

## **WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held in Church House, Widecombe

on Thursday 22 May 2025 at 7.30pm

**Parish Councillors present:** Councillor Elliott (Chair for this meeting), Bibby, Edwards, Partridge and Raynor

**Also present:** District Cllrs Nutley and Rogers

**Members of the Public:** 23

**Clerk:** Suzanna Hughes

### **APM2025.1 CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She informed everyone that she would give a summary of the Parish Council's activities over the last year before moving on to hearing from local groups and organisations.

#### **Improvements to the local area this year**

- Cleaning the Widecombe Fair stone sign and uncovering the surrounding cobbles, along with the benches, Jubilee stone and Time Capsule stone on Widecombe Green. The Time Capsule stone was also re-engraved to improve legibility and looks great.
- Setting up the Road Warden Scheme – Sue to speak more on this shortly.
- Request for reinstatement of various directional signs around the Parish from DCC.
- The defibrillator cabinet at the bus stop in Widecombe car park now has a new case that is permanently unlocked for easier access in the event of an emergency.
- Removal of the unsafe Sycamore tree on the green (which has already been replaced by new saplings).
- Three spare Radar keys for the disabled toilets in Widecombe have been obtained and are now accessible from the café on the Green and the Old Inn, if required, as well as a copy for Widecombe Fair.
- The bench in Widecombe car park has had the timber seat replaced to make it safe and usable again.

#### **Information sharing**

- An article in the Rolling Along publication, introducing each member of the PC and explaining some of the work we have undertaken.
- The contents of the Parish Chest have now been moved to secure storage at Devon Archives, following the digitisation of the contents by the Widecombe History Group.

#### **Public Toilets**

- Notification was received a couple of months ago that the toilets at Badgers Holt, Dartmeet would be closing to the public.

- There was also a consultation about the potential closure of the Widecombe village toilets and those at New Bridge carpark, Spitchwick. We await the formal outcome of this consultation but can confirm that we wrote to strongly object to both closures.

### **Parish Council Precept (the element of council tax allocated to Widecombe PC)**

- An increase of 2% was agreed, bringing the total precept for the parish to £7,113 for the year 2025-26.
- This equates to a total tax of around £22 per household over the year, which we can spend on your behalf.
- Our annual Budget covers the costs of such items as the general repair and maintenance of parish land and assets, including trees on the village green; maintenance of the Widecombe defibrillator; Election costs; Clerks salary; Training for Councillors and our annual Small Grants Scheme. The Parish Field (Jubilee Orchard) is managed separately, but the PC hold the bank account for this group.

### **Grant Giving**

- Two opportunities for local community groups and organisation to apply for small grants this year in October 24 and March 25.
- £1,500 distributed in total – £300 to Leusdon Memorial Hall for an unlocked defibrillator cabinet; £500 to Widecombe Community Hall for ongoing landscaping; £200 to Widecombe PCC towards new internal lighting; £500 to Spitchwick Cricket Club for new nets.

Thanks, as always, go to the small group of dedicated Parish Councillors who meet nearly every month and work hard to look after the needs of the Parish and to Suzanna, our wonderful Clerk, who keeps us on the straight and narrow! We have a couple of vacancies, so if you'd like to find out more, please come and have a chat.

### **APM2025.2 COMMUNITY REPORTS**

Community reports were invited. A summary can be found below.

#### **Michael Brown, Jubilee Orchard**

The Orchard is now home to 40 healthy, apple trees. Tree guards were installed to protect them from the sheep, but it is hoped these will be removed as soon as possible. The trees have been allowed to blossom this year, so they haven't had to rub off all the buds. It has therefore been a pretty season. He encouraged everyone to have a look. There is a padlock on the metal gate (code is 1471) and there are currently six, grazing sheep in there. They would like some picnic tables in there to encourage family time. It might be that people would like to donate such a table in memory of somebody or to recognise something. There was a wassail last year but there is nothing lined up for this year and he invited ideas. A longer-term idea will be to make juice from the apples, and he sees Widecombe Calvados on the horizon and to give a bottle to every parishioner at Christmas!

