

MINUTES
Steep Parish Council Annual Meeting
Monday 12th June 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs. Jenny Martin (in the Chair), Terry Cook, Charlotte Duthie, Freddie Holmes, Robin Hollington, Shannon Askew, Harriet Waley-Cohen, Paul Garstin, Alison Driver

Also present: Dawn Rodgers, Clerk
7 members of the public (MoP)

Minute Item

The meeting commenced late at 7.45pm

23/107 **Apologies for Absence**
None.

23/108 **Declarations of Interest**
Councillors were reminded of the declaration as received on the agenda.

23/109 **Approval of Minutes**
Resolved: The minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 15th May were approved as an accurate record.

23/110 **Public Comment:**
MoP 1 gave a letter to the chair about the trees on the village hall land. This will be passed to Trustees to consider.

MoP 2 informed the council there is a sandwich 'A' board outside the Cricketers on the corner of Stoner Hill and Church Road. This is reducing visibility of the road. They also mentioned the petrol prices in Petersfield being some of the most expensive in the local area.

23/111 **Country Councillor Report:**
Cllr Oppenheimer's report was noted (Appendix B). He also mentioned the HCC Budget Consultation and encouraged both the council and the public to have their say.

Cllr Holmes mentioned the recent roads closures and diversion on Stoner Hill and Ashford Lane on the same days which had led cars to effectively be directed in circles.

23/112 **District Councillor's Report:**
Cllr Drew reported on the following items:

- Thank you to residents for voting him in for a further term.
- Encourage councillors to attend the Parish Forum: Motorbike Noise and Nuisance on 14th July.
- Noted to the speed reduction and cameras on the A272 and wondered if this was feasible on the C18.
- Auto-speed cameras – no news or timeframe from EHDC, but clerk to continue to chase Cllr Drew to remind him.
- Potholes – EHDC have offered help to HCC.
- The Froxfield and Privett drop in morning will be held at Privett Village Hall on the next occasion. All are welcome.
- District Councillor Grant requests are now open. You are encouraged to apply.
- Ash Die back clearance on Stoner Hill. If the parish has any feedback, please provide to Hampshire County Council who are happy to receive comments and feedback.
- When canvassing, Hays Cottages residents complained to Cllr Drew about the impact of lack of parking. There could be opportunity to obtain some of the green space from EHDC to address this.
- Some land in Steep seems to have been taken outside of settlement, where it now cuts through half a property. Should the Parish Council have been notified?

23/113 **Parish Council Drop In mornings:**
The chair has proposed the Parish Council start regular drop in sessions where residents can come chat and raise any issues. This could be a lovely social event between residents and councillors and also facilitate social inclusion.

Resolved: To be pursued by Cllrs Holmes and Waley-Cohen, with support from the clerk.

ACTION: Cllrs Holmes, Waley-Cohen and Clerk

- 23/114 **Parish Priority Statements and Open Space Assessment**
Resolved: Due to workload, councillors stated there would not be enough time to complete in the set timeframe. Instead, it was suggested that we should consider the possibility of taking forward a Neighbourhood Plan. It was suggested the Clerk table this for the November meeting.
ACTION: Clerk
- 23/115 **To consider the grant application for the Parish Coronation picnic**
Councillor Paul Garstin disclosed an interest and was not included in the vote.
Resolved: Grant approved under section 137, with the cheque to be signed at this meeting.
However, it was noted that all future grant applications should be submitted at least at the parish council meeting prior to the event.
- 23/116 **Land at Church Road:**
The Chair read a letter from Wilson Designer Homes (WDH), as they had now received feedback from SDNPA regarding the proposed development of the Church Road site. SDNPA had suggested changes to the proposal contrary to advice previously received and WDH will be seeking clarity before feeding back to the Parish Council and residents.
- 23/117 **Civility Pledge**
Resolved: The council should look at what is needed to fulfil the pledge, and the HR team will progress.
ACTION: Cllrs Martin and Waley-Cohen
- 23/118 **Cyber Essentials plus GDPR and Data Protection**
As Cyber Essentials is related to GDPR/Data Protection, it was decided to discuss items 11 and 22 together.
Cllr Hollington expressed a conflict of interest.
It was noted neither councillors nor the Clerk have the required knowledge or skills to take this forward, and we should look to employ a local company who can help guide us.
Resolved: to arrange GDPR training for councillors and obtain tenders from local companies who could take us through Cyber Essentials and updating our GDPR and Data Protection policies and processes.
ACTION: Clerk
- 23/119 **Lutcombe Pond**
Item 17 was brought forward on the agenda in order for Cllr Oppenheimer to be included, as he had arranged the meeting.
The meeting between HCC, Natural England, Steep PC and Countryside Services was held on 19th May. A report was circulated by Pete Durnell (HCC Countryside Services). A slightly amended report had been agreed by Pete for inclusion in the Steep and Stroud newsletter (Appendix B). Cllr Garstin had also written a report which was circulated prior to the meeting (Appendix C).

