

**Minutes of the Meeting of Clayhidon Parish Council
Held at the Village Hall, Clayhidon, at 7.30pm on Monday, 9 February 2026**

Present:

Councillors Bendle, Drew (Vice-Chair), Kidner, King and Weekes together with Mrs S McGeever (Parish Clerk).

09022026/1. Welcome by Chairman, apologies for absence and introductions

Apologies had been received from and were approved for Councillors Blackmore and Saunders (Chair) and Councillor Clist (MDDC and DCC Councillor).

In Councillor Saunder's absence, Councillor Drew (Vice-Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

Councillor Drew noted the large attendance at the 'Action Pothole' meeting that had taken place prior to this meeting and the group would be progressed over the coming weeks.

09022026/2. Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

09022026/3. To approve minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2026

It was RESOLVED that with minutes of the meeting of 12 January 2026 should be signed by the Vice-Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting and the minutes were duly signed.

PROPOSER: Councillor King

SECONDER: Councillor Bendle

DECISION: unanimous by those present at the last meeting

09022026/4. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Presentation from Connecting the Culm

John Hickey from Connecting the Culm spoke to the Parish Councils on the projects the organisation could fund to try and slow down the flow of water in the Culm Valley to help prevent flooding. The projects were based on nature-based solutions and included:

- Improving Soil Management
- Tree planting
- Woodland management
- Green engineered bunds
- Reconnecting rivers to their floodplains
- Restoring floodplain meadows
- Leaky dams and flow spreaders
- Restoring or reinstating hedgerows
- Creating ponds, scrapes and sediment traps
- Restoring wetlands and mires
- Swales

Connecting the Culm had been working with landowners since 2019 on such projects and the change in the climate providing increased rainfall had an impact on communities on the Culm with conditions worsening as the river flowed to the sea. This could be seen by flooding in Hemyock, Uffculme and Hele with the railway being underwater.

Both Councillors Weekes and Drew had worked with Connecting the Culm in 2020 to put in leaky dams etc.

The Culm valley had moved from being a predominantly tree covered area with multi-channels for the Culm to intensive farming and many natural features to slow water down had been lost. Government funding was available to assist with tree and hedge planting and there was a move to more sustainable farming that provided a environmental benefit.

The Parish Council requested a meeting to look at the land owned by the Clayhidon Charity, the John Griss Charity and the Parish Council itself to see if any works could be funded under the various projects offered by Connecting the Culm.

09022026/5. Planning

5.1 To consider the following planning applications:

No planning applications had been received for consideration.

5.2 To note the following planning decisions:

No planning applications had been received for consideration.

5.3 Enforcement

It was understood that the Enforcement Officer had several ongoing investigations which would be reported as and when Enforcement Notices were in the public domain. These included Poachers Rest (22/01124/FULL) and the removal of hedging.

09022026/6. Finance

The Parish Council noted the financial report provided by the Clerk.

6.1 Unity Bank Current Account

Balance on 31 December 2025	£3345.70	
Less payments		
Defibrillator pad	£ 82.20	
Clerk wages (Oct-Dec)	£ 578.80	
HMRC (PAYE adjusted)	£ 11.91	
Clerk expenses (Oct-Dec)	£ 78.00	
Clerk mileage (Oct-Dec)	£ 28.80	
Clayhidon Parochial Church Council (meeting room)	£ 18.00	
Service Charge	£ 6.00	£803.71
Receipts		
Locality Budget	£ 250.00	

Balance on 31 January 2026 **£2791.99**

Payments to be made:

Parish Online (website)	£ 384.00
C Houghton (Lengths man)	£1443.00
C Houghton (Footpaths)	£ 348.50

The Parish Council RESOLVED to pay the above invoices.

6.2 Unity Bank Instant Access Account

Balance on 31 December 2025	£8331.43
Less payments	
Receipts	
Balance on 31 January 2026	£8331.43

The Cumulative bank reconciliation from 1 April 2025 to 31 January 2026 has been produced by the Clerk and it was duly signed by the Vice-Chair at the meeting.

The ten-month budget monitoring information has been circulated to Parish Councillors who noted the current financial position.

6.3 S106

Clayhidon has £2500.00 towards benches in open spaces.

The S106 application has been prepared for submission to MDDC but one of the suppliers who had supplied a quotation had ceased trading. The Clerk would organise another quote.

