Birlingham Parish Council

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 21 January 2026

In Birlingham Village Hall

Councillors:

Rupert Day (RD), Michael Porter (MP) and Ian Yates (IY).

In attendance: District Councillor Paul Middlebrough (PM), Birlingham Village Hall Chairman, Paul Burton and Clerk June Hiden (JH).

Welcome – The Chairman thanked the attendees and members for attending.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from County Councillor Adrian Hardman who is at Sedgeberrow Parish. Apologies were tendered by Councillors Paula Aston (PA) who was attending school parents evening, and Steven Byrne (SB) and David Glover (DG) who were both abroad. The apologies were accepted. Apologies were received from Footpath Warden Bruce Hayward.

2. Declaration of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025, a copy of which has been circulated to all Councillors was agreed, as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

Democratic Opening

The meeting was adjourned for public question time. The Chairman of the Village Hall gave input for Item 7.

4. Progress Reports

a) Footpath Warden:

i. Footpath 509 (near Hall Farm) – finger-post pointer replaced
ii. Footpath 510 (off the Avenue) – finger-post re-installed (it had rotted)

One point of clarification regarding the minutes of the last meeting:

Footpath 506C from The Avenue (memorial) below The Old Rectory.

"The farm manager has said the PROW team from the County Council visited and agreed that the path was allowing walkers a clearly marked alternative route. They agreed it was a reasonable trade-off given the extensive network of permissive paths the farm has made available to the public (approximately 3 miles) and did not have an issue."

The farm mangers response appears at odds to what the County Council said in the email below:

From: "Penn, Shirley" <SPenn1@worcestershire.gov.uk>
Date: 12 September 2023 at 14:57:28 BST
To: Ian Yates <ian.yates@sipeda.com>
Subject: RE: Re: Birlingham Footpath 506

Dear Ian,

After some thought, I am contacting you regarding your email below. I am concerned the farmer may think that the County Council has agreed to an unofficial diversion around his crop. This is not the case. Although the clearance of the permissive path has reduced the priority of the report they are still committing an offence. I have not and cannot condone that. I cannot guarantee that I will not have to pursue the clearance of the definitive line in the future if we get further reports. However, their actions have prevented me from pursuing the clearance at this time. I felt I should make that clear.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss this further please contact me on my number below.

Regards,

Shirley Penn
Public Rights of Way Enforcement Officer
Countryside Centre
Worcester Woods Country Park
Wildwood Drive, Worcester, WR5 2LG
Tel: 01905 845739
Email: spenn1@worcestershire.gov.uk

worcestershire county council

b) Tree Warden, Rupert Day: Nothing to report.

c) Lengthsman – not applicable.

d) District Councillor. A report has been received by Councillor Paul Middlebrough.

"Key issues for Birlingham Residents:-

FINANCES
At the time of writing Wychavon has not determined its level of council for 2026/27. Wychavon unlike the County Council, Fire Authority and Police, will definitely have no increase in its share of the Council Tax. Whilst other organisation are cutting services, there will be no cuts at Wychavon and a programme of Wychavon Community Legacy Grants is being developed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION
Wychavon and four other districts proposed creating two unitary authorities—north and south—in Worcestershire and submitted the proposal to government. The County Council along with Wyre Forest submitted a plan for a single unitary authority.
The government is holding a public engagement on both proposals in early February 2026 giving you the chance to have your say. Details will be released in the local media, on our social media channels or sign up to our resident newsletter at www.wychavon.gov.uk/lgr
A final decision is expected in July this year with the new council or councils taking over running services from 1st of April 2028.
Parish council elections are scheduled for May 2027. If unitary proposals go ahead, shadow authority elections will also occur then. Wychavon elections will likely be postponed, as the Council is set to be abolished in March 2028.

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW
Residents have a final chance to have their say on the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review before it is officially adopted. A six-week public consultation runs until 5pm on 17 February 2026, to allow residents and other interested stakeholders to review proposed changes to the document put forward by Planning Inspectors.
Following a series of public hearings in 2025, inspectors recommended changes to the Plan – known as main modifications – to ensure it meets legal requirements and national planning policy. The consultation will allow people to review and comment only on the modifications, raise any new issues specifically caused by the changes, or question the evidence base for a proposed alteration.

