



# Neston Town Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

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# Welcome to Neston Town Council's Annual Report 2023/2024 *Cllr Steve Wastell* The Mayor of Neston



Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and our Council Officers for their support and guidance during my year as Mayor. Much of the work undertaken at Neston Town Council goes on behind the scenes, with officers beavering away on projects, ensuring The Town Council acts within the law, and keeps up with current legislation. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, staff moved across to their new roles and job descriptions following the consultant-lead staffing review in 2022. I am pleased to say that the year has been very successful with a full program of events and the Council has made good progress with implementing the recommendations of the Strategic Review.

I have had the pleasure of attending a number of events across my Civic year. My first engagement as Mayor was the annual Neston Female Society's parade in June which was well attended and, fortunately, we had fine weather. I had the pleasure of meeting the High Sheriff

of Cheshire 2023/24 Dennis Dunn MBE JP DL at his fundraising event in aid of The Hospice of the Good Shepherd (pictured, above).

Neston celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023. I attended Ness Community Hall for a commemorative photograph and the unveiling of the Platinum Jubilee Tree to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's 70 year reign. Neston Town Council supported many events across our community and provided free commemorative tote bags, which you will read about later in this report. A jolly extended Bank Holiday weekend was enjoyed by all.

The Town Council has an excellent working relationship with Cheshire West & Chester Council, who are our landlords at the Town Hall, as well as the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC), who provide support for local councils as well as offering an array of training sessions for both councillors and staff. Neston Town Council has lobbied for planning applications within the town and ensured that the voices of our residents have been heard.

Neston has been fortunate to be able to recruit a member of staff for a newly established role during the financial year, an Administration Assistant post, which has already enabled the Town Council to streamline its operations and activities.

In October, I attended the Junior Park Run which was held on 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wirral Way. Despite the bad weather, the children completed the 2km run, and Neston Fairtrade Group handed out over one hundred bananas for a quick energy boost! A number of events have taken place to celebrate the anniversary and more are planned for this year.

The annual Christmas Market and Lights Switch-on was held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Neston Town Council wishes to extend special thanks to Hip & Harmony for organising the event for their final year. The switch on event was a great success and thanks are also due to everyone who worked tirelessly to make it a truly great festive occasion for Neston's residents and visitors alike. I was honoured in assisting Santa with the Christmas Lights switch on and a very merry crowd were suitably impressed. Also, I was very pleased to be presented with a framed certificate to confirm Neston's Fairtrade Town status.

There were two notable new events that I attended over the past year; The Special Equestrian Olympics at Wirral Riding Centre and Neston Community Awards at the Civic Hall. Congratulations to everyone involved and to those who won awards.

I have attended several functions with fellow Mayors from Chester, Ellesmere Port and Mold, including The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Chester, Cllr Sheila Little's Civic Service on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023. In February 2024, myself and councillors hosted Neston Town Council's Civic Service at St Mary & St Helen Parish Church. The service was attended by Mayors and dignitaries from surrounding areas. We were also joined by representatives from local associations at the service which was followed by refreshments, and an opportunity to exchange news and views. This all helps to forge excellent links for future connections.

Thank you for your support and attendance at many of these great events over my Civic Year.

*With best wishes for the coming year,*

*Cllr Steve Wastell - Mayor of Neston Town Council*



Presenting medals to the winners at the Equestrian Olympics

# Highlights of the Mayor's Civic Year 2023/2024



(Left) Ladies Day 2023—The Female Society

(Right) Ness Neighbours: unveiling the tree planted to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee



(Above) Attending the Civic Service for The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Chester, Cllr Sheila Little on 21st May 2023, in full civic regalia.

# The Mayor's Civic Year continued...



Receiving the certificate from Neston Fairtrade Group to show that Neston continues to be a Fairtrade Town



A visit from Father Christmas at the Neston Town Lights Switch on Event in November 2023



Presenting the winning trader Emma Hardie from *Essentially Josephine* with her prize for best decorated pumpkin at the Halloween Market in October along with Deputy Mayor Cllr Brenda Marple



The Trader of the Year Award was presented to Elaine Harford, of the eggs and pet supplies stall, at the December Christmas Market



# Supporting the Community

## Grants & Donations

Neston Town Council prides itself on offering a considerable combined budget for grant and donation support within the community, which is factored into the precept during the budget-setting process. Grant applications are considered twice yearly and must be used to provide benefit to residents living within Neston Town Council's boundaries. Grant applications for the main grants programme are considered twice a year. Applications for the small grants programme and the defibrillator grants programme are considered at the next scheduled meeting following receipt.

