

BROCKDISH (inc. THORPE ABBOTTS) PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of scheduled Parish Council Meeting

Thursday 22nd May 2025 commenced at 7.40pm WHC, Brockdish

Present: Cllrs MacKenzie (Chair), Castagnetti (Vice Chair), Clark, Cobbold & Russell.

Public: 9

In Attendance: County Cllr Wilby & Clerk

1. Welcome

Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) opened the meeting, which followed the Annual Parish meeting. Nominations were invited to elect a Chair for the coming year. Cllr Clark proposed re-election of Cllr MacKenzie, this was seconded by Cllr Castagnetti & was unanimously agreed. Cllr MacKenzie was duly elected Chair & signed the declaration of acceptance of office, which was countersigned by the Clerk.

Nominations were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for the coming year. Cllr Cobbold proposed re-election of Cllr Castagnetti, this was seconded by Cllr Russell & was unanimously agreed. Cllr Castagnetti was duly elected Vice-Chair & signed the declaration of acceptance of office, which was countersigned by the Clerk.

2. To consider accepting apologies for absence:

Cllr McCluskey apologies received & accepted.

3. To consider declarations of interest:

Nil

4. To approve the minutes of the last meeting of 27th February 2025

The minutes of 27th March were ratified as a true record of the meeting & a hard copy signed by Cllr MacKenzie (Chair).

Proposed: EC (Vice Chair) Seconded: SR

5. The meeting adjourned for public participation:

*Thorpe Abbotts resident reported letters missing from the street name plate 'The Street'. Clerk to report to SNC.

*Brockdish resident reported 'Give Way' sign missing + post damaged at junction of Scole Road to A143. Clerk to request an update from NCC (previously reported).

*Thorpe Abbotts resident AR introduced himself to the meeting & reported concerns re: the proposed BESS. AR has set up an action group to oppose the proposed plan (Thorpe Abbotts/Brockdish/Needham/Billingord involved). AR attended the consultation event hosted by Elyma & Renewable Power Energy on 09/05/25 & felt the questions he posed could not be answered.

Discussion followed after AR spoke of concerns & those present raised concerns, see Appendix A.

Cllr Lisa Buck (Vice Chair) of Dickleburgh & Rushall PC introduced herself to the meeting. Cllr Buck is a resident of Rushall & reported opposition/concerns raised by parishioners. Encourages all to request EIA full screening SNC Planning Portal

Application 2025/1332. On the PR side, Cllr Buck is raising awareness of the BESS with local radio, press, tv, social media + MP Adrian Ramsay.

Cllr Clark attended the Consultation - please see notes Appendix B.

6. To receive County Cllr Wilby's report - see Appendix C.

Delivered to the meeting by Cllr Castagnetti (Vice Chair).

7. Planning (applications/decisions/updates as notified by SNC):-

At Risk Register:-

37 The Street, Brockdish

Chris Bennett, Heritage Officer, SNC previously reported the property is now being investigated by another department (a very long process).

The Community Enforcement Officer is involved & the council do have capacity to serve an improvement notice which requires remedial works to the property that would make the property safe for occupation. The notices tackle hazards within the property & its curtilage but are not targeted specifically at the appearance of the property - however they can consequently assist in the building being repaired which is important from the heritage point of view. An urgent work notice can not be served if the building is occupied - the owner is stating & providing evidence that this is the case, even though it is in poor condition. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) contacted Chris Bennett via email on 30/03/25 for an update. Response received to say that the Compliance Officer is to take a look at the building - we will report back once he has done so. Chris Bennett has also contacted the empty homes officer for an update & will advise when he has received a response. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) contacted the Compliance Officer (AB) on 30/04/25 & 19/05/25 requesting updates. Awaiting response.

Application:

2025/1102 Land North East of 68 The Street, Brockdish

Outline permission for erection of three new self build dwellings with matters reserved except access (EOT granted - return date for comments 23/05/25).

After discussion, the PC does not support this application for the following reasons:-

1. Does not accord with the SNC Development Plan.
2. Unacceptable ribbon development.
3. Contrary to the previous planning application which stated 'a hedge to be planted to form an edge to the Village.'
4. Outside of the existing 30mph speed limit for the Village. Speed limit would require to be extended eastwards
5. The footpath will require extending to the proposed site entrance.

Decisions: Approved by SNC & supported by PC

2025/0777 Rose Cottage, Scole Road, Brockdish

Installation of through floor lift

2024/2293 Agricultural Building South of Hilltop Farm, Hall Road, Brockdish

Demolition of existing agricultural building with part Q approval & erection of new replacement dwelling & garage with residential garden land.

8. Correspondence to note : (sent to Cllrs upon receipt).

- Proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) land East of Cuttings Road, Rushall. See Public Forum Agenda item 5 re: concerns raised by parishioners - please see Appendix A. Note: Full EIA Screening Request 2025/1332 consultation expiry date

10/06/25. PC agrees that a full EIA Screening is required & will respond. PC not a consultee & will request to be consulted.

- Devolution/LGR, Norfolk. NCC & SNC details of consultation meetings. Letter sent following the last PC meeting please see attached Appendix D. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) thanked Cllr Clark for composing the letter, raising valid points. County Cllr Wilby informed the meeting that he has planned a face-to-face meeting re: LGR, to be held in Harleston. Further details to follow.
- Norfolk Nature Recovery Consultation. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) to respond.
- Broadland & South Norfolk Design Code Consultation. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) to respond.
- Parish Council Generic email account requirements as informed by NALC/the latest 2025 edition of the Practitioners Guide. Every authority must now have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain. Clerk contacted NALC for further information & quote for provision of email Norfolk Parishes email service (June 2025-March 2025) is £16.67 + VAT. Cllrs unanimously accepted the quote. Clerk to complete application form with Cllrs email accounts & forward to NALC.

9. AOB/Updates/Matters Arising:-

*Flooding: Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) reported the draft investigation report into flooding across Norfolk (Storm Babet-Part 2), prepared by the Flood & Water Management Team NCC has been received. The final report will be published at:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/flood-and-water-management/flood-investigations.

The depth measure gauge is now in place at Syleham Road, Brockdish.

*Speeding: Cllr Castagnetti (Vice Chair) has no further data to report from the Safety Camera Team & is expecting data to be provided for March, April, May at the end of June.

Cllr Cobbold has no further data to report. SAM2 not working properly, requires an assessment by Westcotec Ltd cost £100+VAT. Needham to pay 50% of the cost as SAM2 shared with them. Cllrs approved of assessment & Cllr Cobbold to action.

*The Commons/WVfN inc. Biodiversity (Action Plan).

Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) has contacted Cllr James Bensly, NCC to arrange a meeting re: the future of the old school playing field. Meeting to take place on 19th June.

Cllr Clark completed the EOI SNC Nature Conservation Fund Grant re: the old school playing field. Cllrs Clark & Mackenzie (Chair) participated in an online meeting to discuss the EOI with SNC Officers.

Cllr Clark reported WVfN continues to develop the partnership with RWT.

Plans are underway to hold an event on Brockdish Common on 21st September 2025. PROW, Footpath 3, Foredale Common. NCC contacted PC re: broken stile on Common (alongside Grove Road (PC reported broken stile Feb.2023). NCC believed PC has ownership of the land. Clerk to advise NCC that land is registered 'owner unknown' & no livestock are grazed there.

*Date of Xmas Tree Light Switch-On. Proposed date for Brockdish & Thorpe Abbotts is Saturday 6th December - tbc at the next scheduled meeting.

