

Minutes of Somerford Keynes Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall, 8th September 2025

Present: Cllr A. Clark (AC), Cllr H.Collins (HC), Cllr M. Keegan (MK), Cllr N.Hunt (NH), Cllr J Whitwell (JW), Cllr G.Valentine, Cllr M.H-Oldland (MHO), CDC Cllr M McKeown (MM)

Also present: Clerk K.Holdsworth (KH) and 6 members of the public

1. Apologies

GCC Cllr Lisa Sprivey

2. Declaration of Interest

Cllr N.Hunt

3. Public Session

3.1 Fishing Club

A parishioner has requested for fishing to be allowed on the Village Lake and for a community fishing club to be formed. The approval process to allow this needs to be confirmed. Concern has been expressed that this is not consistent with the aims of the lake though it is also viewed by some as an under utilised community asset.

In the first instance it was agreed to provide the interested party with a copy of the Village Lake's Management Plan which sets out what are agreed and permitted activities.

It would be interesting to ascertain the level of community interest in such a club, please mail skpcclerk@gmail.com if this is something you would like to participate in.

3.2 Fibre Broadband

It was asked whether CIL monies could be used to provide this. It was explained that as well as being unaffordable from Parish Council (PC) funds it is also something that is well outside of our scope.

3.3 Shorncote Village Green

It was pointed out that a fence has been erected which is close to the boundary.

Action: MK to investigate with Highways whether the fence should be moved

3.4 Ashlands Field

It was asked whether the PC had considered putting forward a joint bid with a parishioner.

The PC has previously communicated its position on this. That being that given a resident is bidding with the aim of preventing further development and potentially selling some of the land to the community it made no sense to bid against them.

Given that the resident wished to prime the bid, joint funding would be challenging as it would mean providing public funds to a private individual. However, the PC made its interest in subsequently buying some of the land clear so that, should they wish, the bidder could consider that when deciding on their offer price.

The selling agent has invited final bids on September 11th.

3.5 Parish Field

A parishioner asked whether a sale of this was being considered.

Currently we are in year three of a five year rental agreement to Lake 32. We will look to understand their intentions going forwards over the coming months which will help inform decisions concerning this. It should be noted that rental from this currently funds the ongoing investment needed for the Village Lake.

4. Approval of Minutes of 14th July 2025 Meeting

Proposed NH, seconded MHO

5. Report from CC Lisa Spivey

Awaiting report from Lisa Spivey

6. Report from District Cllr M.McKeown

Cllr M McKeown report is in appendix One.

MM confirmed that works to install rumble strips on the junction where the Ewen to South Cerney road crosses Spratsgate Lane should take place this month.

7. Village Lake Report

Mike Wildings report is in appendix two.

8. Actions from Previous Meeting

8.1 Tree Debris Between Mill Lane to Neigh Bridge

NH engaged with the Cotswold Lakes Trust and they have no need for tree debris for conservation/ecology activities.

8.2 Solar Farm Planning Application

MK & HC prepared and submitted an objection on behalf on the PC. MM also put in an objection.

8.3 Potential PC Funding for Litter Collection & Compostable Toilets at Neigh Bridge

NH has spoken to the Cotswold Lake Trust regarding the above.

Whilst appreciating the offer they are still of the view that having no bins reduces littering and state that since they removed the bins there is less litter. As such there is no further action the PC can take on this topic. It has been noted that every Monday they do undertake a comprehensive clear up.

In relation to toilets, their view is that historical evidence from the site shows that these bring issues regarding anti social behaviour. Correspondence from a couple of parishioners supports this view so this is also something not to be pursued further.

9. Matters Discussed

9.1 Finance and Governance

9.1.1 Audit

Last year's audit is still with the external auditor. Their clarification questions have been answered and we hope to have completion soon.

9.1.2 Risk Management Policy

The PC should have a risk management policy.

Action: GV & KH will put one together based on templates from other similar PCs.

9.1.3 Change of Email Address

It has been pointed out that its good practice to for PC's to have a .gov e mail address. Investigations show that moving to this involves significant costs so, given it is not mandatory, we will stay as we are.

9.1.4 VAT Reclaim

KH submitted a claim for VAT paid last year and has received a refund of £5469.68.

Much of this was from CIL projects so there are the standard CIL guidelines as to how it can be spent.

9.1.5 Annual Parish Field Invoice

KH has sent this to Lake 32.

9.1.6 Parish Field Lease Extension –

MK has had initial discussions with Jo at Lake 32.

Action: MK to continue dialogue though there is no immediate urgency.

9.2 Flooding

9.2.1 Shorncote

Hills Quarry have undertaken quite a lot of work clearing the ditches but further works now need to be undertaken by the Environment Agency to clear the areas they are responsible for.

Action – MK to continue to engage with CDC Flooding, if necessary LS has agreed to help escalate.

9.2.2 Somerford Keynes

Environment Agency have confirmed the work to move the kiosk at Neigh Bridge and undertake associated work on the pump should be completed by the end of next March.

They also stated that the annual Spillway clearance should be done imminently.

And that there is a project to improve the trash screen between the bund and the river which will also include the installation of a camera to monitor

There appears to be some Highways work on the Spine Road drains following the new installations earlier this year.

Action: HC to keep a watching brief on this and engage with Environment Agency and Highways as necessary

9.2.3 Mapping

The PC has subscribed to software that drainage ditches and infrastructure can be mapped onto. There is a task to transfer existing data onto this but there is not the capacity amongst PC member to do so.

If anyone would like to do this (would involve online tutorials on the software and then adding in local data) then please contact skpcclerk@gmail.com
Perhaps a useful project if anyone has someone in the family studying Geography?

9.3 Cotswold Country Park & Beach

The Country Park and Beach had put in a wide ranging license application for live and recorded amplified music. Following dialogue with the PC and MM this was amended to be an application for a single firework event which has subsequently been cancelled.

Noise from the park is a particular problem in Shorncote during the summer. AcqaVenure is especially problematic given its proximity. MK has met with the site operators who have explained that it can't be moved elsewhere in the park.

The next step is for concerned Shorncote residents to do some sound measurement and, if appropriate, engage CDC Environmental Services. Realistically this is not something that can now be done until the busy season of 2026 commences.

10. Community Infrastructure Levy Projects

10.1 Swings at Neigh Bridge

We are still awaiting confirmation from the Lakes Trust on timings based on the availability of their contractor.

10.2 Church Staircase

This has now been approved by the DAC. Given the elapsed time since the original quotations were presented the PC has asked the PCC for updated and final costings which can be presented for approval.

10.3 Village Lake Shelter

A quote has been received which is far in excess of the original estimate. PC voted not to pursue unless a considerably cheaper alternative can be found.

10.4 North of Village Footpath Extension

A submission to the Active Travel Fund resulted in the award of a £25k grant towards this work. It would require a broadly similar contribution from PC funds and the vote was not to proceed, particularly given some of the changes at Field Farm which include the closure of the Tap Room.

The PC thanked MHO for his work in submitting a successful bid. The community has gained significant funds recently through identifying (with the help of MM and LS) and applying for such funding (Village Hall energy and Village Lake projects being good examples).

There was discussion as to whether this funding could be used for other potential paths, such as Mill Lane to Neigh Bridge.

Action: MHO will ask CDC whether the funds could be used for other potential routes.

11. Planning

C/25/00664/PRMV

Application for Variation of Premises Licence

We have received an application for Millenium Building And Beach Cafe Millenium Building And Beach Cafe Cotswold Country Park And Beach Spratsgate Lane Somerford Keynes Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 6DF under the Licensing Act 2003.

No Objection – see 8.3. This application has now been withdrawn.

25/02626/FUL

Full Application for Variation of Condition 17 (Temporal Restriction) of permission 98.01495 (CT.6641/J) to allow 59 Mill Village to be used as a holiday home all year round at Mayfly 59 Mill Village Lower Mill Lane Somerford Keynes Cirencester

No Objection

12. Correspondence

There has been a significant amount of correspondence, mostly on the topics of Ashlands Field and the Country Park & Beach License application.

