

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd August 2026 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Attendance:

Cllr Mrs P. Drinkall (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Mrs S. Yemm
Cllr Mrs A. Bowen
Cllr P. Warden
Cllr. D. Gunter
Cllr H. Cole
County Cllr P. Camp
District Cllr T. Gwilliam
Clerk J. Martin.

01. Apologies and welcome

Apologies had been received from Cllr Kevin Braithwaite, the Chairman, who is unavailable for family-related reasons.

02. Public Forum.

No members of the public were present.

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

Chair asked if visiting Cllrs wanted their items brought forward for convenience. The request was declined.

Proposed: Cllr Gunter

Seconded: Cllr Warden

Resolved.

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

951. Speed Camera.

The Clerk reported that Gloucestershire Council had not refunded the Parish Council for the damage caused by their accidental removal of the Speed Camera. The Parish Council had submitted an invoice to this body as proof of the cost of repairing the camera. This has not occurred despite an agreement to conclude this swiftly and two subsequent follow-up emails from the Clerk to the Gloucestershire County traffic management office.

Cllr Gunter asked whether the invoices submitted to Gloucestershire County Council would cover the full cost of the damage. The Clerk confirmed this as accurate.

The Clerk will continue to chase this up and forward the information to the County Councillor for his assistance in this matter.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

It was reported that Cllr Braithwaite's search for an appropriate warning sign had been put on hold due to his other pressing commitments. Cllr Mrs Drinkall will take up the search for a sign. Cllr Braithwaite had already passed on the supplier details to Cllr Mrs Drinkall.

Cllr Cole mentioned that an associate had told him Redhouse lane could be easily removed from the SatNav system as a road unfit for cars via the FixMyStreet online app. However, this news was highly surprising to both the Clerk and County Cllr Camp and may not be realistic. The Clerk will speak with Cllr Cole about the specifics of this process to see whether it is viable and can be used by the Parish Council for this issue.

219.2 Pavement Weed Spraying.

At the time of the meeting, Gloucestershire Highways had not organised any weed removal in the Parish. County Cllr Camp confirmed the longstanding policy that the County Council had banned weed spraying under its internal policies. However, he added that curb and pavement weeding might start soon, although this remains part of the wider context of diminished funds available to the Highways department.

County Cllr Camp will inform the head of Highways, Mr Middlecoat, about these problems himself, and report back with any progress.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall then summarised the various reports and complaints that the Parish Council had received about the weed condition on the roads and pavements. Generally, the weeds are at the curbside throughout the village, apart from one pavement from Redhouse lane to the entrance of the field opposite Cowmeadow Farm, where weeds are embedded in pavement cracks, where the pavement was poorly repaired after cable laying some years ago. Aside from the general untidiness and derelict appearance it creates, it is driving people off the pavements and onto the roads in order to walk. This has also caused considerable problems for people pushing prams.

Cllr Gunter reported that he had recently undertaken volunteer work to clear the section of road between the entrance to Redhouse lane and his own residence, Cowmeadow Farm.

A potential political issue was raised about whether the Parish Council should run its own weed-clearing program. Local taxpayers would essentially be paying for the same service twice. That said, if the Parish Council were to undertake this, it would likely require contractors to do the work. The Parish could provide equipment and supplies, such as weed-killing chemicals. This would be further complicated by the likely need to obtain permission from the County Council to do this.

Cllr Mrs Yemm suggested that the Parish Council might approach the Two Rivers housing association and ask them to expand their weeding operations to cover the surrounding pavements.

186.1 Warning Sign at the Footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

Cllr Cole reported that the sign was in good order, and the Clerk will report this to Forestry England, as per the installation agreement.

330. Potholes.

The Clerk reported the rise or swell in the tarmac at Eastback Lane, which appears to have damaged at least one vehicle and caused an oil leak, to FixMyStreet. The Clerk also forwarded another report to Andrew Middlecoat, manager at Gloucestershire Highways. As part of this, the Clerk had investigated the site and taken pictures for the report.

