

THE CIVIL PARISH OF PUXTON
Comprising the villages of Puxton and Hewish
In the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury and Puxton

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL
Thursday 1st MAY 2025 AT 8.00 pm

Present: Lynda Redding - Chair; Don Hill - Minute Taker; 11 Other Attendees

APM24/01 APOLOGIES

PPC Cllrs C Penfold, J Corbett

APM24/02 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S MEETING

The Minutes attached to the agenda were those for 2023 instead of 2024. The incorrect date was picked up immediately, but, key issues being common to both years minutes, collective memory did not register that it was the minutes that were the incorrect ones, rather than them being the correct minutes with the incorrect date. Nevertheless, key issues were widely discussed, and are minuted below under the Open Discussion minute APM 25/04. The minutes as attached to the agenda were not signed. *(This was an obvious error by the Minute Taker, who prepared and distributed the minutes and who - post the meeting - offers up a profound apology for his error. Albeit it did not effect the free discussion flow that is the core on such meetings as this, it did give rise to a procedurally incorrect protocol).*

APM24/03 REPORTS FROM INTEREST GROUPS

Parish Council Chair's report

Meetings

The Parish Council held meetings on the first Thursday of each month except August, as usual. In May and June we had to make way as the Hall was requisitioned as a Polling Station on the first Thursday and in February we had to cancel the meeting as we were inquorate due to a course attendance and work commitments.

Agendas

We have had a steady stream of planning applications, mostly fairly routine. Despite the housing shortage North Somerset Council maintain their resistance to allow permission for any house to be built that is not on the footprint of an existing barn.

The speed of vehicles along our lanes are always a concern and we continue to urge North Somerset Council to consider reducing the speed limits. Damage to the roads caused by heavy traffic continues to be reported but there seems to be little in the budget for anymore than temporary filling of potholes.

The Parish Council now own a Speed Indicator Device, it is installed next to the Full Quart at the moment. We secured a grant from the Police Community Trust of £5,000. The SID plus a dedicated laptop cost £5,795. The laptop is needed as the SID collects data on speed and volume of traffic as well as showing the speed of approaching traffic. This data can then be analysed with the provided software. North Somerset regulations require the SID to be moved every few weeks and then not returned to the same spot for a few months. We have started placing it on the A370, first near the school and then by the bus stops.

The central refuge installed by the Wick Lane bus stops has made crossing the road much easier there. Several parishioners have highlighted the difficulty in crossing the road between the other bus stops in Hewish and there was an incident of a child being knocked over while catching the bus to school. Thankfully they were not seriously injured but it could have been so much worse. I have filled in the appropriate form asking NSC to look at the A370 speed limits and the possibility of more central refuges. I was able to supply them with the data from the SID. We await news of any outcomes.

Fly tipping, particularly along Puxton Lane and Dolemoor Lane, is getting worse. We are investigating ways of deterring offenders and of gathering evidence to identify culprits.

We have not been informed when the new bridge across the Oldbridge river will be re-scheduled. The bridge has to be strengthened, NSC assure us there will be a width restriction on the new bridge.

Finance

Another uneventful year, the precept was £12,752. The online banking continues to facilitate payments. We are grateful to our Clerk for managing our finances, accounts and audits efficiently.

Lynda Redding - May 2025

Hewish & Puxton Village Hall Ltd

The facilities at Hewish and Puxton Village Hall have been maintained, a new cooker and microwave were needed and we are continuing to fund the wi-fi. The projector and screen have proved to be a valuable asset to our regular users and encouraged ad hoc users to book for some all day meetings. We are a not-for-profit charitable organisation and have not raised the hire charge for more than ten years but are pleased to report income has matched expenditure.

Our positive bank balance enabled us to hold a free Barn Dance in September enjoyed by all attendees and we hope to have another free social event in the Autumn. The New Year's Eve Party wasn't a great success this year.

I would like to thank our regular users and the committee for their support. Pauline has continued to do a great job juggling the bookings and Dave has kept on top of the maintenance.

Lynda Redding - Chair Hewish and Puxton Village Hall

Ward Councillor Dan Thomas arrived at 8.25pm from the Congresbury PC meeting, during the Open Discussion

APM24/04 OPEN DISCUSSION - a summary of the discussion points

Public Transport

WestLink - there is uncertainty as to what service is offered in and around Puxton and Hewish. The formal pick up and drop off points are not realistically accessible to those in rural parts of the Parish.