- *Proposed Village Fete, Brockdish. Proposed date Saturday 4th July 2026 - tbc at the next scheduled meeting.
- *Village Sign, Brockdish. Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) & Cllr Castagnetti (Vice Chair) to meet to discuss ideas with a local graphic designer, to be arranged.
- *Proposed notice board by Waveney Heights junction (green area) Brockdish. Suggestion to place on existing wooden posts by High Hedge Path. Awaiting advice/permission from NCC.
- *Thorpe Abbotts residents would like a new notice board (same as Brockdish). Awaiting quotation from Earth Anchors Ltd. As in the Conservation area, may require permission from SNC Heritage Officer, Clerk to contact.
- *SNC The Big South Norfolk Litter Pick. Brockdish & Thorpe Abbotts completed litter picks on 26th April. Clerk has submitted completion forms to SNC, each village to receive £20 for taking part.
- *Erosion of verges inc. around the Pump, Thorpe Abbotts. Clerk submitted photos to NCC & awaits further update (with the Highways Team). Update received on 07/04/25 to say 'this does not meet with our intervention criteria. Verges usually recover in the Spring & it is not illegal for drivers to use verges'.
- *Cllr McCluskey reported 'dead' trees in a wooded area, Thorpe Abbotts. Clerk submitted photos to NCC & awaits further update (with the Highways Team). Update received on 07/04/25 to say 'we have assessed this problem & it does not meet our criteria at this time. We will continue to monitor as part of our routine inspections'.
- *Cllr McCluskey reported possible water leak/clogged ditch o/s entrance to fisheries, Thorpe Abbotts. Clerk reported to NCC & included photos 16/03/25. Update received on 20/05/25 to say 'a site visit has taken place & the issue has been resolved',
- *Brockdish War Memorial. 3 additional names to be added/inscribed as per request of Church Warden PT. Requires listed building consent as grade II listed. Clerk has contacted the Heritage Officer at SNC. Advised there would be no problem in adding names to the bottom of lists already in place, however no space to do so & in this case HO not quite sure what the plan would be - it would in some respect not be ideal to inscribe on the octagonal bases/plinths as these do not have any writing on at present. It may be better to add another tablet like the one attached (as previously suggested by PC) HO asked do we have any background to the people we are proposing to put on it so it is clear why they are not on it already? Update: Clerk has forwarded names & rank details to the HO. No further progress to report at present.
- * Village website. AS continues to update the website. NALC website is updated..
- * PC has vacancy for one Councillor (co-option) notifications placed in the Mardler & on notice boards. Brockdish resident expressed interest this evening & will attend the next scheduled PC meeting with a view to being co-opted to the PC.

10.a Payments/Transactions for approval/authorisation: March April May 2025 to date.
COMMUNITY ACCOUNT (current). Proposed: CM (Chair) Seconded: EC (Vice Chair)

Payee March April	Description	Amount
Clerk	Pay (Annual)	£1276.90
Defib Store	Battery & Pads (Brockdish)	£228.00
Pearce & Kemp Ltd	Street Light maintenance	£37.50
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		£1544.40
INCOME March April		
SNC	Precept	£8215.00
NCC PPS	2 SID Units	£2295.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS/INCOME		£10510.00
Payee May		
Pearce & Kemp Ltd	Street Light maintenance	£37.50
G. Leech	Grass cutting etc	£246.66
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		£284.16
INCOME		
UKPN	Wayleave Brockdish Common	£132.93
TOTAL RECEIPTS/INCOME		£132.93
BALANCE c/f		£11530.31*

*monies we hold: £872.53 re: Brockdish 'Xmas Switch On' donations (village sign?)
 £51.79 re: Brockdish Defibrillator (funds from clothes bank)
 (£280.83 *CIL October 2022 Hilltop Farm, Brockdish)
 (£2155.83 *CIL October 2023 Hilltop Farm, Brockdish)
 (£5566.01 *CIL April 2024 Hilltop Farm, Brockdish)

* 5 years to spend CIL payments. a) The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
 b) Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an Area.

b. To approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR) & Accounting Statement

Cllrs considered & approved the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR) prepared by Clerk.
 Statements signed by Cllr MacKenzie (Chair) & Clerk.

Clerk to submit exemption statement to the external auditor. A notice to exercise public rights to be displayed on village notice boards + website advising that the accounts will be available for inspection from 09/06/25 to 22/07/25.

11. To consider date of next scheduled meeting:

To be held on Thursday 26th June 7pm at Thorpe Abbotts Village Hall.
 The meeting closed at 21.25 hours

1. The roads (country lanes, often single track) in the vicinity are not suitable for this kind of development, especially during the construction phase. The proposed route to access the construction (potential maintenance after construction) of the site is through our parishes.
2. Safety Risks associated with BESS. Would our fire & rescue services have the resources to contain a fire, potential explosion, toxic/chemical emissions? Impact on the community? Adequate water supply - storage? Potential flood risk, surface water? Water quality (safe)?
3. Will relevant agencies be consulted? i.e. water company, drainage board, emergency services, Wildlife Trust, Heritage Board.
4. Noise & light pollution affecting wildlife & humans (wellbeing, mental health).
5. Significant impact on the area/environment - landscape, biodiversity, wildlife, habitats, air quality, EMP radiation - proposed site close to public footpath, bridleway, surrounding woods.
6. Loss of agricultural land. Ground conditions, contamination & damage to soil - could it be returned to agricultural land?
7. Effect on telecommunications?
8. Would the site be managed & monitored 24/7 by operatives for potential hazards & security? Threat of terrorism?
9. House prices - values may decrease?
10. Further pylons, solar farms?
11. Why was this site selected? No locational criteria. Not thought through!
12. Consideration should be given to the irreversible harm to our countryside that this proposed BESS development will cause.
13. It may be necessary for the Action Group to seek legal advice.

Dodd's Wood (900 MW) Battery Energy Storage Station (BESS) Appendix B

Notes from Cllr Clark

I attended the public consultation event on 9 May 2025. District Councillor Clayton Hudson (CH) and County Councillor Martin Wilby were also present.

The proposal by Elmya / Renewable Power Capital appears to be entirely speculative. On the basic question “why choose this site?” the only response was that it is “available” and, by the way, is not on high quality agricultural land. I asked about locational search criteria – there are none. We asked about connection to the National Grid on the assumption that it would be a good idea to locate a BESS near to the Grid so that connection by power line or underground cables would be minimised. They appeared unaware that the nearest connection would be at Eye, some 10 miles away. CH challenged their knowledge of the National Grid which has limited capacity in Norfolk and would not be able to accept high discharges from this facility at Dodd's Wood. CH advanced the view that the development would lead to further industrial development involving hydrogen production as a way of using surplus power which could not be discharged to the Grid. There was also a suspicion, heard

from many people, that local solar farm applications would be an inevitable consequence of this development.

Other points discussed include:

- (1) The proposal is to cover the southern half of the site with batteries and a sub-station leaving the northern half, extending to the southern edge of Rushall, as “amenity area” – that’s the community and wildlife benefit !
- (2) There was little thought given to access routes by construction traffic over the 2 year construction period.
- (3) Advice on such developments advises a high volume of water needed in case of fires - a likely event. This need was ‘satisfied’ by having a pond but CH took the line that fires on such sites are almost impossible to control and would in fact be left to take their course – not a happy thought for Rushall residents.
- (4) Their claimed local employment bonus does not stand up as in the construction period large contractors will be needed rather than local contractors and technical staff will “come from a wider area”. Following construction there will be very little employment other than visiting technical staff.
- (5) The life of the scheme is about 40 years after which we would be left with a ‘brown-field site’ impossible to return to agriculture but ripe for industrial use. Elmya argues that BESS is a temporary development that will not change the agricultural land classification – clearly nonsense.
- (6) There was no O.S. based map to show the context of the development (houses, footpaths, woodlands etc) only a fuzzy aerial photo. I have requested a proper map for our considerations.

Despite the sound arguments about sustainability and the wisdom of capturing renewable energy for later use, this proposal has to be seen for what it is: a speculative venture with no place in the middle of the countryside. Being unrelated to other infrastructure the claimed environmental gains will be offset by the costs.

I think we should not respond to this consultation but send our views to SNDC.

Cllr Clark - additional notes from this evening. (PC meeting 22/05/25).

1. E.I.A. 2025/1332 - We are concerned that relevant consultees will not be asked to comment. This particularly concerns fire safety, water supply & the production of poisonous gasses in case of a likely controllable fire.
2. Wildlife – While the proposal says land will be set aside for wildlife/amenity the noise created by the BESS will in fact drive wildlife away & reduce wildlife in the area.
3. Terrorism – The plant would likely be an easy target for terrorists.