The Clerk also received a second report about Murrells Road. Cllr Mrs Yemm sent the Clerk images of potholes and other tarmac damage, which the Clerk uploaded to an FMS report. This damage was particularly pertinent, as Cllr Mrs Yemm was expecting guests who are dependent on walkers for mobility. The damaged pavement impedes this. County Cllr Camp sympathised but reiterated Gloucestershire Highways' reduced funds. This has created a triage situation in which only the most severe road damage is repaired.

The Clerk will continue working with Cllr Mrs Yemm to gather more pictures of the damage and report these to FMS.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall suggested that Cllr Mrs Yemm make her own second report on FMS, as a resident, to bolster the first report. Reports on social media, as well as video evidence uploaded to social media, can also generate local support and demand for urgent repair work.

383. Water across the road. Hillersland/ Symonds Yat Rock.

Cllr Cole reported that the drains had been cleared; however, they had subsequently become blocked again with mud and dust. At present, due to the near-drought conditions, this does not present a flooding problem.

Cllr Braithwaite will be asked to monitor the drain as the weather changes.

07. Biosphere project.

An email had been received from the Forest of Dean District Council which Cllr Mrs Drinkall summarised. At present, the scheme has been severely delayed due to a lack of public consultation. Various local interest groups, such as the verderers, commoners and farmers, had also not been consulted. These groups are now hearing their objections. Cllr Cole added, based on his own research, that the project has been driven by a green lobby for financial gain, not local benefit.

Further reports conflict, but the scheme will likely continue more slowly. An online survey for this scheme is available, and the Clerk will try to find the link and pass this on to the Councillors.

Cllr Mrs Yemm suggested that the Parish Council make its own comment on this, reflecting local opinions. The Clerk said he and the Chairman had worked on a formal comment, although it had been sidelined. The Clerk will redraft the original comment written for the Parish Council and present this to the Deputy Chair before final send-off.

10. Highway issues.

A. 30 mile sign at the northern entrance to English Bicknor.

The Clerk has heard nothing and will chase. County Councillor Camp was asked for his help with this.

B. Mud on Folly Lane.

With the hot weather this problem has disappeared for the moment.

Re: Village of the year contest.

The application deadline had passed, and it was believed the Parish Council may have only been made aware of this after the closing date.

The Clerk reported that his emails requesting more information had not been replied to. This suggests the matter is no longer relevant.

06. Caravan in layby at Junction Hill.

It was reported that the caravan had been moved from the site with no other issues arising. The site itself has been cleaned up. This matter appears to be resolved.

11. Footpaths.

A. REB 18/1

The overgrowth along the REB 18/1 footpath has been reported as cleared by one of the adjacent landowners, specifically, Mr Simon Andrewes. The Clerk accidentally wrote to the wrong address as the second address and apologised. The Clerk will write to Mr Andrewes to thank him.

Although the clearing has been done, Cllr Gunter commented that the footpath's officer at Gloucestershire Council has limited resources to cut back vegetation.

B. REB 5/1

REB 5/1 from Common Grove adjacent to the field in front of Bicknor House which was blocked. The Clerk has contacted Forestry England and subsequently a map of the footpath had been sent.

13. Audit.

The Clerk reported that the notice of public rights of inspection to last year's financial accounts has been up, and no one had yet asked to inspect them or had any questions.

14. Village Notice Board.

Cllr Mrs Drinkall stated that the Village Notice board has been recently repaired. Mr Peter Hester had undertaken the work voluntarily by adding a board to keep the rainwater out, as well as a few other repairs. However, this did not renew the board as it was beyond superficial repair, and a replacement will eventually be needed.

5. Report of the County Councillor.

County Cllr Camp gave his report. This summarised a document he emailed to the Clerk earlier today.

Glos County Council had decided to reorganise the County into a single Unitary authority, abolishing the District Councils. The next round of local elections for this new authority is set for 2028.

Also, a new level of local government will be created. The working name for these tiers is ‘the Neighbourhood Partnerships’. The Forest of Dean could be split into 3 such divisions. These will replace the District Council level and will probably be constituted out of Parish, Town and Unitary elected members.