#### **Fiona Lambeck, Shallowford Farm**

Fiona reported that she has been up at Shallowford for a year now and it's just been a wonderful place to work. Lots of exciting things are happening. They received grant funding for a

defibrillator. This has now been fitted, and they will be communicating its availability to the wider community. Anyone wishing to familiarise themselves with its location are more than welcome to have a look. They have also received funding of £200k from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will be used to allow more children to come and stay at Shallowford and there's also two new positions. One of those positions, which has been filled, is linked to the Farm to Fork project – getting local children out to other local farms other than Shallowford – and the other is for a Volunteer and Partnership Co-ordinator which is currently advertised on their website. Next year, Shallowford will be 50, so part of the funding will also be used for community events to celebrate the 50 years.

### **Sarah Reeve, Widecombe Community Hall**

Hopefully, most of you will be aware of the plans to build a new, accessible community hall in Widecombe on the land next to the tennis courts (the Hayes Field).

The team of 8 Charity Trustees meets regularly to manage the job of designing and fundraising for this major project, supported by a growing group of regular volunteers who help on-site, at events and with grant applications.

Planning permission is secure, and we are nearing the end of the work that can be completed by local volunteers, as we move on to the main build that will be undertaken by contractors.

For this, we need significant funds. We are well on our way but until we have more money secured, we cannot commence the major construction.

To give you an understanding of the funds raised to date, this now exceeds £300,000.

- We have covered the cost of employing an Architect; obtained planning permission and paid for all the supporting reports and surveys this required; created a new access onto the Hayes Field and drained the site ready for the main build.

- Over £62,000 has been raised locally. This is £12,000 more than our original target and it continues to grow at each event we hold. Our next major fundraiser is the Big Widecombe Barn Dance on 28th June – tickets are on sale via our website and we hope to see loads of you there!

- What we have also been really proud of is the community support that has saved us money. Over 1,000 hours of volunteer time have been spent on this project, along with weeks of plant hire that we have never been charged for. The savings resulting from these generous donations of time and machinery equate to around £20,000 to date, and that is based on minimum wage only. Community support is what this project is all about and the end result will be a hall for everyone to access and enjoy.

We are delighted that after all the work completed to date, we still have £200,000 in the bank (£150k of this is in high-interest accounts, earning decent sums and countering the impact of

inflation and rising prices). Whilst this is significant, we need to double this to afford a water-tight building. Further funds will then be needed to fit out the hall and get it ready for use.

Grants are no longer as bountiful as they used to be and competition for funds is fierce. We were really disappointed to miss out on a major National Lottery grant last year, but the feedback stated that “Currently just 1 in 5 applications are invited to the next stage of assessment. [However,] the panel noted your clear commitment to involving the community in developing your proposal and the in-depth planning work that has already taken place.” We continue to apply for funds that we are eligible for, and we will keep doing so, alongside our own fundraising, until we can get this hall built!

Many hands indeed make light work, so if you’d like to find out more or get involved, please come and have a chat. We are always on the lookout for extra support to get this hall built for everyone to enjoy.

### **Mike Pascoe, Church House**

This Church House is still well used, and its finances are in good order. However, the heaters upstairs need to be replaced; they are not PAT tested and are deemed unusable. The Management Committee is talking to the National Trust about replacing them.

Two markets currently use it – the monthly market and the craft market.

The Trustees are John Dracup and Lloyd Mortimore. We are indebted to the Management Committee for all their hard work and commitment. In particular, Sarah Reeve (Treasurer), Rose Mortimore (Booking Secretary), Mike Pascoe (Chair) and Di Cameron (Secretary).

### **Mike Pascoe, Widcombe Bellringers**

Mike is the Captain of the Bellringers. At the moment, there are 12 bell ringers and three learners. These days, Widcombe and Buckland are working together to keep bellringing going in both communities. They meet on Wednesday evening and alternate between the two towers.