Some of the modifications strengthen policies for the major strategic sites. They include setting out the need for key infrastructure to be delivered at Wychavon Town (known in the Plan as Worcestershire Parkway).
One of the most significant changes is the removal of Throckmorton as a proposed allocated site for housing and employment. This is now identified as an 'area of search', meaning more work is needed to demonstrate development is appropriate on the site. This land will be considered for allocation through the next review of the Plan.
Visit www.swdevelopmentplan.org to take part in the consultation.

OTHER PROJECTS
Work continues to find a solution to develop the refurbishment of the sad and unloved shopping centre in the centre of Evesham.
The owners of the Raven site in Droitwich have made no progress in bring forward plans to reinstate and develop the area. Wychavon is taking action to ensure public safety and protection of the listed parts of the building. The owners are being charged.
At the Valley shopping site in Evesham formally the country park David Lloyd have put in plans for a new leisure and sports gym complex."

Councillor Paul Middlebrough spoke of the funding which should come from the reorganisation and that the local authority hoped that £5milion would be put back into the community. The authority is looking at the bidding process, so it is not so onerous. This would be a legacy for Wychavon and there would be more about the funding later in the year.

On 5 February 2026 there would be an engagement with businesses and community groups. The Transforming Worcestershire proposal was available at www.wychavon.gov.uk.lgr

There was a discussion on the agricultural planning application submitted by GWR. Councillor Paul Middlebrough asked for a copy of the comments the Parish Council had sent.
JH

Councillor Middlebrough can be contacted on paul.middlebrough@wychavon.net

e) County Councillor:

Adrian Hardman writes:-

"Happy New year. I'm sorry not to be with you again tonight. I have a Council meeting at Wychavon; And I have elected to go to Sedgeberrow Parish Council, since being far off I suspect they feel a little neglected by me.
When I was leader of the County Council and had to lay out a corporate plan, I had a mantra which was vision, direction and order. After 10 months in power Reform have now laid out a vision of one aim which is to cure the financial crisis, that the County Council is in. This is no surprise to me, since it is the closest wolf to the sledge. They seem to have forgotten their pledge to cut Council Tax.
Unfortunately, out of this vision needs to come direction, and this is an area where they are still struggling, since they cannot find a way to the lower the expenditure, that appears to be acceptable to all their members. They need to reduce their capital expenditure, just do statuary duties, and they need to invest in the prevention work. They are applying for exceptional financial support to convert capital into revenue. But what we're seeing is capital projects having their funding replaced with Government grant, like the Structural Road maintenance fund being diverted into Hampton Bridge, which means in the division we will have £150,000 less to spend next year on roads. This trick only lasts till you reach the end of your prudential borrowing limit.
I used to think it was down to the officers to bring order. But sadly, I keep hearing all the experienced officers, who had decided to leave the organisation rather than take on the challenge. I'm heartbroken that some of our Highways, Waste, Accounts,

Children's and Adult Social Care team think in that it's in their interest to move to Birmingham, Hereford, or Gloucestershire. I suspect the Local Government Reorganisation does not help.
Just on to more local issues, I feel the gritting has gone well, and while the Eckington Bridge closure is a great annoyance, because of the way the rains came it was not as long as it could have been. The bridge across the Bowbrook must have been well under!

Councillor Adrian Hardman has advised Councillor Rupert Day that the Worcestershire County Council meeting is delayed from 19 to 26 February 2026 due to the need to wait for a response to the request to raise council tax by 10%, as well as the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) problem from HMG.
RD

f) Clerk - See ***Appendix 1***

5. Planning

a) Planning applications:

i. W/ 25/02611/LB – The Row, Lower End

Re-roofing of outbuildings, to include insertion of ridge beam and additional internal brick gables

Parish Council comment:
"*Birlingham Parish Council have no objection to the application and rely on the appointed planning officer ensuring that where existing materials cannot be reused appropriate "reclaimed" materials are sourced and utilised*."

PENDING

ii. W/26/02793/AGR - Woodfield Farm, Broadway Road WR10 3AG

Prior notification for the erection of a new agricultural building

Applicant - Revill

"*Birlingham Parish Council. The building proposed appears to be c 1/3 larger than the one it replaces. It is our understanding that the building equating to c 1417sqm comes in just below the 1500sqm limit for an agricultural unit on a site greater than 5 hectares, so it qualifies as permitted development and doesn't require planning permission. We have no objection therefore to the building being used for the storage of farm machinery, as indeed shown on the applicant's submission, but formally request that you as the planning authority state this as a condition in your determination:*

Formal Condition:

"That the premises are not to be used for other than the storage of farm machinery and equipment"

Notes in determination to be included to the applicant:

We would also ask you in your formal determination, to inform the applicant that any future change of use to an industrial/commercial activity, would require a new planning application.
We would also ask you to inform the applicant that the processing and packaging of produce is deemed to be an industrial/commercial activity and would require a new planning application."

The Clerk's correspondence to the Planning Officer assigned to the agricultural application, acknowledged both the formal and informal notes sent to them on 4 January 2026.

The members have made Councillor Middlebrough aware of the businesses operating at Woodfield Farm. It was felt that some parts of the 18/01442/FUL planning application comments were ignored and there were ongoing concerns regarding the use of the site, the volume of traffic, HGV's. The conditions of the application gave no formal planning constraints and yet the farm gave a number of understandings at the time. The Parish Council are trying to ensure that planning conditions are applied to the agricultural application. Councillor Middlebrough will progress and bring back to the next meeting. **PM**

b) Applications determined:

i. W/25/02072/W/25/02072/ CCO - Hills Cottage Upper End Birlingham Pershore WR10 3AA

Discharge of conditions 4 (Bat mitigation strategy) and 5 (External lighting) of planning application W/25/02657/HP.

APPROVED – 8 December 2025

c) Enforcement: - none.

d) CONSULTATION - Help shape the future of Wychavon Town

Information has been published in the Birlingham News 14 January 2026

"You are invited to share your views on a key document that will help shape the future of Wychavon Town.
We are running a public consultation on the Wychavon Town Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) from Monday, 12 January to 5pm on Tuesday, 17 February 2026.
The SPD acts as a set of guidance for developers as they work up their proposals and will be used by planners when deciding planning applications related to Wychavon Town, formerly known as Worcestershire Parkway.
The document sets out the vision, objectives and spatial framework to create the new town which will include 10,000 low carbon homes, low-traffic neighbourhoods, four parks and plenty of green space. There will also be a vibrant town centre, neighbourhood centres, flexible community spaces, employment land, primary and secondary schools, a sports hub, sports pitches and a GP and healthcare centre.
Details of how the development of the town will be monitored and managed to ensure key infrastructure goes in at least at the same time as housing, is also set out in the document.
You can have your say by filling in the online survey which can be found on the Wychavon Town website
Paper copies of the SPD will be available from local libraries, Stoulton Village Hall, Norton Parish Hall, Worcestershire Parkway Railway Station ticket office, the Civic Centre in Pershore, Council House in Malvern and The Hive in Worcester"

6. Financial Matters

a) The Accounts for 2025/2026

i) Bank balances - current is £5,959.06 as at end of December 2025 and Business saving balance is £18,631.20 as at end of December 2025. The CIL balance is noted on the spreadsheet and currently there are no further updates.

ii) Receipts

i. £120.00 – Worcestershire County Council – October Lengthsman
ii. £120.00 – Worcestershire County Council – November Lengthsman
iii. £250.00 – Worcestershire County Council – Divisional Grant Cuppa & Chat

iii) Payments agreed: –

i. £22.00 - Village Hall hire for November 2025 (transaction 26.11.25)
ii. £240.00 – Lengthsman September 2025 (transaction 26.11.25)
iii. £120.00 – Lengthsman October 2025 (transaction 26.11.25)
iv. £690.10 – Clerk's pay July, August, September 2025 (transaction 26.11.25)
v. £112.50 – Clerk's expenses July, August, September 2025 (transaction 10.10.25)
vi. £172.40 - PAYE October, November, December 2025 (transaction 12.01.26)
vii. £4.25 bank charges September
viii. £4.25 bank charges October

Note: Agreed waiting invoice for £250.00 – from Clarian for bench maintenance. Clerk has chased with Ian.
Awaiting bank details from Royal British Legion contact for the wreaths £70.00

Clerk's pay and expenses are not reading correctly on November 2025 minutes. The quarter reads as October, November, December but are July, August, September.

b) Future payments for consideration

i. £22. 00 – Village Hall hire for January 2026
ii. £120.00 – Lengthsman for November 2025
iii. £160.00 – Lengthsman for December 2025
iv. £690.10 - Clerk's pay October, November, December
v. £112.50 - Clerk's expenses October, November, December
vi. £4.25 – bank charges November
vii. £4.25 – bank charges December
viii. £350.00 - Litter bins annual charge (budget £300 noted that this is underbudgeted)

Note:

£250.00 – Councillor Hardman Divisional Fund – Grant for Cuppa & Chat
£250.00 – Councillor Hardman Divisional Fund – Grant for IW

The grants are kindly given by Councillor Adrian Hardman for community groups in the parish. Contact has been made by the Clerk to the group leaders.

c) Budget setting:

The budget requirement was discussed and agreed in November 2025 as £7,125.00 (includes a grant of £179.00).

Calculations have now been received from Wychavon District Council.

Clerk has submitted the application and it has been acknowledged by Wychavon District Council - 5 January 2026. This will result in a Band D charge of £42.24 on the 2026-27 Council Tax Demand, **an increase of 2.3%** compared with the current year's charge.

Members asked the Clerk to make enquiries with Wychavon District Council to understand the calculation for the parish because the Parish Council had submitted a 0% increase.
JH

d) Pension Regulations submitted. Every 3 years a declaration of compliance is required. Clerk has actioned as the submission was due by 4 February 2026.

7. Discuss actions from previous meeting

Community Initiatives / Community Project Funding (CIL) and Consultation on Community Infrastructure Projects

Village groups have been sent a questionnaire to help the Parish Council understand priorities that might be promoted, supported and subsidised with the criteria for funding by CIL (available fund of £1,500 which may be contributed to further by Parish Council project funding). There have been a few informal suggestions on the CIL utilisation but minimal feedback to the survey published in the Birlingham News.

The primary suggestions were:

- A replacement marquee for community use and the Flower & Produce Show.
- A sign for the Village Hall celebrating its 100th anniversary.
- Pickleball for the Village Hall.
- Reinstatement of a legacy signpost on the Defford Road at Upper End.

The replacement marquee has been postponed as the show may be held in the village hall. The cricket ground where the Flower & Produce Show is currently held needs the landowner's permission. The cost to replace is considerably more than first anticipated. For the time being the existing marquees will be used.

A sign for the village hall must be costed, an accepted design agreed and possible formal advertisement consent would have to be researched. The village hall will explore alternative grant funding for this. The BVH Chair will progress.

Pickleball equipment is not feasible due to the lack of storage space and the area of play in the hall.

Refurbishment of the legacy signpost which is currently on the main road by the turning to Upper End. This might also be relocated to a more central part of the village as a heritage item. Councillor Rupert Day has investigated some options for refurbishment/powder coating with estimates of £1,500. Councillor Rupert Day will progress options for the refurbishment and the position. To bring back to the next meeting.
RD

Members and the BVH Chair discussed the hall heating and environmental matters. The District Councillor advised on the carbon reduction office to take things forward in that respect. The BVH Chair will progress and speak with Councillor Steven Bryne, as previously minuted, regarding surveyors.

Speeding/signage/other - Addressing concerns over speeding, residential disruption and pedestrian safety.

- Upper End

  Meeting with Worcestershire County Council Highways (Barry Barnes; County Councillor Adrian Hardman and Councillor Paula Aston) firstly on 8 December 2025 via Teams and then face to face on 17 December 2025 to discuss road markings:

  i. Upper End/New Barn Road Roundels

  Barry Barnes at Highways said that these would be repainted in April when the weather improves, along with the re-doing of the current white line.

ii. Road narrowing road signage

Councillor Rupert Day and Barry Barnes have liaised and spoken about the various options available from Highways under their scheme. Worcestershire County Council does not accept any road narrowing signage on the road itself, only the signs as the parish have currently, on poles. Barry offered to extend the white lines however this was decided against. It was greed that they would be redone exactly as they are.

Councillors agreed that these suggestions, as approved by Highways will go ahead. County Councillor Hardman has also given his support of this.

Consideration will also be given to painting Dragons Teeth to highlight the change in speed limit. These can only be done at a speed limit change sign. Members wanted the lines where the road narrows, so it was decided that they were not suitable. Residents are invited to provide feedback on whether they think this would be helpful at controlling speed and appropriate to the village setting. Councillor Ian Yates will include this in his chairman's report in the Birlingham News.
IY

- New Barn Road

  New Barn Road will be discussed in the future with Highways. Consideration of changing the speed limit which has the support of County Councillor Hardman and Barry Barnes at Highways. This is something that could be addressed as part of the proposed increase in housing density on Eckington Road. Councillor Steven Bryne to be advised.
  SB/RD

- Signage

  A reminder was to be put in Birlingham News regarding the new 20mph signs. Most residents are aware, so this was considered not necessary now.

  A speed reduction sign would qualify under the CIL policy. Was this still to be considered?

- Public Rights of Way

  Communication has been sent to Jon Sansome, Farm Manger addressing his points on Footpath 510C (from the Avenue to Withy Walk) and Footpath 506C (from The Avenue/memorial below The Old Rectory. The Parish Council asked about crops blocking the footpaths. The village is grateful to the farm for providing permissive paths however it is important that when footpaths are blocked by crops that the alternative paths, which may be acceptable to walkers, can't become permanent without going through the proper legal process.

- Meeting with Redstar Growers

  A meeting took place on 7 November 2025 with Redstar Growers regarding disruption by HGV's and since this the company has been in contact with their hauliers to explain villagers' concern. The Parish Council now wait to see if this makes a difference.

  RedStar explained that lorries typically make several pickups so are not only coming to Birlingham. This means that their time of arrival varies. The key point the Parish Council are making is that regardless of how they are scheduled, they should not enter the village until the farm is open and ready to service them. The HGV's should park up somewhere outside the village and only enter just before the farm's opening time (6:00am in Summer and 7:00am in Winter). There is no excuse for them entering in the early hours of the morning, disrupting residents and then parking up in the village. Data has been received by the Parish Council which shows vehicles entering and exiting. There has been no further communication from the farm at this time on the opening hours.

Highway Issues - Flooding at Lower End near Manor Paddock

Councillor Steven Byrne is still in conversation with Severn Trent Water regarding the flooding between the Moors and the Manor Stables. It has not been as bad this year as in previous years. However, the core issue of the collapsed Severn Trent abandoned surface water sewer still needs to be rectified. Councillor Byrne to bring back to meeting when there is progress.

8. Lengthsman – Retirement and Vacancy

It was reported in November, that Carl Brassington, the Parish's long standing Lengthsman, had decided to retire at the end of the 2025. The Parish Council are therefore actively looking for a replacement who might also be able to help on work around the churchyard. The Clerk has approached two candidates and Councillor Yates has approached a third person who is interested. Clerk to send job specification. Clerk to follow up.
JH

9. Councillors' reports and items for next agenda

Correspondence from Barncroft was noted. Chairman, Councillor Yates has assisted on behalf of the Parish Council where possible. No further action.

12. Closure and date of next ordinary meeting - with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 7.00pm.

The meeting will be held in Birlingham Village Hall.

Signed: ..... Councillor Ian Yates, Chairman

Date: ……

Appendix 1 – Clerk's Report

i. Highways / Public Rights of Way

Meeting 7 November 2025 with Redstar – note sent by farm to Parish Council

19 December 2025

"Good afternoon All

Following our meeting in November, we have spoken to the hauliers concerned but we all agree that a 15-minute telephone conversation isn't going to result in a complete change of schedule for the fleet of transport in each company. As we have mentioned previously, the deliveries/collections to Red Star do not involve just one vehicle but are part of a logistics plan that changes on a daily basis depending on other commitments the individual hauliers have. We are just one element of their business but in fairness to them, they have tried to accommodate our request for later visits to the site.

The hauliers we use are nominated by our customers and as James commented at our meeting, the hauliers we used in the past were Bannisters and Freshlinc. After discussions with many of our customers we managed to agree with some of them to use the same Haulier which is Fowler Welch (part of the Culina Group). One of the reasons was to try and reduce the early collections and consolidate multiple orders and depots onto less vehicles rather than, say, sending multiple vehicles for each depot (as an example, for certain customers we supply 10+ depots). Originally, they were keen to send in one lorry to collect for each depot but they did finally agree to the consolidation of orders and at the same time, this enabled us to be more efficient in the loading times at our Packhouse.

We believe that by having a contract with FW, this has reduced the number of vehicle movements quite considerably although we accept, they are not always adhering to our opening times. However, as we discussed at our meeting, the reasons given were explanations as to why this is happening and unfortunately it is not something we can always control if we want to continue running our business efficiently and successfully.

Our planning for the Christmas schedule of collections and deliveries began mid-November, and at the moment we are not aware of any extreme cases of early site visits.

We have agreed to have a face-to-face meeting with FW which we hope will enable them to understand the issues we have with the residents of Birlingham but also help us to understand the problems they have in trying to accommodate us whilst at the same time, trying to accommodate their other customers too.

With best wishes for the Christmas and New Year period and we will be in touch early in the New Year with an update."

ii. Public Rights of Way

Footpaths 510 The Avenue to Withy Walk and 506 Memorial westerly towards Eckington Road (below The Old Rectory)

23 November 2025 – Parish Council to Farm Manager

> *"Thank you for your response which was discussed at the recent Parish Council meeting; especially since another resident came to the meeting and raised the footpath issue in the person.*

Firstly, while the Parish Council recognises and is grateful for the efforts that the farm has made to allow residents to walk across its land via various Permissive Paths, the obstruction of a designated footpath is a criminal offence under the Highways Act 1980 and therefore, since it has been raised, the Parish Council has to address it with you.

I visited the field which 510C crosses and could not actually identify where the footpath should be since the crops cover the whole field. I attach 2 photos of the from the beginning of the footpath. It is obstructed so the Parish Council and the two residents do not agree with your statement that there is a 70cm gap (vs the metre) across the field. It also does not seem to fit with the photographs. So please let us know when the footpath will be reinstated in full.

The Parish Council recognises that the blocking of 506C has been raised before but a designated footpath cannot be blocked long-term, and a Permissive Path should not be put in place as an alternative, even in the short-term.

This does have to be addressed formally and if you wish to change the footpath the landowner needs to go through proper legal process. Since the farm is taking responsibility for this, the Parish Council assumes that the farm is either the landowner or has the landowner's permission in this matter; email of 9th November, the Parish Council is prepared to look favourably on any reasonable proposal.

Given that the discussion will be part of the PC minutes for the Birlingham News it would be helpful for everyone if we could also say that we have had a response from the farm. The Parish Council and RedStar are getting together from time to time in order to discuss any issues and although we do not always agree, in James' words - "we are talking". Could I suggest that we do the same with the farm- you might have things you want to raise with us in addition to being able to plan and communicate things to Birlingham residents before they raise them with us?

I look forward to hearing back from you."

Footpath 508 - Broadwalk Eckington Road towards Defford (below Brook Cottages)

Correspondence from Defford resident and Phil Coulson, Operations Manager, Public Rights of Way

24 November 2025 from resident to Clerk

"Hello Ms Hiden,

I'm still awaiting an update on this chronic outstanding issue in the Birlingham Parish.

I note that on the Birlingham Village website under the 'Parish Council' tab that the last recorded draft minutes were for19th March 2025, and Agenda for the 21st May 2025.

Hoping for a positive response."

24 November 2025 Clerk replies to resident

"I have no further update to give following the contact I had with Phil Coulson as I advised you. As you have copied Mr Coulson into this email and the County Councillor I will wait to see their response.

I have asked the person responsible for the parish website why the agendas and minutes have not updated on the link."

Resident response

"Thank you. We now await a further response from those responsible for rectifying the damage to the Causeway located on the Eckington Circular, BL508 and when it will be restored to its original safe length.

It is now coming up to over three years since the causeway was originally damaged putting members of the public at risk."

25 November 2025 – Phil Coulson

"Hi All,

To confirm our position remains the same that we consider the boardwalk to be safer at its current length given it avoids the bridge being used in flood conditions. If there's anything which has changed on the ground, such as damage from the recent flooding, I'd be happy to arrange for it to be inspected."

25 November 2025 resident to Phil Coulson, copied to Clerk and County Councillor

"Hello Phil,

I'm afraid the argument that the boardwalk is safer at its current length given it avoids the bridge being used in flood conditions doesn't hold true as evidenced by the photographs attached.

The bridge may be crossed safely, but not the causeway as it has been purposely shortened to approximately one third of its original length and fails to reach the safe higher ground.

This situation now may impede a designated 'link' footpath and indeed is dangerous to the public if someone attempts to wade across from the shortened causeway with the step now provided at the end where once the full causeway existed.

The causeway needs to be made safe by being restored to its original length, or the remedial work carried out so far has been a waste of taxpayers' money, and most importantly has put the public at risk.

Would you please reconsider the situation, and restore the causeway to its safe original length in the light of this evidence?"

25 November 2025 to resident from Phil Coulson

"Many thanks for the photos. My main concern is we are aware people commonly crossed the bridge in flood conditions, wading through water that was above the level of the bridge deck. Given the Bow Brook is obviously quite a dangerous watercourse and the bridge is of a somewhat unconventional and aging construction I don't want anything in place that encourages use in flood conditions. Our consultant bridge engineers have also raised this concern with me following previous inspections.

To be honest looking at your photos I actually think we should have probably removed more of it.

Due to the classification of watercourse, it is to install a new bridge, or boardwalk would require formal land drainage consent from the Environment Agency – to receive this legal consent we would need to show that it doesn't interfere with the flow of water in flood conditions, which clearly it does. Ultimately that means installing, at a very significant costs, a much larger bridge.

The bridge receives a safety inspection from consultant bridge engineer every 2 years. I'll check when that's due next."

26 November 2025 resident reply to Phil Coulson

"I was only concerned about the safety of the causeway, but I can understand your concern about the safety of the bridge in high flood water.

The bridge has handrails on both sides, but there is always a risk of a member of the public attempting to cross the submerged bridge following the line of the handrails. However, the bridge is 'fenced-in' on both sides with chain linked mesh within the handrails down to the decking as a control measure to mitigate the risk of a member of the public being carried away. The bridge has been flooded many times in my near thirty-year experience, and there has never been any reported incidents which indicates the effectiveness of this risk reduction measure.

I can also appreciate that a new bridge raised above the highest flood level would require major surgery, involve substantial cost, and disturb the present 'status quo'.

Which brings us back to the main risk factor of the truncated causeway into deep water. If the causeway was removed completely, this would only mean the bridge would now terminate into deeper water. Indeed, an entirely new bridge at a raised level would face the same situation. Hence, is restoring the causeway with its handrail back to the original length the most cost-effective way of mitigating the risk to the public?

When I was Chairman of the Defford-cum-Besford Parish Council, I came across the attached photo of the bridge and causeway taken before the first world war in simpler times.

Surely, we must find a safe way to preserve this ancient route between Defford and Birlingham for the continued enjoyment of all.

I hope that you find my comments of help to resolve this difficult safety issue."

Response from Phil Coulson

"Thanks for the photo – that's quite interesting to see, I don't think that would cope too well with the floods we have these days. I'm guessing the current bridge was probably built in the 60's/70's as it's typical of quite a few have from back then but looking at the photo probably some of the underpinnings are older.

The issue of people using it during flood and getting a bit unstuck has been raised with us and resulted in myself and our bridge engineers rushing out one dark evening in the pouring rain a few years ago after someone nearly went for a swim. I'm also very aware there's a huge amount of water pressure on a bridge that's built rather unconventionally."

Swans Neck / Asham Lane

Chairman to Porter Farming – 22 December 2025

"Just a quick email to wish you a Happy Christmas and thank you on behalf of the parish council for strimming under the withy trees at Swan's Neck as we had discussed. I'm sure villagers appreciate you doing this. Also, I assume that you pollarded the trees along the track at the top of Asham meadow. It's certainly much more accessible now".

iii. Flytipping – New Barn Road

Councillor Porter to Clerk.

Sorry to report the fly tippers on New Barn Road - this time by the gate nearest the Eckington Road.



Clerk reported to the Community and Environmental Protection Team, Wychavon District Council who replied saying it would be dealt with within 5 days. It has been passed onto the contractor for them to remove.

iv. Neighbourhood Matters

To be published on the Birlingham website.

Circulated in the Birlingham News.

Burglary appeal, 597089521

14 January 2025 - The Police

We are appealing to Birlingham community for information following an attempt burglary at a home on THE AVENUE, BIRLINGHAM, WORCESTERSHIRE, WR10 3AB. The burglary took place at approx 0040 hours on 14th Jan 2026.

Did you see anything suspicious or have any information that might help enquires?

Please get in touch with us by responding to this message and quoting incident number 00013_I_14012026

v. Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 - 2030

From Simon Smith, Nature Recovery Lead, Cotswolds National Landscape

Monday 5 January

> *"You may recall that we consulted on the 2025 – 2030 Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan which was subsequently adopted by the CNL Board in February 2025 with a simple version being published on our website soon after.*

I am pleased to report that the designed version which is much easier to use has now been completed. A copy is attached and it can be downloaded here.

Parish and Town Councils are included within the definition of "relevant authorities" for the purposes of the public duty to "seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes". This is outlined more in appendix 4 of the plan.

Appendix 5 of the plan outlines recommended actions for all relevant authorities and Parish and Town Councils in particular. One of the many key actions is to; "Use the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to inform Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements and when considering planning applications." We have also published a Neighbourhood Planning Position Statement. to provide further guidance on how to do this.

There are eight Parish Council CNL Board Members, each appointed by a group of Parish Councils. If you have any questions concerning how your council can best support the outcomes of this Management Plan, please contact your Parish Council Board Member in the first instance (copied in). Please note. If you received a copy of this e-mail with Rebecca as your contact, please use this one. Matt is your correct contact.

One of the strongest themes of the Management Plan is how the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Cotswolds is a collaborative effort. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that the Cotswolds remains a place that inspires people to look after it. Now and for generations to come."

vi. Correspondence

Barncroft

15 December 2025 - Email received from owner

"Back in October last year we observed some cracking in an internal wall, and a couple of doors upstairs were not closing as they should, we fixed these issues, but the problem re-occurred.

I contacted our insurer who said it wasn't subsidence but probably due to age related movement of the internal walls.

In the last few weeks, the problem has got serious with large cracks appearing in several walls and wall and floor tiles lifting, I have employed a Structural Engineer who informs me that the floors have sunk, hence causing the movement.

We have lived at Barncroft since October 1996, this is a recent problem.

It is our opinion the problem has been created by the installation of drainage pipes (in 2018) that run under the lawns of the property. June, you may recall the installation was to relieve the flooding in the road at Upper End, we believe that this installation has dramatically reduced the water table under our property and subsequently following drier summers our home is moving.

If you would like to visit the Property in look at the damage, we would appreciate your input and assistance.

I have attached some photographs."

16 December 2025 - Response from Chairman, copied to all members.

> *"Thanks for your email and I'm sorry to hear about the cracking of internal walls.*
>
> *I have been back through the Parish Council's records and can see that new drainage was installed as part of several different flood alleviation measures around the village. This work was carried out by Ringway who were contracted by Worcester County Council. The drainage you refer to was to reduce persistent flooding in Upper End and our 22 May 2018 minutes noted; Owners of Barncroft and the Brockham track/coppice have been hand delivered a letter of permission to work across land, a consent form and plan for land in their ownership where pipes are to be laid as part of the upgrade. I understand that the pipes were routed through your garden and down the field to the north of the Old Stables. The original pipe had been broken and was invaded by roots, so they installed a new pipe that flows into a ditch that then runs down towards Eckington Road.*
>
> *If you believe the cracking is due to this pipe, then it is something that you would need to take up with WCC directly. The Parish Council had no involvement in the design and installation of the drainage. We simply asked WCC to address the flooding issue. So, there would be little benefit in me or other PC members visiting the house given that you have already had expert advice from Davies.*
>
> *However, I can provide you with a contact at WCC and an introduction if you wish to follow it up. Let me know."*

17 December 2025 – further email from Chairman to owner

> *"We have made some enquiries to try and identify if there is a named individual you could contact about this or whether it is better for you to follow the normal procedure of making a formal complaint to WCC. By coincidence, a couple of members of the parish council were meeting with WCC today on another matter and so I asked them to raise your concerns. They showed them the email you sent and WCC agreed to look at their records and come back to us in a few days. In reality this is likely to be after the holidays. As soon as I have anything useful, I'll come back to you."*

Birlingham News - Extracts of interest

All News can be found online at birlingham.org

Birlingham News **369** – 24 December 2025

The online edition contains:

Christmas & New Year Message from the Parish Council Chair

Christmas Message from Revd Claire Lording

Christmas Message from Cllr Adrian Hardman

Christmas Bin Collections & 2026 Calendar

Birlingham News **370** – 14 January 2026

The online edition contains:

Break-in in the Avenue

Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 21st January

Potential Community Infrastructure Projects:

by Councillor David Glover

> *Further to my last article, we have had a few informal suggestions on CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) utilisation via Birlingham News. From the suggestions received, the primary contenders would be:*
>
> *• A sign for the Village Hall, celebrating its anniversary*
>
> *• A replacement marquee for the Flower & Produce Show and community events, etc.*
>
> *• Pickleball equipment for the Village Hall*
>
> *• Reinstatement of the legacy signpost on Defford Road, adjacent to Upper End*
>
> *The Parish Council is planning to review all suggestions at the meeting on 21st January and then choose a project for the CIL funds. Please email June Hiden, Parish Clerk at birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk if you would like to express a view on the contenders or offer any alternatives for the councillors to consider.*
>
> *The previous article on CIL is included in Birlingham News no. 364.*

Safer Neighbourhood Team Drop-in Sessions

Wychavon Bin Collection Calendar 2026

Help Shape the Future of Wychavon Town