12.1 Ashlands Field

See 3.5

12.2 Country Park & Beach License Application

See 8.3

12.3 Extended Footpath at North of Village

See 9.4

12.4 Neigh Bridge Litter, Parking, and Golf/Coffee Planning Permission

See 7.3 regarding litter.

See previous minutes for position on parking.

A parishioner has asked CDC whether The Lakes Trust needed planning permission for mini golf and a coffee van.

12.5 Neigh Bridge Kiosk

See 8.2.2

12.6 Proposed Angling Club

See 3.1

12.7 Road Closure Elm View to Neigh Bridge

Questions were raised about access arrangement during the work, further clarifications from Highways have been circulated.

12.8 Water Lane Footpath

Tree roots making the path uneven in places.

Action: KH to send pictures to Highways.

As an aside, anyone can report things to Highways via fixmystreet.com

13. July/August Income and Expenditure

Income

Interest Earned July 25 £258.07

Interest Earned August £228.83

GCC Developer Contribution £1750.00

HMRC VAT Reclaim £5469.68

Total Income £7706.58

Expenditure

July 25

GAPTC Audit Charge £250.00

Parish on Line £72.00

Clerks Salary (April/May/June 25) £932.47

August 25

ICO Data Protection £52.00

Total Expenditure

£1306.47

Village Lake

VL Total Expenditure

£None

CIL Expenditure

Total CIL Spend

£None

Transfers

£None

Petty Cash Expenditure

£None

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1 HC has discovered some metal baskets that can be used in ditches and drains to collect fallen leaves and debris. She will investigate further to see whether they can be used to stop the flooding that Water Lane experienced last year due to this issue.
- 14.2 HC was asked if she could have permission to use the SKPC's PSGA (Public Sector Geospatial Agreement) to help emergency services navigate Lower Mill Estate and to address general issues with deliveries. Given Lower Mill is part of the parish, generates Council Tax revenues and there are some safety issues this could help with the PC gave their approval.

Date of next meeting Monday 13th October 2025

Appendix 1

Monthly Report: September 2025

Prepared by: Mike McKeown (mike.mckeown@cotswold.gov.uk)

Councillor for the Kemble Ward

Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Digital

Cotswold District Council (CDC)

Kemble Ward Related

Kemble Wick Flooding

Funding has now been approved for the agreed drainage and flood-prevention design study. A site meeting will take place later in September with the consultant, CDC Flood Officers, residents and myself. The goal is then to work with both CDC and GCC Flood Officers on the design of a scheme.

Kemble–Cirencester Cycle Path

Engagement with one landowner remains a barrier to completing Sustrans' feasibility study. For clarity, this landowner is not the Bathurst Estate, who are cooperating constructively. I have attempted direct contact, and our MP, Roz Savage, will be writing to encourage participation. If unsuccessful, alternative (and likely more costly) routes will need to be explored. CDC has also published an update on improving sustainable travel links between Kemble and Cirencester, reinforcing the importance of this project for active travel and connectivity.

Highways and Road Safety

The Spratsgate Lane / Ewen Lane crossroads are scheduled for further safety improvements, including "SLOW" painted on the surface and rumble strips for Ewen Lane. Lisa, our County Councillor, and I have been working together on this. A date in September has now been confirmed for installation, subject to the weather. Other local issues, such as speeding and flooding at the old railway bridge, remain under discussion with GCC and Highways.

Community Facilities

The new EV chargers at Somerford Keynes Village Hall are physically installed and ready. The agreement, asset transfer, and £2,500 contribution from Thames Head Community Energy are now complete, and the chargers are awaiting technical activation in the payment system.

Community Engagement & News

Following concerns raised by residents and Kemble & Ewen Parish Council, additional dog bins have now been installed. In August, a Retrofit Roadshow was held in Kemble to help residents learn more about grants, solar panels, heat pumps, and insulation.

Kemble Wick Solar Farm

This project is now nearing completion, with an event planned later this month to launch the Community Benefits Fund. Aura have also been involved in the flooding work and have modified some of their flood mitigation measures on the solar farm. They, along with the Bathurst Estate, have shown willingness in principle to help with the additional works described in the previous section.

