

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
BROCKENHURST PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT BROCKENHURST VILLAGE HALL
ON WEDNESDAY 25TH APRIL 2024**

In attendance: Cllr Pete Wales (Chairman), Cllr Russell Horne (Vice Chairman), Cllr John Korbey, Cllr John Wingham, Cllr Alan Bartlett, Cllr Peter Hollins and Cllr Paul Pearse. Heather Lawrence (Parish Clerk) and 24 members of the public

1. Welcome and Apologies – Cllr Wales welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Wolstenholme, Cllr Harris, Cllr Whittle and Cllr Adam Parker (NFDC).

2. Presentation of Young Person of Brockenhurst Award 2024

Ollie Weddell was presented his award by Cllr Wales.

3. Chairmans' Report

Cllr Wales gave an overview of the council during the last year. See **Appendix one** for the full report.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting held 25th April 2023 – These were covered in the Chairman's report.

5. Report on local policing by PCSO Richard Williams

PCSO Williams gave an update on the local policing team, confirming that PC Mark Roberts is the Neighbourhood Officer for Brockenhurst along with PCSO Richard Williams. Lyndhurst Police Station is now being fully used by various departments including the Response teams, Priority Crime teams, Neighbourhood Enforcement teams and a CID unit. The biggest crimes are from outbuildings and homes, theft of motor vehicles and bikes. PCSO Richard Williams has been working with the Brockenhurst Speedwatch group to finalise the required risk assessments by the end of June. Hants Alert "Lets Talk" was explained and how easy it is to sign up. Beat Surgeries from May onwards will be held in the Parish Council office.

6. Report from HCC Councillor – Cllr Keith Mans

Cllr Mans explained that it has been a particularly difficult year for the County Council. Costs of social care for both the young and the elderly have risen steeply and now accounts for almost two thirds of the spending after the education grant from Central Government has been passed directly to schools. This has meant that funding for other services such as roads has suffered.

Cllr Mans confirmed that he will have a devolved budget of £8000 available to spend on minor projects within his parishes and applications will be welcomed from £500 up to £1000. The new budget year will start at the end of May.

The Hampshire County Council app "Our Hants" was explained and how easy it is to report problems and book and pay for various HCC services.

7. Reports from NFDC Councillor Cllr Adam Parker

Cllr Wales read out the report, see **Appendix two** for the full report

8. Report on the Nalder Trust Charity

Cllr Korbey read out the report, see **Appendix three** for the full report

9. Report from Brockenhurst Village Trust

The main points from the annual report were read out – see **Appendix four** for the full report

10. Report from Friends of Brockenhurst

David Eley read out the report, see **Appendix five** for the full report

11. Report from Greener Brockenhurst

Matthew Tulley read out the report, see **Appendix six** for the full report

12. Report on flooding by Brockenhurst Flood Action Group

Peter Hebard read out his report, see **Appendix seven** for the full report

13. Presentation of Contribution to Brockenhurst Life Award 2024

Ashley Pritchard was presented his award by Cllr Wales.

Presentation of Brockenhurst Friend of the Year Award 2024

The winner of this award was Mrs Sue Griffiths, who was unable to attend the meeting and Cllr Wales will arrange to present her award as soon as possible.

14. Questions/comments from Members of the Public

A resident raised concerns for the 66% increase in the Parish Council element of the 24/25 council tax. The ostensibly disproportionate allotment funding was highlighted with several residents raising points from the precept report, (printed copies available for attendees to read) which Cllr Wales responded. Our Hampshire County Councillor, Cllr Mans assisted in an explanation of how government money is spent at County and District level and how this has resulted in Parish Council's needing to make increases.

A resident asked about the Parish Council Village Sign project and made a request that the sign should be placed in a better location in the village. Cllr Wingham, who has been overseeing the project, responding about the project and the frustration that the planning application process has led to a very long delay and that a decision has still not be made by the planning department of New Forest National Park Authority.

