

The Cirl Bunting is the UK's rarest farmland bird. The entire breeding population is found between Exeter and Plymouth.

Coffinswell Parish Council

Serving the Communities of
Coffinswell & Daccombe

MINUTES OF THE COFFINSWELL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2026 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Present: Cllr N Orchard (Chair), Cllr C Bell, Cllr M Atkinson, Cllr S Spokes,

In attendance: Two members of public
Mrs L Moorse – Parish Clerk

1. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm and received apologies from District Cllr J. Radford. It was subsequently noted that District Cllr J. Taylor was unable to attend due to illness, and DCC Horner also unable to attend due to a prior meeting taking longer than expected. Cllr Barnard also sent her apologies.

2. To declare any interests arising at this meeting.
No interests were declared.

3. Reports:
3.1 County Councillors' report was subsequently received and circulated to all Councillors.
3.2 District Councillors' report. – No report available.
3.3 Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch
The Chair had noted that no report was available for this agenda item. Members discussed two recent incidents on Kingskerswell Road involving a caravan being set alight and a van crashing into the Manor Farm upper-field gate, causing significant damage. It was noted that a new PCSO was expected to be assigned to the area, although no date had been confirmed.

4. Approval to consider, amend as agreed by the Council and approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th June 2026
The minutes of the meeting were considered, and no amendments were identified.
The minutes were proposed by Cllr Atkinson, seconded by Cllr Spokes and unanimously approved.

5. Finance
5.1 The Payments Schedule was agreed and approved by all present.
5.2 The bank reconciliation for the months of June, July and August 2026 were agreed and approved.
5.3 The parish council's budget for the period 1st April 2026 to 31st August 2026 was presented and generally in line with expectations, with no immediate concerns identified. The Chair advised that the first draft of the budget for 2027 to 2028 will be presented at the Council's November meeting, which will be circulated in advance to allow members to review and provide comments, including by email if they cannot attend.

6. Funding & Grants:

The Clerk advised that the second Precept payment is expected within the next two to three weeks and to-date awaited the usual notification email. An update would be provided once confirmation was available.

The Chair advised members that he was awaiting confirmation that the Solar Farm Community Benefit Fund would be paid as requested. The payment was reportedly authorised but had not yet been received.

7. Footpaths & Highways

The Chair reported that footpaths and highways appeared to be in good condition, with few issues to raise. Road markings had recently been painted near Princess Cottages, possibly indicating areas requiring repairs. Members discussed the drainage works behind the church, noting that further heavy rain would be needed to assess their effectiveness. Concern remained that mud could accumulate in the drainage system, and a corner gully required clearing of brambles and vegetation.

Members praised Devon County Council for the work undertaken, including repairs carried out without the need for further requests.

8. To note any correspondence received

The Clerk advised that the DALC AGM would be held on Wednesday 7 October at Exeter Racecourse and would circulate the relevant information; if no representative could attend then a proxy vote would be considered.

Members noted DALC's guidance and the estimated £84 million cost of the Local Government Re-organisation process, expressing concern about the scale and expense involved.

9. Parish Matters:

9.1 Update on the Phone Box

The Chair reported that the conversion of the BT telephone box into a book exchange had been completed. Cllrs Spokes and Avery as well as the other Councillors praised the workmanship of the bookcase constructed by M. Batson using recycled materials.

The existing electrical supply and roof light remained in place, but the light was currently switched off because the switch was inaccessible behind the bookcase. Members discussed possible lighting options, including a low-cost solar-powered PIR light and solar fairy lights. It was agreed to see whether additional lighting was needed before making changes, with the relevant rules to be checked before installing decorative lighting.

Members also discussed the possibility of using the telephone box for a seasonal exchange of surplus vegetables. The Chair noted that clearer signage was required to explain that the books were available through an exchange and were not for sale. Members considered replacing the existing telephone-box signage with a suitable "Book Exchange" sign. The Chair offered to circulate details of a specialist supplier of replacement telephone-box signs and panels.

9.2 Update Regarding the Solar Farm

The Chair reported on recent discussions with Harry Wilder of Recurrent Energy and the site manager regarding progress at the solar farm. The delays were reportedly due mainly to outstanding certification, testing and administrative requirements, together with an issue concerning communication between the site's electrical equipment and National Grid equipment. The site manager believed that electricity generation and export may have commenced, but this had not been confirmed.

Members expressed concern that reinstatement works at the site entrance on Ridgeway Lane remained incomplete. Work to reinstate the Devon bank and hedge had been suspended because of conflicting drawings showing different designs. The delay was preventing the Parish from opening the proposed permissive footpath around the site. The Chair reported that completion of the outstanding works had previously been anticipated by the end of September.

The Chair also reported that Harry Wilder had authorised payment of the £20,000 Community Benefit Fund contribution, but the money had not yet appeared in the Council's bank account. The Chair had requested that the payment be split between two financial years, with £10,000 received before the end of March and the remaining £10,000 in April, to avoid triggering a more onerous audit process. The payment arrangements remained outstanding.

Members discussed the rebuilding of the Devon bank and hedge opposite Rose Cottage, which had been damaged by a solar farm delivery vehicle. The completed work was praised not only for its high standard but also for the management of the operation.

9.3 Further Parish Matters

The Chair invited members to discuss whether the Parish Council should support local charities and community events. He outlined the relevant provisions of Section 137 of the Local Government Act, which allow expenditure for the benefit of the local community, subject to statutory conditions and limits.