Cllr Cook expressed his bitter disappointment that HCC will let the pond revert to a natural stream and voiced concerns to Cllr Oppenheimer that the mud and silt that works its way downstream could be contaminated. Cllr Oppenheimer stated the lime trees will be cut back to reduce leaf fall, increasing oxygenation and light, and increasing biodiversity. Natural dams (logs etc) could also be built in places.

The PC will revisit in 4 months, and Cllr Holmes will arrange for the report to go in the newsletter.
ACTION: Cllr Holmes
- 23/120 **To receive Terms of Reference**
Unfortunately, these were not ready. To be postponed for future meetings as and when they become available.
- 23/121 **To receive an update on the Facebook page**
Cllr Martin and Clerk had met and successfully solved the issues with the page. This can now be used for engagement with the community.
- 23/122 **To receive an update on the website**
The new website is fully up and running and the Clerk has admin privileges to update. Any larger changes (new pages etc) will still need to be made by the provider, but content can be updated by submitting a request to the Clerk via the Communications team.

23/123 **Parish Council precept grant to Steep Village Hall**

Resolved: As the precept is received from EHDC in two lump sums, the village hall grant will be provided in the same way. A cheque was raised in this meeting for immediate payment.

23/124 **Phase 2 Traffic management project**

Work is ongoing and we are waiting on an installation date from HCC.

23/125 **Roads and Traffic working party**

- (a) The terms of reference were not yet ready and will be provided at a subsequent meeting.
- (b) An update was provided by Cllr Holmes via email before the meeting (Appendix D)

23/126 **Steep Marsh**

- (a) Venue for October meeting

The Clerk had approached Haste re their meeting room, with no response as yet. It was noted in previous years we had needed to overspill into the outside Courtyard. This is unlikely to be possible in October. There is no other known suitable public venue.

- (b) & (c) Agree the formation of a Steep Marsh working party and appoint members

Resolved: It was decided against the formation of a working party, and councillors were reminded that all areas of the parish should be represented equally by all councillors, committees and working groups. It was agreed that Cllrs Askew and Duthie would take responsibility to be the Steep Marsh council contacts.

- (d) Receive an update on the noticeboard

The Clerk had received a telephone call from the Chair of the Steep Marsh Residents Association (SMRA) about a volunteer fixing and upgrading the current board. Although there was support for this within the council, the Clerk advised that due to the SMRA previously requesting a three part board, she had asked the SMRA to consult with members and residents to definitively agree this was no longer a requirement. The response from the SMRA is awaited. Cllrs Duthie and Askew to provide contact email addresses for the Chair of the SMRA and the volunteer.

23/127 **Finance:**

- (a) To approve the bank reconciliation for 10th May 2023

Resolved: The bank reconciliation was approved.

- (b) To approve cheques and direct debits list for May payment

Resolved: the attached check list and direct debits (Appendix E) were approved for payment.

- (c) To confirm insurance renewal and that finance team will review levels of cover

ACTION: Finance Committee to review Insurance cover

- (d) To receive a recommendation re online banking

Resolved: Due to not receiving a response from Lloyds Bank, HSBC not having suitable signatory separation, it was resolved to apply for an account with Unity Trust Bank.

