

## Sherborne Parish PC – Monthly Meeting Minutes

Held at Sherborne Social Club. 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**Councillors in attendance:** Y Blankley (YB), S Challis (SC), T Whiffen (TW), C Humphries (CH), H Greyson-Gaito (HGG), A Woolley (AW).

**Also in attendance (Observer):** Roger (RD), Dawn (DT).

**Apologies:** E Richardson (ER)

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### 1. Public Surgery

#### **Ancestor Oaks Project**

RD (observer) provided an update on the Ancestor Oaks project, initiated by the National Trust five years ago. Oak saplings have been grown from specific, recorded trees within the parklands and are ready to be planted across the village. Each sapling honours one of the seventeen names on the village war memorial. Planting is planned for early March with the assistance of volunteers, and homes have been found for all seventeen trees.

Each sapling will be fitted with a discreet brass plaque bearing the name and the words 'Lest we forget,' along with a small protective fence. A village map and summary record will be produced showing the location of each tree, the life of the associated soldier, and the provenance of the parent oak. A series of guided walks is planned to allow residents to visit each planting location and mark the occasion with a moment of reflection.

The total cost is approximately £900 (£300 for brass plaques; £600 for posts and wire). Approximately £700 has been raised through donations from a small number of villagers, with a backstop in place for the balance. RD welcomed any contribution from the Parish Council, though he was clear this was not a strong-arm request. The PC expressed wholehearted support for the project.

#### ***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- YB to contact Highways to seek permission for planting of one Ancestor Oak sapling on the triangle at Coal House Corner.
- PC to consider a financial contribution towards the Ancestor Oaks project costs.
- YB to co-opt RD as volunteer grant researcher (see also AOB).

#### **Speed Indicator Devices / Road Safety**

Prior to the formal meeting, a resident raised concerns about vehicle speeds in the village. YB provided an update on the PC's ongoing efforts.

YB reported that she has obtained quotes for Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) directly from a supplier (Elan). These devices are less expensive than the combined speed-indicator/camera units originally priced, but a full deployment at both ends of the village (four devices) would still cost upwards of £12,000 plus VAT. YB has contacted the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) to seek recommendations for approved suppliers, guidance on the procurement process, and information about available grants. A response from GAPTC is awaited; YB has also left a telephone message.

YB outlined the difficulty in navigating the approval process, having been directed in turn by Gloucestershire County Council, Cotswold District Council, Highways and the Police, each of whom

attributed responsibility to one of the others. The PC cannot purchase from an unapproved supplier, as such devices may be removed and the council could be prosecuted. It was noted that Cotswold District Council no longer liaises directly with parish councils; membership of GAPTC (which the PC has recently joined) is now the required route.

TW noted that neighbouring villages such as Coln and Hatherop have SIDs in operation and may have useful experience to share. It was suggested that ER has a contact in one of those villages. TW agreed to follow this up. TW also noted the potential for a cost-sharing arrangement with other parishes on the same road corridor (Farmington, Windrush, Barrington).

YB noted a Gloucestershire County Council community fund offering grants of up to £7,500. If this could be accessed, the shortfall would reduce to approximately £5,000. The National Lottery and other grant sources were identified as further possibilities. The proximity of the school and the speeding observed at drop-off and collection times were noted as factors that may support a grant application.

YB confirmed the village would be updated once definitive cost and funding information is available, so as not to cause confusion or frustration in the meantime.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- YB to follow up with GAPTC regarding approved SID suppliers and available grants, including the GCC community fund.
  - TW to contact ER regarding contacts in neighbouring villages (Coln/Hatherop) that have SIDs, to understand their procurement approach.
  - TW to explore feasibility of a cost-sharing arrangement with neighbouring parishes (Farmington, Windrush, Barrington).
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**2. Declarations of Councillor Interest**

YB confirmed this as the inaugural meeting of 2026. No declarations of councillor interest were made. YB reminded all councillors to ensure their councillor information registration forms are up to date, as the PC has recently received a reminder from the district council that these forms should be completed and published online. YB confirmed she would check the current position.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- All councillors to confirm their registration forms are complete and up to date.
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**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (November 2025)**

YB confirmed that the minutes of the November 2025 meeting have been published online, and thanked ER for his work in producing them.

YB reviewed the outstanding actions from the November meeting:

YB confirmed she has contacted GAPTC as instructed, and is awaiting a response regarding speed indicator devices and grants. This is covered in full under Item 1 (Speed Indicator Devices / Road Safety) above.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- No additional actions arising solely from the November minutes.

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#### 4. National Trust Engagement

##### **Withdrawal of the Wetlands Planning Application**

YB reported that the National Trust has formally withdrawn its planning application for a new wetlands development in the village's listed parkland. The associated flood activity permit has also been cancelled. The NT are considering next steps.

