

Bere Ferrers Parish Council

At a meeting of the Plans & Highways Committee meeting held in the Council Chambers on Tuesday 6th January 2026.

Present

Cllr. B. Lamb	Vice-Chair of the Committee
Cllr. P. Archer	Cllr. P. Crozier
Cllr. R. Leithall	Cllr. J. Maciejowska
Cllr. M. Patterson	

In Attendance:

Cllr. C. Shaw

439. Apologies

Cllr. R. Maycock sent his apology. Accepted by the Committee.

440. Declaration of Matters of Interest

Cllr. Crozier declared interest in a planning application to be discussed under item, Enforcements cases to be taken into Part 2.

441. Notifications of items for information at the discretion of the Chair. No action can be taken on these items at this meeting

Cllr. Patterson has received reports of a fallen tree on the footpath near Tuckermash. It was discussed that it might have already been reported on the Devon County Council report a problem page. The Clerk to check.

Cllr. Shaw reported that the ferry sign outside the train station looks more like it has faded not dirty, therefore a new sign may be needed. The Clerk to follow up.

Cllr Maciejowska reported that a tree is down on Footpath 65, which she will report. She also reported that the mooring opposite Cotehele is in disrepair. She said that her husband will be speaking with Tamar National Landscape regarding future plans for the Quay but with further storms, there is concern that the mooring may be lost to the river. She noted that is not a Parish Council, but wished it noted.

Discussion took place regarding a potential safety concern involving cut-down beer cans used as flower pots on a gate at Ward Farm, Footpath 65. Although located on the far side of the gate, concern was raised about sharp edges posing a risk of injury. The Clerk to contact the Public Rights of Way Warden and ask to carry out an inspection.

442. Matters arising from the minutes at the meeting held on the 2nd December 2025

The minutes were approved and adopted at the Council meeting held on 16th December 2025

Matters Arising

Minute 402 (340)

It was noted that a notice from the Parish Council regarding parking regulations in the Parish Hall car park will be submitted for the February edition of Berelink and also posted on social media.

Minute 406

The Clerk read out an email received from the Senior Transport Co-ordinating Officer at Devon County Council: Edgcumbe Hotel was removed as a timing point by Stagecoach due to issues with buses waiting there. It is a busy area for parking with the Coop store being next door. It is still a bus stop but buses will proceed to next timing point at the Grove as opposed to waiting there until 0930. As the bus ticket machines are not programmed to accept bus passes before 0930, I can see why she is now having to pay. That said, if it is running a bit late, it will be there at or after 0930 but that's not a guarantee. I will speak to Stagecoach to see if the service can run two minutes later to help ensure it does not get to this stop before 0930. This needs to be planned in advance as the service change needs to be registered with the Traffic Commissioner, the Governing body for bus services. Coupled with Stagecoach only normally making timetable changes twice a year due to the work involved and to avoid constant changes, I would not expect any changes to take place before their next service change which will be in April 2026. The only options for now is for the lady to pay the minimum fare to the Grove as this next stop where she will be able to use her bus pass, or travel on the next bus which is at around 1019 from the Edgcumbe Hotel.

If Stagecoach are agreeable to this timetable change, I will let you know when it is starting.

The Clerk was asked to send a reply expressing the Council's disappointment that the timetable had been changed without consultation, resulting in a disadvantage to elderly and disabled residents.

443. To deal with Planning applications for comment. Interested parties are invited to comment on applications they have an interest in before a decision is made, at the discretion of the Chair.

3149/25/HHO Mrs Smith, Sunnyside, 1 Station Road, Bere Ferrers, PL20 7JT
Householder application for single storey side extension.

Comment: The Council supports this application.

444. Take note of any Planning Applications noted after consideration by the Borough

2810/25/CLP Mr K Kingdon, 9-10 The Square, Bere Alston, PL20 7BH
Certificate of lawfulness for proposed infill of two openings to recommence use as two individuals dwelling houses
Decision: Cert of Lawfulness (Proposed) Certified

2980/25/FUL DG CM WA Horton, Leigh Farm, Bere Alston, PL20 7EF
Erection of general purpose agricultural building (retrospective)
Decision: Conditional Approval

2738/25/FUL Mr G Hillson, Higher Clamoak, Bere Alston, PL20 7BU
General purpose/Livestock Building
Decision: Conditional Approval

445. Enforcement cases to be taken into Part Two

Cllr. Lamb proposed going into Part 2, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

Cllr. Patterson proposed coming out into Part 2, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

Enforcement cases and planning application were discussed under Part 2.

446. Consultation on new National Planning Policy Framework

Cllr Lamb explained that the framework forms the basis of all planning decisions and regulations, and noted that this is the new plan from the latest government. He suggested that three members of the Committee—himself, Cllr Leithall, and Cllr Maycock—meet to review the report and provide a summary at the next meeting.

447. Revision of the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr. Leithall read out his draft paper on the current position of the Plan and recommended actions:

- The plan was finalised, examined, approved by referendum in 2018.
- It remains a lawful part of the statutory development plan, but because it is more than five years old it no longer attracts automatic additional weight in housing decisions.

