

BUCKFASTLEIGH WEST PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Tuesday 7th April 2026 **at the Village Hall , Scoriton** **Meeting Commenced approx 7.00pm**

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

C Cllr Thomas & Tony Bolton - Scoriton Village Hall

2. Report from the Chairman of Buckfastleigh West Parish Council

CHAIRMANS REPORT

I'd like to start by welcoming you all to the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting of Buckfastleigh West Parish Council. Your participation is very much appreciated and I'm certain everyone will find the annual reports from the various committees and bodies to be very interesting.

I'd especially like to thank both Guy Pannell and Dan Thomas who continue to make great efforts to attend as many of our monthly Parish Council meetings as possible in order to update us on both discussions and decisions being made at District and County levels. Also our Clerk Karen Gilbert who keeps us all in line and legal!

Sadly this last year saw the passing of Tony Colwill. Tony will be fondly remembered both for his contributions to the local community and his long standing service on Buckfastleigh West Parish Council.

The Parish Council has had another interesting year for Planning Applications to comment on. No site visits were considered to be necessary, however I'd like to thank our Councilors for all their input and comments which were passed on to the National Park.

This winter the weather was dominated by relentless rain with a number of storms hitting the South West. Tree damage caused by wind was fortunately minimal in our Parish, however flooding was more of an issue. Many thanks to anyone who made the effort to get out to unblock roadside drains.

The new Buddle Hole pipe at Stumpy Oak fitted last year by South West Highways has certainly helped during the winter and once the recently layed hedge has been cleared up, keeping the field side unblocked will be considerably easier.

Due to the mild wet winter, our Snow Warden Brad had a pretty easy time of it! Many thanks however for ensuring all our Grit Bins were topped up Brad!!

Potholes continue to be the bane of everyone's driving lives. I really would urge people to go online in order to report any bad holes as the response to reports is normally pretty swift. Repairs however do still take a while! The section of road outside Buckfast Abbey continues to annoy everyone as its now become a cross between a slalom and driving assault course!! Let's hope the 2026/27 budget will stretch to getting it resurfaced.

Many thanks to the Police for restarting their Reports after a brief gap after Tamzin departed. Many thanks for attending tonight.

Finally, as usual, I would like to end by thanking all the local people and Committees who give their time freely in order to help organize the various local events which we all enjoy so much. Many thanks to you all!!

Simon Brent.

Simon Brent. 7/4/26

3. Report from County Cllr Dan Thomas - written

An annual report. As my role is Cabinet member for Highways, that area rather dominates the report, but to be fair, it does always seem to be the most important issue on the doorstep!

Highways

I have been able to introduce 2 projects to the department, with a third about to start:

The 'Common Sense' pothole trial

This ran across 2 electoral divisions in 2025 (1 urban, 1 rural) where the process was that for every pothole reported that met the safety criteria (300mm by 40mm vertical edge), the team would be empowered to fix other defects that did not (meet the criteria). So enthused were the gangs that they decided to use a range of 500m in either direction or to the nearest junction. In practical terms, this is too costly and too large an area. In 2026, a larger version of the trial will run across 7 divisions where the gangs will be asked to follow the 'reasonable person' test, ie would the public reasonably expect you to mend that pothole while you are there as well as this one. Locations will be picked on pothole data as well as those areas high in elderly, disabled and/or pregnant road users, who are disproportionately affected by poor road surfaces.

The Parish Protocol

We are in the process of employing a member of staff specifically to run the PP, which will support towns and parishes to buy bespoke schemes of work from DCC – this will include 20mph zones, parish white lining remarks, zebra crossings, extra road signage – anything in short that the county either does not feel is essential or which it has budgeted for, but not within the time frame requested by the Town or Parish Council.

The Fast Response Squads. These will be set up for 2026/27 as four geographically based teams with a short work programme, meaning that Councillors and their Neighbourhood Highways Officers will be able to get some quick results in areas that are causing particular issues for a community. This is precisely the sort of rapid response that will help to change the 'Computer says no' belief that many have about the Highways Department.

On top of these, and as previously reported, this year's budget includes an additional £15 million investment in Devon's roads, alongside a commitment to maintain £10 million per year in additional funding over the following five years. This is a major shift in approach. For too long, highways funding has been reactive and insufficient, leading to a cycle of patching rather than repairing.

The extra funding will allow us to move beyond emergency pothole filling and begin tackling structural deterioration in a more strategic way. That means more resurfacing, more preventative maintenance, and more drainage work to stop water destroying road foundations in the first place.

After one of the worst winters on record for storm damage, this investment is both timely and essential. While it will not fix every problem overnight, it represents a serious and sustained commitment to improving the condition of Devon's roads. It is worth pointing out that we have had 50 gangs out all the time over the winter, fixing around 2500 potholes per week.

At the same time, an extra £4 million of revenue funding will allow us to continue to fix the potholes that we have now, as well as addressing the regular issue of blocked culverts, grips and buddle holes in quicker order.

Social Care

We should hear imminently both from OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission regarding progress in Children's and Adults' services respectively. Certainly all the mood music suggests progress in the right direction, but clearly the journey of improvement will be a long one, albeit essential.

