

PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Puxton & Hewish: in the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury & Puxton

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Minutes of the Meeting Held at 7pm on Thursday September 5th 2024

(The meeting started just before 7.15pm)

*All meetings are held at 7.00pm in the Village Hall unless stated otherwise -
Although under no obligation to, Dan Thomas, our NSC Ward Cllr, attends when possible*

Present: Cllrs Lynda Redding (Chair), Jim Corbett, Mel Ellis, Clayton Penfold, Helen Riddell
In Attendance: NSC Cllr Dan Thomas, Don Hill (Clerk)
Public Attendance: 0

067/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllrs Peter Penfold, Victoria Butterfield

068/24 DECLARATIONS: *(Dispensations apply to Cllrs re percept setting, and Village Hall matters)*
None

069/24 PUBLIC SESSION

Community Energy Wind Farm: Although an attendee, our ward councillor is not a member of this council and this agenda item was deemed an appropriate one though which Cllr Thomas could update the meeting on emerging wind farm proposals that are beginning to take shape within the area via a group called Mendip Energy (Generation). Mendip Energy believe that a site in Hewish would be ideal for an on-shore wind farm. The site they are looking at lies next to the motorway and is adjacent to a proposed solar farm off Wick Lane. They say that on-shore wind is now the cheapest form of electricity generation, and are talking to the solar farm group, local landowners and Bristol Airport (re the possible impact on flight paths) and wish to sound out the community about their ideas. The map attached to these minutes indicates the proposed siting of the wind farm. There are already similar successful projects in operation and an established source of funding to develop such projects.

A range of questions were asked of Cllr Thomas and as the topic could not be carried forward here, it not being a current agenda item, it will be **added to the October meeting agenda** for discussion as how the Council will formally react to the the proposal.

The project may lie within 5 miles of the airport, but initial contact with them has not raised any immediate objections.

Community benefits could come in the form of residents buying bonds in the project, by the distribution of surplus energy within the district, by reduced energy bills within the district or other means all of which are being investigated. Cllr Corbett was sceptical about the long term viability of such a scheme given the on-off nature if its power source and historical evidence to hand.

Concerns were raised about disruption during the construction period and about the operating noise of the turbines. Whilst planners will require a construction management plan which they will need to approve, Cllr Thomas said that modern turbines are significantly quieter than the early models.

070/24 LAST MEETING MINUTES + Matters Arising: (June 27th 2023) were agreed and signed.
(This meeting was held on an earlier date because the hall was booked for a general election on July 4th).

071/24 PLANNING Details at <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/>

i. New:

- (a) **24/P/1484/FUL Caffle Nursery** storage unit. No objections.
- (b) **24/P/1619/FUH Westerly Cottage**, Wick Lane, New garage and extension. The aspirations and design raised no concerns, and there would be no loss of visual amenity. No objections
- (c) **24/P/1658/FUL Full Quart** Change of use from Public House/Restaurant (Use Class E(b)) to a Learning and Non-Residential Institution (Use Class F.1). Cllr P Penfold had emailed concerns about the loss of a community asset. Outline planning permission for an accommodation block (granted in February 2020) may have lapsed, but may still be reflected in the sale price being sought. All members felt that the loss of this community space would be sad, but also noted that pub closures were, for whatever reasons, a reality of the times. They all valued the social worth that the proposed use will bring, and noted that there were no internal building alterations proposed and with the outside area being used for recreational purposes, the site would remain 'intact' from a visual amenity and possible future reversion point of view. There was a concern that the practice of parents from St Annes Academy using the car park when dropping their children off and picking them up from school should continue by arrangement with whoever becomes the new owner of the site. Loss of this facility would present a serious problem for the Academy whose own car park is small and less well placed for exiting back onto the A370.

