



**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**held at Fownhope Pavilion at 6pm on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Present:**

Cllr Tim Jones (in the Chair); Clerk Helen Tinson; approximately 29 Members of the Public

**1. Chairman's Welcome:**

Cllr Tim Jones introduced himself as the Chair of Fownhope Parish Council; he welcomed members of the public and thanked everyone for attending. He extended thanks on behalf of the Parish Council to all volunteers within the parish for their time and resource supporting the community.

**2. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received from Cllr Claire Patel, Reverend Chris Moore and Parishioners: Christopher Whitmey, Dorothy Quayle and Margret Rolls.

**3. Fownhope Community Service Awards:**

Four Fownhope Community Service Awards were presented to Jon Parr, Kevin Braybrook, William Morris and Helen Tinson, the outgoing Clerk, in recognition of their outstanding and sustained service to the community. It was noted that Community Service Awards are not generally awarded to councillors simply because of their term of office but it was felt that this year Cllrs Kevin Braybrook and Will Morris had exceeded the expectations of a Parish Councillor and therefore deserved to be recognised accordingly.

The Sports Award was awarded and presented to Mike Simmons for his service facilitating sport in the parish.

All recipients were thanked for their service.

**4. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting:**

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

**It was RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. They were duly signed by the Chairman.

**5. Speaker: Jon Parr, Oral Histories Project:**

The meeting welcomed speaker Jon Parr who spoke about the Local History Group's Oral Histories Project.

Considered to be 'Fownhope's Community Gold Mine', the Oral Histories living memory project began in 2005 with the recording of 86 parishioners telling their stories of village life – stories of love, laughter and change. The project received £20,000 from a Heritage Lottery Fund which funded the programme and provided training for the volunteer interviewers.

At the time of recording, consent was obtained to use the material for educational purposes. However, it has been agreed that the archive offers such a valuable insight into village life it is deserving of a much wider audience. The desire is to make the recordings publicly available on the

[www.fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk) website and across social media, and to publish one interview in each issue of the Fownhope Flag which is hoped will embed the Oral Histories project into every day life.

To achieve this, renewed consent is required, either by the interviewees themselves or by a family member if the interviewee has since passed away. A flyer has been produced listing all 86 interviewees; parishioners are being asked to share the message and help obtain the updated consent needed. Any interviewees able to grant consent, or anyone who knows how to contact an interviewee are asked to email [fhoralhistories@gmail.com](mailto:fhoralhistories@gmail.com) or telephone 07872 483503.

Finally, thanks were offered in anticipation of help and to the recorded voices for their participation of a valuable community resource.

#### **6. Chairman's Report:**

Cllr Tim Jones delivered the Chairman's report. The Parish Council is once again at full complement welcoming Cllrs Sue Eames and Peter Neale during the year. Cllr Jones wished to thank all councillors for their hard work and for so regularly giving up their time to the parish. The usual year on year projects and commitments to manage community concerns have been ongoing, with a particular focus on Traffic Calming, Drainage and Footpaths. The Parish Council renewed their Climate Emergency Declaration which continues to impact each decision made. Cllr Jones invited the Chair of each Working Party to present a brief report.

#### **7. Planning Report:**

Cllr Kevin Braybrook presented the Planning Report as Chair of the Planning Working Group. Seven full planning applications and six applications for Works to Trees in a Conservation Area have been considered in the past year.

The major developments at Cherry Hill and Old Barn are now complete and we welcome the new residents. The privet hedge at the front of Cherry Hill has been replaced with the originally specified native mix and the compound is now being decommissioned. The first residents have moved into Three Willows development on Common Hill Lane. Initial issues with water runoff into adjacent properties has been resolved.

We had expected to have started a review of our Neighbourhood Development Plan by now but have had to postpone whilst Herefordshire Council consider the implications of the NPPF on the Local Plan.

Fownhope Community Land Trust has commissioned an independent Housing Needs Survey, the results of which will be presented at the June Parish Council meeting.

A question was raised about whether the Local Plan would be deferred pending the merging of councils required by Central Government. It was thought not, so far as we know, and that it is understood that Herefordshire Council are aiming to have the new Local Plan completed by 2028.

