rossgazette.com

The

The Editor welcomes letters on any topical subject. Please restrict letters to about 200 words. A return address is essential and address even when

Mental health crisis

Dear Editor

THE recent national focus on Mental Health has led local charitable group, Herefordshire Disability United, to arrange a series of meetings to examine what is happening locally. The plan is for these meetings to be wide ranging from issues such as the stigma of mental health, the affect it may have on employment, difficulties in accessing benefits, and how to find independent advice.

The Charity has identified a number of local and voluntary groups who are doing excellent work in their own field but there seems to be no overall strategy for support in the County.

The first meeting aims to comprehensively identify what provision exists at present, not simply the services provided by the NHS, but support activities, advice, sign-posting and social care will form the basis to identify a way forward to improve services and support within the County which individuals and families can access.

If anyone feels that they have experiences they would like to share, representatives of groups working in this field or are simply an interested party and would like to come along to the first morning meeting on March 20th, 10:30am at Hinton Community Centre please contact Sylvie Nicholls.

Telephone 07817 473813 or email sylvia.nicholls@btinternet.com

Online comments

Brexit debate

YES lets all vote to lose our jobs! Lets all lose our mortgages. Project fear is project reality. Ask Honda, Nissan and Toyota. Nationalism is covert fascism.

John Price

Climate change

A LEAFLET came through my door the other day, mostly using the phrase 'we demand'. Odd phrase to use if seeking change from power. It is my experience that appeals are better conducted

via rational argument that gains popular support, culminating in a request hard to resist. Or, failing this, using elections and hustings preceding them to discuss and persuade in a civilised manner.

Screeching until you turn blue, or red, or green on the spot appears the new black and white. It shouldn't work, but often does, mainly because of the calibre of those supposedly in positions of leadership, who will always opt for the easy option, and to avoid getting ears bashed is to concede to those making the most noise.

Also, to maintain using draconian antics exploiting supposedly well-meaning and too often vague new legislation in the hands of those more comfy with the letter than spirit of laws.

And a media estate consumed by 'human interest' at best, and heat over light ratings at less ethical. One such that concerns me greatly is the use of the young, either as rallying icons or, more cynically, as direct advocacy figureheads on the soapbox.

Who could, or would dare to challenge a child? Well, where necessary, the young do need to be met on equal terms, especially when there is a suspicion their youth is a front for those less young but with much older agendas.

I have some unpleasant experience with this having been advised by my kids' pragmatic teachers that a woefully inaccurate AQA text was best addressed on two competing fronts: a) to pass the exam, b) to actually be educated accurately in class in tandem to compete well informed in a global market. Wasteful and unfair.

I have a science and engineering background enough to look at facts objectively, or at least in a way to seek out and assess more trustworthy expert input. I also worked in the field of advertising and marketing long enough to be able to see an agenda being pushed over when substance is lacking. And having experienced parenthood with toddlers, youth, teens and young adults long enough to see what wonders can be worked when healthy minds are applied and sensibly guided.

'Rebellion' has connotations that make my historical antennae twitch, especially as words from past eras make an unwelcome return, to push agendas and suppress or censor counter view. Of course debates can and should thrive at all times, but on matters of policy, elections every few years

is where they get resolved democratically. I have personal doubts on the value of endless petitions, marches, polls, etc, but they are part of a long history of free speech and form all that goes into democratic process.

More positively, as I tour and present at schools and colleges, it is a privilege and inspiration to see young minds grasp what is possible and get motivated to take promising avenues further forward, by doing productive, innovative stuff. These are who will build their own future and take ownership of it. Simply shouting the odds and waving lazy banners comes across as the preserve of the bitter and failed bully sector, with sheep dutifully tagging along. These are my views and may be agreed with, ignored or challenged.

Peter Martin

Town Council budget

TOWN Council can we have a published break down of these running costs to see what is costing the money on each of these assets please?

Caroline Hopkins

Illegal parking

IT'S up to Aldi and Herefordshire Council to make the road markings clear here. They have failed to do that so far. And lots of people know that the yellow lines were illegally installed by Aldi originally - and thus continue to park there, despite the Council sorting things out on the legal front. What a pity that those who paint the lines couldn't do a better job, because the white parking bay lines are still visible.

Richard Hankins

Chase Hotel petition

I WORKED at The Chase Hotel many years ago and I agree with the Mayor that the hotel should be saved from closure because a lot of events over the years have been made at this venue.