Locality

I was delighted to support the Parish with £350 towards replacing the defibrillator in 25/26; my pot has returned to 2021/22 levels and is back to £10k for the coming year so I would like to hear from any organisation in the parish that I could support in a small way (usually up to £500 per application).

As Councillors are aware, the Parish has not historically been overly demanding of the County Council but I reiterate, it is my job to speak for you at County Hall and I am always happy to do so as required.

4. Report from District Councillors Pannell & Hancock

Local Government Reorganisation

If the Government proceeds with its intention to reorganise the Local Government structure in Devon, South Hams Council will cease to exist in two years' time. The local elections for South Hams due in May 2027 will be cancelled, and replaced with elections at that time for Members to a new Shadow unitary authority, which will steer the reorganisation locally before taking over all the functions of the County and District councils at the end of April 2028.

A statutory consultation by the Government, seeking views of individuals and interested parties on proposals for the shape of those new authorities finished on March 26th. Five different proposals were made by councils or groupings of councils.

South Hams Council strongly supported the proposal put forward by itself, together with West Devon Borough and Teignbridge District Councils for three Unitary Authorities. These would comprise:

Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary: East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge

Plymouth to remain unchanged

Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary: South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

South Hams gave some support to a variation of this proposal put forward by the remaining District Councils in Devon. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary: East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, and Torridge

Plymouth Expanded: Plymouth plus parts of the parishes of Bickleigh, Brixton, Shaugh Prior and Sparkwell from the neighbouring district of South Hams

Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary: Remaining parts of South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

South Hams strongly opposed the three other proposals.

Devon County Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

Devon Unitary Council: East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon

Plymouth to remain unchanged

Torbay to remain unchanged

Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

Exeter: Exeter plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid-Devon District Council.

Plymouth: Plymouth plus 13 parishes from South Hams

Torbay: Torbay plus 22 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council and South Hams District Council.

Devon Coast and Countryside: The rest of Devon, including the parishes in the South Brent Ward of South Hams

Torbay Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

Exeter Council: Exeter plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid Devon District Council

Plymouth Council: Plymouth plus 13 parishes from South Hams

Rural Devon Coast and Countryside Council: The rest of Devon

Torbay Council to remain unchanged

The Government is expected to announce its decision in the coming Summer, but it might also ask Devon councils to confer together to refine one or more of the options.

Government cuts funding for SHDC

The Government's "Fair" Funding Review has seen the Council fall into the category of being the worse impacted in the country, where only 95% of the Council's previous levels of funding have been guaranteed by the Government in 2027/28 and 2028/29. This is a reduction in Government funding of £2.671m in 28/29 for example – a 41% reduction. The Council is currently forecasting a £2.65m budget gap by the following year, 2027/28. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2028/29 is £6.96m, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually.

IMPACT OF THE "FAIR" FUNDING REVIEW:

The three year finance settlement for 2026/27 to 2028/29 was announced in Parliament on 17th December 2025. This has seen the introduction of the Government's "Fair" Funding

Review 2.0, alongside a reset of the business rates baseline and the cessation of the New Homes Bonus scheme.

The Council falls into the category where only 95% of its previous levels of funding have been guaranteed by the Government in 2027/28 and 2028/29 – this is the category most impacted by the “Fair” Funding Review. This is a real terms decrease and means the Council will receive no additional funding for inflationary pressures or higher levels of service demand.

This reduction in Government funding is from £6.482m in 25/26 to £3.811m in 28/29. This is a reduction in Government funding of £2.671m (a 41% cut). This is a substantial reduction and is the real impact of the Government’s new “Fair” Funding Review. Shire Districts are the worse impacted category of Councils. Core Spending Power is ‘cash flat’ at £15m for both 2027/28 and 2028/29.

Remoteness has been removed from all of the Area Cost Adjustments (ACA), with the exception of Adult Social Care. This was a last minute change to the funding formula by the Government. As a sparsely populated area with large travel distances, taking away the remoteness factor has impacted on South Hams quite heavily as it disadvantages more rural and remote Councils. The other changes that have significantly impacted South Hams are -

The weighting in the funding formula for visitor and commuter population has been reduced relative to the weighting for permanent residents. This disadvantages areas with a high concentration of tourists and commuters. So this significantly disadvantages South Hams. The visitor economy for South Hams is a significant cost.

The separate funding formulae for coastal protection and flood defence have been removed – so again South Hams loses out.

The Fixed Cost Adjustment has been removed (this is the cost of a Council opening its doors – this fixed cost adjustment used to recognise that there is a minimum cost of running any Council). Analysis by Pixel Financial Management shows that rural authorities have suffered the biggest losses in funding in the 3 year finance settlement in terms of Core Spending Power and government funding changes over the next three years.

The net result is that Core Spending Power – the amount the Government states is available to Councils for the coming year (including a 2.9% Council Tax increase – has fallen by 0.6% for SHDC. In contrast it has risen by 5.3% for Shire Counties, 6% for London Boroughs, and 7.5% for Metropolitan Districts.

