

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 30th March 2026 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Cllr Kevin Braithwaite.
Cllr Mrs Pat Drinkall.
Cllr Peter Warden.
Cllr David Gunter.
Cllr Mrs Avril Bowen.
Cllr Harry Cole.
Cllr Mrs Sue Yemm (following point 2)
Clerk Jonathan Martin.

01. Apologies

Apologies had been received from District Councillor Tim Gwilliam, none have been received from District Cllr Clive Elsmore or County Councillor Piers Camp.

02. Resolve on the Co-opting of Mrs Susan Yemm to become a member of the Parish Council

Proposed: Cllr Harry Cole.
Seconded: Cllr Kevin Braithwaite.

Resolved.

The Forms for the new Councillor will be signed at the end of the meeting and supplied to the FODDC as soon as possible.

03. Forum

As no members of the public or visiting District or County Councillors were present, there was no Forum.

Cllr Drinkall raised the planning survey, noting that it was from a rural housing provider rather than the FODDC. This type of survey had been offered to the Parish Council and considered previously and had been rejected. It was agreed that this stance would remain, and that the survey would remain outside Parish Council business.

04. The reading and confirmation of the minutes of the previous bi-monthly Meeting

Proposed: Mrs Cllr Pat Drinkall.
Seconded: Cllr Peter Warden.

Resolved.

05. Matters arising from the minutes of the last bi-monthly Meeting

951.3 Speed Cameras

The minutes have had the term ‘community watch’ removed from the item title.

Cllr Braithwaite stated that the sole Vehicle Activated Speed Sign the Parish Council has left is still working in good order on Ross Road, English Bicknor, and the missing Vehicle Activated Speed Sign from Hillersland remains withheld by Gloucestershire County Council.

The Clerk reported that he had updated the police’s original information to reflect that the Camera had been found and was being held by a Gloucestershire County Council contractor. The Clerk stated that the County Council’s own complaint procedure had been suggested to them by the police as a means of obtaining the property's return. The Clerk had already written a draft complaint statement and presented it to the Chairman. The County Council's deliberate withholding of the equipment is now being seen as tantamount to theft.

It was agreed that the Clerk would undertake this process and report back, keeping the County Councillor in the loop.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

The Chair reported that he had been delayed in finding a sign.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall said that she would ask Mrs Wendy Gwilliam to have the sign installed on a post or the wall outside of her house, and in a second supporting area.

The Design of the sign cannot be ‘formal’ or ‘official’ in style, as it cannot be seen to represent an official sign sanctioned by the Gloucestershire Highways department. It is, in effect, a private warning sign. A design and cost for a suitable sign that fits these criteria needs to be developed.

219.2 Pavement Weed Spraying.

The Clerk has asked for a weeding schedule from Gloucestershire Highways and has received nothing.

Cllr Gunter suggested that the only way to encourage the above department to start weeding is to log the weed growth issue on FixMyStreet. The Clerk would file this action.

330. Potholes.

Cllr Cole reported that some pothole repairs had been undertaken recently. However, some road damage had simply been marked with paint. However, an eye will be kept on the completed repairs as these have a history of rapidly deteriorating.

Both Cllr Gunter and Cllr Yemm will forward photos of unrepaired damage to the Clerk for reporting online.

Problems with the Red Tarmac area at the 30 mph sign would be reported to FixMyStreet again.

383. Water across road. Hillersland <-> Symonds Yat Rock.

Cllr Cole said that the drain in question had been cleared and this should resolve the problem of water spreading across the road in the short term.

387. Regarding the safety cones and drop-off areas at the School.

It was reported that the traffic cones had been moved onto the pavement. Although the problem of the cones being crushed by cars has improved, the running over of the cones has been reported again. Cllr Cole suggested a staggered leaving time at school might alleviate the traffic problem. It was agreed that there was nothing specific for the Parish Council to address.

397. Footpaths in the Parish.

None.

415. Wildlife and pest Parish.

None.

417. A. Re: Lucy Court power pole overgrowth.

Cllr Gunter reported that some work had been done on the tree; this appeared to still be ongoing.

15.1 Re: Derelict Lorry trailer near Stowfield Road.

The Rubbish has reportedly been cleaned up and removed; however, the lorry trailer remained. It was confirmed that the site was at the edge of the Parish ward.

06. Report of the County Councillor.

None.

07. District Councillor report.

The Clerk read out an emailed report composed by Cllr Gwilliam.

The point of note was that the local potholes were now being repaired.

Cllr Gunter added that the described Biosphere project was being heavily criticised for failing to consult community leaders. Cllr Cole commented that the new system lacks accountability, as the FODDC area would effectively be under the guidance of a foreign agency.

District Cllr Gwilliam would be emailed by the Clerk to express the Parish Council's interest in passing their input about the Biosphere scheme up the chain.

