

**MELLS PARISH COUNCIL**  
**mellsparishcouncil.org.uk**

A meeting of Mells Parish Council took place on Tuesday 17 January 2012 at Mells Barn.

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1. **PRESENT:** Ms A Blanche-Martin, Mr E Costelloe (Chairman), Mrs M Jennings, Mr P Lowth, Mrs J Mann, the Countess of Oxford & Asquith, Mr C Tye, Ms R Wallace (Vice Chair), Mr S West and Miss H Wynter.

The Clerk was in attendance. The County and District Councillors, 34 residents and Ms Caroline Wood, *Somerset Standard*, were also present.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Mr V Turner.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Jane Mann declared an interest in Item 8(c), Clare Oxford, Jane Mann, Abi Blanche-Martin, Peter Lowth, and Chris Tye declared an interest in Item 11.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING** held on 6 December 2011 had been circulated. It was resolved that the minutes be adopted. The minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

5. **MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING** held on 11 January 2012 had been circulated. It was resolved that the minutes be adopted. The minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

6. **REPORT FROM SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

Cllr Matthew Ellis advised that the County Council was making funding available on safety grounds for schemes to improve pavements and footpaths in order to encourage walking rather than car journeys. Residents with suggestions to inform the Clerk who would pass them on to Cllr Ellis.

Somerset County Council was reviewing its policy on speed indicator devices to allow parishes to site them on SCC land while increasing funding for their purchase.

7. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a) **Police Community Support Officer's Steering Committee:** PCSO's report for December noted.
- b) **Quarry Liaison Committee/Site access to Halecombe Quarry:** Steve West had suggested liaison between quarry companies to monitor crucial water levels. SCC to be asked for its help. Steve West had met with County Roads who had agreed to cut back trees on the left of the Halecombe Quarry entrance, replace centre warning/edge of carriage lines and install new warning signs and SLOW markings.
- c) **Bilboa Mells/30mph sign:** Damaged sign had been replaced.

- d) **Dangerous parking/speeding issues:** Jane Mann had produced a leaflet and was considering ways of distribution. The Clerk had reminded the PCSO of the order for 30 mph stickers and would do so again.
- e) **Applicants for parish footpath cutting:** No applicants had come forward as a result of a notice in the parish magazine; the Clerk had written to the two existing applicants with a schedule of work requesting a quotation.
- f) **How to respond to Planning Applications booklet:** Copies of the booklet were distributed to parish councillors.
- g) **Broken stone on war memorial/estate wall opposite Bridge Cottage:** Repairs had been carried out.
- h) **Recreation Ground:** The Chairman reported that the board of the new company had had its first meeting and would be asking the Estate to assign the lease to the new company.

## 8. PLANNING

- a) **Part change of use of agricultural/general storage outbuilding to two number self catering residential units with ancillary meeting room, treatment rooms and studio space, the erection of a timber lodge unit for self catering letting and installation of fixed ground mounted domestic solar PV array with associated equipment housing, Upper Vobster Farm, Upper Vobster:**

The Chairman explained that the District Councillor was unable to take any part in the discussion without jeopardising his impartiality but would note the discussion. He then asked Mr Bill Lowe, Planning Consultant for Upper Vobster Farm, to explain the planning application to the Parish Council and to the residents of Vobster. Mr Lowe advised that the application was for a small scale tourist scheme, in accordance with Government guidelines, and that no extra traffic would be generated as guests would be encouraged to leave their cars and travel in a minibus.

A number of points were raised by parish councillors and reiterated thereafter by 15 Vobster residents:

- i) Concern was expressed about the amount of traffic that would be generated in a lane that was only wide enough for a single car in places. In spite of assurances from Messrs Lowe and Nicholson that movements in and out of the site would be limited to amalgamated trips in a minibus, councillors and residents suggested that numbers of staff living off site, shopping trips for self-catering guests, and delivery of supplies would generate a considerable amount of extra traffic.
- ii) Residents expressed their dissatisfaction that planning permission was being sought for a wooden chalet when their own requests to build chalets had been turned down.
- iii) The cross roads at Vobster Cross were extremely dangerous with reduced sight lines and speeding traffic along the main road; increased traffic along Upper Vobster Lane could only add to this problem.
- iv) Residents expressed their concern that their own tranquillity was being jeopardised in order to provide a peaceful retreat for Upper Vobster Farm guests from abroad.
- v) The development was unsustainable. Encouraging global travel, as the Nicholsons had stated that guests would come from Europe, Canada and Australia, the enterprise was sited at the end of a long, remote lane that

could only be approached by car. The bus service to Bath would deliver an unacceptable 2 1/2 hour round trip. The inevitable taxis and hire cars would double up on journeys and put even more pressure on the narrow lane and its existing residents.

- vi) Rather than the small scale tourist scheme described by Mr Lowe, this application suggested to the residents a major business venture in a small hamlet. *Universal Medicine*, to whom the enterprise was affiliated, was a global cult-like organisation which could only move forward by constant expansion. Work at Upper Vobster Farm had already been undertaken in advance of planning permission and residents were concerned that the enterprise was 'development by stealth'. The separate planning permission recently granted for the end of St Edmunds Terrace adjacent to Upper Vobster Farm was cited as an instance of this stealth.

Following the discussion a vote was taken and councillors voted unanimously to recommend refusal to Mendip District Council.

- b) **Alterations to existing stable block, Stable Block, Mells Park House, Mells:** Mendip DC approval with conditions.
- c) **Erect single storey front entrance porch extension, 2 storey rear access stairway and first floor extension to form new en-suite, Rock Cottage, Upper Vobster:** Mendip DC approval with conditions.
- d) **Proposed felling of and replacement planting of trees in a Conservation Area, Lavender House, Mells:** Mendip DC has no objections.
- e) **Erection of double garage and associated hard standing area and steps, Hazelwood, Top Lane, Mells:** with Parish Council.

## 9. LETTERS FROM SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

- a) **Re Mendip Community Event 27 February 2012:** Chairman to attend to learn about changes due to shrinking budgets.
- b) **Re Somerset NHS Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2011:** noted.
- c) **Re Use of delegated powers for the authorisation of gates on the public footpath FR10/55 in the Parish of Mells:** under delegated powers, kissing gates for stock control had already been installed at either end of the field behind the almshouses.
- d) **Review of old minerals permissions at Whatley Quarry:** Chairman advised that there were no significant changes but that he would suggest an extra condition relating to outsourced lorries based in Frome with legitimate reason to access prohibited routes. He wished to ensure that lorries would be obliged to follow the correct long route or have their contracts revoked.
- e) **A S73 application to vary various conditions at Halecombe quarry:** Parish Council recommended approval.

## 10. LETTERS FROM MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL None

## 11. LETTERS AND REPORTS

- a) **Re Avon & Somerset Police Authority 2012-13 Budget Consultation Survey:** Noted.
- b) **From Somerset Community Food re allotment provision:** Clare Oxford advised that she had had some interest from residents for the provision of allotments. Clerk to pass on details of meeting and place on noticeboard.
- c) **Somerset Playing Fields' Association subscription request:** it was agreed to pay a subscription of £10.00

- d) **From SALC re changes to Standards Board Regime:** noted.

## 12. WHITE BRIDGE

- a) A letter of acceptance had been sent to Somerset Forge following the special meeting's decision to accept its quote for the steelwork. Formal application had been made to Somerset CC to have White Bridge and 5m of path on either end closed from 5 March to 7 April. SCC had agreed to fund this.  
John Mann was aiming to have the bridge reopened in time for Easter and had worked out a timetable which made this possible. *Clerks and Councils Direct* had published an article with photograph featuring the replacement of White Bridge in its issue of January 2012.
- b) In order to meet the deadlines it was agreed to delegate authority to the Vice Chair and Clerk to accept the most suitable quotation out of meetings on future White Bridge contracts
- c) The White Bridge Jubilee Opening Working Party would agree a suitable date for the formal opening with Raymond Oxford.
- d) Raymond Oxford had suggested a plaque in the wall (which would also be renovated) along the eastern boundary of Bridge Cottage near White Bridge. Roger Griffin to be asked to come up with two or three designs and a quotation. An information board on a stake could be placed nearby. Abi Blanche-Martin to produce some designs, possibly with a coat of arms to balance the Big Lottery logo, for the next meeting.

## 13. ACCOUNTS

a) Visc Asquith's 1999 Settlement ( <i>Rec Ground Rent 25/12/11-24/03/12</i> )	£ 147.50
b) Mendip District Council ( <i>Election expenses</i> )	£ 153.80
c) DW McClew ( <i>Parish footpath cutting</i> )	£ 220.00
d) JK Costelloe ( <i>Clerk's salary – (Dec)</i> )	£ 259.20
( <i>Expenses (Oct, Nov, Dec 2011)</i> )	
Stationery	£ 11.97
Phone calls	£ 4.95
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	£ 16.92

It was agreed to pay the above accounts.

## 14. RECEIPTS

- a) Barclays Business Saver Account  
(*Interest 22 Sep/21 Dec 2011*)
- £ 1.27

## 15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) Chris Tye asked when the Woodlands End signs would be ready. Clerk to make further enquiries.
- b) Steve West asked the Clerk to chase up the length restrictions signs for Vobster Bridge.

## 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 6 March, 7.15 p.m. in Mells Barn.