During the financial year 2023/24, Neston Town Council provided grants and donations totalling **£29,571.19** to support the work of local community organisations.

	GRANT RECIPIENT	PROJECT	GRANT AWARDED
1	Little Actors Theatre Company	2023-24 season of theatre	£2,500.00
2	Friends of Park Fields	Creation of a dipping platform	£2,500.00
3	2375 (Neston) Air Cadets Association	Paddle sports	£1,362.00
4	Neston Female Society	Poles for Female Society banner	£362.99
5	Neston Community Youth Centre	Defibrillator	£700.00
6	Little Actors Theatre Company	Lighting operating equipment	£500.00
7	Friends of West Vale Park	Zip wire for West Vale Park	£500.00
8	Neston & District Art Society	Annual exhibition	£471.20
		<b>GRANT AWARDS - ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,896.19</b>

## NESTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY DONATIONS MADE DURING 2023/2024

	DONATION RECIPIENT	PROJECT	DONATION
1	Neston Village Fair Committee	Neston Village Fair 2023	£1,700.00
2	Hip & Harmony CIC	Christmas lights switch-on 2023	£7,600.00
3	Friends of West Vale Park	West Vale Family Fun Day 2023	£1,600.00
4	Neston Music Festival	Neston Music Festival 2024	£1,000.00
5	Neston High School	Makerspace project	£3,500.00
6	Ladies Day	Ladies Day entertainment 2023	£1,261.00
7	Neston Library	Summer Reading Challenge 2023	£499.00
8	Ukrainian refugee support organisers	Ukrainian refugee summer sessions	£1,115.00
9	Party on the Parade volunteers	Parkgate Coronation party	£1,000.00
10	Ness Neighbours	Ness Coronation celebrations	£700.00
11	Neston Methodist Church	Coronation celebrations	£300.00
12	Parish Church	Coronation celebrations	£200.00
13	Churchill Court residents	Coronation celebrations	£200.00
		<b>DONATIONS - ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>£20,675.00</b>

Neston Town Council continued to support popular local annual events during 23/24. Funding included Ladies Day entertainment. The Christmas Lights Switch-on was provided through donations to Hip & Harmony to organise this event. In addition, contributions were made towards the cost of Party on the Parade, Neston Music Festival and Coronation celebrations. The Town Council was the lead authority for Remembrance Sunday.

# Working with the Community...

## Community & Environment Committee

Instead of hosting a single big event in the town for the King's Coronation; it was decided to support events being organised by residents, community groups, and the churches across the parish. We were pleased to contribute to a very successful and well-supported Coronation Party on the Parade in Parkgate, a Ness Neighbours Coffee Morning, Churchill Court Residents' Party, The Welcome Café Coronation Event and also the Neston Methodist Church special lunch. Residents' groups in other parts of the town had garden parties which the Town Council also contributed towards.

Neston Parish Church held a special Service with an afternoon tea. The Town Council also sponsored and supplied commemorative Coronation tote bags which were distributed for free throughout the events we supported.

During the year we have, again, supported a wide range of community groups; youth, theatre and arts, sport, environment, leisure and well-being, with their activities. We were pleased to support Neston Library's Summer Reading Challenge, and a project supporting Ukrainian Refugees. We also contributed financially to the innovative Makerspace recycling project organised by students at Neston High School. The Community and Environment Committee has been kept busy with reviewing and commenting on a lot of planning applications, which resulted in hosting eight additional Extraordinary meetings on top of the scheduled ones. Neston Town Council has a strong commitment to comment on applications, especially those which encroach into areas of the Green Belt. We look forward to continuing to support the community as we head into the 2024/2025 Civic year.



## Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Community & Environment Committee

*Cllr Brenda Marple*

### The Town Council's Core Values:

- 🌀 **Transparency & accountability**
- 🌀 **Working with others to maximise effectiveness**
- 🌀 **Inclusiveness & Accessibility**
- 🌀 **Flexibility and Proactivity**
- 🌀 **Robust with Resources**





(Above) Ness Celebrates The Coronation of King Charles III with grant assistance from Neston Town Council

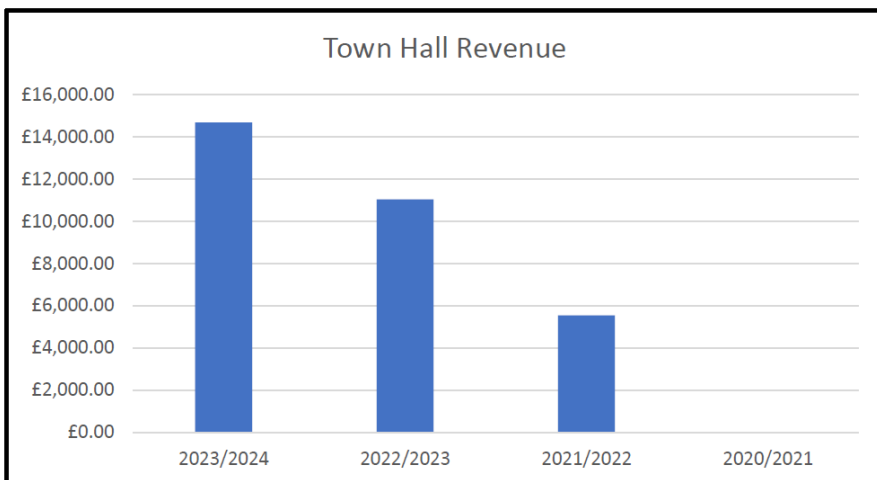


Neston & Parkgate celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III during the additional Bank Holiday in May 2023

# Town Hall and Market Square

## Town Hall

The number of Town Hall bookings has continued to rise, and it is great to see an increase in the number of community groups using the hall for their various activities. The Town Hall hosts weekly yoga, dance, and karate classes to name a few. During 2023/24, Neston Town Council has been pleased to support and provide a venue for the Annual Art Exhibition in the Town Hall, and the Christmas Light Switch on event in the Town Hall & on the Market Square which was very well attended. The Town Hall has also provided a venue for various theatre productions, including Rural Theatre. As we look towards the coming year the venue will once again be utilised as a vaccination



clinic, showing the Town Hall's importance and viability of the hub of the Town Centre.

However, the upkeep of such an old and significant building can be challenging. Officers have dealt with many issues during the year including roof leaks and blocked drains! We continue to lobby with Cheshire West and Chester Council for important work on the building's infrastructure and to secure an updated

Asset Management agreement for the Town Hall, in order to provide future security for our services going forward.

## Neston Market

Neston Market has continued to thrive, despite the constantly wet weather over the recent months, averaging 30 stalls on a fair weather day. We have had several new traders join us and we have more in the pipeline. The special, enhanced, markets at Halloween, Christmas, Easter, and during the summer, continue to be very popular providing a real community atmosphere with added fun for children. The hugely entertaining Port Sunlight Sea Dogs joined us at the Good Friday market in March 2024; children's activities including face painting, crafts, and themed trails with prizes were all provided free of charge by Neston Town Council. The Market is such an asset to Neston which is valued by many. Neston Town Council wishes to build on this popularity to increase footfall to the town as a whole.



# Protecting the Local Environment

## Enhancement of Public Spaces



Throughout 2023/24 Neston organised a number of litter picks and community tidy up days. Neston Town Councillors are huge supporters of these community-led initiatives and the volunteer-base consists mainly of our local Town Councillors. The welcome to Neston and Parkgate signs were also cleaned, removing the unsightly dirt and which had started to build up.



Neston Town Council provided a community event donation for the Friends of West Vale Park fun day in on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The Group organises an annual Fun Day the first Sunday in August. It specifically targets local families with children in Neston, which is free to all.



Community Volunteers at the Community Litter Pick

The event gives local residents, and particularly those living on the West Vale and neighbouring estates, the opportunity to come together during the school holidays to enjoy their local park and meet friends. The event runs as many activities for children as they can. The Friends of West Vale Group maintain the garden area next to the West Vale shops – an area of shrubs and bedding plants that is really appreciated by the local residents. This land has been 'adopted' by Neston Town Council, who provide funds for the planting and shrubs through its contract with PDG Landscaping. Two lots of seasonal bedding is planted twice a year, plus quarterly maintenance as part of the Town Council's floral maintenance contract.



## Allotments

Allotments provide a perfect opportunity for residents without a garden, or those wishing to spend more time outdoors, to get up close with nature and expand their growing expertise.

