



Coffinswell Parish Council

Serving the Communities of
Coffinswell & Dacombe

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

MINUTES OF THE COFFINSWELL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 20th MAY 2025 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Present: Cllr N Orchard (Chair), Cllr S Avery (Vice Chair), Cllr C Bell, and Cllr S Spokes.
In attendance: Three members of Public
Mrs E Barnard
Mrs L Moore – Parish Clerk

Cllr N Orchard welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised of the formalities that are required to be conducted before the commencement of the Parish Council Meeting.

1. Election of Chair and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Avery proposed, and Cllr Spokes seconded that Cllr N Orchard be re-elected as Chair, this was agreed by all, and the Chair signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. Election of Vice Chair and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Orchard proposed, and Cllr Bell seconded that Cllr S Avery be re-elected as Vice Chair, this was agreed by all, and the Vice Chair signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. The Chairman to open the meeting and receive apologies.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.20pm

Received apologies from Cllr Atkinson, District Cllr J Taylor, and District Cllr J Radford.

4. Co-option of a new Councillor

The Chair advised all present that since Cllr Ashley Brent had resigned the vacancy had been advertised according to the agreed policy. There had been two requests for self-nomination forms but unfortunately only one person had returned them. Namely, Emma Barnard of Apple Acre in Dacombe.

5. Election of new Councillor and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After discussion, the Councillors unanimously voted to co-opt Emma Barnard, and she was warmly welcomed by the Parish Council. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed and completed in the presence of the Parish Clerk.

6. To declare any interests arising at this meeting.

Newly elected Cllr Barnard referred to the Planning Application under Agenda Item 16, 25/00568/HOU and 25/00568/LBC – Apple Acre, Dacombe concerning two storey rear extension with glazed link and associated landscaping.

7. Reports:

7.1 County Councillors' report. The Parish Clerk advised that unfortunately no report had been received from the new Devon County Councillor, Heather Horner, who was not in attendance.

7.2 District Councillors' report. – Not received due to absence.

7.3 Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch reports and updates.

Nothing to report.

8. Approval to consider, amend as agreed by the Council and approve the minutes of the following meetings: Tuesday 18th March 2025, and Tuesday 15th April 2025 - Annual Parish Meeting.

Due to the delay in the Draft Minutes being circulated, and, as not everyone had had time to review them, the Council decided to defer the approval of these to the next PC Meeting to be held in June, and, therefore three sets of Minutes would be reviewed for approval.

9. Finance

9.1 The presented payments schedule was agreed and approved.

9.2 The bank reconciliations for March (year-end) and April 2025 were agreed and approved.

9.3 The final quarterly budget update for the year 2024-25 was noted.

9.4 The Insurance Renewal for the Parish Council was approved being at the same cost as previous year.

10. Audit 2024-25

The Clerk advised the Council that this Agenda item with the documentation would be deferred until the next Parish Council meeting in June due to auditing process delays.

11. Funding & Grants:

It was confirmed that the first contribution of the Precept had been received (£3,392.50) and the HMRC had paid the VAT Refund request of £270.00.

12. Footpaths & Highways:

To receive an update on any other highways issues.

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

The Chair reminded everyone present regarding this major road closure and the resulting traffic implications for the installation of main grid connection cables. This is expected to cause a diversion of traffic through surrounding villages. He went on to explain that to mitigate the impact, the council has coordinated with traffic manager, Paul Gray to place signage at common shortcut points indicating "access to village only." While locals will navigate easily, the aim is to deter unfamiliar drivers. Paul Wills, the Solar Farm Site Manager, also informed the Council that construction vehicles will need to access the site via the village during the closure but assured that heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) will not be involved, minimising disruption.

It was noted that because of an incident involving a delivery lorry that became stuck near Fox Cottage additional signage to prevent future issues had been installed. Councillors noted the courteous behavior from solar farm drivers, and so far, the project has had minimal impact on local roads due to effective traffic management protocols.

Another closure was noted for Dacombe Mill from **Monday, June 2nd to Friday, June 6th**, for tree trimming and overhead cable installation. This route is not heavily used by the public but may affect nearby residents. The tree trimming is part of routine maintenance by Highline and linked to electricity infrastructure, evidenced by recent low-flying helicopter inspections.