Questions were raised regarding the poor state of the Roydon Wood footpath. It was explained that the Parish Council are already looking at the footpath following a site visit with a Hampshire County Council Rights of Way officer.

A resident asked whether the Parish Council would have representation at the New Forest Show to promote Brockenhurst. It was confirmed that no arrangements have been made for the 2024 show as a lot of consideration would need to be given to making any future arrangements.

15. Chairman's Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked members of the public for attending, all those who had made presentations and Ann and Keith Nolan for providing refreshments.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT

Appendix one

Parish Council Chairmans Report – Cllr Pete Wales

After the last Annual Parish Meeting we decided to move the day of the meeting in an attempt to differentiate it from the monthly Parish Council meetings as there appeared to be some confusion. The proposal for the church to close St Nicholas' churchyard was announced at that Parish Meeting. No comments or objections being received, the formalities have now been completed by the Church and maintenance of its churchyard is now in the care of New Forest District Council. We did, however, note the concerns about not running an event to mark the King's coronation due to a lack of volunteers. I must say at this juncture that we continue to struggle in this regard when organising events as do other village organisations like Brockcare.

Whilst noting that we thanked Michael Croker for his extensive work on the Nalder Trust and Pauline Mueller for her work with regard to the Hampshire County Council (HCC) Active Travel Scheme and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan as they both stepped down, I am now pleased to welcome you and the return of Richard Wolstenholme, who unfortunately is unable to be with us tonight and Peter Hollins to this his first Annual Parish Meeting.

Councillors held a members forum as one of the first acts of the new Council from which it was confirmed that for the next four years its vision is to promote and support our community as a vibrant village. Priorities identified were communications, Christmas lights, the Citizens Award scheme, office use and the village strategy. A review of its Action Plan is due in June.

We remain concerned about flooding and the state of the roads, particularly Brookley Road and The Rise liaising closely on both with HCC and the relevant authorities. I would thank Peter Hebard in this respect as it is pleasing to report that no houses were flooded but some came close with outbuildings underwater so that his work is continuing. Other issues brought to our attention over the past year include traffic volumes, in particular at New Forest Show times and the number of rental and second homes in the village which we have discussed with the New Forest Agricultural Show Society, other local parishes and the National Park Authority (NFNPA).

Whilst unsuccessfully challenging the increase in car parking charges after pressure we have arranged for late postal collection times and joined others successfully challenging the proposed closure of the railway station ticket office for the time being. Events have also been successfully run and I not only thank the organising Committee but also the fire crew and church bell ringers for their support this year.

Congratulations this year once again go to the Friends of Brockenhurst Station who have been awarded a "Silver Plus" award for their community work. Councillors have also tried to support residents well-being by way of grant funding. Small grants have been given to the local branch of the Royal British Legion, Oakhaven and Victim Support. Amongst other grants a larger contribution has been provided to the school to enable continuation of the crossing patrol. This funding is likely to continue as we feel the pressure on the County Council budget as they used to fund the crossing patrol scheme which like village signs are not a statutory requirement. Indeed, the District Council will now be charging for the emptying of our public rubbish bins due to their budget pressures.

You may have noted that for the past 7 years our Precept has remained unchanged. This was partly due to transferring money from reserves and partly due to delaying some tasks for example at the allotments and new village signage when the cost of living crisis was at its peak. We could have continued to reduce reserves but that might result in us falling below the recommended level for Councils of our size and we have no wish to enter the issues which some larger Councils are now facing.

There have, of course, been cost increases due to inflation but it has been apparent that we need more hours of work than our existing staff can provide so we have recruited and are now training an additional part-time person with cost implications. Projects have been prioritised with some items like the renewal of bus shelters delayed and after debate Councillors decided to continue to support the village Christmas lighting but also a commemorative plaque scheme.

After full consideration of all elements of the 2024/25 Parish Council budget, Councillors agreed, by a majority vote, to increase the precept to £70.79pa for a Band D property. Although this is a 66% increase it is in real terms £28.30pa (less than 60p pw) and all the details are available on our website.

