

CHURCHSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES/ACTION NOTES

Name of meeting:	Annual Parish Meeting - Churchstanton Parish Council
Date meeting held:	Wednesday 18 th May, 2022
Meeting location:	Churchinford Village Hall
Present:	Cllr. Andrew Crabb, Cllr. Raadiyah Rifath, Cllr. Ian Foxwell, Cllr. Tristan Phillips, Cllr. Ken Pearson
In attendance	County Councillor Ross Henley, Joe Knowles, Linda Knowles, Graham Gurrin, Sarah Henderson, Marcus James, Nigel Drew, Sue Cooper, Eamonn Platt, Ruth Marshallsay, Lisa Turner, Charles Isdell-Carpenter, Nicki Dowson, Richard Perry, Clare Aston, Gemma Sparkes, Andrea Gibbs, Nigel Griffiths
Chair	Cllr. Ian Firth
Clerk	Julie Wardle
1. Welcome	Cllr. Firth opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.
2. Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting - Approval	Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 19 th May 2021 - Approved
3. Reports from Representatives from Village Clubs and Societies	<p>Reports were provided by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churchstanton Parish Council – Councillor Ian Firth • Blackdown Support Group – Nicki Dowson • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Lisa Turner • Otterhead Lakes Trust – Nigel Griffiths • Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) - Joe Knowles • Churchinford & District Community Shop – Ruth Marshallsay • Churchinford Village Hall – Linda Knowles • Public Paths Liaison Officer - Sarah Henderson • Churchstanton Primary School – Marcus James • Churchinford Preschool – Gemma Sparkes • Mary Parson Charity – Charles Isdell-Carpenter • Community Bus – Graham Gurrin <p><u>Churchstanton Parish Council - Councillor Ian Firth</u></p> <p>Cllr. Firth provided a summary of the work of the Parish Council over the previous year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Quarry – Following a public consultation meeting at The Quarry itself, the Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) have started work on site in order to commence with our plans to develop this site into a recreational space for all generations in the parish to enjoy. – Take Art – The parish council contributed £300 towards the cost of two Take Art productions in the parish in July last year.

- A Community Speedwatch Group has now been set up in order to monitor / record traffic speed through Churchinford. We are currently awaiting training for our volunteers. Collecting speed data is an essential requirement in order to enable the Parish Council to apply for a Road Safety Grant to purchase 2 x Speed Indicator Devices. One each for Taunton and Honiton roads.

Future Plans include:

- Parish Jubilee Celebrations – Thursday 2nd June to Sunday 5th June 2022
- Ongoing development of The Quarry
- Operational Community Speedwatch Team in regular action within Churchinford
- Installation of Speed Indicator Devices

In addition to all of the above the Parish Council have regular items on the agenda at their monthly meetings for instance, Planning, Climate Change and Public Paths & Highways

County Councillor Ross Henley

Councillor Henley started by thanking everyone for their support in the recent elections.

Ross continues to be involved in many local issues in the parish including housing issues, planning, issues on our highways and fly tipping along with many others.

The Parish Council wish to record they're thanks to Cllr. Henley for his ongoing support of the Parish Council and the Parish of Churchstanton.

Blackdown Support Group – Nicki Dowson

Nicki provided an explanation of how and why the BSG charity was started over 30 years ago and how it works closely with the 3 GP practices of the Blackdown Hills and helps over 600 patients, 80 of these being in the Churchstanton Parish.

Nicki explained the comprehensive list of services and support the BSG provide, mainly the elderly and the isolated and more recently the invaluable help with shopping, prescription deliveries and vaccine clinics the BSG provided with a core group of volunteers.

There is a growing need for more Family Support and Mental Health services in the Blackdown Hills, but the tradition of Blackdown resilience and community spirit will stand us in good stead for the future.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Lisa Turner

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally important, protected landscape, one of 34 in England. Each AONB has its own distinct, sometimes unique, characteristics – in its culture, its history and in its wildlife – and each has been designated an AONB so that these features can be safeguarded for future generations. The AONB Team brings together local authorities, other organisations, community groups to work collectively to manage conserve and enhance the area's special qualities.

2021 marked 30 years since designation, so promotional theme was 30 ways to experience the Blackdown Hills, educating about some of the area's special features and encouraging people to explore them in a creative way.

