

NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Norton St Philip Parish Council 2025-2026

Chairman – Cllr Ian Hasell

Parish Councillors:

David Curwen

George Hitchins

Barbi Lund

Val Fox

David Molian

Catriona Murfitt

Parish Clerk - Nicola Duke

County Councillors – Adam Boyden and Dawn Denton

REPORT FROM CLLR IAN HASELL – PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN 2025-26

This will be my sixth report as Chairman of the Parish Council. Compared to previous years it seems to have been a relatively 'quiet' year – but that is only in comparison with what has been five extremely busy years!

Early this year we welcomed David Molian to the Parish Council – bringing the number of Councillors up to seven – the maximum allowed for our size of Parish. He will be a very valuable addition to our small, but very experienced, team.

It would be fair to say that Planning Applications and Highways matters occupy a large proportion of the Parish Councils time so I will try to summarise these matters. For both planning and highways, the lack of resources and financial issues within Somerset Council is a cause for major concern. Enforcement of any sort is so poorly resourced as to be almost unobtainable.

As for other matters, there has been significant developments on the Neighbourhood Plan, the Section 106 monies relating to the Longmead development regarding Church Mead, the forthcoming new Somerset Local Plan and, on a lighter note, the filming of Mother's Pride in the village and its release to the public in 2026.

Planning Applications

Numerous small planning applications have been dealt with over the year but by far the most significant is the re-application by Lochailort to develop the field between Fortescue and Church Mead. Three applications have been made to build on this field since the year 2000. I have represented the village at all 3 planning appeals and all appeals have been refused. I am still strongly of the view that this field should not be developed.

Lochailort submitted their most recent application in September 2025. It consisted of 107 documents, albeit missing critical documents without which SC should not have validated the application according to their own policy. Since that time and right up to April 2026 Lochailort have continued to request time extensions from SC which has enabled them to submit further documents. The total currently stands at 150. It is difficult to comprehend how and why Somerset Council have allowed this in direct contravention of their own policy on planning applications. We now await the decision from SC on this latest application - which is remarkably similar to the last one refused at appeal.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Last year I reported the NP was at examination. When the PC received the Examiner's report, we were concerned about some of his comments and sought legal advice. Following that advice, we suggested to both the Examiner and Somerset Council that the report should be amended. That advice was ignored. Instead, SC proceeded to referendum. At the referendum there was a large turnout with more than 98% of voters in favour of the NP. It should then have been straightforward for SC to formally adopt the NP but before they could do so Lochailort launched a Judicial Review of the NP against SC primarily on the basis that the Examiner's report was flawed (not the actual NP) – the very thing we had recommended should be amended. The JR was upheld and we are now back to the report being re-examined by a different Examiner.

Somerset Local Plan

Somerset Council's planning department (SC) are at the early stage of developing a new Somerset Plan intended to last until 2045. SC has had, in common with other unitary authorities, a huge increase in housing imposed on them by the current government. In having to try to deal with this imposition it is extremely unlikely that the new Local Plan will be ready to be adopted before 2029. In the meantime, the old Mendip District Local Plan is still relevant until the new plan is adopted.

As part of the first phase of developing the plan SC have carried out a 'call for sites' exercise to ask landowners/developers to submit sites for consideration. More than 1600 sites have been submitted across Somerset. 12 are in our parish. Based on previous experience and that SC officers have indicated that they will only conduct a 'desk top' exercise, the PC is not confident that the results will be as thorough as a properly detailed exercise should be.

The PC has therefore commissioned Context Planning to carry out its own comprehensive appraisal of all the sites that have been put forward in the parish and is in the middle of a transparent and detailed consultation within the parish. The results of this exercise will then be considered by the PC and when agreed the final report will then be submitted to SC as an input to the SC Local Plan. It is intended that this should be ready for submission by the end of Spring 2026. This is the best opportunity the Parish will get to give its views on where development, if any, should go during the timeframe of the new Somerset local plan.

Highways

The Traffic Action Group (TAG) has had a very active year. Speed watch activities continue and have been helped by the installation of two new speed cameras. The installation on Church St in the grounds of the school has, I consider, had a significant effect on slowing traffic in this area. I think it is particularly noticeable outside the school. Because of a lack of resource (and money) at SC getting other improvement works carried out is frustratingly slow. After repeated requests for action on a variety of matters that were ignored for a year, we finally managed to get a whole days visit from a Highways Engineer to discuss what is on our 'shopping list' of our areas of concern. That in itself is some progress but the pace from SC is frighteningly slow.