They are fortunate to have so many ringers in our immediate are. Many towers are struggling to find ringers, especially young people. It takes many years of practice to become a fully-fledged ringer. The expectation is that anyone who learns will attend for ringing on Sunday morning service and other church and national events. This past year, they were winners of the Morton Deanery ringing competition at Holne last June. Besides ringing every Sunday morning for service, they have rung for the VE Day celebration, a special wedding anniversary and, this coming Saturday, they are taking part in the Devon Minor final of the Devon Association of Bellringers competition. If they do well in the Minor final, they will go on to the Major final in June, so they have their fingers crossed. They host an annual Rose Bowl Invitation competition every August, and this year it will be a combined event alongside the Devon Association of Ringers Centenary Celebrations with much ringing and celebration, including a barbeque and teas in Church House.

### **Mike Pascoe, Widcombe Fair**

By this time of the year, the Committee is well on its way to organising this year's Fair. The volunteer list of members who receive the monthly meeting minutes at present stands at 54 and there are a lot more people who help set up before and on the day. The 2024 Fair was very successful, another record, and could possibly have been better but for a soggy end to the day. Comments from the public are always encouraging. It remains a very local rural Fair but is also internationally famous and easily the best around! As a result of all the combined effort last year, they were able to support the local rotary clubs for their help on the day to a total of £4,200. £3,950 was given to local organisations who had applied for grants. Their charity of the day was Dartmoor Rescue, who are invaluable helpers on the day, and they received £2,200. The charity for 2025 is Guide Dogs for the Blind. After donations, they hold a healthy account surplus, which is needed as a backstop in case of a 'bad year' due mainly to the weather. It costs £45k a year to put the Fair on, and a lot of the money comes in from traders. They also need to spend money maintaining and improving land and equipment including fencing to keep sheep out. Please take time to visit the website and they look forward to support from the community to help keep the tradition going.

### **Judy Southcombe, on behalf of Widecombe Pre-School**

They had a good year at the pre-school and numbers are healthy with 13 children on roll. Osted paid a visit and gave the pre-school a good rating. However, they commented that this was actually very, very good. The building and its restrictions would not ever comply with the requirements needed to achieve an outstanding rating. However, the pre-school is running at a significant loss, with its future being uncertain. This is a great shame, as the pre-school has been part of the Widecombe community for over 50 years. As with many small businesses, the running costs are rising, but the government funding we receive for the children isn't, and we're not allowed to ask for more money for them to top it up. Therefore, there isn't enough money to cover the overheads. They would like to thank Shane and Michael from The Old Inn, the Widecombe Fair Committee, the Moorland Merrymakers, the Widecombe Educational Foundation and the Parish Council for their support and kind donations, which, as a very small charity, they rely on. They also have numerous fund-raising activities going on throughout the year, which include raffles, jumble sales, Widecombe Fair teddy stall, the Christmas market and our next event being a sponsored walk around the village. Widecombe has a very happy pre-school where the children thrive and grow, and they will keep this going for as long as they can.

### **Rose Mortimore, Widecombe History Group**

Chaired by Terry French, the Committee meets on the first Wednesday of each month. They have talks, which for the coming month is Land Army Girls, followed by tea and biscuits at a cost of £5. A programme of events was available to take away. They have outings and walks. Yesterday, they went to Shiltsone House, Modbury, which was very enjoyable. Anyone can join for free and receive information via a mailing list. Terry French has talked to the school about the history of Widecombe, and they have given them £1000 to do a project. Terry also hosts a walk every month around the village during the summer period. They had a coffee morning at Church House this week to raise money for Devon Air Ambulance and the AGM was held afterwards. The History Day is on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August and will involve walks, teas and exhibitions. It would be good to see people from near and far. With regard to the pig sty, down below Manor Cottages, the History Group will take over its official custodianship which will replace the current trustees. They thank the Committee and Friends for everything they have done and will continue to do.