There is no information yet as to the powers, responsibilities and funding of this new local gov’ level. There will also be a new ‘West of England’ mayoral position that will interact with this.

County Cllr Camp then went on to mention the housing needs survey, and Cllr Mrs Drinkall asked both visiting Cllrs about the survey which had recently been posted to every household in the Parish.

District Cllr Gwilliam said the organisation's representative should have contacted the Parish Council by now. This had not occurred.

He explained that the housing association has no role in forming the new local plan, and there had been some confusion over their use of the term ‘affordable housing.’

District Cllr Gwilliam said that a report of the findings would be made available around Sept-Oct. The organisers may come to talk to the Parish Council then.

44 other parishes were approached in the same way with a survey.

It was reported that the district’s fire department was reorganising its shifts, mainly to address the issue of some volunteers being on call all day.

A new DIY waste processing centre is being suggested by the County Council. It would likely require a fee to use, and people would pay and book online. This, however, carried the risk that fly-tipping might increase, as a way for people to avoid paying these fees.

The repairs on the A40 were mentioned, and the large-scale disruption they were causing. These repairs, however, are overseen by a quango that is apparently beyond reproach and functions without significant oversight.

Repairs to the nearby Stowfield Bridge, over the river at Lydbrook, also known as the Black Bridge, are underway; however, they have incurred extra costs and delays.

The Ross Road through English Bicknor was also said to be planned for resurfacing.

Cllr Gunter raised the previous matter of dead animals in the Parish and surrounding area not being collected by Forestry England.

6. Report of the District Councillor.

Many issues to be raised have already been covered by County Cllr Camp.

He reiterated that the former local plan has been removed and a new plan is now being formed. The new plan is unlikely to be finished within the remaining lifespan of the FODDC.

The Clerk had previously handed out a summary of these changes to Cllrs, following receipt of a statement issued by the District Council of the withdrawal of the emerging local plan.

Lastly, construction on the Five Acres redevelopment has started.

8:45 PM both visiting Councillors leave the meeting. They are thanked for their time and contributions.

7. Planning matters.

P0849/26/TCA Fell dead Willow tree (T1) in rear garden of Bicknor House for safety reasons. The tree has been progressively losing its leaves over the last 4 years and has had a number of fungal infections.

Cllr Warden explained that the application is simply for a tree which is in need of removal.

The Chair asked for other views on this application. There were none.

Resolved.

The EBPC supports the application.

8. Financial report and accounts for payment:

- Mrs S. Stratford – 2026 internal audit fee - £60.00
- Jonathan Martin – clerk's wages June-July - £538.80

Total: £598.80

Proposed: Cllr P. Warden

Seconded: Cllr H. Cole

Resolved.

9. Highway Matters

This has been covered above.

10. Ash Dieback in the Parish

Nothing to report.

11. Footpaths in the Parish

No new issues reported.

12. Wildlife and pest matters

Cllr Gunter announced that formal complaints will soon be made against Forestry England and DEFRA in relation to problems cited above.

13. Correspondence received since last meeting

The email from the Forest of Dean District Council re Biosphere.

The email from the Forest of Dean District Council re the withdrawal of the emerging local plan.

Both have been covered above.

14. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council

The Chair asked for input from the councilors.

The issue of the possible new tip policy causing fly tipping by householders, especially those undertaking DIY projects was raised again.

The Clerk will draft a letter detailing these concerns to the relevant authority.

The Chair then described the condition of the Parish Council noticeboard at The Glebe. The bottom board of the notice board had fallen away. Mr Peter Hester had undertaken voluntary repairs.

It was noted that the dead tree stump on the roadside at the entrance to the field 'Pigeons' had been removed. Cllr Gunter told the meeting he had removed it without reference to the Parish Council as it appeared loose.

Cllr Cole asked that a complaint be raised with Glos Highways over the late timing of the grass cutting along the local roads. It has been done too late in the year to be fully effective, as overgrowth was allowed to occur. The Clerk will draft a complaint letter to reflect Cllr Cole's points.

Date of next meeting.

The next meeting was confirmed as October 5th.

Meeting started at 7:00 pm. Ended at 8:56 pm