#### **8. Environment Working Group Report:**

Cllr Gareth Williams presented the report as Chair of the Environment Working Group. He reflected that there has been an Environment Group in Fownhope since CRAG (Carbon Reduction Action Group) was created in the mid 2000's. Cllr Williams currently co- chairs the group with parishioner Kate Gathercole. The group meet every 6-8 weeks at either the Green Man or the Pavilion and attract between 10 and 18 attendees at each meeting. Parishioners may attend the meetings even if they do not wish to be actively involved.

The Environment Group invites and supports local participation and supports the activity of other Parish Council working groups & village clubs and societies, for example the new village web site and

calendar worked on by Jon Parr was principally an initiative born in the Environment Group as a response to improving the messaging and promotion of Environment Group events.

A regular emailed newsletter keeps interested villagers in touch with local, and wider, environmental issues, activities and funding opportunities, for example the recently promoted warm spaces home grant. Regular articles are written for the Fownhope Flag, this month including the Planetarium event write up from Natasha Brooker and a piece about the Leigh Day River Wye campaign from Mandy Roland-Smith.

The group organise a rolling programme of activities that benefit local people and environment. The focus for 2024-25 was a successful Dark Skies theme with ongoing outcomes including:

- A lighting audit, repeated early this year
- Exemplar engagement with the county Dark Skies project which led to Herefordshire Council reviewing options across the county
- Parish Council policy on Dark Skies written, to be adopted at the May meeting of the Parish Council
- £3k grant received from Wye Valley National Landscapes for a Dark Skies Information Board for the Recreation Field.

A successful bid of over £3k from the Marches LEP was realised this year for the installation of two Electric Vehicle Charging Points installed in the Recreation Field Car Park providing unrestricted access to community EV charging stations.

Successful liaison with Herefordshire Council corrected the new Cherry Hill hedge planting to remove the privet hedge and plant local native plants.

The Community Car Club continues to be a brilliant resource for the village and also a model of collaboration with other local county clubs, utilising information and resource sharing.

The Wheelbarrows Group continue to provide hands on support to local projects such as hand weeding, ditch clearing - responding to local needs, building community and caring for our local environment.

The Himalayan Balsam Group continue to organise a group to pull this invasive species along the riverbank and aim to coordinate with Dormington and Mordiford Parish Council to see if efforts can be combined.

A visit was organised to EnviroSort, the county's recycling facility near Worcester. There will be a series of articles in the coming months published in the Fownhope Flag and hopefully a trip to the incineration plant that produces power from waste.

This year's theme is Habitats. This will include:

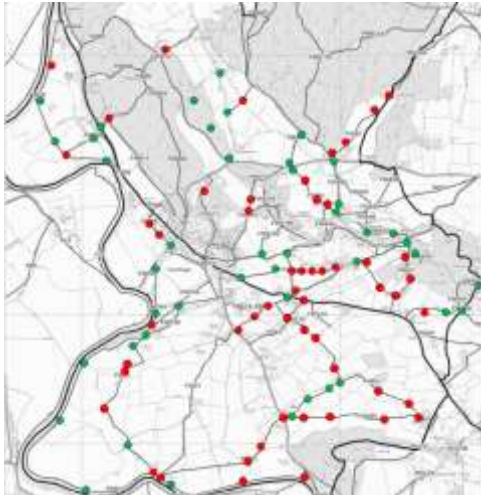
- links with other local groups (including Local History Group / FNMH Memorial Hall Garden group)
- provision of local activities, engagement, information and event .. including a village riverside picnic, planned for July 12<sup>th</sup>.
- a farm visit to explore stewardship and local farming at Caplor
- October garden habitat theme.

## **9. Footpaths:**

Cllr Will Morris, Parish Footpaths Officer presented the report. He noted the value a healthy footpath network has on keeping and maintaining connections with our local environment.