Peter Scott

The Chase Hotel

Dear Editor,

I'm clearly one of many people who are still incredulous at the recent revelations regarding the future of the Chase Hotel.

A prime site within the heart of the beautiful Wye Valley with so much further potential. Indeed, minimum requirement of a modern leisure and spa facility, with proper upgrade of accomodation would, in the scheme of things, appear more than obvious. Any self respecting hotelier group would no doubt ensure this happened and quickly.

However, this should have happened long ago within the tenure of the current owners who it would seem have cynically held the Chase as a landbank, captive from its rich potential over a very long period. We are told the hotel is uneconomic to continue. Conveniently, likely to be true if it has been starved of targeted investment. I've not seen any evidence of attempts to sell the hotel to a forward looking hotel group. Of course not. That would be the best future for the hotel, its staff and Ross. I wonder why it is not currently on the market?

Those readers with a long memory will recall a far earlier attempt to develop this treasured Ross green-space by installing a Waitrose supermarket at the bottom of the parkland. Chaseside residents will especially recall that episode. That would certainly have been the thin end of the wedge.

To even the most casual observer, it would appear a fairly breathtaking attempt to totally exploit and asset strip a much loved and needed Ross landmark which, Mayor Harry Brammer and many others have described as an absolutely clear 'Community Asset'. I think the move to firmly establish this position is worthy of wide support.

I hope last week's news that the proposed development is outside the local plan will prove to have some enduring significance. As if, given the large number of houses approved and about to appear on the eastern edge of Ross, we suddenly need this central area choked with development and vehicles purely for local developers' gain, absolutely defies belief. Because we don't need this. Nor, quite obviously, does the Chase Hotel.

Roger Hanson, Ross-on-Wye

Ross without The Chase

Dear Editor

I write to add my thoughts to the growing opposition to the posposed alarming changes to the Chase Hotel and grounds.

Apartment buildings, houses and

the conversion of the hotel into apartments -such a bad idea.

It was once that The Chase was the place to go, and it could be again. We need to find people with flair, money and expertise in hotel management to transform the hotel, which we all love, into a reinvigorated, dynamic, lively and lovely place to spend time, possibly with spa facilities which would be available not only to guests but also to local people. What a lovely thought.

What a great visitor attraction bringing new life to the town. The alternative is a big increase in population who will put added strain on our already stretched services, such as the GPs, schools and, with the inevitable increase in cars, the roads. Plus the removal of the huge asset of The Chase. Ross without The Chase is unthinkable.

Mrs T Williams, Ross-on-Wye

Festival celebration

Dear Editor,

I have this past weekend attended and greatly enjoyed the events laid on by CreateRoss's Festival of Music and Arts.

Friday night saw The Mighty Pledge soul band at The Venue wow us with their classic 60's repertoire. On Saturday the Orchestra of the Swan delighted us with a varied programme of classical music. Sunday afternoon at St. Mary's saw The DaSilva Marionette Circus Troupe entertain with their vintage puppets, which was particularly appreciated by my granddaughters!

Finally, at the Prospect, the Ross "Museum without Walls" was unveiled. This, by way of clever digital technology, enabled us to see what the old fountain at the Prospect looked like in its pomp on our iPhones and tablets.

A massive thanks to all the people and volunteers involved - you know who you are! You are all people who are 'doers' and organisers and your hard work helps to make Ross the great place that it is.

I hope that this event goes from strength to strength in future years.

Chris Bartrum, Ross-on-Wye

Marvelous event

Dear Editor,

May we use your columns to congratulate the organisers of the Ross Festival of Music & Arts on the wonderful concert given in the Venue by the Orchestra of the Swan, a thoroughly enjoyable evening. A great treat for Ross to have such a prestigious orchestra playing for us.

Well done and keep fingers crossed

Letters to the Editor

Send your views about local issues

Spring brings new arrivals



I AM really excited and a bit nervous because my baby is almost due. When I lie quietly in the straw I can feel the kicking inside me.

One of the sheep has got in first though and I can see her lamb jumping around in the big field. Lambs are wonderful jumpers but goats are better, we are built for it!

The big news this month is the birthday party they had; I've never seen so many people here. Orchard Trust, where I live, was 30 years old and lots of friends, old and new, came to celebrate.

