

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4th August 2025 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Cllr Kevin Braithwaite.
 Cllr Mrs Pat Drinkall.
 Cllr Peter Warden.
 Cllr Harry Cole.
 Cllr David Gunter.
 Cllr Mrs Avril Bowen.
 District Councillor Jamie Elsmore
 Clerk Jonathan Martin.

01. Apologies and welcome.

County Councillor Piers Camp gave his apologies.

02. Public Forum.

There were no members of the public present.

The Clerk and the Councillors present confirmed that there had been no reply to the advert for a casual vacancy for the available role of Parish Councillor at English Bicknor.

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

Prior to accepting the previous minutes, a series of minor changes would need to be made to the formal draft. These included the removal of part of item 360 A. The removal of the line 'addressed above' in item 388. The spelling of recognise was to be corrected to 'reorganising' in item 410. The list of payees presented in the agenda for that Meeting would also be added.

Proposed by Cllr Mrs P. Drinkall.
 Seconded by Cllr D. Gunter.
 Resolved and signed by the Chairman as correct.

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

951.3 Community speed watch camera.

Cllr Braithwaite gave an update on the replacement speed camera and visual speeding sign project. The aim is to acquire a second-hand camera at either a reduced price or for free. Initial reports indicate that there is indeed a spare camera that might be made available for the Parish Council. However, the people who allegedly hold this camera are difficult to contact.

In place of this, Cllr Braithwaite asked for new suggestions for the progression of this objective. The Council has money for one of these pieces of equipment, but not both. A new speed camera would cost around £700.00.

Cllr Elsmore suggested liaising with Cllr Jim Richmond, who is part of the West Dean network. A local charity may donate a significant amount of money to this enterprise, but this remains to be confirmed.

West Dean Parish Council might serve as a better location for the installation of the signs for lorry drivers coming into English Bicknor. These signs would contain warnings about areas being unsuitable for heavy lorries. The Clerk will investigate this.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

The persistent issue of silt build-up at the lowest part of the lane was discussed. The suggestion that the Parish Council could clear the silt would contain the added problem of the Council becoming liable for the work. The problem has been repeatedly reported to the highways by both the Parish Council and residents, with seemingly no effect. It is believed that this is due to the lane not being regarded by the relevant authority as a priority.

A potential solution to the problem of vehicles becoming stuck in the mud would be to reclassify the lane as a footpath, rather than a track suitable for cars. It was suggested that Jeff Wheeler, who is the public rights of way officer, might be approached for this.

Cllr Drinkall reminded the Meeting that County Cllr Camp had previously proposed the installation of 'no through road' warning signs provided by the County Council. Another suggestion, that was perhaps unfeasible, was to install a gateway.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

It was reported that there was no additional information on this matter. Reporting the weed growth via FixMyStreet remained an option. Andrew Middlecote at Gloucestershire Highways would be asked if weed scraping could be done instead of herbicides.

288 Resolve on the course of action regarding the repair of the flagpole.

This item has been satisfactorily resolved.

330. Potholes. Eastbach Road.

Cllr Gunter reported the general poor condition of the roads in the Parish, especially on Eastbach road, due to the damage caused by seasonal flooding. Repairs appeared to have failed, in that they do not last the test of time. There is also an unusual irregularity in how the repairs have been done. Some areas are repaired, but others are not. The quality of the work is also inconsistent. It was agreed that further reports will need to be made on the FixMyStreet website.

Cllr Drinkall mentioned that there had been a previous agreement between the Parish Council and Gloucestershire Highways. This agreement detailed how Highways would resurface the road in question. The resurfacing has not yet taken place.

383. Water Leak. Hillersland/Symonds Yat Rock Road.

There was no progress or change on this issue reported. The Clerk will investigate who owns the land in question, which has had a water leak on it.

387. Regarding the complaint of excessive traffic at the school, to the PCSO.

The Clerk reported that all attempts had been made to contact the PCSO regarding the ongoing issue of congestion at the school at the end of the day. It was also reported that the school was planning to add new signs that either forbade or regulated parking in the area. The success of these signs remains to be seen. The Clerk will continue to pursue the PCSO for a solution to this issue.

388. Pavement at Castle House.

Highways had subsequently added bollards to deny use. The Clerk will chase up the progress of this repair work.

389. Hedgerow and pavement weeds opposite Cowmeadow Farm.

Cllr Gunter reported that the work had been done, and this item should be closed. However, a new item should be added to the next agenda to address the general problems of the trees in the Parish.

391. Damaged electricity pole in English Bicknor.

The first pole was reported as repaired.

397. Footpaths in the Parish.

This matter is resolved, as the landowners are now addressing the fallen and overgrown trees in the trackway.

415. Wildlife and pest matters.

Cllr Gunter stated that he had received a report from Forestry England, which intimated that this organisation had little interest in controlling the boar problem. There appears to be a conflict over which agency is responsible for dealing with the Boar, either this one or DEFRA.

416. Re: Review of the Standing Orders.

Since the previous Meeting, Councillors reported that they had read the Document and would have comments for the next Meeting.

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

Cllr Gunter stated that he had reported this issue to the authorities. However, he was told that the overgrowth was not severe enough to necessitate a repair.

417. B. Re: Traffic restriction order.

The prospect of a TRO would cost the applicant, in this case, the Parish Council, approximately £15,000. The Clerk will see if MP Matt Bishop can lend any assistance in this matter.

5. Report from the County Councillor.

County Councillor Camp was away.

6. Report from the District Councillor.

Cllr Elsmore provided an update on local events that affect the Parish.

