

BUCKFASTLEIGH WEST PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Tuesday 2nd April 2024 **at the Village Hall , Scoriton** **Meeting Commenced approx 7.00pm**

Present – Cllrs Brent (Chairman), Knowling , Feasey , Le Marchant, Niering Owen & Rolls
Karen Gilbert as Clerk
22 members of the Public , Rob Steemson _ DNPA Ranger , District Cllr Pannell

The Meeting commenced with a highly interesting and informative talk and presentation by Kevin Cox. Kevin Cox, RSPB Chair

Kevin's talk highlighted the Bird species and populations across Devon and their recent decline in numbers - but focussed on Moorland birds and their habitats - which was of particular interest to those attending

This was followed by Questions and comments from those attending

The presentation was greatly enjoyed by all present and the Chairman thanked Kevin for the interesting talk

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

C Cllr Thomas and Sue Colwill and family

3. Report from the Chairman of Buckfastleigh West Parish Council

I'd like to start by welcoming you all to the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting and to once again thank Kevin Cox for his very interesting talk on birds.

The Parish Council has had another busy year for Planning Applications to comment on. A couple of site visits were held and I'd like to thank all our Parish Councillors for the time and effort they are happy to give freely both to these and other Parish matters.

Twelve months ago, in my last Chairmans Report, I remember commenting on the exceptionally dry winter we had had, well the past 6 months has certainly made up for that. With several

monthly rainfall records being broken it must be the wettest period of weather that I remember.

The prolonged wet weather has created some flooding issues. On the public roads and my thanks go to anyone who has spent time clearing out buddle holes and drains. Fortunately there was no snow of any note this year to deal with.

The Parish Council have again employed the services of a part time Lengthsman at strategic times in order to get drains opened up as required in order to prevent excessive flooding. This works well.

The state of our roads is becoming more of a concern with potholes seemingly being created at a rate of knots. This has been largely due to the continuous wet weather we have been experiencing. I would like to encourage everyone to report any bad potholes on the Devon County Report a Pothole website.

From my experience this seems to work really well with a quick response from the Devon County team both in the assessment of the reported holes to repairing them, often within a fortnight

Throughout the year our Parish Council meetings have been regularly attended by both our District and County Councillors. My thanks to them for the regular reports which give us a good idea of what's going on at County and District level.

As usual I'd like to end by thanking all the local people and committees who help to organize the various local events which are put on during the year and which we all enjoy so much.

Many thanks to you all!!

Simon Brent. 1/4/2024

4. Report from County Cllr Dan Thomas - written

Another tricky year for DCC with Adult and Children's Services under tremendous pressure and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) section of the latter in special measures under OFSTED criteria.

The other core part of the Council's service – Highways – has not fared much better, with numerous issues with damaged roads and blocked gulleys. In the South Brent and Yealmpton Division, of which Buckfastleigh West is one of 12 parishes, we have not done too badly, mainly thanks to Nick Colton, our local highways engineer. As long as potholes are reported, they are generally being mended reasonably quickly, and when that hasn't been the case, Nick and I have put pressure on Milestone, the external contractor in question. Whether this crucial service should be privatised to a third party company is a matter of political debate.

From a Governance point of view, we have the new Combined County Authority to look forward to. It remains to be seen exactly how this will benefit the residents of Devon.

The small piece of good news is that Locality Funding seems to have gone back up to £8k per Cllr. Buckfastleigh West hasn't asked for support this year, but I would certainly look kindly on match funding any projects in the Parish from May.

5. Report from District Councillors Pannell & Hancock

Local Elections 2023

At the Local Elections in May 2023 control of South Hams District Council passed to the Liberal Democrats for the first time since the Council was formed in the 1970s. The only other period when the Conservatives were not in the majority was in the 1990s, when members of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independents formed a coalition ruling group for four years. There are now 19 Liberal Democrat Councillors, seven Conservatives, three Greens, one Labour and one Independent. One Conservative member and one Green accepted invitations to join the Council's Executive Committee. Guy Pannell and David Hancock are the two Members for South Brent Ward.

Council Plan approved for 2024-5



At their February meeting this South Hams District Council voted to accept the Council Plan setting out priorities for the next four years in response to the challenges and opportunities faced by communities across the District. Members also supported the Year 1 delivery plan, and the funding needed to deliver the plans. The Council Plan includes four key policy areas: to tackle the housing challenges, address climate change and biodiversity loss, support the economy and deliver good quality services to our communities. The plan is

funded by an investment of £4.59m. This is made up of £1m of money released from reserves and capital schemes that are no longer needed together with £3.59m from the realignment of core budgets and government grants such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. To complement the housing priorities in The Council Plan, the Executive also approved a specific action plan focused on Housing and Homelessness prevention. Another of the Council's key priorities is to do all it can to respond to Climate change and Biodiversity loss . It will do this with a budget of £500,000 to support a wide range of environmental initiatives, including supporting changes to agricultural practices and decarbonisation of the marine economy. The four priorities will be underpinned by providing good quality core council services. The Council will do this by working closer with our communities, improving customers access to services, making sure it is financially sustainable and putting good governance in place.

