

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council

1. Chairman's Foreword

The 2025-2026 municipal year has been a period of both significant challenge and remarkable community achievement for the Dartmoor Forest Parish. As we navigated the complexities of local governance, our focus remained steadfast on preserving the unique character of our villages—Princetown, Postbridge, and Hexworthy—while proactively planning for their future. This report highlights our collective efforts to maintain assets, support residents, and advocate for the parish on the wider stage of Dartmoor National Park.

2. Council Membership and Governance

This year saw several transitions within the Council. Following the resignations of Councillors Greatrex and Manning early in the year, and Councillor Easton this year, we have been pleased to welcome new members through co-option to ensure representation for both the Princetown and Postbridge wards. We currently have two Councillor vacancies for the Princetown ward.

A significant administrative milestone was the recruitment of a new Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) following a vacancy announcement in December 2025. The Council successfully interviewed and appointed a new Clerk in early 2026 to manage our 30-hour monthly administrative cycle, ensuring our compliance with the latest local government standards.

Throughout the year, the Council conducted a comprehensive **Governance Review**, updating key policies including the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and the CCTV Policy for Princetown. All documents were reviewed and finalized by March 2026 to ensure the Council operates with maximum transparency and accountability.

3. Community Achievements and Highlights

The Parish has enjoyed several high-profile successes this year:

- **RHS Community Garden Success:** "The Plot" Community Garden in Princetown received a prestigious award from the RHS and the One Show in the Community Garden of the Year competition. This is a testament to the hard work of Councillor Hazel Williams and The Plot volunteers.
- **Vision for Princetown:** Following the concerns regarding the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) Visitor Centre, the Council played a lead role in the "Vision for Princetown" initiative. In collaboration with the Duchy of Cornwall and the Princetown Business Network, we have begun a place-shaping exercise to secure a vibrant, sustainable future for the village.

4. Key Actions and Infrastructure Projects

- **Play Park Maintenance:** Following the March 2025 RoSPA inspection, a detailed Action Plan was implemented. Significant repairs were completed, including the replacement of bearings and seats on the seesaw, repairs to the cableway, and the radiusing of timbers on the agility trail to ensure the safety of our younger residents.

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- **Princetown CCTV:** The Council adopted a new CCTV Data Protection Impact Assessment and Policy, ensuring our monitoring systems are both effective for public safety and compliant with privacy laws.
- **Asset Adoption:** Progress continued on the adoption of the BT phone box in Princetown from the Duchy of Cornwall, intended for community use.

5. Statistics and Financial Overview

The Council maintains a prudent approach to the public purse. Key financial statistics for the 2025-26 period include:

- **Precept:** In December 2025, the Council agreed to a **5% increase** in the precept for the 2026/27 financial year. This modest rise is necessary to cover increased service costs and to fund future community projects.
- **Sensory Garden Project:** Detailed costings were developed for a new Sensory Garden, estimated at approximately **£45,000**. The Council have secured this funding from the National Lottery and the project, in liaison with the Sensory Trust, is underway.
- **Cemetery Management:** New burial fees for Postbridge Cemetery were approved, effective from April 1, 2026. The Council also completed its annual memorial safety inspections.

6. Residents' Issues and Advocacy

The Council remains a vital link between residents and higher tiers of government. This year, we addressed:

- Proposed weekly catering visits (such as the Pleasing Cheesing Pizza Company) to support local variety.
- Continued lobbying for better signage to the DNPA car park.
- Emergency planning, including the review of the Snow Warden procedure and salt bag distribution for winter resilience.

7. Future Outlook

Looking ahead to 2026-2027, the Council will focus on the delivery of the "Vision for Princetown" strategy and the implementation of the Sensory Garden. We remain committed to supporting our local primary school, the PTA, and the Youth Club, ensuring that Dartmoor Forest remains a supportive environment for families.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my fellow Councillors, our Clerk, and the many volunteers who give their time so generously to our parish.

Signed,

Chairman, Dartmoor Forest Parish Council March 2026