



Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11TH May 2026 at 6pm at Combe Martin Community Centre.

Present: CMPC Cllrs. T. Seldon (Chair), A. Corner, C. Masters, D. Optix, E. Smallridge and M. Worth.

Also in attendance: Andrew Wyer (Clerk) and 2 members of the public

1/26 Welcome – Cllr Seldon (on behalf of CMPC, who hosted the event) welcomed everyone present.

2/26 Minutes – Copies of the draft minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held in 2025 had been printed and were available prior to the start of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as being accurate and were signed by the Chairman.

3/26 Matters raised by Parishioners –

1. Thank you to the Parish Council for their work in the village. Please keep going!
2. Well done for providing the children's play area. It is good to see it being largely respected.
3. Newberry shelter looks nice. It is good to have it back.

4/26 Reports – The meeting ended with reports from local organisations:

Combe Martin Beach Clean Group
Combe Martin Community Shop
Combe Martin Business Association
Combe Martin Football Club
Combe Martin Museum
Combe Martin Parish Council
Combe Martin Village Hall
Combe Martin Water Watch Group
Combe Martin Leys Charity

These reports are attached as appendices.



Appendices:

Combe Martin Clean Beach Group

Since we launched in April 2023, we have:

- carried out 2,062 beach cleans ('picks')
- collected more than 241,000 pieces of rubbish
- deployed 50 volunteers
- passed 1,000 consecutive days.

This past year, we picked up 37% more rubbish than in 2023/24 and 8% more than 2024/25.

We collected an average of 249 pieces of rubbish every day; however, this was heavily influenced by exceptionally large amounts of rubbish blown in on the tide by strong northerly winds on a few days in July 2025, January 2026 and March 2026 respectively. On a 'normal' day, we collected around 150 pieces of rubbish.

The figures suggest that the amount of rubbish on the beach is increasing, although this might be partly explained by our volunteers getting better at what they are doing. We call it having a 'picker's eye'. Because we also pick up small and very small pieces of rubbish (not just the more obvious bottles, cans, takeaway boxes etc.), the rubbish that I collect often easily fits into a shoebox, which is my way of keeping track of the volume rather than just the number of pieces. So, 150 pieces doesn't necessarily mean that the beach looks full of rubbish.

In the last few weeks, the better weather has meant lots of people on the beach, and inevitably lots more litter. It's sad that so much of this could so easily be avoided but it's a constant battle to try to change people's behaviour. You may have seen my recent Facebook post after a group of people left the worst amount of litter that I've seen in 3 years around the corner to the right of the concrete walkway. I just needed to let off steam, but the fact is that this sort of thing is not the norm.

Dog poo remains an issue, but the problem does not seem to be getting worse. Of course, everyone should pick up after their dog and we shouldn't be finding any at all during the bathing season, but I always remind myself that it is a tiny minority of people who act irresponsibly. Sadly, we know that dog poo contributed to the downgrading of our bathing water classification and the issue is not confined to the



beach. We must keep trying to get the message out there that dog poo that is not picked up can wash into the drains and the river, ending up in the sea and putting the health of swimmers, kayakers, paddlers and general beach users at risk, as well as putting our designated bathing water status at risk.

Finally, I'm sorry to say that cigarette butt littering is at epidemic proportions. Every day our volunteers pick up butts from around the benches in Kiln Car Park, alongside the walls around the beach where people like to sit, by the rocks etc. My sense is that this is getting worse and most smokers don't think there is anything wrong with throwing their butts on the floor. We have some ideas to try to tackle this, but they are all resource intensive and I'm not sure that we could implement them in a meaningful way. We will, of course, keep picking up any butts that we find.

A big thank you to the Parish Council and to Tom and Andy for your support and efforts to keep our beach clean.

Best wishes,
Ray Ashman (on behalf of the Clean Beach Group)

Combe Martin Community Shop

The Community Shop has 38 volunteers and continues to support local college students undertaking their work placements.

Our prices remain lower than National Charity shops, this is achieved by the sheer volume of donations and the fact that we don't purchase stock for sale.

We have many regular customers from across the area and we receive many compliments praising the quality of goods, the layout of the shop and the friendliness of the volunteers.

During the past 12 months the Foundation has donated £44,000 to 11 village clubs and organisations.