Furzenleaze Farm Solar Application

I've followed up on concerns raised by Somerford Keynes Parish Council and local residents regarding the Furzenleaze Farm solar application. I contacted Aura Power directly to request additional mitigation on visual impact (panel siting and immediate evergreen screening), noise (relocating inverters), and flood risk (enhanced measures such as swales or wetlands, in line with Wildlife Trust suggestions). I also checked the soil classification report, which indicates the land is Grade 3B and therefore within NPPF guidelines, and flagged this with officers for confirmation.

Bledisloe Barns, Coates

I have been closely involved with the large and contentious planning application at Bledisloe Barns, Coates. The proposal seeks to convert and part-rebuild a group of agricultural barns into high-capacity tourist accommodation.

I have:

- Reviewed the full set of application documents (over 50 submissions, plus a further listed building consent).
- Met on site with parish councillors and local residents to hear their concerns.
- Raised issues with the planning officer, particularly around scale, design, highways, amenity, and the lack of environmental sustainability measures.
- Supported residents in seeking transparency on the applicant's business plan, which the applicant is refusing to allow CDC to release, even in summary form. I have assisted a resident in submitting an appeal to the Information Commissioner on this, and advised on possible Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests.
- Submitted a detailed objection highlighting overdevelopment, likely noise/light impacts, unsustainable traffic generation, and failure to meet CDC's climate and biodiversity policies.

Further ecological and heritage reports were submitted in July, but these mainly address technical points and do not resolve the fundamental concerns. The application remains highly controversial in the village and I am continuing to monitor closely, with the option to request referral to Planning Committee if the officer does not refuse it.

Cabinet Portfolio – Climate Change

Home Energy Retrofit Programme

The partnership with Furbnow is now in full operation. Following village-based events earlier in the summer, a major district-wide online and in-person retrofit event is planned for the autumn. This programme is already helping residents reduce bills and carbon emissions.

EV Charging

CDC announced in July that 24 new EV chargers have been installed in Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh, and Tetbury, bringing the total number of council-provided chargers to 49. The chargers in Cirencester are also installed and are just awaiting activation. This supports equitable access to charging and contributes to the district's improved climate action score.

Green Tourism

A new package of projects funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund launched in August, including Sustainability Champions accreditation for businesses, eco-friendly itineraries, and the "Car-Free Cotswolds" initiative promoting bus, train, cycling and walking options. These projects support both the visitor economy and our climate commitments.

National Climate Policy Influence

I was one of the co-authors of the new Liberal Democrat national climate policy overall, with particular contributions to the transport, energy and industry sections. The policy will go forward to the Autumn conference in 2025 for adoption, ensuring the Cotswolds' priorities are reflected at national level.

Cabinet Portfolio – Digital Services

Work continues to identify opportunities where digital innovation and AI can make council services more efficient and user-friendly. Initial discussions with planning services are exploring how AI could assist officers in assessing applications and drafting reports. We have also started drafting the council's Responsible AI Policy and are looking at how AI can be used in the new Local Plan work to deliver this faster and more efficiently.

Cotswold District Council Update

Local Government Reorganisation

All Gloucestershire councils are required to submit proposals for unitary reorganisation by late November 2025. Government will decide in 2026 whether Gloucestershire becomes one unitary authority or two. Elections for the new authority or authorities are expected in May 2027 or 2028.

Local Plan and Housing Targets

In July the council wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister urging a rethink of national housing targets, which would require 1,036 homes per year in the district — more than double the

previous target. In August the Government confirmed that targets remain unchanged. Under the new methodology, the Cotswolds no longer has a defensible five-year housing land supply, whereas under the previous approach it did. This means that speculative development applications now carry a much greater chance of being approved on appeal, making it vital to update the Local Plan as quickly as possible. It is very frustrating that the government knows that doubling the target without any grace period to update the Local Plan has directly created this situation, effectively encouraging speculative development.

