

## CHURCHSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES/ACTION NOTES

<b>Name of meeting:</b>	Annual Parish Meeting - Churchstanton Parish Council
<b>Date meeting held:</b>	Wednesday 22nd May, 2024
<b>Meeting location:</b>	Churchinford Village Hall
<b>Present:</b>	Cllr. Ian Foxwell, Cllr. Ken Pearson, Cllr. Paul Carter, Cllr. Rob Sparks, Cllr. Tristan Phillips
<b>In attendance</b>	County Councillor Sarah Wakefield, Marcus James, Ruth Marshallsay, Nicki Dowson, Elizabeth McNabb, Stephan Lehner, Carolyn Dare, Helen Jones, Nigel Griffiths, Sean Dyer, Peter Allfrey
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr. Ian Firth
<b>Clerk</b>	Julie Wardle
<b>Apologies</b>	Cllr. Raadiyah Rifath
<b>1. Welcome</b>	Cllr. Firth opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.
<b>2. Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting - Approval</b>	Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2023 - <b>Approved</b>
<b>3. Reports from Representatives from Village Clubs and Societies</b>	<p>Reports were provided by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Otterhead Lakes Trust – Nigel Griffiths</li><li>• Churchinford &amp; District Community Shop – Ruth Marshallsay</li><li>• Churchstanton Parish Council – Cllr. Ian Firth</li><li>• Somerset County Councillor – Cllr. Sarah Wakefield</li><li>• The Blackdown Practice – Written report provided by Practice Manager, Mark Dodds</li><li>• Blackdown Support Group – Elizabeth McNabb</li><li>• Blackdown Hills National Landscape – Written report provided by Lisa Turner</li><li>• Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) – Marcus James</li><li>• Churchinford Village Hall – Sean Dyer</li><li>• Churchstanton Primary School – Marcus James, Parent Governor</li><li>• Churchinford Preschool – Written report provided by Gemma Sparkes &amp; Andrea Gibbs</li><li>• Blackdown Transition Group – Carolyn Dare</li><li>• Blackdown Hills Repair Café – Stephen Lehner</li></ul>

### **Otterhead Lakes Trust – Nigel Griffiths**

Nigel explained a little about the Otterhead Micro Hydro Electric Project which has recently been completed. This was a 40k project and has taken 7 years to complete. The project was to provide hydro powered electricity, using an ancient mill, providing power to the Forest School and make the Otterhead Estate more financially sustainable. They hope that the community will now use the facility when the school are not there. Nigel thanked the Parish Council for their involvement, in particular for their help and support obtaining and managing the 20k Climate Emergency Grant obtained from Somerset County Council. The Parish Council have now agreed to become a Corporate Member of the estate. Nigel invited anyone who may be interested in the project to get involved.

### **Churchinford & District Village Shop – Ruth Marshallsay**

Last year, like for most businesses, was very worrying for the shop, with a downturn in turnover and ever increasing costs, as with many shops and businesses, that saw many closing. We did manage to bring everything in line in the last quarters. With the shop looking to produce a small profit last year.

The new solar panels are in place and a big thank you to the Parish council and the Churchstanton fund Grant, as this helped greatly. The panels are estimated to produce a third of the shop's usage and this will help greatly with what is looking to be another challenging year income wise.

The shop is likely to lose a significant income around 5 digit, from the loss of many of the Post Office outreach sites. These are currently under review by the Post Office, due to cost saving measures and many sites not being supported by their communities and are therefore running at a significant loss.

We have been advised that interviews regarding the closures and or any compensation etc, will happen in the next few months, with at least 4 of our sites likely closing due to lack of use, with only 1-2 customers attending the sites each week. This despite repeated attempts to improve use through talks, leaflets and editorials. There has been a steady decline in the generation that will plan their week to come on a specific day, with many now wishing for an at demand service.

The shop is working hard to prepare for the loss, with measures such as a new till system which will greatly decrease our charge charges etc.

