

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting of the Parish electorate. It is not a Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council Chairman calls and Chairs the meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting must be held between March 1st and June 1st (LGA 1972, sch 12, para 14). There is no prescribed format for this meeting and its recommendations are not binding on the Parish Council.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 11 MAY 2015 AT 7.00pm IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Residents

Peter Greig (Chairman)	Geraldine Mayell
Barbara Carter	Pat Pardoe
Jo Forrest	Colin Penny
Maggie Harlow	Tony Rich
Margaret Harris	Barbara Rich
Margaret Harrison	John Roberts
Wendy Hobbs	Mary Roberts
Malcolm Hogg	Stephen Taylor
Margaret Hogg	

Others representing local organisations

Michael Barry	Representing Nether Stowey Twinning Association
Ray Brooks	Representing Nether Stowey Village Hall
Jos Clark	Representing Books for Life
Robin Popham	Representing Urban Saints
Tim Whittingham	Representing Friends of Quantock

In Attendance: Caro Slaymaker Clerk to the Parish Council

1. Welcome

Peter Greig, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed all attending to the meeting. He said it was lovely to see so many people attending.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Mr Roger Stacey.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 May 2014 were **approved** as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Items for discussion

Firefighters Charity Bin: Mrs Forrest said that a large duvet had been dumped at the Fire Station, presumably as the Firefighters Charity Clothes bin was full. The Clerk said that both she and Mr Flay had contacted the charity to have the bin emptied, but so far they had not done so. She would pursue it.

Litter: Mrs Forrest also commented that after the verges by St Mary Street had been cut there a considerable amount of litter was revealed. The Clerk said that she would speak to the contractor. It was also agreed to arrange a volunteer's litter pick. Mr Greig, Mr Barry and Mrs Forrest said they would volunteer. Mr Rich asked how often the verges were cut and said that the timing of the litter pick should be co-ordinated with the verge cutting.

Playing Field: Mrs Rich said that work at the children's play area at the Playing Field had started and should take three weeks. The basic clearing had been done by volunteers and she thanked Andrew Jeanes in particular who had cleared the mound.

Playing Field/Village Hall Task Force: She also said that the Task Force's feasibility report would be sent to the two Committees (ie the Recreation Ground and Village Hall committees) for consideration and, hopefully, for adoption. The Village Hall would then have to call a Village Meeting in compliance with their constitution.

Mr Brookes added that the feasibility report would be discussed in July by the two committees and the Village meeting would be held in August or September (after the holidays). It was intended to have it by the end of September.

Mr Popham said that most people already thought the Village Hall would be closing and would be relocated to the Playing Field.

Mrs Rich said that it needs to be made clear that the Hall would be open until the new facility was available to avoid losing bookings.

Mr Popham asked how the Village Hall would be consulted – from his own experience of running a project he knew that getting input was very difficult, and had only had 80 out of a population of 1500.

Mr Brooks said that the requirement was for agreement for 75% of those attending the meeting.

Mrs Harrison asked where vehicle access would be.

Mrs Rich said that this was something for the future. The Playing Field already had planning permission which includes parking for 20 cars. A bigger facility would require more parking, but this would be covered in a new planning application.

Mr Hogg added that the detail can't be worked out until there is some agreement on the feasibility of the project. Mr Greig agreed that it would be an important factor.

Railings: Mrs Pardoe asked about the railings. The Clerk confirmed that the estimate had been accepted [at the Parish Council meeting on 13 April] and work had started.

There were no other issues raised, and it was agreed to have a short refreshment break before continuing to the reports.

5. Chairman's report

The Chairman gave the Annual Parish Council Report, a copy of which is appended to the minutes.

6. Reports from Other Organisations

Urban Saints: report by Mr Popham who said that Urban Saints was a Youth Group for children up to 11 years old. It was a Christian based organisation. They are not evangelists but do try to instil Christian values such as good grace, humour, civic duty. They have had a waiting list to join for the last few years and have also started a group for older children. The younger group meets on Thursday evening and the older ones on Sunday evening.

