



**Minutes of Brixton Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting held on
Wednesday 30th April 2025 at 7.00 pm in Brixton Community Room**

Present: Cllr Liz Hitchins (Chair), Cllr Michael Wills (Vice Chair), Cllr Tony Carson, Cllr Terry Clegg, Cllr Rachael Gillard, Cllr Neil Hawken, Cllr Ian Martin and Cllr Stuart Nix

In attendance: District Cllrs Julie Carson & Alison Nix and Kirstie Aldridge (Clerk)

Members of the public in attendance: 7

Cllr Hitchins welcome everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and stated that this was an opportunity to learn about things that are happening in the area. She explained that the April parish council meeting will follow this meeting at 7.30pm and everyone was welcome to attend.

Invited speakers

Cllr Hitchins introduced Ray Holland, Director, Yealm Community Energy and stated that BPC have just made an application for grant funding.

Ray Holland, Director, Yealm Community Energy

History – A Community Benefit Society

YCE were a member owned Community Benefit Society that was formed in 2015 and covered five parishes – Brixton, Holbeton Newton and Noss, Wembury and Yealmpton

CBS – a new form of coop allowed under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. All profit/surplus income has to go to fund activities of benefit to the community. The purpose of the project was initially to find local renewable energy sources that could be owned by the community for the benefit of the community.

Three solar farms, on two sites, on now owned – Gnaton Farms at Creacombe and Newton Downs farm with a total installed power of 12.3 MegaWatts (MW). The land is leased from the landowners for 30 years, this is extendable to 40 years.

YCE sell electricity to the grid electricity supply companies – over 12 million kilowatt hours, equivalent to the annual domestic consumption of all 4500 households in the five parishes. The total solar radiation/electricity generated over a year varies by around 10% maximum, so it is a fairly steady source. This year March generation was up by 40%, and April looks similar.

YCE are part of a group of 5 Community Energy organisations around the country – including Isle of Wight, Kent, Shropshire and S Wales.

Date

25th June

Signed

Michael Wills

Mr M Wills – Vice Chair Brixton Parish Council

YCE Board and membership

YCE have a board of unpaid volunteers, currently 7 people with different skills, environmental, business management, engineering and finance. YCE have 160 share-owning members and over 300 supporters, who receive regular newsletters.

If you would like to become a supporter, details are on the website – www.yealmenergy.co.uk

There is an annual revenue of about £1.2 million, at present much of that goes to pay off a big bank loan plus operation and maintenance charges, but we do have income for our community benefit fund of about £30k per year and we pay our shareholders 6% per year

Share Offer

There are 150 shareholders following a public share offer in 2023, and there are plans to make a further share offer this year, probably in October. The reasons for that are

1. We would like to have more local shareholders. Last time the share buying process was very difficult. This time it will be much simpler.
2. We want to pay off some of our bank debt
3. We want to raise more capital for future energy investments

Impact – projects funded

Since 2017 over £100k has been given to over 50 local community projects concerned with clean energy and environment and funded from surplus income from the solar farms, even before we owned them. Including several projects in Brixton, such as the concrete pad at the community composting site and the food waste composter at St Marys school.

The total money available over the 30-year life of the project is expected to be about £8million, though much of it will come in later years when we have paid off the senior debt of about £10million.

YCE are particularly keen on longer term projects such as the Yealm Estuary to Moor and the Yealm Community Electric Transport, that owns the electric passenger boat on the Yealm.

Incidentally, that is now running the Ferry from Wembury to Newton Ferrers as well as providing a boat taxi service.

One activity we are supporting this year will be an energy fair in Yealmpton in October, to provide an opportunity to learn about the latest home energy products and services from insulation to heat pumps to solar PV and batteries.

Biodiversity

YCE are particularly keen on ensuring that the biodiversity of the three sites shows steadily improvement and we survey it regularly, grow wildflowers and grasses on the site and measure the soil quality, the variety of insects and birds. Sheep are regularly grazed at Newton Downs.

As far as possible we use local contractors to do work on the farms, such as grass cutting, panel cleaning, electrical planned maintenance etc.

AGM

We are holding our annual general meeting on Saturday 7 June at N&N WI hall at 10 a.m. Anyone interested is welcome, though only members can vote.

Date 25th June 2024

Signed Michael Wills
Mr M Wills – Vice Chair Brixton Parish Council

Cllr Hitchins commented that this was a very complicated project and finance experts were definitely required. It was confirmed that the bridging loan, that is shared, is £27 million. The senior loan is for 15 years and the junior loan 5 years. All the sites are generating electricity and YCE are jointly liable – the other sites would make sure any payments are covered if required.

Cllr Hitchins thanked Ray for his informative presentation

Cllr Hitchins introduced Peter Hinchcliffe, the Parish Council Representative on the South Devon National Landscape and Chair of Newton & Noss Parish Council.

Peter Hinchcliffe, Parish Councils Representative, South Devon National Landscape

Peter explained that the South Devon National Landscape is a strategic, independent unit dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of the South Devon National Landscape. This is formally known as AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), various references are still made to AONB in literature, the same terminology has some significance. The purpose is to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the area, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Terms of Reference (TOR) – identify, protect and conserve the culture and to raise awareness. Some of the councils / agencies that are included are SHDC, PCC, DCC and Torba Councils, Environment Agency, Forestry Commissions, Representative Business Community, Coast and Marine Sector, Communities, Villages, non-government professionals, tourist industry, Plymouth University, SW Coastal Path and CPRA. Parish Council are also included, Peter explained that his role was the Parish Council Representative,

Facts

- England's 34 National Landscapes cover double the land area of the National Parks
- National Landscapes welcome double the number of visitors per year than National Parks
- National Landscapes are much closer to centre of urban population
- National Landscapes play a vital role, not just in protecting our precious wildlife and landscapes, but also for tourism, the regional economy and public access to natural places.

As Parish Council representative please forward any questions / queries to Peter, that he can pose to the partnership on our behalf. All questions are welcome.

The National Landscape Management Plan is the foundation of how it conducts the business. This existing Management Plan is 5 years old and needs to be revised.

Leading on the Management Plan and looking to engage with all Parish Council's. Want to engage as many members as possible with this new Management Plan and encourage detailed conversations with clusters of parishes. There will be 6 clusters, with the first one - Western edge bordering parish Councils will be invited to come and take part in the cluster meetings.

There is no date at present for the cluster meeting.

The survey is available on the website and social media.

Date

25th June 2026

Signed

Michael Wills

Mr M Wills – Vice Chair Brixton Parish Council

The subject of LGR and the security of the South Devon National Landscape was discussed. It was confirmed that this has been raised with the partnership.

At present the partnership work across 3 administrations, whatever happens with the LGR, the partnership will be working across a number of unitary councils, it is business as usual
The draft document for the plan will be available in July, with a formal consultation in August and the final document available in December.

There is an emphasis on the beauty of the landscape and more question about rivers
It is weighted with wording towards the beauty rather than what is harmful to the landscape.
Cllr Hitchins urged all to take part in the survey as we are all so lucky to be in the South Devon National Landscape areas. Fortunate to walk down to Steer Point Road and be near the river within a short distance.

Will villages be receiving any news signs with the new South Devon National Landscape terminology, as the signs still state AONB. Peter will raise this.

Cllr Hitchins expressed her thanks on behalf of BPC for Ray and Peter attending the meeting, it was very enlightening. She urged residents to complete the South Devon National Landscape open consultation.

Cllr Hitchins thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.27pm

Date

25th June 2026

Signed

Michael Wills

Mr M Wills – Vice Chair Brixton Parish Council