

Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of Burlescombe Parish Council
on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 at Westleigh URC

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Box, Downing, Elliss-Brookes, McDonald, Smith and Walker together with MDDC District Councillor Westcott and the Clerk, Mrs S McGeever.

Councillor Forward opened the meeting at 7.00pm and welcomed the councillors present.

009/2526/1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from MDDC District Councillor Lock and DCC County Councillor Clist.

009/2526/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations.

009/2526/3 Minutes of Previous meetings

The draft minutes of the meeting on 5 January 2026 had been circulated to all councillors and published on the website and noticeboards. These minutes together with those of the meeting of 25 November 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair.

009/2526/4 Public Participation

Members of the public present raised the matter of potholes, particularly on the A38.

009/2526/5 Matters arising from the last minutes

Updates on matters arising from the last minutes will be raised under the appropriate agenda item.

Councillor Box asked if Mid Devon District Council would continue to be in existence following the Local Government Reorganisation and the Clerk advised it would not. There would be a transitional period to the new arrangements.

009/2526/6 Emergency Planning

Councillors Elliss-Brookes and Forward had attended an Emergency Planning meeting at Holcombe Rogus on 22 January 2026 and the report from that meeting would form part of the minutes of this meeting including the Community Emergency Hubs Guide.

It was suggested Burlescombe Parish Council could work with both Borden Gate and Holcombe Rogus Parish Councils to produce joined-up Emergency Plans.

Discussion was ongoing to confirm the Burlescombe Village Hall and the Westleigh URC as the muster points.

The Clerk was working on a draft emergency plan and this would be circulated to Parish Councillors and form the basis of a Public Meeting, the timing of which would be set at the next meeting. The Clerk would also contact the Quarry with regard to possible emergencies resulting from its activities.

Councillor Forward advised that she would be attending the Devon Communities Together Resilience Forum on 26 March 2026.

Councillor McDonald would look to see if he could attend Community Conversations event with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service on 6 March 2026.

009/2526/7 Community Mapping

As part of Local Government Reorganisation, the Parish Council were mapping community assets and those identified as being owned by MDDC and DCC.

MDDC assets had been identified as falling under General Funds or HRA Funds and the Clerk was in discussion over the possible handover of non-statutory assets.

A request for a map for DCC owned lands would be sent out.

Action: Clerk

Review of risk register

The Clerk advised an annual review of the risk register to ensure that all Parish Council's activities and assets were covered was part of the reviewing of policy documents at the May meeting. The risk register was published on the website.

009/2526/8 Training

The Clerk had completed training on Assertion 10 and would be preparing a report for the March meeting.

A Bring Your Own Device Policy has been circulated to Parish Councillors and this would be considered alongside the report at the March meeting.

Public Spaces in Crisis: Libraries, Leisure & Parks at Risk — Can Councils Save Them?

Councillor Forward advised that this free online event on 5 March 2026 was CPD-certified and she was able to attend.

MDDC Planning Training – 26th March 2026

Councillors Elliss-Brookes and Forward would be attending this free online event that focussed on the National Planning Policy Framework.

009/2526/9 To receive a report from the Chair

Delivery of fast fibre

Whilst no official notification had been received, it was understood that BT were looking to introduce fast fibre in the parish from March 2026.

The Parish Council RESOLVED not to respond to a request for information on broadband coverage from a private company.

- VE Day Flag

Councillor Forward was discussing the display of the flag with Westleigh URC.

- Neighbourhood Plan / Housing Needs Survey

The Clerk had circulated documentation on the Neighbourhood Planning meeting to Parish Councillors and was in discussion with MDDC regarding a housing needs survey.

Neighbourhood Plans took 18-24 months to complete and needed to be aligned to MDDC's Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Given both documents were in development, it had been recommended to write a Planning Statement in the first instance which could then form the basis of a Neighbourhood Plan. A Planning Statement was easier to achieve but still required consultation with parishioners.

The Clerk would circulate further information and this would be discussed at the March meeting

Action: Clerk

- Business Continuity Plan

The Clerk advised that the plan would be brought to the March meeting.

- Assertion 10

See note under training.

- Registering assets of community value

Councillor Forward was reviewing the information that could be found at [Assets of Community Value - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/Assets-of-Community-Value)

Other matters:

Councillor Forward raised the DCC consultation on libraries and this had been shared on Facebook.

Councillor Forward advised that the Vexatious Policy had been invoked following harassment from a resident. The Parish Council has a zero-tolerance policy with regards to bullying.

009/25/26/10 To consider the Parish Council's response to the following planning applications and receive decision notices:

26/00005/HOUSE

Proposal: Installation of dormer windows and roof lights to facilitate loft conversion; alterations to existing garden room; kitchen extension; infill extension to incorporate and conversion of existing barn to domestic space

Location: Ayshford House Westleigh Tiverton

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 304848 / 115133

Parish: Burlescombe 06

The Parish Council noted the comments from the Conservation Officer but RESOLVED it had no objections to the application.

26/00045/LBC

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for replacement of 4 windows on front elevation and rear external door

Location: Great Southdown Farm & Cottage Burlescombe Tiverton

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 307786 / 115001

Parish: Burlescombe 06

The Parish Council RESOLVED it had no objections to this application.

26/00061/PNCOU

Proposal: Prior Approval for the change of use of 2 agricultural buildings to 4 dwellings under Class Q

Location: Land and Buildings at NGR 306361 116702 Moor Farm Westleigh

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 306347 / 116701

Parish: Burlescombe 06

This application had been received for 'Information Only' as this type of application was not determined in line with Local Plan Policy but through an assessment based on the conditions and limitations of the permitted development rights as set out with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).

However, given the number of representations received from parishioners, the Parish Council had requested clarification of the consultation process.

As a result of that clarification, the Parish Council RESOLVED it should comment on the application outlining three main concerns:

1. the unsuitability of the track (Moor Lane) from the barns to take additional traffic
2. the standard of the bat survey carried out and
3. no comments had been received from DCC Highways, MDDC's Public Health Officer or the Environmental Agency with respect to the bat survey.

