

SELLACK PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20th MARCH 2025 AT 6.00pm IN SELLACK VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs Sarah Aitken, Mark Robinson, Emma Crowe and John Marshall.

In attendance: Claire Vaughan (Clerk) and 12 residents.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting, held on Thursday 28th March 2024 were read, agreed and signed as correct.

2. GUEST SPEAKER – ‘We Don’t Buy Crime’ – a presentation from Nicholas Hall of West Mercia Police

‘We Don’t Buy Crime towns and villages see West Mercia Police work with parish councils to invest in the initiative which sees them offer a free SmartWater marking kit to every resident in the area. Signs are displayed throughout the We Don’t Buy Crime towns and villages letting criminals know that the area is protected by SmartWater to act as a deterrent to would-be thieves’.

The Parish Council is keen to gauge local interest in this initiative.

Nicholas responded to a number of questions asked, as follows:

- What happens if you move out of the house that the kit is registered to? Each kit is unique and has its own code. Kits can be transferred to a new owner.
- How robust is the product? Once dry, you could scratch it off but you only need a small amount to identify and we recommend non-flat surfaces, as this makes it harder to scratch it off. Nicholas gave an example of a lead roof that is still marked after 14 years.
- Can you mark electronics? Yes, but would recommend that you don’t put it on laptop/computer screens. Avoid marking removable parts of any items.
- How much Smartwater property do you recover? Not much but some of this may be down to deterrent signage etc.
- What is the commitment required from the parish, in order to access the Police funding and signage? There is a minimum commitment of 70% of properties in the parish.
- How do you register the kit? Registration has to be done via an app. The Police, with the Parish Council, would organise a roll out day to support this.
- What if we decide we don’t want the signs? One resident mentioned not wanting to identify that there were valuable items to steal. Nicholas advised that the signage was optional but felt that it would act as more of a deterrent.
- Are there planning issues when deciding where to put signs? Look at thoroughfares coming into the parish. They can go on fingerposts.
- Neighbourhood watch – a resident asked about signage and if there is any chance of replenishing this.
- Can you get a discount on your home insurance, if you have SmartWater? Nicholas wasn’t sure but thought the NFU may offer a discount.

3. ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL 2024-25

3.1. Chairman’s Report (Cllr Sarah Aitken)

‘A Parish Council is only as good as the people who volunteer to be Parish Councillors. I would like to welcome our newest recruit, Cllr John Marshall and to thank Cllr Mark Robinson and Cllr Emma Crowe for all their time and commitment over the last year. Having lived in the area for over 25 years, John says he is ‘delighted to have the opportunity to work with, and for, our very special community’. Together we make a good team, each bringing different perspectives and skills. We still have one vacancy if you feel inspired to join us. We aim to keep it enjoyable and to be realistic about the limited amount of time people have for the role.

AP/02/2025

We continue to be very fortunate in having Claire Vaughan as our Clerk, who is pivotal to everything we do. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank her for all that she does. We achieve so much more because of her efficiency, professionalism and enthusiasm. We meet in public and are very pleased to have had residents present at all our meetings over the last year, some coming frequently, which we hope will continue. I like to think our meetings are more interesting and enjoyable than you might expect! A short part of the agenda of every Parish Council meeting is open to residents to provide their views on an agenda item or to bring an issue to our attention. This evening, an important part of our Annual Parish Meeting is to provide residents with an opportunity to speak about any parish matters if they wish to. On the 9th November last year, we launched the new Sellack War Memorial Plaque Trail, achieving the Parish Council's long held ambition to place a plaque for each man on the Sellack War Memorial on footpath gates around the parish. After an Act of Remembrance at Sellack Village Hall, two groups enjoyed led walks of separate sections of the new trail. Thank you to everyone who joined us on the day and to everyone who sponsored a plaque. John will say more about the next steps for the trail and the Herefordshire History Festival later this evening. Thank you to the two volunteers who worked to repair and care for our War Memorial last year. Its location on a busy crossroads makes it impossible to hold an annual Remembrance Sunday around the War Memorial, but we continue in our ambition to hold an annual act of Remembrance to honour the sacrifice of Sellack's fallen. Thank you to the many residents who have attended in recent years.

Backney Bridge Picnic Site is the largest asset that Sellack Parish Council owns, and I would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped to maintain it over the last year. Together we keep an eye on the site, which generally is well respected by those who use it. Our spring working group is this coming Saturday morning and everyone is welcome to join us to help in any way they can. We will be litter picking, painting railings and continuing the battle with the brambles and tree saplings, which each year we succeed in controlling and pushing back a bit further. Over the next year we will be applying for grant funding to add interpretation boards about the wildlife and history of the site and will be exploring how we can make the top viewing platform accessible in a wheelchair.