Volunteer numbers have been growing steadily, although there will be a push for a few more new volunteers, to help with mainly administrative tasks in the coming months.

As always we are striving to keep the shop sustainable for the longterm.

### **Churchstanton Parish Council - Councillor Ian Firth**

Cllr. Firth introduced himself as the newly re-elected Chairman of the Parish council. He went on to introduce those Parish Councillors present. Since the previous Annual Parish Meeting in May 2023 Cllr. Crabb and Cllr. Rifath have resigned. We are delighted to welcome Cllr. Rob Sparks to the Parish Council and we currently have one outstanding vacancy. If anyone is interested, please do contact the parish clerk for further information. Cllr. Firth encouraged anyone who might be interested to attend one or two meetings in order to understand what is involved. Candidates must live in the parish or within three miles of the parish or work in the parish.

Finance - Cllr. Firth explained to those present why the Parish Precept had increased substantially in this financial year as a result of the financial challenges being faced by Somerset County Council and the lack of available clarity on services that may be at risk at the time of setting the Parish Council budget in January. Funding has been earmarked for possible highways maintenance and additional clerk salary if required. If the additional precept is not needed in this financial year the Parish Precept will be reduced in 2025-2026.

Local Community Networks (LCN) – Following the commencement of a Unitary Council, Local Community Networks have now been established at which groups of Parish Councils meet to decide on their priorities for action, focussing on areas such as Highways, Social Care and Environment. There is a possibility of the LCN appointing a Highways Steward, the cost of which will be shared between 10 Parishes at a cost of 5k per parish. Churchstanton is part of the Chard and Blackdowns LCN. Cllr. Firth and Cllr. Pearson as well as the Parish Clerk attend these meetings to ensure representation from our Parish. If anyone is interested in getting involved, please contact the Parish Clerk. Community involvement in these groups would be beneficial and is encouraged.

Cllr. Firth commented on how pleased he was with what the Parish Council had achieved over the past year and provided a summary of their work in this time.

Dog Bins – Two additional dog bins were installed, one in Moor Lane and one in Stapley.

Speed Indicator Devices – Two devices have now been purchased and will be installed on Taunton Road and Honiton Road as soon as possible.

Highways – There have been a number of concerns raised over the past year regarding the condition of the highways and drainage within our Parish. The Parish Council engaged our County Councillors in order to assist with resolving some of the urgent problems. Cllr. Firth encouraged anyone who has any concerns to use the online link to ‘Fix My Street’ – <https://www.fixmystreet.com> to report them.

D-Day Parish Event – The Parish Council were delighted to be able to financially support the organisation of another community event to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day. The event will take place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June and Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June in the centre of Churchinford.

Community Larder – The Parish Council continue to financially support the Community Larder with a monthly donation. Their thanks to Liz Feehan and the village shop for their work to keep the larder stocked every week.

Royal British Legion – A wreath was purchased once again on behalf of the Parish and laid on Remembrance Sunday at the memorial inside the Parish Church.

Christmas – A Christmas card was delivered to every residence in the Parish with an update from the Parish Council and providing contact details for the Parish Council. In addition a Christmas Tree was again purchased for the centre of Churchinford.

In addition to all of the above the Parish Council have regular items on the agenda at their monthly meetings for instance, Planning, Climate Change and Public Paths & Highways

**County Councillor Sarah Wakefield**

Cllr. Wakefield started by thanking the Parish Council for their work in Churchstanton Parish.

LCN's – The LCN's are starting slowly and will take time to be affective.

Maintenance of footpaths – Cllr. Wakefield offered her help and advice if there were any concerns regarding this issue in the Parish.