ACTION: Clerk to apply

Cllr Garstin left the meeting at 9.32pm

23/128 **Swings at Hayes Cottages**

The grant application had been submitted. EHDC had subsequently requested information re all associated costs of the project, including ongoing costs to the council. Unfortunately, this could not be found before the deadline. Therefore, the Clerk regrettably had to withdraw the Council's application.

Correspondence received

- (a) Letter from member of the public re representation of Councillors across the Parish

A resident had expressed disappointment that some areas of the Parish were no longer represented on the Council (Steep Marsh, Bedales). Unfortunately, the Council has no prior knowledge of those standing for election. However, it was suggested the Council make contact with the Bedales Bursar to encourage a working relationship.

ACTION: Clerk

- (b) Parish Forum Invite: Motorbike Noise 14th July 2023 at 3pm
Councillors Martin, Waley-Cohen and Duthie would endeavour to attend.

Date of next meeting: The next meeting will be held on **Monday 3rd July 2023** at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.43pm.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO ALL PARISH COUNCILS IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS

1 JUNE 2023

1. Highways Update

The drier weather in May has meant that the Highways teams have turned a corner when it comes to getting on top of the pothole situation. By the end of June, we anticipate being back to “business as usual”. The sustained heavy rainfall from January-April this year was unprecedented; roads across the UK were negatively affected. But we need to do better in Hampshire. At HCC we recognise that man-made climate change has led to a changing climate and we need to adapt to it. We are working hard to improve resilience for next Winter and we are bringing in extra funding.

Following all that rain, the hot sunny weather is now causing a lot of rapid vegetation growth. Any issues with overgrowth can be reported on the website at this link:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/othertree>

There is a new process to request a Highways Tree. I am pleased to hear that a new tree is coming to the corner of Pulens Lane and Love Lane following an early request from a resident. Here is a link to make a request:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/tree-planting>

2. Ancestry records now available for free at Hampshire Records Office (HRO) and at all Hampshire Libraries

You may be aware that many people pay £19.99 per month to subscribe to ancestry records at Ancestry.co.uk. I am pleased to inform you that the entire ancestry database is now available for free at the Winchester HRO and at all Hampshire Libraries. This is a great opportunity to do some research into your family or any local family of interest.

Baptism, burial and marriage records spanning 400 years of history are now available. Prominent Hampshire residents featured in the collection include Florence Nightingale, Jane Austen and Thomas Lord. Dating back to the 16th century, parish records are some of the longest running records available and are some of the best resources to use when tracing family roots. This free new facility may be worthy of an item in Parish Newsletters!

3. Update on Hampshire Forest Partnership

HCC was involved in planting over 10,000 trees during the winter planting season and we are building our partnership all the time. There has been good momentum and I would like to share some key recent highlights as follows:

- Young Tree Growers Guide – HFP have commissioned The Tree Council’s Schools section to produce this guide for children and families, and schools. The guide will be broken down into approximately 40 resources which will be downloadable via a micro-website. The guide will enable children and families to enjoy seed collection, tree ID and germinating tree seeds.
- Disease-resistant elm project – Already 40 elms have been planted in the Cheriton Parish along rights of way. Another £3k worth of pot grown elms (40 trees) have been donated by the Tree Council and the

HFP has been working with the Countryside service and parishes to find homes for these trees. I am very pleased that some are going to Ropley.

- Agroforestry Guidance – The new guidance will inform farmers on the benefits of agroforestry and how it can be implemented within their farming systems. Agroforestry is the planting of trees within arable and pastoral landscapes, both systems have benefits to crops and to livestock. The trees can have a commercial benefit in addition to provision of ecosystem services.
- Tree Guardians scheme – It is increasingly difficult to provide trees with enough water due to the hot and dry summers. This scheme aims to encourage more public involvement with the tree care element of tree planting. Hampshire Forest Partnership would like to give communities the opportunity to ‘adopt’ trees to be responsible for their care and maintenance for the first few years, becoming Tree Guardians. We will provide a guide to care which will involve watering, weeding and mulching. Participants will receive little updates by email to remind them to water during dry weather periods.