The Five Acres redevelopment project has entered its third year without being completed. The project has faced numerous delays, mainly as its budget has grown due to inflation. That said, the Contract with the developers is scheduled to be finalised by 17th October this year. Construction work will then commence in 2026. The original plans have also undergone significant concessions from the ruling Green Party administration at the District Council. A considerable amount of time and money was also expended on lengthy consultations, some of which, may not have been strictly necessary. There is also contention that local Contractors were not going to be used in place of government-sanctioned Contractors.

Eventually, when completed, the site will have a 3G football pitch, a soft play area, a gym, changing rooms and bathrooms.

The District Council is undergoing a review and update of its local plan. The previously defeated new development idea at Churcham has been revived. Another potential site for a large housing development would be the Hartpury/Redmarley area. The total number of new houses mandated for the district has been recalculated at thirteen thousand over twenty years. The Greens have pushed this through, but the plan will require further debate.

The Parish Council will need to submit its own comments on the local plan before the deadline.

Cllr Ellesmore was thanked and left the Meeting at 9:01 pm.

7. Review and update of Parish Assets.

The sign at Symonds Yat Rock had been added to the register and would require periodic inspections. As part of the Parish Council's agreement with Forestry England to mount the sign on their bridge, the Council is required to report on the condition of the sign every two months. This will be done by Councillors who pass the site. It was reported that the sign was currently in a nominal and good condition. The Clerk would forward this to Forestry England as per the agreement. The Clerk will also prompt Councillors to undertake the inspection a week before the next Council meeting.

8. Planning Matters.

- **P0761/25/FUL Copperbeech, Hillersland Lane, Shortstanding, Coleford. Conversion and two storey rear extension to existing garage and storage building to form separate dwelling.**

There had previously been some debate over whether this house fell within the boundary lines of English Bicknor as a planning consultant. However, the Forest of Dean planning department confirmed that the site straddled both this jurisdiction and that of West Dean Parish Council. Both Parish Councils were thus being approached for comments.

The Parish Council reviewed the application and has no comment to make.

Updates on the previous planning applications processed by the Parish Council were:

- Peacehaven Cottage, P1960/09/COU – District Council Decided 11th June. Permission granted.
- 4 Orchard Close, P0480 – District Council Decided 9th June. Permission granted.
- The Coach House, P0456/25/LBC – District Council Decided 6th June. Permission granted.

9. Financial report and accounts for payment:

Resolved.

- **Women's Institute, Catering and Refreshment payment at Annual Meetings - £30.00**
- **Mrs Sharon Stratford – annual internal audit - £60.00**
- **Mr Jonathan Martin – Clerk's wages, office allowance and expenses - £334.94**

Total: £424.94

The Clerk gave an update and report on the Parish Council's finances over the previous two months. A new model of financial report documents had been introduced, and the Chairman explained that this new system showed the budget targets in relation to income and independence so far. The new diagram also included the matter of last year's budgetary surplus.

Further debate was had over what to do with the remaining surplus in the budget. Suggestions included managing the local weed problem. A list of local work projects should be drawn up for a potential groundskeeper. Other options include purchasing memorial benches and building and improving existing fence lines. All of these suggestions need to be formalised for the drafting of next year's budget to be fully considered.

10. Highway Matters.

This item is covered above in item 330.

11. Footpaths in the Parish.

There was nothing new to report.

12. Wildlife and pest matters.

There was nothing new to report.

13. Correspondence received since last Meeting.

The tree problem at the footpath REB 18/1 was said to be in hand, as one of the landowners has started to remove the problem trees. It was stressed that the Parish council has no proprietary interest or liability in the management of the track. That said, it has been difficult to ascertain the precise landowner, as there is a lack of documentation on this. It was lastly agreed that the Parish Council would disengage from this, as it is ultimately a private land matter.

14. Any other business.

Cllr Gunter described the background to the events of a recent lorry fire in the Parish that occurred on the evening of 17th June. The local fire brigade put out the fire, and thankfully, no one was injured. The Fire Brigade reportedly had problems with the traffic around English Bicknor school. However, debris was left on the road for three days. A complaint about this was sent to Andrew Middlecote at Gloucestershire Highways via the Clerk, although it was not actioned.

Warning signs were put up, but these were all that was initially done. As the debris was left on the road, it presented a clear danger to local people, as well as a long-term pollution issue to the Parish. The County Council eventually undertook a clean-up ten days later. The road was back to normal by the 4th of July. Cllr Gunter had been of the opinion to report highways to the Environment Agency for this.

The Parish Council agreed to formalise and write its own complaint letter regarding this. The Clerk will draft this and forward it to Councillors for approval.

Cllr Warden updated the Parish Council on the English Bicknor Village Hall activities. The VH had booked in the Cheltenham Town Youth football club for pre-season training during the summer, which was going well. The VH had also acquired a quote for its changing rooms and groundworks projects at £19,250 for which fundraising would be required. In addition, planning permission to pollard the trees adjacent to the main road has been received. The work will begin at the end of the summer at a cost of £2,300. It was reiterated by the Chair that the Village Hall Committee does have responsibilities to maintain the grounds under their lease agreement. Further details are available in the latest Village Hall Committee minutes.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall stated that she had arranged for the Robin Bus service to be expanded to include Smithy Close English Bicknor with a stop added in the Mount in Hillersland. This will be added to the information on the website, with a bus fee of £3.00 charged, and concessionary bus passes being accepted.

A new item will be added to the next agenda to address the topic of the Ash Dieback affecting the Parish.

15. Date of next Meeting.

The next Meeting is set for Monday, 6th October.