Much patience is required with many of our projects as they continue to go through the bureaucratic process involving local organisations including not only HCC and NFNPA but the Commoners Defence Association, Environment Agency, Forestry England, Natural England, Network Rail and the Verderers in order to help businesses, landowners and not least advocating on behalf of residents. These projects include the Brookley Road improvements, bridleways and footpaths including the Martins Road footbridge, bus shelters, CCTV and webcams, Community Speed Watch, clean rivers, the village sign and other signs to and around the village. New initiatives continue including more use of the Parish Council office with the Police who will be holding monthly surgeries in the future.

All this is possible by not only the support provided from my fellow Councillors but also following recruitment to the fantastic hardworking, dedicated and loyal staff. Heather, our Clerk, for holding everything together, Tiffany, our Responsible Financial Officer, for her financial expertise, Celia, our new Assistant Clerk, Ray and Luke the ground staff - I give my sincere thanks to all.

Finally my heartfelt thanks go to Russell who has unexpectedly had to step up and supported me magnificently this year due to my personal circumstances. Many of you will not be aware that I have been in hospital for the last 2 days but feel fortunate to join you tonight.

Appendix Two

New Forest District Councillor report – Cllr Adam Parker

Good evening to all and I apologise that I am unable to attend due to a work commitment.

It is hard to believe that almost an entire year has passed since I was elected to New Forest District Council (on May 5th 2023)!

In that time, I - as one of the three new Green Party councillors to join NFDC - have had to hit the ground running, and as we previously had a total of zero councillors - we really are undertaking things with fresh eyes and an independent, hopefully invigorating, and environmentally centric voice.

The King's Coronation street parties took place the day after the election result, and I was stunned to be met with so many people at New Forest Drive's event coming up to shake my hand and offer their congratulations - including even life-long Conservative voters telling me they had voted Green for the first time. From those exchanges, I took away with me a great and earnest sense of responsibility to those who had placed their trust in me, and to all residents in the village.

The work started immediately, and after consuming substantial induction seminars and learning materials, I found myself liaising with NFDC's officers - the council's local equivalent of the civil service - to do my best to action residents' needs on matters relating to housing, refuse collection, some grievances with 'No Mow May' (now rebranded 'Let It Bee'), and frequently seem to act as a conduit to both Hampshire County Council and the Forestry Commission when matters arise outside of my remit.

There have already been numerous deeply disheartening moments in my short tenure. Not to get too party political, but most recently, despite considerable research and impassioned pleas from myself and our leader, Cllr Janet Richards, our proposed amendment to NFDC's corporate plan - to ensure that it took its self-declared climate emergency seriously and its carbon emissions across its activities were properly measured and reported - was unsuccessful and voted down by the Conservative majority. Similarly, impassioned pleas and a special vote on deciding upon NFDC's communications to Hampshire County Council on a quarry extension near Fordingbridge proved equally disappointing as a more robust stance on opposing the plans was dismissed, despite, again, full opposition party support.

As might be obvious, and although I consider my personal sensitivity a gift, even local politics is not particularly a game for a sensitive person.

However, things are improving locally, with regard to sustainability - food waste will be collected as part of the council's core collection service from Spring next year.

I endeavour to attend as many Brockenhurst and Denny Lodge Parish Council meetings as I can and invite you to contact me with your issues by email adam.parker@nfdc.gov.uk or by phone or WhatsApp on **07423 683266**.

Appendix three Nalder Trust report

As many of you will be aware, The Nalder Trust was set up with monies from a very generous bequest in the will of Miss Nalder - just over 30 years ago now and continues to provide accommodation for people with a local connection. Having started with two flats at Homeforde House, we have, over the years acquired two further flats at the development.

The past year, Tenant wise, has been a thankfully uneventful one, all four residents remain in place - and other than routine maintenance I have nothing untoward to report!

The Nalder Committee (a mix of both councillors and non councillors) - who report to Brockenhurst Parish Council as the Sole Trustee, were exploring the possibility of constructing a small Almshouse development of our own - considerable time and effort was made, exploring possible funding opportunities and indeed, potential sites.