Friends of Quantock: report by Mr Whittingham who said that Friends of Quantock is a conservation charity for the protection of the environment and landscape of the Quantock Hills. The Charity has been running for longer than the AONB and JAC. It is funded entirely by members. The charity also own land handed over by Somerset County Council. Membership is £12 for families, £20 for businesses. The Chairman said that he was a member and it was the best £12 you could spend.

Women's Institute: Mrs Harris (President) said the WI was not just about making jam. They meet on the second Thursday of each month at the Village Hall. They have a speaker each month (details are on the Parish Council website and notice board). Over the past year the WI have put a commemorative bench on the Cross and stitched a banner to commemorate 90 years of the WI in Nether Stowey. This year the national WI celebrates its centenary and would hold its AGM at the Albert Hall at which HM The Queen would be present. The 2015 Resolution would be "Failing to care – assessment of need in long term care"

Books for Life: report by Mr Clark. Books for Life was a charity

Books for Life: Mr Clark, a trustee of the Charity presented a report on the Charity. They were, he said, an unashamedly Christian organisation trying to help the most desperate people in the world. It was amazing how much effect one corner of Somerset could achieve. Their work was mainly in the education sector to help lift children out of poverty and protect them from traffickers. Further details are in the Charity's report.

Active Living: Mrs Hogg said that Active Living was popular and strong. They hoped to encourage more men to join. They offered delicious cake, copious amounts of tea and some great speakers.

Twinning: Mr Barry: The Twinning Association had been going for 17 years now. It was a chance for the community to get to know another similar community, to make friends and for local organisations to get together with similar groups in Theillay. Sadly, membership was waning with few younger members to keep it going. The organisation was now tending towards being a hub for groups rather than individuals – Theillay had brought a group of school children, though it had not been possible to arrange a return visit. The Theillay fireman had invited the Nether Stowey fireman. A group of French walkers had visited. The initiative for these visits needed to come from the groups rather than from the Twinning Association and the Theillay group was thinking along similar lines. The idea of a Quantock Twinning Forum had been dropped as Williton had closed their group. New members, especially younger ones, were vital to keep the relationship and the Association going.

Village Hall: Mr Brooks said the comedy evenings had been popular and would be repeated in September. The Christmas Market had been a success and they were planning to make it a regular event. The cinema was also proving successful. Unfortunately the heating cost was phenomenal, largely because there was no insulation. They were sorry that they could not make it more comfortable. He was thankful to those who helped – both those on the Committee and those who weren't. He was an enthusiastic member of the task force and hoped they could come to some agreement, but in the end it depended on the village's choice. He hoped they would look to the future, as the previous generation had done in 1928.

Playing Field: Mrs Rich said that the Task Force was keen to move on as soon as possible. Meanwhile, new play equipment was being installed, a £50,000 project. The MUGA was running well but suffered repeated acts of vandalism and they might have to consider CCTV. The MUGA project had been managed by just six people. The Committee thanked Cannington College who had carried out maintenance work for a nominal sum as training experience for the students. They were busy organising the Party in the Park which would run from the Friday evening to Saturday night with a Farmers' Market on Sunday morning. They also thanked Bill Preston for all his behind-the-scenes support.

Mrs Forrest asked about dog fouling. Mrs Rich said that there had been several visits from the dog warden and loose farm dogs were a particular problem. But it is a Recreation Ground not a sports field and it was accepted that there were groups of dog-walkers who valued the social contact and the Committee did not want to ban them.

CANS: Mrs Roberts thanked all those who had helped at the recent May Fair, and the companies who had sponsored entertainment – National Windscreens had sponsored the

Devon ACF and Cricketers had provided their lunch and them and for the Wessex Historical group. CANS had had raised the majority of the funds for the new notice board which would be installed later in the week.

QMTC: Mr Hogg said that QMTC had moved to Stogursey as most of their members were there. The concert season started on 5 June and this year's theme was VE Day. There would be other concerts later in the year, and they would appear at "Dunster by candlelight", Hestercombe and others. They were always looking for new members, and there was no need to be able to sing.

Quantock Players: Mrs Hobbs said that this year's pantomime would be Treasure Island. They had a wonderful group of children, but needed more adults. The paperwork for the children – chaperoning, DBS clearance etc was onerous.

