

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council



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8 January 2015

Councillor Notes for the Parish Council Meeting at 1930 on 13 January 2015 in Princetown Community Centre.

Hexworthy/Huccaby Ward:	Princetown Ward:	
Cllr Alison Geen	Cllr Stephen King	Cllr Wendy Stones
Postbridge Ward:	Cllr Gregg Manning	Cllr Paul Turnbull*
Cllr Wendy Watson	Cllr Cliff Palmer	Cllr David Worth
Cllr Val Greatrex	Cllr Mark Renders	

Alison will chair the meeting

1. Apologies.

I have apologies from Cliff. For those that do not know, Shirley died on Monday. When I last spoke to Cliff the funeral was expected to be Wednesday 14th of January, although this was yet to be confirmed. I have sent a with sympathy card to him on behalf of the Parish Council.

2. Declarations of Interest

No amendments have been reported to date.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

No amendments have been reported to date.

4. Police Matters.

I have not received a Police report yet.

5. Meeting time efficiency measures. The co-chairs and the clerk are meeting on Friday evening to discuss possible measures to put before the council. I will circulate an outline summary over the weekend.

6. Repairs, Maintenance & Highways

Currently there are no highways defects reported throughout the Parish, although parishioners have raised road and drainage defects with individual councillors. The system no longer works through parish councils providing consolidated lists, instead individuals need to register defects on the DCC highways website. We need to get the message across.

Public session

7. Review of Procedures - Play Area Maintenance Procedure.

I have developed a maintenance schedule for the playground area by trawling the Internet for manufacturers' recommendations. Where this has not been possible and I have interpreted these recommendations across to other items of equipment. In all cases the requirements and recommendations are for inspection and corrective action if necessary; in other words we have not missed any recommended planned maintenance actions. That said, for insurance purposes we should be inspecting the Play Area equipment weekly, for which we will need volunteers. For both

warranty and insurance purposes we need to adopt a more formalised approach with recorded inspections against the new schedule. The maintenance schedule is on the website and I am currently developing it into a procedure format that I will publish before the next meeting. The Parish Council is recommended to adopt the new play area maintenance procedure and schedule.

8. Precept

There has been a lot of discussion and correspondence about public finances, council tax and precepts. The government has proposed a measure requiring parish councils to conduct a referendum for any increases above 2% in line with district and county councils. I believe this is over government fears that County and District Councils may seek to transfer funding burdens to parish precepts to mitigate central government cuts (this had been suggested at the December Super Link meeting). This is being challenged in the consultation, but it is indicative that any increase beyond 2% could be subject to extra scrutiny. The current draft precept for Dartmoor Forest involves an increase of 2.98% (equivalent to £1.31pa per property). Notwithstanding the bottom up costing to arrive at this figure it is recommended the parish council reduces this increase to 2% (£0.89pa per property) and redefines the budget within that constraint. The difference between 2.98% and 2.0% is £214 net receipt to the council and we still have room for manoeuvre in grass cutting arrangements, donations and repair and maintenance costs. This will place DFPC on the moral high ground, particularly as we have also absorbed the £255 cut in council tax support grant.

9. Parish Emergency Plan - Meeting insurance company requirements and recommendations

We received an e-mail from our insurers, Came and Company, on Christmas Eve which indicated how processes and procedures should be more robust, and in particular for the snow warden's scheme. David has spent time looking at the requirements. The original letter and David's comments are in a separate document on the website, together with our insurance policy documents. In summary, we need to have more robust Risk assessments, Inspection regimes, Asset registers and Procedures in place; and notify the insurance company whenever we intend to clear roadways. The Parish Council need to decide whether we meet the insurance requirements or withdraw from the Snow Warden scheme.