Grants for climate and ecology projects

District Councillors have been given a budget of £2,000 each to enable them to support a wide range of projects to help us tackle our Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations. The project should meet one of the objectives in the South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. These are:

Each Councillor has a budget of £2,000 to help not for private profit groups or organisations to deliver community projects that benefit their Ward or the wider local area. This is in addition to each Councillor's yearly budget of £2,000 for their Locality Fund to support local groups and initiatives on other projects.

Devolution Deal for Devon

Devolution for Devon and Torbay has taken a step nearer with the publication of Government proposals for a ground-breaking deal that could re-draw the future relationship between local government in Devon and Torbay, and Whitehall. The plans, announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young at an event in Paignton in January, would enable more decisions to be taken locally on issues such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport. The proposed Deal sets out proposals that could see the transfer of a range of powers and funding to a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), subject to public consultation. This body includes representatives of the District Councils in Devon. Under the proposals the new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030.

Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities.. The Government .s proposing to transfer over £16 million of new funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy.

The Government is offering a stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

On transport, the proposed Deal builds on Devon County Council and Torbay Councils' long history of working well together on local transport planning. The proposed Deal will strengthen this joined-up approach with Devon and Torbay working as equal partners on a CCA and improving the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport.

The Government is also offering to transfer responsibility for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025.

The CCA would be responsible for working with Devon County Council, Torbay Council, District Councils and the business and education sectors to support high growth business sectors such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital, and improve the look and feel of local communities with street and town centre enhancements.

Waste/recycling collection on track

The final reorganisation of the waste and recycling rounds in areas not previously covered has gone much more smoothly than can have been hoped for. Managers have worked closely with the collection staff to ensure the rounds are planned as efficiently as possible, and the introduction of more smaller collection lorries has worked well. In January only 191 collections were missed out of 100,000 – a failure rate of less than 0.2 per cent. The recycling rate for all waste collected is currently 45% but this is steadily improving towards the excellent levels achieved before the service was privatised in 2019.

DNPA - Guy Pannell also spoke for DNPA - as a serving Member

He explained that the budget for the 24/25 was still unknown as had been the case in 23/24 when the Authority began the year using Reserves

He confirmed that the Authority had submitted its response to the Fursdon report - on the management of protected sites on Dartmoor and that the date for the appeal on Wild camping at the Supreme Court had been set for October 2024

6 . Speakers / reports from Parish organisations

Scoriton Village Hall Management Committee - NO REPORT

Scoriton Show - Mark Knowling advised the meeting that approximately 1000 visitors had attended the Show in 2023 with 483 entries presented resulting in a profit of £4000. After the retention of £3000 to the Rainy day fund, the sum of £1000 was to be allocated to various local good causes

The Parish Tree Warden

Simon Brent, as Parish Tree warden, reported that Stumpy Oak was in relatively good shape - with Stumpy junior growing well. Ash Dieback continues to be problematic - although possibly not so widespread as first thought.

National Trust - NO REPORT

Buckfastleigh West Commoners - NO REPORT

Police Report - NO REPORT

Dartmoor National Park Ranger - Rob Steemson

I am pleased to be your DNPA Sector Ranger again after a gap of forty years and have over the year surveyed the two footpaths and seven bridleways in the Parish.

New signs have recently appeared on BW14 at Hayford hall and Ludgate, whilst drainage has been undertaken on BW1 in Burchetts wood. New signs are ordered for BW2 in Scorrison and FP4 between Strole and Higher Coombe along with a temporary repair on a gate which will now be passed onto a contractor.

Signs are also ordered for FP10 Bilberry to Button along with a stile repair which will be done soon.

I recently had a site meeting with the owner of Scorrison down and three new signs are on order for the permitted footpath whilst we are still looking at options at Chalk ford bridge and erosion.

I have a few Voluntary Wardens who also undertake practical works such as vegetation clearance and drainage. We are also planning to organise a community event to remove the plastic tulip tubes from the tree planting area up Scorrison lane.

The Chairman thanked all for their contributions and also thanked the Tradesman's Arms for supplying the refreshments

The meeting closed at 8.55pm