As I'm sure you are all aware, not only is land scarce for construction, but the high cost within the village proved an obstacle that elsewhere would not have been quite such an issue - so, without shelving the idea completely, this will have to remain as a plan for the future.

The Trust is also to make preliminary enquiries as to extending the lease on the last remaining flat where this has not already been carried out. To not take this action diminishes the asset value and as the lease shortens further the cost of extending will increase. Reserves are adequate to complete the extension.

We are also looking to create a new website, entirely dedicated to the Nalder Trust - not only to present the full history of the Trust and indeed Miss Nalder herself, but also to heighten awareness and publicise the Trust (I am sure many residents are unaware of it's existence and/or purpose).

The website will provide a platform to also give details as to how donations or bequests can be made - allowing us to expand our portfolio, providing more homes for people who might otherwise not be able to remain in the village.

Overall, a quiet but successful year!

Appendix four Brockenhurst Village Trust

Annual Report 2023-2024

Brockenhurst Village Trust is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, incorporated on 15 November 2000 and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The charity was registered with the Charity Commission on 27 March 2001 and commenced operations upon transfer to it on 15 May 2001 of the assets from the Brockenhurst Village Hall charity. The Company number is 4108622 and the Charity Registration number is 1085825.

Directors and Trustees

As required by the Memorandum and Articles of Association the management of the company is invested in the Board of Directors who are also the Trustees of the Charity. The Board consists of up to eleven Directors.

Objects, Organisation and Activities

The object of Brockenhurst Village Trust is to provide educational, recreational, and other community facilities for the benefit and social welfare of the people of the civil parish of Brockenhurst in Hampshire by charitable means.

This means the running of the Village Hall, and its site in Highwood Road, the Charity Shop in Brookley Road. and organising such events which benefit the widest possible community in Brockenhurst under the revised branding as The Brockenhurst Community Hub.

The Trustees giving due regard to guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

The Village Hall hosts around 30 weekly and 10 monthly clubs and classes in addition to repeat booking from other community groups and small businesses. Organisations such as Hampshire County Council and the New Forest National Park Authority regularly hold training sessions at the Hall, appreciating the location, facilities, and service and also the value for money that it offers. External events such as this contribute to the successful running of the Hall, and thus its wider community benefit.

The Hall is available for hire by individuals and organisations. There is a standard hiring agreement and scale of charges. which is calculated to be adequate to generate income to meet all expenditure incurred in maintaining the Hall, providing an appropriate share of the wider site maintenance and annual depreciation of the Trust's assets.

Hire fees were increased this year, first time in five years, due to a quadrupling of energy costs.

The Trust hosts activities, such as "Brockenhurst Cinema" and the Brockenhurst Bridge Club in the Hall on its own account, managed by volunteers, in order to provide a focus for the village as part of the Community Hub concept described below.

The Trustees are responsible for the overall management of the Company and its future

direction. This may also include strategic guidance, or delivery of projects for the community.

The day-to-day operation of the Village Hall, the charity shop, and site facilities is the responsibility of the full-time Operations & Development Manager supported by part-time administrative and caretaking staff and a growing number of volunteers.

Review of Activities and Future Developments

The full Statement of Financial Activities for the year is set out in audited annual accounts, and available from The Charities Commission website.

Highlights

Income from lettings and events during 2023 was approximately £110,000 (2022 £104,783)

The Charity Shop, which had operated in the Hall since 2021 relocated to an empty shop in Brookley Road in the centre of Brockenhurst and following renovation of the premises re-opened successfully in September 2023. It was apparent that the central location would double the shop's revenue and thus increase the funds available to the Trust. The shop's gross contribution to the Trust in 2023 was £43,000 (2022 £26,525) and it is expected to contribute up to £60,000 in a full year of trading in 2024. The shop is entirely staffed by volunteers and the Trust wishes to express its gratitude to them. As part of the Community Hub the shop showcases events in the Hall and on the Highwood Site.

The space released in the Hall by the shop's relocation is being developed as a Community Food Enterprise during 2024, which could include a Community Fridge and Cafe. This will be closely connected to the outside space with community garden projects.

Rising energy costs were identified as the major risk facing the Trust with long term fixed contracts expiring in late 2023. To that end the Trust decided to invest some £24,000 in additional solar panel capacity including battery storage in 2023 and is negotiating new agreements with energy suppliers and for sale of surplus energy generated in the expectation of moving as far as possible "off-grid".

The focus for 2024 is to enhance the facilities both inside and out.

The hall, improving insulation and examine whether gas use can be eliminated by installation of heat pump technologies.

The outside space made more useable and attractive with the installation of picnic benches and planting.

All potential developments are tested against our five-year strategy, developed in 2022, which provides a framework for decision making, investment and prioritisation and the basis for regular reviews of the Trust's activities and financial position at each board meeting.

As these plans start to take shape, we will be seeking input from our community. Please keep a look out for these opportunities.

Appendix Five

Friends of Brockenhurst

For the past 67 years, Friends of Brockenhurst has served the interests of Brockenhurst's residents. Initially, in the early years its main function was to pass comments to the Parish Council on Planning Applications. Whilst this is still an important function of Friends of Brockenhurst, over the past couple of years we have been broadening our scope on other Village matters.

Some of our members have expressed their concern on the growth of AIRBNB and Holiday Lets in the Village and the effect this has on the community. Following extensive research, we found that the percentage of AIRBNB and Holiday Lets was less than 10%. However, the 10% is mostly concentrated in one area of the Village, which gives the impression of a larger problem than it is. New legislation may help to limit any growth.

Friends of Brockenhurst are concerned about the Watersplash area in the Village. The Watersplash is arguably, the most visited tourist attraction in Brockenhurst. Yet the area is looking very much on the faded side and with very little cost could be made more attractive. Yes, we know that there are several statutory bodies concerned with this area, but this should not be an excuse to let the area deteriorate.

The Wheel, at the entrance of Brookley Road Car park commemorating the Old Village Forge is badly in need of restoration. This was erected 30 years ago by FoB in conjunction with New Forest District Council. We have obtained NFDC permission for FoB to restore the Wheel and we are in the process of arranging with tradesmen (which has not been easy) to start the work.

Again, at the request of members, we formed a committee including other interested parties to work on a Village Concept to improve the main Village area, whilst retaining the character of our Village. The proposal from this Committee was presented to the Parish Council, who had formed their own sub-committee to take these ideas forward. FoB believe there is more work to be done, so we wish to resurrect these ideas so that, with agreement of the Village residents in place already for when funding is available.

FoB are pleased that we are able to continue to make monetary donations to our Village organisations and these have included The Village Primary School, Brockenhurst Childrens' Pantomime, Village Warm Hub, Village Hall Defibrillator, Gateway Club and Oakhaven Hospice to name a few.

Other organisations we give help by advertising their events on our website or Newsletter. In our Autumn 2023 Newsletter we included a leaflet from Brockenhurst Care Cars who urgently needed additional drivers to fulfil their requests for over 600 medical trips from Brockenhurst residents.

FoB continue to publish and deliver to every property in Brockenhurst, twice a year a Newsletter. In fact, the Spring 2024 Newsletter is in the process of being delivered this week. We are fully aware that in this day and age we are told to use technology instead of the printed matter but after every delivery we get many compliments on how nice it is to get the Newsletter in print through their door.

Like many organisations, we are in need of new Committee Members to take the Society forward, as several of us on the Committee are in our eighties. Despite advertising, to date we have had little success. But we shall persevere, as a Village such as Brockenhurst, needs the organisation FoB, outside of the statutory elected bodies, to promote ideas and assist the likes of the Parish Council.

Appendix Six Greener Brockenhurst

Greener Brockenhurst Activities

- Members have a common concern over the environment and climate ('Greener') 200 subscribers with regular newsletters
- Recycling shed – for harder to recycle items 11 types of waste thanks to volunteers – one for each waste stream
- Repair café – repair items for a second life 3 times/yr . For all ages. 2/3 items are repaired, next one in 20 July Church Hall.
- Nappy library – reusable nappies not disposables (kits on loan – try before you buy) 80% success rate
- Plastic Free Brockenhurst – 5 businesses signed up as champions, supported by PC. 17 community allies – helping them to reduce single use plastic
- Making space for nature – Eco gardening event, talks and wildlife friendly nature trail. Also looking for other public spaces away from ponies.
- Eco walks – environment education and enjoyable (deer and history of forest)
- Great Brockenhurst Clear Off – This Sat 11-3pm.re-homing less loved tools and stuff. 28 so far
- Events – fun / eco education / give positive messages, eg litter pick with Brock College and Eco Fair, Home Energy

Appendix Seven Brockenhurst Flood Action Group

Address to Brockenhurst Annual Parish Meeting

Brockenhurst and New Forest Flood Action Group was founded in 2016, the year that the UK's Flood Resilience Review was launched. A Chartered Engineer and Member of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management, in the years since I have been working with our team of 20 local observers and the support of the PC, to coordinate the efforts of many organisations to both keep roads passable and reduce flood risk to properties, initially with significant success. I have been funded by HCC to attend Environment Agency conferences and workshops on Natural Flood and water management to learn how best to do so.

However, this winter has been a wake up call, not only for us but for the whole of the Forest. Despite our best efforts, every green space around the village, most exit roads and some outbuildings have been flooded to some depth, with some houses millimetres away from flooding internally. To put the task in perspective, in the worst storms 3 ½ million cubic metres of water now fall on our catchment but to avoid serious flooding, the peak of that needs to have passed through our village within 12 hours. One fallen tree in the wrong place could be catastrophic so we also need to slow the flow of water coming into the village, as well as making sure it can get out faster than it comes in.

Irrespective of habitat regulations, Forest authorities, collectively, have an ancient riparian responsibility to ensure water can pass through the village and escape unobstructed. That only requires removal of fallen trees from the river and clearance of small areas of brambles and brushwood, basic good husbandry at the end of a day. Even re-wilding requires sympathetic management.

However, the Met Office has warned that central southern England will not only suffer more intense rainfall but also more severe drought. In summer thunderstorms, valuable storm water will be lost to the Solent unless we do more to hold more water upstream of the village for longer, for both ecological and flood risk benefits.

We already work closely with Hants Highways, Network Rail, businesses and landowners but we are now urgently seeking the “neighbourly” cooperation of all Forest authorities to help. Natural Flood Management can also help to replenish mires and refresh lawns, so there need be no conflict, quite the reverse, and commoners’ interests, along with those of all who live in and derive their living from the Forest, have always been close to our hearts.

Back in 2016, DEFRA convened a meeting where all Forest authorities committed to work with our Flood Action Group on a joint plan to reduce the risk of flooding. 8 years on, Climate Change is clearly with us and we now need to hold all to that promise to ensure Brockenhurst does not suffer a similar fate to Boscastle, whilst also protecting Forest ecology and livestock against the effects of severe drought.

There are benign and cost-effective ways to hold back water on the Forest at sufficient scale but we are urging all authorities to come together to decide where it is most needed and where it is not, where we can hold most and how best to do so and, importantly, how all can help. In short, how, collectively, we can manage climate change and water to best effect.

I have already briefed principals and members of the NPA, Forestry England and the Verderers giving some a tour of our area and have offered the same to HCC, the CDA, Natural England and ecological NGOs.

Today I have been briefing the Principal of the UKs new Flood Research Centre based in Southampton University to enlist their help and next Monday we will be working with Hants Highways to get Waters Green to drain better. Their Engineers do their best but, frustratingly, their contractor’s last attempt to clear Balmer Lawn Road underpass failed and they still have to clear Latchmoor underpass drains several months after they were tasked.

Peter Hebard
BSc, CEng, FIMechE, MCIWEM
Brockenhurst and New Forest Flood Action Group