

Annual Summary Dartmoor Forest Parish Council May 2024 – May 2025

The Parish Council is made up of 10 Councillors: 7 for Princetown, 1 for Hexworthy, and 2 for Postbridge.

Councillors who have left: Charmaine Clarke-Major – April 2024
Hannah Wood – August 2024
Julian Greatrex – March 2025
Gregg Manning – April 2025

Welcomed new Councillors: Hazel Williams – May 2024
Martin Grover – November 2025
Brenda Cotterill – February 2025

There is currently one vacancy in Postbridge ward, to replace Julian Greatrex, who joined in June 2015, and one in Princetown to replace Gregg Manning, who joined in May 2011.

All the Councillors are unpaid volunteers, but we do as a Council employ a couple of people:

Clerk and RFO:

The Clerk keeps us all in order and, most importantly, legal. Ensures that Council business is conducted correctly and within the law. She also organises all the paperwork for meetings and deals with letters, emails, finances, burials and burial plot sales, insurance and much more.

Litter Picker:

We would like to thank Jake Cook our litter picker. He left at the end of February due to moving out of the village, but he previously kept the Play Park tidy which is most important as our park gets many visitors from outside the village. We have not as yet replaced him, as the Council are carrying out the litter picking on a trial basis in order to save money on the precept. This may change in the future.

Lengthsman:

The Lengthsman's Council duties include:

- Grass cutting: The Play Park, around the Community Centre, and around the War Memorial
- Postbridge Cemetery: grass cutting and tidying approx. 1 day a month from April to Sept
- Clearing roadside ditches and culverts to prevent surface water flooding roads and causing ice, mainly in Jan/Feb
- Putting up signage: '5mph speed' and 'No Dogs' for instance around the Play Park and Community Centre
- Play Park: removing faulty elements, repairs to various elements
- Refurbishing the bus shelters, painting and putting in bench seating
- Installing tree guards

Additional Lengthsman's contracted out work:

- Princetown Football Club pitch cutting through season (Charged at £60.31 per cut x9 pa)

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- Princetown Churchyard grass cut x11 times last season (charged at £38.92 for 2.5hrs cut)
- DCC Highways for cutting back roadside verges at junctions
- Duchy areas of grass cut around Princetown

What does Dartmoor Forest Parish Council do?

Tidy Princetown Sessions: A small group of villagers who meet every first Saturday of the month. We meet at 10am outside the Post Office and we spend an hour around the village. It might be removing the weeds along the edge of the pavement, or litter picking around the village. We need more to help, so all volunteers are welcome. Although this group still exists it has been hard to keep people on board this year so we need a new recruitment drive. After all, we all want a tidy village.

The LOVE project: which stands for the Love Our Village Enthusiasts, has been a great success since it began in April last year. The project gains sponsorship from local businesses to adorn the village with planters, helping make it a welcoming place for visitors and residents alike. Our sponsors this year so far include Dartmoor Preservation Association, the Duchy of Cornwall, Duchy House B&B and JP Blackmoor accountants.

The Plot, Princetown Community Garden: We have led the development of a community garden in the grounds of the Youth Club over the last year. Named The Plot, it is managed by a team of volunteers growing fruit, vegetables and herbs for the benefit of the community. The project has gained funding and a secure lease, meeting as it does the Duchy of Cornwall's sustainability and community ethics. Everyone is welcome there.

The Parish Council was instrumental in setting up **Princetown Churchyard Maintenance Fund**, now more commonly known as **Gardening The Grounds**, in 2022 to look after St Michael's Churchyard. Now into it's third year we have seen this project move from strength to strength. Whilst it is no longer a Parish Council project it's very much a community event with the churchyard being such an important part of the village. None of the funding from this group comes from the Parish Council, in fact Gardening The Grounds actually pay the Council for any grass cutting that the Lengthsman does for them.

Planning Applications: Dartmoor National Park Authority have the ultimate say regarding planning issues, but we are a 'statutory consultee', along with Highways, Environment Agency, SW Water and so on. If we, as a Parish Council, object to a planning application, then it can no longer be dealt with just by a Planning Officer but needs the full planning committee at DNPA.

Planning Applications considered and responded to April 2024- March 2025: Responded to 15x applications, including 3 for works to trees in a Conservation Area. 14 In support, 1 objection.

At least two Councillors will have normally visited the site, considered all aspects of the application and whether it fits within the criteria laid down in the planning regulations. They then prepare a report and present to the Council where it will be

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debated. The remaining Councillors will have read all the relevant paperwork for each application.

Princetown CCTV: Council is responsible for maintaining the CCTV system in Princetown (installed in 2021 to tackle antisocial driving and assist with crime prevention). There are 4 cameras sited on the Visitors Centre. This year we have thoroughly reviewed and re-written our operating policy and procedure. During the last year we have been contacted three times by D&C Police requesting access to the CCTV footage to assist them in their investigations. On two occasions we were able to provide the footage, the other was outside of the coverage area.

Postbridge Cemetery: In August, concerns were raised about some of the large trees on the perimeter of the Cemetery, particularly during periods of strong wind, where tree movement was loosening/dislodging stones from the walls beneath. Council undertook to get a Tree Risk Assessment Survey, obtaining quotes from three local providers. In October the survey was conducted and a report received stating no action was necessary at that time. It was noted that they are mature broadleaves, providing precious mini habitats for wildlife. Birch Utilities were contacted to cut back the overgrown vegetation around the power lines in the vicinity and the matter was resolved.