08. Planning Matters

The topic of a planning application resolved at the February meeting was raised. This involved application P1548/25/FUL at Sterts Farm, to change the land purpose away from purely agricultural usage. The decision at that meeting was to assign a no-comment statement and this was duly recorded in the February minutes.

Cllr Warden explained that he had heard from a neighbour a confused belief that the Parish Council had actually voted against the application. There was apparently a 'list' of the Parish Councillors who had voted against the application. This was clearly a distortion of the event. There had clearly been a problem with people getting faulty information. Cllr Warden suggested that the Parish Council write a letter to the planning applicant in question to express the above correction.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall also reiterated that the Council's meetings are neither secret nor are their minutes. Another solution could be to provide the person with their own copy of the minutes from the February meeting. In this, the no comment resolution could be seen for themselves. The Parish Council agreed that this would be an adequate solution, and the Clerk would provide Cllr Mrs Drinkall with a copy of these minutes for them to be passed on.

Cllr Mrs Yemm asked if it was the practice that the Parish Council should inform planning applicants directly of their resolutions after the meetings. The Clerk explained that the Council's decisions were posted online as part of the formal document sequence to which the applicants have access. It was also standard practice not to record the precise votes on Parish Council resolutions, except for whether the resolution passed or failed.

09. Financial report and accounts for payment:

- GALC (Formerly GAPTC) membership fee - £137.42
- Mr David Maxfield – Work on trees through English Bicknor Village - £175.00
- Jonathan Martin – clerk's wages - £334.94

Total: £647.36

The role of GALC (Formerly GATPC) was briefly explained to Cllr Mrs Yemm.

A letter of thanks to Mr Maxfield would be included with his payment, in gratitude for his support of the Parish Council.

Proposed: Cllr Peter Warden.

Seconded: Cllr David Gunter.

Resolved.

- To discuss and resolve upon the update of the Clerk's wages in line with the NALC recommendations.

An issue of the Clerk's change in PAYE status was addressed. The Clerk had yet to receive the underpayment for five months. The amount is £418.70. This would be paid along with the wages.

The Clerk excused himself from the discussions on their wage increase. Returning to the chamber, it was determined that, as of April 1st, the Clerk's new hourly rate would be increased to £13.47 per hour for 20 hours a month and that the Clerk would submit an invoice at each two-monthly meeting which would detail any PAYE tax information whether Zero or otherwise. Resolved.

- Preliminary review of the end-of-year accounts for 2025-26.

The Clerk described the end-of-year accounts, which now need to be reviewed by members of the Parish Council. Generally, the Parish Council was well within budget. The regular internal auditor had also been contacted, and the audit had been arranged.

10. Highways.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall raised a concern that the Left Hand Village Sign at the approach from the northern end of the Village in the northern part of the Village had disappeared. This would be checked on and reported to Highways if needed.

A silt buildup at Folly Lane was reported following recent flooding. The Clerk will report this via the FixMyStreet website.

11. Ash Dieback in the Parish

NTR

12. Footpaths in the Parish

NTR

13. Wildlife and Pest Matters.

Cllr Gunter detailed that he had attended several meetings with various agencies about the potential risk of an outbreak affecting pig livestock. It had become apparent that both DEFRA and Forestry England were unprepared for this potentiality.

14. Correspondence received since last meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that the Annual meetings had been rescheduled to May 18th, one week later than originally set.

The Clerk was then commissioned to begin sending out the invitations to all of the local groups and associations for the meetings on the above day.

The Clerk reported the reason why the Parish Council had not been billed for the use of the shared website. This is because the website manager, Mr Andrewes, believes that they are on a multi-year subscription and will not be invoiced for at least another year.

There is also a new Forest of Dean Crime Prevention Officer, Mr Tom Oliver.

15. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

The routine inspection of the warning sign over the road at Symonds Yat Rock found no serious defect. However, slight buckling was observed due to the wood backing's warping. Cllr Cole said that he will take a look at this to see if any repairs are needed.

Cllr Warden mentioned his recent attendance at a tea and cake morning at the Village Hall. These events are held on Monday mornings between 10am and 12pm. He suggested that the Parish Council might consider setting up a table for a Q&A service for anyone with questions on Parish Council operations and activities, and he would be happy to attend. There was general agreement that this would be a good idea. This could be done before the upcoming AGM in May.

The Parish Magazine will be provided with various updates and information pertaining to the Annual Assembly and Annual Meeting set for May 18th.

Cllr Cole inquired about the Biosphere project, and the Clerk said that he would forward the Councillor some information that had recently arrived on this.

Cllr Mrs Yemm said that the WI will be attending the Annual meetings and would be available to provide refreshments.

16. Date of next meeting, and dates of next year's meetings.

The Parish AGM and Assembly meeting is set for Monday 18th May 2026.

The next normal Parish Council meeting is set for Monday 1st June 2026.