

Welcome to our October 2026 Newsletter

Happy Birthday! It may be hard to believe but this September marked the first anniversary of the opening of the Village Hall Footpath. I still think of it as the “new” footpath but for many people it is now just a part of the scenery and it feels as though it has been there for ever.

It certainly is well used and has been worth all the effort that went into constructing it. It may only be a few metres of tarmac but each of those meters proved to be a struggle to overcome some quite extraordinary obstacles. But we made it and it has been a success. I would like to think that it has helped to contain the congestion in the carpark at school opening and closing times – or is that wishful thinking?

Do you have ideas for other similar worthwhile projects that would add value for the village? If you then let us know and we can have a go at cracking that nut as well.

Cllr Francis Pullman, Chairman

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Is it too early to mention Christmas?

We're excited to welcome a new community event for West Hill **Illuminations + Celebrations**, organised by the community for the community. Please look out for details, come along on Saturday 5th December and have some Christmas fun.



New! For a trial Period...

Monthly Parish Council Surgeries

RBL Clubhouse

10.00am - midday

Third Tuesday of the month

20th October 19th January

17th November 16th February

15th December 23rd March

Please see page 2 for details. It's not essential but if you want to book an appointment please contact:

Anne, our Parish Clerk: 07450 388198

clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

Cllr Francis Pullman, Chairman:

francis.pullman@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

As the saying goes... Use it or lose it!

Parish Council news

Monthly Parish Council Surgeries: Meet the Parish Council

Residents get in touch with the Parish Council in many ways. Some choose to email, others prefer to phone. Some may come along to a Parish Council meeting! Resident's queries can be many and varied. Quite often it's a case of signposting residents to the appropriate authority.



Did you know that every monthly Parish Council Meeting includes an opportunity for members of the public to speak about or ask a question about a topic that concerns them? There is a strict protocol about public participation and speaking at these meetings which is published on our website. This includes a time limit of three minutes per speaker. It may not always be possible for the Council to give an immediate response in which case a written response will be provided.

Other than engaging in an exchange of e-mails there is currently little other opportunity for residents to engage with the Parish Council over a matter which is important to you. The Parish Council has therefore decided to offer a regular drop-in session where residents of the village may come to have a confidential and informal face to face discussion with two Councillors in a relaxed forum.

These "Drop-In" sessions are sometimes referred to as "Surgeries" but call them what you will it is our intention that these sessions will be an opportunity to help people who are seeking information, an opportunity for residents to let the Parish Council know their view on subjects the Council is discussing and also an opportunity for the Parish Council to find out what is important to the residents of the village. These conversations will inform decisions taken by the Council at its regular monthly meeting.

I must stress at this point that the Parish Council is not qualified to give people advice on matters including legal, planning or financial topics and if people wish for such advice they should contact a qualified professional or a Citizens Advice Bureau. We will however endeavour to give you factual and public information that may help you or point you in the direction of someone who can help you. These meetings with the councillors will be confidential and there will be no record kept of the discussion.

We will hold these sessions at the RBL between 10.00 and 12.00 on the third Tuesday of each month. There will be no need to make an appointment but it would obviously help enormously if you did e-mail to say you intend to come and provide a brief summary of what you want to talk about. This will help us to ensure we have the relevant information available so the time we spend together can be as productive as possible but it is not essential that you do this.

We will start this as a trial to see whether it is something that people will find useful. We will welcome as many people as possible as it is a valuable form of community engagement and we hope that both the Parish Council and the residents see some real benefit from the meetings. You never know – there may even be a cup of tea and a biscuit on offer!

Cllr Francis Pullman

Parish Council Surgeries

RBL Clubhouse

10.00hrs-12.00hrs

Third Tuesday of the month

20th October 19th

January

17th November 16th

February

Exciting times ahead in the play park

The council is now in a position to plan and implement some exciting changes in the play park!