We still have our **office base** in the healthy living centre in Hemyock, but we have been mostly working remotely. We have been able to be contacted by email and phone as normal, but apologies to anyone who may have dropped into the centre hoping to catch us in person. Now moving to a position where office will be staffed more often.

Work highlights:

The **Farming in Protected Landscapes** programme was launched in July last year.

- FiPL is a capital grant scheme available to land owners, whether they have a holding number or not
- It provides funding for measures which provide environmental benefit in terms of climate, nature, people or place
- It can fund work on farmland or smallholdings, or community spaces
- It is a Defra fund but is administered locally by the AONB, with decisions on applications made within the AONB.
- The AONB FiPL team can also help answer questions about other aspects of agri-environmental funding and how to negotiate the current period of transition.

24 Projects supported in first year (to end March) including habitat management, orchard restoration and infrastructure for educational visits.

Connecting the Culm is a project which aims to demonstrate how by working with nature we can collectively make the River Culm and its floodplain more resilient to flood and drought, improve water quality and support biodiversity and habitat.

It takes a catchment scale approach, so working from where the river meets the Exe near Exeter all the way upto the source and many tributaries here in the Churchstanton area.

The Connecting the Culm education programme engaged with five primary schools in the Culm catchment between June and September 2021. Over 330 school pupils participated in a range of activities including river dipping, walks along the Culm and hands-on interactive sessions in schools.

Churchstanton primary school was one of these last summer. The project team visited the school twice in June and ran a range of workshops for years 1 to 6, which had the aims of:

- Enabling pupils to learn about the River Culm and the problems it faces due to climate change
- Exploring how working with nature can solves the problems the River Culm faces and help it adapts to the pressures caused by climate change.
- Encouraging children to be champions for the River Culm and contribute to the 'Blueprint' to create a vision for the River over the next 25 years.

Other practical action that has been established over the past year and continues to flourish is a community-led Culm Himalayan Balsam Action Group, tackling this invasive plant at various locations along the river and with dates planning for the next few months, including one pencilled in for Burnworthy.

Somerset Nature Connections

is a partnership project between Somerset Wildlife Trust and the three AONBs in Somerset.

The project aims to:

- Support individuals and groups to understand and enjoy the benefits nature connection can have for their physical and mental health.

- Increase people's confidence to engage and enjoy natural spaces.

Key element is a series of free 6-week nature and wellbeing courses held in the AONB. Each week participants will attend for half a day, benefitting from practical, outdoor activities, including conservation tasks, wildlife walks and natural crafts. Anyone who feels that they may benefit can self-refer or may be signposted by health and wellbeing partners.

Funding and supporting community projects

Last year we ring fenced some project funding for a **Challenge Fund**, to support community projects themed around climate change and nature recovery. We had a great response and were able to support 6 projects, including the micro hydro project at Otterhead Lakes.

At this point it may be of interest to highlight the **Blackdown Hills countryside fund**. The money to establish this fund originally came from the second development of solar panels at Culmhead. The fund is administered by Devon Community Foundation and can offer grants of up to £3000 for projects that support local communities and natural beauty – it is open to groups and organisations in both the Devon and Somerset part of the Blackdown Hills, and has recently supported the micro hydro project at Otterhead.

We are looking for new panel members to help assess applications, so do get in touch if that might be of interest.

Meanwhile the AONB still has its **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)** which can provide grants of up to £2,000 for community-based projects that will have an environmental, social or economic benefit, helping to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

Further information on all of these can be found on our website, which is blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk, and to keep in touch with our projects, activities and events you can sign up to our e-newsletter from the homepage.

Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) - Joe Knowles

Community Field

- The Summer maintenance programme has now commenced including, grass cutting, strimming and bush cutting in both main field and the allotments.
- Events taking place on the Community Field over the past year include:
 - Two Take Art presentations
 - Fitness classes
- A children's balance beam with stepping stumps has been added to the field – Thank you to Andy Crabb for this.
- A meditation pod has recently been built and installed – Thank you to Karen Atkinson and Andy Crabb.
- 30 tree saplings have been planted this year in one of the long grass sections. In total almost 150 tree saplings have now been planted.
- Use of the Community Field has increased substantially over the past year.
- An application to Churchstanton Community Fund for grass cutting has been made.