10. People's Health Trust Active Community Grants

The People's Health Trust is offering grants of between £5000 and £25,000 per year for projects lasting between 9 months and 2 years aimed at local people and groups wanting to create a fairer places to grow, live, work and age. Dartmoor Forest is one of only two rural parishes in Devon that are considered to have health inequalities and is eligible to apply for funding (the other is Lydford). The projects should take place within a small area for a small group of people such as "20 or 30 streets or a couple of villages". The proposal must come from the community and be managed by the community. See separate documents on the website.

The Devon Community Foundation is willing to assist local groups in the County to apply for this funding. The deadline to register with the Devon Community Foundation is 1300 12th January; and the deadline to submit full funding application to the People's Health Trust is 1300 4th February. The clerk has already registered Dartmoor Forest Parish Council with both organisations to ensure we do not lose this opportunity (and in anticipation we will be able to put forward a proposal), but has not yet done any work to develop a proposal. The Parish Council needs to decide how best to utilise this opportunity and then to develop a robust application within the next two weeks.

11. Princetown Car Park Charges

Andrew Watson briefed me on 7th January that the National Park was considering increasing charges for the high moorland visitors centre car park. Their plan is to keep the £1 charge for up to 3 hours and then charge £2 for any period beyond three hours. The Park expects to make their final decision

on 9th January, but any increase will be subject to formal consultation by West Devon Borough Council. Financial figures for the proceeds from the car park are not currently available but Andrew believed the profits to be in the order of £14,000 per annum rather than the original estimate of £28,500. In our discussions I raised the following points:

The new charges may lead to increased displaced parking in village sidestreets.

Similarly, parking in Princetown may be discouraged, leading to loss of business to village shops and cafes.

I questioned the decision of using three hours, all previous analysis has used for hours as the dividing line for the all-day charge (previous analysis indicates 35% stay from 2 to 4 hours, 14% over 4 hours).

The National Park might consider offering a number of concessionary tickets for school and local business employees (I suggested £10 per month) to mitigate the price increase to local employees and also assist with displaced parking.

The National Park might also consider favourable responses to: making the £1000 per annum contribution to the running costs of the toilets permanent (currently three years only); cutting the grass around the visitors centre and car park more frequently as proposed by the parish council; allowing us to install a defibrillator at Postbridge visitors centre.

Andrew emailed me on Friday to brief me on the outcome of the National Park meeting and to provide more accurate financial figures:

Dear Nigel

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me earlier this week.

Pay and display charging for the public car park at Princetown was introduced in August 2013 following reductions in National Park Grant and the clear steer from DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) that we should be looking at alternative sources of income. Two ticket machines were installed, with the parking service being managed by West Devon Borough Council through a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Part of the decision to introduce formal car park charges at Princetown was the investment being made in the area by the Authority. Over the last twelve months the Authority has undertaken an extensive refurbishment of the Visitor Centre (circa £40k) with extended opening times; resurfaced the car park (circa £42k); completed repairs to Station Road (access road) to the car park (circa £6k); and completed wider improvements to the public realm – (an ongoing programme with circa £20k spent to date).

In addition, the Authority has provided £3,000 of the income from the new car park charges to the Parish Council in the form of a grant towards the costs of the public conveniences (for the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2017).

You asked me for the income figures for Princetown – our finance team have now finalised these for a twelve month period.

Income from ticket machines (Gross)	£22,616
Less VAT at 20%	(£3,769)
Less WDBC commission (20% of gross income)	(£4,523)
Net income	£14,324

The initial costs associated with setting up pay and display at Princetown (ticket machines, signage, installation, maintenance contract etc) were £10,373 and the annual running costs amount to around £1,100.00.

Today our Authority Members agreed revised charges for the car park to go out for consultation as part of the forthcoming WDBC amendment order.

Class of vehicle	Up to 3 hours	Over 3 hours
Cars and motorcycles	£1.00	£2.00

Coaches or PSV's displaying a valid community disc etc	£1.00	£2.00
All other coaches and PSV's	£4.00	£4.00
Disabled persons vehicle displaying a valid Blue Badge	Free	Free

I understand from WDBC that this is likely to be around 5 February and there will be a 21 day consultation period.

