

13th September 2026

YARNSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 26th August 2026

7.30pm, Village Hall



Present: Cllrs. Brice (Chair), Ellison, Jeffery, Newberry, Pengilly, Cllr Elliott (Torridge District Council/ TDC), 2 members of the public and Martina Dymond (Clerk)

26.89 Apologies, Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllr. Cooke, Cllr. Lock and Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin (the latter two may have tried to log in online, but connection was not working). There were no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensations were received.

26.90 Public Participation and Feedback

Telephone Kiosk Book Box – A group of 4 volunteers take it in turn to tidy up Book Box.

Actions taken: None at present.

26.91 Representatives Reports

1) County/District Councillors

a) COUNTY

No report received.

b) DISTRICT

Local Government Reorganisation(LGR): Administrative capital is not yet decided. Potentially Okehampton would be the sensible place for its near central point to the new authority. The current Torridge District Ward of Two Rivers and Three Moors of which Cllr Rosemary Lock and I are your current representatives for, will remain as the ward boundary for the new Unitary with the addition of the Winkleigh and Ashreigny Ward. There will still be a requirement of two councillors to be elected to serve this ward, something which is of a rarity as there are very few wards with two councillors representing. So you will be fairly represented.

The four new Unitary areas are Plymouth City Council with expanded boundaries, Exeter city Council with expanded boundaries, Torbay Council again with expanded boundaries and the remaining Devon Council. The latter of which covers your area will have 103 councillors for the first term, as this may be reduced after the first 5 year term. Official rebranding of a final name/logo for the Devon Council still outstanding with estimates of the cost of doing so between £55 Million and £75 million.

The new Devon unitary has the largest network of roads out of the 4 new councils but with the lack of funds likely to be available, it is likely that roads in rural Devon will get worse. Costs for Social Care will be high and likely take up the most of percentage of the budget similar to that of Devon County Council today, as there is high percentage of elderly people living in the area of proposed. Election for new shadow councillors will be held in May 2027. Current TDC councillors will stay in place and see out the last 12 months until 2028 to see the transfer of the councils and the new unitary will go live and TDC will cease to exist as of April 2028.

It seems, that LGR could set urban areas on a collision course with rural areas in Devon with the former being better financially. This is not good news for us, but this will be where we will need strong experienced councillors to make a stand and give this new council a chance of getting off its feet. There is still talk of there being an elected mayor,

but this may be for an area as large as the region of the South West. But Cornwall are not in favour as is many of us as this will not be a good result for any of us.

Data and BESS Campus just on the outskirts of Torrington: Following a number of questions that have been put to me, I asked the Fire Service for their Action Plan, should a fire occur. Their target response time is 5 minutes. Of the questions that I asked, they answered them all but not to the extent I would of liked. They explained about their back up supplies of water, foam and pumps, but refrained from actually stating where these are stationed other than that of the foam. They said with regards to back up, that they would call on as many engines as needed at the time and situation. I asked about the foam and water and which is the preferred choice given the environmental impact of the foam, with which they replied that although there are more environmentally friendly foam options now available, water would be the preferred line of defence against any fires and the aim is a controlled burnout. Councillors queried whether it would be worth approaching the Firemen's Union for their views. Cllr. Elliott agreed to do so. He warned Councillors, that to attend a protest can impact their ability to vote on the Parish councils consultee response ,if or when the application goes forth. Due to a conflict of interest, so tread carefully. BESS have the potential to be a huge fire risk. There have recently been two applications in Devon that were refused planning, went to appeal only for the planning inspectorate to refuse them as-well.

Regarding the application for Showmen's site, it is still going to Committee, possibly in October or even November, there is no confirmed date yet. There are two members of the public allowed to speak for and 2 against and this is done by registering with the planning department before the deadline upon the Agenda being released. This is a first come first served basis and each speaker has 3 minutes to speak.

2) Village Hall / Social Club – Feedback from AGM

Cllr. Newberry had attended AGM. Village Hall/Social Club Committee agreed to village hall being used as emergency hub. Ian will get emergency box and contact Dolton PC who have an active emergency hub. It was also reported that Village Hall made good profit over the last financial year.

Actions taken: None at present.

3) PCSO/Police Report

On Devon and Cornwall Police website, report for Torrington Rural only went up to the end of June, with violent and sexual assaults being the most numerous. There was no breakdown for any offences within parish. Cllr. Elliott had put in complaint regarding the lack of communication and/or presence at meetings, this process is still ongoing.

4) Playing Field

Awaiting invoice.

26.92 Minutes of Meeting of 22nd July 2026

Minutes were approved and signed off as a true record

26.93 Matters arising from last Meeting

1) Road Warden Scheme – It was decided to discuss issue further at next meeting.

