

MINUTES OF THE URGENCY MEETING OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 5th August 2026 at 7.30 pm in the Lilac Room, The Village Hall

Thom Rhodes, Clerk and Proper Officer

DRAFT MINUTES**Members Present:**

Cllr. Matthew Barker (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Cllr. Jo George

Cllr. John Dunsdon

Cllr. Angela Dowley

Cllr. Paul Lishman

Cllr. Peter Almgill

Cllr. Thomas Ashby (Oxfordshire County)

Cllr. Liam Mackenzie (West Oxfordshire District)

Also in Attendance:

Thom Rhodes (Clerk and RFO)

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. David Duthie (Chair), Cllr. John Smyth, and Cllr. Sarah Varnom.

Public Participation

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to address the Council. No members of the public were present.

98.26 Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st July 2026 were proposed by Cllr. George and seconded by Cllr. Barker, and were approved as a correct record.

99.26 County and District Council Matters**County Councillor Report - Cllr. Thomas Ashby**

Cllr. Ashby presented his report (circulated). The re-opening of the Botley Road has been delayed until Sunday 20th September 2026 following the discovery by SGN of three gas leaks; consequently, Oxfordshire County Council has delayed the implementation of the Oxford traffic filters (a new start date, originally 14th September, is to be confirmed).

The Witney High Street improvement scheme continues: Phase 1 (west side of the High Street and Market Square) is almost complete, and Phase 2 (east side) is commencing, including a new zebra crossing on Welch Way outside NatWest. ANPR cameras will be installed as part of the works.

A415 Speed Limit Consultation: the County Council is consulting on a proposed 50 mph limit from the Ducklington roundabout to Cokethorpe and 40 mph between Cokethorpe and Standlake. Members were broadly supportive of the 50 mph proposal but sceptical of the 40 mph section, which several considered too low; concerns were also raised about speeding and dangerous driving near the bends, car-boot-sale traffic, and the Aston Road junction. It was agreed to gather members' views and place a formal response to the consultation on the next agenda.

Action: *Clerk to add the A415 speed limit consultation to the September agenda for the Council to agree a formal response. (Clerk)*

District Councillor Report - Cllr. Liam Mackenzie

Cllr. Mackenzie presented his report (circulated). Land East of Witney Road (The Moors) (24/02878/RES): on 30th July 2026 the Environment Agency submitted its latest statement and has maintained its objection, as the developer failed to provide up-to-date modelling files within the required period. WODC will re-consult the Environment Agency once the new files are available. Members noted that the reserved matters application is approaching the three-year mark (January 2027) and agreed to maintain a watching brief.

Local Plan 2043: Cllr. Mackenzie reported that, through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, he has recommended that the Local Plan explicitly state that new housing developments must not surround the Witney Sewage Treatment Works, so as not to prevent future upgrades. The infrastructure delivery plan has not yet been released; without it he is not yet willing to fully support the Local Plan. A new development (referred to as the "New Village"), comparable in size to Ducklington with an initial 700-800 houses, is proposed opposite the sewage works. Public consultation on the latest Local Plan is expected to open in August 2026.

Planning process changes: from 31st October 2026 the Government is restricting district councils' planning functions for smaller developments, and the Secretary of State will have authority to review larger developments to speed up housing delivery.

Leisure and Tourism: Cllr. Mackenzie will attend a September Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting with GLL (Better) and invited members to forward any questions for the leisure/sports contractor.

Action: *Members to forward any questions for GLL (Better) to Cllr. Mackenzie ahead of the September Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. (All Members)*

Standlake Road

It was noted that the site on Standlake Road was approved subject to legal agreements on 29th January 2026 and awaits a reserved matters application.

Conservation Area

Feedback received on proposed improvements was positive; it was noted that, as the site is within the Conservation Area, the proposals will be subject to the appropriate scrutiny.

100.26 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items on the agenda.