There was a huge cake with bright orange

The Chase Hotel

Dear Editor

IN his excellent letter last week, Roger Hanson outlined reasons for concern about the impact on the town and wider community of the proposed plans for the Chase Hotel site. You would have hoped that the current owners would have appreciated that the Chase Hotel has been an iconic feature of the town for generations and has become synonymous with Ross itself.

It is hard to believe that if offered for sale it would not attract the interests of enterprising hoteliers nationwide. The owners have opted for a more lucrative collaboration with property developers. Unfortunately it appears that the spirits of John Kyrle and Thomas Blake are not influencing actions and that financial gain is taking precedence over any philanthropy that might have dictated a more community-minded strategy.

(A petition opposing the proposed plans is available to sign at Miles Morgan Travel Agents).

*James J Williams
Ross-on-Wye*

Chase Hotel's future could be protected

by Aliya Shibli

AT the Town Council meeting on Monday, April 8th, Joyce Thomas MBE asked Mayor Harry Bramer if he would endorse the 'opinions that are coming forward from the people of Ross-on-Wye' that the grounds of 'The Chase Hotel should be designated as a Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Councillor Bramer said: "Yes, I fully believe that the grounds at the Chase Hotel meet the criteria for a Local Green Space designation in all five aspects as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

"The grounds at The Chase Hotel are in close proximity to the community of the town and are held in high regard by the community because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value and richness in wildlife - not to mention the tranquillity they afford.

"I will be putting a motion to the new council at our May meeting after the elections are finished."

Local Green Space designation allows local communities to protect green spaces of local importance, and these can be identified through neighbourhood plans. This helps to protect land from housing developments, but a green space cannot be awarded once planning permission has been accepted.

Joyce Thomas and Marie Ward will be out about this. You can write to Samantha Banks, Herefordshire Council, The Neighbourhood Planning Team, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0XH. Or, alternatively, write to Councillor Bramer, The Corn Exchange, 7 High Street, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7HL.

Residents are invited to express their views about this. You can write to Samantha Banks, Herefordshire Council, The Neighbourhood Planning Team, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0XH. Or, alternatively, write to Councillor Bramer, The Corn Exchange, 7 High Street, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7HL.



Cawdor under threat



The flooded area in 2008

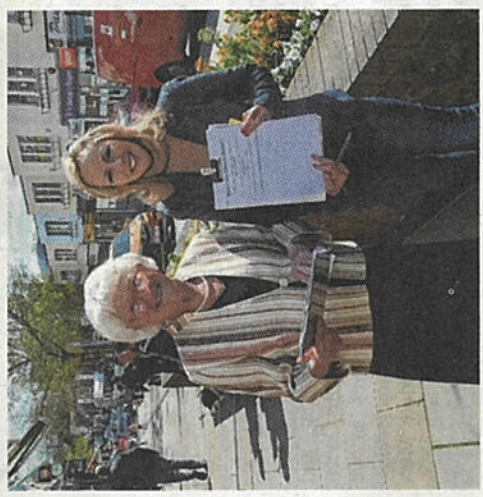
by Aliya Shibli

A COLLAPSED drain in... not been fixed by Balfour... Council to whom they... for children to walk... dents living the... The floodin... where the... Fownhor... Parr... "It's...

Petition to protect The Chase Hotel

JOYCE Thomas MBE and Marie Ward were out and about in Ross-on-Wye on Thursday, April 11th to gather signatures supporting their petition to protect The Chase Hotel and keep the grounds as a green space.

Local Green Space designation allows local communities to protect green spaces of local importance, and these can be identified through neighbourhood plans. This helps to protect land from housing developments, but a green space cannot be awarded once planning permission has been accepted.



Positive change?

by Aliya Shibli

WHEN Jesse Norman MP expressed on Twitter that he was 'on a fantastic tour' of a Holland-like cycling and walking scheme in Waltham on Tuesday, April 9th, some local residents were hoping similar ideas could be implemented in Ross-on-Wye. One person said: "Fantastic to see what can happen when a council demonstrates leadership and boldness - surely this is the kind of initiative that could help put Ross-on-Wye on the map - will you be looking to pilot a similar project in Ross-on-Wye?"

Jesse replied: "I'd love to. But these projects rely on local leadership at council level in the first instance. I have encouraged both Herefordshire Council and the Mayor of Ross on town regeneration."