SCC Achievements in 2023-2024 include:

- Increased recycling
- Support for investment in bus services – review of routes
- Working with Education Partners to encourage higher expectations for our children
- Buying homes for children to be cared for in Somerset
- Securing Government money to invest in our County
- Working closely with the NHS and partners to help re-able residents to live independently at home and renewing commitment to carers
- Somerset Independent Living Centres established – led by Occupational Therapists who will help you to see what gadgets / equipment you could have to enable you to stay at home. Gateway in to our adult social care services

**The Blackdown Practice – Mark Dodds (Practice Manager)**

(Written report)

Thank you for allowing me to provide this update on behalf of the Blackdown Practice. I apologise that I cannot be with you in person, I am sure you will all appreciate that we cover a number of parishes and if I attended one meeting, I would potentially have to attend all which is just not feasible.

We have had quite a year at the practice, in April 2023 Dr Barnes unfortunately had an accident and broke his hip. This resulted in him being absent from the practice for 3 months and we had to provide cover across that period, potentially we could have lost over 1400 patient appointments, thankfully we were able to cover all of them.

Then in late November 2023 during routine maintenance checks we discovered that the sites at both Churchinford and Dunkeswell

had unacceptably high levels of radon gas entering the premises from below ground. The levels at Churchinford were of particular concern as they seriously limited the length of time staff were able to spend in the premises under Health and Safety law. As a result, and I am sure you are aware we had no choice other than to close both sites each afternoon. Whilst we were able to provide all appointments utilising additional space at Hemyock, we recognise that this caused some inconvenience to patients.

In addition to this we also had several staff retire and some resignations from Employees who thought it was time to move on. We have had to undertake a considerable recruitment programme to recruit sufficient staff to cover all 3 surgeries.

I am pleased to be able to say that we have now fully rectified the radon gas situation and also recruited five new members of staff, meaning we will be able to reopen each site for two afternoons per week from the 3rd June.

Across the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 we have like all Primary Care practices been particularly busy. The practice has offered 43,730 appointments to patients during the year of which 41,316 were booked. This means that on average we saw 795 patients each week. In addition to this we also provided 3,069 COVID vaccinations across the 3 sites. We have 8,254 patients on our current patient register, this has increased by 655 patients over the past 5 years representing growth of 8.5%. This trend is continuing with year-on-year increases forecast. Our current average wait for a routine appointment is 3-4 weeks.

We recognise that patient's ability to contact the practice has been affected by the increase in our work loads. We aim to offer patient's multiple ways to contact the practice and to aid this we have improved our website and changed our telephone system. Many patients use our website or apps such as the NHSApp to keep in touch with us, order repeat prescriptions etc. However, a lot of patients still like to be able to ring the practice and speak to a member of staff. We want to make this as simple as possible, we have along with all practices upgraded our telephone system to meet current NHS standards. The new system was installed in February 2024, this initially resulted in some delays answering calls which we are correcting. In February when the system was installed, we were averaging four and a half minutes to answer a call, by mid-May we were averaging 2.5 minutes. The biggest difficulty is always the 8:30 queue especially at the beginning of the week which still has much longer response times.

The answer to all the issues we have encountered over the past year and to the increase in workloads is simply resource. We have had a contract imposed on us by NHS England for the forthcoming year which provided a funding increase of 2%. Unfortunately, that has been swallowed up by staff pay awards (mainly to meet legal minimum wage requirements) and the current rates of inflation so in reality we are facing a significant reduction in funding. The result of this is that the Practice is now working at or beyond 100% capacity. Requests for on the day appointments are greater each day than appointments available, this is a situation that is unlikely to change soon.

Overall and despite the issues we faced this past 12 months we believe we continue to offer a service that is patient focussed and all staff do their utmost to meet each individual patients' expectations. The Partners remain determined to offer a GP led local service, whereby each patient knows and can see, his or her doctor. They are supported by an excellent Nursing team, and everyone will continue to work out of local surgeries for the best patient convenience possible.

We will continue to work hard to maintain these levels going forwards and are very pleased to see the site at Churchinford re opening on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

**Blackdown Support Group – Elizabeth McNabb (Manager)**

Thanks for inviting us to join you, I am Elizabeth McNabb, Manager of the Blackdown Support Group, Nicki Dowson joins me as a representative from our Board of Trustees.

