

Otterhampton Parish Council Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting

Held on 13 November 2025 at Otterhampton Village Hall, commencing at 7pm

Present

- Cllr L Parsons (Chair)
- Cllr C Sanders (Vice Chair)
- Cllrs M Haycraft, C Bradbury, T Gardener, S Parker
- Mrs S Juniper (Clerk/RFO)

155/25 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Bolt sent his apologies.

156/25. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

157/25. Public Participation

Five members of the public were present. Concerns were raised regarding two trees that were recently cut down opposite Nursery Close and the effect this will have on the stability of the adjoining embankment. Reassurance was given that this was not due to actions of the PC. A question was raised as to the need to gain permission to reduce the height of a tree, once it reaches a certain size and were there any further plans to remove more trees. Consideration to be given to see if the Highways would consider the PC planting a few replacement trees.

158/25 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th October were approved and signed as a correct record.

159/25 Planning Matters

None

160/25 Finance

- a) The Bank Reconciliation and Budget Statement for October 2025 were circulated prior to meeting and were APPROVED.
- b) The balance as of the 30th of October was £75,420.78.
- c) Payments detailed below were approved: -

Otterhampton VH	OPPT	£12.00
Parish Online	Subscription	£45.00
SALC	Training	£180.00
Somerset Council	Grass Cutting (Sept)	£616.80
Somerset Council	Bins (Jul/Sept)	£608.40
Kedel	Bench	£575.40
PKF Littlejohn	Auditors Fees	£252.00
SALC	Introduction to AI	£25.00
Somerset Council	Grass cutting (July)	£838.20
New Somerset Flags		£30.00
Pains Fireworks		£1278.00
Staff costs	Wages, employers NI, pension	£1509.82
OVH Hire	SSG	£16.00
OVH Hire	Flower show from SALC fund	£32.00
Bridgwater mowers	Oil for pump	£32.00
Wembdon S/Stn	Oil/fuel for pump	£28.80
Amazon	Ink for printer	£19.67
Mileage claim	Audit	£13.10

Signed by Chair_____

Date_____

d) To note receipts:-

Somerset Community Fund	Village Shop Fund	£5000.00
Interest received		£37.38
Refund from Cllr Gardener		£10.10

- e) Audit – The Annual return has been signed off by the external Auditor with no matters needing addressing. The Notice of Conclusion has been displayed on the Notice Boards and added to the PC Website.
- f) It was APPROVED that the Parish Clerk may start using an Accounting Software package namely Scribe or Edge.
- g) It was AGREED to hold the 1st Budgeting meeting on the 2nd of December 2025 at 1430 in the Village Hall.
- h) Cllr Parker raised a query regarding the costs of the grass cutting services provided by Somerset Council.
- i) It was AGREED by all to spend approximately £100.00 on a better-quality flag.
- j) Cllr Parker asked for an explanation regarding the funding of the annual fireworks display.

161/25 Parish Clerk Brief

Parish Clerk's Brief was circulated prior to the meeting and is attached to these minutes at Appendix A.

162/25 Flooding/Emergency Plan

- a) The PC have been contacted by several parishioners who are interested in becoming involved in helping with formulating a village resilience plan.
- b) Cannington are interested in attending a joint resilience workshop, waiting to hear back from Stockland regarding their participation.
- c) Unable to contact Mr R Dunn regarding the flooding on Brookside. Might need to consider forming a committee to focus on this issue. Cllr Sanders confirmed that a ditch has been dug along the hedge and that the pumps are on standby.
- d) Volunteer has come forward to assist with the pump.

Cllr Dodge arrived after attending the Transport Forum

162/25 Anchor Inn

- e) Concerns have been raised by several parishioners about The Anchor Inn not being open and potential breach of planning. These refer to planning conditions in the following planning applications: 39/01/00021, 39/99/00008 and in particular 39/16/00003.
- a) It was AGREED to contact the owner to ask his intentions and remind him of his planning obligations and advise the planning office at Somerset Council of the situation.

163/25 Highways

Somerset Council have responded to an initial enquiry regarding this matter. They advise that SC are not in a position financially to carry out any traffic calming measures at present, this would have to be funded by the PC at a cost of approximately £7500.00.

It was RESOLVED that the PC would formally apply to reduce the speed limit within the village to 20mph and look at other potential calming measures, upon consultation with the villagers. The PC will need to evidence this for the application. After a discussion it was further AGREED to carry out formal consultation in the new year, ensuring that as many people are engaged as possible. Cllr Parker will oversee this process, using Ottertales and Facebook. Due to time restraints, it was further AGREED to postpone the format of the consultation until the new year.

After a discussion it was AGREED to site one of the 20mph banners on the village barn wall.

