



Minutes of the Highclere Parish Council Meeting

Westridge Studio

Tuesday 14 October at 7.00pm

Members Present: Cllr York (chair), Cllr Easton, Cllr Bartholomew, Cllr McIver, Cllr Morrey

Clerk: Amy White

In attendance: Cllr John Izett (via Teams); two parishioners (one to be co-opted); Henry Oliver (North Wessex Downs Landscape Team)

1. **52/25 Apologies for Absence**
Cllr Falconer sent his apologies.

2. **53/25 Declarations of Interest**
None.

3. **54/25 To agree Minutes of Meeting held on 23 September 2025**
The Minutes of 23 September 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, Cllr York.

4. **55/25 Matters arising from Meeting held on 23 September 2025**

Number	Action	Person
44/25	Clerk to set up Cllr Morrey on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc- Actioned	Clerk
46/25	Clerk to contact Steve Lees: Actioned - see item 7.	Clerk
49/25	Clerk to confirm all requirements for Henry Oliver from NWDNL to attend parish council meeting on 14 October 2025- Actioned . The Glebe: Cllr Morrey will chase Savills on the Glebe rental. Actioned	Clerk Cllr Morrey

5. **56/25 Co-option of Councillor**
Peter Malone was co-opted to the parish council.
Action: Clerk to set up Cllr Malone on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc.

6. **57/25 Public participation**
One parishioner observed the meeting.

7. **58/25 Reports from County and Borough Councillors**
Cllr Izett reported via Teams:

Loss of 7, 7A Bus Services: Current Action:

- Cllr Izett is lobbying at the borough council level regarding the loss of these services.
- The borough council will not assume responsibility from Hampshire County Council but has agreed to discuss funding for a taxi service as a partial solution.

Next Steps:

- Cllrs Paul Hurst and Graham Dick (East Woodhay Parish Council) will attend a Hampshire County Council session next week focused on community transport and grants.
- Cllr Thacker has also agreed to contribute some funding.
- Several transport operators (including one from Newbury) are interested.

Issues Identified:

- Low usage and lack of profitability led Stagecoach to withdraw the routes.
- Legislation caps bus fares, preventing price adjustments to sustain service viability.

Oakley Farm Development Proposal

- Overview:
 - The Oakley Farm proposal has been supported by the Borough Council.
 - The parish council strongly opposes the plan and aims to mitigate or stop it.
 - The first opportunity for challenge is at the Cabinet meeting for the new Spatial Strategy in November.
- Cabinet Process:
 - Written concerns to be submitted **one week before** the Cabinet meeting.
 - Cllr Izett will speak at Cabinet (4 minutes), and another representative may get 2 minutes.
- Planning consultant Progress:
 - Steve Lees (former Test Valley planner) has been appointed.
 - Produced a draft report identifying key planning and sustainability issues.
 - General feedback: report is strong, well-structured, and only needs minor factual or grammatical updates.
- Main Issues Identified:
 - Sustainability: Question over whether Oakley Farm is a suitable development site.
 - Risk to Local Plan: If the site is found unsound, it could undermine Basingstoke's entire Local Plan.
 - Other Planning Risks:
 - Impact on listed buildings.
 - Flooding risks, especially near Watermill Bridge.
 - Lack of Duty to Cooperate evidence with West Berkshire Council.
 - Concerns over water cycle studies and infrastructure capacity.
- Next Actions:
 - Finalise and submit report to Cabinet.
 - Incorporate feedback from parish council members by end of next week.
 - Submission likely to come jointly from parish councils and Cllr Izett.

- **Public Engagement**

Leaflet & Communication Plan:

Draft flyer prepared by Izett; Clerk handling printing (low cost) to include:

- Photographs and a map of the site.
- Clear outline of concerns.
- Distributed by hand delivery in the affected area, incl local residents and poss neighbouring areas (e.g., Newbury, Wash Common).
- Volunteers needed for distribution.

- **Additional Outreach:**

- Articles in parish magazines and Highclere Society newsletter.
- Posts on Facebook community groups.
- Possible public meeting or petition under discussion.

Housing Numbers and Local Plan Impact

- **Concerns Raised:**

- Oakley Farm could mean 500 new homes in Highclere parish, plus existing sites (150 homes total); represents a disproportionate burden on the parish.
- Watermill Bridge development classed as “*windfall*” and excluded from housing targets, which council disagrees with.
- Potential overdevelopment and loss of village identity.

- **Additional Risk:**

- Developers (e.g., Bishops Green) are proceeding with applications regardless of selection status due to lack of five-year housing supply.

- **Strategic Goal:**

- Preserve village gaps between settlements (e.g., between Woolton Hill and Highclere).
- Reinforce these as statutory planning principles, similar to other borough areas.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Izett to create Oakley Farm flyer for distribution.

8. 59/25 Planning

25/02160/HSE The Gable House Andover Road Wash Water. Response sent: No objection.

9. 60/25 Financial Matters

a. Grant application from Forever Loved Horse Therapy

The council discussed the application received. It was agreed that the request, and that it is a Community Interest Company and not a charity, still had the appropriate aims and objectives as required in our grant policy (see website). It was agreed to offer a grant of £500 to Forever Loved Horse Therapy. The grant request is an attachment to the Minutes.

Action: Clerk to organise grant payment to Forever Loved Horse Therapy.

b. Accounts for payment

The Clerk presented accounts for payment (see end of Minutes).
Bank reconciliation as at 30 September 2025:
Unity Bank Current Account: £17227.64
Unity Bank Savings Account: £46033.92
Total: £: **63261.56**

10. 61/25 Items to take forward to subsequent meeting

Policies and procedures for updating. Action plan. Budget first draft.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 11 November 2025

Actions from 14 October 2025 Meeting

Number	Action	Person
56/25	Clerk to set up Cllr Malone on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc.	Clerk
58/25	Clerk and Cllr Izett to create Oakley Farm flyer for distribution.	Clerk, Cllr Izett
60/25	Clerk to organise grant payment to Forever Loved Horse Therapy.	Clerk

Henry Oliver, North Wessex Downs National Landscape

HPC welcomed Henry Oliver to give us an overview on the NWDNL activities.

Henry provided a comprehensive and inspiring update on the expanding work of the North Wessex Downs team, highlighting their growth, partnerships, and achievements across the landscape.

Team Growth and Focus

The team has grown from four to eleven members, with additional staff funded through joint projects. They balance core work on behalf of local authorities and parishes with project-based delivery tied to the North Wessex Downs Management Plan. Covering 700 square miles, 9 local authorities, 173 parishes, and 4 counties, the team handles a vast workload including 794 planning consultations last year.

Planning, Guidance, and Publications

Henry described the team's planning input and their role in providing practical guidance to local authorities and communities. Recent publications include:

- A Colour Guide for building and refurbishment in harmony with the landscape.
- Lighting Guidance to reduce light pollution.
- A Historic Landscape Characterisation resource, showing how the past shapes the present landscape.

Nature and Farming Initiatives

The team's Nature Recovery Plan sets the direction for county-level strategies, working closely with farmers across now 15 "farmer clusters." These groups collaborate on habitat creation, climate resilience, and water management — with the team acting as a convenor, connecting and empowering local land managers.

Projects have included ancient woodland restoration, chalk grassland recovery, wetland creation, and innovative arable wildflower work. Through the Farming in Protected

Landscapes programme, over £3.3 million has been awarded to support 180 local projects improving nature, climate, and access.

Partnership and Heritage Projects

The team has delivered a wide range of partnership initiatives, from the Historic Ridgeway Project (surveying and conserving monuments) to Mend the Gap, mitigating visual impact from rail electrification by enhancing chalk landscapes and wetlands. They also run annual Walking Festivals, encouraging communities to explore the landscape.

Education and Community Engagement

While school engagement is limited by resources, the team supports school habitat projects through the Mend the Gap programme and works with farmers to host educational visits. They also promote inclusive access, for example by improving rural paths and creating resources for new walking groups, including under-represented communities.

Looking Ahead

Henry shared the forthcoming Management Plan (2025 edition), due for publication in November, which outlines how local councils and parishes can contribute — from heritage and signage initiatives to dark sky events and local sourcing. He encouraged parishes to collaborate, report on their Section 85 duties, and get involved in nature recovery. Finally, Henry introduced The Big Chalk, an ambitious regional initiative linking chalk landscapes from Dorset to Kent to create connected corridors for wildlife and people — a powerful vision for large-scale collaboration and climate resilience.

Highclere Parish Council

14 October 2025 (2025-2026)

PAYMENTS LIST

Vouche	Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
83	Clerk Salary	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Pension- nest	Nest Pensions	E	86.43		86.43
84	Clerk Salary	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Clerk Salary	Amy White	E	841.28		841.28
85	Litter Warden Salary	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Litter Warden	David McClelland	E	605.62		605.62
80	Scribe Accounting	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Accounting Software	Scribe	S	31.00	6.20	37.20
82	Payroll	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Monthly payroll invoice	Red76 Tax Ltd	S	20.00	4.00	24.00
81	Hall Hire	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Hall Hire	Westridge Studio	Z	20.00		20.00
84	WFH Expenses	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Clerk Salary	Amy White	E	26.00		26.00
86	PAYE	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		PAYE	HMRC	E	478.79		478.79
85	Litter Warden Expenses	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Litter Warden	David McClelland	E	25.00		25.00
79	Speed Indicator Placement	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		SID	Premier Grounds	S	420.00	84.00	504.00
87	Admin incl Ionos, website	07/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Bank charge	Unity Trust Bank	E	6.00		6.00
88	Admin incl Ionos, website	14/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		Hugo Fox website	Hugo Fox	S	9.99	2.00	11.99
89	Speed Indicator Placement	14/10/2025		Unity Current Accour		SID	Amy White	Z	22.99		22.99
Total									2,593.10	96.20	2,689.30