### **Rose Mortimore, Social Club**

The 'Ladies' Social Club' has now been renamed the 'Social Club' to be gender inclusive, to include men as well as ladies and encourage more people to attend. They meet from March to November in the Church House on every second Thursday in the month. There is a draw, a talk and coffee and biscuits all for £3. This year, Debbie Silver will be speaking about Healthy Living, a vet will be speaking on his profession, along with Ken Edwards, and Sue Vickers, a Dartmoor journalist, will also be attending to name but a few. There is a lunch on the fourth Wednesday of each month at The Old Inn. Sue Bird is the Treasurer and Daf Edwards helps organise the talks for which they are most grateful.

### **Rose Mortimore, Widecombe Singers**

Widecombe Singers has been in existence for about 16 years. It formed as a result of the Moorland Merrymakers wanting some extra singing lessons. They are indebted to Bridget Ansell for her support and guidance. They are divided into four groups – base, tenors, altos and sopranos – and they make a lovely sound. They have various gigs including Widecombe Fair, weddings, concerts, Exeter Cathedral, and many more. They have a very wide range of members from Widecombe and the surrounding area. There are about 35 members each evening and it costs £3 to attend. This goes towards hire of Church House, heating and Bridget's fees. Anyone is welcome to join, 8 -9pm on Tuesday evenings at Church House. It is a happy group, and we would welcome you.

### **Peter Blood, St Pancras**

Our vicar, Ross Hathway, is now into his second year in Widecombe. Ross is part-time. He works on Church matters usually on Mondays and Tuesdays and takes services on Sundays at Widecombe, Leusdon and Postbridge. In our mission community, there have been a few personnel changes over the last year. Mark Rylands retired as Team Rector. A new rector, Philip Parker, has now been recruited. He's married with a young son, and they will move into Ashburton in the summer. Phil will be inducted at a service in Ashburton on 1 September. Angie Blanche is the new Children and Families Worker taking over from Heidi Lewis. With Angie's help, they hope to be in a position to attract more families to St Pancras. At the recent annual meeting, Mike Pascoe and Philippa Gimlette were re-elected as our churchwardens. Services remain unchanged with a 10:30am service on most Sundays. They also hold seasonal services which include a celebration of events through the agricultural year, such as plough service, rogation and harvest. In July, they hold an animal service, and in November, they commemorate Remembrance. The Christmas services include Christingle and carols. All services are listed in the Parish Link. They are fortunate to have three organists – Michael Brown, Alison Hathway and Jacqueline Wilding White – who provide music for services. A book-lending library has recently been set up in the church. It has a range of Christian-themed books for adults and children, covering Bible stories, life events, personal experiences, etc. Anybody, whether you're a member of the congregation or not, can go in and browse and borrow a book. The church is open for visitors every day, and due to the number of visitors, they have a steady income from items for sale and donations. However, one lesson learned from COVID is that visitors are carrying less cash and the church was losing out on purchases and donations. To keep up with the times, they have installed a card payment donation station, which is making a significant difference to our income. The pre-school has allowed the church to share its internet connection and so there is now a Wifi signal in the church. In return, the church will be making an annual donation to the preschool to share the cost. Apart from the normal routine

maintenance of a listed building, they have two projects, which are starting this year, for which they will need to do some serious fund-raising. Firstly, accessibility and how to make access easier for disabled visitors. They have been looking at various solutions, including ramps and a step lift. The other project is the rood screen. The medieval screen is badly in need of conservation work, both to clean the paintings and to secure it as some of the panels are very unstable. This is going to cost quite a lot because they will need to employ specialists to do the work. If anybody wishes to get involved in church activities, please do get in touch. These activities include a team of welcomers (who are organised by Ronnie Constant and who greet visitors during the summer months), flower arranging, making coffee and bell ringing. You don't have to be a member of the congregation to join in the activities so please sign up if you've got a spare five minutes.

### **Michael Brown, Music in the Church**

Since the last meeting, there have been eight concerts in the church. The first was about 12 months ago, in May, when they enjoyed a lovely piano recital by Iwan Llewelyn-Jones. That was followed by a string quartet from Ashburton Arts Festival. They have expressed an interest in doing something similar again this year. In August, there was an inaugural organ recital to launch the new organ. Four organists played at that event, including organists from Christchurch Cathedral from whom the organ was purchased, Peterborough Cathedral, Buckfast Abbey, and Michael. Michael then played two recitals for Widecombe Fair and will be doing so again this year, and then in early December, there was an advent concert from the Ferio Saxophone quartet which was great fun. Widecombe Singers and Jim Causley performed at Christmas and yesterday, there was another organ recital with the Two Moors Festival. Another piano recital is planned for 21 June. Making money out of a concert is quite hard to do so having a local audience is important.