Actions taken: None at present

2) Proposed Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System(BESS) -
Summary of council's objections as summarised by Cllr. Newberry:

Background: Xlinks have announced plans for a hyper scale data centre and a very

large scale battery centre on land to the North of Torrington. Xlinks were behind a plan to bring solar power from Morocco to connect to the grid at Alverdiscott. They secured licenses to connect to the National Grid at the node there, the government refused to grant National Infrastructure Status and plan was withdrawn. Xlinks still hold these licenses and they plan to monetise them via Data Centre/BESS.

The Data Centre as currently planned would be one of largest in Europe and the BESS would consist of 2,700 shipping containers of batteries of the same type as used in your mobile or electric car.

Objections and on what grounds

We are dealing with two different application, at present it looks like Xlinks will apply for full permission for BESS and outline permission for data centre in early 2027.

BESS - based on current information BESS systems of this size are being allowed as "Critical National Infrastructure", which makes objections more difficult. The most productive line seems to have been safety issues, in particular fire safety, or more accurately what could happen in event of fire. (see Cllr. Elliott's report 26.91/1) Fires caused by these batteries are difficult to put out. Fire may cause environmental damage, contamination to surrounding ground and negative impact on wildlife. The other issue is noise, each container could produce 68dB of noise and the cumulative effect of 2,700 would be in the region of 102dB, the noise level at a rock concert, but it would be constant frequency hum. Traffic will also be a major issue on our narrow rural roads and according to some information, each battery container has a life span of 8 years. As it is unlikely that all containers are installed at once, here is a likelihood of ongoing traffic to install new containers regularly, for the life of the site not just during construction.

Data Centre - At present, no confirmed design plans, so all any objections are currently speculative. Water consumption has been a big feature and depending on the actual system used, this could be significant. According to Xlinks a closed loop system with rainwater harvesting would be used, but no exact type has been specified. A closed loop system would reduce water usage, but brings problems of its own. Any closed system would need chemical additives which could be environmentally damaging if released. The quantities of additives in system and stored on site would be significant, as a leak could result in major pollution incident including groundwater contamination. The electricity consumption of this site would be off the scale compared to anything local currently. The plan seems to be to use the significant installed solar and wind generation capacity locally, with the BESS possibly used as backup. Normally, these sites have large number of back up diesel generators, current outline plan doesn't have any, therefore likelihood of BESS being used as backup. Therefore, if Xlinks use the carbon free energy being generated locally and use BESS as back up, then instead of this being used to decarbonise the grid, it will instead make no meaningful contribution, but will instead power this data centre. The scale of data campus does make loss of landscape amenity value a possible ground for objection. Another issue to be considered is the local temperature around the site. Evidence suggest that these sites increase local temperatures. It has been suggested (not backed by scientific evidence) that this centre could raise local temperatures (over a 3 mile radius from site) by up to 3 degrees. Given the issues we have experienced this year, this may well be of importance.

Cllr. Elliott had pointed out earlier that the two main local protest groups, the **Devon**

Data Centre & BESS Action Group and the **Leave Devon alone/Say No to Devon Data Centre** had a falling out, but that the planning process for data centre and BESS needed to be examined in detail, potentially liaise with CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England).

Xlinks had contacted parish councils and invited them to meetings, but these meetings were meant to be held according to Xlinks preferences. Councillors felt this was a deliberate tactic to split councils and weaken their opposition.

Actions taken: Keep liaising with TDC and DCC. Invite representative of Devon Data Centre & BESS Action Group to next meeting (they had already written to clerk). Cllr. Ellison to contact Parish Council Group, in order to organise one meeting with Xlinks that all local councils could attend.

3) Register of Interest

Cllr Newberry's form still outstanding according to TDC.

4) Co-option of new councillor(s)

Two candidates were present at meeting: David Kane and John Edwards.

David has been living in Yarnscombe for over 10 years and would like to contribute to future of the parish. He is in his sixties, can offer plenty of life experience and has a background in business/industry.

John has been living in Yarnscombe since 2013. For over 40 years he had in an accounting firm, covering the agricultural side. He wanted to know the village before coming forward as potential councillor.

All councillors voted to co-opt David Kane and John Edwards by show of hands.

Actions taken: David Kane and John Edwards filled in Acceptance of Office forms.

*Post Meeting Note: Due to procedural error and advice given by TDC these co-options are **invalid**. Notice of Vacancy for position given up by Cllr. Cooke has as yet to be displayed. Should no more than ten electors demand election, then co-option can take place at next meeting **23rd September 2026**.*

5) Identify project within parish that council can financially support - It was decided to discuss issue further at next meeting.

Actions taken: None at present

26.94 New Matters

1) Parish Online £36-00 – Cllr. Brice proposed, Cllr. Pengilly seconded. All agreed to pay annual subscription.