If you would like to know more about any of the above, or would like to get involved in planting a mini-forest or community orchard, please email treeplanting@hants.gov.uk

4. Stoner Hill: removal of Ash Trees

We are all now aware of Ash Die Back (ADB) and, in particular, of its potential impact on the Ashford Hangers. I would like to address some of the concerns which have been raised about the removal of ash trees along the highway during the closure of Stoner Hill. Many valid points have been made. All the feedback is being carefully considered and I can reassure everyone that lessons are being learnt.

Before addressing the concerns, I would like to highlight three positives from the Ash Tree removal programme:

- It turns out that many of the Ash trees had even more advanced ADB than we realised. Many of them were soft in the middle of the trunk and inevitably would have fallen very soon. These works have therefore been timely and have quite possibly saved lives.
- The extra light now coming onto the Highway has improved visibility and will therefore have an additional positive effect on road safety.
- The sunlight will improve biodiversity on the verges of the highway over the coming years. The stunning views across the valley are also now more visible although this is perhaps not so good for road safety!

The concerns that have been raised are mostly around the messy visual impact of the works, the leaving of tree stumps, the destruction of wild garlic banks and the impact on the natural habitat. I would now like to address those points.

We acknowledge that not all trees were removed immediately. The contract had a tight timescale due to the road closure and the teams had to work in a 5.5hr window each day to get as much work done as possible. This meant that trees were cut and stacked on the road edge ready to be chipped. All trees and arisings were chipped into trailers and transported to drying houses at South East Wood Fuels and then moved onto National Trust Properties to fuel their biomass boilers. The cutting machines sometimes worked at a quicker pace than the chipping machine, and this meant that piles were sometimes left on the road edge ready for chipping the next day. All material has now been removed from site bar a very few small remnants of twigs and branches which will break down naturally and in doing so will be good for insects and fungi.

Some of the tree stumps were left higher than normal, especially on the lower slopes. This was done deliberately to maintain some structure to the bank and to give some kind of barrier should a car leave the road. Some stumps were also left higher due to machine capabilities.

We acknowledge that the bank at the hairpin bend (also known as Garlic Corner) was damaged when the machine went up it. The machine had to enter the area on the corner to access the trees on that bank. The contractor kept this incursion to a minimum to avoid unnecessary damage. They parked the machine there for two nights over the weekend as it was felt that moving the machine back up off-site would have reduced the time they were able to carry out the felling works. They then used the laybys as they moved down the road. The damaged bank area will be reinstated soon.

Some people have asked why the cutting machine was necessary at all. I would like to explain that the contractors had to use the specialist tree-felling equipment due to the nature of Ash Dieback disease. The diseased trees often break apart when felled and therefore it is not safe for operators to fell trees by hand. Across the UK there have been numerous incidents where handcutters have been injured due to this and so as a council policy we require specialist machine equipment to be used.

Finally, I will address the concerns about biodiversity impact. The County Council does not normally carry out works during bird nesting season. It is our general policy to wait until winter. However, on this occasion it was decided that the works could not wait due to the safety risk to the road and its users. Inspections of each tree were carried out before it was felled. We had the HCC ecologist onsite working ahead of the contractors, and checking each tree carefully before works commenced. You may have noticed a few trees with pink crosses on them remaining. These are trees on which the ecologist stopped work due to bat interest or birds. These trees are undergoing surveys and we will be looking to put in another 2-day closure at some point to have the last of these trees dealt with as soon as we have clearance from the ecologist. I hope that the above is helpful and I hope you will agree that the road safety benefits mean that (overall) this operation can be considered a success.

5. Chawton Flood Alleviation work: next phase

Many people will remember the winter in 2013-2014, when the A32 at Lower Farringdon, parts of Chawton, and the surrounding area were badly affected by flooding caused by a combination of rising ground and surface water. Hampshire Highways has since installed a series of flood prevention measures including ditches, drains, and soakaways, alongside other engineering work to reduce the risk of flooding. The current work is the next phase of this.

The first elements of the construction work started on Tuesday 30 May and are expected to take up to three weeks to complete. For this part of the scheme, the A32 Gosport Road at Farringdon will be closed from Woodside Lane to Kitcombe Lane. A signed diversion will be in place. The A32 will then be re-opened and the remaining works will then take place off the highway.