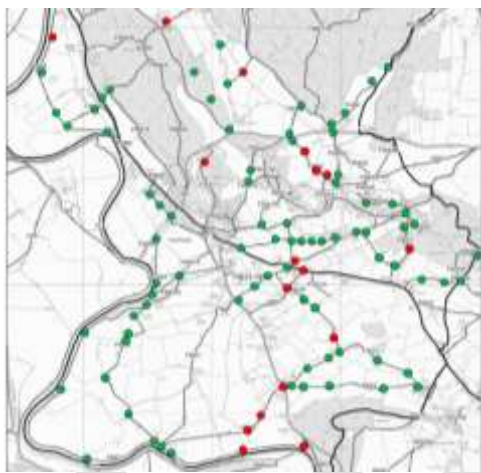
Will wished to thank the Parish Waywardens – a committed group of people who walk the public rights of way armed with secateurs and tools to fix and maintain the footpaths. Any issues they can't resolve themselves, they feed back to Will for reporting to Herefordshire Council.

He also thanked local landowners for their support and agreement to replace stiles with gates to improve accessibility along the network.



Looking back to 2021, it was reported that the parish network had 44 gates and looked like this:

Green = gates  
Red = stiles



In 2025, the number of gates has increased to 83 and now looks like this:

Funding acknowledgements were made to the Parish Council, Herefordshire Council and Wye Valley National Landscapes. The bridge at Hawkers Lane was replaced a few months ago by Herefordshire Council. Three further bridges require replacement by Herefordshire Council.

The project to install as many gates as possible will continue into the next financial year and Cllr Morris will continue to push for the remaining replacement bridges. Whilst Fownhope remains a challenging area to access fully, there are routes that are now stile free.

Finally, it was reported that this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wye Valley Walk and in celebration of this, a fully funded uniquely carved bench is being made and will be installed at a viewpoint at the top of Shearhill Common. Weekly guided walks are being arranged along the Wye Valley Walk between 19<sup>th</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> October. This includes the section between Hereford and Fownhope on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August. Walks are ticketed and available from the Wye Valley National Landscapes website. Local walks are available to download from the website [www.fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk) and links to a further 50 walks from the Herefordshire Council website.

A question was raised about who has responsibility for clearing trees. It was noted that the area in question was looked after by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.

#### **10. Highways Working Group Report:**

Cllr Kevin Braybrook presented the report as Chair of the Highways Working Group. The Lengthsman has continued doing her regular month to month maintenance, supplemented by a drainage grant from Herefordshire Council which has enabled us to have broken drains, gullies and underground pipes repaired.

The Traffic Regulation Order to extend the 30mph zone at Cherry Hill has been made and we expect BBLP to move the signs at any time. We applied to take part in a trial 20mph zone outside the school, but that initiative has been put on hold by Herefordshire Council. We are still awaiting completion of the white lining throughout the village and acknowledge Stuart Eames' time and effort time managing the SIDs and CSW teams.

Work to mitigate water damage to the road surface at Nash Pitch was completed recently and resurfacing of the entire B4224 east of the village will begin next week. Responsibility for repairing the wall and safety barrier at the bottom of Capler Lane has been taken by Herefordshire Council and we await completion of that work.

Questions were raised about why the 20mph trial was stopped (unknown); concerns about the speed of traffic travelling through the village (acknowledged); where the data from the Community Speed Watch Sessions go (West Mercia Police); and the lack of the centre white line at Fiddlers Green (intentional traffic calming measure).

#### **11. Investment Strategy Group Report:**

Peter Davis presented the report on behalf of the Investment Advisory Group. The report explained the purpose of the portfolio, the strategy engaged for managing it, the current investments and dividends received during the year, along with reflection and review for the forthcoming year. The full report is appended as Appendix A.

#### **12. Fownhope Recreation Field Association (FRFA) Report:**

Cllr Mike Simmons presented the report on behalf of the Fownhope Recreation Field Association. The Parish Council owns the 11.5acre Recreation Field and the Pavilion and the FRFA handles all its day to day running – bookings, mowing of the meadow, upkeep and development of the pavilion, and so on. It's able to do this almost entirely using volunteers – which of course offers a huge saving to the parish.

Highlights this year include the extension of the patio outside the Pavilion which has received an overwhelmingly positive response. Mike wished to thank Derek Colley for his time and expertise in delivering the project. The EV chargers have also become a very welcome asset and the first public chargers in the village. Football will be returning to Fownhope this season courtesy of the Phoenix Football Club of Hereford.

The low point of the year was the break in experienced at the tractor shed, despite the CCTV system in situ, resulting in the loss of the electric trimmer, its charger and batteries and a compressor – a total value of about £1400.