The Parish Council would ask that consultation takes place with the above three mentioned organisations together with a site visit from the planning officer if this has not already taken place.

25/01740/HOUSE

Proposal: Erection of 2 extensions following removal of existing conservatory and erection of outbuilding for storage use

Location: Locks Cottage Westleigh Tiverton

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 304687 / 114710

Parish: Burlescombe 06

The Parish Council RESOLVED that it had no objections to this application but noted that any hedge removal should take place outside the bird nesting season.

26/00151/PIP

Proposal: Permission in Principle for the erection of up to 3 dwellings

Location: Land at NGR 305520 114082 North of Waterloo Court Uffculme

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 305419 / 114052

Parish: Burlescombe 06

The Parish Council RESOLVED that it had no objections to this application noting that some development was inevitable given Government guidelines.

PC Consultation Telecoms Site Pound Farm (Ref: CS 12256125)

The Parish Council noted that there would be improvements for Vodafone Three customers within the target coverage area and that this was an upgrade application to replace the current structure with a 17.5m mast was approved in 2022 whilst this mast would be 20m high.

The Parish Council RESOLVED not to provide consultation on the pre-application but would reserve comment for the actual application.

National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”)

A revised document has been published and the consultation should be read in conjunction with the draft, which sets out the detailed proposed policy wording indicative of what may be implemented, subject to the outcome of this consultation.

The Parish Council noted the 10 March 2026 deadline and asked the Clerk to put together a response for approval.

Action: Clerk

Caravan site and mobile homes policy consultation

The Parish Council noted that Mid Devon District Council was currently consulting on a draft Caravan site and mobile homes policy. Given the closing date of 8 April 2026, the Parish Council would discuss its response at the March meeting.

Decision Notices:

No decision notices had been received.

009/2526/11 Highways Matters/Footpaths

The main concern was the ongoing pothole issue by Morgan’s Café on the A38. The issue had been raised by residents and the Parish Council and some remedial works had taken place. It was understood that the road was scheduled to be re-surfaced in the financial year 2026-27 but had to be timed so that it did not coincide with M5 closures.

DCC were aware of the number of HGVs using the route and that this was likely to increase with the re-opening of the Willand AD Plant.

The need to ensure motorists were aware of the potholes either through traffic lights or reduced speed limits would be important given the 60mph speed limit and the number of HGVs. The Parish Council had made representation to DCC Highways.

11.1 Roads

Councillors Forward and McDonald would meet with Councillor Clist with the discussion points being:

- Road safety on quarry lorry routes e.g. white lining, potholes and pedestrian/cyclist safety
- A38
- Brimstone Lane (given it has been used as a diversion route)
- Speed limits

11.2 Speed Limits / Speeding

Whilst Burlescombe would not attract funding to introduce a 20mph, based on existing data and priorities, DCC Officers would be prepared to work with and support the community, should they wish to use local funding to consult on and deliver such a scheme using the community protocol, S4 would appear to be the relevant section.

The Clerk was awaiting costings from DCC Highways.

11.3 Potholes and other matters

The matters below have all been followed up again with DCC Highways and MDDC.

Brimstone Lane potholes

Parish Council and public to continue reporting potholes online:

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Action: Councillor McDonald would contact residents.

Water on the hill road, Burlescombe

The drains at the top of the hill have been cleared. This item would come off the agenda.

White lines / slow sign - Primary School, Burlescombe

This is with the white line team – no update has been received.

Action: Clerk to chase again

Water from the garages, Burlescombe

Ongoing investigations - further update awaited from MDDC.

Blocked drain by Poacher's Pocket on A38

Drains cleared and jetted (normally carried out on a six-monthly basis). This item can come off the agenda.

Overgrown hedges by railway bridge

Reported to DCC – Parish Council to write a letter to the landowner.

Storm Chandra Flooding 26th - 27th January

Parish Councillors have been requested to submit information on flooding.

11.4 Footpaths

Councillor Smith advised that it had been too wet to walk the paths.

The Clerk advised that a Purchase Order had been received for £280 and a further request submitted to cover path maintenance of £900.00.

The quote for path maintenance for 2026/27 was £950.00 and this would be included in the upcoming funding round

11.5 Road Warden Scheme/Snow Warden Scheme

Councillor McDonald had submitted a road report that would form part of the minutes of this meeting.

009/2526/12 Financial matters:

The Parish Council noted the following:

12.1 VAT

The Chair thanked the Clerk for organising the £2479.49 VAT refund.

12.2 Financial Report 2025-26

The Financial Report is provided up to 31 January 2026 as follows:

Lloyds Bank

Current account balance at 31 December 2025	£ 343.69
Less payments	
Receipts	

Current account balance at 31 January 2026	£ 343.69
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The account is being kept open whilst discussions on the complaint are ongoing.

Unity

Current account balance at 31 December 2025	£3262.32
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Payments

02-Jan-26	S/O to: Countrywide	SJB016	-208.80	
12-Jan-26	Community First	BURLESCOMBE PC	-360.21	
12-Jan-26	Westleigh URC	NOV MEETING	-14.00	
12-Jan-26	Clerk	EXPENSES	-58.10	
12-Jan-26	Clerk	WAGES	-509.63	
12-Jan-26	HMRC	475PM01737213	-160.40	
12-Jan-26	Burlescombe Hall	MEETING 4/12/25	-12.00	
31-Jan-26	Service Charge		-6.00	-1329.14

Receipts

Current account balance at 31 December 2025	£ 1933.18
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Deposit account balance at 31 December 2025	£20710.25
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Less Payments

Plus Receipts

Deposit account balance at 31 January 2026	£20710.25
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Payments made prior to the meeting not shown above:

Clerk wages	£509.63
HMRC PAYE	£160.40
Countrywide DD (grass cutting)	£208.80

Payments to be authorised at the meeting:

URC (Meeting room)	£ 14.00
SJM Tree Services (Ash)	£336.00
SJM Tree Services (Tree Survey)	£714.00
MDDC (Play Area inspection)	£100.80
Clerk expenses	£ 25.00

The Parish Council RESOLVED to make the above payments.