The new organ in the church has transformed things. Thanks again to those who were involved getting the old organ out and transporting the new organ down from Michael's barns into the church, and then building it, which took two weeks. Ed Lamb did a wonderful job spraying the pipes a lovely gold colour and to David Thomas who did the detailed bit around the mouths of the pipes. The organ has coped with the change of environment remarkably well. The final handover from the organ builder, Martin Renshaw, is likely to be in August. The old organ has been taken to Northway and installed in a barn now known as their organ loft. They will make it available to the public to play.

### **Miles Fursdon, Snow Warden Scheme**

The scheme has been operating for 12 years and consists of 60 voluntary members. 17 tractor drivers have been allocated about a mile of road each and will clear away the snow when required. The entire network is covered with the exception of Bonehill and Southcombe. Once the tractors have been through, volunteers can spread salt on the steep bits and the difficult corners. The scheme is working well, and Miles would always welcome new volunteers. There was only one day this last winter that he had to go out and clear snow, so it has been an easy job this year.

### **Anthony Arnold, Widecombe Primary School**

The school has grown over the last two and a half years from 69 pupils to 91. The school belongs to a Trust of 23 schools, so although it is in what feels like a gorgeous, small location, they do spread their wings a lot and collaborate with other schools across the Trust. They have

a four-class structure, with Reception by themselves. The Trust, alongside grants from other sources, has ploughed in over £100,000 over the last couple of years. They have had a new roof, a new central heating system, a new fire alarm system, new lighting and lots of other improvements. The Trust has worked on developing the Reception class with capacity of 15. Unfortunately, they couldn't build a cover for the outside because they ran out of money, however, people from the community came together with time, energy, experience and a bit of money, and the school now has a fully functioning structure outside giving continuous outdoor provision all year round.

The finances around education is going to be tough over the next few years. Pupil numbers are predicted to be a lot lower over the next five years, so the more we can work together and the more the community can help us the better. The school will have a closer working relationship with Hennock over next few years which will also help financially. Some examples of the strong community links and where the community has stepped in include donations from the History Group to provide trips and tours of the local area for the children, provision of a defibrillator which can be used by anyone during school hours and support from Friends of Widecombe School to fully fund the running of the swimming pool. A hernia of the pool has been fixed, it has a new cover, the chemicals are all funded by the Friends and it allows all 91 children to swim for about 13 weeks in an 8x4 heated pool. Friends have also recently run a big fundraising campaign – thank you to everyone involved in this. They raised a massive £30k plus enabling a new adventure playground, which can be added to over time. It's more inclusive, so all the children can now play on it. Other kind donations have been received from other groups: the Rotary Club donated some money for the mud kitchen and the Widecombe Educational Foundation has donated money to allow training for key adults in school and they hope next year to host their own junior Ten Tors. The school continues to thrive and is looking smart, thanks to everyone pitching in and helping – so thank you.

### **Fiona Senior, Parish Link**

The Link is in good shape at that moment. It is supported by a combination of commercial advertising and generous donations from local organisations and individuals. Donors are listed on page 42 of every issue if we want to check who has donated. The accounts are audited as part of the church's accounts. Advertising rates haven't increased for quite a few years now, which means that it represents really good value for local businesses. There are currently enough funds to keep publishing for at least the next year as long as advertising revenue is maintained and printing costs don't go up too much. They are getting some positive feedback from people about the content, but they always welcome new ideas and if there are people who would like to contribute something regularly to the magazine, please get in touch. The really good news is that they have increase their print numbers recently to 720 copies. They use a really small printer who specialises in printing parish magazines and they can therefore be very specific about print runs. If anyone knows of any new distribution points, please get in touch. They also have a great team of people who hand deliver the magazine, but they are always looking for more people to help with that. Debbie Richardson and Fiona are the editors who bring all the content together. Peter Blood looks after the accounts and proofreads each edition, Rachel Arrowsmith-Brown manages the advertises and Marilyn Wells manages the distribution. Sadly, Debbie Richardson is moving away later this summer, so they are looking for someone to join the editorial team. If anyone is interested in being involved, or if they know of somebody who they think might be interested, please get in touch.

