

# Highnam Parish Council

## Highnam ~ Linton ~ Over ~ Lassington



**Minutes of a Highnam Planning Committee Meeting**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025**  
**held at 7.00pm, Parish Office, The Old School Highnam**

**Present:** Cllr Charlie Coats Chair  
Cllr Russ Bailey  
Cllr Bill Badham  
Cllr Nick Cook

**In Attendance:** **1 Member of public**  
Wendy Barnard Clerk/RFO

### **Public Questions:**

**There is a vehicle parked on the central reservation on the Over roundabout, this is illegal as it has no license to be there, can anything be done to have it removed?**

*This is not Parish council responsibility to have it removed but Highways as it is on their land, they have in previous years been made aware of it.*

1. To receive apologies for absence  
Cllr Jill Smith
2. Members of the committee are invited to declare any interest they may have in the business set out below.  
There were none
3. To consider and agree any dispensations.  
N/A
4. To agree the minutes of the last meeting 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025  
Agreed & Signed
5. **Planning – To discuss FODDC Churcham settlement response & actions after cross parish meeting**  
A cross parish meeting was held to discuss a joint response to the Forest of Dean Local Plan consultation, specifically the proposals for new housing settlements.
  - Proposed Settlements:
    - Beachley Bks This site has been withdrawn as the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has decided to retain its land due to ongoing military needs.
    - Redmarley: A proposed settlement for 3,000 houses (approx. 7,500 people).
    - Churcham: A proposed settlement for 3,000 houses (approx. 7,500 people).
  - Both Redmarley and Churcham sites are likely to come forward as real prospects, despite the long gestation period of the local plan process. The overall housing target for

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the Forest of Dean area is 28,000 houses by 2041, with an extra 13,000 needed in addition to previous plans.

- Concerns Raised:
  - Economic Impact: Building new settlements on the northern extremity of the district would draw economic activity (employment, retail) towards Gloucester, potentially "sucking the lifeblood" out of existing district towns like Lydney, Coleford, Cinderford, and Newent.
  - Infrastructure: Major concerns regarding road congestion and traffic infrastructure were highlighted. This points to the need for a "mega upgrade" of highway infrastructure, possibly including an additional Severn crossing between Minsterworth and Quedgeley.
  - Environmental Impact: General concerns about flooding and environmental impacts were also noted.
- Strategic Local Plan (Gloucester and Cheltenham): This plan is also out for consultation and identifies Highnam as a "service village," suggesting it is ripe for further development (up to 955 houses identified in one plan). This could add pressure for a potential 6,000-house settlement in Highnam (approx. 15,000 people), requiring a full range of new infrastructure (schools, retail, community facilities).
- Maisemore Parish Council is reportedly in favour of the developments, which could undermine the case of the other opposing councils.

### Action Points:

- Engage Consultant: It was agreed to jointly engage a consultant to work on a collective response. Cllr Coats has approached "Savills" (a large, worldwide property consultancy) for "critical friend" advice.
- Next Meeting: A follow-up meeting is scheduled for mid-January to discuss the likely costs of the consultant and how to share them.
- Engage Planning Consultant for Strategic Plan: It was suggested engaging David Crofts, the retained planning consultant, to review the separate Gloucester/Cheltenham Strategic Local Plan and provide pointers for the parishes' response.

## 6. To discuss Tipping & Burning updates from recent media contacts

### Update

#### Media Involvement & Public Awareness:

- An individual was interviewed by BBC Point West regarding the illegal tipping site.
- The BBC team also met with residents from Rudford and is conducting research using their BBC Verify team.
- Interest has been generated in other villages in Worcestershire and Oxfordshire, suggesting a wider regional issue with the same landowner.

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### Enforcement & Official Actions:

- Councillor Paul McLain is liaising with Nick Bryant at the Borough Council.
- Rudford residents reported that the Forest of Dean planning enforcement team has served enforcement proceedings on the operator/landowner

### Formal Correspondence:

- A formal letter of complaint has been drafted and is pending circulation.
  - The letter will be sent to key authorities: the Chair of the Environment Agency, Chief Executives of the relevant councils (Borough and County), the Secretary of State for DEFRA, Mary Craig (Minister of State for Pollution at DEFRA), and the Public Ombudsman.
7. **To discuss actions to be taken regarding 111 Maidenhall reference the re planting of a tree**

A mature tree was removed from a grass verge as part of a drop-kerb application to create a larger centralised driveway for a private property.

The approval from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Highways stipulated that the tree must be "relocated" (implying a replacement planting) once the works were completed.

The driveway works were completed months ago, but the replacement tree has not been planted. It is suspected that Highways has not yet formally signed off on the work.

The clerk will contact GCC Highways (James Boone/Max Kelly's team) to confirm whether the works have been signed off.

**Action:** Liaise with the Borough planners to enforce the original planning condition requiring the property owner to plant a new tree. The planning permission remains technically unsigned until this condition is met.

### 8. Environment

- i. **To validate any group that will be working on behalf of the PC (Parish Council), now there is no EWG (environment working group)**

The original volunteer-based Environment Working Group has been formally disbanded. This group previously implemented the first five-year plan through volunteer effort, planting, clearing, and weeding.

The new Environment Management Plan (covering January 2026 to December 2030) has been drafted, but currently has no dedicated working group to execute it.

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Several former members of the original working group are part of a separate, independent entity called "Wild Highnam."

"Wild Highnam" operates separately from the Parish Council, is self-funding and uses its own equipment and volunteer manpower.

The group manages John's Wood, focusing on clearing brambles in specific areas to create accessible walkways (e.g., a "bluebell walk") while leaving other areas wild for habitat preservation (deer, badgers, rodents, etc.). They have four events planned in the next 12 months, including a bird watch on January 16th.

It was recognised that Cllr Badham was leading the environment team and relied upon the volunteer help of "Wild Highnam". The Environment Management plan would be followed by the team of volunteers.

### ii. To discuss the purchase of items requested by Cllr Badham (Hivis Vests, Rigger gloves, Secateurs)

The need for basic equipment for "Wild Highnam" and other volunteers was discussed, as existing gear is wearing out.

Required items include high-visibility jackets/vests (branded as "Volunteer" or similar), heavy-duty gloves, and secateurs.

**Action:** Bill is requested to obtain specific quotes for these items (e.g., five pairs of gloves, four sets of secateurs, high-vis vests) for formal submission to the Parish Council for budget approval.

The topic of providing refreshments (e.g., crisps and drinks) for volunteers during work sessions (like the bramble clearing) was debated. A consensus was reached that while the work is valuable, providing refreshments might be seen as excessive administrative detail for the committee.

The group agreed that the most important form of support is recognition of the volunteers' time and effort.

The idea of a "Villager of the Year" award (which could include groups or teams of people) was proposed as a formal method of recognition.

### iii. To discuss the Environment plan that was submitted to PC (to follow)

The committee members reviewed the new plan, finding it well-written, relevant, and comprehensive.

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The group will recommend at the January Parish Council meeting that the new Environment Management Plan be adopted in principle as a guiding document for the next five years (January 2026 – December 2030).

**Funding Caveat:** The plan is not costed. Adoption is subject to the understanding that any project within the plan will require a separate, individual funding request to the Parish Council, dependent on funding availability at that time.

**Scope Limitation:** Only projects explicitly included in the adopted plan will be considered for funding, unless the plan is formally reviewed and amended at a later date.

**Meeting closed at 8.23pm**

**Next meeting date 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025 @7.30pm**

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