164/25 Open Spaces Strategy

Cllr Parker has completed the recent survey and advises that it would be prudent for the Council to keep abreast of the situation as things develop as improving our open spaces could attract funding/grants. Cllr Gardener suggested that the goal post needs to be changed along with the net.

165/25 Enhancements

- a) Cllr Parker raised his concerns regarding the two trees that are on the small parcel of land owned by Somerset Council off Wharf Road, as they could potentially be causing issues. It was AGREED to contact the Council and make them aware of the situation
- b) The brownie bench has been ordered and will be delivered after the 10th of November.

166/25 Reports of Representative

See Annex B

167/25 Correspondence/Communication requiring consideration

- a) Enquiry from Parishioner regarding political affiliations of Cllrs – Advised that under GDPR this is protected information.
- b) Local Councils Explained (NALC) Translates complex legislations into practical guidance for Councils
- c) Hinkley Point Briefing Update of work uplift (Power point slides)
- d) Downsborough Highway Working Group
- e) Letter from Sir Ashley Fox (MP)
- f) Parish & Town Council E-mail addresses
- g) Parish and Town Council Tax Levels 2025/26
- h) NALC Training Events
- i) West Country Car Scheme sharing Partnership – Minutes

168/25 Items for OtterTales

A list of items was identified to be published in the next addition of OtterTales.

169/25 Forthcoming Meetings/Events/Training

- a) OVH ordinary meeting – 19.11
- b) Meet the Regulator Meeting (Hinkley Point) – 25.11.25
- c) OVH AGM – 3.12.25
- d) Dowsborough LCN – 10.12.25
- e) Community Forum meeting – 12.01.26
- f) EVAG presentation – 27.11.25 @ 1900

170/25 Register of Interests

It has discussed who needs to be updated, which will be actioned in due course.

171/25 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 11th December at Otterhampton Village Hall at 1900

Meeting closed at 2100

Parish Clerk Brief Nov 2025

- **Reports of dead wildfowl and domestic chicken in village surrounds**
Report made to DEFRA, no reply to date.
- **Vegetation encroaching onto Estuary Park from the ponds**
Angling Association have advised that they have a tree surgeon on site this month. They will only be removing vegetation that overhangs onto neighbouring property. Again, they have reported rubbish being dumped over the fences.
- **Planning Breach reported**
Complaint has been received regarding the height of the new houses on the Church Hill development (Cornish Close). Potential planning breach has been registered with SC.
- **Register of Interest Forms**
Forms have been circulated to all Councilors. Once outstanding responses have been received, I will forward to Monitoring Officer and update information held accordingly.
- **Brownie Bench**
Mike Ingram has agreed to site the bench, just waiting for confirmation of delivery
- **Bollard Repair**
Price A received - £584.70
Price B received- £275.00
- **Bus Shelter Cigarette Receptacle**
Delivered and will be fitted in the next week.
- **Abandoned boats on the pill**
Contacted by EDF who have confirmed that they will be putting notices on the boats shortly, prior to removal to confirm they have been abandoned. Stacey will contact boat club directly to ask them to forward a letter onwards to owners if known. EDF have confirmed verbally that they will be covering the cost of removal.
- **Childrens Play Area**
Equipment now repaired. Bolts need to be tightened up in a couple of months' time.
The use of Foamstream has been successful.
- **Flags**
New policy is being in acted and appears to be well received.
- **Grass Cutting**
Contract with Somerset Council ends next year
- **HMRC**
Works in progress to sort out access to PC Government Gateway account. Currently having problems in paying monies owed due to not having access or being able to pay using a debit card.
- **Reports of trees being felled on area opposite Nursery Close**
Not PC land and works not carried out by PC.
- **Use of Village Hall for meetings whilst HVB is opened and serving Alcohol**
HVB committee have written a letter of complaint about the bar being asked to close when a Full PC Meeting is in progress. Advise has been sought from SALC who have said that whilst technically this should happen, due to the whole building being licensed, they believe that as long as the situation is managed correctly, ie no alcohol allowed in the meeting, no Cllrs to be in the bar before or during the meeting and no one who has been drinking is to come into the meeting and the Council is able to continue with their works undisturbed it should be ok. HVB have agreed to assist in managing the situation. It will remain under review.

Reports by Representatives

Public Rights of Way

Mr B Birkenhead

It was confirmed that he continues to walk the footpaths and clear vegetation where necessary and is able to do so. He advised the PC that any member of the public can report to Somerset Council if they spot any problems with the local footpaths.

It was also confirmed within the meeting that the question has been raised to our local MP Sir Ashley Fox about the Public Right of Way around the ponds. He has contacted SC, we await any further communications regarding this.

