

## Mayor's Annual Report

Martin Wrigley – March 2018

Writing this report, the Town is eagerly awaiting the completion of the Exeter Road works and looking forward to a pothole-free experience on our main road to the North.

This 'Spring' has been remarkable – with two major snowfalls and another cold snap forecast it feels like the seasons are all wrong, but we have changed the clocks for the summer and the season of events will be soon underway.

My year as Mayor has gone very quickly – it feels like just yesterday that I was looking forward to an 8-day carnival and the full schedule of events and shows over the summer of 2017. From my first Mayoral event with the Twinning association, choosing the American car I'd like to drive home in at Cofton through to all of the amazing activities in the centre of Dawlish, I have been privileged to be part of a fantastic year for the Town.

It has been a year of change at the Council, we now have a team in place to take us forward with confidence, and I'd like to thank all of the Council staff past and present for their patience and dedication through the year.

In the year we have been looking at what the Council can do to help tackle some of the anti-social behaviour issues we had in the Town, and after working with the local police and looking at some of the areas concerned, I'm pleased to say that recently police reports of anti-social behaviour have dropped down to zero. This is very welcome and something we must aim to maintain and build upon.

The Council considered Lea Mount Gardens and what the Town wanted from that area and concluded that we wanted to enhance the area and make something of the WWII remains and build a tribute to Dawlish history and the contributions of local people including the Home Guard. Discussions are on-going with Teignbridge in terms of maintenance options, and I'm pleased to say that this park is now included in the planning process for improvements and developments in the Boat Cove / Coryton cove area.

Throughout the year the WWI commemoration project has been holding services for the fallen of that conflict. Next year is the anniversary of the end of the conflict, and there will be much to mark it. I would like to commend the group for keeping the project running for the full duration, and thank them for their work. One area of focus for this is the Memorial Gardens, and the Council is negotiating to continue the lease of the area from Teignbridge so that our volunteer team can continue their excellent work making that a space of peaceful contemplation and a worthy tribute to sacrifices of the past. I would like to thank our volunteers for all that they do there.

Recently the Council has set up a Lawn Working Group to consider a vision for the Lawn that the whole Town can get behind. We have seen several projects suggested for the Lawn, but until we get our neighbourhood plan up and running, we have had little to guide and combine these projects into a coherent whole. I anticipate that the Lawn Working Group will build upon previous good work and deliver a consensus view. As with every area that is so close to the hearts of so many people in Dawlish, I know that some may be disappointed – whatever the group comes up with – but I hope

that the group will manage to air the discussions, alternatives and options so that we can find the best vision of the lawn for the most residents.

Towards the end of 2017 we had a flurry of interest in the Town on a national level after someone left a comment on TripAdvisor concerning signs. They pointed out that we had a proliferation of negative signs and that we had significant duplication. Since then we have started removing some of the obviously redundant signage, and the lawn is looking better for it. We are hoping to have new simpler, more positive signage to replace the remainder, and I am expecting that to come before the Council in the coming months.

Our Black Swans have had a fantastic year, and another clutch of cygnets are currently wandering around the Lawn. I'd like to thank our wardens for all the work that they have done to keep them safe – even when the roof of the area collapsed under the weight of the recent snow.

And coming back to snow and storms, the railway took another small battering this year, and we are looking forward to the work to be carried out by Network Rail to improve the line's resilience. This is starting with investigations on Kings Walk starting very soon, looking to re-enforce that section of the defences. I suspect that we can expect to see a constant presence in the Town of people working on the walls, tracks, cliffs and tunnels for a good number of years.

The storms and snow and road-works and all has highlighted the need to re-visit our emergency response planning and the Town's resilience overall, and the Council has resolved to review what we can do and how we can build on what we learnt from 2014.

I am looking forward to a 2018 that has a continuing improvement in the working relationship between Dawlish and Teignbridge and working together we can achieve a lot more for the Town and improve our Town and the environment. The creation of the new Dawlish against Plastic group is the latest example of how the residents of Dawlish are keen to act to improve our Town and our life here.

As a final thought I would like to thank everyone who stands up to be counted and contributes to the multitude of groups, associations, committees and activities in the Town. You really do make this Town proud and a place that people want to live. It has been an honour to be mayor this year, and I hope to continue to do everything I can for Dawlish.

Thank you.