



# Coffinswell Parish Council

Serving the Communities of  
Coffinswell & Dacombe

The Cirl Bunting is the UK's rarest farmland bird. The entire breeding population is found between Exeter and Plymouth.

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## MINUTES OF THE COFFINSWELL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

**Present:** Cllr N Orchard (Chair) Cllr S Avery (Vice Chair), Cllr C Bell, Cllr M Atkinson, and Cllr. S. Spokes.

**In attendance:** Devon County Cllr A Dewhirst,  
District Cllr J Taylor  
District Cllr J Radford  
Mrs L Moorse – Parish Clerk  
Mr. Paul Gray - Streetworks and Highways, DNO Consulting Limited  
(arrived at 7.30pm)  
One member of public in attendance.

**1.** The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm, welcoming everyone in attendance and duly advised that Cllr Brent had resigned from the Council due to overwhelming responsibilities at work and home. With his resignation, the Council would now have a vacancy, and the Clerk was asked to formally begin the process, which includes advertising the vacancy.

**2. To declare any interests arising at this meeting.**  
None

### **3. Reports:**

As both District Councillors were due to shortly attend another Meeting that evening the Chair asked them to present their report.

#### **3.2 District Councillors' report**

Cllr Radford provided an update on the ongoing IT system transformation across Teignbridge, East Devon, and Exeter. Explaining the initiative aims to automate various council services, including payroll and waste collection. He advised that some progress has been made, but the transformation is currently hindered by uncertainties related to devolution efforts, which have led to project delays. There is concern however about software compatibility between the three councils and Devon County Council (DCC). He highlighted East Devon's successful mobile app for reporting missed waste collections.

Both District Councillors then went on to discuss the political structure changes and budget approval, as well as the uncertainty about Devon's future governance. They also advised of recent

changes in Committee memberships which has resulted in the planning and overview committees being reduced in numbers. District Cllr Radford reported that he had resigned as Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny and briefly outlined the reasons for his decision.

The District Councillors advised that they were attending a meeting regarding a proposed McDonald's drive-thru which is raising significant concerns. Local police have objected, and speakers anticipate severe traffic congestion on local roads as customers try to bypass main routes, creating safety hazards. There were several other concerns, and it was noted that the project's progression remains uncertain due to highway issues, and it was noted that greater consideration should be given to traffic management strategies within Torbay's unique regulations.

*\*\*\* District Cllrs Taylor and Radford left the meeting at 7.11pm\*\*\**

**3.1 County Councillors' report.** (Read by Cllr Dewhirst and is available to view on the website).

**3.3 Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch reports and updates.**

The Chair advised that there was nothing to report. Discussion then followed regarding recent loud music disturbance, which was revealed to be an unauthorised rave. The noise was traced to a remote location near a solar farm, lasting well past midnight. The police were unable to intervene until contact had been made with the landowner. It was understood that some residents called the police, and while officers initially found no noise, they later witnessed it and acted. Reports indicate the noise disturbance reached distant areas, leading to widespread complaints.

**4. Approval to consider, amend as agreed by the Council and approve the minutes of the following meeting:**

It was agreed by all to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

**5 Finance**

**5.1** It was agreed by all to approve the payments schedule.

**5.2** It was agreed by all to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the months of January and February 2025. The Chair advised that he had viewed the Bank Account with the Clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting.

**5.3** The budget update for period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 was presented with no matters arising.

**6 Funding & Grants:**

No information update.

**7. Footpaths & Highways:**

**7.1 Road closure – 10<sup>th</sup> March to 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – Dacombe Cross (Dacombe Hill to Treacle Barn. Environmental clean-up due to fuel spillage.**

The Chair informed the Councillors that this road closure sign was posted for a clean-up that didn't happen. Certas asked OHES (a specialist company), to handle the contaminated soil removal. Unfortunately, OHES explained that delays were due to needing an Environment Agency permit and the contractor's subsequent unavailability. A new DCC road closure permit is now being sought.

Regular soil samples show most areas are clear of contamination, with the worst affected area awaiting soil removal. The priority is ensuring Certas's insurance doesn't close the job until the owner is satisfied her property is free of smell and oil residue. The matter is being regularly monitored.

## **7.2 Road closure St. Marychurch Road and Ridgeway Lane - to connect new electricity power cable to solar park - Date closure 26<sup>th</sup> May – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

The Chair advised that the speed restrictions (40 and 30mph) and the Construction Traffic Management Plan are now active on St Marychurch Road. Deliveries to the site are using "Stop/Go" boards instead of traffic lights, which is expected to result in shorter road closures. So far, there have been no reported issues. The Site Manager, Paul Wills, has agreed to communicate any significant disruptions.

However, St Marychurch Road will need to close for two weeks to connect a power cable to the grid. As this closure will significantly divert traffic through Coffinswell and Dacombe, the Chair advised that Paul Gray from DNO Consulting was attending the meeting and asked him to provide further details on the work.

Paul Gray explained the technical aspects of the power connection, emphasising the loop-in, loop-out method. This involves breaking the power cable, connecting it to a new substation, and reconnecting it to the main grid. The complexity of this process requires shutting down a section of the network, and scheduling constraints dictated the specific closure dates. He advised that the team had built in extra time for contingencies, particularly given that adverse weather can delay work. The work involves multiple parties, including the Distribution Network Operator (DNO), which will handle critical cable reconnections.