We are aware that one large gap in the playpark is that there is a lack of playthings for the under fives, so we are very keen to install some new equipment for this age group. We are also aware that some of the present equipment will need to be replaced soon as it is approaching the end of its useful life and we intend to include this in a re-design of the park.

Have your say! Playpark Consultation now open

We want to hear from children and adults. The best people to decide on what is needed to make the playpark a really exciting and fun place are the users past and present.

Please get involved by completing the survey. It's a short survey and will only take 5-10 minutes

Once the consultation has ended, with your help we can then choose a design which will best meet the needs of the children involved (*subject to the limited size of the playpark and budget available!*). Amongst our criteria for new equipment are that the new equipment should be made of sustainable and durable materials such as recycled plastic. This, once installed, requires very little maintenance, it has a much longer life expectancy than wood and can be recycled. We'll also look to include some equipment for children with some restricted mobility so they can join in fully in enjoying the playpark.

We will keep everyone informed of progress and we look forward to an exciting new facility for the new generation of West Hill residents.

Playpark Consultation

Closes 6th November 2026

Details of the survey can be found online at:

- www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk
- www.eastdevonsays.commonplace.is
- or using the QR code

Paper copies are available from our Parish Clerk.



Times's passing elections May 2027

The term of this Parish Council comes to an end in May 2027 when elections are due. Given the uncertainty about Local Government Reform and the proposed creation of Unitary Authorities under which West Hill becomes part of the Exeter Unitary Authority it is very important that the Village has a strong Parish Council to promote the best interests of West Hill.

In the three years that I have lived in the village and in the three years less 1 month that I have been a Parish Councillor we have never had a full strength of 7 Councillors. We currently have 4 on our strength and we have had to abandon some meetings as we were inquorate.

In this village we have people with many different skills and wide experience who would be of enormous benefit to the community if they were to join the Parish Council. If some of the current members do not stand next May and no new potential members put their names forward then it is entirely possible that there would be no Parish Council, no Parish Council response on planning applications and no-one representing West Hill during a period of change. There is only one way to prevent this from happening and that is for people to come forward and be prepared to spend some of their time and deploy their skills and experience as Parish Councillors for the good of the village. Like many volunteering roles what you get out of the role depends on what you put in. In the time I have been a Parish Councillor there have been challenges, there have been frustrations and there have been successes and there have been joys.

We do need a strong and effective Parish Council to see us through the changes that are taking place and to serve the best interests of West Hill. This is a call to all those people in this village who have so much to give to do something for the benefit of the community and consider becoming a Parish Councillor. West Hill was my first experience of being a Councillor and I have no regrets about my time as a member.

May 2027 might sound a long time away but the clock is not just ticking it is galloping. Please contact the Clerk or Chairman for more information or come along to a monthly surgery session (page 2 for details).

Cllr Francis Pullman



Neighbourhood Plan Update: Protecting Our Local Green Spaces and Valued Views

Our Neighbourhood Plan continues to move forward, and over recent months we've been focusing on the things residents consistently tell us matter most: protecting the green spaces and landscapes that give our woodland parish its unique character.

From the quiet corners where children play, to the tree lined lanes that frame our walks, to the long views across fields and wooded ridges — these places shape daily life here. The Neighbourhood Plan gives us a real opportunity to safeguard them for the long term.

What counts as a “Local Green Space”?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows communities to designate certain areas as **Local Green Spaces (LGS)**. Once designated, they receive protection similar to Green Belt land — meaning development is **highly restricted** and only permitted in very exceptional circumstances.

To qualify, a space must meet three national criteria:

- **Close to the community** it serves It should be within or near the settlement, not miles away in open countryside.
- **Demonstrably special to local people** This can be because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife;
- **Local in character and not an extensive tract of land** In other words, meaningful places rather than large swathes of open countryside.



Open Space at Beech Park

These criteria come directly from the NPPF 2026 Policy HC2, and they give us a strong policy basis for protecting the green spaces that matter most to residents.