YB placed on record the PC's thanks to all councillors and community members for the sustained, measured, and thorough work in preparing and presenting the PC's response to the application. She noted that residents have been visiting the shop to express their thanks, which she described as a rare and significant endorsement.

##### **Engagement with National Trust Senior Management**

TW updated the PC on continued efforts to arrange a direct meeting with Jonny Loose, NT General Manager for the Cotswolds, to discuss any potential 'village changing' plans the Trust may be considering. The PC has sent two invitations, both of which have been declined. Mr Loose has cited the breadth of his Cotswolds remit, his engagement with many stakeholders, and the existing bimonthly meetings with Andrew Danson and Simon Nicholas as reasons why a separate meeting with the PC is unnecessary.

The PC noted that the NT has recently appointed an additional tier of management – a Nature Manager – between Simon Nicholas and Jonny Loose, as part of the NT's new ten-year strategic focus on nature.

The PC discussed next steps:

- The email exchange with Mr Loose represents the PC's genuine attempts at constructive engagement. The PC is concerned that that Mr Loose conflates the frequency of meetings with the quality of engagement.
- It was agreed to write once more to Mr Loose to express the PC's disappointment that there is no current opportunity to meet, as well as to reflect on opportunities for early and collaborative engagement on significant NT Sherborne topics going forward.
- The full email exchange is to be published on the PC's village communication channels so that residents can read it and form their own view.

##### **Lady Sherborne's Walk Working Group**

TW confirmed that a detailed footpath plan to the turbine house had previously been shared by the NT and is in the PC's records. TW will recirculate this to all councillors.

Andrew Danson has indicated that he would welcome a proposal from the PC for a working group on the Lady Sherborne's Walk. The PC has previously prepared terms of reference for a broader working group, and it was agreed that these should be submitted to Andrew Danson for approval, along with a proposed participants list and meeting structure. The working group should comprise a representative cross-section of community stakeholders without becoming unwieldy. TW and AW to lead.

TW noted that the NT has proposed an open community drop-in session for early March

### **Brook and Broad Water Restoration**

TW reported that at the November bimonthly meeting with Andrew Danson, it was confirmed that vegetation and silt clearance works on the brook remain planned to proceed. A contractor meeting had been scheduled for December. An update received on the day of the meeting confirmed the works are now aimed to proceed in the summer.

AW noted that Historic England, previously mentioned as a funder for a c.£450,000 phase of works, has not featured in recent communications. Whether the project scope or funding has changed is unclear and should be established at the next bimonthly meeting.

YB suggested inviting Alison Jewell (Gardens Trust) to visit Sherborne for a site visit. It was proposed to extend a formal invitation from the PC and to consider inviting NT representatives to attend the same visit, so that any information shared is heard directly by the NT. AW proposed this approach was also a good way to signal that the PC is seeking to work with the NT constructively.

### **National Trust Properties**

YB raised awareness of potential plans by the NT to sell properties at the edges of the Sherborne estate. It was confirmed that Sherborne village as a whole is inalienable under the terms of Lord Sherborne's will, but noted that a separate document on alienable and inalienable land exists and that Windrush has some flexibility. AW noted that NT-owned barns at Windrush are subject to plans for conversion to two large houses; access rights are reportedly being contested.

No formal plans have been submitted for any properties within Sherborne. The PC agreed to remain vigilant.

### **Solar Farm and Historic Turbine**

YB confirmed that the two representatives previously in contact regarding a potential solar farm will also investigate the potential for hydro-power generation on the brook. YB also noted that the NT has recently received a £10 million gift from a benefactor, to be spent on nature and sustainability projects. It was suggested that this funding might be available to support the restoration of the historic turbine at Sherborne, and YB agreed to look into this.

### **Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership**

The Sherborne Brook Support Group intends to join the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP). It was noted that Mr Loose sits on the GLNP board, which provides a potential avenue for engagement outside the direct NT/PC relationship. The PC was encouraged to consider joining the GLNP, as membership is open to any organisation.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Credits**

TW reported that Andrew Danson has again discussed the NT's interest in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits. Grassland reversion on Sherborne land could command BNG credit values in the millions of pounds under the emerging national scheme (compared to approximately £600,000 previously offered by Highways for an equivalent area). Wetland habitat credits are expected to be particularly valuable. Sherborne has been discussed by NT senior teams in the context of BNG, and has been identified as a potential pioneer site.