Andrew

Thank you for your email. I am a little disappointed none of the issues/ideas I raised on Tuesday have been included in the Authority's decision but I will put the position to my councillors on Tuesday evening and follow the council's direction.

Best wishes

Nigel

Hello again

The Members decided to go out for consultation on the arrangements we discussed and they weren't minded to extend the 3 hours "half day" to 4 hours. There was some debate about possibility of introducing residents permits / season tickets, but concerns over administering who would administer and cost. The idea of a season ticket was discounted last time round when the daily charge was dropped to £1.00.

I realise this will be disappointing to the local community at Princetown, but I suggest that if the parish councillors have concerns that they make those known through the consultation process for the Order that WDBC will advertise in due course.

Regards

Andrew

The approach of the National Park appears to be unchanged by the points I raised with Andrew, but emphasising the existing investments already made. The Parish Council needs to decide whether to (a) accept (b) object or (c) try to negotiate more money/concessions from the Park in exchange for its agreement.

12. Reports from Committees, Sub- Groups and Special Interests.

Councillors are requested to forward their briefings by email in advance of the meeting. This agenda item then becomes 'any questions' rather than 'reading the briefing' to help with meeting time management.

Community Centre	Wendy S	VCC Meeting Dec 16th 2014. Roof repair completed - cost £2,400. Fire door damaged Dec 11th/12th. Secured at time, full repair Dec 29th. Police informed. CCTV hopefully to be installed before Christmas. Update on Pre-school. Still awaiting documentation regarding "time changes" from DCC. AGM Feb 24th at 18.30
Pavilion Youth Club	Wendy S	
Parking Committee	David	See item 11
Princetown Primary School	Wendy W	
Emergency Planning Sub-Group	David	See item 9
Public Library Sub-Group	Wendy S	Does DFPC wish to get involved again? Currently all Brian Harry
Parish Plan Sub-Group	Alison	
Play Area Sub-Group	Cliff	Clerk inspected 2 Jan – all in order but some preservation work will be needed on rocking horse in summer
Princetown Toilets Sub-Group	Clerk	Nothing to report
Postbridge Village Hall	Val	The sign is up and looking good – a fantastic piece of oak and a sign which cost hundreds of pounds. The sand from W Devon is in the car park at the V. Hall and the bags available for when

		villagers wish to collect some – one assumes we need some cold weather first. The quotes for the bore hole are being progressed and that is second on the 'wish list' behind the car park which, I believe, is now completed. There are several potential new members of the committee coming to the Feb. meeting including the new Treasurer.
Fire & Rescue service	Paul	
Cemetery	Clerk	ITT for joining extension. Update of procedures and registers needed.
Training	Clerk	Preparing for Elections 21 Jan 15
Christmas Tree	Wendy S	Lessons learned? Equipment storage? Lead for 2015?
Emergency Committee	Clerk	Nothing to report

13. Reports from other meetings

Nothing to date.

14. Planning applications

a. The current status is:

With the Parish Council	0719/14 0713/14 & 0714/14 0684/14	Single & 2 story side extensions, rear terrace and extension of outbuilding to form car port – amended Dartlands Hexworthy - supported Barn conversion Dunnabridge Pound Farm - supported Demolition of existing dwelling and building new Tor View Bungalow, Postbridge – no objection
Recent DNPA decisions (all conditional approval)	0650/14	Extension and new disabled access - Postbridge Village Hall – conditional approval
With DNPA	0619/14	Convert telephone exchange to bunkhouse - Postbridge Telephone Exchange
Awaiting enforcement action	0164/07	Beardown Farm un-authorised chalet. Clerk is awaiting update from Jo Burgess.

15. Correspondence

Correspondence has been uploaded to the website.