Neston Town Council operates three allotment sites located in Raby Park Road, The Ropewalk and Marshlands Road. This year, the Town Council has been investigating the possibility of installing water on site at Marshlands, a decision on this will be taken during 24/25. Since the demand for allotments has increased in recent years, this has resulted in a considerable waiting list. Wherever possible, full plots are being halved when they become vacant in order to increase the overall provision.

# Testimonials

We went to view our plot on a rainy day in July after being on the waiting list for over 10 years! Despite the plot being very overgrown our two children, aged 13 and 11, were very excited at the prospect of becoming tenants and we agreed to give it a go!

We spent most of the summer, cutting back all the vegetation and discovering beds and paths that we didn't know we had! It was a lot of hard work, but we were all excited about the progress made.

Nearly 9 months on and we now have raised boxes, beds which we have started to plant, a fully functioning greenhouse and a shed which has had a full make over and new coat of paint! We are spending time at the allotment at the weekends and whenever we can get! We are all excited about the prospect of having our own fruit and vegetables this summer and have enjoyed the journey so far!

*Gemma, who became an allotment tenant with her family in 2023/24*



At the Christmas Lights Switch on Little Actors were open at the front of the Town Hall and offered free craft activities and refreshments. Hundreds of people popped in and got into the Christmas spirit at this community event.

Our professional company performed Cinderella in the Town Hall and it was well received by an enthusiastic audience, which included a special party from the adult SEN home in The Priory.

We worked with 43 volunteers to bring about events and host a Warm Welcome Space in our office at the front of the Town Hall. The space has become an information and signposting service for residents, also selling stamps. Approximately 1600 used this service. A week long summer course ran in the Town Hall culminating with an end of week show.

We continued to offer 50% discounts for low income families. On Saturdays with the under 12's, 20% of the children are supported. For the summer course again it was around 20%.

*Samantha Giblin from Little Actors, a Neston group supported by the Town Council's Grant Scheme during 2023/24*

**Thanks to the Neston Council Grant, equipment was purchased in July 2023 to enable cadets to participate in outward bound paddle sports such as canoeing and kayaking. We have already been able to put the equipment to good use last year and this will continue into 2024 and for years to come.**

**The benefits to the young people in Cadets has been a new experience which virtually none had been able to participate in previously, overcoming obstacles, travelling and working as a team and thoroughly enjoying themselves in a natural outdoor environment.**

**The impact of the project is evident in the leader's assessment of how well the Cadets have embraced the challenges, used new equipment, earned new skills and made real personal development progress as a result.**

*A. Langshaw from Neston Cadets*

  
2375 (Neston) Sqn Air Cadets

# Parkgate Marshes and Mosquito Monitoring



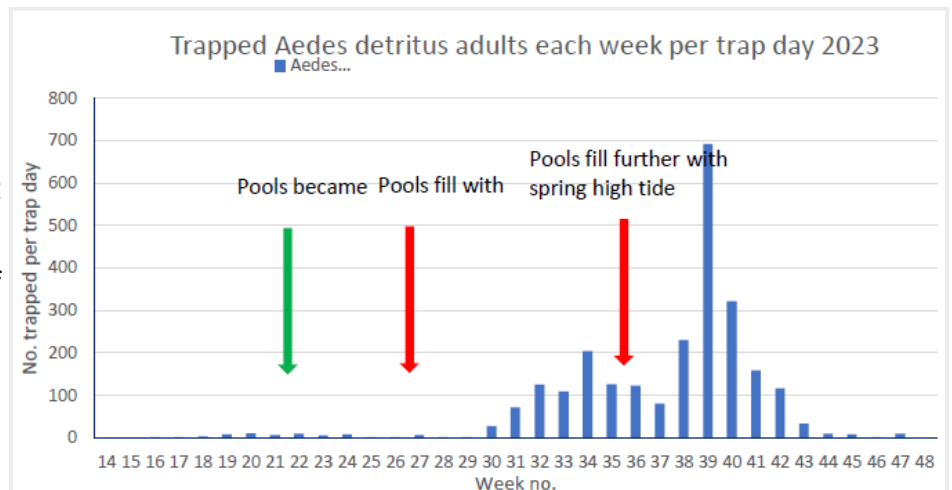
Z. Dean

Whilst the Town Council does not have responsibility for the marshes, councillors do appreciate the impact mosquitoes have on residents and therefore commit funds each year to carry out strategic digging and excavation of pools and ditches as part of an open marsh water management strategy (the practice of controlling the mosquito population in salt marshes by creating an appropriate habitat for mosquito predators). This strategy is informed by Dr Enevoldson's monitoring, the results of which are reported to C&E Committee via the Marsh Working Group. The Dee Estuary is a SSSI site