The cumulative bank reconciliation for January was brought to the meeting and duly signed by the Chair.

The budget monitoring information for the 10-month period had been circulated to Parish Councillors and no questions were raised.

12.3 2026/27 Precept

A statement had been forwarded to MDDC regarding the rise in precept. No comments had been received from residents.

12.5 Review of Asset Register

The Asset Register would be reviewed again at the March meeting.

The insurance policy has been updated to reflect current assets.

12.6 Computer

Purchase of a new computer had been agreed at the last meeting. The Clerk would look to purchase at the best possible price.

Other matters:

Jackalope Grant and Confirmation of Outcomes

Correspondence from the recipient of the grant of £500 had been received and it appeared that there was no record of the report being presented to the previous Parish Council in the paper minutes available to this Parish Council. The recipient of the grant had advised that no record of the report had been kept.

Action: Clerk to invite the recipient to supply a copy of the report or return the grant funds.

Historic website / emails

No correspondence has been received from the person (contractor) appointed to carry out the contract. Correspondence has been received from one of the people responsible for appointing the contractor which included a 'Factual Chronology and Supporting Documents Relating to the Parish Council Website Contract'.

Councillors advised that there were anomalies within the account and given that the site was taken down prematurely, the Parish Council RESOLVED that it was reasonable that the contractor should be asked to return the management fee covering the period of time that the website was not available. The funds expended to create the site would have been used by the contractor to produce the site and would have to be written off.

Action: Clerk to write to the contractor and request a refund of the management fee from May 2024 onwards.

It was noted that some hardware had been handed to the contractor but the records were not sufficiently complete to understand the item in question. However, the Parish Council RESOLVED that it should request the hardware was returned to the Clerk.

Action: Clerk to write to the contractor and request the hardware be returned to the Parish Council.

Defibrillators

The Parish Council noted the request that the Parish Council take on the defibrillators. Given the Parish Council has already agreed to fund the defibrillators, becoming the Guardian of the devices was the next logical step.

The Parish Council RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Downing to look after the defibrillator in Burlescombe and Councillor Box to look after the defibrillator at Westleigh. The Clerk would be the Guardian in terms of updating The Circuit. The current Guardian had offered to provide training.

The Parish Council wished to record a vote of thanks for all that had been done in the past by a community volunteer to ensure the parish had defibrillators.

Action: Clerk to advise and understand if there were any funds left in the defibrillator account.

Given no response had been received from the Devon Health & Wellbeing Board, the Clerk had contacted the SW Ambulance Trust regarding the number of defibrillators required.

Obtaining the bank account

The Clerk had written as follows:

With the council and clerk resigning at the same time, there was no handover of the bank account. A letter was sent to Lloyds Bank requesting the best course of action to take.

No response was received.

Following phone calls, it appeared that Lloyds Bank had attempted, unsuccessfully, to contact the previous signatories.

A new mandate was submitted but during the process one councillor resigned.

Another new mandate was submitted but during the process a date of birth provided by a councillor appeared to be incorrect then a councillor resigned.

Lloyds Bank eventually advised the Clerk to submit a Board of Resolution to obtain access with the guidance that a signatory could also sign the Board of Resolution.

Then Lloyds Bank rejected this application.

After further discussion, the Clerk was allowed to sign the Board of Resolution and become the sole signatory on the account.

The time scales had been from coming into office in July 2024 to January 2025.

A new account was then set up with Unity Trust Bank with four signatories and triple authorisation.

Transactions set up by Clerk and authorised by two signatories.

The Parish Council RESOLVED this item was now concluded and could come off the agenda.

Contact with Lloyds Bank/Financial Ombudsman

The case is ongoing because the issue of the banking card issued to a previous clerk had been added to the existing complaint. Further information was awaited from Lloyds Bank.

Bank transactions and review of Councillor Walker's report and actions needed

The information has been recirculated to Parish Councillors and the two key items Jackalope and the website had been followed up by the Parish Council.

Outstanding income through the P3 scheme and VAT refunds had been addressed and the monies received.

The Parish Council RESOLVED this item was now concluded and could come off the agenda.

- Noticeboards and their upkeep

A volunteer had looked at the Burlescombe noticeboard and identified that a lock had not been installed properly. Remedial work was being carried out.

All noticeboards needed to be cleaned and oiled/painted. This would be discussed by the Amenities Working Group.

- Grants and sponsorship

The Clerk had signed the Parish Council up to the DCC funding bulletin. Grants could be applied for as specific projects arose.

Action: Councillor Walker to review the funding bulletin.

- Repairs to Westleigh Telephone Box

Councillor Smith would send the information on the glass required to the Clerk.

Action: Clerk to purchase

009/2526/13 To receive a report on Parish Council Communications

- Communications report

The Communications report forms part of these minutes.

- Next steps with volunteer group

Further contact had been made with those willing to volunteer and all were aware that the volunteer forms would need to be signed and risk assessments carried out for each activity.

- Email newsletters and mail drop

Councillor Smith had provided quotes for the postcards as detailed below:

Quote 1: Local company 500 £94.8

Quote 2: £37 they do not have an online design tool which will make it difficult to design and supply in the right format etc.

Quote 3: £39.11

Quote 4: £71.64

The Parish Council RESOLVED to accept Quote 3.

(Post meeting note: the cost of option 3 was further reduced due to a new customer promotion.)

The draft postcard was approved and it was noted that the Privacy Notice would appear as individuals signed up to the Newsletter.

The free version of Zoho would be used in the first instance.

009/2526/14 To receive a report on the Councillor Advocate Scheme/local crime

Councillor McDonald advised there was nothing further to report at this time other than there was the possibility to meet the Neighbourhood Team in Cullompton. Details had been circulated by the Clerk. Councillor McDonald had also completed the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Questionnaire.

009/2526/15 To receive a report on the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Councillor Box advised that the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee would take place on the first Monday in March.

Councillor Box had reported minor damage to the wall and this would be dealt with in due course given it was not deemed to be dangerous.

A swan with bird flu had been put down.