101.26 Planning

101.1 Manor Farm, 1 Witney Road, Ducklington - 26/01552/HHD (Householder)

Repair and refurbishment works including replacement French doors, roof lights to the dwelling and garage, and changing the existing garage doors to glazed doors with timber screening. Applicant: Ms Jennie Bishop. The application is within the Ducklington Conservation Area; comment deadline 10th August 2026.

101.2 Manor Farm, 1 Witney Road, Ducklington - 26/01553/LBC (Listed Building Consent)

Internal and external alterations including new conservation rooflights to the modern garage, relaying the existing stone floor, a replacement internal staircase, and new fenestration.

Members considered both applications and raised no objection, noting that the Conservation Area status will ensure appropriate scrutiny.

102.26 New Business (Urgency Items)

102.1 Road Closure - Apple Pressing Event (11th October 2026)

The Council considered the road closure application for the Apple Pressing event on 11th October 2026, which needed to be progressed before the September meeting to allow sufficient time. Cllr. Barker agreed to submit the application, with Cllr. George's name on it. Payment for the road closure will be met from the Village Events Fund.

Resolved: The road closure application for the Apple Pressing event on 11th October 2026 was approved, to be submitted by the Clerk on behalf of Cllr. Barker with Cllr. George named on the application, funded from the Events Fund.

Action: *Clerk to prepare and submit the road closure application for the Apple Pressing event, with Cllr. George's name as contact. (Clerk)*

102.2 Hedge Cutting - Landowner / Countrywide Highways

It was noted that last year the landowner of the Moors cut both the hedge and the verge along the path, but this year the path/hedge has not been cut and weeds, brambles and nettles are affecting its use. The Clerk has identified the landowner's contact details but the historical responsibility (landowner or Highways) is unclear. Cllr. Ashby offered to contact the Public Rights of Way team once the Clerk emails him the details.

Action: *Clerk to confirm the hedge/path maintenance responsibility (landowner or Highways) and to email Cllr. Ashby the details; Cllr. Ashby to contact the Public Rights of Way team. (Clerk / Cllr. Ashby)*

102.3 Grass Cutting - The Moors & Witney Road / Chalcroft Close Field

Members discussed the ongoing grass-cutting arrangements for the Moors and the field behind Witney Road / Chalcroft Close.

102.4 Grass Cutting Contract - Backdated Payment & Revised Rate (D&S Garden Services)

The Council considered the backdated payment and revised rate agreed with D&S Garden Services pending a new tender. It was agreed to approve the backdated payment and the interim increased rate while the contract is re-tendered in December. The Clerk will circulate the full grass-cutting layout for members' review before the re-tender.

Resolved: The backdated payment and revised interim rate to D&S Garden Services were approved, pending a new tender in December 2026.

Action: *Clerk to circulate the full grass-cutting layout to members by 31st August 2026 for review ahead of the December tender. (Clerk)*

Triangle Vegetation: Cllr. George reported rapid growth of false acacia at The Triangle. She was authorised to spend up to £20 on stump killer to treat it.

Resolved: Expenditure of up to £20 for stump killer to treat the false acacia at the triangle was approved.

102.5 Ashes Scattering (Strewing) Policy - In-Principle

Following multiple resident requests to scatter ashes atop graves, which is contrary to current policy, a compromise of “strewing” was proposed (lifting the turf, placing the ashes beneath, and replacing the turf). Members agreed in principle that the burial regulations may be amended to allow strewing at existing graves - by funeral directors only - subject to Council approval, a fee, and record-keeping. The Clerk will draft a formal policy; three pending requests will proceed.

Resolved: The Council agreed in principle to permit the strewing of ashes at existing graves, subject to a formal policy (fee and record-keeping), to be drafted by the Clerk.