6.4 Defibrillators

C Houghton continues to monitor the defibrillators.

6.5 Grant requests

The Parish Council noted the Clerk's report that the John Griss Charity had RESOLVED to give a grant of £750.00 to St Andrew's Church on 8 December 2025, therefore, no grant was required from the Parish Council.

6.6 Precept 2026-27

The precept had been submitted.

Given that the Band D charge had increased by more than £20, MDDC had requested a short paragraph explaining the increase. They were then required to provide the information to the Government.

6.7 Locality Budget

A second locality budget application for £250.00 has been submitted towards another new noticeboard and this has been agreed and the monies received.

09022026/7. Clerk Update and Correspondence

Dates for the Pump

The copy deadline dates for the Pump were noted as follows:

14th Mar - Apr May issue

14th May - Jun Jul issue

14th Jul - Aug Sep issue

14th Sep - Oct Nov issue

14th Nov - Dec Jan issue

The Clerk would ensure the information for the Parish Council was up to date.

Mid Devon District Council Caravan site and mobile homes policy consultation

The Parish Council would consider its response at its next meeting.

Emergency Plan

The Clerk was still working on a draft Emergency Plan. When completed the Parish Council would need to consider who the members of the Response Team would be and take the plan to a Public Meeting. Funding was available for a Public Meeting and equipment.

Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Saunders had attended the Neighbourhood Planning meeting on Tuesday, 20 January 2025. The presentations given at the meeting had been circulated to all parish councillors.

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan was a long-term project that normally required the input of a planning consultant, and it needed to relate to the current Local Plan for the district. Given MDDC were in the process of updating the Local Plan, preliminary work could be undertaken but it should be approved following the publication of the Local Plan.

The recommendation had been to produce a Planning Statement in the interim, the information contained therein could be used in the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst it did involve public consultation, it was a much simpler project.

A housing needs survey was normally required, and the last such survey had been carried out in conjunction with Hemyock.

Free Landmark Tree

Councillor Drew advised that he would now be planting the tree and would provide the location and photo.

Storage of Parish documentation and maps

The Clerk was arranging for the minute books and maps to go to the Devon Archive.

Dumped Caravans

It was understood that whilst four caravans had been removed, another had appeared.

Blackdown Hills Parish Network

The request for support had been circulated to Parish Council. It was RESOLVED that this request would be reviewed alongside other grant expenditure.

Japanese Knotweed

The Clerk had received a response from the Environment Agency and all the information provided had been circulated to members of the Parish Council.

Connecting the Culm

See comments under Public Forum.

Assertion 10

The Clerk had attended three webinars covering all aspects of Assertion 10 and would bring a proposal to the next meeting. The presentations had been circulated to Parish Councillors.

Parish Councillors should all be using their gov.uk email addresses and if any personal equipment was used, it should be in line with a Bring Your Own Device policy.

The Clerk had circulated a Bring Your Own Device policy for approval.

PROPOSAL: The Bring Your Own Device policy be adopted.

PROPOSER: Councillor Drew

SECONDER: Councillor Weeks

DECISION: majority in favour

A Parish Council WhatsApp group would be created so that the Clerk could communicate important information generated for Parish Councillors. The group would have a 7-day delete.

Other matters:

Asset Register – the Clerk was working to determine whereabouts of all items listed

Continuity Plan – the Clerk was producing a continuity plan that could be held by the Chair of the Parish Council and would contain a list of processes and documentation. The Assertion 10 recommendation was that passwords were not kept in a document and, if necessary, they could be reset.

09022026/8. County Council Report

In the absence of Councillor Clist, no report was given.

09022026/9. District Council Report

In the absence of Councillor Clist, the Parish Council referred to the Town and Parish Report prepared by MDDC Councillor DuChesne which is published as an addendum to these minutes.

09022026/10. Highways/Footpaths

15.1 Highways

The Parish Council were heartened by the response to the 'Action Pothole' meeting and noted that Mr M Carter had volunteered to co-ordinate the group of volunteers and would be assisted by the Lengthsman.

The Clerk would seek several clarifications from Devon County Council in respect to the Road Warden scheme and use would be made of the Parish Council's volunteer policy.

A further meeting would be called to ensure that all legal requirements were in place before the group undertook any action.

A spreadsheet of actions would be started so that the effect of the actions taken could be monitored and key problem areas identified.