Actions taken: Electronic Payment Schedule was filled out and countersigned. Clerk to pay £36-00 via BACS

2) Feedback of meeting re. Showmen's site on 18th August, Alverdiscott Hall

The applicants belong to the Showmen's Guild, a registered organisation. The term "traveller" had been removed from application, the applicants are happy to consider any caveats which would make their application successful. The site would consist of 5 mobile homes, the applicants, their three daughters and their families. Vehicles present would consist of 4 tractor trailers, catering units and cars. Between the months of March and October there would be neither equipment, nor showmen on site. The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) would test any rides that have broken down. Applicants only have small rides. No expansion to site, noise and light disturbance should be minimal. No

diesel generator on site. Issue of septic tank outstanding. The application is still going to committee. See item 26.91 1)

26.95 PROW Monthly Report

Nothing to report, no response yet from PROW at Devon County Council.

26.96 Planning

1/0633/2026/FUL Conversion of redundant rural building to 2no. dwellings and associated work, Location: Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 255824 124492, Yarnscombe, Devon, O.S.Map Reference: (E) 255824 (N) 124492. No comments made.

Actions taken: None at present.

1/0628/2026/FUL Demolition of an existing agricultural barn and erection of 1no. dwelling and associated works in lieu of Class Q approval 1/0984/2025/AGMB. Location: Barn At Grid Reference 256449 121983, Yarnscombe, Devon O.S. Map Reference: (E) 256449 (N) 121984 – No comments made.

Actions taken: None at present

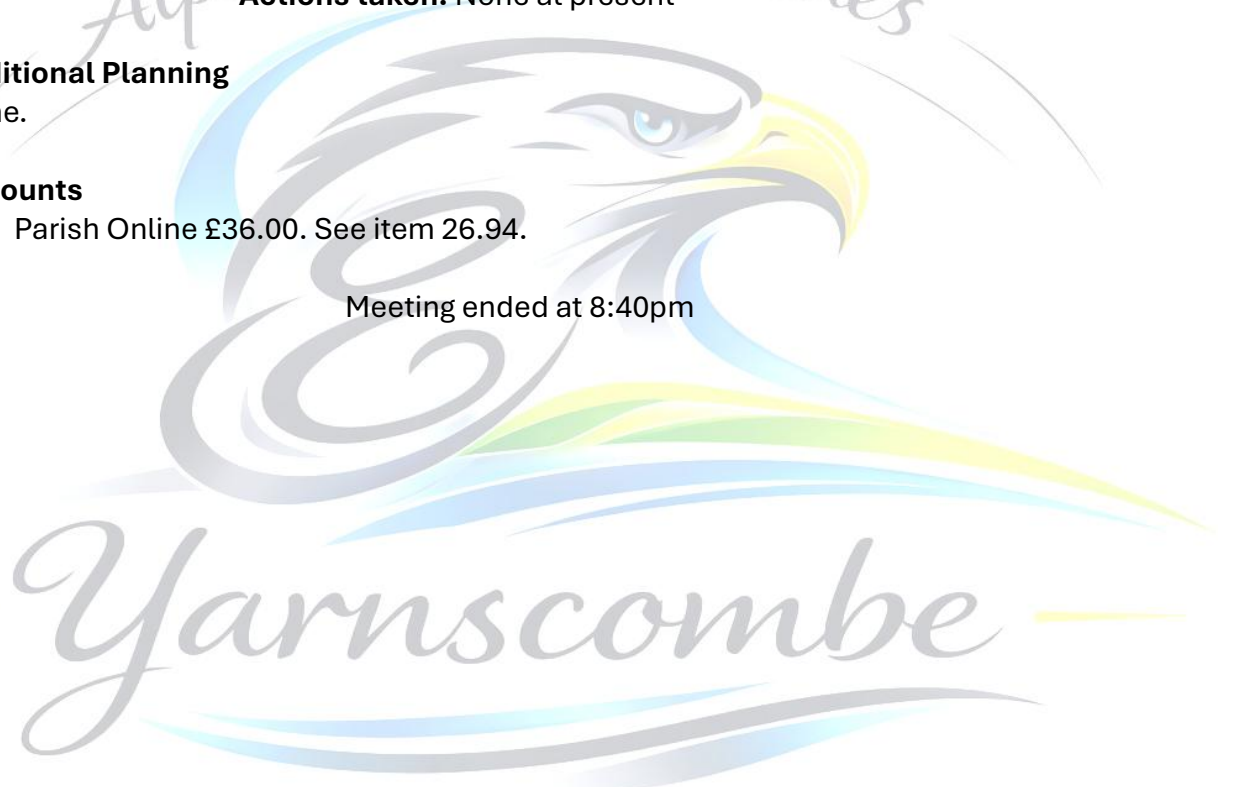
26.97 Additional Planning

None.

26.98 Accounts

1) Parish Online £36.00. See item 26.94.

Meeting ended at 8:40pm



Yarnscombe