This year we extended the Picnic Site working group's Terms of Reference to include acting as the Flood Action Group for Sellack Parish. Thank you to the resident who has been actively linking into Herefordshire Council's flood planning. We are concerned that any upstream flood prevention does not result in higher flood levels on the stretch of the River Wye that flows through Sellack.

Sellack Parish Council opts into the Herefordshire Council Lengths Man scheme which provides us with a small amount of funding to maintain the road drainage network around the parish. Wet as the roads have been this winter, they would have been much worse without the expertise and hard work of our Lengths Man, Terry Griffiths and his team. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for turning out in all weathers to do their best to keep the drains flowing. Last year, Herefordshire Council invited Parish Councils to apply for funding to undertake more significant work on the drainage system, but we are yet to hear if our application has been successful.

We have been more successful with our application to Herefordshire Council for grant funding to buy new footpath gates to replace stiles and make our footpaths more accessible. As our Parish Footpath Officer, Mark will talk next about progress to date and our future plans.

Sellack Parish Council owns and maintains the defibrillator and bleed kit inside the box on the outside Sellack Village Hall. Both are registered with the ambulance service whose advice is phoning 999 is the best way to access them, because they will give guidance on resuscitation, dispatch expert help and provide directions to the nearest, functioning defibrillator. With that in mind, we have liaised with Bridstow Parish Council about the continued placement of defibrillators along our common boundary.

Sellack Parish Council owns the three coronation commemorative benches located around the parish. Thank you to the volunteer who recently painted the Queen Elizabeth II (QE II) coronation bench located at Sellack Marsh near the Millenium and Jubilee trees. The other QE II bench has been removed from the Caradoc bus stop to be restored, as has the George VI bench from Picts Cross. We are seeking quotes to restore them and they will be replaced once restored.

AP/03/2025

As the most local unit of local government, we are the point of contact for a range of public bodies who send us a wide range of information. In an urgent situation, our ambition is to be able to disseminate information quickly to all households in Sellack. An example would be a problem with the drinking water supply and the need to distribute bottled water. The red alert for strong wind that some people in our community received last autumn, prompted us to question whether we could be doing more to build our community's emergency resilience and we are open to any suggestions. If you are not already signed up for receiving our electronic communications, please consider signing up before you leave. We will continue to hand deliver our printed newsletter twice a year as well.

That concludes my report. Thank you for listening and I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening. If you have any questions, there will be the opportunity to ask them in the public section later in the meeting.'

3.2. Parish Footpath Officer's Report (Cllr Mark Robinson)

Cllr Robinson introduced himself and advised that the Parish Council continues to work towards making all of the footpaths in the parish accessible, by replacing stiles with footpath gates when possible and where the landowner gives permission.

Cllr Robinson asked parishioners to email Claire, the Clerk, if they become aware of any footpath issues and obstructions, and he will go out and investigate.

4. Sellack War Memorial Plaque Trail and Herefordshire Histories Festival (Cllr J. Marshall)

Cllr J. Marshall provided an update on the trail and next steps planned, including taking part in the inaugural Herefordshire Histories Festival in May 2025 <https://herefordshirehistories.org/sellack/>

The Parish Council is planning to hold a launch event on the morning of the 10th May at the Church, followed by guided walk. The panel for the launch event talk will include John Marshall, the Parish Footpath Officer, Mark Robinson and Bill Webb, who wrote the booklet on the men listed on the Sellack War Memorial. There will also be three other guided walks during the festival, on 12th, 15th and 18th May and all of these will be free and bookable via Ticketsource.

The Parish Council also plans to add information boards to the start and end of the plaque trail.

5. Participatory Budgeting (PB) Scheme (Cllr S. Aitken)

A democratic process that provides opportunity for local residents (Sellack parish electors) to decide how to spend part of the Parish Council's budget. The Parish Council has allocated £250 to PB and welcomes ideas from local residents on how best to allocate this funding to the local area. Find out more about the PB process and criteria at <https://sellackparishcouncil.gov.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

The Chair advised that the Parish Council had launched a PB scheme, providing up to £250 for the local community to decide on a project or activity to spend it on. More details can be found at <https://sellackparishcouncil.gov.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

6. Matters raised by Sellack Parish Residents

One resident asked about the Parish Council's stance of overnight visitors to the BBPS – the Chair advised that the Parish Council does not encourage this, but did choose to work positively with those visitors in 2024. The Chair added that the Parish Council does have a lock and chain for the car park gate, if ever needed, and will continue to monitor the situation over the spring and summer period. Residents are encouraged to report any concerns to the Clerk.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....