County Councillor Wilby's Report to scheduled PC meeting 22/05/25 Appendix C

It was good to attend many VE celebration events over the recent days seeing all of the bunting and flags that have been decorating our streets and homes. A very big thank you to all of the volunteers involved with organising these events and a very big thank you to all of the volunteers who give up their time to make our towns and villages the special places they are. As with the VE events there will be no charge for road closures for the VJ Day celebrations on August 15th, deadline date for applications is Friday 18th July.

People and organisations in Norfolk are being invited to give their views to help shape the future of local government in the County. NCC is posing a series of questions and will help it draw up plans for a future council structure. The feedback form is available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/LGRfeedback and people can answer as many or as few questions as they wish to. You can find out more about local government reorganization at www.norfolk.gov.uk/LGR and by subscribing to the county councils email bulletin. Your Norfolk Extra.

NCC is inviting residents, landowners, conservation specialists and local communities to participate in the public consultation for Norfolk's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Running from 16th April to the 11th June, this consultation offers an opportunity to provide feedback on the priorities and actions for restoring and enhancing nature across the county. While Norfolk is home to a rich variety of species and natural spaces, many of these are isolated and fragmented. The LNRS aims to reverse biodiversity loss, support climate adaption and encourage sustainable land use to benefit both people and wildlife. People are encouraged to review the Local Habitat Map, draft LNRS and FAQs available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/naturerecovery

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) recently played its part in supporting Ukraine by sending a convoy of volunteer firefighters to deliver essential fire equipment to the war-torn region. A group of 15 NFRS firefighters drove five retired fire vehicles across Europe to Ukraine bringing vital equipment such as ladders, generators, hydraulic rescue tools, light portable pumps and positive pressure ventilation fans. These vehicles and equipment are part of a larger humanitarian initiative coordinated by FIRE Aid and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). The five vehicles from Norfolk were part of a UK convoy of 30 fire appliances, carrying over 15,000 items of essential firefighting equipment to help replace resources lost in the ongoing conflict. NCC is encouraging people who are interested in home composting to give it a try. Discounted 220 litre compost bins are available at all of Norfolk's recycling centres at the price of just £15 and from June this year, for the first time ever, discounted 330 litre compost bins will also be available to purchase at the seven larger recycling centres. There is lots of advice on how to get started on www.norfolkrecycles.com/home-compost including information about our new, free introduction to Composting Course.

Letter (Cllr Clark) re: LGR Appendix D.

Dear Colleague,

At our meeting on 27th March 2025, we discussed the proposed changes to our local Government system. We were disappointed that our County Council & District Council Representatives were not present to hear our views.

Our main concern can be summarised by saying that 'local government is becoming less & less local' & not truly representative of local communities. The prospect of a single unitary authority for Norfolk means that any 'local' member for our area will be 1 voice in over 100 & is most unlikely to be effective in pressing any views from our community. The emphasis of the debate appears to be on the advantages of financial savings but this will be at the price of local involvement in decisions which affect us directly.

We note that in the Spring edition of 'Your Norfolk' the County Council says that local government reorganisation will '**ensure strong local links, through closer working with town & parish councils.**' But those are just words. Currently local views are largely ignored, so what changes are proposed to redress this? It will require something much more concrete than a phrase like 'closer working' to give effect to local views. To gain support for the proposed reorganisation there is a crucial need to include real proposals to empower town & parish councils & provide them with resources derived from the savings.

A good local example of the problem are the current efforts to secure the future of the Brockdish old school sports field. It is now well over 2 years ago that the County Council was asked to consider allowing management of the site as a small nature reserve, involving children in its creation - no real change from its established educational use. The County Council has abandoned this land-locked site for 9 years but still refuses to discuss the community's ideas. Not a shining example of 'closer working.'

The 1974 changes to our local government system removed the small but essentially local, rural & urban district councils. The current proposals, as they stand, remove another layer of local democracy. These changes happen rarely so we must get it right & restore the 'local' to local government.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Christine MacKenzie (Chair)

SIGNED.....DATE.....

Cllr C. MacKenzie (Chair)