Bus Shelters - NSC plan to rebrand their bus shelters. It was questioned why this would be prioritised over other needs: in the case of Puxton the plan is to remove shelters. Why do this while existing shelters are able to still continue to serve bus users?

Flavours - this property, which has had a controversial recent past, has been sold. The outside areas have been cleared, but there is no news as to the plans of the new owners.

Wick Lane Rail Bridge - Apparently cyclists are obeying the traffic signals more than they used to. The main worry is for pedestrians as the painted-off stretch on the Weston side of the bridge is not wide enough for them to use safely - especially when large lorries are passing - and the area is often overgrown with weeds. Maintenance of the highway aspects of the bridge is a North Somerset Council responsibility, but over recent years regular maintenance has become unreliable. Another concern is that approaching the bridge from Wick, traffic tends to be going too fast for the safety of other bridge users and of those with entrances off the highway.

Contacting NSC - Those needing to contact specific officers are frustrated by their inaccessibility and the formalised responses that come via the now exclusive access routes online or via the telephone. These services do not seem to be widely valued by the public either.

Parish Maintenance of the A370 Footpath: Our Parish Maintenance contractor believes he has equipment that will be able to keep the path clear to ensure its safe use. He and Cllr Riddell work on these issues and will hopefully be able to find a way of ensuring that the path is kept clear and safe.

Dolemoor Lane and Puxton Lane Fly-tipping - Various ideas are being worked on to try and reduce fly-tipping and to speed up its clearance when it does occur. These need to be worked on with NSC and will be slow to bring into effect rather than being a quick fix.

Road Repairs - the topic was discussed with some passion under this and other headings. It is not an area where individual parishes can take on work from NSC; it is also known that NSC are not positioned to satisfactorily maintain the lanes within the parish. There was a sense of hopelessness and resignation in terms of being able to press for a way forward.

Vexatious Behaviour - attendees expressed shock at the degree to which this is being allowed to persist and at the significant cost it has caused not only in time and money to the Parish Council and Council Tax payers, but to all the other agencies that become embroiled in the process.

Solar Farm - Planning permission is soon to be sought for the proposed Wick Lane development.

Puxton Lane/Puxton Road/Maysgreen Lane Road Safety - the lanes around Puxton are narrow and poorly maintained, yet are being subjected to increasing volumes of fast moving traffic to the point where they are becoming unsafe for Active Travel users. Speed limits will not in themselves be a solution, as their effectiveness is severely reduced if there is no enforcement to back them up. There is a desire to keep the finger post at the Puxton Road/Puxton Lane junction as it is an essential ingredient of the 'Puxton Village' atmosphere around Holy Saviour Church. This effectively rules out engineering solutions to slowing traffic. Both at this junction and at the Puxton Road/Maysgreen Lane junction the conclusion was drawn that signage and white messaging on the highway surfaces was the optimal way of attempting to calm the traffic.

Discussion with Cllr Dan Thomas

Introduction - Cllr Thomas introduced himself as the Ward Councillor for Congresbury, Hewish and Puxton. He is keen to be in touch with the people and issues of Puxton and Hewish and has an open door attitude to keeping in touch which he hopes people will feel able to use. Various issues summarised above were touched on in the context of NSC and three were specifically focused on as itemised below.

Green Energy - Cllr Thomas was asked how he squared the need for green energy with the submerging of swaths of farmland with solar panels. The need for them has to be balanced in each case against the alternative uses of the land and the visual impact they present. Wind Farms, too, have to be sensitively positioned in relation to affected populations. Progress on a proposed wind farm north of East Hewish was asked about. It is moving forward slowly, with grant funded feasibility studies being the expected next phase. The issue of disturbing reverberations from the turning blades was raised but modern technology has reduced this problem significantly.

Fly-tipping - Cllr Thomas is acutely aware of fly-tipping problems and has been emailing energetically within NSC to seek action. For whatever reason, positive responses have not been available. The Puxton Parish Maintenance contractor put forward the idea arising from the earlier Parish Council meeting that he might be allowed to take on delegated responsibilities in this area - one in which he has a lot of experience via work with Mendip District Council. Cllr Thomas agreed to follow up possibilities with NSC.

Communicating with NSC - Cllr Thomas said he has no issues in communicating with NSC via their online and telephone systems, as opposed to having direct contact with a particular officer. He says dedicated enquiry handlers pass issues to the most appropriate NSC team and he gets fast and constructive responses.

There being no further topics raised, the Chair thanked everyone for coming, offered them tea and cakes before their departure, and closed the meeting at 9.05pm