I am pleased to report that Hampshire Highways will complete a road resurfacing at the same time. We would like to thank residents and businesses for their patience as we undertake these essential works.

6. Parish Forum on Motorbike Noise and Speed

I will be hosting an online Parish Forum on MS Teams which will take place at 1500 on Friday 14 July. The online forum will include updates as follows:

- Update on Average Speed cameras on A32 and A272 and speed enforcement in East Hants and Winchester generally: PCC Donna Jones.
- Update on DfT Acoustic Camera trial: Damian Hinds MP
- Update on Community Funded Highways Initiative scheme; Cllr Nick Adams-King
- Update on HCC plans for reducing conflict on Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs): me.

This online forum is open to all Parish Councillors and I hope you may be able to attend. The link has hopefully been forwarded to you by your Clerks.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

DRAFT

Lutcombe Pond

On May 19 councillors attended a meeting at Lutcomb Pond, organized by Cllr Russell Oppenheimer, with representatives from the SDNPA, Natural England and HCC. The group looked at the changes taking place at Lutcombe Pond and HCC's proposed management plan.

Below is an edited version of the report submitted to the PC by HCC's Countryside Services.

The Dam

The dam has been leaking for at least 10 years and has been monitored closely by site staff for the last five. At present it appears to be in a stable condition.

Over the last five years Countryside Services have looked at options for the dam with the County Council engineers and two external contractors. All stated that due to potential future liabilities they would only be prepared to undertake repair work to the dam which involved substantial sheet piling. Estimates for this work have ranged from £80-100K.

There would be no guarantee you could obtain Natural England's consent for undertaking such work in a SSSI and SAC. It is doubtful that substantial engineered structures are suitable within the landscape of the NNR.

Silting up of the pond

Ponds created by damming the flow of a watercourse are often problematic as they effectively become 'silt traps' for any transported sediment within the water column. Lutcombe Pond has probably been silting up from the time it was first dammed. The large amount of sediment in the top two thirds of the pond is testament to this.

Any project to reinstate the pond would require the removal and disposal of a large amount of silt, which would all have to be transported off site by lorry. Any such operation would cost tens of thousands of pounds as disposal costs are now extremely high. There is no realistic chance that this would be paid for by public funds.

Such an operation within the SSSI/NNR would require consent from Natural England. As Ashford Hangers is designated as an SSI for its woodland habitats, not for the pond, it is unlikely that consent would be granted.

Future Management

After exploring a range of options, the meeting reached a consensus that a natural approach to the valley is the best way forward. The Countryside Service will allow 'natural processes' to continue at Lutcombe Pond, which will be allowed to silt up and will gradually form a wetland habitat supporting specialist plants and insects. Over time the area will resemble the wet valley floor you see above the pond supporting species such as Herb Paris, Opposite-leaved and Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage and specialist wet woodland invertebrates.



Herb Paris

The fringing growth from the Limes trees on one bank will cut back to open up the area and let more light in.

We will continue to monitor the dam, and will also look at installing debris dams on the stream below the pond to slow the flow and create some specialist habitat. Similar projects have been carried out on streams in the New Forest with encouraging results.

It was recognized that much of the concern about the pond within the local community was around a lack of communication about CS's plans for the area. The Countryside Service has agreed to install an interpretation sign on site to explain the reasons for their approach and the benefits of the policy.

Pete Durnell May 2023

Lutcombe Pond Meet 19th May 2023

Present: Russell Oppenheimer, Freddie Holmes, Jenny Martin, Paul Bushell SDNPA, Alan McVittie NE, Pete Durnell HCC & Paul Garstin.

Overview of Meeting – Paul Garstin.

The context of the meeting was provided by Peter Durnell shortly after the meeting and covered the topics, brief history of the pond and future proposed management.

You will have copies of his report - I set out my connection with the pond and surroundings, more from a public perspective as follows.

I have known the pond since the late 1980's and spent many hours – in all weathers with friends and families walking around the perimeter and slopes above.