Report from OPRA

Cllr T Gardener

The village fireworks held on 2nd November was a great success. It was very well attended, and the weather was kind to us. The BBQ did well, and the chefs worked hard to serve everyone in the queue before the fireworks commenced. Our guys setting off the fireworks have perhaps become too proficient as it took less than 10 minutes for the display. It was well appreciated by the spectators.

Addendum to report – It was estimated that between 200-300 people attended the Fireworks

Our next event is the Senior's Christmas dinner to be held on Saturday 6th December and invitations were sent out last week. This will be followed on the Sunday with the lighting of the Christmas. A tree will also be purchased for Steart.

Report from Cllr D Dodge (Website/Social Media and Steart)

For Nov 2025 Full Council Meeting

Website:

The website is a parish council asset. Currently there is only one administrator. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give limited access, i.e. it is not possible to allow access to individual pages for admin purposes. It would be great to provide access to the Otter Tales section for the editors, unfortunately this is only possible by providing access to the entire admin area of the website.

For the purposes of business continuity, it is important that other PC members can update /amend the website and would be preferable to appoint certain areas to individuals such as events, Otter Tales, etc. I am happy to go through the various workings of the PC website with anyone interested.

Addendum to report - Cllr Gardener agreed to help along with the Parish Clerk

Steart

A Steart Residents meeting was held on 7th October at St Andrews Church, Steart.

Author Notes: Flood issues: EA confirmed to have primacy not WWT, assets are still owned by EA. Lack of funding and resources mean a known faulty water management system needs to be monitored carefully by residents and EA due to silt build up impacting current water management.

Bristol Port scheme could be encouraged to provide support to help alleviate systemic problems with flood mitigation within Steart - this needs exploring.

Supporting docs attached: Bridgwater Bay LIDAR, Steart Peninsula water level management, Parret IDB Stockland.

Environment Agency:

The capital scheme was completed over a decade ago and unfortunately there is no mechanism for ring fencing funding for ongoing maintenance. Funding has become increasingly challenging over the last few years and our resources have also been reduced.

During the summer Defra completed [consultation](#) on proposed funding reforms for Flood and Coastal Risk Management. and it is anticipated that there will be increased investment in maintenance rather than building new schemes. Whilst the number of properties at Steart is low – this change in funding should help the case. The new funding rules should apply from April 2026, and we are awaiting further information and guidance.

The EA are responsible for the tidal outfalls as part of the scheme. The two main outfalls which discussions were focused on were D3 (North Brook) and D5 (adjacent to Dowells Farm). We have been recently completed maintenance de-silting at these structures. During the two latest sets of high tides there has been no tidal ingress at D5 which is positive and shows the structure is now working as it should. We will continue to monitor the situation.

We continue to have issues with D3 at the end of the North Brook. The tidal outfall flap has not been sealing properly and the penstock, which prevents water back flowing into the North Brook, is leaking. The bung which had been put into the defunct fish pass on the tidal flap also fell out and allowed saline water into the freshwater system. Since the meeting we have reinserted a bung and completed an inspection of the outfall flap and the upstream penstock. We have secured funding to replace the tidal flap (which is on order) and are working on securing money to fix the penstock.

We will continue to raise the issues with lack of revenue funding for the scheme to our management team and, whilst not ideal, appreciate your support in this.

We will be reviewing the Bristol Port Scheme proposals – including the flood risk assessment modelling. We are supportive of the scheme. We will review the planning application with the same level of scrutiny we would of any developer. There may be opportunities as part of their work to make overall improvements to the water management of the Peninsular and we will continue to work with them in this respect.

WWT:

Will be installing gauge boards at the tilting weir installed within Bridgwater Bay, and at each of the new stop log structures being installed by the end of the year. These gauge boards will enable to accurate monitoring, review and adaptation of water levels and start the process of drafting up a Water Level Management Plan (WLMP) to be written in partnership with all stakeholders.

The newly installed tilting weir will be managed much like we currently manage the freshwater levels in Stockland Marshes; holding up water during the winter months but dropping and raising as required when high rainfall is predicted to ensure there is capacity in the hydrological block C. We will continue to have good communication with Andy Darch and Robin Prowse during periods of higher risk.

Once the next stage of works is completed, WWT will issue a map with the new water management structures installed, along with their ID's so it's clear for all which structures are being talked about and the hydrological units they affect.

We will be continuing with the current management of clearing a single side of the ditch system, laying and planting hedge rows on the other and continuing rotational ditch clearance which will also increase the capacity within the system.

IDB:

The IDB monitor water levels in the freshwater system and plan install an additional remote sensor at the North Brook Outfall at Stert Drove.

The IDB are preparing to replace the road culvert near Dowells Farm with a larger pipe, to improve drainage in the area. The work is scheduled to be completed this winter.

