



NETHER STOWEY PARISH

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 23 MAY 2022 AT 7.00pm AT THE CHURCH CENTRE

Present: Councillors

John Roberts (Chairman)	Margaret Hogg
Penny Everett	Andrew Jeanes
Colin Falla	Barbara Rich
Kevin Ferriday	

Somerset CC Cllr Michael Caswell Cllr Brian Bolt

Speakers

Duncan Harvey, Housing Development Manager, Sedgemoor DC
Will Jones, Coleridge Cottage
Bill Jenman, AONB Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager

Representatives of the following organisations

NS Active Living
NS Allotments Association
NS Art Group
Stowey Green Spaces
Knit and Natter
NS Short Mat Bowls
Stowey Shuttle
NS Village Hall & Recreation Ground
NS Wednesday Club
NS & F Women's Institute
Thomas Poole Library

Approximately 20 residents

In Attendance: Caro Slaymaker, Clerk to the Parish Council

1. Welcome

John Roberts, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed all attending to the meeting.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting, held on 24 May 2021, had been published and were signed by the Chairman.

4. Bill Jenman, AONB Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager.

Bill gave a brief rundown of activities being carried out by the Quantock Landscape Partnership scheme. He particularly wanted to highlight the current "View to a Hill" project. Residents could nominate favourite views of the Hills looking from the surrounding area. It was intended to compile all the nominations to add the views to the protection plan.



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5. Will Jones, Coleridge Cottage.

Will introduced himself and Charlotte as the new managers of Coleridge Cottage. He gave a lively speech in which he said he wanted to change the perception of the “NT place down the road” and recognised that in recent years had not really engaged with the community. He wanted to change that. The Cottage was now open and ready for visitors and the tea-room would open on 1 June. The 250th anniversary of Coleridge’s birth would be celebrated in October and he and Charlotte were working with Friends of Coleridge on this.

6. Duncan Harvey, Housing Development Manager, Sedgemoor DC

Duncan gave an interesting presentation with an overview of affordable housing and how Sedgemoor hoped to be able to provide the promised 16 affordable houses at Cricketer assisted by partial funding by HPC and Homes England. The houses would be allocated on a local lettings policy similar to that used for Harry Prowse Close and included as part of Nether Stowey’s Neighbourhood Plan. The new homes would be managed by Homes in Sedgemoor and the allocations would be run through Homefinder Somerset. He strongly advised that residents interested in one of the houses should register with Homefinder Somerset as soon as possible, and previous registrations should be checked and updated. He would ensure that information would be provided to the Parish Council at an early stage.

There were various questions from the audience and Duncan replied as follows:

Q It was understood the Cricketer development would have a Residents’ Management Company. What were the implications of private roads and in particular, insurance?

A This would be discussed at a later date.

Q What changes were expected next year when the Unitary Government took over?

A The current policies would remain in place until the Unitary Council reviewed and refreshed it. The Local Plan would take several years to review and update. As far as the financial aspect, he wasn’t sure what impact there would be as all current projects were self-financing, so there would be no investment reasons to change, but another change of political control could lead to a different approach.

Q Would there be shared ownership options?

A The current model was for 16 rented houses, but Sedgemoor would need to know about demand for other tenures. There was no reason why this could not be considered, but it was necessary to ensure that the desire for shared ownership is realistic and that applicants could genuinely afford to buy and maintain the houses. This would be reviewed when they were further down the road with the contract.

Q How could Sedgemoor protect the longevity of rental properties given “Right to Buy”?

A The Right to Buy still exists and extends to Housing Association properties. There was a 10-year protection period, and the Council were not obliged to sell houses for less than they had paid.

A copy of the presentation is available with other APM reports.

7. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman gave the Parish Council’s Report for the past year, summarising the Council’s activities and recording the Council’s thanks to many residents for their services to the community. A copy of the full report is appended to these minutes.



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8. Community Reports

Some reports were read by representatives of a few local organisations (Stowey Green Spaces, Women's Institute, Knit and Natter and Active Living). Written reports from those who had spoken and from other groups were available at the meeting and could be collected from the Parish Office, requested by e-mail and would be posted on the Parish Council website as soon as possible at www.netherstowey-pc.gov.uk/about/annual-parish-meetings/.

9. Items for Discussion

A member of the public asked if the traffic lights would be working for the Women's Walk. Sadly not, as Somerset County Council had required changes which meant a delay.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 7.50 pm



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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2022

Monday 23 May at 7pm at Nether Stowey Church Centre

This being the Annual Parish meeting it is the opportunity to see what village groups and people have been involved in. A number of people and organisations have reported their activities for the past year and these reports and others are on display for you to read. Please help yourself to copies – if however we run out we can e-mail one or you can collect from the Parish Office.

It is a year since we held the last Annual Parish Meeting and although we are now returning to something approaching normality after the pandemic; its influence will be with us for some time yet. After the disruption of the previous year we have managed to return to proper meetings at the Church Centre for the whole year – no more Zoom, much to my personal relief! The office has been working as normal all year too. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors past and present for the time and effort they put in. As well as our regular Parish Council meetings between them they have attended a lot of external meetings, some face to face and others still “virtually”.

At the elections nearly three weeks were sorry to say good-bye to Malcom Reid, who had decided to retire. He will be sorely missed. His contributions were invaluable particularly his excellent work representing the Parish Council on three Hinkley Point groups. We are pleased to welcome Penny Everett who, although a relative newcomer to the village, brings a wealth of experience in Parish Council matters and fresh ideas. The Parish Council still has two seats to fill. If you care about the village and the people in it, please think about joining us – whether you have been in the village forever, or arrived recently, you will have something to offer to help make this a wonderful community to live in. And that's just not our opinion - the Sunday Times named Nether Stowey as one of the top 50 villages in the country.

The election also started the process of reorganising local government, which next abolishes the four Somerset District Councils and creates a Unitary Council next April. We are pleased to still have Mike Caswell and to welcome Brian Bolt as our Councillors on the new Council, and glad that we still have Julie Pay at the District Council, if only until next year. We thank Julie and Mike for their support for the village over recent years – long may it continue with the new team.

There are also a lot of local people beavering away for the village. As always our village Clock continues to give good service and again this is thanks to a dedicated team lead by Tony Edney, who keeps it wound and on time. I'd also like to thank Kevin Dinham who keeps the toilets clean and safe.

The volunteers of Stowey Green Spaces continue to do a great job in and around the village and it must be remembered they are volunteers who give up their spare time for the tasks they undertake. One project has been to enhance the by-pass and it is nice to see that this is now showing signs of success. We are pleased to say this has the backing of county highways and the parish council.

The Library has been a great success under its new community management and volunteer staff and we thank them for all they do and congratulate them on their success in raising funds to offer ever more.

I would also like to pay tribute to the phenomenal hard work of the Nether Stowey Village Hall and Recreation Ground CIO. As well as all the work keeping the current facilities going and masterminding what I know will be a terrific Jubilee celebration at Party in the Park in a couple of weeks, they have made huge progress towards the new Stowey Centre that is going to be a super modern asset for us all to enjoy.



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The Stowey Shuttle continues to keep villagers on the move so efficiently, ready to help when needed again manned by volunteers.

Councillor Colin Falla continues his work as Footpaths Liaison Officer and all the strimming he undertakes to keep the paths clear.

Many of these groups – as well as others – have given reports – please help yourself.

PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Although face to face meetings are starting to return some are still held via zoom and at times this can be beneficial allowing more people to attend. EDF, HPC, County Council, Sedgemoor DC and Somerset Waste are among those we have been meeting and dealing with over the past year and will continue to do so.

I am pleased to say that the Parish Council has achieved two major goals this year. The first is the almost-complete traffic lights at St Mary Street at last providing a safe pedestrian crossing to the church and the new development at Cricketers. While there are other issues about the new development, which I will come to, this is an improvement that the Parish Council and many residents have long argued for.

I am also pleased to say that Highways are in the process of installing new speed warning lights and 20mph zone in Mill Lane near the school. Again, something the Parish Council has been fighting for over many years.

A list of the Parish Council meetings scheduled for the rest of the Council year is available on the table.

We will continue to work with Sedgemoor and Somerset Councils and other bodies to try and achieve quality services, and to ensure the new Somerset Unitary Council works better for us than its predecessor, and to help residents if they have problems especially relating to other parts of local government.

The Parish Council will continue to work towards the protection of our conservation areas and the village heritage. We also undertake village maintenance, have responsibility for the car park and public toilets, bus shelter, the clock tower and the cemetery

GRANTS

The Parish Council is always keen to support local groups and activities which enrich the lives of so many of our community. In the last twelve months we have awarded over £4,000 in grants to local groups including support for Stowey Green Spaces, the Toddlers Group, Stowey Shuttle, the new Art Group, the Women's Walk, St Mary's PCC and for playing field equipment. The Parish Council has also funded the laser show which will be the grand finale to Party in the Park.