The Councillors raised concerns regarding the extent of the road closures. He advised to ensure safety, operatives will be stationed at either end of the closure to prevent unauthorised access, as drivers often attempt to bypass barriers. The road layout, with its poor visibility, necessitates strict traffic control to protect workers. He advised that they had arranged for additional signage for a local business ensuring customers understand how to access the premises despite the closure. Further discussion followed regarding how traffic will re-route, with concerns that detours will send an excessive amount of traffic through the village. Suggestions were made about including additional signage to discourage unnecessary village traffic and it was noted that speeding on such detour routes are also identified as a significant issue.

It was noted that (subject to weather conditions) anticipated completion would be August 2025.

*\*\*\*Paul Gray was thanked for his attendance and explaining the issue more fully and left the Meeting at 7.56pm\*\*\**

7.3 It was also noted that Dacombe Mill Lane will be closed for 5 days from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025 for the installation of new cables.

8.

### **9. 7.4 Footpaths**

10. **The Chair thanked Tim Rumball** was praised for maintaining Kerswell Lane, particularly in narrow areas affected by overgrown hedges.

11.

12. It was noted that three volunteers, Neil Bowers, Mark Clayton, and Mike Harris, have recently completed a strimming course and will assist with maintenance.

13.

14. Footpath 1 was discussed in that the recent gravel work has been successful in preventing mud accumulation. It is proposed to add another five tonnes of gravel and additional reinforcement measures.

15. An issue has arisen with regarding to Footpath 3, where it appears that a landowner has removed part of a hedge and bank at the footpath's end, allegedly to prevent dogs from roaming. Whilst the landowner insists this is for safety, but the Parish Council feels that

whilst the change has not technically blocked the footpath it has altered the landscape, thereby raising concerns about compliance with regulations. The Parish Council await to see how the hedge and gate will be restored.

#### **16.To note any correspondence received**

None.

#### **9 Parish Matters:**

##### **9.1** To agree the Annual Parish Meeting format.

The Chair proposed that the Annual Parish meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 15 April 2025 should be in the same format as in previous years. Councillors fully agreed with the suggestions.

##### **9.2** Solar Farm:

The Chair advised that he has contacted the new developers, and it is hoped that discussions can be made to give a revised contribution model, though no commitment has been made yet.

Discussion then followed regarding the level of contribution in that an ongoing annual payment as opposed to a single sum. Potential fund uses ideas included maintenance projects and community investments, such as re-purposing the church as a village resource centre. However, allocation plans await successful negotiations, and the Chair invited the Councillors to join in the future discussions with the developers to secure a beneficial agreement for the Parish.

##### **9.3** Fibre-Optic Installation and Connectivity Issues

It was noted that Fibre optic cable infrastructure is in place in the village but requires individual resident requests for home connection. Discussion followed regarding mobile network reliability in the area, with both EE and Vodafone reportedly having poor or no service, and possible broader connectivity challenges.

#### **10.Planning & Enforcement Public Question Time:**

A period of 10 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make comment regarding planning applications and/or enforcement issues that affect Coffinswell Parish Council.

The Chair acknowledged that there was a member of public in attendance and as there were no further public questions, the discussion moved onto planning matters.

#### **11 Planning:**

##### **11.1** To discuss the following planning applications:

##### **25/00287/CAN – 1 Princess Cottages, Coffinswell.**

*Oak Tree (Tree 1) - Crown reduction*

*Sycamore Tree (Tree 2) - Extraction or reduction*

The Councillors discussed this application, and all present confirmed there were no objections.

##### **24/02094/FUL – High Meadow, Coffinswell.**

*Demolition of existing house and construction of replacement self-build dwelling with detached garage and annex*

The Chair reminded the Councillors that the Council had previously voted to support an application to re-model the existing bungalow but understood that subsequently not possible using the existing structure, hence the new application. The Chair advised it was unfortunate that the owner was not present, but he acknowledged a parishioner was in attendance to give their views.

Discussion followed during which significant concerns were raised with respect to the demolition process and its impact. The member of public highlighted the solid construction and deep foundations thereby predicting extensive work. Concern was expressed regarding the narrow, shared private driveway which it was felt would present major logistical challenges for large trucks, impacting debris removal and material delivery. It was feared that this would cause significant traffic disruption, noise, and potential damage to the driveway with this being some three years being constructed and finally completed. The visibility and aesthetic impact were also major concerns – the removal of trees from a neighbouring property has significantly increased the new structure's exposure, raising questions about its visual impact on the surrounding area, including a listed building. Debates then followed regarding the modern architectural style (particularly the flat/mono-pitch roof) and the new building's increased height compared to the existing structure. While acknowledging potential improvements the Parish Council were concerned for the community thereby trying to balance architectural plans and logistical challenges. It was evident that there were many mixed feelings about the application.

After much further discussion by the Councillors concerning the application, it was agreed that Whilst the Parish Council supported the previous, smaller extension, they viewed this revised application as a much larger-scale project requiring comprehensive management plans - there would be an objection to the application due to the concerns of no Construction Management Plan (no clear plan to minimise noise, dust and general nuisance) nor Traffic Management Plan (insufficient attention to managing increased traffic and disruption for neighbours and the village).

It was noted that should Teignbridge District Council approve the application, the Parish Council would request it be conditional on the submission of acceptable Construction and Traffic Management Plans.

**12. Enforcement Issues:**

None

**13. General Public Question Time:**

None.

**14. To note the date of the next meeting:**

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the Meeting which ended at 8.55 pm.

Signed:  
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council

Dated: