

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th October 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.
Clerk Jonathan Martin.

Guest Speaker: Mrs Sue Middleton. Representing Forestry England.

01. Apologies and welcome.

No apologies were received from either County Councillor Piers Camp or the District Councillors Clive Elsmore and Tim Gwilliam.

Parish Councillor Harry Cole was expected to be late due to work commitments.

02. Public forum.

A visiting speaker from the local branch of Forestry England gave an update to the council on this organisation's plans to mitigate the risk of rockslides in the Symonds Yat area. The aim of this is to protect people and property from the risk of landslides. There has been a history of rockslides at the cliff face, with one such incident in 2023 luckily missing the hunting lodge's kitchen. There had also been reports of rockfalls dating back to 2009.

Funding received by Forestry England from the DEFRA grant must be spent within the current financial year. This creates a pressing time limit, and the proposed solution is to create a metal fence that will either catch or slow tumbling rocks. This fence will be significantly stronger than the previous one and will be built along the so-called 'ambulance' path, which runs underneath the viewing summit.

The construction of this fence is being delayed by various necessary studies and jurisdictional issues, with part of the fence line falling in Herefordshire. Forestry England is also currently liaising with Gloucestershire Rights of Way. When the construction begins, several other footpaths will need to be closed to accommodate it.

Currently, the project costs are not fully known, as Forestry England is still in the process of tendering for contractors.

Cllr Gunter asked what the clean-up and repair procedures would be if another rockslide impacted the proposed fence. The plans for this had not yet been devised, but would be soon.

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

Proposed: Cllr P. Drinkall.

Seconded: Cllr D. Gunter.

Resolved.

The Chair thanked Cllr Drinkall for her assistance in preparing these minutes, as he was away and unable to do so.

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

Cllr H Cole arrived at 7:26 pm

951.3 Community speed watch camera.

There was no further progress to report on this issue. The prospect of a free or very inexpensive speed camera is now unlikely.

Funding towards replacement costs still seems possible and the Parish Council will follow up with District Cllr Clive Ellsmore. Cllr Drinkall suggested that local and private funding could also be sought directly by the Parish Council to purchase this.

Independantly of the Community Speed Watch camera, Cllr Drinkall also reported that the Parish had been given positive feedback on the Vehicle Activated Display Speed sign's usage. There was a question as to how easy it would be to move the Sign around when needed. The Chair explained that installation is rather labour-intensive but can be done when necessary. However, when the time comes to move the camera, it will be turned around on its post to scan the other side of the road. The Chair will gather data over the coming months for a detailed report on speeding through the village.

Cllr Drinkall suggested that the news of the Speeding sign be communicated via the Parish Magazine. The Clerk and the Chair would prepare a small insert for this.

84.5 Red House Lane.

The Clerk reported that Gloucestershire Highways Officer Middlecote would be inclined to install signs if asked. The Clerk was asked to contact Mr Middlecote to request 'no through road' signs on the existing post and wall at both ends of the lane.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

There was no new news to report. This issue would be deferred until February.

330. Potholes. Eastbach Road.

The road remains in poor overall condition. Its surface is reported to be cracked, pitted, and deteriorating. Despite sporadic repairs, the work remains incomplete, and a long-promised general resurfacing has yet to be undertaken.

The Clerk will take pictures of the specific areas and make a Council-based complaint via the FixMyStreet website. Moreover, the Country Councillor Piers Camp will be approached to take up this cause on behalf of the Parish Council.

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

The owner is reported may be 'David' as a resident of Holly Barn. The Clerk will check the electoral register for the full names of the current occupants.

The Clerk suggested that a Freedom of Information request be issued to find the precise organisational structures of the Gloucestershire Highways department. This would be done and reported back on.

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

The new cones at the School have been installed to help limit traffic problems at the end of the school day. The road safety group had funded these. It was reported that this had had a positive effect on reducing the problem. The Clerk would write a thank-you letter to the School in recognition of this. The Clerk would also write to the PCSO Tom Oliver to ask how the police are helping the school with the operational deployment and upkeep of these cones.

388. Pavement at Castle House.

The Clerk reported that Gloucestershire Highways would not be repairing this defect.