CRICKETER DEVELOPMENT

We are all obviously aware that development of the site has started and that the road junction is almost complete. Alun Griffiths, the contractor responsible for the junction construction, have carried out their task efficiently and have co-operated with the community wherever possible. They have in the main kept the roads open where feasible and the traffic flowing, even co-operating with funerals when they have been held. It is a shame this level of co-operation does not extend as far as all those involved in the Cricketer site.



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With regard the subject of the affordable housing at the site, Duncan has already given a good overview of how the affordable housing promise may be delivered. The Parish Council is well aware of the further need and we will continue our work to try to deliver more in the future.

HINKLEY POINT PROJECT

Councillors continue to attend numerous meetings organized by EDF and the District Councils to discuss matters concerned with project. As the workforce increases the greater will be the impact on our village and we are working with HPC to find resolutions to that impact. We also continue to work with HPC and Sedgemoor District Council to try and resolve the issues caused by workers living or lodging in the village and are hopeful we can mitigate some of the problems.

We are now beginning to see some benefit from this – HPC has contributed funding towards Sedgemoor’s plan for the affordable housing and there may be funding for other things in the pipeline.

Our relationship with the team who handle the fly parking remains good and this has greatly reduced, where it does occur it is dealt with immediately.

The community bus service provided by HPC continues and there are many in the village that are grateful for this service, we thank HPC for stepping in to provide a community bus service when the County Council would not help.

DISTRICT, COUNTY COUNCIL AND UNITARY

We continue to work hard with both Councils to try to get the best possible services. Some services that used to be provided by Sedgemoor or Somerset CC have been cut back or are now non-existent. The Parish Council does try to top-up these services, but we do have to pay for them through the precept, which means everyone’s Council tax bills. We try to work out what services give the most benefit to the most residents.

The question of the new UNITARY Authority for Somerset is now a stark fact and is something that will affect us all. For the next twelve months there will be a transitional period where we still have the districts and what was the County Council. In May 2023 the district councils will cease to exist and we will have one unitary authority for the whole of Somerset.

In the coming months we will be working with our neighbouring parish councils and the unitary team to try and achieve the best possible solution for Nether Stowey. Somerset becoming a unitary authority is going to affect all of us and there will undoubtedly be changes in the way services are provided and more importantly who provides them and how they are paid for. The saying goes that the “Devil is in the detail” – unfortunately at the present time that detail is sadly lacking.

WALKING AND COUNTRYSIDE SAFETY

Our surroundings have acres and acres of lush green fields, pastureland and hills and we are lucky to have so many Public Rights of Way from which to enjoy it. The words “public footpath” means exactly that – public, however, if you do find yourself wandering off the designated footpath you could find yourself in trouble or more to the point in danger. The “Right to Roam” or more properly designated “Open Access Land” does not give automatic access to all land and especially not to private land. There is no designated open access land with in Nether Stowey Parish. The bottom line is that all of the above, including miles and miles of tracks, pathways and bridleways usually cross land that is owned by someone or more to the point farmed by someone.



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Farms are someone's place of work and, often, someone's home. Agricultural vehicles have accounted for 13 of the 39 farm fatalities over the past year so it is vital to remember that farms are busy working areas with tractors, telehandlers and agricultural machinery moving about 24/7. We are all aware of the size of modern farm machinery, but we may not be aware of the fact that when the driver is in the cab he is effectively insulated from the sound, vibration and noise around him.

This has recently been brought to light by an incident on a local farm where the farmer was cutting grass with a large mower and a tractor. Out of the corner of his eye he saw something move and immediately stopped. On investigation he found two children playing in the tall grass who were – when he stopped - less than a metre from the cutting equipment. The tractor driver's diligence and quick thinking prevented what could have been a very tragic accident. Please remember that this happened on a farm in Nether Stowey with local children.

Farm buildings are also not for public access and certainly not for playing in. We have recently received reports of children playing from the rafters of the big barn near the Millennium Wood. Again, the risk of a tragic accident is enormous.

We all have a responsibility for our own safety and in the case above the safety and education of our children, please Walk Safely, Walk Responsibly and Obey the Country Code. Please make sure you know where your children are playing. And if you're out with dogs please think - is it under tight control, is it damaging crops or is it chasing stock?

Thank you all for coming.