The Chair also reminded everyone that there was an additional closure scheduled for 16th June to 20th June regarding the road past The Barn in Dacombe to complete the environmental remediation following an oil spill in November 2024, which it is hoped will finally clear the oil residue.

"20's Plenty" speed awareness stickers" The Chair advised that it had originally been intended to purchase another fifty of these stickers, but due to a sharp price increase only ten have now been purchased: it was noted that the Council still has a few remaining in stock.

The Council continued its discussion on footpath accessibility, focusing on making Footpath 1 suitable for pushchairs. It was noted that while some deteriorating gates might inadvertently improve access, the kissing gate at the top remains impassable for pushchairs. The Council has yet to formally follow up on potential improvements for this gate.

Regarding broader pathway improvements and pushchair access, the Council discussed utilising the remaining Parish Paths Partnership funding (£300 allocated for chippings, with underlay already available). It was hoped that a working party will be organised to lay these chippings before the end of June.

Concerns were raised about the safety of the path, particularly the steep incline at the Bothy end and its immediate exit onto a fast road. A proposed solution involves re-routing the exit and regrading the slope for a safer, more gradual descent. The Council will consider this further and may seek advice from Highways Authority on this.

The Council generally agreed to pursue these accessibility improvements to make the footpath more user-friendly and safer, viewing this as a positive step towards a more inclusive and safer village.

Concerns were also raised about kissing gates not being properly shut, leading to sheep escaping from fields. This issue is particularly problematic for managing weak or rejected lambs and has resulted in animals getting lost. While a stile was previously removed for better access, the recurring problem of escaped livestock is prompting reconsideration of reintroducing stiles. Various solutions for gate management were discussed, including installing weighted, self-closing gates. It was emphasised that ensuring gates shut properly, especially in fields with livestock, should be the responsibility of local highways or footpath authorities to prevent animals from escaping onto the road.

13. To note any correspondence received

None

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14. Parish Matters:

14.1 To discuss ownership of the Phone Box in Coffinswell.

The Chair informed the Councillors and those present that BT have stated that the phone box will be disconnected and the phone equipment removed unless a good case for its retention within the village can be made. The records show that there has been one phone call from the box within the last twelve months. Despite the lack of use, the phone box is Grade II listed, meaning it cannot be removed but could be sold to the community for £1. BT recently repaired the door after a winter storm, though a full replacement is pending. The Council discussed the requirement that the box must be in good repair before they would consider purchasing it, and it was noted that maintenance of the listed structure would become their responsibility, and although ideas for repurposing the phone box (e.g. book exchange or installing a defibrillator) were mentioned it was decided that any possible uses would be discussed at a future meeting. The Clerk was asked to contact BT to confirm that the Council wish to purchase the phone box once the new door has been fitted.

14.2 Councillors' Roles and responsibilities

The Chair initiated a discussion on Councillors' roles and responsibilities, referencing a document he circulated prior to the Meeting detailing tasks essential for the Council's functioning and fulfilment of its obligations.

Emphasizing the voluntary nature of being a Councillor, the Chair encouraged councillors to review the circulated list and volunteer for tasks they were willing and happy to undertake. It was acknowledged that if councillors were not able to take on duties, progress on certain initiatives would inevitably slow down. The floor was then opened for immediate volunteers or for councillors to request more time for consideration.

Following this, an informal discussion ensued, covering specific roles such as footpath maintenance, gardening, and social events. While no events are currently scheduled, the potential for future engagement was noted.

The Chair further clarified the formal division of duties between his role and that of the Parish Clerk & RFO.

A new potential role managing the village phone box was discussed, subject to the Council securing it. One of the Councillors expressed interest in this.

Another Councillor expressed interest in the Defibrillator management and the tasks involved were then briefly outlined by the Chair.

14.3 To discuss Parish Council IT/email requirements.

The meeting addressed the mandatory adoption of a ". gov.uk" domain name and domain-based email addresses for the Parish Council, as advised by the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC). The Chair highlighted concerns regarding the significant cost, with a sample quote of £500 for setup and £500+ annually, plus potential extra charges and fines, which was deemed unreasonable for a small parish.