A local resident suggested that 'I'd love to. But' has turned into the route course of Brexit, and demonstrates why he finds it hard to have faith in promises of positive change. He said: "From our point of view. We are supposed to care that an important person is going to look at a project. For a moment we hope that this could be coming to us. Then we find that person has no power to implement this positive change."

Jesse replied: "Look, the facts are the facts. I try to give all the leadership locally I can. But bids have to be conceived in detail, written and submitted before I can go to work to help get them funded."

How strongly do you agree with the notion that MPs have little to no power to implement positive change? Get in touch with Aliya by emailing aliya@rossgazette.com.

erable teenagers (Jess and Randal) enticed into drug trafficking by Dex - a manipulative, violent drug dealer.





Warning about shed burglaries

A series of burglaries in Upton Bishop have taken between Saturday, April 13th and Sunday, April 14th.

Three separate garden sheds situated behind the properties were broken into overnight. Various items were

stolen including a Specialised mountain bike, a chainsaw, a compressor, and a pressure washer.

The incident reference number is: 0209N 140419.

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Concerns that The Chase Hotel cannot be protected

by Aliya Shibli

AT Ross Town Council's Annual Review Meeting on Monday, April 29th, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), Melvin Reynolds, gave a presentation about the NDP and explained why allocating The Chase Hotel as a Local Green Space would not necessarily protect it from redevelopment.

Melvin said: "NDPs are mechanisms which devolve certain levels of planning responsibility to communities. They are outlined by national planning policy framework. The basis of Ross-on-Wye's NDP came out in 2011, and was finally ratified in 2013-14. Herefordshire has number of NDPs, and most of them are based around villages.

Many of the residents who attended the meeting were concerned the find out that The Chase Hotel has not been allocated in the NDP, which is now in its final stages. The draft plan is now being adjusted based on consultations and discussions, and Melvin anticipated that it would be put forward to local residents for a referendum in late Autumn, 2019.

Melvin said: "Following consideration and exclusion of proposals brought under Regulation 14, The Chase Hotel has been excluded from the NDP as a Local Green Space and a development site.

The advice that the NDP team have been given is that there 'is no question at all' that any attempt to designate all of the 'green' area as a Local Green Space would fail at examination. This would be regarded by any planning examiner as 'preventing potential development'.

One option advised to those working on the NDP was to designate only a part of The Chase Hotel as a Local Green Space, although, Melvin warned that even that could be regarded by an examiner as too restricting, and comments from the landowner would be anticipated.

Another option would be to add a new policy to the current NDP. There are already policies in the Plan about historic parks and gardens and about retaining what is termed 'green infrastructure'. To achieve such a policy, evidence would need to be sought with consultations, involving site neighbours and others, to provide an opportunity to explain the legal situation clearly to everybody.

A further option suggested by advisors was to await imminent revision of Herefordshire's Local Plan so that it could include a policy similar the previous one, in response to consultations.

Melvin displayed examples of planning drawings for The Chase Hotel that have been considered before to help illustrate the variations in green spaces and housing allocation. These included considerations of housing developments, a spa, or holiday lodges.

Melvin presented four options at the meeting: Leave the NDP as it is; consult on Local Green Space; consult on an extended Green infrastructure policy to apply to The Chase; await imminent revision of the Local Plan to include a county-wide policy similar a Green Infrastructure policy. He also invited suggestions from those at the meeting, and said that the plan for The Chase was hoped to be finalised by December 2019.

Joyce Thomas MBE thanked Melvin for his work on the NDP but said that she was 'disappointed' with the fact that The Chase had been excluded from the NDP. She said: "The Chase Hotel is of immense importance. Three of us, Mayor Harry Bramer, Marie Ward, and I, without any trouble, have had over 1000 signatures hoping to protect The Chase."

Councillor Bramer explained that the NDP was well into development until early January when it was announced that The Chase Hotel would close. He said since then the Plan has been in 'disarray'.

Councillor Hannah Lerego wanted to clarify that currently, the Town Council has no official view regarding The Chase Hotel. She said: "I have lived here since 2000 and think The Chase Hotel is great, but I would like to say that there's no official Ross Town Council view on whether it should be saved.

"Nobody can speak for us collectively; this is an emotive issue but the Town Council are not telling the owners of The Chase what they should or shouldn't do. The NDP has had a huge amount of research and it's clear why The Chase Hotel has

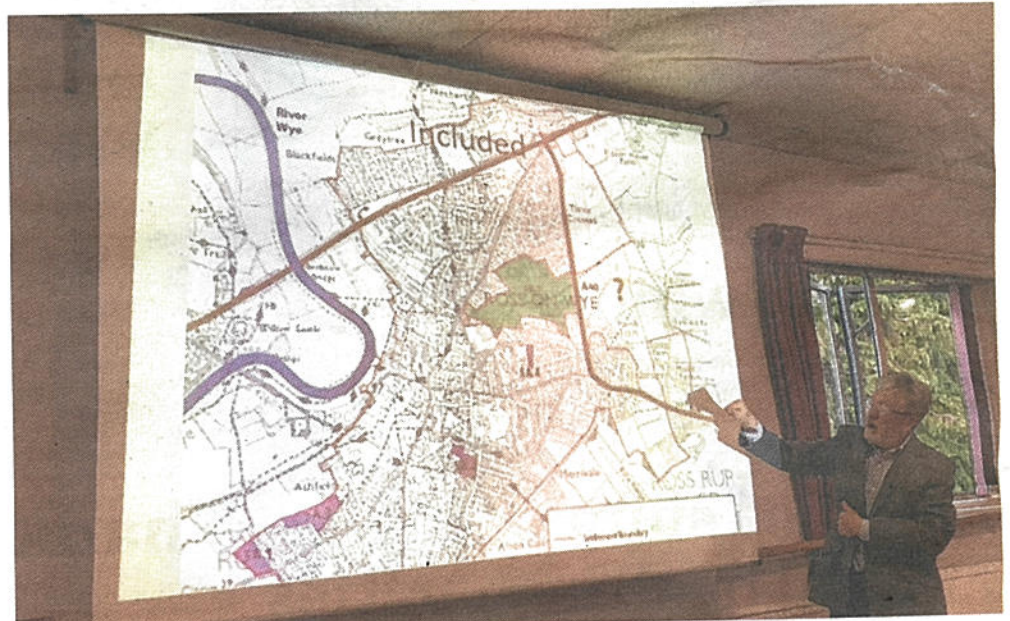
been left out - it's because otherwise it would fail."

One resident asked if the Town Council could have a view on this issue, to which Councillor Bramer replied 'absolutely'. He said: "I have put forward a motion for the next Town Council meeting. My view is that there has been an omission and this should be put right, and the NDP should be advised of Town Council's wish to do this. It is up to the next Town Council to vote on that, and that is what will become the Town Council's official view.

Melvin said: "This just adds to the view that somehow we need to work through this. If a Local Green Space is what we want then that's fine, but we need to find a way of putting it forward in a way that isn't trying to stop future development - that is problematic, and that will fail."

He then asked for a vote about which option should be chosen. Some residents expressed their anger at being asked to choose between options they still did not understand. In the end, it was decided that the options would not be narrowed down at this stage, and allocating The Chase Hotel as a Local Green Space was not ruled out. Despite this, Melvin warned that it was very unlikely that The Chase Hotel could be allocated just as Local Green Space because of the planning regulations.

At the end of the meeting, residents had the chance to discuss the NDP and the situation regarding The Chase Hotel further with Mayor Harry Bramer, Melvin, and other Town Councillors.



Melvin Reynolds discussing the different designated areas proposed for The Chase Hotel in one of the planner's drawings.

Discussing Chase Hotel's future

by Aliya Shibli

FORMER Mayor and Councillor, Harry Bramer, put forward a motion for the new Town Council to vote on at the Annual Meeting of the Full Town Council on Monday, May 13th.

Harry told the *Ross Gazette*: "There is growing concern in the Town that The Chase Hotel was missed out by the Town Council for designation as Local Green Space in their submission to Herefordshire Council for the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

"I intend to correct this error at the first opportunity."

It read that 'this Town Council notes that the land at The Chase Hotel was not considered for designation as a Local Green Space during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and supports the immediate consideration of the grounds below the car park down to Waterside as a designated site.'

In addition, it advised that 'an application be made to register The Chase Hotel, its entrance drive, car park, and gardens as an Asset of Community Value.

Councillor Julian Utting proposed

an amendment to the motion, and Councillor David Ravenscroft seconded the motion.

Councillor Utting said: "This Council recognises the controversy within the town about proposals for future development of The Chase Hotel site. The Council also recognises its responsibilities as a statutory consultee and the obligation not to take a position on any planning issue in advance of a formal application."