Other Organisations Written reports the groups who presented a verbal report and from other organisations (listed below) who did not attend the meeting were available to anyone who wished to take one. They, and any others received after the meeting, would be available from the Parish Office or by e-mail and on the website. The reports are included as a separate annex to the minutes.

- Books for Life
- Community Action Nether Stowey
- Footpaths Liaison report
- Friends of Coleridge
- Friends of Nether Stowey Library
- Nether Stowey Village Hall
- Quantock Players
- Stowey Gardeners

Mr Greig thanked the Quantock Tea Rooms for the excellent refreshments and, with no other matters raised and closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MAY 2015

2014 -2015 WAS AN INTERESTING YEAR FOR THE VILLAGE AND PARISH COUNCIL

Most of the numerous local organisations have reported their year's activities but I would like to draw attention to some particular individual matters that I consider warrant attention. Before I get on to that I would like to use this opportunity to express the thanks of us all to a number of people who do jobs around the village: Bob and Jo Scoins, for winding and generally tending to the clock; Colin Penny for opening the gaol and Heather Coates, Louiza Pearson, Mike Henry, Alex Ballinger and Colin Penny (again) for locking it up, Chloë Frost for opening and closing the public lavatories every day, and Colin Falla for his work as Footpaths Liaison Officer. I would also like to thank all those who turned out to help with the May Fair last week, especially those who shivered in the drizzle at the road barriers!

ELECTIONS

Thursday was election day, and I am very glad to report that Julie Pay and Mike Caswell continue as our District Councillors. We are grateful for all they have done for Nether Stowey in the past four years.

The Parish Council election was uncontested as there were only seven nominations for our nine Parish Council seats. The Parish Council will now have to fill the vacancies by co-option and I would urge anyone who has an interest in parish matters and in shaping Nether Stowey's future to consider putting their name forward. Please talk to any of the new Councillors or to Caro at the Parish Office if you would like to know more. Whatever new Government we end up with, we will inevitably face a considerable number of "challenges".

ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

HARRY PROWSE CLOSE

Affordable Housing Completion but at last moment a nasty surprise.

The new affordable housing scheme constructed off Stogurse Lane was completed. All the properties have now been let, but with a nasty surprise revealed just as the new tenants were taking up residence. A claim had been made on the Housing Association SHAL of Bridgwater that a strip of land immediately adjacent to the development belonged to a third party and a very large 'ransom' was demanded by the owners for SHAL to access the land over the strip. At the time of writing, the matter, negotiations seem to be making progress.

FURTHER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

A proposal was made to construct a number of houses on land owned by a local Trust adjacent to the Playing Field. Subsequently, a survey of the village population to determine the current actual housing need was executed for the Developer by the Community Council for Somerset. The result of the survey appears to have been inconclusive. Currently there has been no reaction from the developer.

WEBSITE

The Parish Council website has been up and running since October. We hope that it will be a useful resource for anyone looking for information. We would particularly like to invite contributions from local organisations – as well as an opportunity to put their events on the calendar we also hope you can use the space to promote your organisation with more information, and we will shortly be rejigging the website to make this more accessible. We will continue to make changes and improvements as ideas (and our skills) evolve. Please do let Caro know of any suggestions you have.

AONB GRANT

The Parish Council has successfully bid for a Grant to improve the Secret Garden under their Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund. The grant will be used to plant orchard fruit trees and to carry out management work on other trees.

NOTICE BOARD

A smart new notice board will shortly be arriving on The Cross to replace the Parish Council's board and those of the WI and Royal British Legion. by a smart free-standing board. The notice board has been mainly funded by CANS with contributions from Magnox and the Parish Council.

PUBLIC TOILETS AND CAR PARK

Since last summer the Parish Council has become the owner of the public toilets and car park on Castle Street, guaranteeing these facilities for the village for the future. We now have planning permission to carry out work on the overgrown trees in the car park, and this will start at the end of the summer, after the bird-nesting season.