Discussion confirmed the Council's obligation to comply but also the need for further research into mandatory requirements and associated costs. An alternative provider, TEEC, who manages Coffinswell's domain, was mentioned as a potentially more affordable solution, and as it is the Council's aim to find a compliant and cost-effective solution the Clerk was tasked with investigating options with them and reporting back to the Council with quotes.

14.4 The Financial Regulations Policy was reviewed and agreed by the Council.

14.5 The Risk Management Policy & Risk Assessment was reviewed and agreed by the Council.

14.6 The Privacy Policy was reviewed and agreed by the Council.

15. Planning & Enforcement Public Question Time:

The Chair reminded attendees that questions related to specific planning applications on the agenda should be reserved for their relevant time slots. At this point, no questions were posed by the public.

16. Planning:

16.1 To discuss the following planning applications:

25/00568/HOU and 25/00568/LBC – Apple Acre, Dacombe

Two storey rear extension with glazed link and associated landscaping.

- *Comments to TDC by 22nd May 2025*

The Chair began by asking Cllr Barnard for additional explanation regarding the project and its objectives, so that everyone was able to better understand the scope and intent of the proposed changes before opening the floor to discussion and making a formal recommendation or comment as a Council.

Cllr Barnard went onto explain that although it is a wonderful property she highlighted significant practical limitations for family life. For instance, the undersized kitchen which is too small for comfortable movement and poorly suited for regular use. Although advertised as four-bedroom property it effectively only has three functional bedrooms and a small dressing area. With a growing family there are serious spaces issues and increasingly impractical.

She went onto explain that to address the kitchen limitations the plan is to renovate and repurpose the current kitchen as a utility room; construct a new, more spacious kitchen in a separate structure; connect the new kitchen via a glass walkway thereby creating a "small wing" rather than a typical extension. The new kitchen's design is to accommodate more family interaction, comfortable seating, and communal meals, which aren't possible in the current layout. Also to increase living space by adding two new bedrooms upstairs, making the project more economically justifiable.

The Councillors then discussed the renovation's impact on the locality, and it was noted that the planned extension would respect the original building's character while offering modern living improvements. It was noted that it would not be visible from the road and its connection to the original cottage preserves the historical facade. Question was also raised concerning nearby residents' views, and Cllr Barnard confirmed that the most affected neighbours have no objections, and the extension will be barely visible due to the property's sloped position. Additionally, it was noted that the existing pond will be relocated to accommodate the renovation – all plants and aquatic life to maintain local wildlife support.

The Parish Council then unanimously agreed to support the application.

25/00529/HOU – Kates Meadow, Dacombe.

Proposed – Conservatory

– comments to TDC by 29th May 2025

The Chair asked the owners of Kate's Meadow, Mr. and Mrs Austin, to explain the reasons for this planning application. Mrs Austin explained the origins and that the project was delayed due to family illnesses and bereavements. Unfortunately, a re-application in 2020 was also stalled because of continuing health issues. The family still wants to retain the option to build in the future, prompting the current application. Since the conservatory would not be visible from the road and mirrors the existing porch, it promises modest but important improvements to family living space.

After a brief discussion, the Parish Council unanimously agreed to support the proposal, noting its lack of visual impact and the fact that it was previously approved.

16.2 To note the following Decision notice(s)

24/02094/FUL – High Meadow, Coffinswell.

Decision – refusal of Demolition of existing house and construction of replacement self-build dwelling with detached garage and annex

The Councillors discussed this planning decision, and it was noted the refusal was based on three main reasons:

- Impact on bats, particularly horseshoe bats, due to increased light pollution.
- Concerns over the proposed drainage, especially the disposal of wastewater directly into the land.
- Risk to trees at the bottom of the slope, as steep terrain would channel runoff water towards them, and protection measures were insufficient.

It was also noted that Teignbridge Planning emphasised these issues, highlighting that the new proposal's impact was more significant than the previously approved plan due to the extent of construction work involved.

17. Correspondence received by the Parish Clerk

None.

18. Enforcement Issues:

To receive any updates on outstanding enforcement issues.

19. General Public Question Time: None

20. To note the date of the next meeting:

Tuesday 17th June 2025

The meeting ended at 8.38 pm.

Signed:
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council

Dated: