

BISHOPS LYDEARD & COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in St Mary's Church Centre, Bishops Lydeard on Wednesday 21st May 2025 at 6:00pm.

In addition to the Chair, six Parish Councillors and the Clerk of the Parish Council, there were 18 members of the public present.

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming and said refreshments were available.

Agenda Item 1 - Adoption of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2024

A member of the public proposed that the minutes were approved. This was seconded by Cllr Roberts and received unanimous support.

Agenda Item 2 - Presentation from Richard Brooksbank regarding the cycleway - The Russet Cider Trail Project

Richard Brooksbank provided a presentation of the Russet Cider Trail Project (RCTP). The key points that he covered were as follows:

AIMS

- To deliver a shared use path between Bishops Lydeard, Cotford St Luke and Norton Fitzwarren.
- A safe cycling and walking route that connects with similar existing and planned routes to Taunton, Wellington and beyond.

STRATEGY

- To have a detailed, feasible and fully costed plan 'on the shelf' ready for any major funding opportunity.
- To grow a local community and broader support base.
- To actively seek funding sources.
- With landowner support, use volunteer participation for path preparation work (Method used by the Strawberry Line)

PEOPLE

- Chair: Richard Brooksbank (richard.brooksbank@russettcidertrail.org)
- Secretary: Tony Hampson
- Treasurer: Annette Law
- Additional support from members of earlier cycle path charity

HISTORY

- 2012: Quantock Eco Cyclepath Group
- 2013: Feasibility study by Sustrans
- 2023: Study by Santec for Somerset Council
- 2024: New Group forms
- 2025: May – Application for charitable status

NEXT STEPS

- Charitable Status
- Develop communication methods – Website etc.
- Define Route.
- Engage with landowners.
- Engage with stakeholders – Local councils, County Council, West Somerset Railway, Norton Manor Camp.
- Engage with related charities, other local initiatives, businesses and potential funding sources.
- Engage with the communities.

The slide used can be found on the Parish Council website at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/TRCT-Presentation-1.4.pdf>

Agenda Item 3 - Presentations from CiL recipients

- a. James Dakin – Bishops Lydeard Church School

Unfortunately, James Dakin was not able to attend the meeting and Rebecca Wheatley (School Governor) stood in and read out a letter prepared by James Dakin. This can be found on the Parish Council website at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Headteacher-Letter-to-the-Parish-Council.pdf>

b. Alan Ball – Bishops Lydeard Players

Unfortunately, Alan Ball was late arriving and not in attendance at this point to provide the update.

Agenda Item 4 - Presentation from Joanna Cavill - Division Commissioner for the Girl Guides

Joanna Cavill the division commissioner for the Girl Guides gave a talk about the Girl Guide movement. It is the largest girls only organisation in the UK with over 600,000 members and 100,000 volunteers. It is a safe space for girls to be themselves and their strap line is 'We let girls know they can do anything'. Their activities are girl led and have included archery, rifle shooting, water slides, camping and campfires. In Bishops Lydeard at the moment there are Rainbows (4 to 6 year olds) who meet in the Village Hall, Brownies that meet in the scout hut, Guides (10 to 14 year olds) that also meet in the scout hut, Rangers who meet at Wellington and adults (18 to 25 year olds). There is the opportunity for international travel.

There is an urgent need to recruit new leaders. The leader for the Guides is stepping down and if we don't find a new leader by the end of the school summer term the unit will have to close. Also, the Brownie leader has given a year's notice, and that role needs to be filled. She has placed adverts in Fiveways, the school newsletter will have a request for volunteers and posters are going up plus Facebook group messages. She noted that full training is provided, and all reasonable expenses paid. She said they would like to be more visible (the scout hut is out of the way so people may not know about it) and will be supporting the flower show in Bishops Lydeard which may help.

The Guide promise is now to 'develop our beliefs' and so it is inclusive to all.

A member of the public suggested approaching the Quantock Brewery as there is high footfall there.

A member of the public said that she hadn't seen any information about this in the village or Facebook sites and would be happy to advise.

It was noted that Brownies and Guides take place on Wednesday evenings.

A member of the public said that a new noticeboard is being provided by the Parish Council for the Moorland Gate development, and this would be a good site for a poster. He wanted to thank the Parish Council on behalf of the Moorland Gate Residents Committee for providing the noticeboard.