For those of you who don't know us, we are a local charity, originally established in 1991 by one of the GP Partners at the Blackdown Practice alongside volunteers from the local community. Our Founders' vision was to set up a voluntary group which could provide social and practical support to the communities of the Blackdown Hills, helping to improve the health and wellbeing of local people and in doing so, relieve pressure on the local statutory and health and social care services.

Our services are still delivered by Volunteers from across the Blackdown Hills (about 90 of them currently) and overseen by a Board of Volunteer Trustees who all live locally and are actively involved in our service delivery as well as governance.

Our office is co-located with the Blackdown Practice at the Hemyock surgery site and we work very closely with the GPs and the Practice teams across all three surgery sites of Churchinford, Dunkeswell and Hemyock.

Anyone resident in the Blackdowns Hills is eligible to utilise our services and ask for support.

Our aims and objectives are that people living in the Blackdown Hills

- Feel part of their community
- Have equal access to services and support
- Have choice and independence
- Feel safe and secure
- Feel confident and not anxious about their future
- Feel healthy and have a strong sense of wellbeing

We work to achieve these aims by offering the following services:

Community Transport

Volunteer visiting and sitting

Community-based social groups

Bereavement support

Wheelchair loan

Prescription delivery, errands and shopping for the housebound

Form filling

Low-cost toenail cutting

Signposting and support in accessing other services

We are a trusted local source of support for many people which means we can often identify potentially problematic situations before they deteriorate. We can also support people to access other sources of help that they might not otherwise consider or feel confident about reaching out to. We have a small staff team who co-ordinate the volunteer services and know the local area very well, they

spend time getting to know our service users and ensuring they feel heard, understood and able to navigate and access other services at a local, district and regional level where applicable.

In the year 2023-4 we supported 474 users with our transport services and 315 users with our other services. Services were delivered by 98 volunteers.

We are very proud to have been nominated for the King's Award for voluntary services and are currently going through a rigorous selection process, we hope to have good news on that front later in the year.

Some statistics

- Official ONS data shows in 2011 total population of Blackdown Hills AONB was 12,803 – by mid-2020 this had grown to 13,779
- Between 2011 and 2020, the overall population grew by 8% - BUT, the under 65's by just 2%, over 65yo by 25%
- Number of people aged 75 or more is projected to double in the next 20 years
- Fastest growing group in the over 75s is men over age of 80
- 27% of Blackdowns population is over 65 but the last 17 years of life spent in ill health

This means demand for services for older people has grown significantly and will continue to do so and that we should be working on strategies to support health ageing, enabling people to live well and independently in their later years.

Poor rural transport links, services increasingly going online or being restricted to larger centres of population due to funding constraints and fragmented health and social care services in our cross-border catchment mean that we face an even greater challenge.

I would also like to emphasise that our services are available to anyone, of any age, residing in the Blackdown Hills, not just to older residents – so if you know someone who is finding it hard to access help and support due to a lack of transport, health, mobility or sensory loss, learning difficulties etc then please pass our details on.

The next step

In order to be better prepared to meet the health and social care challenges we face, we have been working on a strategic development plan over the last 12 months in an effort to ensure that the BSG is ready to meet the needs of the local population long into the future.

Our staff team is located in a tiny office at Hemyock surgery – we can't develop the organisation without growing our team so we have been seeking an alternative site from which to do so.

We would like to develop "pop-up" sessions in village halls and/or at local markets so we become more visible/accessible to a wider group of people.

We are also looking to extend the voluntary support and informal signposting that we already offer, by establishing a care matching service, introducing trusted local self-employed professional carers (micro-providers) to local people in need of care and support that falls beyond the remit of our voluntary services. I've been meeting with Somerset County Council and local providers already operating here to work on developing this.