### **Sue Raynor, Road Warden Scheme**

She heard about the Road Warden Scheme whilst listening to Jeremy Vine on Radio 2 who was discussing the scheme run by Devon County Council with someone from a parish near Kingsbridge. The scheme provided funding for the cost of equipment, clothing, tools tarmac and third-party insurance cover to enable volunteers to fill potholes which don't meet highways' criteria. The idea was supported by the Parish Council and after about six months, we now have a wonderful team of 14 volunteers. They try to go out twice a month to repair the roads. They are not permanent repairs, but they do the best they can. and e roads. Now, this isn't permanent repairs. These are as best as we can do. So far, the team have filled 77 potholes having started only two months ago and averaging 12 potholes each session. If anybody is interested in joining or coming along, it's normally a morning for about three hours, let Sue know. The group communicates with each other via WhatsApp.

If you are aware of a pothole that needs to be filled, report it to Devon Highways in the first instance (<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/>) but also let the team know. Devon will look at it first and decide whether it meets the criteria and, if it doesn't, the volunteers can add it to their list.

### **Martin Cherritt, Rolling Along**

I stood up here last year reporting that Rolling Along had been going for four months and had 125 subscribers. 12 months later, this has increased to 325 subscribers. The idea arose mainly from the History Group wanting a website, so the idea of a website and newsletter have been combined and 'Rolling Along' is the result. The idea was that we would write about community life in Widecombe and surrounds. They have close links with the Parish Link which can be used to alert people about something with a link/QR code to a more detailed article with photographs on Rolling Along. 40 posts were published last year including an article about Leusdon Church following Jeff Bamsey's report at last year's Annual Parish Meeting which turned out to be the most read post all year on Rolling Along. If anyone wishes to write an article for Rolling Along and reach its 325+ subscribers, please contact Martin.

### **Daf Edwards, Defibrillator**

The defibrillator is accessible 24 hours a day and is situated in the bus shelter in the car park. It is now housed in an unlocked cabinet so there is no need for a code. There's a little light that comes on, and then you just take it out, push the on my button, and it tells you what to do. She recommended that everyone familiarised themselves with its location and how to access it so that if they were ever in a position of needing it, they would know what to do.

### **Claire Partridge, Widecombe & District Sports Group**

A reminder that the parish has its own floodlit tennis court. This is a facility which is free to use for the school and pre-school. There are three Trustees, Claire, Judy Southcombe and Norma Tempest. A few very committed tennis players have carried out some recent improvements for the enjoyment of younger members of the community. She thanked Mike Pascoe for his help with this which included putting up some basketball hoops which youngsters have very much enjoyed using. District Councillor Rogers has been exploring some options to potentially find some money to invest in the play area. The Group continues to seek funding to resurface the court.

### **Postmaster and District Councillor Stuart Rogers**

Mobile Library – books can be ordered by phone or online (<https://discover.librariesunlimited.org.uk/-/ashburton-library#>) and they will be delivered on the Post Office van on a Monday. Alternatively, you can browse the catalogue on an iPad in the van. The Post Office van is also in Widecombe 9-10.30am on Mondays and cash can be withdrawn. It is also coming to Widecombe Fair. It also runs on bank holiday Mondays, but it is needing people to use it.

Regarding the playpark, he is working with TDC members about accessing funds. A design has been put together and DNPA are supportive. This is one of four initiatives they are looking at to provide more facilities for the youth: a play park in Ashburton, a play park in Broadhempston and a scout hut in Buckfastleigh.