The Quarry

- Having been asked by the Parish Council, the OSMG agreed to manage the development of the Quarry to create an additional recreational space for use by all in the community.
- A Community Meeting was held on site to gather thoughts, ideas and suggestions for the development of the site.
- Access and a new car park with gate posts have already been installed.
- Emergency tree work was completed following the storms earlier this year.
- Further development will depend on successful applications for grant funding. Unfortunately, our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was rejected and therefore immediate plans for further works have had to be revised.

AGM – OSMG

- Will take place on Wednesday 25th May in Churchinford Village Hall.

Volunteers

- Thank you to the Blackdown Hills AONB for their support this year.
- Volunteers are a great asset to the OSMG and the successful development of the Community Field only happened and continues to survive as a result of their dedication and commitment.
- Thank you to Churchstanton Parish Council for their ongoing support.

Churchinford & District Village Shop – Ruth Marshall

- Although the shop is doing well, like all businesses it was feeling the recent increase in costs, but not as much as our customers. Measures have been put in place to mitigate some of these rises and to help reduce increases to our vulnerable customers.
- Although orders and deliveries had dropped significantly since covid, the shop was still completing these for some vulnerable customers and thanks were offered for the continued support from the community, and to those people that helped with the deliveries etc.
- Now that covid restrictions were easing and the volunteers and customers were more comfortable, the shop was no longer enforcing the mask wearing policy but asking people to be respectable both to other customers and also volunteers, that prefer to still wear a mask.
- Volunteer numbers are currently stable, but with volunteers wanting to go back to a buddy system, more volunteers would be needed. Some had already started but the shop would be actively looking for more.
- A relaxing of covid has also meant the younger volunteers have started working in the shop again. With many completing their Duke of Edinburgh volunteering module and / or work experience in the shop.
- The shop continues to work closely with other community groups and events, to increase its community work, most recently with helping with jubilee celebrations logistics.

Churchinford Village Hall – Linda Knowles

- The Village hall has now re-opened fully with no covid restrictions, regular weekly classes, parties, music evenings and film club are all now taking place.
- Preschool and shop continue to use the premises.
- Hall For All still running successfully.
- Trees at the back of the car park have been felled, some diseased and some in danger of falling over.
- Although we are in a good position financially, we do have some maintenance issues to deal with, car park re-surfacing, (this to be done when a decision is made about the future of the barn), roof repairs, window replacements and modifications to the hall heating.
- Car parking is still an issue but as the committee are aware there is also an issue with parking in the village so apart from reminding people for insurance purposes that it is a private car park we are taking a relaxed view about parking in the car park.
- The hall has an excellent committee who work hard to keep the hall in a good condition and the committee would like to thank the village for its support through the recent difficult times.

Public Paths Liaison Officer – Sarah Henderson

- Sarah outlined her role as one of our Public Paths Liaison Officers in the Parish managing the footpaths in the Parish.
- Any issues or concerns with any of our footpaths are communicated to Martin Cooper the Rights of Way Officer for Somerset County Council, and issues are flagged on the public Somerset Rights of Way mapping / system.
- A new 'Assemble' platform that has been introduced by Somerset County Council to facilitate easier / better communication between PPLOs and the County Council.
- If anyone identifies and issues on any of our paths within the parish, you can communicate directly with Sarah or via Julie (Parish Clerk).

ACTIONS FOR 2022/2023

- Continue monitoring the paths throughout the Parish.
- Look into and utilise the Assemble platform.
- Try and re-institute the sending of Waymarkers from SSC, to put these up where better signage is needed.
- Look into idea of a 'Path Hunt' for the Parish on a day in the year – TBC / very much an idea and not sure on feasibility – but on the idea of matching a booklet of photos to points on various paths, so that families can have a day out on the paths and help with the management of them (even if they don't realise it)!

The Parish Council would like to convey their thanks to both Peter and Sarah for their time and good work looking after our public paths in the parish.

Churchstanton Primary School – Marcus James

- We are working hard to improve school lunches and plan to work with Dartfresh but need to raise funds to complete a kitchen conversion.
- Artsmark award is well on the way with our Circle of life project that can be found in the Gazette.
- KS1 & 2 SATS have returned after temporarily stopping in 2019, pupils have worked hard and done their best.
- Requested road signs to be cleaned but to no avail, we would also like to get some school signs on the main road to try to slow traffic down as its dangerous crossing the roads and, also, we may be missing out on prospective students as people may not know we are there.
- Our caretaker has started a gardening club with the children, and we are growing some of our own food for the lunches. (Volunteers welcome to help through the summer.)