We would not seek to compete with regulated home care services such as those provided by Hummingbird or other care agencies but to complement this, offering local people more choice and flexibility when they need it.

We believe a service of this nature would dovetail and complement our existing voluntary services and that we are uniquely placed to develop it, given our existing infrastructure, reputation, community network and relationships with local health and care professionals.

It would encourage potential local care professionals into the sector and support them through accreditation or training, support service users to define their needs and encourage early intervention.

We will be looking to the Parish Councils in our catchment area to support us with funding and in spreading the word about these new developments so I will be coming back to you on that in the not too distant future.

### **Blackdown Hills National Landscape – Lisa Turner**

(written report)

#### Our new name

In November 2023, along with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England, Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was renamed to Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

This name change, coupled with the new logo and branding is intended to create a unified national identity. Also, it better reflects the national importance of landscapes such as the Blackdown Hills, and the vital contribution we can make to protect the nation from threats such as climate change, nature depletion and the opportunities to contribute to health and wellbeing.

#### Strengthened duties

Around the same time, legislation was strengthened so that ‘relevant authorities’ must now seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, rather than ‘have regard’ (this applies to parish councils, local authorities, Government and its agencies, utility companies, and more).

#### Staff changes

Last summer, Jackie Vaughan, office manager retired and was replaced by Hannah Metson. More recently we wished farewell to Abby Wilkinson, our Community Engagement Ranger, and Mark Edwards, Farm Engagement Officer for Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL). Gavin Saunders has just left his post to take up a new position as manager of Luppitt Landscape Partnership. Nicola Cunningham, previously FiPL administrator, is also moving on to work with the Luppitt Landscape Partnership. Hannah has taken on the Project development and delivery role vacated by Gavin. Two contractors – Eli Sherlock from FWAG South West, and Pete Youngman – will be covering Mark’s Farm Engagement Officer role, working alongside Jane Robertson.

At the turn of the year we were saddened by the death of John Greenshields, vice-chairman of the Partnership, Chairman of Wellington Without Parish Council, a trustee of the Blackdown Hills Trust and ambassador for Wellington Monument.

#### Blackdown Hills Management Plan

Every five years, we create a Management Plan to help guide the work and activities of all organisations, groups and individuals with a responsibility or interest in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, and we’re currently focused on preparing the next one.

Over the past year we have been gathering views from a range of stakeholders to help us develop the new Plan. For example, we have held workshops with representatives from local parishes and community groups, our management group, and the organisations that make up the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership. We also got some views on priorities for the plan via our farming facilitation network and ran an online survey.

We are working on drafting the new Plan ready for public consultation in the autumn before it is formally adopted by our local authority partners in spring 2025.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)



The FiPL programme is now in the fourth and final year, ending in March 2025. Up to the end of March 2024 we delivered 94 projects totalling £645,000, since the programme started in July 2021. It is available to all farmers, land managers and landowners and although the funding comes from Defra it is managed locally by each protected landscape.

We can fund works which;

- Enhance the environment
- Protect against climate change
- Help wildlife
- Provide better access for people
- Enhance the historic environment

Projects supported last year included pond creation, orchard planting, hedgerow restoration, access improvements and visitor facilities. Locally, there was support for tree planting and a compost loo at The Quarry and further footpath works at Otterhead Lakes.

#### Projects

Project work relating to the water environment and catchment-scale management continues to be a focus. With Connecting the Culm, after the EU co-operative programme finished, work has continued using a range of other funding (through the Environment Agency and National Highways Designated Funds for example) and links with different initiatives (such as Devon Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP) addressing flood and drought resilience and water quality through a nature-based approach. The top end of the Culm catchment around Churchstanton is an important element of that.

Elsewhere a Lottery bid has just been submitted for the River Axe catchment 'Rivers Run Through Us' (RRTU) project. This will build on community activity to date in the Axe catchment to provide support for local communities to become involved in understanding their local river environment and contributing to addressing the issues it faces. If successful the RRTU project would begin with an 18-month development phase starting in autumn 2024, and then run for a further five years.