It is also known locally as the Blue Pond – at certain times of the summer, shafts of sunlight pierce through the water and reflect upwards turning the water to a soft blue colour – it can vanish in a moment.

The pond and location is a much prized asset of Steep Village and has connections to Edward Thomas as the link below by Fran Box

History of Steep - <https://historyofsteep.co.uk/portfolio/lutcombe-cottage/>

In the late 1990's, I recall HCC were erecting safety rails around the pond and beside steps – this proved to be unpopular by locals who thought they were an intrusion into the natural lie of the land. Over time, some became unstable and collapsed - nature reclaimed the remainder. At this time, the pond had a robust flow and discharged over into the stream below – this stopped some 10 years back and the leak has steadily become greater.

I think we have all missed the water cascading over the dam and believed the pond was falling into disrepair. Listening to Peter Durnell, I could see the pond with new eyes and understand that we were watching nature slowly reclaiming the land enabling new plant species and insects to thrive.

It would certainly help if the lime trees could be trimmed back to open more of the pond to provide a larger expanse of water, I am not entirely sure of the pond becoming a wetland with soft mud with potential hazards, but this would take many years to evolve.

Freddie suggested a notice board could be erected to inform the public of the long term plan – potentially on the bank on the south east side. The Countryside Service have agreed to provide such as an Interpretation sign - I believe this would be right approach and will reassure the locals and tourists for the immediate future of the pond.

**ROADS AND TRAFFIC UPDATE
JUNE 2023 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

- Elmwood Lane flooding: Highways are waiting for a road closure order before they can schedule ditch clearance
- Ashford Lane flooding: this has now been elevated from maintenance to Operation Resilience, who deal with major engineering works. They work on a 2-3 year schedule of planned works, so if any engineering solution can be found it will not be a quick fix. In the meantime, we simply have to keep reporting the flooding as it occurs. Highways have agreed to suck out silt collecting in the drain under the road rather than jet it through leading to more build up in the ponds at Old Ashford Manor. I have encouraged Simon Bridger to discuss the desilting of the ponds there with the owners, and Highways will make a contribution to costs, but this is essentially a private matter and not one which the PC can have any direct input into.
- Church Road/Restalls: Highways have agreed to replace missing chevron signs on the bend at the E end of Church Road.
- Steep Marsh speeds: after quite a bit of discussion re possible speed checks with SpeedWatch team and landowner, it has emerged that as there are no restrictions on speeds in the Marsh, the SpeedWatch team are unable to operate there. They can legally only operate where there is a speed restriction in place.
- Potholes: I have reported potholes in Mill Lane, Ashford Lane, Ridge Common Lane online. In two cases, I received responses that they had been inspected and did not need attention at the moment! Russell O's report also addresses issues with potholes across the county and where Highways are in catching up on the backlog.
- Overgrown hedging: I have reported Soal Farm hedging online.
- Stoner Hill: see Russell Oppenheimer's report on ASD works.

Please can I encourage all councillors to report potholes, missing or damaged signs, and hedging online as the more reports HCC receive the more likely they are to do anything about it.

Cheques -June 2023			
Chq No.	Amount	Payee	Service
100524	£660.00	Hart Landscaping and Tree Services Limited	Lengthsman Services (other parishes)
100525	£168.00	Petersfield Town Council	New councillor training
100526	£783.33	Dawn Rodgers	Clerk Salary and Lengthsman Admin
100527	£34.05	Dawn Rodgers	Office supplies expenditure
100528	£333.41	Stroud Parish Council	Stroud PC's half of SpeedWatch kit
100529	£591.71	Arthur J. Gallagher Insurance	Parish Council annual insurance policy (Hiscox)
100530	£196.95	Selina Garstin	Grant reimbursement of costs for Parish Coronation picnic
100531	£2,500.00	Steep Village Hall	Payment of precept grant
Subtotal	£5,267.45		
Direct Debits - June 2023			
Invoice	Amount	Payee	Service
INV-IIS0003196	£77.52	Inspired Information Services Limited	Email, Office 365 licenses, Virtual Phone number, etc
Subtotal	£77.52		
TOTAL	£5,344.97		

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