Members discussed the principle of making charitable donations, emphasising the importance of demonstrating clear benefits to parish residents. Views were expressed on the appropriate level of support, the need to consider requests consistently and the potential value of establishing a policy for assessing future applications. The Chair agreed to look at the approaches adopted by other parish councils.

Members also discussed whether provision should be made in the next budget for community or charitable expenditure, including whether an increase in the precept might be appropriate in view of possible Local Government Reorganisation and future responsibilities. No decision was made regarding charitable donations or an increase in the precept. The matter of charitable giving would be revisited at a future meeting.

10. Correspondence received by the Parish Clerk - This was previously discussed under Agenda item 8.

11. Planning & Enforcement Public Question Time:

The members of public did not have any questions.

12. Planning:

12.1 New Applications since the Parish Council Meeting held in June 2026

Members noted that applications received since the previous meeting had been circulated and dealt with by email where appropriate.

Application Ref: 26/01059/CAN: Manor House Road From Westcombe Park To Princess Cottages Coffinswell Devon TQ12 4SW. the application for crown lifting of a beech tree had been supported by the Parish Council and approved by Teignbridge District Council.

Application Ref: 26/000825/LBC: Daccombe Mill Coffinswell Devon TQ12 4SY: the application for external and internal renovation works had been supported by the Parish Council. No decision had yet been issued, pending consideration by a Listed Buildings Officer.

Application Ref: 26/01125/FUL: The Maples Footland Lane Daccombe Devon TQ12 4ST

retrospective planning permission for a bird hide had been refused by Teignbridge District Council on 8 September 2026. The Parish Council had not supported the application but had not raised a formal objection and had said it would maintain a watching brief. Members noted the planning officer's concerns about features including a patio and whether the structure was appropriate for its stated purpose.

The Council did not know whether the owners would remove the structure or appeal. If the matter remained unresolved, the Council would contact the enforcement officer to ask what action would follow.

12.2 Planning Applications Received since Agenda Preparation

No additional applications were recorded in the notes provided.

12.3 Decision Notices

Members noted the following decision notices:

- **Application Ref. 26/00925/CAN – Coffinswell Road, outside Pitt Cottage:** Permission to fell the sycamore tree was granted on 21 July 2026.
- **Application Ref. 26/01059/CAN – Manor House, Road from Westcombe Park to Princess Cottages, Coffinswell, Devon, TQ12 4SW:** Approval issued on 13 August 2026.
- **Application Ref. 26/01125/FUL – The Maples, Footland Lane, Daccombe, Devon, TQ12 4ST:** Retrospective planning permission for the proposed bird hide was refused. The decision notice was issued on 8 September 2026.

Regarding the bird hide, the Chair noted that the Planning Officer appeared to take a different view from the Enforcement Officer concerning the works undertaken and changes made to the field. The Council would await confirmation of whether the applicant intended to appeal the refusal or remove the bird hide. If neither occurred, the matter would be referred back to the Enforcement Officer.

Following the granting of permission to fell the sycamore tree near Pitt Cottage, the Chair sought agreement to accept Oliver Wills' quotation of £200 for its removal. The tree was considered a potential hazard because its branches had grown through the overhead cables and could be caught by passing vehicles, potentially placing the telegraph pole at risk. Cllr Atkinson proposed that the expenditure of £200 be approved, and Cllr Avery seconded the proposal. This had full agreement by those Councillors present.

13. Enforcement Issues:

13.1 To receive any updates on outstanding enforcement issues.

Manor Farm, Daccombe. Agricultural barn development

Members discussed the agricultural barn development, including the size and position of the barn under construction and its relationship to the approved plans and surrounding landscape. The barn under construction was understood to be approximately 60 metres long. Members raised concerns about the positioning and visual impact of the development in relation to the woodland and surrounding landscape.

It was noted that further work on the proposed additional barn could not proceed until information requested by the Planning Authority had been provided, particularly regarding site levels and screening. Members discussed whether landscaping and screening could help reduce the visual impact. The Chair intended to review the site alongside the planning drawings to assess the position and scale of the proposed development.

Manure accumulation near Downaway Lane and Strawberry Lane

Members discussed a substantial accumulation of manure along a field hedge near Downaway Lane and Strawberry Lane, estimated to extend approximately 60–70 metres. It was unclear whether the storage arrangements raised any planning or enforcement concerns. Members agreed to monitor the

situation, and to seek further clarity as to whether alternative arrangements for manure storage or spreading had been necessary.

Cllr Bell raised concerns about material accumulating along the hedge near the fields off Downaway Lane. Although no obvious cause for concern was identified, members agreed to monitor the situation and ask the local parishioners if anyone had noticed any relevant activity.

14. General Public Question Time:

One of the members of public in attendance advised that new people had recently moved to the village: the Councillors discussed welcoming the family and adding them to the local WhatsApp group once contact details were available.

The possibility of using some of the solar-farm contribution for a community charging facility was raised, initially suggesting a charging point for electric bicycles. Members discussed the practicalities of public charging, the need for cyclists to bring their own chargers and potential fire-safety considerations near thatched properties. Other possible uses of the community benefit money, including electric-car charging points or a community electric-bike scheme, were mentioned. No decision was made.

15. To note the date of the next meeting:

Tuesday 17th November 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the Meeting ended at 8.20pm.

Signed: Dated:
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council