Agenda Item 5 - Chair's report

Cllr Lewin-Harris, the chair of the Parish Council read her annual report, the report is available on the Parish Council website at the following location:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Chairs-report-to-2025-Annual-Meeting.pdf>

Agenda Item 6 - Comments and questions from members of the public

Comments and questions were raised by members of the public, including:

- a. A member of the public said that the Moorland Gate Resident Committee were in discussion with David Wilson Homes regarding an early take over the contract to look after the public open space within the development from the current agent (First Port) and wanted to know if the Parish Council lengthsman could do the work. The chair said that it would be up to the Lengthsman whether he would want to take it on. She did not think the Parish Council would object to this.
- b. A member of the public said that Wyvern Football club are looking to relocate to the edge of the village which seems a very speculative application. The key issue is there is no access via pedestrian route or bicycle so it is hard to see how that would proceed given the requirement of the council to ensure access other than a car.
- c. A member of the public said that there had been some sad news that the school has not got the money they hoped for from central government which means no wrap-around nurse care for a growing village with young people.
- d. A member of the public said that it is a shame that there are gaps in Guiding services.
- e. A member of the public said that it is evident that a lack of central government funding is increasing reliance on resources we have in the village and wanted to know how much is committed to the £375K Road and Traffic project. It has been running for about 10 years with nothing delivered. Local groups have questioned many times 'is this good value for money'. Other low-cost speed reduction proposal had been put forward.
- f. A member of the public said that two members of the speed watch team had been vilified. They had been photographed on Greenway Road and these had been posted on Facebook (Bishops Lydeard Community Help) for the second time and wanted to know why the admin team had accepted bullying and harassment posts like that. Cllr Rigby said in his opinion they looked quite supportive of the people going out there doing community speed watch and most of the comments seemed supportive. Cllr Rigby said he is an administrator of this Facebook page but would leave it up to the other administrators to decide.
- g. A member of the public wanted to know why we are spending £375,000 on something that we do not know what it is (referring to the Road and Traffic project). Are they speed bumps or what are they? The chair said that when we

embarked on this about 8 years ago no one had any idea how long it was going to take and there are various reasons for that. We are not able to make decision on this at this meeting. It was noted that there are other things that money could be spent on. When the Parish Council do get some figures, we will have to decide what to do and how far to go. She personally feels we need to deliver something on this as that is what all the consultations indicated very strongly. It was also noted that it was clear in the consultation that people did not want speed bumps in the village.

- h. A member of the public wanted to know about the relation the council has with TPA (referring to the consultants Transport Planning Associates used by the Parish Council on the Road and Traffic project). The chair said that the consultant had been suggested by Somerset Council. The exact cost of the work TPA has been paid needs to be clarified. The member of the public said that Somerset Council had been paid £8,000 to review the safety, feasibility and buildability of the TPA designs and now we are in the position that Somerset Council have taken the most lightweight (easiest) gateway and want a further £12,500 to redesign it. What is the bare minimum the council will deliver and what does it look like for all that money? The logic is that Somerset Council will take a further £12,000, £15,000 or £20,000 for the redesigns of the more technically complex sites. The chair said that until we get the figures it is difficult to say. The figure of £375,000 from TPA was in 2023. It was noted that Somerset Council indicated that this could be two to three times higher now. Cllr Bletcher said we would like to do the whole scheme but obviously we can't as prices have moved on dramatically since the original cost estimates were prepared. What we will hope we can do when we get firm figures back is to look at the scheme as a whole and say can we afford this and is it value for money. Once we have the figures, we can do that. At the moment it is pointless as we don't know. We have been promised these figures for next month. A member of the public said that Somerset Council has reorganised, and they are not going to deliver as they can barely cope with the work they have got. We could have given £70,000 to the cycle path project (referring to the Russet Cider Trail Project presented earlier) to get that going. A member of the public said that it is extraordinary that there is no control on this project. It should be on the agenda each month as it is the biggest spend item and is barely mentioned. The chair said that until there is a decision to be made it is not on the agenda and as soon as we have figures it will be.
- i. A member of the public asked about absent councillors (referring to Parish Council meetings). There are some very good councillors at attending but a couple whose attendance leaves a lot to be desired. It was noted that there have been some 4 in a row missed. The chair said she understood that after 6 meetings not attended and apologies not accepted the councillor is automatically removed from the council. This will be checked.
- j. It was noted by a member of the public that the Speed Indicator Device (SID) on Taunton Road is set to 30mph rather than 20mph. The clerk will report this back

to the lengthsman. The chair noted that the SID on Cothelstone Road has been turned round to face down the hill.

- k. A member of the public said that there had been a post on Facebook asking when the children's playground refurbishment will be started. A member of the Village Hall committee said that they have a grant application in with Awards for All and are waiting for that and is expecting to hear back in the next few weeks.
- l. A member of the public asked if PECS boards (The Picture Exchange Communication System) will be installed in the playground. The member of Village Hall committee said that they had not considered that. The member of the public will provide information on PECS boards.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm