

**BELSTONE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
TUESDAY 1ST MAY 2018
DRAFT MINUTES**

Present: Michael Ash (Chairman), Ann Norman (Vice Chairman), Paul Boyce, Peter Cooper, Susan Norrish, Jon Pike and Kate Little (Clerk)

In attendance: Ian Brooker, Robin Hill and Andrew Terry

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies:** Elizabeth Emmerson
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2nd May 2017:** The minutes were signed as a correct record.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Annual Report of the Parish Council:**

The Council has held seven meetings, plus two planning meetings. Attendance of members has again been good and WDBC, DNP and DCC representatives have also attended, as have members of the public. Five planning applications were received and discussed. Three have been granted and two refused by DNPA. Some concern was expressed about the amount of development at Rew Meadow. The DNPA replied that it was monitoring the situation, but none of the work which had taken place was against planning rules.

The precept for 2018-19 was set at £1,800 which includes a Council Tax Support Grant of £37. This is an increase of £70 over 2017-18.

Following the flooding in the summer we had meetings with Daryl Jagger (DCC Highways) to highlight the problems with the drainage system through the village. Highways did not seem able to give a decision on if and when they would be able to do any work on the system, so the Council applied for TAP funding so that it could employ a private contractor to carry out some work to ease the problem. The Council managed to obtain £1,485 from this fund and hired Drainology to carry out two day's work. During the course of this work they found that two pipes were badly damaged and Highways were notified about this. They have drawn up a plan, but with no timescale on it. We are pressing them to give us some indication of when it might take place. Another highway problem has been the large potholes at the car park. Again Highways have been met on site and we have been told that the road from Tongue End to the village will be re-surfaced this year. Further to this, the problem of repairs to the car park surface itself where it meets the road would still remain and to this end the Council is seeking to obtain a lease from the landowner, Michael Reddaway which would give it the power to carry out maintenance and repairs. This matter is still ongoing.

A new gate has been fitted to the Tor Down cattle grid after many attempts to repair the old one.

Some of the village seats need repair and STOC has offered to replace the one at West Cleave which was broken and then removed.

As is usual during the year there has been much other correspondence and various questionnaires to be filled in. Council members have again attended WDBC, DNP and Highways meetings at various venues.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman and fellow Councillors for their help and interest in Council matters over the last year and for giving up their time to attend Council meetings and those of other organisations.

Lastly I must thank our Clerk, Robin Hill, for all his hard work over the previous five and a half years and welcome Kate Little into the role of our new Clerk.

Thank you also to Simon Herbert for his excellent job as the internal auditor. I must also thank Mrs Kuhn for looking after the Pound garden.

Michael Ash
Chairman

5. Statement of Accounts 2017-18 and Precept for 2018-19

The balance at 01.04.17 was £1237.14 in the bank with no money in petty cash. Last year's balance was £2355.19. The reduction on last year is due to £1,188 paid to Drainology for drain cleaning carried out in December 2017. This money will be recouped through the TAP Fund plus an element of VAT which can also be claimed.

Income for the year included the Precept of £1730, a VAT claim for £39.34 and a small amount of interest on the Reserve Account. Expenditure has included Community First Insurance, subscription to Devon Association of Parish Councils, rent for use of the village hall meeting room and the clerk's salary. Payments, apart from the drainage work, were approximately in line with budget estimates with some savings in petty cash and stationery expenses. There were three outstanding cheques amounting to £254 that were included in the accounts – these have now been cleared through the bank.

A payment is also made to South Hams District Council for administration of the clerk's salary and notification of PAYE to HMRC. Section 137 payments totalling £80 were paid to Okehampton Community Transport, North Dartmoor Search and Rescue, West Devon Citizens Advice and Sticklepath Conservation Group. An additional payment of £20 was paid to Belstone Village Hall to cover Parish Council website expenses.

The Parish Council expenses have been set at £1800.00 for 2018/19. This is made up of £37 Council Tax Support Grant and £1,763.00 Precept. It was agreed to increase the clerk's salary to £1200.00

Robin Hill

6. National Park Ranger's Report

The Moor Otters project, which I mentioned last year, was a great success and has raised a net income of £60,000. As you know we have had to look at various ways of increasing our income and something like this was a real test of nerve in exploring something that we have never done before. The funds are to be used to further our Junior Ranger

programme including a Youth Ranger scheme; erosion repairs to Moorland paths and to control non-native invasive plants such as Skunk Cabbage and Himalayan Balsam.

Other income generation will include the extension of car parking charges involving places like Haytor, Postbridge and nearer to home, Meldon Reservoir car parks. Charges are reasonable at £1 per car for up to three hours and £2 per car for over three hours.

On a more local level, I have dealt with another fly-tipping scenario but with a slightly different twist to last year's one! This one involved the dumping of 300 plus telephone directories that were destined for addresses in South Devon! They were in bundles and were unceremoniously dumped in the Skaigh car parking area on common land. Everything was removed by my local Voluntary Warden, Mike Watson and his wife Libby from Sticklepath and was taken to their property whilst the saga of trying to get them picked up by the appropriate organisations was pursued. This proved incredibly difficult and frustrating as both the delivery company and BT denied any responsibility! However, due to the tenacity of my VW and an excellent response from WDBC, they were finally removed and we understand that the delivery driver has lost his job following this incident.

I did finally manage to secure some funding to improve the surface condition of the bridleway near The Moors and near the Old Skaigh Stables which was completed in October by a local contractor. Paul Sowden, representing Bernard's Acre, has also done some excellent work on the track leading up to their property and has generally helped with his volunteers, to maintain the surface of the track which is also a public footpath.

I do have plans this year to help coordinate an event to remove the Himalayan Balsam on the common and to improve the lower path on the common land that links the existing leat paths. The latter would involve flying in 20 tonnes of stone and would rely on helicopter support from the MOD!

My thanks as usual to my Voluntary Warden, Ian Solomon who continues to complete various tasks in the area and of course for the tremendous local support for other projects that I am involved with.

Ian Brooker DNPA Ranger

7. Annual Report of the Skaigh Woods Trust

As last year most of the Trust's work over the past year has concerned work on the trees along the public footpath. Emergency work being needed after a storm. Ian Brooker (DNP Ranger) kindly cut up another tree which had blown across the path in one of the more recent storms.

The Trust thanks Ian Brooker and STOC for the work that they carry out for us in the wood.

The rent for the Warren has been paid by the tenant and this is likely to be reviewed this coming year.

Insurance on the wood has been renewed with the NFU. The Trust agreed to increase the public liability insurance cover to £10 million, at an additional premium of £55.

The end of year balance for the Skaigh Wood Trust was £9138.98. This includes rent for Skaigh Warren £1120. Interest on savings account £6.95. Expenses were £366.14

Insurance, £1128.25 to R. O'Bryen for a tree inspection and remedial work carried out in April 2017, a £100 honorarium to the clerk and a further £144.00 to John Fuller Trees for emergency work to clear a tree along the Tarka Trail. These payments amount to £1738.79 a considerable increase on last year which was £1285.68.

The footbridge has been inspected and once again found to be in good order. Cleaning of the mud and debris from it will take place shortly.

Lastly thanks to my fellow Trustees for their interest in the management of the wood and to our Clerk Robin Hill for all his past work and Simon Herbert our auditor and of course welcome to Kate Little our new Clerk.

8. Report of the Village Hall Committee

Firstly, I'd like to offer huge thanks to the members of the village hall committee for another year of service on the committee. I'd particularly like to thank Chris our treasurer for keeping the books straight and Mel for keeping us on the straight and narrow!

Village events are at the heart of village life and we can be proud that the village hall organizes and runs so many popular and successful events, from annual traditions like the village fair, dawn chorus walk and craft fair to exciting one-offs like Casino Night. Events like these take a lot of hard work to put on and I would like to thank all those who contribute time and effort to make them happen.

The village hall is also the venue for the community café on Thursday morning, which plays a key role in village life and offers a chance for villagers to meet and exchange news. A big thanks is due to all the volunteers, many of whom are committee members, who bake cakes and offer their time to keep it thriving.

Village halls don't manage themselves and we are very fortunate in having Edwina Hill as our village hall manager. She goes above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the hall remains in excellent condition and that village hall users have a positive experience of using the hall. Together with Eva Briggs she keeps the hall spick and span and she is always a willing port of call for any users in difficulty. It is because the hall is such a welcoming and helpful venue that it is a favoured location for many regular activities such as Pilates and yoga, which benefit village residents and visitors alike.

Over the past year potholes in the village hall car park have become an increasing hazard both to people and vehicles. Minor repairs over the years have deteriorated with alarming speed and it has become clear that short-term fixes are not the answer. Because the car park is such an important village resource, representatives from all interested parties including ourselves, the National Park, the Parish Council and Devon Highways have been working together on a permanent solution. I would like to thank those members of the village hall committee, particularly Rona, for representing our interests and keeping us abreast of developments. I am happy to say that Rona's last report to the committee indicates that there is light at the end of tunnel.

As you all know Chris Walpole, after 17 years as treasurer, stood down at our last village hall committee meeting. He is a meticulous book keeper and a miraculous source of

information about village hall history and he will be sorely missed both as treasurer and committee member. However, Chris Bonnet has volunteered to step into the role as of today. We are very fortunate to have such an able successor to Chris W.

I would like to conclude with thanks to everyone involved in the continued success of our village hall.

Alan Moore Chairman

8. Any other business: There was none.

The meeting finished at 8.05pm

Signed: **Date:**

Chairman