

Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

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

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

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

010/2526/1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from MDDC District Councillor Lock.

010/2526/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations.

010/2526/3 Minutes of Previous meetings

The draft minutes of the meeting on 17 February 2026 had been circulated to all councillors and published on the website and noticeboards. These minutes were approved with the correction of the spelling of Westleigh in one instance and then duly initialled and signed by the Chair.

010/2526/4 Public Participation

Members of the public present raised the following matter:

Drains

- Who was responsible for cleaning the drains and/or the interconnected pipes between the drains
- Who is responsible for reporting them?
- There were drainage problems in Westleigh on the top road and in Burlescombe by the railway bridge
- The junction warning signs on the A38 were still not operating, given the lack of visibility and the speed of lorries and cars, this made it dangerous to turn right.
- There were numerous potholes from the quarry to the A38
- Lorries from the quarry had been dropping mud on the road but the Quarry had not introduced using a second wheel washer
- The Quarry road sweepers were ineffective
- The potential of health issues due to the amount of dust in the air
- Flooding at Horsepond Bridge

The Parish Council advised that many of these issues were on the agenda and would be discussed. Devon County Council was responsible for Highways which included potholes, drains, signage etc. Residents should report such problems online and advise the Parish Council so it could follow up on any issues.

010/2526/5 Matters arising from the last minutes

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

Potholes on the A38 raised in Public Participation in February - covered under Item 4 February minutes and discussed again under Highways.

010/2526/6 Emergency Planning

Councillor Forward noted that the Clerk had sent through a draft Emergency Plan. The information could apply to any parishes and thus needed to be updated with Burlescombe specific issues which Parish Councillors should feed into the Clerk.

The Clerk had received information from the Quarry and the Grand Western Canal which could be included in the plan. The Clerk also had information on what walkers should look for along the canal that could indicate a possible breach.

Once all the information was in place then the maps to accompany the Emergency Plan could be generated and the Community Response Team set up. The team would be comprised of Parish Councillors and, hopefully, volunteers.

A date for a public meeting would be set after the May annual meetings.

Councillor Forward suggested attending a Burlescombe & Westleigh Village Hall Committee meeting to discuss the hall being a muster point and was also in discussions with Westleigh URC. In this regard, the Clerk had also attended an Emergency Community Hubs online meeting by run Devon Communities Together. As a result, the two halls could apply for Emergency boxes.

Action: Clerk to circulate information to the halls/arrange meeting with Councillor Forward

The Emergency Plan included a personal emergency plan and Councillor Forward asked that all Parish Councillors completed this action.

Action: All

010/2526/7 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. Information had now been received from both Mid Devon District Council and Devon County Council.

Councillor Forward asked for the mapping to include areas of biodiversity.

Action: Clerk

Review of risk register

The updated risk register would be circulated prior to the May meeting.

010/2526/8 Training

The Clerk had completed training on Assertion 10 and would be bring the completed report and recommendations to the April meeting.

The Clerk had run through her thoughts on the proposed report with Breakthrough Communications who had conducted the training and they had indicated that the thought process was sound.

Assertion 10 looked to ensure that the Parish Council's practices were secure and protected the information that the Parish Council held and covered IT Policy and Security, Website Accessibility, Transparency and Social Media Management.

The Parish Council had its own computer and all documentation was kept on the computer with backup in the cloud and on a secure external hard drive.

The Parish Council used a gov.uk website and email addresses from an approved Government supplier and Parish Online had confirmed that their services met Assertion 10 requirements. The Parish Council also published the required documentation on the website.

The Parish Council had a Social Media Policy in place.

The use of gov.uk email addresses meant that email boxes could be deleted when an individual was no longer a parish councillor. The Clerk, unless essential, redacted resident's information when providing correspondence to Parish Councillors.

Parish Councillors should not be holding Parish Council information on their own computers but this could be covered by a 'Bring Your Own Device' policy but Parish Councillors needed to understand that they became responsible for that information.

Parish Councillors were made aware of their obligations around storing council information on their own devices. The 'Bring Your Own Device' policy would be discussed at the April meeting.

It was noted that the majority of information that councillors dealt with e.g. agendas, minutes and financial documentation was published on the website as a statutory requirement and therefore in the public domain.

Contractor's information was held for a legal reason.

The Clerk had set up a system whereby resident correspondence was easy to access and could be deleted once it was no longer required, normally, six months after completion.

The Parish Council had clear arrangements for data protection through its GDPR policy.

The Parish Council would review its IT policy.

Action: Clerk to review IT policy and resend the Bring Your Own Device policy.

MDDC Planning Training

Councillors Elliss-Brookes and Forward would be attending this free online event that focussed on the National Planning Policy Framework on Thursday 26th March 2026.

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

Councillor Forward had attended this free online event on 5 March 2026 and her report would form part of these minutes.

010/2526/9 To receive a report from the Chair

Delivery of fast fibre

The Parish Council noted that a new telegraph pole was to be erected in Westleigh to support Open Reach.

Action: Councillor Elliss-Brookes would take a photo for the minutes.

VE Day Flag

Councillor Forward was in discussion with Westleigh URC.

Neighbourhood Plan / Housing Needs Survey

MDDC and Devon Communities Together would be undertaking a Housing Needs Survey for the parishes of Burlescombe, Halberton, Sampford Peverell and Uplowman. Each parish would receive its own data. The Parish Council would assist with its promotion. The Housing Needs Survey focused on those who had a housing need and supported the development of affordable homes on rural exception sites which helped local people stay in their communities.

Action: Councillor Smith would consider a communication plan to ensure maximum response. Clerk would contact DCT for promotional information.

Business Continuity Plan

The Clerk had almost completed the plan which reflected the Parish Council year with daily, weekly, monthly and yearly tasks.

Registering assets of community value

Councillor Forward noted the information can be found at [Assets of Community Value - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://assets-of-community-value-middevon.gov.uk). Westleigh URC had followed this up with the Synod.

Sewage discharge

Following a Facebook post, the Parish Council had entered into correspondence with South West Water regarding a sewage discharge from storm drains into River Lyner.

Councillor Westcott had been copied into the correspondence as she was part of MDDC's Scrutiny Committee who had been meeting with South West Water. It was noted that South West Water were not able to provide details of any possible health risks. It was noted that storm discharge figures for each year were available from South West Water.

Action: Councillor McDonald/Clerk to monitor

Spring Clean Up Day

Councillor Smith proposed a weekend day in spring when at least 3 or 4 Parish Councillors were available.

Action: Date to be set outside the meeting

The Parish Council would urge residents to respond to the Local Government Reorganisation consultation and express their concerns.

The Parish Council felt it would be beneficial to be included in correspondence so that it could support residents in resolving the flooding issues. The benefit of a site visit was questioned if it solely included the members of the Parish Council but it would be a site visit with the other local government organisations involved.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Parish Council RESOLVED to support DALC's response and to call for assurances that there would be local offices and access points for residents to visit key offices and planning teams.

Councillor Clist echoed the Parish Council's concerns regarding local representation and noted candidates did not have to be based in Devon. It was likely that those elected to the Unitary Authority would not attend Parish Council meetings taking away a level of communication. LGR had already cost £15m and he noted that Sussex and Norfolk were also going through the same process and suggested the Parish Council look at these areas when forming their response.

Action: Clerk to formulate response

Report from DALC Biodiversity webinar

Councillor Forward had circulated a report which would form part of these minutes.

The key take aways were:

- The Parish Council had a statutory obligation to have Biodiversity as an agenda item
- Biodiversity should be a part of each planning application review and on-site or local biodiversity was preferential to biodiversity located in other areas of the UK.

Parish Councils and organisations in Devon were already undertaking biodiversity projects and for Burllescombe, the ORL was a prime site.

010/25/26/10 To consider the Parish Council's response to the following planning applications and receive decision notices:

The Parish Council noted that no new planning applications had been received.

National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework")

The Clerk has submitted a short response focussing on the concerns relating to inadequate roads and services and the impact new housing will have on existing residents.

Caravan site and mobile homes policy consultation

Councillor McDonald advised that this was a review of an existing policy from 2013, and looked to strengthen accountability and improve standards for caravan sites and mobile home sites with information being published on Mid Devon District Council's website. There were a number of exceptions including temporary use and traveller sites and the Caravan Club whose members had an automatic planning permission. Temporary use would have stricter criteria.

Councillor McDonald did not feel that the Parish Council needed to respond to the consultation given that the sites within Burlescombe parish were exempted.

Decision Notices:

The Parish Council noted the following decisions:

26/00005/HOUSE – APPROVED – 2 March 2026

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 Devon

26/00045/LBC – APPROVED – 9 March 2026

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

Location: Great Southdown Farm & Cottage Burlescombe Tiverton Devon

010/2526/11 Highways Matters/Footpaths

11.1 Roads

Councillor Forward had sent potential meeting dates to Councillor Clist who was speaking to the Neighbourhood Highways Officer to finalise a meeting date.

11.2 Speed Limits / Speeding

The Clerk advised that a response is still awaited from DCC in respect of the cost of introducing a 20mph limit. Councillor Clist suggested that there may now be information online.

Action: Clerk to follow up

20 is plenty signs

The signs were available for installation.

Action: Clerk to contact Seddons who had provided the signs as they normally chose to install them.

11.3 Potholes and other matters

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

A38

Repairs have been carried out to the A38 and it is scheduled for re-surfacing.

Brimstone Lane potholes

Parish Council and public to continue reporting potholes online:

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

White lines / slow sign - Primary School, Burlescombe

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

Water from the garages, Burlescombe

MDDC had advised their investigations were ongoing and the Clerk followed this up prior to the meeting. - further update awaited from MDDC.

Action: Clerk to follow up again

It was noted that South West Water lorries had been seen in the area.

Overgrown hedges by railway bridge
Councillor Walker advised that a hedge had been cut.

11.4 Footpaths

Councillor Smith advised that there was one more footpath to walk before the P3 forms could be submitted to DCC.

The process had changed this year and information had to be submitted online as well as on the excel spreadsheet provided.

PROW funding

A Purchase Order had been received for £280. A further request had been submitted to cover path maintenance of £900.00 and a purchase order was awaited.

11.5 Road Warden Scheme/Snow Warden Scheme

Councillor McDonald advised there was nothing to report.

010/2526/12 Financial matters:

The Parish Council noted the following:

12.1 Financial Report 2025-26

The Financial Report is provided up to 28 February 2026 as follows:

Lloyds Bank

Current account balance at 31 January 2026 £ 343.69

Less payments

Service charge £ 4.25

Receipts

Current account balance at 28 February 2026 £ 339.44

The account is being kept open whilst discussions on the complaint are ongoing.

Unity

Current account balance at 31 January 2026 £ 1933.18

Payments

S/O to:

02-Feb-26 Countrywide SJB016 -208.80

03-Feb-26 HMRC 475PM01737213 -160.40

03-Feb-26 Clerk JAN 26 WAGES -509.63

26-Feb-26 SJM Trees INV 1745 -714.00

26-Feb-26 MDDC INV 20042372 -100.89

26-Feb-26 Clerk EXPENSES -25.00

26-Feb-26 SJM Trees INV 1754 -336.00

26-Feb-26 Westleigh URC JAN MTG -14.00

28-Feb-26 Service Charge -6.00 -2074.72

Receipts

03-Feb-26 Transfer 3000.00

Current account balance at 28 February 2026 £2858.46

Deposit account balance at 31 January 2026 £20710.25

Less Payments

03-Feb-26 Transfer 3000.00

Plus Receipts

Deposit account balance at 28 February 2026 £17710.25

Payments made prior to the meeting not shown above:

Clerk wages	£509.62
HMRC PAYE	£160.40
Countrywide DD (grass cutting)	£208.80

Payments to be authorised:

URC (Meeting room)	£ 14.00
Clerk expenses	£ 25.00
Email postcards	£ 25.06

The Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the above payments.

Burlescombe Village Hall has been booked for the Annual Parish Meeting at a cost of £36.00.

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

The budget monitoring information for the 11-month period had been provided as a separate document and would form part of the minutes of this meeting. No questions were raised.

12.2 Review of Asset Register

The updated Asset Register would be brought to the April meeting.

12.3 Computer

The Clerk would action the purchase of the computer as soon as possible as prices were expected to rise.

Other matters:

Jackalope Grant and Confirmation of Outcomes

This matter was ongoing and an update would be brought forward to the April meeting.

Historic website / emails

This matter was ongoing and an update would be brought forward to the April meeting.

Defibrillators

The Clerk had initiated the handover of the defibrillators and this would be brought forward to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to follow up on training for the new guardians

It was noted that no response had been received from the Devon Health & Wellbeing Board so the Clerk has contacted the SW Ambulance Trust for further information.

Contact with Lloyds Bank/Financial Ombudsman

The case is ongoing and further information was awaited from Lloyds Bank.

Other matters:

Noticeboards and their upkeep

The Amenity Working Group would look to cover this through volunteers

Grants and sponsorship

The Clerk had circulated information on the MDDC's Creative Communities Grant and the Parish Council would consider potential projects.

Repairs to Westleigh Telephone Box

Councillor Smith would forward the size so that the Clerk could order the glass.

Action: Clerk

010/2526/13 To receive a report on Parish Council Communications
Communications report

Councillor Smith's Communications report forms part of these minutes.

Next steps with volunteer group

Further contact had been made with those willing to volunteer and it was hoped volunteers would join in the Spring Clean Up Day.

Email newsletters and mail drop

Councillor Smith advised that so far 17 people had signed up to the email newsletters through social media. The Parish Council would now distribute the postcards across the parish and use it as an opportunity to speak to residents.

The free version of Zoho campaigns was sufficient for the Parish Council's needs.

010/2526/14 To receive a report on the Councillor Advocate Scheme/local crime

Councillor McDonald advised there was nothing further to report that was relevant to Burlescombe parish.

010/2526/15 To receive a report on the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Councillor Box had attended the meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee on Monday, 2nd March and had circulated a brief report. The minutes of the meeting would be circulated at a later date.

The key points raised were:

- The Fenacre water transfer project. The quarry pumped water from the canal and it needed to be returned and was particularly important when canal water levels were low. The project had been part of the planning approval some 30 years ago. The Environment Agency was reviewing the new plans and it was hoped the project would be completed by November 2026.
- The Enforcement Officer had given a talk on how to report potential breaches of planning and the actions which could be taken by Enforcement. Full information regarding reporting potential breaches of planning were on Mid Devon District Council's website and Parish Council's were encouraged to direct residents to the information.

Councillor Forward felt it would be beneficial for the Parish Council to invite the Enforcement Officer to a Parish Council meeting or organise a joint Parish Council meeting.

Action: Clerk

Councillor Box noted that a number of Parish Council representatives were also Friends of the Grand Western Canal for a nominal fee.

Action: Bring forward to the next meeting. Councillor Smith to promote the organisation.

Councillor Box also reported the damage to Ebear Bridge, a lorry had knocked the corner of the wall off and left its bumper. It also looked like more stones had fallen down. The damage had been reported to the GWC Manager.

Councillor Box had also reported being informed by GWC Management of an incident of a tractor drawing water from the canal. If it was a one-off incident, no action would be taken but if it happened again, it would be taken up by the Grand Western Canal management team.

010/2526/16 To receive a report on the Quarries

Councillor Downing advised that she was meeting with Heidleberg about quarry verge and hedge on the road leading to the A38. It was a mothballed site, and the owners were responsive when the verge needed cutting.

Councillor Elliss-Brookes advised that she was in communication with the quarry over concerns raised by residents and further information had been received and circulated to Parish Councillors and included:

- confirmation of the individuals and their addresses who should receive correspondence regarding the asphalt relocation had been received. The Parish Council RESOLVED to alsocopy in Rachel Gilmour, MP.
- information on dust levels provided in a simpler format
- confirmation of the complaints process

Councillor Elliss-Brookes report would form part of these minutes.

Councillor Downing would be attending the Broadpath/Hillpath meeting and both Councillors Downing and Elliss-Brookes would attend the Westleigh meeting in April.

The quarry did not provide an annual community benefit grant but did consider grants when requests were received.

Action: Parish Council to submit a grant request

010/2526/17 To receive a report from the Amenities Working Group

The Amenities Working Group had met on 16 March 2026 and the report would be circulated to all Parish Councillors and form part of these minutes.

Tree Report

Councillor Forward asked that the Tree Report be uploaded to the website.

Action: Councillor Smith/Clerk

The Amenities Working Group recommended that the quotation for £340 plus VAT for essential tree works to the oak tree (G4 in the report) be approved by the Parish Council. The Parish Council RESOLVED to accept the Amenities Working Group recommendation and noted the garage had an asbestos roof. The wood should be chipped and left.

The Amenities Working Group recommended that G7 and G8 (leylandii and elder) be taken down.

Action: Clerk to obtain quotes

Further tree works would be undertaken going forward and the Parish Council noted minor, low level actions (G9) could be carried out the Working Group as part of the spring clean-up.

The tree report and map would form part of these minutes

Hole in the bank

The Parish Council was taking advice on the best way to tackle the hole which had been created in the 100 year old bank. The bank was part of the parish's industrial heritage and should be protected.

Action: Councillors to consider how to raise awareness in the community

Burlescombe Open Space

The Clerk advised that the S106 monies set aside for the open space at Burlescombe would be used by MDDC to replace the safety matting in the associated play area.

The Clerk advised that this was an asset that MDDC were considering offering to the Parish Council. MDDC had already indicated that they were open to other works taking place on the Open Space to improve its use for residents.

The Parish Council could seek to use funding from the precept or apply for grants to achieve this.

Tasks for spring clean-up included:

General

Litter picking

Noticeboards – clean/sand down and oil

Westleigh Play Area

Clear moss on the matting

ORL (in order of priority)

Clut down buddleia at base of wall by old tar plant

Clear nettles/ brambles by the bench

Clear ivy on the fence / propping it up

Trim growth on steps by Black Bridge

Trim growth around the picnic table area

The Holcim Wildlife Fund Application for a biodiversity survey had been submitted and had the support of Holcim's Biodiversity & Restoration Advisor (Southern Sites). It was hoped that the funding would be made available in the next few weeks to allow the survey to be undertaken in the spring.

010/2526/18 To receive a report from MDDC Councillors Westcott and Lock
Councillor Westcott raised the following items:

The Extraordinary Council meeting on 25 February 2026

The meeting was held to approve Mid Devon's Council Tax Resolution for 2026/27. The average Band D Council Tax across the district will be £2,656.41 for the year ahead, which represents an increase of £135.24, or 5.36%, compared with the previous year and includes all major precepting authorities. Mid Devon District Council's own share will rise by 2.99%, bringing its Band D charge to £246.29, an increase of £7.17.

Devon County Council's precept will increase by 4.99%, partly due to additional Adult Social Care responsibilities, resulting in a Band D charge of £1,891.17.

The Devon & Cornwall Police precept will rise by £15 to £303.20 for Band D, while Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue's precept increases by £5 to £109.68.

Some funding had been lost through the Fair Funding Review but there was additional funding for homelessness.

Business Rates Drop-In Day: Strong Turnout and Positive Feedback

Mid Devon District Council's recent Business Rates Drop-In Day, had seen an encouraging turnout, with 15 local business owners attending to seek advice, clarity, and support on a range of business rates matters.

Local Government Reorganisation

The government has launched a consultation on proposals to overhaul Devon's local government—the biggest change in 50 years. Residents have until 26 March to give their views. Under the plan, Devon's county and eight district councils will be abolished in 2028 and replaced with fewer, larger unitary councils responsible for all services.

The Warm Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2

A major investment programme has supported households across Devon to reduce energy costs and make homes warmer, greener, and more efficient.

Cullompton Relief Road – Early Works Now Underway

Devon County Council has now begun preparatory works on the site. This marks another important step toward delivering the long-promised route that will help ease congestion, improve local air quality, and support the town’s future growth.

Green Enterprise Grants

There was still funding available to for small and medium sized businesses to reduce their carbon footprint by investing in energy efficient and renewable energy. assist with green energy.

010/2526/19 To receive a report from DCC Councillor Clist

Councillor Clist advised that DCC had achieved a balanced budget for 2026-27 with a view to protecting front line services. The majority of spend was on adult and child social care with additional focus on fostering.

Highways is receiving another £15m in the next financial year with another £4m for ditches and drains it would then be another £10m for the next five years. DCC was petitioning Government regarding further major routes into Devon given there was one main train route and one motorway.

The library consultation had finished with 25,000 responses. No library would be shutting and opening times will remain the same or possible extend. However, libraries would be becoming hubs to include community banking etc.

010/2526/20 Items for next meeting

As detailed in these minutes.

010/2526/21 Dates of the next Parish Council Meetings

Meeting dates are as follows:

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Tuesday, 21st April 2026 at Westleigh URC Hall starting at 7pm.

Future meetings:

- Wednesday, 20 May at 7pm Annual Parish Meeting
- Wednesday, 20 May at 7.30pm Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9.08pm.