The Recreation Field is a popular spot for dog walkers and an issue with dog poo has arisen leaving the FRFA debating the matter. The FRFA have recently been asked why people are allowed to let their dogs run free and to get a sense of public opinion, an article has been submitted to next month's Flag inviting feedback. At this stage the FRFA doesn't have a strong opinion either way but are keen to get a sense of what users – all users, not just dog owners – think about it.

The layout of the car park is also being considered and how users are guided to the entrance of the Pavilion.

Mike wished to acknowledge and thank the mowing team, led by Helen Phillips, for their commitment maintaining the field and keeping it looking great.

Donations have been received from the Fownhope Fringe (bench), Margret Rolls (Bench) and the Fownhope Flag (kitchen equipment). All donations were very welcome and gratefully received.

The Fownhope Strollers will shortly be installing cricket nets on the field – the FRFA are keen to ensure that residents have access to the facility.

Finally, Mike wished to extend his thanks to all the volunteers who support the FRFA, but especially to Derek Colley who has been instrumental in almost everything that can be seen in the building.

**13. Report from Fownhope Libraries:**

Cllr Frank Hemming presented a brief report on behalf of the Fownhope Libraries. The library has been going for ten years with over 5000 books and maps and tea and biscuits now provided during sessions. There is a steady, but low attendance with 12 to 14 regular borrowers, and about the same number of volunteers. In 2024 there were 877 books borrowed, which was a slight increase on the year before. New members and increased support would be welcomed. Frank wished to extend his thanks to Harriet Lansberry for organising the volunteers and to all the volunteers and users of the library.

**14. Report from Fownhope United Charities:**

There was no report.

**15. Report from Fownhope Community Land Trust:**

Cllr Frank Hemming presented the report from Fownhope Community Land Trust. Please refer to Appendix B for the full report.

**16. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Fownhope Parish:**

There were no questions or comments raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 7.49pm.

Signed ..... Dated .....  
**Chairman**

## **Appendix A: IAG Report:**

### **Preamble.**

The Investment Advisory Group was set up in April 2014 to administer the investment of £27620 – the proceeds from the sale of a Treasury bond- with the twin objectives of at least generating the income provided by the bond (£1127 p.a.) while preserving the level of the capital employed.

### **Investment Strategy.**

The Strategy, which may be found on the Parish Council's website as Financial Regulations Appendix 1.0, was reissued during the 2021/22 financial year and reflected the increased flexibility to the Group particularly when considering the sale of investments as well as taking into account environmental and ethical considerations. Furthermore, the Council has given the Finance working party the ability to make changes to the portfolio without reference to the full Council. This flexibility is most welcomed in an environment which can be extremely febrile at times.

### **Valuation.**

As at close of business on 17th April 2025 the portfolio was valued at £ 22675 compared to £23180 in May last year.

### **Dividends received and anticipated.**

For the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 these totalled £ 2148 against an estimate of £2085 which was projected this time last year. The amount expected in this financial year is £ 1997 which, if achieved, will be a return of 7.2% on capital employed and some 77% over the £1127 which the original Government bond provided. The reduction is mainly due to the absence this year of a special dividend paid by HSBC.

### **Changes to the portfolio made in the last year.**

There have been no changes to the portfolio

### **Comments and outlook.**

Looking individually at the investments, HSBC has further improved despite the headwinds- banks generally do better when interest rates rise and, despite current events, it is still wise to have a stake in the Far East because that is really where future growth lies. CAML price continues to be very disappointing since copper prices have stabilized but it is maintaining its output and dividend and the longer term outlook for copper continues to be promising. Regional REIT continues to be a dog. But its price is 50% below the value of its assets and I believe it will eventually improve against the background of an easing of interest rates. Phoenix and NESF have both been disappointing but Phoenix has recently rallied. NESF has fallen victim of being in the now much unfavoured group of "green stocks" partly because of interest rates which are staying higher for longer. Finally, Skipton, the only real bond-like stock, has recovered from its nadir of 154p to near enough its purchase price – a down and up movement completely illogical. It will come as no surprise that I recommend no further changes at this time.

