

CURBRIDGE AND LEW PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly for the Parishes of Curbridge and Lew Curbridge Parish Hall Monday 11 May 2026 at 6:55 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs. Glenn Gannon (Chair), Patrick Foley, Phil Boddington, Angela Boddington, Jenny O'Sullivan. Howard Higgins - Clerk & RFO, Thomas Ashby (County Cllr), Liam MacKenzie (District Cllr).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Assembly held on 12 May 2025 be confirmed as true and correct and signed by the Chairman.

ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

My annual Chairman's report is usually about what the Parish Council has been up to over the last twelve months, however all that information is of course readily available on our website.

So, with this year's report I would like to focus on those who give up their time and energy for the good of our Parish.

I would like to start by thanking our Parish Clerk, Howard does such an excellent job for our Parish, he is an invaluable member of our council and community.

I would also like to thank my fellow parish councillors, Mark, Angela, Phil, Jenny and Patrick for their help and support throughout the year, we should also show our appreciation to our partners who put up with us.

My thanks also to Thomas Ashby, for keeping us up to date, supporting and representing us at county and district levels.

Mark Wilson has retired, after twenty-five years of service and dedication to our Parish, thank you Mark for your help and support as my Vice Chairman.

The Parish Hall is now being used on a regular basis, I would like to thank those people who take the time to organise various events and coffee mornings.

My final and most grateful thanks go to my dear wife Julie, who not only administers the hall, but also supports and listens to my own thoughts and concerns as Chairman of this Parish Council.

RFO REPORT AND PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The accounts of the Council for the previous year were accepted. Annual Governance and Accountability Return to be published on the Parish website. Nothing further to report.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

Report from County Councillor attached (also covering District Council matters).

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Annual Report to Curbridge Parish Council – May 2026

It has been the greatest pleasure of my life to represent the area I grew up in over these last twelve months. I have learned an incredible amount of additional local knowledge from those I have been supporting, including the residents and Parish Council here in Curbridge. I am also pleased to have supported financially for improvements to local play area in the village.

Therefore, I wanted to reflect on what I have been doing in my first year in the role and highlight some of the key issues and developments affecting our local area at County and District Council level.

1. Highways, Traffic & Transport

Gully Cleaning

The condition of our roads, alongside drainage and flooding have been among the most persistent raised by residents this year. A few months ago, I was pleased to see that the County Council commit to a new approach to gully cleaning, backed by £2.6million of annual funding.

This means that every highway drainage gully will now be cleaned annually, rather than once every four years.

A4095 Works

I have been campaigning hard to get the surface improved on the A4095 through Curbridge, with it being dubbed at one stage as the 'Grand Canyon', therefore, these last two weeks I have been pleased to see improvements to the road, however, I do note, as does the entire village, that the worst affected area between the Lord Kitchener and Grey Gables has either been missed or ignored. I will raise this with our new Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways Management. Further sealing work along the road will be carried out from 13th – 17th May.

Potholes

It will come as no surprise that the County Council have missed around 35% of non-urgent repair work, therefore exceeding their 28-day timeframe during the winter. So, I would like to thank everyone for their patience, as the County Council have failed to plan adequately for the new, mild and wet winters we are seeing in England.

Speeding / Traffic Calming

I remain committed to working alongside residents and the Parish Council to champion traffic calming and lower speeds across our village. Since the opening of the A40 Downs Road roundabout, Well Lane has unfortunately become a "rat-run" for commuters seeking a shortcut toward Bampton.

The Council has identified full-length speed humps as the most viable solution to reduce speeds on Well Lane, which we hope will also deter drivers from using it as a cut-through. While I have considered various suggestions, including closing the road to create a turning circle: these alternatives have proven impractical for several reasons.

Looking ahead, Curbridge is set to become a 20mph village. This transition will be subject to a formal consultation, and I encourage everyone to share their views. Currently, the most pressing concern remains speeding HGVs linked to Brize Norton developments. Following my intervention in March, HGV traffic has decreased; however, we are still monitoring two specific firms that continue to use unauthorised routes.