Why this matters for our Parish

In a woodland village like ours, green spaces aren't just “nice to have” — they shape the look and feel of our settlements. They soften development, support wildlife, provide breathing space, and help maintain the rural character that residents value.

Designating Local Green Spaces through the Neighbourhood Plan means:

- They gain long-term protection;
- Planning decisions must respect their special qualities
- Future development is guided to the right places, not the wrong ones
- The community's voice carries real weight

This is one of the most powerful tools available to us in neighbourhood planning.

Tree-lined lanes and hedgerows

We have assessed that some of our most important views are along our tree-lined lanes — the main through routes that characterise our unique woodland village. We're therefore having a specific policy to cover all of these. We are now focussing on the other more open views across fields etc. and this is where we need your help.



Valued Views: Protecting the Landscapes We All Share

Alongside Local Green Spaces, we are also assessing **Valued Views** — the important sightlines, vistas and landscape settings that help define the character of our parish.

A **valued view** might be:

- The long view across fields to a distant ridge
- Views across fields framed by mature trees and hedgerows
- Views into and out of the village



View from B3180/Top of Bendarroch Road

and particularly views from public vantage points, e.g. footpaths, public benches

The Emerging East Devon Local Plan emphasises the importance of identifying local landscape features and supports their inclusion in Neighbourhood Plans.

By identifying Valued Views in our Neighbourhood Plan, we can:

- Ensure development respects key sightlines into and out of the village
- Prevent new buildings from intruding on sensitive vistas
- Preserve the rural character that residents value

This evidence will help shape future planning decisions and maintain the look and feel of our parish for generations to come.

Have Your Say – Survey now Open - *Your feedback is important.*

We have cast the net widely to identify potential Local Green Spaces and Valued Views for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan. Now we need your help to decide which places and views are most important. We cannot include them all, and we may also have missed somewhere that is special to you.

Please complete our short community survey and tell us what you value most. Your feedback will help us understand:

- Which spaces and views you value most
- Whether there are areas we may have overlooked

Every response will help us prepare a Neighbourhood Plan that reflects the priorities of our community. The survey takes only a few minutes to complete, and the results will directly shape the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

West Hill Local Green Spaces and Valued Views Survey

Closes 13th November 2026

Details of the survey can be found online at:

- www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk
- www.eastdevonsays.commonplace.is
- or using the QR code

Paper copies available from our Parish Clerk.



Latest News: The Morrisons site

In last year's community survey, residents told us they would support some redevelopment or additional facilities at the Morrisons site. Keeping a viable shop and the post office is essential. The most popular suggestion was a café or coffee shop that could provide a friendly place for people to meet. There was also clear agreement that keeping enough parking spaces is essential. Many people felt that a small amount of housing, such as apartments, could help make any improvements to the site financially viable.

As part of the formal consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, we are required to notify and consult landowners who have an interest in our village. We are therefore identifying the relevant landowners and beginning conversations with them. We have already made contact with an agent acting for the owners of the Morrisons site and hope to continue a helpful dialogue. We are committed to keeping the process as open and transparent as possible, and the agendas and minutes of any meetings will be published on the parish website.

Aircraft Noise: *Having an airport as a neighbour is a mixed blessing.*

Firstly what are the benefits? Airports are great creators of economic wealth. Airports create jobs, attract other businesses, and their taxes support local economies. Our local airport Exeter is small by airport standards but nevertheless employs hundreds of people on site, many in good quality jobs. For example, the aircraft engineering company at the airport alone employs around 140 highly skilled aircraft engineers and has an apprenticeship scheme that is helping many youngsters obtain their professional licences so they can look forward to a rewarding career. I must declare an interest and admit that I spent my career in the aviation industry working in airlines and airports. I count myself as extremely fortunate and I would not have missed it for anything.

But what about the downside? Well undoubtedly one of the worst disadvantages of having an airport nearby is aircraft noise. A modern jet aircraft flying several hundred passengers on holiday, or on business trips, or visiting relations in far off countries does make quite a bit of noise on take off. In my early working life I remember the ear splitting noise of a VC10 taking off or feeling the ground shake as Concorde opened up the throttles. Technology has moved on and modern jet engines are a lot less noisy than their predecessors but even so no-one could truly call them quiet.