The last year has seen a continuation of the roller-coaster ride and I do not think that the PC needs to be reminded of the carnage being done on the world economy by the Trump administration. There is however a perception that the UK market is the place to be, both from a dividend standpoint and that of capital gains. In these days of extreme volatility I will repeat the concluding paragraph of my report of last year

(see Reflexions paragraph below). The figures need to be updated since we are another year ahead but the message is very much still the same. And who knows what is in store for the coming year. One thing is certain -Trump will be brought to heel by the Bond market. The USA is too indebted for any other outcome to be envisaged!

### **Reflections Repeated!**

It is now 10 years since we started the IAG. The Treasury bond that we sold to create the portfolio will be redeemed in March 2025 and is currently trading at about par. On redemption it would have yielded £22557 and to date would have earned the PC 9.5 years at £1127 per year equalling £10706. In the same period the portfolio has earned £15699 in dividends and interest and is currently valued at £ 23,180. The disparity of return is even more marked when one takes inflation into account.

Peter Davis  
For the Investment Advisory Group  
April 2025

### **Appendix B: Fownhope Community Land Trust Report**

FCLT continues to work towards the provision of more affordable housing in Fownhope to enable people with a local connection to stay or return to a home in the village.

The scarcity of sites for development for affordable housing remains a key concern. We remain hopeful that land may be donated for a small number of affordable homes and continue to be open to discussion with any local landowner. Progress on one promising opportunity has been slower than we would like for a range of reasons but these are gradually being worked through.

One key issue has arisen which has wider implications than for a single site: anyone wishing to make a donation of land to FCLT would have to pay Capital Gains Tax on the assessed increase in value of the land during their period of ownership – even though no money changes hands. After further investigation, the FCLT Board has decided to apply to HMRC for recognition as a charity exempt from taxation. This is less onerous than being registered with the Charity Commission but still requires an increased level of reporting and scrutiny. If accepted as a charity, any donor of land would be exempt from Capital Gains Tax on the value of the donated land and FCLT will also be able to claim Gift Aid on cash donations.

FCLT's focus for the past nine months has been to undertake a housing need survey. Having an up-to-date picture of all types of unmet needs for housing is essential in helping FCLT and the Parish Council to plan. It provides the evidence needed to show local authority planners and funders the numbers, size, type and tenure (affordable, shared ownership or open market) of homes needed. FCLT was fortunate in being the first CLT or Parish in Herefordshire to respond to Community First Herefordshire and Worcestershire who came forward with the funding and expertise to do this with us. The survey has been completed and responses collated and analysed. A summary of the findings will be presented to the June Parish Council meeting. The aim is then to engage with Herefordshire Council to secure recognition of FCLT's survey evidence and then to report more fully to the Fownhope community.

As a member of the National Community Land Trust Network, Board members continue to benefit from policy updates, webinars on key issues and access to discounted training and advice. The Network has introduced an online community of practice where members can share knowledge and experience on



specific topics. FCLT appreciates the support of the Parish Council in funding our subscription to the Network.

FCLT membership continues to increase slowly, and our Board has remained at 5 members with Teresa Plummer taking over as Treasurer from Ian Quayle who has now stepped down from the Board. We have received two expressions of interest in joining the Board and hope to welcome those people to our next meeting.

FCLT is a member of Marches Community Led Housing Ltd (<https://www.mclh.org.uk/>), an umbrella body across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin set up to use the Government's Community Housing Fund for CLT support, training of accredited advisers and pre-development funding. MCLH was mothballed when the funding ended. In anticipation of possible new funding following the general election, members of the MCLH Board in conjunction with Community First and HVOSS have been debating how MCLH should position itself to ensure that Herefordshire does not miss out on any funding opportunities for CLTs. It has been concluded that MCLH needs to operate as a rural housing enabler by acting as an honest broker engaging with parish councils, Herefordshire Council, housing associations, landowners and developers to raise awareness of and make the case for CLTs. A key element would be to have the ability to act across the whole county to assemble/ aggregate sites in separate locations as packages for development, overcoming some of the challenges housing associations face in relation to developing small sites.

The Parish Council's observations on this and any other aspects of FCLT activity are welcome.

Catherine Stubbings  
Chair, FCLT  
April 2025