Action: *Clerk to draft and circulate a strewing policy for approval; the three pending requests to proceed on agreement. (Clerk)*

102.6 Playground Safety Surface Repair - Slide Area

The temporary sand fix beneath the slide is being lost. Members approved the purchase of a compliant wet-pour (granular rubber) repair kit and its professional installation by a local handyman, at a total cost of £160, with completion targeted for about a week after the materials arrive. It was further noted that Hags will inspect the playground, re-quote for new equipment and advise on currently available items, and that the RoSPA report has been received and will be recirculated.

Resolved: Expenditure of £160 for the wet-pour rubber repair kit and professional installation of the slide safety surfacing was approved.

Action: *Clerk to arrange the slide repair, obtain playground equipment quotes from Hags (including the large swings), and recirculate the RoSPA report. (Clerk)*

Large Swings

It was noted that the A-frame poles at the top of the large swings at Glebelands are loose and clank, and require attention. The Clerk will request repair quotes.

Action: *Clerk to obtain repair quotes for the loose A-frame poles on the large swings at Glebelands. (Clerk)*

102.7 Art Trail Leaflet - Printing Quotes (instantprint)

Members reviewed the printing quotes from instantprint for the Art Trail leaflet (4 working-day turnaround, VAT-inclusive, free delivery). It was resolved to approve the printing of 500 copies at £73.34. As instantprint will not accept BACS for orders below £500, the Clerk will place and pay for the order and be reimbursed as an expense (invoice to follow).

Resolved: The printing of 500 Art Trail leaflets with instantprint at £73.34 was approved, to be paid by the Clerk and reimbursed as an expense.

Litter Picking

It was also agreed to write to a new volunteer (I.M.; GDPR) to congratulate her, and that Julie (litter picker) is authorised to sign off the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award assessment form for her help with litter-picking; the Clerk to provide a supporting letter. The Council would like to extend their thanks to Julie and her husband for their continued efforts; alongside the new volunteer (I.M.; GDDPR).

Action: Clerk to order 500 Art Trail leaflets at £73.34; authorise Julie to complete volunteer DofE assessment form and provide a supporting/congratulatory letter. (Clerk)

103.26 Finance

103.1 Account Balances / Bank Reconciliation / Debts

The Clerk reported that the invoicing and payment system is now fully automated through Scribe workflows, which should reduce cemetery administration time. A reconciliation discrepancy was identified between the Clerk's figures and Scribe; this has been raised with Scribe for support, and the financial documents will be circulated securely to members. The historic debts remain on track to be settled by September 2026. It was confirmed that a review of the cemetery burial fees will be undertaken in September, following comments from funeral directors that the current fees are significantly lower than elsewhere.

Action: Clerk to resolve the Scribe reconciliation discrepancy and circulate secure financial reports; cemetery burial fees to be reviewed in September. (Clerk)

103.2 Invoices for Payment - Payments Schedule

The payments schedule circulated with the briefing pack was reviewed and approved as presented, including the conditional items (the playground surfacing at item 102.6, the Thames Water application/design fees, the SLCC FILCA and ILCA course fees on remittance, and the Art Trail leaflet reimbursement).

Supplier	Description	Invoice No.	Date
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Starboard Systems Ltd	Scribe cemetery & allotments monthly subscription	INV-20565	15/08/2026
Starboard Systems Ltd	Scribe Accounts annual renewal	INV-17849	Overdue (30/06/2026)
D&S Garden Services	Churchyard grass & hedge cutting	SI-1609	04/08/2026
D&S Garden Services	Sand for slide matting (interim repair)	SI-1608	04/08/2026
Parish Online	Mapping software subscription (30% OALC discount)	38UF027-0009	07/08/2026
Magic Smoke Design (Vic Powles)	Sensory Garden plant labels (x29)	1273	26/07/2026
Magic Smoke Design (Vic Powles)	Art Trail QR code labels (x7)	1274	26/07/2026
Broadsword Security	CCTV contract call-out (22/07)	1086997	24/07/2026
M. Everett Tree & Garden Services	Peel Close - sycamore reduction & planning application	7244	18/05/2026
Cllr M. Barker (Expense)	Timber for sensory garden (Travis Perkins; payable M< Barker)	07A45110	21/07/2026
Playsafety Ltd	Annual play area inspection (Glebelands & Chalcroft)	100251	16/08/2026
Castle Water	Allotments water supply (total due, incl. £8.82 b/f)	10010718349	09/07/2026
Thames Water	Water connection application & design fees - Sensory Garden (total £420 incl. VAT)	DS2041700	-
SLCC	FILCA course fee (previously agreed)	-	On remittance
SLCC	ILCA course fee (previously agreed)	-	On remittance
Playground Slide Surfacing	Wet pour rubber repair kit & professional installation - if approved at item 102.6	-	Aug 2026
Thom Rhodes (Clerk - expense)	Art Trail leaflet printing (instantprint) - reimbursement; amount per quantity agreed at item 102.7	Invoice to follow	Aug 2026
Thom Rhodes	Clerk's salary (August 2026)	Payslip	06/08/2026

Resolved: The payments schedule was approved as presented in the briefing pack.

Solar Farm Fund

The Clerk is continuing to chase the Solar Farm Fund payment (approximately £53,000), due within 28 days of connection. Clerk has requested the connection date (if already connected; or awaiting).

Action: Clerk to follow up the Solar Farm Fund payment. (Clerk)

104.26 Closing Comments from Members of the Public

No members of the public were present.

105.26 Closing Comments from the Chair

The Chair noted the following matters:

Art Trail: the Ducklington Art Trail launch date has changed to Sunday 20th September 2026 (previously 19th September). Members are encouraged to support the event.

Newsletter: Cllr. Lishman will submit an invoice for newsletter printing, to be paid in September. The next newsletter deadline is 11th September 2026. Feedback included making the front page more colourful with a stronger image. It was noted that the regular printer had not been informed of the printing changes; an apology will be made and she will continue to be used for future calendar printing.

Pond: the pond water level is affected by weather conditions. After discussion, Members concluded that asking the fire brigade to fill it (as in a 2017 training exercise) would not provide a long-term solution.

EV Microhubs: the project appears to be progressing - the Council awaits formal location confirmation from Connected Kerb; Clerk notes that the changes requested by the council appear to be well received.

Over-Sixties Club: a positive email and receipt (grant) were received from the club and noted with thanks.

FCC Environment: Penny Horne from FCC confirmed by email that it is very unlikely any grants from Dix Pit will be available again, but she will review every six months. (Cllr. Jo George)

Action: *Cllr. Lishman to send the newsletter printing invoice to the Clerk; Clerk to follow up with Charlene and update members on the EV Microhub location confirmation. (Cllr. Lishman / Clerk)*

106.26 Meeting Close Time

The meeting closed at 8.27 pm.

107.26 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Ducklington Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 2nd September 2026. Cllr. Matthew Barker gave his apologies in advance for that meeting.

Signed: Date:

CLERK'S NOTE - POST-MEETING UPDATE (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

The following update was received after the meeting and does not form part of the minuted record of the meeting held on 5th August 2026. It is recorded here for information only and will be reported to the Council at its next meeting.

Received from Cllr. Thomas Ashby (Oxfordshire County Council) by email on 6th August 2026.

Botley Road / Oxford City Traffic Filters

Following the news that the Botley Road will re-open on 20th September 2026, Oxfordshire County Council has announced that the Oxford City Traffic Filter Scheme will commence on Monday 28th September 2026.

The traffic filters will operate in a similar way to the congestion charge. All six filters will be in the same locations as the current congestion charge, with a permit system in place. A key difference is that car drivers will no longer pay a £5 charge if they pass through the filters or run out of their allocated passes. With the Botley Road open, drivers will be able to access the Westgate Centre without needing to enter a traffic filter.

Further information is available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxford-traffic-filters/about-traffic-filters>

Recorded by: Thom Rhodes, Clerk and Proper Officer, Ducklington Parish Council.