2. What the Plan was based on

- The Plan was prepared with extensive community engagement over several years.
- It was written to be in general conformity with:
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in force at the time.
 - West Devon Borough Council's Local Plan/Core Strategy then in place.
 - The emerging Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan, which was not yet adopted.
- It deliberately allocated housing and avoided under-provision, which was (and remains) a key legal requirement.

3. What has changed since 2018

- West Devon Borough Council moved into joint plan-making with Plymouth City Council and South Hams District Council.
- A Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) was adopted and now provides the strategic planning context above neighbourhood plans.
- That Joint Local Plan is itself aging and likely to be replaced, particularly in light of:
 - changing national policy, and
 - the Government's direction of travel towards local government reorganisation and unitary authorities in Devon, which may dissolve West Devon Borough Council within the next few years.
- This means the strategic planning framework is unstable and transitional.

4. What the new national policy document changes

- The recently published National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025) places much stronger emphasis on:
 - proportionality,
 - avoiding duplication,
 - and not forcing communities into repeated plan rewrites when higher-level plans are out of sync.
- It explicitly accepts pragmatic decision-making during periods of policy and governance change.
- In effect, it recognises the limits of “democratic bureaucracy”: communities are not expected to endlessly redo plans simply to chase moving targets set elsewhere.

5. What we should *not* do

- We should not undertake a full review or rewrite of the Neighbourhood Plan now.
- We should not reopen housing numbers, site allocations, or settled policies.
- We should not exhaust volunteer time rewriting a plan that risks being overtaken by:
 - a new Local Plan, and/or
 - a new Unitary Authority structure.

6. What we *should* do now (minimum, proportionate action)

To keep the Plan as strong as possible without rewriting it, the Parish Council should:

- Formally note and minute that:
 - the Neighbourhood Plan has been reviewed against current national policy and the Joint Local Plan;
 - no fundamental conflicts have been identified;
 - and a full update is deferred until the strategic planning framework stabilises.
- 2. Publish a short Neighbourhood Plan Status / Conformity Statement (a brief note, not a plan update) confirming:
 - the Plan remains part of the development plan;
 - most policies (design, Local Green Space, heritage, settlement character) remain fully consistent with national policy;
 - only strategic housing context has aged, which sits above neighbourhood control.
- 3. Agree clear triggers for any future update, such as:
 - adoption of a replacement Local or Strategic Plan;
 - formal notification of a new neighbourhood housing requirement;
 - or confirmation of post-reorganisation planning arrangements under a Unitary Authority.
- 4. Nominate a single councillor or officer to monitor changes annually, rather than creating a standing working group.

7. Overall conclusion

- The Bere Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan is still valid, still relevant, and still defensible.
- The most democratic and responsible course is not to rush into rewriting it, but to:
 - formally reaffirm it,
 - document its continued conformity,
 - and update it only when higher-level plans and governance are settled.

This approach protects community effort, respects national policy, and keeps the Plan as strong as possible during a period of unavoidable change

Cllr Lamb stated that the plan was reviewed 18 months ago, resulting in moderate changes. He noted that the government is now offering funding for any new or revised plans, with a submission deadline of 31 March 2026.

Cllr Graham Reed, West Borough Councillor for Tavistock North and member of the West Devon Housing Panel, reported that at a meeting held earlier that day, the panel discussed the new planning framework and will be reviewing and revising policies to make them more relevant, particularly for rural communities. It would appear though that the new plan does not appear to take into account rural and affordable housing.

Last year's Call for Sites was not widely published, so it will be issued again later this year. Cllr. Reed recommended that the Council review its plan as a way of preparing for and protecting against potential future developments within the Parish.

The Woolacombe Estate, now owned by Bunny Homes, has submitted their planning application. The only change is a variance regarding the builder named on the application.

Cllr. Lamb requested that the Clerk arrange a meeting with the new Devon County Council Highways Officer.

Cllr. Lamb explained that the Parish Council has been trying for many years to reallocate the Section 106 funding to the Pavilion rebuild. Currently the approx. £20,000 is still allocated to the two Bere Alston playparks, which is not currently needed, as approx. £15,000 has already been spent on playparks in recent years. When Cllrs. Crozier and Lamb raised this the Director of Strategy and Governance at WDBC, he said he would look into it, but no response has been received.

They have also met with the agent for Bunny Homes, who indicated there could be an informal arrangement to facilitate the reallocation. The Clerk was asked to follow up with Bunny Homes to confirm whether this request has been submitted to WDBC.

Cllr. Lamb suggested the same Councillors - himself, Cllr Leithall, and Cllr Maycock, with Cllr. Reed to discuss revising the plan and provide an update at the next meeting.

448. Correspondence

1. Email from Cllr. Maycock: 'After a number of attempts I believe we managed to have The Down added to the gritting route sometime ago? However the last two morning it's been like driving on an ice rink do we know if there has been a change in this policy or am I mistaken? If not, I'll get onto our new County Councillor to chase this up with Highways. Fore Street and High Cross had been gritted.'

Cllr Shaw confirmed that the area is being gritted and had observed this personally.

449. Items for the next agenda

Aside from the usual items, reports on the new National Planning Policy Framework and Neighbourhood Plan.

450. Questions from any members of the public

The Vice-Chair thanked the Committee members for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 8.17 pm.

Signed by the Chair of the Committee

Signed this date 27th January 2026