The Clerk to convey the comments on the above three applications to NSC planners.

ii. Decisions Due:

- (a) **19/P/0815/FUL** Puxton Park car park.
- (b) **22/P/3067/OUT** Haybow Village (Banwell PC).
- (c) **23/P/2593/FUL** Land Opposite The Full Quart.
- (d) **24/P/0143/FUL:** Gypsy/Traveller site below Heathfield Park
- (e) **24/P/0604/FUL** Barn next to Oakacre & amended plans

iii. Approved:

- (a) **24/P/1039/AOC:** Cider House Conversion. **2**
- (b) **4/P/1133/AOC** Barn conversion opposite Heathgate Farm.

iv. Refused:

- (a) **23/P/2738/FUL** Villa Farm barn conversions.
- (b) **24/P/1352/CRA Burnt House Farm** - Change of use of 4 agricultural buildings to storage. *(Neutral comments to NSC ratified: application refused).*

072/24 FINANCE

- i. 2024-25 Accounts:** Accounts to date were reviewed and reconciled with bank statement.
- ii. Complaint to the external auditors:** The Chair reported that the 2023-24 accounts were challenged via the external auditors. This is the third year in a row that this has happened, with no significant changes called for except one relating to a difference in auditing practice (as demonstrated via the requests of external auditors over the years), rather than to accounting error. All this has been at significant cost to the parish. The auditors concluded that there was nothing relating to the 2023-24 accounts that they took issue with, and

reminded the challenger that the costs of such complaints was a direct burden on the parish's council-tax payers and on the parish council's resources.

- iii. **Training:** The Chair has been able to secure a place on an ALCA course on 'Chairmanship Skills and Standing Orders' at a cost of £45. The meeting agreed that various ALCA courses might prove of value and that this course would be a positive start. The £45 cost was approved to come from the 'Other Costs' heading of the budget.
- iv. **Payments Authorised: HMRC re PAYE Jul/Aug/Sep £229.20. ALCA cost of course attendance per ii above £45.00.**

073/24

PARISH MATTERS

- i. **A370. St Annes School Signage and Speed Issues:**
 - (a) **Police DCB** (data collection box): erection awaited.
 - (b) **SID (Speed Indicator Device):** The £5000 police grant was awarded and has been paid in to the bank. The meeting agreed that the Chair proceed with the purchase of the SID (£4850.50) and the associated dedicated laptop (£852.00) at a total cost of £5702.50. The amount of £702.50 additional to the grant to come from the Parish Maintenance budget. NSC permission has been granted for the SID to be mounted on a range of suitable street furniture within the Hewish and Puxton area. Initially the mounting, data transfer to computer and charging will be undertaken by Cllr Redding under the parish council's insurance policy. Upon purchase, **Clerk to add the SID kit to the asset register, and contact the insurance company re any specific listing and additional premium that may attach to asset and personnel cover.**
 - (c) **Gully overflows:** pictures of flooding needed to push this up the NSC agenda. **Cllr Redding will remind her contact of the need for photos.**
 - (d) **Congresbury-end School warning sign:** repair with NSC.
 - (e) **Footpath overgrowth dangers:** see below re A370 footpath.
 - (f) **Road Safety outside schools:** Hutton now have a 20mph speed limit around their school. Parents at St Annes are working towards a Community Speed Watch scheme to operate on the A370.
- ii. **Fly-tipping:** Cllr Ellis reported that no discreet places for the siting of a fly-tipping camera were found. The landowners along Dolemoor Lane will be contacted about the possibility of erecting gates at either end with access via a combination lock. *(Post meeting note - some sections are public footpath some are not. Human/dog/horse access for leisure users may need to be considered?).*
- iii. **A370 Footpath:** NSC are reportedly planning to clear the section between the Full Quart and St Annes School. As maintenance of this path is a ward-wide issue Cllr Thomas will become involved in this long term maintenance problem. **Clerk to supply Cllr Thomas with his contact and action information.**
- iv. **Parish Maintenance:** The Clerk has developed a draft maintenance schedule for Members to refine, against which a replacement contractor can be appointed. On balance, the caveats surrounding the employment of one of its councillors by the council rule out Helen Ridell undertaking the parish maintenance work. Cllr Thomas said Congresbury are also seeking a new contractor as their original one (the same person we contracted) has retired through ill health. Finding a contractor online or via contacts is not easy as there appear to be few people interested in the work. Possibilities were discussed and Members will continue to be alert to likely contractors. **The Clerk will re-circulate the maintenance schedule for members to work on and will contact the Congresbury Clerk to see if a combined approach to contractor-seeking would work.**
- v. **Wick Lane M5 Bridge:** drainage run-off from the bridge into the ditch is a long running issue between NSC and Highways England, which NSC are handling.
- vi. **ALCA Training Courses:** see minute 072/24 iii above.