Church Mead/Longmead Section 106 monies

In last year's report I stated that just over £26,000 was available to be spent on *'the provision of recreation space and facilities including equipped play space in the village of Norton St. Philip'*. I am pleased to say that following the submission of a bid by the Church Mead Committee to SC for enhanced children's play equipment and the provision of a Boules Court, which the PC supported, Somerset Council agreed to fund this project. The children's playground has already been provided with new equipment and the Boules Court will be the final item to be provided, which it is hoped can be carried out shortly.

Mothers Pride

Last year saw a film crew in the village during the Summer making a film about the rivalry between two pubs featuring our very own 'The George' and the 'Fleur de Lys'. The film is now on general release and it's quite heartwarming to watch a film and recognise so many places in the village where filming took place.

And finally, I wish to thank all the Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk for their continuous help and support to me during the last six years. It has been truly a team effort and I am indebted to them all.

Cllr Ian Hasell

Chair, Norton St. Philip Parish Council

GRANTS 2025/2026

In 2025/26 the Parish Council paid £14,250 in community grants and Service Level Agreements:

- £853.84 – Palairet Hall SLA for insurance
- £2,896.16 – Palairet Hall SLA grant
- £3,783.51 – Church Mead SLA for fireworks
- £1,200.00 – Hardington Vale PCC
- £300.00 – Old School Room, Farleigh Hungerford
- £1,216.49 – Church Mead SLA grant
- £2,000.00 – Capital grant Palairet Hall
- £2,000.00 – Capital grant Church Mead

PRECEPT 2026/2027

The precept for 2026-27 has been set at £60,350, representing a 4.9% increase on the current year and an annual increase of £5.28 per Band D equivalent household. The increase will enable to Council to 'balance' its budget requirement and protect earmarked and capital fund levels for the future.

Copies of the approved budget are available from the Parish Clerk or can be viewed on the PC website.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Parish Council's end of year Finance report is as follows:

| | 31.03.2026 |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| INCOME | |
| Precept | £55,927.00 |
| Total other income | £7644.09 |
| Other grants | £26,869.07 |
| Total income | <u>£67,338.78</u> |
| | |
| Parish Council operational expenses | |
| Audit fees | £732.00 |
| Hire of hall for meetings | £50.00 |
| Insurance expenses | £806.91 |
| Office expenses | £4,047.21 |
| Professional Fees | £6,581.60 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Salaries and wages | £19,376.52 |
| Subscriptions and books | £524.41 |
| Parish maintenance | £5704.43 |
| Total Parish Council operational expenses | <u>£37,823.08</u> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Community grants | £14,250.00 |
| Operational costs | £37,823.08 |
| Expenditure from Capital Fund | £39,691.20 |
| Neighbourhood Plan | £100.80 |
| Total Expenditure | <u>£91,865.08</u> |

PARISH COUNCIL RESERVES 31.03.2026

At the close of the financial year 2025/2026 the Parish Council held the sum of £92,365.98 in Reserves:

| Capital Funds | 31.03.2026 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Street Furniture | £1,390 |
| Recreation Land BF | £1,000 |
| Allotments BF | £1,500 |
| Church Mead | £4,240 |
| Palairret Hall | £5,000 |
| FH Water Tower | £1,015 |
| General Capital Project Fund | £2,185 |
| Total Capital Funds | £16,330 |
| Earmarked Funds | 31.03.2026 |
| Road safety audit | £3,000 |
| Highways and Rights of Way | £6,630 |
| Jig with a Pig MUGA | £1,231.41 |
| Speed Sign | £400 |
| Bollard Installation | £1,000 |
| Hassage Funding | £100 |
| Legal and Professional Fees | £33,359 |
| Pension Fund | 15,378.57 |
| Total EMR | £61,098.98 |
| General Reserve | £14,937.00 |
| Capital Funds | £16,330.00 |
| Earmarked Reserves | £61,098.98 |
| TOTAL ALLOCATIONS | £92,365.98 |

REPORT FROM THE CHURCH MEAD COMMITTEE

The 2025 Bonfire and Fireworks were a great success with high attendance despite a cold and damp day. Lee Hodgson arranged a tremendous fireworks display, all cued and triggered from his iPad!, The stalls were busy but without long queues and all the food and 95% of the drinks were sold. There was an increased number of “quiet” fireworks which was appreciated by many. The Committee would like to thank the many volunteers who gave their time to set up and manage the event; also to clear up the Mead so efficiently the following day. Without their help it would not be possible to hold the event.

The 100 Club is well subscribed with approx. 120 members. Thanks to all who have joined. There are quarterly draws with prizes of £50,£30 and £20.

The Committee was successful in its bid for the S106 fund of £26,700 associated with the Longmead development and held by Somerset Council. This fund was *“for the provision of open space and facilities and the maintenance thereof for recreational purposes within the Parish of Norton St Philip.”*

The pre-school and first school PTAs were consulted on whether they would like to see new playground equipment and if so, what they would like,

Both PTAs responded that they were in favour of making improvements to the playground on the Mead. They referred to the playground being a central event for school events and also a popular spot for families after school and at weekends. They noted that the recent increase in village population had resulted in increased usage of the Mead and its playground. There was a consequent need for new play equipment.

The Committee engaged with three local playground equipment specialists and selected Phoenix Play of Bristol to provide and install a new wooden climbing frame and roundabout. These were installed in early 2026; further works included replacing the surfaces below the existing swings and tower.

The total cost was in excess of £31,000 with the excess over the S106 fund being met by the PC’s Church Mead Capital fund. The new equipment and surfacing is proving extremely popular.

The Mead is being mown weekly during the grass growing season. The committee is very grateful to local resident Gordon Morse who with his careful and regular mowing has helped the Mead look stunning.

The Committee is proud of the Mead and the important part it plays in the social fabric of the village. It thanks all parish residents for their support in looking after this wonderful space.

George Hitchins

Treasurer, Church Mead Committee

April 2026

REPORT FROM PALAIRET HALL COMMITTEE



The PalaiRET Hall, Norton St Philip

Report for the NSP Parish Council Annual Report 2026

The Palairet Hall has once again been a valuable asset for the Norton St Philip community. As well as the established events - Palairet Productions Friday Film Night, The Tuesday Drop In coffee morning, The Norton Women's Group meetings, The NSP Parish Council meetings, Norton Chapel meetings, Evergreen Dance classes, the Ukrainian ladies fitness classes, the NSP Photography Club, the NSP Art Club and Yoga classes; the hall has recently started to host adult ballet and tap classes. We were sorry to say goodbye to Lindsey Shepherd and her Pilates Classes at the end of October after a staggering 23 years! But very pleased to welcome Samantha James who has taken on the Pilates classes with such expertise and who has now started Chair Pilates sessions as well.

The Palairet Hall has also proved to be an ideal venue for numerous birthday celebrations, Christmas parties, a few wakes and the occasional Repair Café. Although we have not had the opportunity to act as the polling station for local elections over the last year, there was a good turnout for the village referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan held in the hall in July.

In August, we took advantage of most groups having a holiday to close the hall for two weeks and have the main hall redecorated. We have continued to pursue the installation of automatic doors to the entrance of the hall, but this has proved more difficult than we ever imagined. However, we believe we are now much closer to having the doors manufactured and fitted. Once that is achieved, we will have the entrance area redecorated.

The finances of the hall remain reasonably sound. Despite increases in energy charges, internet charges and water bills, we have not increased our hire charges for yet another year. We eventually received the good-will payment of £1,000 from the makers of the "Mother's Pride" film which has enabled us to just cover our expenditure. However, we were very disappointed that we were not able to have a screening of the film in the hall.

I would like to record my thanks to everyone on the management committee for their hard work over the last year, particularly to Sara Willis for her work as Honorary Secretary (we will indeed miss her if she moves away later this year), to Andrew Morrison for his work as Honorary Treasurer and to Anne Twist for keeping our website up to date. Anne has also taken on the role of Bookings Clerk, and has developed our new online booking facility as well as taking on the issuing of the invoices for the hall hire. Thanks are also due to the Parish Council for its financial support towards the insurance and upkeep of the hall and to Oksana and her cleaning team for their weekly cleaning of the hall.

David Lockley
Chair of the Palairet Hall Management Committee
April 2026.

REPORT FROM THE TRAFFIC ACTION GROUP

Between eight and twelve TAG members have contributed actively to meetings every other month in the last year. Meeting notes can be found on the TAG page of the PC website. Thanks again this year go to Ian Biggerstaff, Ian Mills and Catriona Murfitt for their very effective chairing in rotation.

The main issues for the group are:

Traffic and road safety

About a dozen Community SpeedWatch volunteers conduct regular sessions on both main roads through the village at three approved locations. We are grateful for the commitment of these volunteers. Due to ill health, some have been unable to conduct sessions and so more active supporters are needed. PCSOs continue to support us when they can. Our thanks again this year go to David Lockley for his perseverance in organising sessions, liaising with the police and uploading results to their database so that they can follow up.

Speed Indicator Devices

There are two SIDs operating effectively on Church Street. The PC is assisting us in applying for permission and funding for more SIDs, on Farleigh Road and Bath Road.

Other traffic issues

TAG continues to work with Hemington Parish Council to press for better safety measures on the A366 between our parishes. This spring Somerset Highways has responded to our calls for better road markings by improving the “signing and lining” on the bends east of Tuckers Grave Inn. We continue to press for more speed restriction measures here.

Heavy lorries

Once again this year, residents have been encouraged to report sightings of illegal HGVs direct to company transport managers and when appropriate, the police. Regular notices in the Parish News and a dedicated page in the TAG section of the Parish Council website give guidance.

Pedestrian safety

We are grateful to Anna and Christopher Nixon for their commitment to this cause. In February a meeting in NSP was convened between Sara Davis of Somerset Highways, a wheelchair user and several TAG members. We voiced our concerns for the safety of pedestrians, including wheel users, on the pavements around the crossroads and along Bell Hill and Church Street. As a result, proposals for improvements to parking problems, pavement quality and road markings were discussed and are continuing.

Buses

The D2/D2X service has continued to improve this year and the timetable has not changed this April.

Footpaths

Progress has been made to improve the safe access for walkers on the blocked footpath between Farleigh Hungerford bridge and the old Hungerford Arms after discussion with the many stakeholders. We are confident that a new footpath will be created which will suit landowners, councils and the public. Thanks to Catriona Murfitt for expertly convening meetings to make this possible.

Val Fox

May 2026

REPORT FROM THE SUSTAINABLE NORTON ST PHILIP GROUP MAY 2026

Repair Cafe:

3 well attended Repair Cafes were held in 2025 raising over £300 in donations. The next Café will be from 10.00 – 12.00 on Saturday 9th May at the Palaret Hall. Many thanks to Jackie and Martin Moss for overall organisation and to all those who give their time and skills to enable them to be such a success – both the committed repairers and those who provide teas, coffees and cakes.

Litter Picking:

Many thanks to the regular litter pickers who each manage a route, together covering the whole of NSP. Special thanks to Jane Standen for overall organisation of the team.

On 20th April there was a very successful village litter pick organised in collaboration with the Parish Council. About 20 people took part and we covered the centre of the village as well as Wellow Lane, Mackley Lane, Tellisford Lane and the road towards Farleigh Farm Shop where we gathered up an impressive haul of over twenty Birra Moretti bottles! A big thanks to all who joined in.

As ever Sustainable Norton St Philip welcomes new members and ideas. If you are interested in joining us, please get in touch with Barbi Lund – contact details below.

Barbi.lund@nortonstphilipparishcouncil.gov.uk

barbilund@live.co.uk 07846 335636

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026-2027

Wednesday 10th June 2026 – Farleigh Hungerford
Wednesday 8th July 2026
Wednesday 12th August 2026 – if required
Wednesday 9th September 2026
Wednesday 14th October 2026 – Farleigh Hungerford
Wednesday 11th November 2026
Wednesday 9th December 2026
Wednesday 13th January 2027
Wednesday 10th February 2027
Wednesday 10th March 2027
Wednesday 14th April 2027 – Farleigh Hungerford
Wednesday 12th May 2027 – Annual Council Meeting/Annual Parish Meeting

For more information about parish affairs:

Norton St Philip Parish Clerk
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**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL TAKE PLACE ON
WEDNESDAY 10th JUNE 2026 AT 7.00 pm
in THE OLD SCHOOL ROOM, FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD.**