Churchinford PreSchool - Gemma Sparkes

- Preschool is based in The Old Doctors Surgery, next door to the village hall.
- We rent the land from the Village Hall, but own the building.
- The preschool is committee run.
- We are open from Monday – Thursday, 9am -3pm, during term time.
- There are currently 22 children on our books, which is great for a small little preschool.
- We have 5 members of staff, 3 ‘full time’ (covering all open hours) and 2 part time.

Current Challenges

- The main challenge in the last year has been COVID.
- COVID meant we had to shut for a week in the spring.
- Fundraising opportunities have been limited due to COVID.
- The committee struggle to recruit volunteers for events and to join the committee.
- There has been a major change to the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance which has meant lots of changes have needed to be implemented in a short period of time.
- Our building is aging and needs constant work.
- There is a constant demand for new equipment, especially when required for children with special needs.

Community Links

- The preschool has forged a number of good links in the community.
- We love being able to use the Community Field, where the children often visit and have been involved in the planting of wildflower mix.
- The Community Shop has been a great resource, with Ruth & Mandy always being particularly helpful.
- In the development of our garden the children have recently been able to go and buy the plants from the shop, therefore learning about money and counting.
- We love working with Hummingbird and were even able to exchange videos of carol singing at Christmas when COVID did not allow in person visits.
- Dan at The York Inn is also very good to us, providing support in multiple ways.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children are all really looking forward to the Jubilee Celebrations, they have been busy making crowns and learning about the Queen. • Pastor Nick comes in fortnightly to read to the children and play games. <p><u>Learning at Preschool</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EYFS changes promote independence of children. • All children are now encouraged to brush teeth after eating. • We have developed a sensory area within the garden, full of herbs for different smells and textures. • We are looking to develop our garden to grow our own fruit and veg, to provide our own snacks, to encourage healthy eating and for children to learn about growing and gardening. • There is a lot more learning about emotions and how children can deal with them. <p><u>Positives and development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We hosted a brilliant Easter Egg Hunt this year, raising much needed funds for the preschool. • We were provided a grant by the Community Shop. • We would like to implement a sensory wall within our back garden area, this is an expensive piece of equipment. • We would like to install a sail shade in the front garden. • We have a great team. <p><u>Community Bus – Graham Gurrin</u></p> <p>Graham was invited to the meeting to make his usual appeal for volunteers, but he regretted to announce that after much consideration the trustees had agreed that the bus was no longer feasible and that they would dissolve the charity. The good news was that they had agreed to donate the bus and funds to the Blackdown Support Group, keeping it within this community, and they were waiting for the BSG to take it over.</p> <p><u>Charities – Mary Parsons Gift Charity</u></p> <p>There are six trustees of the Mary Parsons Gift Charity and the purpose of the charity is to support, provide grants to the poor people of the parish. In more recent years the trustees decided that this would be most useful to the Blackdown Support Group to support their work within the parish.</p> <p>Following ongoing problems with tenants together with issues regarding the cutting of trees with ‘Tree Preservation Orders’ the trustees have taken the decision to sell the land. The Charities Commission have authorised this sale. A legal pack is currently being drawn up by a Solicitor and indemnity insurance has been taken out by the trustees. Within the agreement there is a clause that states that should planning permission be granted on the piece of land, a 20% uplift must be paid to the charity.</p> <p>Proceeds from the sale of the land will be invested and the interest used to support the Blackdown Support Group or as appropriate in line with the charitable status.</p>
4. Churchstanton Community Fund	<p>Two bids had been received in the Spring window for applications to the Churchstanton Community Fund. One from the Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) for £1,500 for grass cutting, £500 for raised beds & £500 Jubilee Celebrations and a further application from the Otterhead Estates Trust for essential maintenance work to keep the site safe and accessible to the public. A vote</p>

	was taken from all those present at the meeting and both bids were unanimously approved. This approval will be ratified at the next meeting of Churchstanton Parish Council on Wednesday 8th June, 2022.
5. Meeting Close	Cllr. Firth thanked everyone for attending and for their reports. The meeting had provided an opportunity to hear about the great work that takes place in our community.