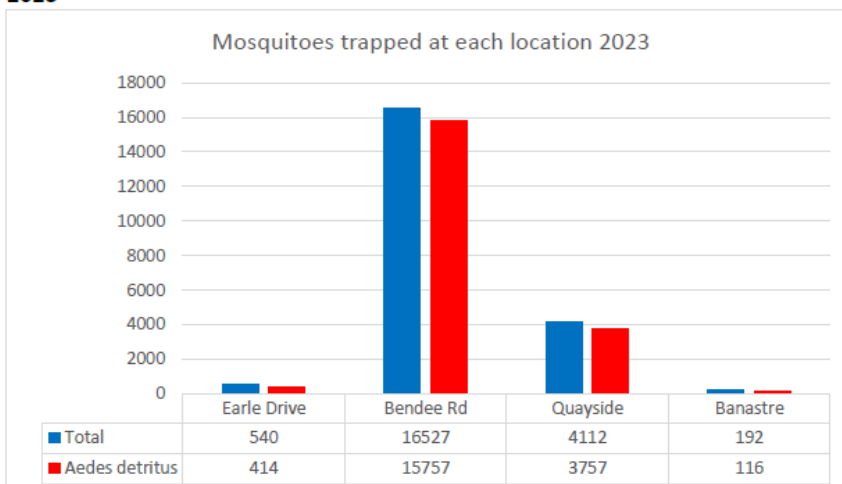
and, as such, any work requires the prior approval of Natural England. We also have a small window of opportunity each year for marsh works as contractors can only operate on the marshes after the main breeding season has ended, but before the arrival of over-wintering birds. Neston Town Council operates closely with RSPB on any such works.

Unfortunately, it is never going to be possible to eradicate the mosquito impact but we work hard to try to control numbers. That said, there are a variety of factors that impact on mosquito levels and these can differ each year. Very large numbers of adult mosquitoes were caught in traps during 2023, over 90% of which were marsh breeding mosquitoes (*Aedes detritus*). The surge was bigger and earlier than in

previous years which was caused by a very wet July (ponds filled 2-9 July) resulting in a mass synchronised hatching. This was followed by a tide and another synchronised hatching and then a very warm September with a spring tide at the end of the month. The increase in the numbers of *Culiseta annulata* caught in traps compared to previous years suggests an expanding lifespan for adult mosquitoes. Trends appear to be changing and surges are lasting longer (ie ending Oct/Nov instead of Sept/Oct).



## 2023



Changes in climate could possibly be a factor but this cannot currently be stated with certainty. Dr Enevoldson has ongoing collaborations with Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (virome studies and adult mosquito dispersion), University of Liverpool (virology infectivity) and University of Oxford (modelling and possible effects of climate change).



Mosquitoes trapped at different trap sites in 2023



## Neston Town Councillors at 31 March 2024

### NESTON WARD

Cllr Janet Griffiths  
Cllr Andrew Townsend  
Cllr Christine Warner

### LITTLE NESTON WARD

Cllr Carol Braithwaite  
Cllr Tracey Hardcastle  
Cllr Sion Jones  
Cllr Pat Kynaston  
Cllr Stephen Wastell (Mayor)

### PARGATE WARD

Cllr Simon Davies  
Cllr Paul Doughty  
Cllr John Edwards  
Cllr Shirley Hudspeth  
Cllr Brenda Marple (Deputy Mayor)

### STAFF TEAM

Zoë Dean—Locum Chief Officer  
Audrey Duncan—Community & Environment Manager  
Trevor Godfrey—RFO/Finance Manager  
Nicky McMahon—Market & Town Hall Manager  
Joanna Harding—Administration Assistant  
James Jones—Caretaker & Market Officer

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Keep up to date with our Town Councillor vacancies via our website:

[www.neston.org.uk/make-a-change-become-a-local-councillor/](http://www.neston.org.uk/make-a-change-become-a-local-councillor/)