The government has announced that funding will be available for household support, but the District Council is waiting for the County Council to agree how this will be distributed. They are also awaiting more information about the winter fuel payment.

### **District Councillor John Nutley**

Listening to everyone this evening, he was so pleased to hear about all the activity in Widecombe. He advised that District Councillor and DNPA Ranger Rob Steemson has been voted in as Chair of Teignbridge District Council and District Councillor Jack Major is the Vice Chair. Small TDC vans have now been replaced with electric vehicles, but it is not possible to replace the larger refuse trucks with electric vehicles as they have too big an area to cover. He advised that District and County Councillors each have a fund available for grants for community projects.

### **John Southcombe, Leusdon Memorial Hall**

The past 12 months have been very busy for Leusdon Memorial Hall and as we have recently commemorated VE Day, it focuses one's attention on why the hall was built. If it had not been for the people who fought for upholding our freedom in the past two world of wars, none of us would be here now. It's worth remembering that the fact it is a memorial hall and is a reason itself for making sure that we all do what we can to preserve and improve it for the future. In the past year, we have been fortunate to recruit four new members to the committee. All these people come with talent which will put to good use. Two long-standing members stood down at last AGM, although fortunately, they still help us in coffee mornings and other hall events. The treasurer, Rob Steemson, has tirelessly applied for grants to improve and update the hall. As well as grants from Widecombe Fair and the Parish Council, the Hall has been successful in obtaining an award from the National Lottery. Several other grant applications are in the pipeline and work has already started on allocating money. Noticeably, they have purchased 19 new chairs. The old ones have been put in the store and are available to other community organisations for outside events. Work will shortly start on redecoration, insulation and expanding the disabled parking, making the whole even more user-friendly. As usual, we continue to organise monthly coffee mornings and whist drives, as well as raising much-needed funds for the hall to provide important social activities which combat loneliness and isolation. Other activities include a weekly keep fit class, a monthly religious service and meditation. From September to December, we are home to the Moorland Merrymakers who in the past 12 months have celebrated their Diamond anniversary. We are pleased the Parish Council hold regular meetings in the hall which fosters a sense of inclusiveness. Many local groups and families continue to use the hall for meetings and parties. Its position means minimising

disturbance to its neighbours. Social media presence continues to grow which now exceeds 420 followers. It is a resource to all the community and local charities. It is invaluable in publicising local activities. Charges have been held for the past twelve months, and hall hire now includes electricity and heating. We look forward to serving the whole parish for many years to come and would welcome anybody at the AGM on the 3 July.

**Rob Steemson, DNPA Ranger, was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:**

Reflecting over the last year of Public Rights of Way work within the Parish I can confirm that there have been six new signposts, two new stiles and two new gates erected. However, the biggest accomplishment was to get surface repairs on the Two Moors Way route at Ponsworthy with agreement from the landowners. They and I have been monitoring the work since and are happy with us doing more improvement again this year.

Subject to funding I am also planning to upgrade the field furniture on the Footpath at Dunstone Farm.

Best wishes to all.

**Roger Claxton, representing Widecombe Website, was unable to attend but sent the following report:**

The website has had a good year with the switch across to the new version going smoothly and a mostly new team successfully maintaining and adding content. I would like to express my gratitude to the team of volunteers who have embraced their role very well and the regular updates, such as the parish link and the parish council minutes and agendas, proceeding smoothly.

We are always after new content, so if anyone has any ideas, and if there are any local organisations who would like to promote their activities, please get in touch.

We would also like to thank our advertisers for their continued support and their valuable contributions towards the running costs.

*Before the meeting closed Jenny Pascoe announced the imminent retirement of the Widecombe Postman, Mike Lehman on 31 July after 28 years of service. She has booked Church House for an evening event so that the community can give him the send-off he deserves.*

**APM2025.3 CLOSE**

The Chair thanked everyone for their reports and expressed how proud she is to be the Chair of Widecombe Parish Council. It is amazing to hear about the exciting, interesting and diverse activities which are going on and she thanked everyone for the part they play in that.

Signed:..... Dated .....