#### Events and activities

We are planning some heritage events around September building on the success of the 'Festival of Heritage' we held last year, which included a RAF Culmhead guided tour.

Do check out our website for visitor information, walks and rides, children's activities and other ways to explore the area. With the help of volunteers, we are currently auditing our walking routes, updating them on our website and plotting them digitally. We plan to do the same with our cycling and horse-riding routes. Changes to the website are underway to improve accessibility and make for a more user-friendly experience when seeking information.

If there are any local events coming up, as long as it's in keeping with our work, we'll be happy to help publicise it. Email us at [blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk](mailto:blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk)

Keep in touch

Sign up to our mailing list to receive our regular e-newsletter; you can do this by going to the website home page, [www.blackdownhills.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhills.org.uk) scrolling down and then clicking on the mailing list sign up link.

#### **Outdoor Space Management Group (OSMG) – Marcus James**

Following their recent AGM, there have been some changes to the structure of the OSMG committee.

Chairman – Marcus James  
Treasurer – David Wright  
Secretary – Julie Wardle  
Grant Applications/Fundraising – Peter Radice

Community Field - this is now in 'Caretaking' mode.

The Quarry – Work is ongoing at the quarry, with a car park and a compost toilet completed. The next stage is to engage with the community to find out what they would like this space to be. The food group have now planted 18 trees and the Scouts have also been using it. It is another good space for the use of the community.

### **Churchinford Village Hall – Sean Dyer**

Overall a successful year with bookings steadily increasing to levels in excess of pre pandemic levels.

During the year we undertook a series of major upgrades and repairs;

- Following feedback about the poor acoustics in the main hall we have installed sound deadening panels on the ceiling. Feedback from users of the hall has been positive with reports that there is less echoing at busy market days and music events.
- The water supply has been restructured to improve its robustness. The hall now has its own spur from the main supply rather than relying on a shared spur which was failing.
- Despite uncertainty around the future of the Barn the carpark has been re surfaced. This provides a more even surface and safer access to the hall
- A long standing leak in the roof has been resolved by involving an alternative contractor. Following the successful repair water damage on the inside of the hall has been made good
- Drainage in the lower end of the carpark has been addressed with the installation of a new drain, bund and soakaway to the border of the Preschool.
- New quieter and more efficient heaters have been installed in the main hall
- The Wellesley room has had a facelift with new lighting and internal windows.

Our relationship with other village organisations continues

- A new 7 year Lease has been agreed with the preschool following the improvements to the drainage in the carpark. The preschool have part funded the drainage work as part of this agreement.

- We continue to rent an office at the hall to the shop for stock storage. We have changing the surface of the gravel path leading to the storage room to allow easier access when moving heavy loads. This will obviate the need for sack barrows to be loaded in the carpark which we consider to be a health and safety risk.
- During the skittles season the York continues to use the hall as a second skittle alley
- The Open Space Management Group now rent a cellar store from us to keep their equipment. This store has limited access for insurance purposes.

The Hall committee has taken on one new member Jill Fussell. The chair has moved to Sean Dyer and the role of booking clerk moves to Linda Knowles.

We continue to enjoy our regular weekly bookings which offer the community Yoga, Fitness and Pilates classes. Monthly film nights and Markets remain popular with the later now attracting more regular local food producers. These regular bookings are augmented by sporadic music, craft and performance events.

The financial situation remains stable with a small reserve fund for unexpected repairs.

For the year ahead, our focus will be on the ongoing maintenance as and when required. We need to consider the condition of the lower end of the carpark, where a resurfacing project may be required. Many of the storage areas including the underfloor space are poorly utilised. We intend to clear these out, reorganise and rationalise to make them more useable. We need to reinvigorate our "Hall For All" draw as numbers participating has fallen away.

Finally we will be installing a commemoration plaque for Sylvia Pike to honour her long service to the community.

#### **Churchstanton Primary School – Marcus James**

Churchinford School Bus – Following recent concerns that the 'free' school bus would be withdrawn from all children over the age of eight years old who live under three miles (safe walking route), there were many objections from Parents and the Parish Council, and I am pleased to say the 'free' bus has now been reinstated for all children.

Ofsted – The school were delighted to receive a 'good' rating following a recent Ofsted inspection.

School Fete – The school fete will take place on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July and this year is being run by a group of Dads.

#### **Churchinford PreSchool - Andrea Gibbs**

(written report)

Firstly, apologies from Churchinford Pre-school that no one could attend tonight's meeting. Rolling into September went well and with the sun shining, children settled into the Autumn term. Sadly the sunshine didn't last too long and the rain soon came and was here to stay!!

Grabbing every dry moment was quite a tricky challenge. Some days by the time children were all prepared for an outside burst, it was raining again!

2 Reindeers visited the nursing home near Christmas and we were asked over which staff and children all enjoyed.

Father Christmas kindly sent the children a small wrapped gift which was delivered by Topper the pony who pulls a cart which was covered in tinsel.

Christmas came and went and soon we were starting 2024. With 28 children on role, days were busy. Lots of topics were covered including Healthy Eating ,Transport, Road Safety, Numbers and Chinese New Year (the children loved being dragons) and of course we couldn't miss pancake day.

February half term was really needed with most children and staff struggling with the awful colds/coughs hitting us hard and with it still raining definitely not helping.

World book day was celebrated in March and our older children took part in MY First Poem and some of their poems were published . Recently with the weather improving, we have been busy learning about bugs, caring for plants and learning what they need to survive, building bug hotels, weeding, digging and shopping for plants at the community shop to cheer up the garden. All the children have planted a pot of their own to take home so that they can keep caring for their plants. What will grow will be interesting as little hands picking all sorts of seeds!

We have also had regular visits to Kenneth who drives the library bus – we choose books to learn about the topics we're are covering. Reverend Nick pops in to see us regularly and on one occasion, brought with him Reverend John from Africa.

We have also all really loved Trevor Lloyd attending for 30 minutes a week for a music sessions, which everyone is loving (this was doable due to us receiving a music grant).

We now have 30 children on role so apologies if you are around the village and there is a lots of noise coming from our direction!

#### **Blackdown Transition Group – Carolyn Dare**

Presentation available on Parish Council website

#### **Blackdown Hills Repair Café – Stephan Lehner**

The Repair café is part of the Blackdown Transition Group and is based in Hemyock. It is open on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of each month and there are six cafes every year. In addition, the Repair Café is open at the Churchinford Village Market on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month. To date approximately 4,160 items have been brought in for repair. 3,097 of these items have been fixed, a percentage of 74%. Popularity of the café is growing and often we receive 80-100 items at each session.

Having analysed our data we notice that the demographic for those coming in to the café is age range 60-70 years old, followed by the older generation again. Living in a 'throw away' society we would like to attract and encourage the younger generation to repair not replace.

Many new repair cafes are being set up based on our model.

<b>4. Churchstanton Community Fund</b>	<p>Two grant applications had been made in the spring window to the Churchstanton Community Fund as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Churchstanton Public Open Space Management Group (OSMG) – To cut grass in community field (£1,600)</li><li>• Blackdown Hills Transition Group (BHTG) – To create a focus on local food production (£500)</li></ul> <p>Both applications were presented to those present for their information and consideration and with an available fund of £961, approval was given to allocate funds as follows:</p> <p>OSMG - £600 BHTG - £361</p> <p>This will now be ratified at the next Parish Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024.</p>
<b>5. Meeting Close</b>	<p>Cllr. Firth thanked everyone for attending and for their reports. The meeting had provided an opportunity to hear about the great work that takes place in our community.</p>