

BERWICK ST JAMES

MINUTES OF VILLAGE MEETING

DATE:	Thursday 22 nd January 2026 at The Reading Room from 7pm
IN ATTENDANCE:	Christian Lange – Stand-in Chair for the Meeting Bill Hiscocks – Treasurer Carolyn MacDougall – Secretary/Clerk
APOLOGIES:	Julian Glyn-Owen, Sarah and Toby Humphreys, Greville Bibby, Gail and Keith Lovett, Mike and Helen Riding, Mary Cochrane.
No. ATTENDING:	32

ITEM	ACTION
1. STAND-IN CHAIR – Bill Hiscocks Bill Hiscocks informed the attendees that with regret Julian Glyn-Owen was unable to Chair the Village Meeting due to illness. Following Government rules re Parish Meeting villages, a vote was required to approve Christian Lange as Chair for the meeting. Those who reside in the Parish of Berwick St James and who are also currently on our parish electoral roll list are eligible to cast votes. Bill Hiscocks proposed the motion and all approved.	
2. WELCOME – Christian Lange Christian Lange opened the meeting with introducing the guest speakers, David Bullock and Chris Hilldrup. He also welcomed newcomers to Berwick St James: Milly Night, Sally and Rob Page.	
3. PRECEPT – Bill Hiscocks Bill Hiscocks explained that there are a few formal annual prerequisites for our village, which are constituted under the laws of the land. The Precept is one of these. Each year we have to present a Precept to Wiltshire Council for them to pay the village a lump sum which is reflected in everyone's Council Tax bands. The amount currently in the Precept is £4,234 but approximately £500 is still to be spent. Last year the figure at April 2025 was £3,439, so it will be almost the same as this year. As of January 2026 the Community Fund stands at £2,020. 2026 Precept: It was proposed that we keep the Precept this year at £2K. This figure has not changed for over 10 years. All attendees voted in favour.	BH
4. LOCAL ROAD NETWORKS – Guest Speakers We were pleased to welcome two key players within our local road networks, to come and share information with us and to address some of our concerns. David Bullock , Interim Director Highways & Transport (Head of Major Highways Projects) for Wiltshire Council. Significantly, David Bullock was the Project Director for National Highways on the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down road scheme. Chris Hilldrup , National Highways Route Manager for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Government Cancellation of the A303 Project First topic of discussion was the cancellation of the above A303 project. National Highways, and in particular David Bullock and his team, together with many of our local communities were extremely disappointed with the decision made by the Government in July 2024 to cancel the project. The scheme would have solved the problems of congestion and rat running while opening up a green space for all to enjoy. The project had, at that stage, successfully overcome all the legal hurdles and work was given the go ahead.	

Questions were asked as to whether the plans already in place could not be used in the future under a different Government. Chris Hilldrup explained that this would only be possible if there was a long-term cross-party appetite and endorsement for such a project. Road infrastructures of this kind take years in the planning and much legality to address so inevitably it could cover more than one sitting party.

The Development Consent Order (DCO)

The Department for Transport (DfT) is currently reviewing the proposal to revoke the DCO. By revoking the DCO, all plans, research and taxpayers money already spent - £180M – would be totally wasted. This would include any other plans that were part of this consent, for example the Winterbourne Stoke bypass. Questions were asked as to what advantages would be achieved by the Government by revoking the DCO. David Bullock explained that when a DCO is revoked it would remove the planning powers of compulsory acquisition granted to the developers – i.e. allowing landowners to regain control over their land and or property. He also pointed out that any road developments must begin within a set period and if this is not met the consent expires naturally. Typically, in complex infrastructures like the A303, this could mean a period of just two years.

Working Within Constraints

They informed us that the local authorities, including National Highways (and our MP Danny Kruger), will continue to pursue solutions with the DfT but there is no apparent appetite in central government to address solutions for the A303 and no funds available.

Small Local Projects

There is currently a study being conducted into ‘small’ priority work schemes listed by Wiltshire Council and National Highways. These 5-6 projects were listed as: *Allington Track* (the slip road from Amesbury that joins A303) to be improved/removed; the *Countess roundabout* underpass at Amesbury to have an early warning system installed to pre-empt any flooding; *Longbarrow roundabout* to be redesigned for better road management (apparently never built as a permanent design!); and for *Winterbourne Stoke* a) address solution of current speed limits – speed cameras - and some new road markings b) introduction of additional pavements and c) safety improvements for the bus stop. The acceptability of any of these business case studies will be announced shortly but they would not be implemented until 2031.

Some other Questions Raised by Residents:

Why can’t the Winterbourne Stoke bypass be considered separately? David Bullock outlined that there would never be a scheme acceptable that would go ahead without incorporating the Stonehenge issue at the same time. A bypass would cost many tens of £millions and these funds would have to come from central government funding. Other questions raised covered areas such as why can’t some form of screening along the stones be a solution to alleviate gridlock. We were told that some of these constraints were due to the fact that Stonehenge is a World Heritage site, backed by UNESCO, which has restrictions and therefore not a straightforward solution. Another resident felt that the parties involved were not being robust enough in their efforts to push forward with solutions with the World Heritage site. Another point raised was why a dual carriageway couldn’t be introduced – the reason given was that it would mean the need to excavate an area where most of the archaeological remains exist – the tunnel scheme avoided this to a much greater degree. David Bullock stressed that over decades, more than 6 possible alternative routes were researched and reviewed in-depth together with other possible solutions.

The open forum discussion ended and a round of applause for our Guest Speakers before they departed.

Janey Campbell-Johnson thanked Carolyn MacDougall for all her efforts.

Note added post-Meeting by Carolyn MacDougall to accompany the Minutes

The Reality Check for Berwick St James

With the A303 scheme cancelled and with no central government funding available for the foreseeable future – not even for a Winterbourne bypass or a plan B in place - it is with utter bewilderment that we are faced with the harsh fact that the traffic issues afflicting our local communities will remain ‘unresolved’. Berwick St James, in conjunction with other local communities, will continue to have open discussions with key players and push for more robust action in their dialogue with central government. We have to be realistic in what we in Berwick can achieve if anything.

CM

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST VILLAGE MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING –

Christian Lange

Three items were carried forward to this Meeting:

- a) Cherry tree is unstable and needs attention – Julian Glyn-Owen contacted the family concerned and a new tree has been planted as replacement.
- b) Neil MacDougall had asked for the Lime tree on the bank by the barn to have a tree preservation order placed on it. – No action had been taken and this will be carried forward to the next Village Meeting.
- c) Planting of more daffodils – These have been done.

JGO

Minutes of the previous Village Meeting were agreed to be a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed by Bill Hiscocks and seconded by Olivia Marchant.

6. SOCIAL FUNDRAISING EVENT – Christian Lange

Christian Lange put forward an idea for this year's fundraising 'fun' event. The original thought was to have a larger cider-making event followed by a barn dance. We are too late this year to do both but a barn dance is on the cards. Due to Christian Lange erecting one of his large tents up at the Cricket Club grounds for his son's birthday, he has offered to put it in place a week earlier so that the village can take advantage of it.

These are the ideas so far:

- a) Date: Saturday 8th August 2026 from round 6pm
- b) Location: Cricket Club grounds (agreed by Streets and Cricket Club)
- c) Nature: Barn Dance
- d) A private party for village, family and friends – restriction on numbers to be discussed
- e) Entrance fee to be discussed to raise funds and pay for entertainment, etc.
- f) BBQ and bar to be organised and run by the Cricket Club members to raise funds for CC
- g) Further food and drink options to be discussed
- h) Hire one or two ceilidh type bands and caller. Finish with a DJ?
- i) Offered free by All the Kit: tent, sound system, lighting, stage, dance floor and some furniture
- j) Overheads: hire of bands, portaloos and generator
- k) The need for volunteers to come together for more ideas and to help organise the event.

Carolyn MacDougall to send out email to the village.

CL

CM

CL

The idea was warmly received and approved.

Christian expressed the need to secure funds for deposits needed for hiring of the bands, portaloos, etc. and requested the Village to agree the sum of £499 up-front. A vote was proposed by Christian Lange and seconded by Ian Gibb.

7. VILLAGE CHAIR VANCANCY – Christian Lange

Christian Lange reminded everyone that there is still no official replacement for Julian Glyn-Owen's position as Chair for Berwick St James. Christian Lange highlighted that we could consider a co-Chair or deputy-Chair framework thereby spreading the workload. Carolyn MacDougall has already taken on a lot of the administration work. Bill Hiscocks informed that without a Chair in place we might be forced to amalgamate with another Parish, which was not desirable. Carolyn MacDougall added that we would have to seek advice from Wiltshire Council on the matter.

ALL

8. CLOSING STATEMENT – Christian Lange

Any other business not covered by today's Village Meeting will be carried over to the next Village Meeting.

Christian Lange received a round of applause for running a great meeting.

The Village Meeting ended at 2010 and everyone invited to wine and chat.