

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st June 2026 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Cllr Kevin Braithwaite.
Cllr Mrs Pat Drinkall.
Cllr David Gunter.
Cllr Mrs Avril Bowen.
Cllr Mrs Sue Yemm
Clerk Jonathan Martin.

01. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Parish Councillors Cole and Warden; none had been received from District Cllr Jamie Elsmore, Tim Gwilliam or County Councillor Piers Camp.

02. Public Forum

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

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

The minutes required a change of name of the cited CPO (Crime Prevention Officer). The officer in question's name is Rhian Rose-Jones.

Resolved.

04. Matters arising from the minutes of the last bi-monthly meeting.

The Chair suggested that the Clerk investigate an alternative minuting system for the next meeting.

951.3 Speed Cameras.

The Chair also gave an update on the speed camera situation. The money for the replacement parts of the now returned VAS is being arranged as a refund from Gloucestershire County Council. This will be done by obtaining a quote from Elan City, the original suppliers, for the replacement materials and then passing it on to the County Council. At present, there remains no way to secure the VAS back to its post. This will require purchasing new brackets, which may need to be funded by the Parish Council.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

There is no further information on replacement signs at the lane, and Gloucestershire Highways remains firm in that they will not be installing warning signs.

Cllr Gunter described a new incident that had occurred down the lane, which occurred before the recent AGM. Once again, a car became stuck in the mud-trap. This was further compounded by the very poor mobile phone reception in the same area. This incident was caused again by following the SatNav.

A potential warning sign, installed by the Parish Council, would only need to cover one part of the lane, perhaps near The Redhouse. However, the real issue remains the incorrect SatNav.

This sign can be simple, with straightforward wording. It would likely need to be reflective and blue.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall reported that she had spoken with Mrs Gwilliam, the owner of Hillersland Farm, who has no issue with signs being put up on her wall or a post.

219.2 Pavement Weed Spraying.

The Clerk would raise this matter with County Councillor Camp, especially over the 'brick wall' stance of Gloucestershire County Council in refusing to undertake the maintenance.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall suggested that the Parish Council might consider paying for a private clearing service, but stressed that this would, in effect, be paying twice for what Council tax should be covering.

Another alternative, suggested by Cllr Gunter, was to organise a volunteer group to clear it, for which he may be able to use his equipment.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

The sign had been recently inspected, and there were no reports of any issues with it.

330. Potholes.

The Clerk reported that he had not received the promised photos from Cllrs Gunter and Cllr Mrs Yemm of the new and persistent potholes in the area. He would chase this up.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall stated that some repairs had been made to potholes around the entrance to the Village; however, many remained untouched. Another reported issue was the location of the missing village sign at the northern end of the Village. The Clerk would report this.

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

The Chairman will inspect this after the rains have passed.

397. Footpaths in the Parish.

None.

12. Wildlife and Pests.

None.

15.1.A Lucy Court.

The Chair asked the Parish Council if this item ought to be removed. However, Cllr Gunter reported that this matter is still being seen to, and should remain in the minutes until then.

15.1.B Derelict Lorry trailer near Stowfield Road.

The removal of the lorry and the clean-up of the debris had been accomplished and were deemed a success.

07. District Councillor report. (March 2026 meeting)

Cllr Cole asked if the parish Council could write a letter of non-support regarding the Biosphere project affecting the Forest of Dean. Cllr Gunter added that there had been recent protests against this at the Forest of Dean District Council. The ruling Green party seems to have either rejected or ignored the legitimate concerns of the Commoners, Verderers, Freeminers, Farmers and other professional groups.

Further reports suggest that the project has been shelved by the current District Council administration.

The Clerk will work with the Chair to draft this letter.

08. Planning.

Description.	Status/Decision.
P1548/25/FUL Bungalow At Sterts Farm, Ross Road, Shortstanding, Coleford.	Refused. 17/2/2026
Removal of condition 03 (occupation) of P1257/09/FUL to allow for occupation of dwelling without agricultural tie.	Remains declined. No sign of appeal or reapplication.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall confirmed that she had spoken with the occupant of Sterts Bungalow, about the confused reports over planning application P1548/25/FUL at the Bungalow at Sterts Farm. This application was originally processed by the Parish Council in February. This referred to the belief that the Council had voted against her application, when in fact, the Council had made no comment. A copy of the previous minutes was handed to her. From this, the situation was seen as amicably resolved.

10. Highways.

It was reported that one of the '30 mph' signs at the northern entrance to the village is missing. The Clerk will report this to Gloucestershire Highways.

A build-up of mud was reported at the sump of Folly Lane. The Clerk will log this on the FixMyStreet service.