15.2 Footpaths

The Clerk had reported the missing sign at Lillicombe to DCC.

The Parish Council had requested that Mr West, Footpaths Officer, be invited to the February meeting but this had been postponed to the March meeting when the annual audit of parish footpaths would have been completed and Devon County Council P3 paperwork completed.

09022026/11. Clayhidon Charity & John Griss Charity

To receive any relevant information.

11.1 Clayhidon Charity

A meeting of the Clayhidon Charity is required to sign the accounts.
Trustees to decide on meeting date.

The Charity Commission Annual Return had been submitted funding sums were at a level where no audited accounts were required.

Merger

The Clerk was in discussions with the solicitor to move the potential merger of the Clayhidon Charity and John Griss Charity. This move would keep the charities two assets separate but reduce the need for two sets of accounts etc.

11.2 John Griss Charity

The Charity Commission Annual Return had been submitted together with a set of signed accounts and the charity's policy documents.

Councillor Kidner advised that:

- the tree work had been completed
- a grant had been received for the disabled fishing access
- the stretch tent had been mended and returned
- work was ongoing on the LEMPS monitoring
- work was ongoing on the format and presentations for the Annual Meeting

The Clerk advised that no questions had been received to date.

09022026/12. Items raised by Chair

The Chair had no issues to raise.

09022026/13. Items raised by Councillors

Councillor Weekes asked that the Clerk report the broken grit bin at Battle Hill to DCC Highways.

Councillor Bendle would chase the Garland Bowers hay payment.

09022026/14. Date of the Next Council Meeting

The Parish Council set the following dates for its meetings:

9 March

13 April

18 May

The Parish Council concluded that this year's Annual Parish Meeting which would take place prior to the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

A revised format would be considered for 2027.

Signed..... Date.....
Chairman

2026 January Parish Report

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The draft NPPF 2026 proposes significant changes aimed at enhancing sustainable growth and streamlining planning processes in England. The NPPF was released in December 2025 and is currently open for consultation until March 2026. The draft aims to strengthen national policy's role in driving sustainable growth and ensuring consistent decision making across England.

Mid Devon District Council is holding a Town and Parish Planning event for parish and town councillors **26 March 2026 18:00-20:30** to cover this and other issues.

Businesses:

There has been a lot happening regarding Business Rates but there is help and guidance around. If you need further information please visit the website [Important changes to Business Rates 2026 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/important-changes-to-business-rates-2026) The site has also been updated to reflect the Government issued guidance giving extra relief to Pubs and Music venues. Those that qualify will get 15% off their net 2026/27 business rates bill, assuming our software supplier is able to make the changes bills will be issued with the extra relief applied.

Current estimates

c53 businesses may qualify

Estimated Value c£50k

MDDC will be compensated via s31 for the loss of income

Drop-in Day for Businesses

Business' are welcome to come in and or contact us to discuss their bills

Website link: [Business - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/business)

The event will be held on **Tuesday, 17 February 2026** at Mid Devon District Council Offices, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

There is no need to book, and you can visit anytime **between 10:30am and 5pm**.

Anyone who is unable to attend and has questions about the changes to Business Rates Relief can email the Revenues Team at: revenues@middevon.gov.uk and arrange to have a call back.

You can also find out a lot of **information about the changes to Business Rates on our website**.

As we move into a new year, Mid Devon District Council is encouraging businesses to sign up to their business e-newsletter

The e-newsletter keeps businesses informed about initiatives including grant schemes, training, and events, as well as a roundup of information and useful resources to support them.

[Mid Devon businesses encouraged to sign up to e-Newsletter](#)

Budget

After being summoned into a Govt webinar back in late September, warning around circa 60 Councils to expect funding cuts of around 7% and with no guidance on whether the threatened removal of business rates growth accrued since 2013/14 was going to materialise, the Council had planned for a very challenging 2026/27 budget.

Clarity on both of these positions was finally provided in late December. The Government, in providing a 3 year Funding Settlement (FS), only delivered funding cuts of 2.1% (although you could easily argue this is really 5% if you take account of inflation) and is providing 100% protection of all the extra business rates accrued since the beginning of this system (a huge relief). This had the effect of improving our earlier estimated budget gap reported to the January Cabinet meeting by around £1m.