Airport operators and airlines are very conscious of this and they constantly work to find ways to minimise noise disturbance. Technology obviously plays a part and millions of pounds are spent by the engine manufacturers in developing ways of reducing noise. The airport operators and airlines constantly review their operating procedures to try to minimise the impact of noise on local communities. Some larger airports have defined aircraft departure routes through their controlled airspace that avoid overflying built up areas. Over a year however just adding a couple of minutes flying time to an aircraft departure to avoid overflying some houses can mount up to eye watering costs.

I know from personal experience that this is a big headache for the industry but that's what they get paid to deal with. Exeter airport has defined noise abatement procedures to try to minimise disturbance but they can only make aircraft follow this procedure in their controlled airspace. Exeter being a relatively small airport has a small block of controlled airspace called the Air Traffic Zone or ATZ. This is a circular area of 2.5 miles radius reaching from ground level up to 2000 feet. Within this ATZ the aircraft has to follow the instructions of the Exeter air traffic controllers but outside this zone the airport no longer has control over the aircraft's routing.

Aircraft usually take off and land into wind. In this country the prevailing winds are from the west so most aircraft taking off from Exeter will fly to the west away from West Hill. On average only around one third of departures take off to the east and therefore fly over or close to West Hill.

The main noise disturbance to West Hill residents is therefore probably the aircraft that take off in an easterly direction intending to fly south to the Canary Islands or the Mediterranean. When they reach a height of around 1500 feet they turn to the South and this brings them overhead West Hill. The noise impact could be reduced by delaying their turn so they can follow a route in the gap between West Hill and Ottery St Mary. Whilst this would not eliminate the noise heard on the ground it would certainly reduce it. As I mentioned before however this has a significant cost impact for the airline.

How to report a Aircraft Noise Problem

Exeter Airport is required by statute to meet with a Consultative Committee comprising representatives from local authorities and other interested bodies. The Consultative Committee is presented with figures showing the number of noise complaints that have been received by the Airport. At Exeter this number is usually very low leading the Airport and the operating airlines to believe that there is not a significant noise problem. If you are disturbed by noise then you should report these events to the airport. The Parish Council website has a link to the Airport's noise reporting system so it is easy to make an on-line report that is sent directly to the Airport. (Look for the Information tab on the home page or search for aircraft)

The airport has been here for a long time and many of us moved here in the full knowledge that there was an airport here so we should expect there to be some occasional noise. Even someone like me however who has lived and worked with aeroplanes for most of my life gets a little bit annoyed when an aircraft passes over my house at full throttle at 0615 on a Sunday morning!

Cllr Francis Pullman

Help us protect West Hill's Trees and Public Footpaths

Could you become a volunteer West Hill Footpath Warden or Tree Warden? These rewarding roles can be tailored to your interests and time available.

The Parish Council is very glad to have the support of volunteer Eileen Perkins, our experienced Footpath Warden and Tree Warden for West Hill. A small team of Footpath Wardens and Tree Wardens would be fantastic!



Eileen says: "West Hill is known as a Woodland Village. We have many beautiful trees and hedgerows which give us a countryside feel. This blessing comes with a responsibility. I am the Tree Warden and the Arboretum Group secretary. I could do with a little help, as the village covers a large area. Keeping an eye out for fallen, diseased or dangerous trees or potential development where mature trees are, would help enormously. Problems on footpaths can be reported to me too. If you are keen to learn more on either of the above please ring the Parish Clerk or me Eileen Perkins on 01404 815905. PS: The Arboretum Group needs some more committee members. Celina Herbert – Chair and myself as secretary are the only two members at present."

Eileen, Tree+Footpath Warden

Footpath Warden

Could you become a volunteer West Hill Footpath Warden to help keep local rights of way accessible and enjoyable for our community? Public footpaths and rights of way in our village are the responsibility of Devon County Council (DCC). However, their officers don't visit to check on the paths on a regular basis. Under DCC's Parish Paths Partnership (P3) Scheme, West Hill Parish Council can appoint volunteer Footpath Wardens to:



- regularly check the condition of local public footpaths and report problems.
- Carry out light maintenance such as replacing waymark arrows.
- Liaise with the Parish Council and DCC officers to plan path improvements

A Footpath Warden can do as much or as little as they like, depending on their interests and available time. An inspection schedule can be tailored to suit you (specific footpaths, a monthly/quarterly inspections etc).

Tree Warden

Becoming a volunteer West Hill Tree Warden offers a rewarding opportunity to support conservation and help maintain the woodland character of the village.



East Devon District Council's Tree Champion scheme aims to help look after local trees, hedgerows, and orchards. Their Tree Officers support a network of volunteer Tree Wardens across the district, by providing information about tree management, law and protection and data about which trees are protected within an individual parish. The Tree Wardens act as the "eyes and ears" of their communities by monitoring tree health, advocating for their protection and promoting local biodiversity.

What does a Tree Warden do? A Tree Warden can do as much or as little as they like, depending on their own interests and available time. Tree Wardens are appointed by their Parish Council to:

- Protect trees by reporting on early signs of pests, disease and vandalism
- Be a contact and support for tree related matters in their local area
- Help look out for more opportunities to plant more trees in the local community and enhancing the environment for parishioners
- Comment on planning applications relating to trees
- Get involved in planting trees in the parish or encouraging others to do so

For further information please contact Anne, our Parish Clerk, clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

Changes to the Planning Application Process

In October we will see a significant change to the process for considering Planning Applications.

Currently selected planning applications are considered by a Planning Committee consisting of elected District Councillors. At those Planning Committee meetings interested parties – such as your Parish Council - can speak to the Committee to state their case for or against the proposal. The Committee will then weigh up all the comments, listen to the legal arguments, consider all the local and national planning policies and then decide by majority vote to accept or reject the proposal. It is a democratic process making decisions that affect our lives.

That is all about to change. From the end of October this year the majority of planning applications will not be considered by elected representatives on a Planning Committee but will instead be determined by unelected Planning Officers employed by the District Council. As before, during a consultation period, interested parties will have an opportunity to submit written comments but will not be able to present them personally to a committee of elected Councillors. With the changes in Local Authority boundaries and the creation of Unitary Authorities that could also mean that the unelected Planning Officer may be located remotely from the area concerned and be totally unfamiliar with the geography or the social factors affecting the proposal.

Whatever people's views may be about this it is going to happen. The Parish Council will have to be even more detailed and thorough in its written submissions about planning applications and then just hope that they are given due consideration by the Planning Officers. All members of the public can help by making sure that they have a say in decisions that will affect their futures. You can do this by registering to comment on the EDDC Planning Portal and submitting comments on planning applications that you feel strongly about.

The Parish Council is also working hard to complete a Neighbourhood Plan. When this is complete and approved the Planning Officer will be legally obliged to take note of its policies in their consideration of planning applications.

I do urge people to take an interest in current planning applications – those that affect West Hill are listed on the Parish Council Website under "Planning". If you are concerned about trying to ensure that planning decisions about West Hill are truly in the best interests of West Hill then use your democratic right to comment. If we don't do this we cannot justifiably complain about decisions we don't like.

Cllr Francis Pullman

The Curious Case of the 'Litter' Bins.... *What happened next?*



Thank you, the problem of 'overflowing bins' has improved over recent months.

Missed collections can be reported to East Devon District Council:

online www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Tel **01395 571515**

Contact Us:

West Hill Parish Council welcomes your comments. Please contact our Parish Clerk, preferably by email

clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Do you want to join our **mailing list**? We use this to send you updates such as meeting agendas. Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website.

Thank you for your support!