



Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

Minutes, number 314 Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 15 April 2025 at 7pm at Meldon village hall, Meldon Okehampton

Councillors Present -

M Cooper (Chair)
M Littlejohns (Vice Chair)
P Heard
J Goffey
B Wood
A Ewen

Also present Emily Young Parish Clerk

Cllr Cooper opened the meeting at 7.35pm.

1. Welcome by the Chairman - Cllr Cooper thanked everyone for coming and said it was great to see so many people here tonight.

2. Apologies – Cllr Norris and Cllr J Heard

4. Chairman's report – Cllr Cooper commented on the speed of which this last year has gone by. She thanked the new Clerk and the Councillors for their work the past year. She also thanked Cllr George Dexter.

There has been lots of work carried out in both Old Town Park and Meldon woods, particularly following the storms we have had. The PC are saddened about the boundary change to go ahead.

The jubilee celebrations last year were very well attended and felt positive.

She is looking forward to the D-day celebrations to be held by Okehampton Town Council in May.

The annual wildlife day at Meldon was very successful.

She thanked StOC for their continued support with work in both Old Town Park and Meldon woods. They are a great team of volunteers.

The Dartmoor marshalls service has been supported since Covid, but this year the PC will see how things go without the service.

Many of the Okehampton Hamlets Cllrs are involved with local projects, for example, Okehampton BID, Regen, Okehampton Hospital, Okehampton Castle, local Police engagement, Okehampton United Charities.

Future projects will continue to be Crediton Road pavements, Okehampton Castle, Beating the Bounds, St James crossing. The precept for 2025-26 has been set with a small increase equating to a Band D equivalent of +5.34%. The new inter-change rail station is due to open in Spring 2026.

5. Guest speakers –

Joshua Conibear – Meldon quarry

Josh is a Chartered Surveyor who is working as a Consultant for the new owners of Meldon quarry.

He gave an overview on the quarry and why the two new owners bought the quarry and the current status.

The quarry itself is a stone quarry (mainly used for asphalt) and when bought was in quite a mess, mainly due to it having been moth-balled for some time. It required a general tidy up; which it has now had. They have installed more modern techniques. There has been lots of paperwork to complete with regards to the quarry regulations. The new stone has been tested and certified. They have been through some of the old 'tips' and found that about 75-80% of the content is recoverable. It is expected that the new quarry will be opening again in about 2 weeks time. The new owners will be serving notice to Network Rail to use the railway line asap. At the moment there are 8 full-time employees and 2 part-

time. They will be looking for a weighbridge clerk, once the weighbridge works and office are open again. Some members of the public asked some questions which Josh fully answered.

Kit Hancock – Dartmoor National Park Ranger – Kit looks after Dartmoor North which covers 12 parishes. He has an assistant ranger who is called “Sam.” He spoke about some of the problems\works needed on various paths following the various storms we have encountered. His team are continually replacing gates, finger posts, signage, etc. They have been talking to South West Water about bridlepath 4 (that goes over the dam at Meldon). They are also working to put in better benches at Meldon for people to use with disabilities. There have been 1347 byelaw offences on Dartmoor during the last year, of which 59 were reported. These were things like overnight campervans, camping and mountain biking. There are some archaeological plans for Meldon quarry area due to some discoveries, as well as some new hut circles recently being discovered.

Dartmoor National Park are still waiting to hear back from the Supreme Court about the right to wild camp. At the moment the byelaw rules are on hold. The Dartmoor marshalls were very busy last season at Cadover bridge, Burrator and Newbridge. There have also been 11 reported cattle attacks last year; the HSE and the Commoners are working together to resolve.

Kit passed on ‘thanks’ from StOC to OHPC.

Princetown Dartmoor National Park office is closing at the end of October 2025 due to the building being in a poor state of repair.

It was released yesterday that there has been a cut in DNP’s grant (funding) from DEFRA (the Government) which isn’t good news for Dartmoor.

Dartmoor Dynamic Landscapes is a partnership programme with a vision to create more naturally resilient landscapes, to enable better understanding and to connect people more sustainably to their place. Kit said we may hear more about this if it comes this way.

Crispin D’Apice – Okehampton Army Camp – The camp is 140 years old. It is both an Army camp and a Dartmoor training camp. They try to use local maintenance contractors for maintenance work. They try and minimise their footprint as much as possible on Dartmoor. Live firing cannot be avoided as this is as close to the ‘real thing’ the soldiers can experience (and practise). There are restrictions (set by Duchy) on the maximum number of firing days a year, which is 112 days for Okehampton and 180 for Merrivale.

Crispin showed a map of Dartmoor with two main zones for firing, a blue zone and a red zone. Presently they are doing more firing around the Merrivale area.

Dartmoor training area (DARTA) is the UK’s 4th largest military training area. It is 11,874 hectares in size. Of which 8,947 is used for live firing. It has 107 buildings and bedspaces for 1090 personnel. In 2024, 39,000 service personnel trained on DARTA. These can be Royal Marines, RAF, Royal Navy or Army.

The usage is split between: Field firing – out on the ranges, as close as possible to the ‘real’ thing. Static ranges which is at Willsworthy (no public access), blank training, dry training (in uniform and doing navigation) and adventurous training which could be kayaking, climbing, mountain biking, etc.

5. Questions from parishioners – Questions were asked after each talk.

6. Close of meeting followed by refreshments – Cllr Cooper thanked everyone for coming and asked that they stay to enjoy some refreshments that have been provided.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Signed Date

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