The Council has submitted a consultation response to the Local Government Finance Settlement. In particular, the Council’s response focusses on the fact that the separate funding formulae for coastal protection and flood defence should be reinstated, the remoteness factor should be reinstated and the weighting should not be reduced in the funding formula for the visitor and commuter population. The Council’s response also highlights that there is a technical error in the council taxbase growth assumptions with regards to the second homes premium which is already within the 2025/26 Taxbase’

The Council agreed an increase of the maximum of 2.99% in Council Tax for the coming year. This equates to a rise of £5.88 per year or 11pence per week for a Band D property.

Storm response

Our officers have been working closely with the Environment Agency and Devon County Council, to deal with damage caused by strong winds and waves to the A379 road and one of our car parks at Torcross in February. Properties there have also been damaged - delivering another blow to the area after Storm Ingrid. We continue to work with our partners to carry out further investigations and work out what next steps are available to us.

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

Guy Pannell advised that the new CEO Tom Surrey started in his role in mid March and that the Authority had supported the 4- 5- 1 proposal submitted to Government under the LGR

5 . Speakers / reports from Parish organisations

Scoriton Village Hall Management Committee

- Handover from old committee to new members underway (not much enthusiasm locally for involvement with the hall)
- Finances ok, though some projected spending on maintenance this year
- Problem with damp/rot in the floor may require substantial work (quotes being obtained)
- Usual level of bookings foreseen through the year
- Trying to get electrical testing up-to-date (EIRC/PAT) - electrician booked
- Need to review hall policies in light of safeguarding/H&S concerns

The owner of the Chapel was present and gave an update on the works to date and the progress on his proposals / pre-app planning

Scoriton Show -

Mark Knowing reported that the Show would take place in 2026 . Given the restrictions and regulations on holding a Public Show , together with the increased Financial overheads , careful consideration would be given to the viability of future shows

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 no so widespread as first thought . Some trees appear to be improving over time

National Trust - NO REPORT

POLICE REPORT

The Parish of Scoriton is served by the Neighbourhood Police team working out of Ashburton Police station and Chudleigh Police office.

The team is currently being led by Inspector Sean Roper. Sgt Ryan Cook is the Neighbourhood Team Leader and PC Claire Hurrell is the Neighbourhood Beat Manager. At this time there is no Police Community Support Officer specifically assigned to the Ashburton Neighbourhood team that covers Scoriton, so PCSO Paul Wilson and PCSO Tina Jordan are supporting the area when necessary.

Scoriton sits within the Police beat area of JA2F an area we call Buckfastleigh Rural.

The map attached will show the area covered by this report which includes small hamlets and individual farms and properties as well as the road network around them

Although every effort has been made to produce accurately the following figures, there may be a discrepancy in the totals shown.

In the period from 1st April 2025 to the 31st March 2026 there has been an approximate total of 9 criminal offences in this area.

Assaults; 2 Burglary; 1 Dog offence; 1 Fraud; 1 Harassment; 2
Theft; 2

From what I am able to research 2 of these offences were in Scoriton itself.

These figures do not include any traffic offenses that may have been recorded

In the same period of time there were approximately 24 non-crime occurrences in the JA2F area 5 of which were shown to be in Scoriton.

Non crime occurrences are where the Police are contacted via the 999 or 101 telephone systems or through email or contact through the Devon and Cornwall Police website.

Examples of this type of occurrences would be, road traffic collisions, road obstructions due to flooding or fallen trees etc, antisocial behaviour, concerns for welfare including missing persons or

alarm responses. This type of occurrence does not generally meet the criteria for recording a crime.

The Neighbourhood Police team hold Police surgeries throughout the year; these surgeries give members of the communities the chance to talk to members of the Local Neighbourhood Police Team about local Policing issues. If you think your area would benefit from a Police surgery please let us know of a suitable location and we will try to arrange one.

PCSO 30382 Paul Wilson. Chudleigh Police office

Dartmoor National Park Ranger - Rob Steemson

DNPA's fourth Chief Executive started on 18th March.

DNPA is celebrating its 75 anniversary this year and generally our government funding is looking stable for the next three years. Over the last year DNPA were given 1.4million for capital investment and this continues throughout 26/27. The successful Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) project has also been extended for another three years.

Works have taken place on DNPA land at Buckfastleigh moor above Lud gate to manage heavy rainfall. An old leat has been cleared out and gorse in the area removed to make access easier. This has been done to alleviate the flooding that has been running off the Pupers hill and down to the bridleway below Cross Furzes and washing out the surface. Old, abandoned drains alongside the road have been reopened from near Hayford hall down to Cross Furzes which Highways will now put back on their maps for future maintenance.

Regular Public Rights of Way checks have been undertaken throughout the year and minor works done. There are a few replacement signs on order.

The last time I saw Tony Colwill, he showed me the prisoner of war stone in Scoriton lane that he was concerned might get damaged. Unfortunately, I could not progress the idea over the last few months. Therefore, I mention it to Council for future discussion and thoughts about how and where it might be re-located as a village project, that I could oversee, potentially using FiPL funding.

Buckfastleigh West Commoners - NO REPORT

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

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm