# Approved Minutes of the Blackawton Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 17 May 2022 at 7:30 p.m. in Blackawton Village Hall

This was a great meeting with representatives from most of Blackawton's many community groups. I have summarised what was said and I'm not able to include details about members of the public. Please do get in contact if you want more information!
Apart from the Chair's opening and closing comments, the order of speakers was random (drawn from a teapot).

**Present:** Councillors Rake (Chair), Coe, Curry, Mallyon, Ougton and Thomas were present, as were South Hams District Councillor Reeve, and A Thom (Clerk). There were 28 members of the public.
**Apologies:** Councillor Mewes and Devon County Councillor Brazil.

## 1. Chair's Report – Looking Back

Councillor Simon Rake outlined some of the work done by Blackawton Parish Council (BPC) over the past two years: BPC responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, has taken local action about climate and the environment (including changing how it manages grounds maintenance in the Cemetery and Churchyard), has worked to support the completion of the French Furze project and been delighted to welcome two new councillors who live at French Furze, has employed a Parish Lengthsman to clear buddle holes (road drainage), and replaced two gates in the Cemetery.

## 2. Footpaths, Community Composting, Energy Saving Tips, and Energy Security

Councillor Ruth Coe discussed how as Footpath Warden she is available to support you to communicate with Devon County Council about the maintenance and repair of the network of footpaths and bridleways throughout the parish.
She has been researching the feasibility of setting up a community composting system in Blackawton. She said that although garden waste collections have now restarted there is no guarantee they will always continue and there are considerable greenhouse gas emissions associated with taking garden waste to a processing site up country where it becomes a resource and returning it to South Hams – which could be avoided if Blackawton managed this operation itself. Councillor Coe is seeking feedback from the Blackawton community on whether there is a need for, and a willingness to participate in, a community composting scheme that would deal with Blackawton's garden waste locally.
Councillor Coe shared a few tips on the potential to save substantial energy and money by changing how we run our appliances.
Councillor Coe also discussed community energy security and some possible actions which could be explored. She noted that wind turbine cost and technology has improved since it was last considered by Blackawton and also the support of energy efficient housing and insulation.

## 3. Blackawton WI

Blackawton WI is a friendly and active group. Activities include lunch club, book club, craft club, and monthly meetings with speakers. The WI welcomes ladies of any age.

## 4. West Dart Bus

The West Dart Bus is now part of the IDCTA [Ivybridge & District Community Transport Association]. It needs more volunteer drivers, and standby drivers for the School Bus. It currently runs two trips to Dartmouth each month and one trip to Newton Abbot per month. Trips are free. You need to book 24 hours in advance. The Bus can be hired: £55 plus fuel. Please support your Bus!

## 5. Dartmouth Young Farmers

You don't have to be a farmer - anyone aged 10 to 28 can join. Young Farmers supports its members and the farming community. Activities include shearing, rock climbing, and bouldering, travel via exchange visits. They are active fundraisers. Young Farmers invites new members - especially over 18s.

## 6. Bellringing at St Michael's

The bells of St Michael's Church have been ringing since 1782. What the ringers would like to do now is to encourage new ringers in order to continue this very long tradition. Some of the bell ringers have done an

Association of Ringing Teachers course so can provide structured training for learners. Bell ringing is a great social hobby, wonderful for body and soul. If you would like more information, please contact Councillor Allan Mallyon.

**7. Blackawton Primary School FOBS & BPS Forest School's Habitat Homes Project**

Blackawton Primary School is going to work alongside Sustainable Blackawton on a project in June 2022 to celebrate The Platinum Jubilee. All children at the school (from Nursery through to Year 6) will be involved in the project to create habitat homes for our local wildlife. Workshops will be run during the children's Forest School sessions at school to make bird boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog homes or bug hotels, which will subsequently be put up in different locations in and around Blackawton village and primary school. This is a wonderful opportunity for the whole of the local community to come together to celebrate The Platinum Jubilee, at the same time as enabling the children at Blackawton Primary School to further their learning about the importance of protecting natural habitats and to help care for their local environment.

**8. Project to Reintroduce Water Voles to the River Gara**

A group of is working together with those living near the Gara to reintroduce the water vole in the near future. The plan is to release 800 water voles at four sites over a two-year period. The project needs £27,000 (£13,000 for the first tranche) and hopes to confirm a contract in September. The water vole used to be very common but now its numbers have declined by almost 90% and it is classified as endangered. As a keystone species water voles have a beneficial effect on the habitat and support other species.

**9. Community Shop**

The Community Shop has been in existence for 10 years now. It is a Community Benefit Society: owned by, run by, and for the benefit of the community. The Shop exists to meet community need. It proved its worth during COVID. It stocks basic items and more at reasonable value. It is increasing its focus on local suppliers.
The Shop is run by a volunteer Management Committee of six people and one paid part-time Manager. It has 30 active volunteers, seven of which are trained to run the Post Office. The Shop welcomes new members!

**10. Phone Box "Jubilee" Restoration Project, Fibre to Premises Broadband Rollout to Rural Areas of the Parish & Worm Charming**

Councillor Steve Thomas describe the Platinum Jubilee project to renovate the phone box on Main Street. The Crest on the phone box will be detailed in a silver colour. Volunteers are welcome! The next phase will be to decide how to use the phone box!
Councillor Thomas has volunteered to be Blackawton's Broadband Champion. Broadband roll out to rural communities is a government funded project – with fibre connection to premises. At this point only 135 of 209 rural Blackawton residences are scheduled to receive fibre. To see if your property is included, go onto the Airband site and do a post code search [https://www.airband.co.uk/]. If the answer is no, he suggests that you register your interest and contact the South Hams District Council Officer for the project. He will work with SHDC to try and resolve.
Worm Charming was a great success! The wash up meeting tomorrow will distribute the money raised to Devon Air Ambulance Trust and others.

**11. South Hams District Councillor Reeve**

SHDC Councillor Reeve reported on SHDC's activities: The financial team continue to work extremely hard keeping the council finance stable and many COVID grants have continued to be paid out. Six extra Locality Officers were taken on in time for summer 2021 helping to keep an eye on our beaches, towns, carparks, dog and anti-social behaviour. Four extra Planning Officers were appointed to hopefully help with demand and enforcements have had a shake up and we are seeing improvements there. We also have an excellent housing team which work incredibly hard and do help many residents in need, this also includes those residents needing assistance in their homes with the likes of stair lifts etc. Waste has been a problem. Although the grey bins and recycling has settled, unfortunately brown bins are being missed, where the council apologises. Climate change and biodiversity has its own Officer helping to research ideas and hold meetings. A good fund has been put aside to assist with projects. There is also an Officer dealing with the internet courage in the South Hams working with residents and Airband. Our Leisure Centres work hard as they try to reinstate their usage after coping with Covid and talks are in hand to put solar panels on their roofs. A housing crisis was declared in the

South Hams and schemes have been put in place: from helping with deposits for those in social housing to buy, encouraging downsizing, and finding ways to build more affordable homes. I have supported good worthwhile projects with my locality fund in my Ward and have used some of my climate change fund. Consultation has been in place about climate change and biodiversity in our developments being included in the Joint Local Plan.

**12. Blackawton Parish Minutes Project**

During lockdown a project took place to digitise all the handwritten Council minutes, dating from the Council's formation in 1894 until 1997 when they started to be kept digitally, and was fortunate to get offers of help from several parishioners. The team has nearly finished this very time-consuming job. The team lead commented they think they have all been struck by the changes, and even sometimes the lack of them, over time; we may still get complaints about road repairs and blocked buddle holes but the current council is much more business-like than that of 1894! We hope that, by the autumn, digital copies of all eight minute books, plus the vestry minutes which preceded them from 1880-1894, will be lodged with our Parish Clerk and also with the Devon Heritage Centre, so that they will be available to anyone who is interested.

**13. Councillor Chris Oughton - Why I joined the PC**

Councillor Chris Oughton discussed how he was motivated to volunteer help where he can and to be involved in the choices people make. He thanked those present, saying that we [the Parish Council] represent you and more. We want to listen to what you want.

**14. Village Hall**

The use of the Hall by the Parish for the Parish is free. There are problems with the roof trusses which will be replaced in the next three to four years and cost at least £50,000. There is the possibility of raising the roof and increasing the space available in the Hall at the same time.

**15. Transition Streets**

There the opportunity to implement this concept in Blackawton.

**16. Chair's Report - Looking Forward**

Councillor Simon Rake comments that if you have a project and people, money is probably not going to be a problem. He discussed some of the projects BPC is taking forward: The renovation and reuse of the phone box on Main Street, the transfer of the community assets at French Furze and the transfer the business units, whether Blackawton residents want street lighting, a speed survey, whether Blackawton residents want the village speed limit reduced to 20 miles an hour and extended where the village has extended, the transfer of the Slapton Line Monument to Strete Gate and then its maintenance by the six named parishes. He commented that this is a diverse, enthusiastic, talented, and giving community. The PC is available to help, support, and guide if needed.

The conclusion of the meeting was delayed by a final collection of news items:

- Look out for a new 'Gardening for Wildlife' booklet which has been written by local Sustainable groups and will soon be distributed to all homes in Blackawton.
- Jubilee Lunch, Church, Sunday 5 June. Bring and share. Wear red, white, and blue clothing.
- Blackawton Playing Fields Committee - Now has an active Committee. Welcomes new members.
- Driving Supplies to Poland - A trip is leaving on 31 May but expects to repeat.

And a post meeting note from BaSH (Blackawton and Strete History) - BaSH has extensive resources and money in the bank which could provide real opportunities for someone new!

**17. Celebration**

The formal meeting was followed by drinks and refreshments!