His motion read that as an elected body and as individuals, the Town Council have no pre-determined opinion in respect of future planning applications on The Chase Hotel site, and acknowledged full confidence in the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to develop appropriate planning policies in respect of The Chase Hotel site.

The motion also stated that the Town Council would delegate to the Planning Committee to investigate and recommend back to the Full Council the appropriateness of including The Chase on the community asset register.

Apart from Councillor Katie Fowler who could not participate in discussions regarding The Chase, the Council voted unanimously to amend the motion.

CHARITY OF THE YEAR 2019



New Start Cat Rescue is a non-profit organisation who help rescue unwanted cats and kittens of any age, and where they can, find suitable homes for any that come into their care.



The charity relies on donations, whether financial, or items such as blankets, towels, wet or dry cat food.



The *Ross Gazette* is a drop off point for any donations people would like to make.

Please bring donations to the office; 54a Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7DY.

Any cheques should be made payable to New Start Cat Rescue.

New Start Cat Rescue



t: 07510 134805



The Ross Gazette



Chase development fear

JOYCE Thomas MBE attended the Town Council meeting on Monday, June 10th to express her concerns about potential development on the Chase Hotel site.

She said: "Although this Council cannot directly affect the decision to close The Chase Hotel, it does have a direct responsibility to oversee any new development proposals relating to the hotel and its grounds.

"The development allocation for The Chase Hotel in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is based on a scale of five houses possibly rising to 12 if both North and South areas are exploited.

"As the NDP is unlikely to have passed all of the obliga-

tory approval stages, before a formal planning application for The Chase Hotel site is made, can I urge this Council to reject it completely.

Joyce has been out and about in Ross-on-Wye collecting signatures in support of protecting The Chase Hotel from development, but wished to urge residents that they must write letters of objection themselves to planning officers.

Joyce described the proposed development as a 'gross over exploitation of the site' and said it would provide far more dwellings than are required adjacent to the Town Centre. Joyce said:

"The implications for traffic congestion are overwhelming, with Gloucester Road likely to be grid locked.

"The loss of green space close to the Town would further diminish the quality of life of those living in the proximity of The Chase grounds."

Councillor Jane Roberts said: "We will certainly take great care with all planning applications that come to us but we cannot predetermine any decision we may make without prejudicing that decision."

Chair of the NDP, Melvin Reynolds, has posted letters about the Chase Hotel consultations through over 80 residents' doors around The Chase Hotel.

Residents have until June 28th to respond to the consultation, which is available on the Town Council's website. There are also paper copies at the Corn Exchange.

feline wins ional award

of the Rings and James designing, crafting and polystyrene structures etc.

a lifetime working in one of Geoff's favourite paint is wildlife, and works on commissioned He joined the Wildlife International three

years ago and has since done well each year, competing against many talented artists.

Geoff told the *Ross Gazette*: "It's great to win a National Award deemed the best picture in the Keith Shackleton Award category. It's also nice to think that I can still compete at my mature age."



Future of Ross-on-Wye

AN 'Alternative Background Note' will be presented to the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group meeting at the Town Council offices on Thursday, July 4th, and to the Town Council on July 8th, regarding the future of the Chase Hotel site. The recent public consultation will be considered at both meetings.

The 'Alternative Note' has been prepared by campaign group 'Save the Chase 2019', to inform the debate and the decision that both the Steering Group and the Town Council make.

The NDP Steering Group meeting is open to the public and the *Ross Gazette* understands there will also be members of the public concerned about the Stoney Stile site attending.

Organic products in refillable style

Advertising feature

TO Field Fayre, organic means good food as it should be; not adulterated, faked or pumped full of stuff nobody should be eating. That's why they've packed their award-winning little shop in the heart of Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, full of everything organic – and customer service that means whatever you are looking for they'll do their best to help.

So whether it's a tasty chunk of Booja Booja Organic Chocolate, some organic ingredients from trusted providers like Shipton Mill, or you'd like to pour through our extensive selection of organic beers, ciders and wines, they are sure they'll have something to suit your taste.

Field Fayre now have brand new nut and seed dispensers available at a 10% discount with the advert below.

for a limited time only - offer valid until 31/07/2019. They have a selection of nuts and seeds available with re-useable cotton bags or biodegradable paper bags. Unlike supermarkets, they don't pre-bag any of their fruit and veg so you can choose as much or as little as you want, reducing waste and ensuring you only buy the best and freshest produce available. You won't be given a plastic bag to put your shopping in, but they do offer a recycled box or lots of lovely reusable bags to buy.