Signed _____ **Date:** _____
Chair

REPORTS

Devon Association of Local Councils Webinar - Biodiversity; Practical measures to enhance wildlife Tuesday 24th February 2026

Cllr Forward attended the above session and the slide deck issued by the organisers forms part of this report as attached

The webinar was delivered by a specialist biodiversity consultant and discussed biodiversity measures and new legislation

The agenda was

Part 1. Background

- Biodiversity locally and relevant national policies
- Complying with recent Biodiversity Duty
- Possible steps to take
- Role of principal authorities and agencies

Part 2. Opportunities for Local Councils;

- Accessible advice, support and funding
- Liaising and working in partnership
- Community action case studies
- Engaging/bringing your communities with you

I took notes during the session as follows:

- Britain's biodiversity decline is amongst the world's worst as stated by the great man David Attenborough himself.
- What does biodiversity really mean? Variety of life that lives in an area.
- 3 types of biodiversity - species, ecosystem and genes
- Benefits of biodiversity - healthy environments, humans and economies
- Devon CC kicked off a Local Nature Recovery Strategy at the end of March 25
- There is a specific duty towards biodiversity that every Parish Council has - this is something that we are supposed to take account of and actively manage - National Association of Local Councils and DEFRA have guidance on what a Parish council should be doing to comply with the biodiversity duty
- There were a number of organisations name checked that are working in our county in support of improving biodiversity like Devon Wildlife Trust, DevonCPRE (who apparently comment on planning applications), Devon Environment Council, Woodland Trust, Devon Local Nature Partnership, Government Agencies like Natural England and Environment Agency and DRIP - the Devon Resilience Innovation Project.
- Mentioned Mid Devon Wildlife who are a local group who might be able to provide support to our activities
- DCC website had details on stewardship of historic environment - something that we have a lot of with the industrial heritage of the quarries and canal
- Parish Councils should address biodiversity in planning application comments and also add into Neighbourhood Plans / Statements
- Quick wins like providing swift bricks
- Carry out a Biodiversity Audit - make use of any knowledgeable volunteers - to record birds/plants/insects
- Make a Parish map of habitats - something to add to our community mapping
- Devon Biodiversity Records Centre - will advise us of what is living in our area
- Biodiversity Action Plan - is what a Parish Council needs to develop - lots of examples of what other Parish Councils have done was signposted
- Identify "Trees of Interest" in the Parish - looking after our veteran trees
- Devon Hedge Group - specific group that can advise on optimum hedgerow management

Minimum requirements as set out by Government

- have Biodiversity as a meeting agenda item
- note local biodiversity actions taking place
- agree what further steps to take
- address biodiversity when commenting on planning applications

Possible next steps

- 1 Create a Parish Biodiversity Policy - will ensure actions last beyond the tenure of current councillors
- 2 Form a Biodiversity Group - with a specific remit for boosting biodiversity in our community
- 3 Manage for wildlife - take biodiversity into account with roadside management, church yards, hedgerows, open spaces etc.
- 4 Create a Management Plan - have clear actions and measure their effectiveness

There was a huge amount of information shared and signposted which will take some time to review. The key takeaway point was that if every one of the 300 plus Parish and Town Councils in Devon took even a small amount of action to promote biodiversity then this would have a significant positive cumulative effect on the biodiversity of the county. Our next job as a Council is to identify how to take this crucial and mandated piece of our work forward in the most effective way.

Emma Forward

Chair

Burlescombe Parish Council

Report on Rethinking Public Services Online Conference

I attended the online conference from 0930 to 1330 on 5th March - it was a free to join event that had CPD Accreditation so it seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

The opening talk was on seven generation thinking and why today's decisions will echo far beyond our terms of office which was a bit of an eye opener. I'd not really considered what we do on the Parish Council in that way before but it made me feel rather proud.

Then came a talk on how Social Care is at capacity and how they are having to navigate workforce shortages, financial strain, rising demand and the urgent need for sustainable reform - key takeaway was how being a trusted voice is critical, particularly in the age of internet and AI. The concept of front doors was mentioned - organisations that help as an access point to other support and information services. Something for the Parish Council to consider when info sharing from MDDC and DCC etc.

The next session was on Libraries, Leisure and how to avoid the potential loss of these crucial civic spaces, along with a discussion on how to survive and reinvent services. Key takeaways were: the importance of face to face community interactions; how crucial libraries are for giving people a safe space to learn about issues and support available and again how the long term lack of funding and further budget cuts were affecting services.

The Mental Health & Youth Services talk came next and this really resonated as the mum of 2 teenagers. The discussion was about responding to the growing crisis in youth mental health through early intervention and the joining up of services. Key takeaway was about the responsibility that a whole community should really take for the mental health of their youth. It made me wonder what the Parish Council can do to help?

The final session was about SEND provision in schools and the realities of a system under extraordinary strain. I only hope these vital services get the reform and funding so disparately needed.

There were some incredible speakers all doing brilliant work under very challenging circumstances, which at times was tough to listen too.