This late news has significantly eased the Council's budget position for 2026/27 and it is now looking likely that we will be able to set a balanced budget, without the use of reserves, keep Council Tax increases within the Referendum Limit and continued to maintain our existing level and quality of service provision. A position we are very pleased to disclose.

The advantage of a 3 year FS is it gives more medium term financial certainty moving into the future – which enables more proactive strategic planning than rolling 1 year ones. Although the irony here is, that many Councils will not exist in the third year of FS! However, there are some other challenges included in the detail of the FS. At the end of 2028/29 we are £814k above our "fair funding" assessment (so what happens if this protection is removed?) and it also assumes that the Council's property base grows at the average level of the past 4 years (this is baked into the FS – so passes the financial risk of slow build out

rates in the District to the Council). Both of these changes generate further uncertainty into any future financial planning.

Leisure Pricing Strategy

A decision was made to freeze membership prices for the forthcoming year to support affordability and encourage sustained participation, while increasing pay as you go tariffs in line with inflation and market rates.

Decision to cease using 'X' (formerly 'Twitter') as a social media platform.

While the use of communication and social media channels should not ever be solely down to any alignment on 'brand values', the platform now permits the creation and distribution of content widely perceived as abusive. Online abuse creates real-life victims and real-life vulnerabilities, and as such the Council does not feel it should continue to utilise such a platform.

Waste and Recycling

To find out your waste and recycling day and download your 2025/26 calendar visit [Check collection dates - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)

Household Batteries

Batteries, especially lithium-ion batteries commonly found in everyday devices, can pose a severe fire hazard when disposed of incorrectly. Fires caused by batteries can spread rapidly, resulting in extensive damage to waste vehicles and facilities, and creating danger for residents and waste operatives. Recycling batteries correctly is not only a matter of safety but also a vital environmental responsibility. Batteries contain hazardous materials that can leach into the soil and water if not recycled properly. By ensuring batteries are placed in designated recycling boxes, we contribute to the protection of our environment and reduce the risk of fires.

To help prevent battery-related fires, residents are encouraged to follow these essential guidelines:

1. **Use designated recycling boxes:** General household batteries can be recycled as part of your fortnightly recycling collection - batteries must be placed in a clear plastic bag or tub, and left on top of the black box clearly visible for our collection crews. We do not collect Lithium-Ion batteries at this time.
2. **Wrap or tape batteries:** Used batteries are not always completely discharged so take caution when disposing of multiple used batteries that could come into contact with one another. To dispose of the batteries safely, cover the positive terminal of each battery with tape.
3. **Drop off at recycling centres:** When in doubt, consider dropping off batteries at designated recycling centres or collection points.
4. **Educate others:** Spread the word about the importance of proper battery disposal to friends, family, and neighbours.

Green Enterprise Grants This scheme will run again, this time for 2 years up to March 2028 with a budget of £20k/year. Look for news of it from March. The purpose of the grants is to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) based in Mid Devon to invest in improved efficiency, for resource and energy savings and cost savings, to achieve reduced environmental impact and particularly climate impacts (carbon footprint). Note for Town & Parishes: there is an intention to make it easier in this round for community halls to apply (village halls, parish halls, church halls).

WHATS ON

26 February Grand Western Canal - Illustrated Talk

[Grand Western Canal - Illustrated Talk - Visit Mid Devon](#)

Westex Rec junior parkrun

A free, fun, and friendly weekly 2k event for juniors (4 to 14 year olds) is now held every Sunday at 9:00am. The event takes place at Westex Recreation Ground, Wellbrook Street, Tiverton, EX16 5BP.

[home](#) | [Westex Rec junior parkrun](#) | [Westex Rec junior parkrun](#)

The Source Trade Show

Food, drink and hospitality businesses - join the Growth Hub team at The Source Trade Show on Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th February at Westpoint Arena, Exeter. The show brings together suppliers, ideas and insights designed to help businesses stay competitive in a fast moving sector.

With hundreds of food and drink brands under one roof, visitors can explore quality ingredients, equipment and services essential for the year ahead. It is an opportunity to discover new products, refine existing offers and spot emerging trends across hospitality, catering and food retail.

Visit our stand G8 to speak to the Growth Hub team about available business support for food, drink and hospitality businesses.

Registration is free for trade buyers, register here: <https://enrolment.engage-powered.com/sr/go/register.aspx> Find out about the show: thesourcetradeshow.co.uk.

Gwen DuChesne

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