Papers that require decisions by the Parish Council are:

Whether to nominate a long serving councillor or other to attend the Queen's Garden Party 2015. DALC has 4 nominations allocated and will select from Devon parish council nominations by ballot.

Whether to seek or sponsor representation on the Devon Countryside Access Forum

Whether to comment on the Dartmoor Classic Sportive cycle event 2015 documentation published to date.

Whether to comment on the consultation on revised rules for Parish Polls.

Whether to send a representative to the SLCC South West Regional Roadshow on Wednesday 25th February at a cost of £69.

Whether to seek accreditation under the NALC Local Council Award Scheme.

16. Financial management

a. Cheques to be approved this month:

824	A Jaques - Litter Picking	£56.33
825	Nigel Tigwell - Pay	£546.19
826	HMRC - Income Tax	£86.00
827	Nigel Tigwell - Projector & Laptop expenses	(tbc)* £1,898.61
828	Mike Druett – Grass cutting	£150.00

* The final total may change before the meeting as some ancillary items are still to be purchased.

b. Bank Reconciliation.

Balance on last statement (31 December)	£
Outstanding Income	
Outstanding Cheques	
Reconciled total	£

Bank statement not yet received

c. **Forecast of Outturn.** This is shown in the tables and graphs attached.

d. **National Joint Council for Local Government Services new pay scales.** Pay scale recommendations reported in the November meeting have been approved nationally, which uplifts the Clerk's hourly rate on SC15 from £8.428 to £8.613 (2.2%). Legally, this needs to be agreed by Parish Council resolution before it is implemented.

e. **New signatories for Lloyds bank account form.** This is a long form requiring multiple signatures and either details of Lloyds bank accounts held by signatories, or other proofs of identity. I still need: from Val her existing Lloyds bank account sort code and one signature; from Wendy – whether she is an existing Lloyds account holder and if so the account details, plus one signature; from Cliff his Lloyds account sort code and number plus one signature.

17. **Progress reports on previous actions, not on the Agenda**

Grass cutting options. I have been unable to progress this significantly over the seasonal period. Costings remain approximately the same as last reported to the Council. Mike Druett has asked to terminate his contract. A number of approaches have been received by people offering to cut grass, but without the equipment needed for larger spaces. The purchase of equipment option remains viable, but no decision needs to be made before setting the precept as had been originally envisaged.

Defibrillators. I have approached the national park about mounting the Postbridge defibrillator on the visitors centre to the right of the gentleman's toilets and have received a positive but holding reply. The park has recently gone out to tender for architects to design the visitor centre enhancements and it is possible they may seek to delay a final decision until an architect has been appointed. I have not taken any steps yet to get the defibrillators registered with the South West ambulance trust and the 999 service.

Postbridge 3G Signal. Val and I spend a day escorting the Vodafone engineers around Postbridge Ward. In summary, the project is viable and we can expect detailed design work in January/February and installation in March/April. The surveyors' report will be subject to Vodafone commercial and project management considerations, but their outline plan is to site 3-4 units along the main road (with shortlisted locations at the Visitor Centre, the shop, the Village Hall and Beechwood B&B) and one unit to the south at either Lydgate House Hotel or Higher Lydgate Farm. In Bellever there will be a single unit. The ideal location would be 10

Forestry Houses but Carrie Jost has withdrawn as a volunteer and so the currently intended location is Forestry Cottage. I have been trying to get in touch with the couple at nine forestry houses allowed to see if they would be willing to host the transmitter but with no success to date.

This will provide a good coverage of the villages and tourist areas. The signal is attenuated by granite walls and some properties may find it weak indoors. If this does happen, Vodafone have a unit to provide a signal indoors but this would need to be purchased. I am unsure of the costings as yet.

Outline plans for Play Area improvements Phase 3 & a skate park. If I have made no progress on this since the last meeting.

18. Urgent decisions since the last meeting

None.

19. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be at 1930 on Monday 9 February 2015 at Princetown.