The Council is the Burial Authority and as such is responsible for managing the Cemetery memorials, selling burial plots, and liaising with funeral directors and families for burials or interments. One interment of ashes took place in August. The Cemetery fees have remained the same since 2012, so are due for a review in the coming months to ensure the fees cover the necessary costs.

Speedwatch Sessions: This initiative was started back in 2016 and has carried out hundreds of sessions. During that time we have seen the overall speed of vehicles drastically reduced. This, we hope, has meant fewer animals killed on our roads. For every animal hit there is also a real possibility of serious injury to the driver and passengers or even death.

Responsibilities for community assets:

- Postbridge Cemetery: Burial Authority, as described above.
- Defibrillators: maintain in Hexworthy, Postbridge, and Princetown.
 - New batteries and paediatric pads for Princetown defib in May 2025.
- Bus shelters: 2 in Princetown: seating refurbished, windows inserted, re-painted, notice board installed and planters positioned.
- Princetown Play Park: maintenance and repair of all elements. Weekly safety inspections by Councillors. Action plan agreed to respond to issues identified by annual RoSPA inspection in March 25. Total expenditure of £5568.90 to effect repairs as identified in March 2024 RoSPA inspection. Kind donation of £4000 from Cllr Philip Sanders Locality Budget in Nov 2024 enabled Council to replace a key component on Single Point Swing, meaning it could be retained rather than removed.
- Parish Council noticeboards: new Parish Council notice board for Postbridge to replace the one which had become beyond repair. New bus stop notice board in Princetown centre.

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- CCTV Princetown: annual maintenance/servicing and monitoring as required (for the purposes of crime prevention).
- Public benches by the war memorial: responsible for maintenance.
- Put up and decorate Christmas tree in Princetown.
- BT Telephone box: Adopted by Council in 2025, to become WW1 Memorial in Princetown village centre.

Lobbying:

When we become aware of things that may affect the Parish, that is when the Council takes action. For example:

- Closure of the Visitors Centre: written to DNPA, local MP, Councillors, Duchy of Cornwall and Prince William, attended Princetown Business Network meetings, and meetings with Duchy representatives. Working with all parties to find a new model for the premises, to the benefit of the Parish.
- BT: attempts to retain BT phone box in Princetown and now at Rundlestone.
- DCC Highways: to cut back gorse on B3357 Dunnabridge.
- Duchy of Cornwall: Old Prison Officers Mess, to make site safe and tidy up
- Plymouth City Bus: turning early / missing the bus stop.

Responding to issues raised by local residents, including:

Parking issues, dangerous driving and other road safety issues, fly tipping, litter, dog mess in and around the village, BT removal of land lines and removal of phone box in Princetown, reporting pot holes and drainage issues to DCC highways, DNPA and the Duchy, buildings in disrepair, safety issues regarding the fencing around the Old Officers Mess, DoE groups leaving litter and routing through private property, speeding through Postbridge, reporting Japanese knotweed, and complaints re: the public toilets in Princetown.

Events we have organised or facilitated:

- Organised public meeting to present proposals re: additional CCTV and double yellow lines, attended by 5x DFPC Councillors, 1x WDBC Councillor, and 1x DCC Councillor plus 12 members of the public.
- Facilitated public session with WDBC to feedback Housing Needs Survey findings, and the potential housing development.
- Organised Governor of HMP Dartmoor to attend Council meeting, to communicate plans given the temporary closure.

Finally, there are some things we have to pay for:

Salaries, Employer NI & Tax: for the Clerk and Lengthsman

Insurance cover: all activities, Postbridge Cemetery, Princetown Play Park, CCTV, community assets, public and employer liability.

WDBC: for emptying of 4 dog waste bins fortnightly

WDBC Cemetery rates: for Postbridge Cemetery

Rent: to the Duchy for the Play Park

Professional fees and services:

NALC/DALC: for training, advice and information

Internal and external audits

IT, email and website support

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CCTV: annual service and support
Payroll services
Monthly bank charges

Where does the money come from?

The majority of Council's money comes from the Precept, paid for by local residents via their Council Tax. We submit a request each year for a proportion of the Council Tax collected by WDBC. Last year this amounted to £18,535, which works out at £49.61 per year from Band D Council Tax.

We are also fortunate to receive donations from Princetown Charity Shop, High Moorland WI, LOVE sponsors (local businesses), and funding from Devon County Council Localities Fund, Asda Outdoor Communities Fund, South West Water 'Water Saving Fund', and a local employer.

We also contract out the Lengthsman to local organisations, but our charges only cover costs, we do not make a profit on this.

Finally, the Council sometimes has to take difficult decisions such as the decision to increase Precept by 5% this year to £19,462 (£50.81 per Band D Council Tax). This was largely necessary due to increases in Employer NI contributions and monthly bank charges. There is only so long we can ignore the price rises that are happening all around us.

As a resident you can be sure that every penny is accounted for, nothing is wasted. We as a Council always seek to get the best value in everything we do. We aim to instil pride in the Parish with our various Council-led projects and involvement of the community.

Our mission:

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council is dedicated to enhancing the well-being and sustainability of our unique community by fostering local spirit, providing essential services, and advocating for the needs of our residents.