A team of rangers had gone out to clear up after Storm Chandra.

009/2526/16 To receive a report on the Quarries

Councillor Elliss-Brookes had attended the latest meeting and her notes form part of the minutes of this meeting.

It was noted a new site manager and estate manager had been appointed and discussion was still ongoing on moving the Asphalt Plant.

The Parish Council RESOLVED to write to Holcim in relation to the Asphalt Plant and a date for its relocation.

Action: Clerk

It was further noted there had been a significant increase in night works but it was still under the permitted 160 journeys. This was due to repairs to the M5.

Councillor Forward advised that the Bio-diversity meeting had been worthwhile and information had been received from Holcim together with the details of grants on offer through the Holcim Wildlife Enhancement Fund.

Action: An application for a grant would be submitted for an Environmental Survey.

Holcim had confirmed that complaints should be addressed directly to the quarry.

Action: Given the change of staff, Councillor Elliss-Brookes would obtain the new contact email address.

The Parish Council would continue to follow up on residents concerns regarding vibrations, noise and dust and evidence could also be sent to MDDC's environmental officer. Dust monitoring was carried out by an independent company and the Parish Council were given to understand that the results showed compliance with the regulations.

The soft blast technique was only effective for deeper blasts.

There continued to be HGV movements along the road leading to the poultry farm.

009/2526/17 To receive a report from the Amenities Working Group

Given the number of points under Item 17, the Amenities Working Group would meet before the March 2026 meeting and circulate a report for consideration covering the points outlined below:

17.1 ORL

- Review of the tree report

Circulated to Parish Councillors

- Update of essential works undertaken

The 'at risk' tree had been felled and left to form a natural habitat

- Review of the report from Biodiversity meeting at Westleigh Quarry

See Item 16

It was noted that the ORL was an important wildlife corridor

The majority of bio-diversity at the quarry itself was on the boundary.

- Black Bridge steps

Any works carried out would need to happen in drier weather.

- Option for volunteers to help maintain ORL

See Item 13

- Update on conifers

The conifers were on Parish Council land and hence fell under its responsibility.

- Update on risk assessment

A risk assessment relating to the ORL would be reviewed and then included in the Risk Management document which covered all Parish Council assets. This review of the Risk Management document was normally carried out in March and approved at the May meeting.

17.2 Westleigh Play Park

- S106 Funding

The Clerk had met with MDDC on 9 February 2026 to discuss MDDC assets and whether or not they fell under General or HRA funding. The next step was to agree the methodology for the handover of non-statutory assets. This would relate to play area and recreation field in Burlescombe. Open Space in Westleigh was related to the HRA fund and, therefore, funded by residents.

- Possibility of recording Westleigh Play Park inspections on Burlescombe Parish Council website

Not possible at present.

Update on actions from the annual ROSPA report:

- Fencing

Meeting to be arranged

- Dog signs

To be purchased

- Mossing on matting

Power washing required

- Fixing the goal posts

Ongoing

- Repairs to equipment
The Clerk was chasing the company for the cost of repairs.

009/2526/18 To receive a report from MDDC Councillors Westcott and Lock
Councillor Westcott referred to Councillor DuChesne's written report that forms part of the minutes of this meeting and also provided her own report to be included in the minutes.

The Parish Council had no questions.

009/2526/19 To receive a report from DCC Councillor Clist
In the absence of Councillor Clist, no report was given.

009/2526/20 Items for next meeting
As detailed in these minutes.

009/2526/21 Dates of the next Parish Council Meetings
Meeting dates are as follows:

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 at Westleigh URC Hall starting at 7pm.

Future meetings:

21 April 2026 – Full Council Meeting, Westleigh URC Hall

20th May 2026 – Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, Burlescombe & Westleigh Village Hall

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9.08pm.

Signed _____ Date: _____
Chair

Emergency Planning Meeting – Summary

Date & Venue: Thursday 22 January 2026, King George V Memorial Hall, Holcombe Rogus

Attendees: Representatives from Burlescombe Parish Council (Cllrs Forward and Elliss-Brookes), Mid Devon District Council, Devon Communities Together, and local community members

Presenters:

- Martin Rich, Devon Communities Together
 - Lewis Dyson, Resilience Officer, Mid Devon District Council (MDDC)
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- **Purpose of the Meeting**

To introduce and discuss community emergency planning, outline statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and explain how parish and community-led emergency plans can complement the work of emergency services, particularly in rural areas.

- **Key Messages**

1. Why Community Emergency Planning Matters

- Emergency services cannot always respond quickly in rural areas (ambulance response may exceed 20 minutes).
- Communities can play a vital role in the early stages of an incident, helping to reduce impact and chaos.
- Most risks are local and predictable, particularly weather-related events, utility failures (power, water), flooding, pandemics, and cyber-related disruption affecting rural communities.

2. Community Emergency Plans (CEPs)

- Devon Communities Together has developed a standardised emergency plan template used across Devon.
- Plans should ideally be community-led, with parish councils acting as custodians.
- A small core group (around 2–6 people) with local knowledge and relevant skills should develop the plan.
- Plans identify:
 - Key local risks
 - Skilled individuals (e.g. blue light services, armed forces, utilities, agricultural workers)
 - Local resources and equipment
 - Important locations and maps (e.g. village halls, schools)

3. Response Teams and Training

- **Communities are encouraged to form a volunteer response team to support residents during incidents.**
- **Training and guidance are available through the Devon Community Resilience Forum, which:**
 - **Holds six-monthly meetings**
 - **Runs exercises and practical sessions**
 - **Provides a helpline for advice**
- **Plans should be reviewed every three years to keep contacts and risks up to date.**

4. Working Across Parishes

- **Strong encouragement to create joint emergency plans across neighbouring parishes, with local response teams operating at parish level.**
 - **This approach improves resilience and resource sharing.**
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- **Practical Considerations**

Emergency Hubs

- **MDDC is developing Community Emergency Hubs (e.g. village halls) as visible points of help.**
- **Hubs can act as places of refuge, information centres, and coordination points for emergency services.**
- **Village halls and schools are seen as key assets, with school evacuation plans potentially dovetailing into community plans.**