Field Fayre also stock natural shampoos, conditioners and laundry detergent so pop in and fill up your bottles with as much as you need. Why not pop in at 18-19 Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye or visit: www.field-fayre.co.uk. Find them on Facebook @FieldFayre or give them a call on 01989 566683

Sites not given LGS status

By Jo Scrivin

DESPITE protests by dozens of local residents who crammed into the council chamber for the meeting of the Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan Development Sub Committee on Thursday, July 4th, proposals to designate the land at the Chase Hotel and Stoney Stile as Local Green Space were not supported by the NDP Steering Group or the Town Council.

The main items on the agenda were discussions around the best way to protect the Chase Hotel site and the area known locally as the 'horses field', or the field off Hawthorne Lane. This has been called Stoney Stile in the NDP which meant that many of those at the meeting said they were unaware of its inclusion in the Neighbourhood Development Plan until a planning application was made. The proposal not to include a designation of the Chase as a Local Green Space was then discussed at the Town Council meeting on Monday, July 9th.

At the start the meeting three public speakers summarised their arguments in favour of the LGS. Joyce Thomas, Chair of Save the Chase 2019 asked the Town Council to designate the unregistered part of the site as it is 'demonstrably special to the local community' and asked that the registered land should be allowed to develop in line with existing local and national planning policies.

Sue Brazendale questioned whether the amendments had to be 'either or,' She said we could add the paragraph designating the Local Green Space and also



Some of the residents who attended the NDP Steering Group meeting

have the protection of local and national policies if the Examiner strikes that out.

Angie Hoddell also supported this argument. She said: "We have the chance to save something very special and not turn this town into one big housing estate."

The Mayor, Cllr Jane Robert said that the Steering Group recognised the strength of feeling on this issue but the NDP cannot diminish the existing protection under national planning law. "We also want to put the maximum safeguards in place and we need to find the best way to do this," she added.

Councillor Chris Bartrum, who is also a member of the NDP committee, repeated what he had said at the meeting on Thursday, that as the town had paid for professional advice they would be foolish not to follow it as this would lead to more delay.

He also pointed out that all plans of this nature are not going to please everybody. Cllr

Paul Symonds added: "I understand that once this draft plan is at Regulation 16 stage it will be a material consideration in the planning process, we take a much bigger risk allowing an applicant to get a toe in the door before Regulation 16 is agreed."

Cllr Tracey Burford said: "As a resident of Waterside I think this is the safest option."

The Steering Group also added that residents who would prefer an LGS designation for the Chase Hotel site can make this case as part of the Reg 16 consultation in the hope that the Examiner will agree with them. In this way they can maximise the chance that either protection offered by the SG amendments, or the protection offered by the LGS, will apply.

Councillor Julian Utting said that this is similar to the decision not to designate the Stoney Stile site as a LGS. He said it is unlikely to be developed as long as Ashfield Park School remains at that site.

Plans for more Brampton Abbotts houses

A planning application for seven houses on land south of Church Road at Brampton Abbotts has been made to Herefordshire Council following the refusal of an earlier application for ten dwellings on the site.

The site, along with the rest of the village and surrounding area (including parts of Ross-on-Wye), is within the statutory designated Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposed layout consists of seven, two storey detached dwellings in a mix of three and four bedroom homes.

The applicant says that the houses will be set back from the highway to allow for ample green space to be provided to reinforce the informal rural feel. Access to the homes is gained via two private drives which minimises the number of new access points onto Church Road. Garages have been restricted to single units and have only been provided to the four bedroom dwellings.

The south east corner of the site, which was originally designed to have bungalows, will be retained as a paddock with additional fruit trees.

Engine fire

A fire crew from Ross-on-Wye attended a vehicle fire on Old Gloucester Road at 10.02 on Thursday, July 4th.

A spokesperson for HWFRS told the *Ross Gazette* that the engine had blown and the vehicle was made safe by fire service personnel.

Away Day?

ROSS Town Councillors are considering organising a day away from the chamber, to work alongside staff, on setting the Council's priorities for the next four years.

They agreed a budget of up to £800 which will include the cost of providing training and a facilitator. Venues suggested included the Larrupertz Centre and the Rowing Club.