074/24

PROJECTS AWAITING FURTHER ACTION FROM NSC

i. **Footpaths:** 4 old items and one new item:

- Path 399628 - New kissing gate overgrown, making access to field impossible
- Path 398631 - obstruction to access from the road on the corner
- The roadside path at Puxton Court Farm: fence removal. Re-fit of exposed wires on pole.
- Path at Wick Lane M5 bridge: With NSC agreement, Cllr Redding has cleared obstructions from the original entrance and the kissing gates will not be needed.
- Rotting bridge and brambles off Puxton Road/Maysgreen Lane junction NSC dealing.

Cllr Redding raised the possibility of this council including some of the necessary footpath maintenance within its parish maintenance programme. In some cases landowners will also need to be consulted. **Cllr Redding will liaise with her NSC footpaths contact.**

075/24

COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Riddell

Friends of the Drove: an event off Balls Barn Lane Rolestone.

Community Composting: Cllr Riddell is attending an NSC training day and will report back on what opportunities community composting can offer within our parish.

Cllr C Penfold

A370 Planters: Cllr Penfold was unable to collect and manage the flowers in the parish boundary planters on the A370 this year, and wished to apologise. For the future it was suggested that the planting of sturdy shrubs might provide an easier to manage option, watering being the major regular need.

Cllr Corbett

Damaged Highways: Notwithstanding the pothole and curb crisis that has followed from the constant wet weather over many recent months, Cllr Corbett is still concerned about the dangers for drivers of unwittingly driving too close to the edges of the lanes. His particular concerns within our parish are the two edge collapses; one along Puxton Lane on the bend past the garden centre and one leaving Puxton village towards Maysgreen Lane on Puxton Road. Both these need repairing but also require expensive engineering input that NSC says it cannot currently afford. Given that curb breakup is a menace across the lanes currently and that much of the danger is hidden by water or grass, and given that NSC are not prioritising this work over potholes, the option for drivers is to ensure that they do not drive close to the edges of the highways - not an easy option on the narrower lanes.

Cllr Redding

NSC to devolve more activities to parish and town councils: NSC says it cannot fulfil many of the service functions that it has traditionally performed. Although some activities have been undertaken by parishes over recent years, NSC want to extend this more widely in consultation with the towns and parishes. Cllr Redding is consulting with NSC to see what implications and opportunities this may offer to Puxton.

Bus Stops outside the Full Quart: Residents using the bus stop outside the Full Quart going in the Bristol direction say they experience such problems of crossing the A370 on their return that they don't get off at the to-Weston bus stop opposite the Full Quart, but travel on to Sainsbury's in Worle and catch a bus back to Hewish from there, getting off on the footpath outside the Full Quart. This highlights the need for a pedestrian crossing, or at least another central refuge at this point. Will the cost be born by NSC, Puxton PC, shared between them, be funded by grants? What can be afforded and who much will the options cost? **Cllr Redding will sound out this problem and possible solutions with her NSC contact.**

076/24

NEXT MEETING: Thursday October 3rd in the Village Hall

The meeting closed at 9.15

Annexe

showing the proposed location of the Mendip Energy Wind Farm