Vulnerable Residents & Data Protection

- **Plans should consider vulnerable residents, recognising this can change depending on the situation.**
- **Two versions of the plan are required:**
 - **A full version (restricted access)**
 - **A public, redacted version**
- **GDPR compliance is essential, with consent required to include personal details.**

Insurance and Liability

- **Volunteers acting in good faith are generally well protected in law.**
 - **Those acting under the direction of emergency services are covered by their insurance.**
 - **Competency is key: only trained individuals should undertake higher-risk tasks (e.g. chainsaw use).**
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- **Funding and Support**
 - Once a plan is established, up to £1,500 may be available for equipment such as PPE, torches, radios, and clothing.
 - Small grants can also support hall hire, printing, and postage.
 - No direct funding from MDDC, but strong advisory and practical support is available.
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- **Next Steps**
 - Circulate informal notes from the meeting.
 - Parish clerks to coordinate a follow-up session to begin plan development.
 - Devon Communities Together to provide templates, guides, and ongoing support.
 - Consider wider community engagement events and public awareness activities.
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Disclaimer: These notes are an informal summary and are not a formally minuted record of the meeting.

Road Report – February 2026

Highways Management

All the road network is the responsibility of Devon County Council (DCC), except the M5 which is National Highways.

Highways are a priority for residents. Both 2024 and 2025 residents' surveys revealed it's *the* top priority when it comes to our work with other organisations, and the top thing residents would like to see improved.

It is also a topic of discussion on the local Facebook group, and in Councillor conversations with parishioners. We know that the state of the roads matter to residents and the Council endeavours to do all we can to represent them through our liaison with DCC, contact with the roads officer and local district councillors, site visits, and highlighting how parishioners can report issues.

Below are the current key issues facing the network in and around our parish.

Potholes on the A38

After contact from residents about the road, and enquiries with DCC, the clerk received the following from DCC's highways officer on 20/01/26:

I have just spoken to our network response team. The two worst failures outside the cafe were cut out and repaired yesterday and there are still several outstanding defects along the A38 which will be repaired in due course. There was an additional Highway Safety Inspection done whilst on site yesterday so they are aware of the issues and monitoring the situation.

Looking ahead, I can confirm that Devon County Council has two full resurfacing schemes in development on the A38 corridor, covering sections between Appledore and Southdown Cross, and between Southdown Cross and Woodlands. These schemes are currently programmed for delivery in the 2026/27 financial year, subject to final design approval and budget confirmation.

The above has also been sent to at least one resident who has complained directly to DCC about the state of the road.

The A38 is subject to monthly safety inspections by DCC to identify defects that pose an immediate risk to the safety of the highway users. The most recent survey took place on 19/01/26 where several defects were identified and scheduled for repair.

Regarding the wider condition of the A38, DCC acknowledge that this route has been adversely affected by recent weather conditions. They advised that in recent weeks, Devon has experienced repeated cycles of freezing temperatures followed by rapid thaw and heavy rainfall. This pattern, which occurred on multiple occasions, is known to significantly accelerate carriageway deterioration and has led to a substantial increase in pothole formation across the network.

Parishioners are encouraged to continue to report issues via the DCC website.

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Brimstone lane

After contact from residents of Brimstone Lane, the clerk received the following from DCC on 06/01/26:

I have heard back from the application for dragon patching on Brimstone Lane, and unfortunately it is not suitable. Due to the category of lane (category 9) this was my only remaining option for resurfacing. Only safety defects and patching are possible here and I would think it is beyond the set limit for patching. The only option is that the residents continue to report any safety defects according to the policy listed on our website and they will be looked at by our dedicated inspectors:

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

From my inspection though I do not believe that this condition of the road would prevent access for emergency vehicles as I was able to drive the lane without any issue.

The recent closure of the bottom road out of Westleigh and designation of Brimstone Lane as the diversion route has however highlighted to DCC again the parlous state of this road. It is wholly unsuitable as a diversion route.

Burlescombe

Numerous potholes from the quarry to village. The worst one has been patched. Once again residents are encouraged to continue reporting them on the DCC website.

The white lines outside school have been reported to DCC. It's currently with their line painting team. There is, however, no timeline for repainting.

Overgrown hedges encroaching on the highway have been reported to the council. The clerk has contacted DCC. They advise that they currently don't meet the safety standard for them to carry out the work. These hedges will remain the responsibility of the landowner to maintain. The clerk is in the process of contacting the landowners. Should the hedges become too overgrown and impair the carriageway, DCC will reconsider.

Westleigh

Ongoing flooding at Pugham is due to the low-lying road and water runoff into the river Lyner below. Once significant rainfall occurs, the culverts and Lyner cannot cope with the amount of water, leading to the road becoming impassable. As a minor (category 9) road, this is very unlikely to be remedied anytime soon.

Flooding also occurs just past Blacksmith's cross again when there is heavy rainfall. This is generally passable but could become an issue during periods of unusually heavy rain.

The above issues do highlight that if any of the main routes out of the villages are blocked / closed, it can be difficult for residents to move around.

As a parish when compared to similar sized rural parishes in Devon, we do seem to have fewer issues reported on their website than others. Is this because we have fewer issues, or is this due to underreporting?

The parish council can and will continue to report issues to and liaise directly with the roads officers at DCC but we are only one voice. Parishioners should continue to report every issue they come across on the DCC website:

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

The cost of repair of any damage caused to a vehicle because of a road defect can be claimed from DCC.

[Highways insurance claims - Roads and transport](#)

The accompanying maps (provided as a separate attachment) show the current issues affecting the parish, and the number of incidents DCC are dealing with at this time.

Burlescombe Parish Council communications update

February 2026

Communications since last meeting

1. Parish magazine

For the February issue of the Parish magazine, we shared an update that summarised key messages from January's precept meeting.