The update follows a nationally regulated process. The next step will be a public consultation this autumn on potential areas for development, called “Reg 18”, followed by a further public consultation on the final draft during 2026 (Reg 19). The final plan is likely to be submitted to the national inspector in late 2026 or early 2027, with the last stage of the process taking about a year before a new Local Plan is adopted.

This also links directly to Local Government Reorganisation. When the new unitary authority is created, it will initially have to rely on the existing local plans of the predecessor councils. It often takes five or more years for a new unitary to create a unitary-wide Local Plan. Therefore, handing over a completed or near-completed Local Plan for the Cotswolds ensures continuity, reduces the risk of speculative development, and gives the new authority a strong starting point.

Community and Culture

In September, CDC wrote to the Chancellor warning that proposed inheritance-tax reforms could harm family farms. The council’s cross-party group has suggested alternatives such as exemptions for land actively farmed and waivers for land held at least seven years.

In August, the council launched the Creative Cotswolds partnership to strengthen the district’s arts and cultural sector.

The council’s Unsung Heroes Awards in July celebrated young people and adults making exceptional contributions to their communities, from litter-picking to decades of volunteering. A series of heritage and museum initiatives included the unveiling of rare Roman swords at the Corinium Museum in July and the Festival of Archaeology earlier in the summer.

Waste and Fly-tipping

In August, CDC reminded residents of their legal duty of care when disposing of waste, with fines of up to £600 for failure to use licensed contractors. This campaign is designed to cut fly-tipping across the district.

Strengthening Communities

The council has announced new “Strengthening Communities” events for autumn, offering fun, connection, and support across all ages and communities.

Notable Councillor and Leadership Updates

- Cllr Tony Dale returned to council duties in August following a life-changing accident last year.
- Jane Portman has been confirmed as interim Chief Executive of CDC, bringing four decades of experience in public service and local government reorganisation.

Latest CDC News Highlights

For a full list of news stories and council updates, visit: news.cotswold.gov.uk/news

Appendix 2

Somerford Keynes Parish Council

QUARTERLY LAKE REPORT for 8 Sept 25 Meeting

1. Volunteer mornings:

One volunteer morning was held on 5 July but **response to our flyers has been steadily decreasing. Only two volunteers made themselves available** (Marie Bowley, Chris Isherwood plus Lake Committee Chairman). Work was concentrated on clipping brambles and branches overhanging the path and fitting out the new shed (funded by Build Back Better funds). Also cleaning the water depth gauge, to make it readable at the lower levels, was carried out by Nick Hunt in his own time. However it is about 7m deep in the middle, near the floating island, so it won't dry out! Mowing of the path has been carried out by Committee as necessary.

2. Lake water levels: Level has been the lowest recorded since installation of our water gauge, two or three years ago

3. Wildflower areas: Our wildflower areas on the N side of the Lake have benefited from the dry summer, autumn maintenance last year and spring reseeding, and in July, 9 varieties were found with the help of the SEEK app!

Oxeye Daisy, Musk Mallow, Field Scabious, Black Knapweed, Yellow Rattle, Hairy St John's Wort, Tufted Vetch, Hogweed & Ragwort

Autumn strimming and raking will be carried out by contractor as last year

4. Boardwalk: Replacement of the rotted timber, to which the oak post holding John Sweet's memorial plaque is fixed, is due for repair w/c 25 August. Inspection of the longitudinal bearers supporting the decking is scheduled for September, together with application of protective coating. This will be carried out by contractor & is currently being investigated by the Parish Council as an approved use of CIL money

5. Budget: The budget this financial year will primarily be spent on repairs to boardwalk timbers, wildflower areas maintenance and treework in the winter.

6. Notice board: The old village notice board, was relocated to the Lake to make way for the new bus shelter. It will be used for Lake information, such as Volunteer morning flyers, wildlife survey results, and other Lake information. Currently the results of the bat survey in the spring, is displayed showing that we have 8 species of the 18 British species, in the area around the Lake. Committee member Lisa Willis holds the key to the notice board

The Lake Committee: Mike, Nick, Lisa, Graham & Jane

25 Aug 25