Eaton Village Residents' Association - Chair's Report to 2025 AGM

This will be my final AGM as EVRA Chair and I thought that I would look back over my fifteen years on the Committee (nine years as Chair) and how EVRA has evolved during that time. I have lived in Eaton since 1980 and joined the Committee in the summer of 2010 becoming vice-chair at the AGM in October of that year.

EVRA Projects:

Back in 2010 the main project was seeking funding for the accessible path around Marston Marsh. Gerald Cooke was the Chair and I helped him complete the application to the Big Lottery Fund for £50,000 which was successful. The path was opened in 2011 and in December I set up a group of volunteers to help maintain and also do other work on the marsh with the Norwich Fringe Project. This led to my involvement as a volunteer with the Fringe Project for two days a week since 2012.

In 2011 Sharon (who also joined the committee in 2010) and I revamped the Scarecrow Festival introducing the trail map and voting with sponsored prizes for the winners. The 16th Festival ran in July this year and is still going strong with same format but now with the option of online voting. Garage and cake sales help make the (now) week-long festival the main event in our calendar.

We started the Eaton Green Playground Project in 2013 following a survey of residents seeking their views and involving the Primary school in creating designs for improving this. Our fund raising activities achieved £5000 for a climbing tower and a donation of picnic benches from Jewsons and toddler swings and new fencing from City Council created a more attractive playground. Another round of fund raising achieved £8900 and added an accessible roundabout installed in 2021.

In 2015 EVRA took on the management of Donkey Lane by agreement with City Council and our volunteers have been working on this since. We now manage the lane with a more hands-off approach because we don't have the resources to undertake weekly work sessions as in the past.

Back in 2021 it was evident that the Eaton Village Sign installed in 1956 was in need of repair. Options considered were replacement or repair but we thought that repair might give it another few decades of life! We found a local specialist workshop in Hingham able to repair the sign and began a fund raising campaign for the £2900 needed. This target was achieved and the sign was refurbished back to its original 1956 design and installed in 2023.

Road and Street Issues:

Over the years roadworks and street issues have been a significant feature. Parking and traffic around Eaton Primary School and other pinch points continues to be an issue. The Eaton Street roadworks in 2018 led to a fraught few months with road closures and diversions and failing temporary traffic lights. Cadent gas pipe replacement programme in 2023 was also fraught with faulty temporary traffic lights and diversions. Installation of speed humps on Church Lane in 2024 created a lot more work than envisaged!

The Eaton SAM sign provides data on traffic flows and speeds around the Village and shows a small reduction in average speeds over the past four years although we still get vehicles exceeding 50mph in our 20mph Zone.

It would be good if County Highways and other contractors took time during planning of roadworks to better understand the impact of these in Eaton Village, especially works on Church Lane which is the only access to 1000 households beyond this and to Eaton Primary School.

Events:

Over the years EVRA has organised an increasing number of events for the Village. Back in 2010 the main events were the spring and summer garden competitions and the new scarecrow competition. In 2011 the bigger scarecrow festival was introduced along with events to celebrate the opening of the new path around Marston Marsh. Gradually more events were organised including Dyke Dipping and bird walks on the Marsh, Easter and Halloween Pumpkin Trails around the Village, garage and cake sales alongside the Scarecrow event. Family Fun Days at Cellar House started in 2016 to raise funds for playground and other EVRA project and ran until 2023 (except 2020). More recently we have run our popular Quizzes at the Church Hall and History Talks at Eaton Vale. We have also supported Arts and Crafts Exhibitions at St Andrews Church Hall showcasing the work of Eaton crafters. The creation of our Events Planning team enabled EVRA to deliver more events for residents and we know from your support that these are much appreciated.

Community Relationships:

EVRA has represented the Eaton Village community on the St Andrews Church Hall refurbishment project steering committee, Norfolk Net Zero Project Eaton cluster, UEA Boardwalk replacement project, and various consultations conducted by the City Council.

We work closely with our Eaton Councillors and are very grateful for their support to progress and resolve issues. The Community Team in City Hall have also been supportive providing a link into the council to deal with matters.

EVRA Committee:

Throughout, the committee has been the main focus of all that we do. Many residents have contributed over the years serving their time and eventually moving on. We know from your comments and support that you appreciate all that we do. Our outgoing committee is the smallest it's ever been but has achieved much during the past year. Only 3 out of 5 committee member roles were filled at the last AGM and a vacant secretary post (filled by Sharon after the AGM). We know life is busy (it is for us too!), but with your support, it will be easier to keep organising events and responding to village matters. Our events team led by Fiona plans and arranges events and would welcome more support to help with the running of these.

We now look to more residents getting involved. The commitment isn't huge. The committee meets every two months, with updates handled by email between meetings. The Events Team meets as required and reports back to the committee for funding and updates.

It has been an interesting fifteen years and I have enjoyed being involved in our community and working with local organisations. I won't be disappearing completely and have offered to continue leading our Friends of Donkey Lane Group and managing the Eaton Speed Sign for the time being.

Finally, I would like to thank all committee members past and present for their dedicated support over the past nine years. I also thank Helen Flute and her group of volunteers who deliver our twice yearly newsletters. I also thank you, Eaton Village Residents, for your involvement and support for EVRA over the years.

Chris Stebbing – EVRA Chair, October 2025