2. Website and Facebook

Our standard approach for significant updates is to add a news item to our website, share that story on our Facebook page and share into the local Facebook Group. This month we have shared:

- Key messages from the January precept meeting.
- Local Government Reorganisation plans and consultation survey.
- Devon Libraries consultation (Facebook only, shared DCC post into local group).
- Agenda for the February meeting.

3. Noticeboards

Notices, agendas and minutes continue to be posted in the Westleigh, Burlescombe, Appledore and Ayshford noticeboards, where space allows.

Topics for future communications

Volunteering, email newsletter, highways updates, broadband provision, emergency planning, and any other matters arising.

Burlescombe Parish Council volunteers – February 2026

The agreed process to manage one-off volunteering opportunities will be in place from this meeting onwards. It is as follows:

1. A potential volunteer task is identified and agreed at a BPC meeting.
2. Most relevant councillor to send a brief description of the task, and any other relevant details, to Cllr Smith.
3. Cllr Smith to send a communication out to the volunteer group via the email newsletter platform to see if anyone is able to support the completion of the task, giving a deadline for responses.
4. If someone volunteers, Cllr Smith will connect the relevant councillor (and therefore the volunteer supervisor for this task) with the volunteer(s) to arrange completion of the volunteer form and to manage the rest of the process.
5. If no one volunteers, Cllr Smith will notify the relevant councillor and the Clerk so that alternative arrangements can be made.

A log will be kept each year to record volunteer tasks completed, hours given and estimated costs saved. As agreed at the January meeting, an email was sent to all volunteers to:

1. Share the Burlescombe Parish Council volunteer policy and form.
2. Provide a simple explanation of the proposed principles/process for managing one-off volunteering opportunities.
3. Check that they would still like to be involved in light of information provided.
4. Offer a session to get the volunteers together and gather availability for those who would be interested.

Two volunteers responded positively to the offer of an in-person session, so I would suggest this is not a viable number for an in-depth session.

I propose I contact the two individuals to offer an informal discussion with them each individually, so they can share any ideas they have or ask any questions.

Once the email platform is in place for the newsletter, this can also be used for volunteer emails.

Next steps for introducing an email newsletter

Mail drop

Quotes obtained (incl VAT) for following specifications:

- Double sided postcard size (A6) in colour.
- Decent weight of paper (250gsm).
- 400 copies (384 households in Parish as per recent research).

Quote 1: Local company 500 £94.8

Quote 2: £37

These two options do not have a design tool included, which will make it more challenging to design and supply in the right format, ensuring professional result.

Quote 3: £39.11

Quote 4: £71.64

Step 1 (now): Council to discuss and decide on best printing option.

Side 1



Side 2



Draft design

Step 2 (now or via email shortly after meeting): Council to give feedback on draft design and content.

Newsletter creation

Need to establish whether free version of Zoho Campaigns is sufficient, or whether we need to subscribe to paid version at cost of £28.80 per year.

Step 3: Cllr Smith to undertake free training in the Zoho Campaigns platform to establish needs, and liaise with Clerk if subscription is required.

Distribution

Step 4: Aim to have postcard printed in time to enable delivery to households in March. Support the maildrop with communication through our usual channels as well.

Holcim / Burlescombe Parish Council Biodiversity Meeting, Westleigh Quarry

Tuesday 13th January 2026

Attendees

Luc Philips (LP) – Holcim

Jonathan Davis (JD) – Holcim

Melissa Turner (MT) - Holcim, Westleigh Quarry's on-site biodiversity representative

Paul Hill (PH) – Holcim, Biodiversity & Restoration Advisor (Southern Sites)

Emma Forward (EF) – Burlescombe Parish Council (BCP)

Judy Downing (JD) – Burlescombe Parish Council (BC)

LP gave a brief overview of quarry activities and EF asked if a “Ladybird” type guide to the technical aspects could be produced to help the community better understand the works. EF referenced the recent responses BCP had received regarding questions raised at our meetings where the answers used technical language that a lay person couldn't understand.

LP also touched on what might happen at the end of life of the quarry and JD suggested a reservoir. LP and new Estates Manager agreed to add this to their considerations.

PH then gave a presentation on Holcim's biodiversity activities

PH mentioned that there was a possible soil quality issue around the Rocknell quarry where the new trees had been planted as the majority disappointingly had not grown. He also advised there is a problem with deer around the site eating new growth and that taller tree guards were being used and a new environmentally friendly deterrent spray was going to be trialled.

He advised that Holcim have a biodiversity plan and the starting point for this was the conducting of a baseline habitat and ecology survey. This gives a bottom line to compare biodiversity gain or loss and informs biodiversity actions.

PH talked to the importance of wildlife corridors around quarries so that the biodiversity created on a site does not exist in isolation. His view is that a quarry is a focal point or hub for wildlife and then there are wildlife corridors that link in and out of that area and he stressed the importance of working with landowners to achieve this. He mentioned that Somerset Wildlife Trust gives funding for wildlife corridors and assumed that Devon Wildlife Trust might do the same.

EF post meeting note – the ORL is therefore an important wildlife corridor leading to and from the quarry site and consideration of this should be given when we are forming our own biodiversity plan.

PF also mentioned the Holcim UK Wildlife Enhancement Fund which could help fund the costs of the habitat and ecology survey and post meeting has shared the application form which we will be completing. He also agreed to share the specification for such a survey so that BCP know what to ask for.

PF talked about how good swallows are for dairy farmers as they eat the midges that can cause blue tongue. EF asked if Holcim had any plans to install swallow boxes around the site to encourage them.

PF also advised that there are peregrines nesting in the quarry which the Hawk and Owl trust are monitoring as well as doormice on the surrounding land. EF noted that we must definitely take into account the presence of doormice on the ORL. He also advised that Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats are in residence and that these are one of the rarest and most protected bats in the UK. He stated the importance of hedgerows for bats as well as cow dung and also how ivermectins used by farmers could be detrimental as they kill the dung beetles that the bats feed on.

PF said that Holcim were going to be applying to the Woodland Grant Scheme which is a government fund that promotes best practice in tree management and is run by the Forestry Commission. This

would mean that they could go above and beyond in the management of the land around the quarry in terms of woodland management.

