



## NETHER STOWEY PARISH

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***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 12 MAY 2025 AT 7 pm AT THE CHURCH CENTRE**

**Present:**

<i>Councillors</i>	John Roberts (Chairman)	Lesley Bowditch
	Kevin Ferriday	Margaret Hogg
	Three residents	

In Attendance: Caro Slaymaker, Clerk to the Parish Council

**1. Welcome**

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

**2. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Andrew Jeanes, Cllr Colin Falla, Somerset Cllr Brian Bolt, Rev Eleanor King and three residents.

**3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting, held on 13 May 2024, had been published, were agreed and were signed by the Chairman.

**4. Chairman's Report**

The Annual Parish Meeting is an opportunity to reflect on the vibrant life of Nether Stowey and all the various groups and organisations. Most of them had produced reports which were available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website. They would also be available from the Parish Office. The Chairman gave an abridged version of the Parish Council's Report for the past year, summarising the Council's activities and recording the Council's thanks to many residents and local groups for their services to the community. A copy of the full report is appended to these minutes.

Cllr Roberts thanked Cllr Barbara Rich for her long service to the community, as a Parish Councillor and in her other roles and made a presentation. Council members had contributed to mark the occasion with an engraved vase and a bouquet.

**5. Community Reports**

Community reports were available at the meeting or later by e-mail or from the Parish Office and website at [www.netherstowey-pc.gov.uk/about/annual-parish-meetings/](http://www.netherstowey-pc.gov.uk/about/annual-parish-meetings/).

**6. Items for Discussion**

There were no matters raised.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 7.15 pm



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### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025

The Annual Parish meeting is an opportunity to show the vibrant life in Nether Stowey, with our array of village groups and their activities. 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 – we haven't printed too many, but if we run out we can e-mail one or you can collect from the Parish Office and there is a list you can sign up to on the table.

There are also a lot of local people working for the betterment of the village who get little recognition. So can I say thank you to Tony Edney and his team who look after the clock, Danny Hicks who looks after the toilets, Jeff Hopkins who keeps the Cross and car park tidy, and the hard-working volunteers of Stowey Green Spaces who give up their time, for the work they do around the village looking after and improving our green spaces. The Library continues to go from strength to strength, and we thank them for all they do.

I would also like to pay tribute to the ongoing work of the Nether Stowey Village Hall and Recreation Ground CIO: they have made continued progress towards the new Stowey Centre, despite the frustrations of the planning system.

The Stowey Shuttle and its great team of co-ordinators and drivers continue to help villagers with transport needs.

#### Parish Council activities

There have been a number of changes in the Council since this year. We welcomed Lesley Bowditch as a new Councillor, but sadly I have to note the sad death of Terry Yarwood, to say farewell to Lou Brett for her brief tenure.

And finally I would like to thank Barb Rich for her long and unflagging service to the community in many different roles. Barb has been a Councillor since 2013 and represented the Parish Council on the Recreation Ground and Village Hall Committees, continuing her long association with Playing Field and Village Hall before that. She served as Vice Chair in 2023. Barb has been a fierce champion of the village and together with her late husband Tony, former Chairman of the Parish Council, has played a very active role in countless aspects of village life over many years. She brought to the Parish Council a vast knowledge and for that we will always be grateful. The Council will greatly miss her contribution, and we wish her speedy return to full health.

*Cllr Roberts presented Cllr Rich with a bouquet and gift.*

This has been a busier year for the Parish Council as we continue to navigate our way through the changes following the introduction of the Unitary Council and the financial emergency which Somerset Council declared. Kevin said this last year, and I say again, it is still far from clear what Somerset Council services will look like in the future and even less clear which services, and possibly assets, might be devolved to the Parish Council. Even without any formal devolution agreement, we have increasingly found we have to take on all sorts of work that Somerset Council should be doing, but now just shrug off mainly, we presume, through lack of funds or staffing shortages.



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For this reason, the Parish Council has now taken over the grass cutting on many (but not all) of the grass areas formerly cut by Sedgemoor. It has taken a while to sort out what they say they used to do. We would encourage those residents who can, to consider spending an extra 5 or 10 minutes to do verges in front of their houses where they can. This will save money which the Council can better use elsewhere and helps cut our budget – and your parish Council Tax.

We are also having to do a lot more to protect the village from floods, something that Somerset Council should be dealing with. We spent a couple of days last December clearing the culverts under St Mary Street to improve the flow through the Church Centre and across to the ponds at Stowey Court. This stops the brook overtopping further upstream when it can't cope with the volume of water coming through. I am extremely grateful to Cllr Jeanes who did the work with all his big farm equipment. The only bit that needs doing now is the Somerset Council land beyond the Church Centre, which remains blocked and uncleared.

We have had the Millennium Wood registered as an Asset of Community Value, giving this much-loved area protection so it can't be sold without the community first having the opportunity to buy it. Thanks to Roy Osborne, and Stowey Green Spaces Group for their help on this.

On Christmas Eve the old signpost on the Cross was knocked over by, presumably, a delivery lorry. Amazingly no-one saw it happen, so the police have been unable to take the matter further. Somerset Council refused to deal with it, so the Parish Council was faced with the decision to either repair and restore it or leave a hole in the pavement. Despite the cost, we felt it was an integral part of The Cross, and its historic street scene, it will be completely refurbished and will be returned home in a few weeks' time. We are grateful to the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme who have offered a substantial Landscape Partnership Heritage Grant towards the cost of the repairs.

We are pleased to announce the arrival of a defibrillator on the outside of the toilet block in the Castle Street car park. It is now in the process of being registered with the ambulance service. The cabinet is unlocked but the defibrillator should be taken for use only after calling 999 or with the advice of a paramedic or other medical professional. If it is used, please return it to the Parish Office as soon as possible so it can be prepared for another user.

We were heartened to see so many turn out for the community consultation in February regarding future development near the A39/Stogursey Lane corner. Both on consultation day and through social media it brought out the best of the village but unfortunately also the very worst. The voting was very close and made for a difficult decision. The Council considered the comments made (even the nasty, vitriolic and libellous ones) but in the end the Council decided that they considered the principle of a possible shop there would be in the best long-term interests of the village. However, there remain a number of other planning issues that must be overcome before any application could be agreed.

We have continued to represent the Parish's interests at the various Hinkley Point fora.

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 grants to local groups including insurance and litter-picking equipment for Stowey Green Spaces, paid



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for the DJ at Party in the Park, contributed to work on trees and pitches and the cost of insurance at the Playing Field, made contributions to the Church towards Christmas hampers, café furniture for the Library and funding for Stowey Bears who are expanding their facilities. If your organisation would like to apply for a grant, please contact Caro for details or there is information on our website on the Local Organisations page.

Thank you all for coming.