397. Footpaths in the Parish.

Re: reb 18/1. It was reported that the dangerous ash trees on both sides of the path had been removed and in addition, further clearing of trees and vegetation had been undertaken.

415. Wildlife and pest matters.

The NFU is currently working on the potential and ongoing management of disease spread and animal control relating to this.

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

Cllr Gunter reported that the national grid had inspected the area. The overgrowth at the site was not heavy enough to start the work, nor is it close enough to the wires. However, this will likely change, and the situation will be reviewed again.

Cllr Gunter also suggested that a volunteer group could be arranged in order to cut back the brambles and other weed growth in order to help the local residents.

5. Report of the County Councillor.

None.

6. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

7. Planning Matters.

There were no new planning applications to consider.

This item was deferred to the next Meeting.

8. Financial report and accounts for payment:

- **Confirming the purchase of the traffic sensor signs at £2,867.99**

- **Yearly mowing grant to English Bicknor Village Hall - £450.00**
- **24th October – 25th September English Bicknor Village Hall Hire
8x20 = £160.00**
- **Replacement office printer and copier as Clerk's office exp' 1/3
£70.00 – £23.30**
- **Jonathan Martin – Clerk's wages - £334.94**

Total: £968.24

The report was given with no unusual activity.

The Chair provided a brief description of the VAT refund that is currently being awaited. This VAT was levied on the recent purchase of the speed sign and should be received in a few weeks.

The Clerk stated that he would undertake the enabling of online back payments and transfers as a matter of urgency. He was granted permission to expend £1.00 in testing the transfer capability of the online accounts.

Payments were authorised.

The confusion over the Hall Hire payment to English Bicknor Village Hall was addressed. It was not as originally invoiced at £160.00. This was an error, and the actual invoice amount is £140.00. A Cheque was written to facilitate this and was authorised.

The Clerk would check on the options for a savings account that would give a higher interest rate.

9. Highway matters.

See items 330, 383 and 388.

10. Ash Dieback in the Parish.

See item 417.

11. Footpaths in the Parish.

See item 397.

12. Wildlife and pest matters.

None.

13. Correspondence received since the last Meeting.

The Clerk explained to the council about the GAPTC's free email and domain services.

14. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported on his attempts to rectify a recent HMRC taxation error. This appeared to be resolved, as HMRC had instructed the Clerk to modify their tax payments.

15. Any Other Business.

15.1

The Chair asked for any ideas for the upcoming budget for next year. Topics for discussion were:

Cllr Drinkall first raised a pressing issue with a lorry trailer that was either parked or abandoned. Cllr Gunter reported that the vehicle will have to be removed by the landowner at a cost of £50,000.

The trees that the Parish Council planted some thirty years ago are reaching a stage where they may require the attention of a tree surgeon to cut them back. An early estimate for this quote may be as low as £175 for crown management and undergrowth. It was agreed that this quote would be pursued, as it represents an excellent deal for the work.

To address the developing problem of the Ash Dieback disease in the Parish, the Clerk will write to Forestry England on the processing of the Ash dieback trees in the Parish.

The annual mowing grant given to the Village Hall would be reviewed, with an examination of the Village Hall's quotes for the work being included in the discussion.

Cllr Gunter suggested that the Parish Council could offer its support to the Lydbrook Parish Council in their restoration work on their bridge.

15.2

Cllr Braithwaite suggested investing in memorial chairs to be placed at selected locations. These would be made of Teak and have custom plaques installed on them. They would cost around £400 each. Donations for this project could be asked for through the Parish Magazine. Most Councillors generally supported this idea at this time.

15.3

Lastly, Cllr Gunter mentioned that the grass in the field next to the School's car park has been left to dry over the summer. It is believed that the mowing of this land is the responsibility of English Bicknor Village Hall. Cllr Gunter would investigate this matter further and report back.

Cllr Drinkall reported that the residents of Hillersland were now using the Robin Bus service.

Cllr Drinkall also reported that the red tarmac at the approaches to English Bicknor village was deteriorating badly. The Clerk will contact County Highways about this.

15. Date of next Meeting.

The next Meeting is set for Monday, 1st December 2025.

End. 9:25