It has however made me even more determined to help keep up the good work of the Parish Council in support of its community, especially at what seems to be a very tough time in society.

Emma Forward
Chair
Burlescombe Parish Council

Burlescombe Parish Council communications update

March 2026

Communications since last meeting

1. Parish magazine

Due to the meeting date and the deadline for submissions, a summary of February's meeting will be in the April issue of the magazine, which will be out late March.

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:

- Neighbourhood policing team coffee morning (Facebook only).
- Key messages from the February meeting.
- The link to sign up for our new email newsletter.
- Sampford Peverell housing development consultation (Facebook only)
- Devon County Council's information about how to prepare for emergencies.
- Agenda for the March 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

Annual meetings in May, promotion of volunteering, further promotion of the email newsletter, highways updates, broadband provision, emergency planning, and any other matters arising.

Email newsletter update

- We have now begun promoting the newsletter in earnest, through our website, Facebook and the parish magazine.
- 17 sign ups at time of writing.
- It seems that the free version of Zoho campaigns will be sufficient for our needs, it includes up to 2K contacts, 6,000 emails/month, 5 users, signup forms, some ready-to-use email templates and crucially a compliance check.
- The first newsletter was sent with the agenda for this meeting and a few other key news stories from our website.

Postcards

Final cost for 500 postcards was £25.06 after obtaining an introductory discount from the chosen company.

Next step is to deliver the postcards to residents, to reach new audiences.

Proposal to divide as follows:

- Burlescombe village from canal to Woodlands Business Park: divided between Cllrs Walker and Downing.
- Rocknell, Westleigh, Pugham, Ayshford and Canonsleigh: divided between Cllrs McDonald, Ellis-Brookes and Box.
- Appledore, Eastbrook/Fenacre/Whipcott, Leonard Moor/J27/Waterloo Cross, Maidendown/Southdown, Waterloo Cross: divided between Cllrs Forward and Smith.

If this is agreeable in principle, a precise map will be shared to ensure coverage and no duplication.

Volunteers

The two people who responded positively about an in-person meeting have been contacted with the offer of an informal chat.

The Zoho campaigns platform will be used to send a welcome email to share the first volunteering opportunities (once confirmed) with the mailing list

GWC Advisory committee – 2nd March 2026 – bi-annual meeting

Notes from Councillor Box

The minutes are not yet available so notes from me.

Fenacre Water Transfer System update.

Has been submitted to EA.

They want a more technical flow record submitted. There has been a delay in the 30 Year flow data and the final design will be submitted by end of March.

Hopefully all will be ready end November 2026.

The planning Enforcement Officer and her colleague had been invited. They are a team of 2 people and investigate complaints. This may lead to a notice being served which can lead to prosecution and a court case. We should start publicising what the public can or can't do following an application. This could help keep public in check.

This was a most inspiring talk and most informative.

A request was made by Friends of the GWC to join their organisation which is struggling to keep sufficient memberships. Membership fee is £15.

All other matters will be documented on the official minutes.

The damaged wall on Ebear Bridge is still awaiting repair and has been reported twice.

QUARRY REPORT

Councillor Elliss-Brookes

There have been no meetings relating to the quarries since the last meeting of Burlescombe Parish Council.

I have written to the Westleigh Quarry Liaison Group sharing quarry-related extracts of the draft minutes from the February 2026 Burlescombe Parish Council meeting.

I have also written directly to Holcim representatives regarding the following topics:

- Complaints: we have advised parishioners that they should contact Holcim direct with any complaints relating to the quarry, please could Holcim confirm which email address we should advise people to use, and whether there is a formal procedure that is followed.
- Asphalt Plant: BPC will be formally writing to Holcim to express concerns about the delays to re-locating the Asphalt Plant, please could Holcim advise who it would be best for us to contact about this.
- Dust levels: previous responses to BPC enquiries regarding dust levels have been provided in technical language that is not easily accessible to the general public, please could Holcim provide some more lay person summaries that we can there share with parishioners. It would also be helpful to share the Dust Action Plan which has previously been mentioned.
-

The next meeting of the Broadpath & Hillhead Quarry Liaison Meeting will be held on Monday 23rd March 2026.

The next meeting of the Westleigh Quarry Liaison Group will be held on Monday 20th April 2026.