Combined:

The EA, IDB and WWT all agree that resources are more limited both in terms of 'boots on the ground' and funding since the scheme was completed. We have agreed to work together and share our resources more effectively. This has already been happening with the IDB helping to de-silt upstream of D3 (North Brook) whilst completing their routine works. The IDB have agreed to the EA having access to and operating their structures at Steart for the purpose of urgent / emergency reaction on tides.

An updated agreed Water Level Management Plan would help facilitate more joint working and would link into a flood plan. For example, when prolonged wet weather or a storm is predicted space could be created within the system pre-emptively as well as operationally once the North Brook Culvert is cleared, we could look to utilising the water in the system to flush the sediment out. WWT are reviewing and updating this document at present before circulating to IDB/EA.

We are also collectively investigating options with funding from the Somerset Rivers Authority to aid with ongoing maintenance.

The Steart Forum meeting is to be held on Friday 7th Nov 11:00 at the Stockland Club.

Report from Health and Wellbeing: Growing Together Project.
Cllr Parker

Pumpkin Carving

The Pumpkin Carving event scheduled for October half term was initially timed to coincide and support a children's Halloween disco in the village hall - as last year. Instead, a school event was held at the school ten days before. Consequently, the pumpkin carving event was considered as not being viable.

After consulting other village groups, it was decided to proceed and the event grew into a 'Fun FrightFest', with a range of activities including pumpkin carving, apple bobbing, colouring in, hedgehog making and ghost bananas. A Spooky Lunch of Vampire Soup, Goolash, and Eyeballs in Slime was also available. The event was publicised via the school WotZap group and advertised as a half term event for all ages.

The event was well attended by 12 children and their parent/grandparent and a few older members of the community. Admission by donations. Not including Village Hall hire the event cost £89.47. Donations received £122.

Everyone enjoyed the event, feedback indicated that a half term event was welcome. Parents were able to socialise, and children had a fun time. Older residents also participated and interacted with the children. The aim to enable people to make social connections seems to have been achieved.

School holiday and half term events seem to be welcome. Consideration of future events will be needed.

Half term Halloween event for 2026 will include a children's Halloween party event held in the Village Hall.

Garden Club: The Restoration of Hestercombe Gardens

The presentation by David Usher on the Restoration of Hestercombe Gardens was attended by 30 people, mainly from the membership of Garden Club. Feedback from the presentation was that it was informative and the speaker gave an excellent presentation.

Though attracting a reasonable audience, the presentation did not attract significantly more people than usual. It was hoped that a presentation on a significant Somerset garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens would attract more people. Consideration needs to be given to what events would attract larger audiences.

Christmas Wreath Making

The next event is Christmas Wreath Making. Last year this was very popular.

Report from Chair of Village Shop Steering Group

- Response from Plunkett Foundation to a question raised by Cllr Parker regarding the use of The Anchor Inn as a potential site for a new shop.

'The Plunkett Foundation membership is fundamentally based around a community business that has or will apply for a legal status. With respect to the Combwich Community Shop Project, we will hopefully be applying for a legal status of a 'Community Benefit Society' through FCA at some point next year. If you were turning the Anchor Inn into a community business a separate membership will be required, when the project is in full flow. However, the Plunkett team will under our community business membership provide advice, support and/or any resources they have available. Therefore, if in future the parish council members wish to ask questions and/or seek support from Plunkett, that can easily be arranged.

Report from Otterhampton Village Hall – Nov 2025 Cllr L Parsons

The village hall monthly meeting was held on 15th October.

The new electronic door switch has been replaced and is now working properly.

The village hall Chair has spoken to the builder regarding the necessary work that needs to be done on the ramp and are awaiting a start date for this to be done.

Upcoming events are the bingo which is on 8th November, the Christmas raffle draw will be on 20th December and the Stoggymen are performing on 28th February.

Hinkley Point Site Stakeholders Group Mrs R Perret

A new vice chairman (Graham Pearn) was welcome by the chairman (Leigh Redman).
'B' Station

The station is carrying on with defuelling, it hopes to be free of fuel early in the New Year. They continue to work towards the site transfer from EDF to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). The site staff are also continuing to get safety reminders of driving standards on the C182 (main Hinkley Road).

I have again requested that EDF get in contact with the parish council with respect to the position of the Combwich Labs

'A' Station

Nothing significant to report.

Following the 'A' station directors report there were several in-depth reports from the Nuclear Reconstruction Scheme (NRS) and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) with respect to to the long term decommissioning of nuclear power stations and main facilities across the UK.

The Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Environment Agency (EA) also gave their reports.

The SSG are involved with a display at the Blake Museum in Bridgwater about the nuclear industry in the area.

Addendum to report: A volunteer is being sought to replace the current representative, please contact the Parish Clerk for further details on clerk@parishcouncil.gov.uk