13. Wild Boar and pests.

Cllr Gunter gave a brief background summary on the origin of the local wild/feral pig population in the Forest of Dean. They originally escaped a farm in 1999, and by 2001, when the foot-and-mouth pandemic hit, the Forestry Commission was already aware of them. However, they chose to do nothing. It is also believed that the Boar may have been deliberately released by politically motivated people in or around Staunton about the same time.

Cllr Gunter will keep the Parish Council updated on this matter. Complaints procedures and possible legal measures may be taken against Forestry England for its continued negligence in failing to manage the pest problem.

15.C Re Tea Mornings at the Village Hall.

Regarding the local tea mornings. Cllr Warden reported that he had attended the event and that it had gone very well. Cllr Mrs Drinkall had also attended and reported the same success, noting that the tea morning had been well attended, though the vast majority of people attending came from outside the Parish.

5. Report of the County Councillor.

None.

6. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

However, the Chair read out the application for Village of the Year. This had previously been communicated to the Parish Council by the District Councillor. This would need the Parish Council's permission to be entered into. Questions were raised about what the Village may need to do to comply with the competition requirements.

In principle, the Parish Council was in support of this. However, the Clerk will inquire with the organisers about the process and criteria. Including the timeline details.

8. Financial report and accounts for payment.

The Village Hall invoice at £105, covering bookings between 18/5/2026 and 7/12/2026, was discussed. This invoice constituted a payment in advance, and it was noted that the Parish Council was one of the few, if not the only, customers of the Village Hall to be billed in this way. This method, however, provides the Village Hall with additional financial security.

Proposed: Cllr Gunter.

Seconded: Cllr Mrs Bowen.

Resolved. On the following payments.

- Village Hall hire 5x21, between 18/5/2026 and 7/12/2026 = £105.00
- Insurance renewal, Committee Insurance = £311.20
- Jonathan Martin – clerk's wages - £538.80
- Total: £955.00

The Clerk mentioned that the insurance renewal remained part of a three-year deal. The policy would need to be reviewed next year.

The yearly banking charges of approximately £50.00 will be added to the budget.

The Clerk would also transfer £500.00 from the current account into the savings accounts to regenerate the election costs reserves. The Clerk will also ask the FODDC for an updated estimate on what a theoretical election would cost.

The Clerk then gave a general description of the accounts, stating that they remained in good health, well within budget, and with no problems to address.

9. Highway matters.

It was reported that a Caravan had been set up in the layby at Junction Hill.

Other matters to report include a bump (likely lifted due to water saturation) near Eastbach Farm, 200 meters from the farm and 100 meters from the lowest part of the lane. The Highways update sheet would be modified to reflect this. The Clerk will report this.

10. Ash Dieback in the Parish.

Nothing to report.

11. Footpaths in the Parish.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall reported that footpath, REB/18/1, has become overgrown from the recent warm weather. It is thought that the obligation to keep the path clear would fall to the landowners on either side, with each responsible for 50% of the task. The Clerk could write to both landowners to politely request that they take this action.

Cllr Gunter said that he would contact Mr Jeff Wheeler, the public rights of way officer, who he knows well, to see if he would deal with this.

Cllr Mrs Yemm reported that REB/5/1 is blocked with fallen trees etc. This is at the woodland area from the junction of the path with Common Grove. The Clerk was asked to contact Forestry England, who it is believed owns the woodland.

12. Wildlife and Pest matters.

See item 13 above.

13. Correspondence received since last meeting.

The only additional information the Clerk reported was that the Audit file had been submitted to the internal auditor and that, so far, there had been no problems.

14. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council

13. B

Cllr Braithwaite suggested that the Village and the area around the Village Hall could do with a significant weeding. This should ideally be done before the Village Fete. Areas that require attention would be the verges and perhaps the hedgerows.

This may require the hiring of contractors. Mr Maxwell may be open to being hired for this. Instead, though, an arrangement might be made wherein the Village Hall and the Parish Council share the financial burden of this. This, however, constitutes the 'paying twice' issue of doing work that Gloucestershire Highways is doing. Cllr Gunter volunteered to undertake this.

The Chair asked whether there were any further matters the Councillors wished to raise. Cllr Mrs Drinkall mentioned that the middle panel of the public noticeboard was both leaky and rotten. It could also do with a new coat of varnish. She will contact Mr Peter Hester, who may have a look at it and undertake repairs if needed.

Cllr Gunter noted that the grass around the school remains overgrown. This, however, remains the responsibility of the Village Hall Committee, who manage the land.

14.

The next meeting was confirmed as the 3rd August.