RAILINGS IN ST MARY STREET

I am pleased to say that we have been able to find the funds to repair and repaint the railings in St Mary Street. We are all aware that they present a less than ideal appearance as you enter the village, but Highways – who own the railings and are responsible for them – are never going to find a budget for work that they consider as low priority. The Parish Council has accepted that we will have to pay for it if we want it done and have now found a way of doing it which meets Highways have approved at a price the Parish can afford. Work has already started and will be done in three phases over the summer.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AT MILL LANE AND LIME STREET

We continue to work with the County Council for safety improvements at Mill Lane and Lime Street to give safer access for pedestrians and in particular for those walking to and from school. This week the County Council have been carrying out a survey to inform the design and we hope to receive their detailed proposal very soon.

TWO CASTLES TRAIL

The Parish Council has been working with Somerset County Council on a new “promoted footpath” provisionally to be called the Two Castles Trail. The circular route will link Nether Stowey and Stogursey. Although this is still a work in progress, we already have the benefit of a new kissing gate on The Mount and other improvements will follow over the next few months.

A NEW VILLAGE HALL AND PAVILLION FOR THE PLAYING FIELD, THE FUTURE.

A Task Force is examining the possibility to combine these two independent organisations with the purpose of relocating the Village Hall to the Playing Field and to construct new facilities in common. and we had hoped that they would be able to provide a report this evening.

LIBRARY

The Friends of Nether Stowey Library have continued successfully in holding events regularly in the Library with a variety of times and speakers which are well attended. Our thanks go to Tom and Eliza Sackett who have produced a plaque celebrating the life of Tom Poole which will be unveiled at the end of the month.

COLERIDGE COTTAGE AND COLERIDGE WAY

The vastly improved Coleridge Cottage continues to draw very large numbers of visitors to the Village. The extension of the Coleridge Way by 15 miles from Porlock to Lynmouth was opened by Rosemary Coleridge Middleton with other members of her family on a gloriously warm day in May. This extension brings the Coleridge Way up to 51 miles which was walked by Coleridge and Wordsworth during the time Coleridge lived in the village with the patronage of Thomas Poole. We anticipate more on this subject soon from the direction of the Library which was the former school donated by the said Thomas Poole late of this parish.

GENERAL

Shops and services continued to trade but with some disappointments. The closure of the Rose and Crown reminded us all of the fragility of our Village economy and we are glad to see it reopened just in time for the May Fair. My plea is to support these services if we wish them to keep trading.

MAYFAIR

CANS under the Chairmanship of Mary Roberts continues to organise the annual May Fair in the village which raises valuable funds for village projects. Despite the disappointing weather this year's May Fair went well and in particular we are all grateful to everyone who turned out to help. We had a far better response than in previous years and without volunteers we simply would not be able to hold it.

HINKLEY C DEVELOPMENT

Councillors attend a number of regular meetings organized by EDF and the District Councils to discuss matters likely to affect parishioners.

Progress of the preliminary works is continuing to enable the construction of the Nuclear plant to commence but when? Press reports vary in the degree of optimism shown concerning a date for commencement of the main Project. However, road works and junction (so-called) improvements continue to progress.

CRICKETER FARM

Cricketer Farm continues to show itself as a very valuable asset in the Village. Apart from being our largest employer they produce an interesting and varied range of local products available for sale many of which have won major prizes in the annual farming shows such as the Bath and West at Shepton Mallet. This year their Cheese, Cider and Moozic Fest will be held in conjunction with the Playing Field's annual "Party in The Park" on 19-20 June. Thank you, Cricketer Farm, and the Playing Field organization for getting together and especially Cricketer for your continuing generosity with facilitating these events.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Gemma Rogers. Sadly, Gemma our assistant clerk resigned earlier this year and we have welcomed Jenny Webber to our office.

Councillors have been involved in various training activities throughout the year. This has been partially necessitated by new legislation and regulations for the management of Council and Councillors activity. As a result, new Financial Regulations have been adopted.

Our Parish Clerk Caro Slaymaker continues to work unceasingly for the Parish. Visitors to the office in Castle Street often bring news and enquiries and sometimes complaints which all have to be carefully listened to and where appropriate acted upon. Of course, Caro is a very professional individual who takes great pride in her work. This requires finding solutions to the many problems and in doing so shows tremendous patience when subject to the many deadlines which have to be met but always without complaint.