Responses received:

Complaints

Please direct these to the new Quarry Manager:-

Julian Manship - 07785 681149

julian.manship@holcim.co.uk

Asphalt

Please direct any correspondence to our Regional Asphalt Operations Manager :-

Ben Greet, **HOLCIM UK LIMITED**

Floor 3 Poseidon House

Neptune Park

Plymouth

PL4 0SJ

E ben.greet@holcim.co.uk

Dust Levels

1. Dust levels permitted on site are governed by the Environmental Statement within the documents supporting the planning permission.

2. Permitted fugitive dust levels are 200mg/m²/day which is an unofficial guideline used in the absence of any formal stipulations, taken from best practice guidance (Control and Measurement of Nuisance Dust and PM10 from the Extractive Industries, 2011).

3. Holcim's Environmental Consultants undertake monthly dust monitoring in and around the Villages of Westleigh and Burlescombe, including the hamlet of Canonsleigh. The rates of dust deposition at these locations demonstrate compliance with the 200mg/m²/day figure.

4. On receipt of a complaint, Holcim will instigate an immediate investigation, with the Mineral Planning Authority and Mid Devon District Council being kept informed of such investigation and any subsequent remedial action taken. All complaints will be investigated by Holcim site management or other nominated site personnel, with reporting provided back to the person making the complaint.

5. In addition, the Mineral Planning Authority carry out periodic site visits to monitor compliance with planning conditions and review justified complaints made since the last visit. These Monitoring Reports are published on the County Council's website.

6. Holcim record complaints made about dust and/or mud as part of their complaints procedures, which requires any non-compliances identified to be followed up and rectified.

7. Some of the measures Holcim implement to reduce the impact of dust include :-

- A high standard of housekeeping at all times to ensure that dust from site is effectively suppressed;
- Spillages of materials cleaned up promptly and efficiently;
- Mobile plant regularly serviced and equipped with effective exhausts to minimise fume emissions;
- Haul roads adequately maintained;
- A water bowser used during dry conditions on the access road, haul roads and any other trafficked areas;
- All commercial vehicles pass through a wheel washing facility prior to leaving the site to prevent the deposition of material onto the public highway;
- In the unlikely event that dust or mud from the quarry has been deposited on the public highway, a road sweeper will be employed;
- When the site is operational, the site manager or instructed site personnel will undertake daily inspections of the access road and public highway to identify the need for any cleaning requirement;
- Holcim ensure loaded vehicles leaving the site onto the public highway are sheeted;
- A vehicle speed control of 15 mph is implemented on access and haul roads;
- Water sprays or surface binders are utilised to maintain damp surfaces on exposed tip and stockpile faces during dry and windy weather;
- Loading and unloading of vehicles ensure drop heights are minimised - especially pertinent at the quarry face, the plant and stocking area.
- A Dust Action Plan is followed to address the risk of dust generation from foreseeable weather changes. These weather conditions Eg. High winds, are known as trigger levels. During these periods, additional focus is given to vulnerable areas of the site to reduce dust Eg. applying wetting or crusting agents to exposed surfaces to prevent wind whipping. These trigger levels are when forecast wind speeds exceed 10 metres per second (22 miles per hour) and incorporate a west-north-westerly through to north-north-easterly component.

Amenities Working Group Report - 16th March 2026

Present:

Councillors Forward, Elliss-Brookes, Downing and Walker

1. ORL - Tree report

G4 - Recommendation is to for part 2 of 2nd quote for pollarding oak tree - £340. To note asbestos roof of the adjacent building. Possible to chip the wood and leave it on site.

Recommendation - get quotes for taking down the leylandii and elder – g7 and g8. Possible to chip the wood and leave it

Recommendation that G9 - hazel is done by us on spring tidy up day

INCLUDE TREE REPORT IN MINUTES

2. ORL - hole in bank - how do we get it filled / prevent it happening again? 15 mins

100 year old bank – raise awareness with children and community

how best to fix a 100 year old bank?

Discussions ongoing

3. Burlescombe Open Space - is it possible to provide some sort of bike facility there? 15 mins

Clerk to ask MDDC about if we paid for improvements would they allow us to use it (as they are the site owners)

4. Tasks for spring tidy up - this event will be first meeting of volunteer group so identify tasks and possible date - 25 mins

litter picking

moss on matting in Westleigh play park – moss brush – 1

noticeboards – clean / sand down and oil – stand alone task and weather dependent (summer)

ORL (and priority dependent on how many volunteers we get on the day)

trim growth on steps by black bridge - 3

buddleia at base of wall by old tar plant - 1

nettles / brambles by bench - 1

growth around seating area - 3

ivy on the fence / propping it up - 2