He also talked about how when tree maintenance is carried out around the site that the felled wood is left in habitat piles so that nature can take advantage – BPC should note this for the tree works that need to be carried out on the ORL.

We were then taken on a tour round the perimeter of the site to view the various areas of tree planting and bat housing that Holcim are providing. EF mentioned that it would be great if Holcim could publicise these type of activities and we are going to investigate whether a periodic update from Paul could be added to our upcoming newsletter.

PH also offered to assist us wherever he could in our formulation of our biodiversity management plan for the Parish which was appreciated.

MT then drove us round the inside of the quarry from Rocknell to Fenacre showing us all the works and different levels and pointing out the caves where the bats live as well as the rock faces where the peregrines nest. This was a highly educational tour as EF had not been to the quarry before. The scale of the works there is really very impressive.

All in all it was a very interesting and productive session and BCP are very grateful to Holcim for giving their time and expertise in support of our biodiversity activities.

DISCLAIMER – This report is taken from written notes made by EF and is not intended to be a formally minuted record of the meeting.

Westleigh Quarry Liaison Group, 1pm on Monday 19th January 2026

Held at Holcim UK's Westleigh Quarry Offices

These are the informal notes from the Westleigh Quarry Liaison Group meeting held on 19th January, 2026, covering updates on quarry operations, environmental concerns, highway matters, traffic, and planning issues. The meeting involved representatives from Holcim UK, local councils, and community groups discussing ongoing quarry activities and community relations.

- **Meeting attendees and apologies:** Representatives from Devon County Council, Holcim UK, local councils, and residents' associations attended, with apologies noted for Judy Downing. Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed without comments.
- **Quarry operations update:** Rocknell Quarry has no new updates; Westleigh Quarry is progressing with ridge removal and blasting activities, with some concerns about the impact of blasting on overcast days. Tree and biodiversity conditions remain stable after recent storms, and Holcim supplied grit bins to the community.
- **Environmental and biodiversity concerns:** Some replanted trees appear unhealthy, possibly due to soil or drought conditions. Holcim is investigating improvements. A recent biodiversity meeting was positively received.
- **Staff changes and asphalt plant relocation:** Quarry operations manager Luc Phillips will leave in February. The asphalt plant relocation is delayed due to legal and economic factors, with Holcim managing current operations and recognising external pressure is needed for change.
- **Highway and traffic issues:** Discussions included the 20mph speed limit proposal, concerns about lorry traffic on local roads, potholes on the A38, and the potential for community-led traffic calming schemes. Holcim drivers follow designated routes, but independent drivers' actions are harder to control.
- **Traffic movements and materials:** Quarry traffic remains within legal limits, with some increased night movements due to M5 works. Holcim is experimenting with new road materials, including recycled components, though some trials have been unsuccessful.
- **Environmental monitoring and community reporting:** Blasting vibrations and dust levels are monitored, with blasts within limits. Residents are encouraged to report concerns directly to Holcim for prompt response. Communication about dust levels will be made more accessible to the public.
- **Planning and environmental compliance:** Holcim is progressing with Environment Agency requirements for a fish survey related to the Fenacre stream and managing other site developments such as mobile mast installation and fibre optic infrastructure.
- **Community engagement and future meetings:** Meeting minutes can be shared among participants. An open day may be organised by the new quarry manager. Interest was expressed in hosting an independent talk on blasting. Regular communication between the quarry and parish council is desired.

Councillor Elliss-Brookes raised the following issues on behalf of Burlescombe Parish Council:

- Likely timeframe for moving the Asphalt plant, and what community action could be taken to influence the decision
- Concerns over lorries not using the agreed routes
- Potholes on the lorry routes
- The reporting of concerns about blast vibrations
- Plain English communications relating to dust monitoring
- Action on light pollution coming from the quarry
- Improving communications between Holcim and BPC

The next meeting is scheduled for 20th April, 2026.

CLlr Gill Westcott - Report to Parish Councils, February 2026

Warm Homes Local Grant

Warm Homes grants are being delivered in partnership with Devon County Council and other local authorities in Devon - a government backed scheme to make homes across Devon warmer, greener and more affordable to heat. The scheme offers fully funded energy efficiency upgrades for eligible households, including measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation, double glazing, air source heat pumps, solar panels and insulated doors.

visit [Warm Homes: Local Grant DCC - Energy Saving Devon](#)

The **Green Enterprise Grant Scheme** still has some funds to support local businesses investing to reduce their climate impact – things like energy efficiency measures, LED lighting, installation of renewable generation. At least one village hall has benefited from a grant. Half the investment can be paid, up to £5,000.

Business Rates are changing, partly because of a Revaluation exercise. There has been an opportunity today for businesses to gain advice from the council and more information will be available soon.

Businesses will see their bills increase. In many instances there are Government schemes in place to help smooth the extra costs, these may not take the full financial impact away. Link below for information on the changes. [Important changes to Business Rates 2026 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)

Members have been considering the reasons for voids in social housing – often vacant for necessary repairs between tenants. There is a higher demand for social housing than can be met at the moment and people are having to wait, even though priority for local people is in most cases in place.

Local Government Reorganisation – No change here. We are still awaiting the decision of DCLG on what Devon's local government landscape will look like.

2026 January Parish Report (MDDC) – Full version

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The draft NPPF 2026 proposes significant changes aimed at enhancing sustainable growth and streamlining planning processes in England. The NPPF was released in December 2025 and is currently open for consultation until March 2026. The draft aims to strengthen national policy's role in driving sustainable growth and ensuring consistent decision making across England.

Mid Devon District Council is holding a Town and Parish Planning event for parish and town councillors **26 March 2026 18:00-20:30** to cover this and other issues.

Businesses:

There has been a lot happening regarding Business Rates but there is help and guidance around. If you need further information please visit the website [Important changes to Business Rates 2026 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#) The site has also been updated to reflect the Government issued guidance giving extra relief to Pubs and Music venues. Those that qualify will get 15% off their net 2026/27 business rates bill, assuming our software supplier is able to make the changes bills will be issued with the extra relief applied.

Current estimates

c53 businesses may qualify

Estimated Value c£50k

MDDC will be compensated via s31 for the loss of income

Drop-in Day for Businesses

Business' are welcome to come in and or contact us to discuss their bills

Website link: [Business - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)

The event will be held on **Tuesday, 17 February 2026** at Mid Devon District Council Offices, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

There is no need to book, and you can visit anytime **between 10:30am and 5pm**.

Anyone who is unable to attend and has questions about the changes to Business Rates Relief can email the Revenues Team at: revenues@middevon.gov.uk and arrange to have a call back.

You can also find out a lot of [information about the changes to Business Rates on our website](#).

As we move into a new year, Mid Devon District Council is encouraging businesses to sign up to their business e-newsletter

The e-newsletter keeps businesses informed about initiatives including grant schemes, training, and events, as well as a roundup of information and useful resources to support them.

[Mid Devon businesses encouraged to sign up to e-Newsletter](#)

Councillor DuChesne's Report

Budget

After being summoned into a Govt webinar back in late September, warning around circa 60 Councils to expect funding cuts of around 7% and with no guidance on whether the threatened removal of business rates growth accrued since 2013/14 was going to materialise, the Council had planned for a very challenging 2026/27 budget.

Clarity on both of these positions was finally provided in late December. The Government, in providing a 3 year Funding Settlement (FS), only delivered funding cuts of 2.1% (although you could easily argue this is really 5% if you take account of inflation) and is providing 100% protection of all the extra business rates accrued since the beginning of this system (a huge relief). This had the effect of improving our earlier estimated budget gap reported to the January Cabinet meeting by around £1m.

This late news has significantly eased the Council's budget position for 2026/27 and it is now looking likely that we will be able to set a balanced budget, without the use of reserves, keep Council Tax increases within the Referendum Limit and continued to maintain our existing level and quality of service provision. A position we are very pleased to disclose.

The advantage of a 3 year FS is it gives more medium term financial certainty moving into the future – which enables more proactive strategic planning than rolling 1 year ones. Although the irony here is, that many Councils will not exist in the third year of FS! However, there are some other challenges included in the detail of the FS. At the end of 2028/29 we are £814k above our "fair funding" assessment (so what happens if this protection is removed?) and it also assumes that the Council's property base grows at the average level of the past 4 years (this is baked into the FS – so passes the financial risk of slow build out rates in the District to the Council). Both of these changes generate further uncertainty into any future financial planning.

Leisure Pricing Strategy

A decision was made to freeze membership prices for the forthcoming year to support affordability and encourage sustained participation, while increasing pay as you go tariffs in line with inflation and market rates.

Decision to cease using 'X' (formerly 'Twitter') as a social media platform.

While the use of communication and social media channels should not ever be solely down to any alignment on 'brand values', the platform now permits the creation and distribution of content widely perceived as abusive. Online abuse creates real-life victims and real-life vulnerabilities, and as such the Council does not feel it should continue to utilise such a platform.

Waste and Recycling

To find out your waste and recycling day and download your 2025/26 calendar visit [Check collection dates - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)

Household Batteries

Batteries, especially lithium-ion batteries commonly found in everyday devices, can pose a severe fire hazard when disposed of incorrectly. Fires caused by batteries can spread rapidly, resulting in extensive damage to waste vehicles and facilities, and creating danger for residents and waste operatives. Recycling batteries correctly is not only a matter of safety but also a vital environmental responsibility. Batteries contain hazardous materials that can leach into the soil and water if not recycled properly. By ensuring batteries are placed in designated recycling boxes, we contribute to the protection of our environment and reduce the risk of fires.

To help prevent battery-related fires, residents are encouraged to follow these essential guidelines:

1. **Use designated recycling boxes:** General household batteries can be recycled as part of your fortnightly recycling collection - batteries must be placed in a clear plastic bag or tub, and left on top of the black box clearly visible for our collection crews. We do not collect Lithium-Ion batteries at this time.
2. **Wrap or tape batteries:** Used batteries are not always completely discharged so take caution when disposing of multiple used batteries that could come into contact with one another. To dispose of the batteries safely, cover the positive terminal of each battery with tape.
3. **Drop off at [recycling centres](#):** When in doubt, consider dropping off batteries at designated recycling centres or collection points.

4. **Educate others:** Spread the word about the importance of proper battery disposal to friends, family, and neighbours.

Green Enterprise Grants This scheme will run again, this time for 2 years up to March 2028 with a budget of £20k/year. Look for news of it from March. The purpose of the grants is to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) based in Mid Devon to invest in improved efficiency, for resource and energy savings and cost savings, to achieve reduced environmental impact and particularly climate impacts (carbon footprint). Note for Town & Parishes: there is an intention to make it easier in this round for community halls to apply (village halls, parish halls, church halls).

WHATS ON

26 February Grand Western Canal - Illustrated Talk

[Grand Western Canal - Illustrated Talk - Visit Mid Devon](#)

Westexe Rec junior parkrun

A free, fun, and friendly weekly 2k event for juniors (4 to 14 year olds) is now held every Sunday at 9:00am. The event takes place at Westexe Recreation Ground, Wellbrook Street, Tiverton, EX16 5BP.

[home](#) | [Westexe Rec junior parkrun](#) | [Westexe Rec junior parkrun](#)

The Source Trade Show

Food, drink and hospitality businesses - join the Growth Hub team at The Source Trade Show on Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th February at Westpoint Arena, Exeter. The show brings together suppliers, ideas and insights designed to help businesses stay competitive in a fast moving sector.

With hundreds of food and drink brands under one roof, visitors can explore quality ingredients, equipment and services essential for the year ahead. It is an opportunity to discover new products, refine existing offers and spot emerging trends across hospitality, catering and food retail.

Visit our stand G8 to speak to the Growth Hub team about available business support for food, drink and hospitality businesses.

Registration is free for trade buyers, register here: <https://enrolment.engage-powered.com/sr/go/register.aspx> Find out about the show: thesourcetradeshow.co.uk.

Gwen DuChesne

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