2. Waste & Environment

The implementation of new booking and ID requirements at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) on 14 January 2026 has proven to be a significant step backward for public service accessibility. By forcing residents to navigate a rigid digital portal and present strict identification just to dispose of basic household items, the Council has effectively traded convenience for unnecessary bureaucracy. This "digital-first" barrier disproportionately penalises the elderly and those without reliable internet access, turning a simple errand into a logistical hurdle.

The controversy surrounding these measures reached a boiling point in March, when our Oxfordshire Alliance motion to scrap the requirements was narrowly defeated at County Council. This decision ignored widespread public outcry and mounting evidence that these restrictions are actively counterproductive. There is a growing and palpable fear across our communities that by making legal disposal more difficult, the Council is indirectly fuelling an increase in fly-tipping. While the administration insists on waiting for further data to be reviewed later this year, local residents are already seeing the consequences in their hedgerows (like we saw in Yelford) and back alleys.

3. Development & Planning

I continue to object to the Gladman Home development for 900 homes in North-West Witney until they listen, consider their development alongside MacMic and commit provide adequate infrastructure prior to the construction of these homes. A central theme so far is that the council ensures the project is evaluated in direct conjunction with other major developments, such as the MacMic scheme, to ensure that the broader infrastructure for Curbridge and Witney, specifically school places and medical facilities remain sustainable. Beyond the scale of the build, current concerns focus on the Burford Road bottleneck and the need for a unified Section 106 strategy that prevents fragmented infrastructure improvements.

Finally, attention has turned to the **Brize Norton Solar Farm and Battery Storage (BESS)** project. While the solar farm itself received approval in October 2025, the battery storage component has faced significant opposition. Specifically, representatives from Caswell House have raised alarms regarding the siting of the battery units near a natural spring. Due to the risks of chemical contamination and the sensitivity of the local water table, a formal request for an independent review has been made. The goal is to secure a relocation of the storage units to mitigate environmental risks and avoid the potential for future legal action. I will continue to support Caswell House where I can.

4. Finance, Budgets & Governance

During the County Council budget, as the Oxfordshire Alliance, we proposed "Return to Basics" amendments aimed at shifting priorities toward visible local infrastructure. These proposals included a significant funding boost for pothole repairs and drainage to combat the deterioration of rural roads, dedicated financial support for the Oxfordshire Fire Cadets, and the creation of a parish banner fund to support community-led signage and events. However, these amendments were not adopted.

Beyond immediate fiscal concerns, the future of Oxfordshire's governance is currently being reshaped by a national consultation on Local Government Reorganisation. The proposals under

review seek to replace the current two-tier system of county and district councils with a streamlined unitary authority model. I support the Single Unitary Model, which suggests the council could save upwards of £20 million annually by eliminating duplicated administrative roles in areas like waste management and planning.

5. Fire, Community Safety & Public Facilities

Following recent consultations, the council has officially scrapped the proposal to reduce the number of fire stations across the county. The initial plans, which suggested the closure of stations in Henley, Eynsham, and Woodstock, as well as reductions in staffing and night-time cover, met with strong objections from the community. Residents were heavily encouraged to engage with the public consultation, and their input proved pivotal in the council's decision to maintain current service levels and station locations to ensure ongoing public safety.

Witney Library has now fully reopened to the public following an extensive refurbishment program; the updated facility has been well received by the local community, restoring a vital resource for education and engagement. Regarding local transport, the status of the **Lord Kitchener footpath and cycle lane** has been re-raised with OCC Highways – I am keen for this to be added to a list of additional improvements in the planning round in the next financial year.

There is much more to do, from securing the Lord Kitchener footpath improvements to managing HGV traffic from Brize Norton. I am incredibly grateful for your support and patience over the last year, and I look forward to continuing our work together to keep Curbridge and Lew a vibrant, well-maintained place to live.

Councillor Thomas Ashby
Witney West & Ducklington Division