The PC noted that BNG revenues should be directed to fund the specific local scheme rather than to NT central funds, given the 25–30 year management costs involved. Whether this would be

guaranteed under the NT's new financial leadership remains unclear. TW noted that the NT's new Financial Director has reportedly identified serious financial pressures within the organisation.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- PC to publish the latest NT email exchange on the PC website.
  - TW to recirculate the NT Lady Sherborne's Walk footpath plan to the turbine house to all councillors.
  - TW and AW to submit terms of reference and proposed participant list for the Lady Sherborne's Walk working group to Andrew Dunson, to be brought to the next PC meeting for approval.
  - AW and TW to seek clarity at the next bimonthly NT/PC meeting on the brook restoration scope, funding (including Historic England), and planned timeline.
  - YB to invite Alison Jewell (Gardens Trust) for a site visit to Sherborne and to explore whether NT representatives should also be invited.
  - YB to investigate whether the NT's £10m benefaction could support the historic turbine restoration at Sherborne.
  - TW to circulate new bimonthly NT/PC meeting dates to all councillors once confirmed.
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## 5. **Emergency Planning (Phase Two)**

YB provided an update on the Village Emergency Planning project. Phase Two is confirmed for the evening of Saturday 21st March, hosted by the army. The session will be attended by members of the defence committee as well as one of the country's most senior defence specialists.

The Army is using Sherborne as a model for community-level emergency planning across the country, based on the view that government cannot be relied upon to support local communities in a crisis, and that bringing local expertise together is the most resilient response. The outputs from Phase One have been shared by the government with the United Nations.

Invitations for Phase Two have been extended to stakeholders from Farmington, Clapton, Windrush, and Little Barrington, with the aim of sharing resources and applying the approach across a broader community. Clapton/Rissington approached by a neighbouring village chose to join the Sherborne group rather than run their own exercise, which was noted as a positive endorsement of the approach. YB confirmed that she will provide refreshments.

The PC expressed pride in the project's reach and significance.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- YB to confirm final arrangements for Phase Two with the army representative.
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## 6. **Snow Plough and Winter Resilience**

YB raised the difficulty of securing a tractor and operator for the village snow plough. The plough's current storage location is no longer available and an alternative must be found.

***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- YB to contact a local farmer regarding use of a tractor for the snow plough and alternative storage.
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## 7. Village Verge and Wildflower Management

YB noted that ER had agreed at the November meeting to circulate information on verge management this week. This item was deferred for discussion by phone or WhatsApp call within the next fortnight, once that information has been received.

CH and AW offered guidance on the timing of any cutting work: a pre-season cut in February before growth commences, or an autumn cut, would avoid damage to spring wildflowers. CH noted that a mown edge alongside wilder sections can give a managed appearance while preserving wildlife interest. AW confirmed an autumn cut can be a separate operation. Guidance from Anna (a local specialist) on specific locations was noted as a resource to draw upon. The need to seek quotes and develop a specification before the end of March was highlighted.

YB noted the existence of a potential grant for wildflower/verge management which she would identify and share. It was also noted that GAPTC may be able to provide a broad grants listing once they respond, covering verge management alongside the SIDs enquiry.

TW noted that the National Trust have indicated this is the PC's project to manage and have stepped back, so the PC should be proactive.

### ***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- ER to circulate verge management information to the PC (as previously agreed).
- YB and TW to schedule a short WhatsApp/phone meeting within two weeks to agree verge management plans, timing, and specification for obtaining quotes.
- YB to identify and share grant information for wildflower/verge management with the PC.

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## 8. Any Other Business

### **Meeting Schedule**

TW confirmed the meeting schedule for 2026: third Monday of each month, excluding August and December. All present agreed. This schedule applies also to the bimonthly NT/PC meetings with Andrew Dunson and Simon, for which new dates are to be confirmed.

### **Social Club Bookings**

TW noted that the PC used the Sherborne Social Club for seven meetings in 2025 – the number for which they will be invoiced. One meeting was held elsewhere and one was missed due to no one being available to open the hall. YB confirmed she has requested an invoice from the Social Club.

### **Grant Research**

RD offered to assist the PC with identifying and applying for grants, noting he has more time available than the councillors. YB accepted with thanks, co-opting RD as a volunteer grant researcher. Potential grant sources identified include the Gloucestershire County Council community fund (grants of up to £7,500), the National Lottery, War Memorial Society grants (for which quotes are required), and the GAPTC grants listing. RD confirmed he would be happy to write grant applications if required.

### **New Residents**

YB noted that new residents have moved into number 42. YB has welcomed them on behalf of the PC and they have agreed to register on the parish council website.

### **Little Barrington and Neighbouring Parishes**

YB noted she has been in contact from Barrington, where there is concern about potential knock-on effects from National Trust activity – particularly increased traffic and visitor numbers associated with the NT's 'access for all, always, free' mission. YB is exploring whether the two parishes can work together on shared concerns. TW noted similar concerns in Windrush regarding NT-owned barns. YB observed that all parishes working together would be considerably stronger than any acting alone.

#### ***PC Actions Post Meeting:***

- YB to continue dialogue with contact at Little Barrington PC and explore joint working on shared concerns.
- TW to circulate confirmed 2026 meeting dates (NT/PC bimonthly meetings) to all councillors.

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**Next Meeting:** Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025