Combe Martin Business Association

By Bryan Cath, Chair

The 2025 high season was busy on the beach and village shops, and reports from our various accommodation members showed good bookings. But it did not last. The South West Coast Path provides a steady stream of walkers helping some accommodation providers and local cafes. During that season we ran a three-month social media campaign run for us by Boom



Boom Media and paid for by our wonderful Community Shop. This boosted interest in the village and website.

Facebook performed exceptionally well with nearly 7,000 interactions on Visit Combe Martin posts across the 3 months. An interaction can be a comment, like, click or an image but ultimately these interactions mean that the content was engaging –exactly what a social page should be.

One post absolutely lit the page on fire. The Silver Mines <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1398878612240552&set=a.508605001267922&type=3> this post had a reach of over 19,000! With over 1,800 interactions itself. This figure has likely risen since the report was written by Boom Boom.

The real highlight was the impressions.

FB: the page reached over 166,000 impressions up 12,888.51%.

Instagram reached over 800 up 1,833.33%.

Combined, the page posts were seen 115.12K times in 3 months.

Our website was getting on average just under 5000 visits each month staying on the site for an impressive 4-6 minutes.

We did some advertising in the *Exmoor Magazine* which has a wide coverage to people who already enjoy this area.

In March 2026 we had a disaster when our website domain went down. This happened because the hosting changed hands caused by the retirement of the company I used for this. Unfortunately, the company he passed his business over to, proved not to be good and did not remind me to renew my hosting. In the 2 weeks it was down, nowadays domains go straight back onto the open market, and a fraudster bought it before we could reinstate it. He is a fraudster as he took a screenshot of our site and inserted it into our old domain, but of course it cannot work as a picture. Of course, I am not paying his exorbitant price to buy it back. So, I had to buy a new domain and put the site into that. So, the domain has changed to **visitcombemartin.travel**. A very annoying situation meaning our new domain must climb back up the search engine listings.

I have attended two AI courses on how to use it to the benefit of our website, making it AI-search compliant. This work I have completed on our website, helping it get up the searches a bit quicker. I regularly update our website and add new blogs when appropriate. This amounts to many voluntary hours work.

Our renewals have just come in, and there has been too many yet to renew. This means that the chances of our business association being able to continue for much longer is in question. The association has fixed expenses, such as website hosting and the webcam. Advertising does not have to continue, thus being reliant on simply our website and social media. That is not healthy. Do we want to rely totally on Visit Devon and Visit Exmoor to market our destination and lose our Destination Management Organisation (DMO) status? Do we want to ask Visit Ilfracombe to take Combe Martin under their wing?



There are just two of us voluntarily running our association, me and Philippa Shone. We both put a lot of time and effort into keeping our village promoted. If we take away our online visibility, I cannot say what effect it will have on our local economy. The marketplace is changing fast and going heavily towards AI searches. Hating AI won't get you anywhere – it is already here, getting cleverer and growing fast.

This Easter produced a small blip in visitors, giving a possible idea of what this season might bring. With Europe being so close to all the troubles, fuel costs going so high for transport which gets passed on to holiday-makers, staying in the UK seems the obvious choice. If that happens then we could be in for a bumper season, but with visitor spend being down.

Conclusion

What does our village want? We cannot continue as we are.

1. Get more financial support from our village businesses to enable us to boost the amount we promote the village and the benefits that brings to inward income and thus investment.
2. Let the business association die and the unknown consequences of that decision.
3. Pass everything over to Visit Ilfracombe and let them market us, but as a secondary market.
4. Let Visit Devon and Visit Exmoor continue with what they are doing, with no clear online links through to us anymore.

Consequences of the above

Related to above bullets.

1. Philippa and I would need more physical help to get local businesses to appreciate what marketing the village does for their businesses and thus put something back into our village economy.
2. That would take the strain off Philippa and me, but to what end?
3. Potentially our web-based presence could diminish – is that what we want?
4. What Visit Devon and Visit Exmoor do for us is not that brilliant, again we are very much secondary and on their borders. If our website dies, then all the inwards links from the other DMOs also die.

Philippa and I would very much like feedback on this report. Thank you.

Combe Martin Association Football Club

Senior Football

We've once again had two men's teams out competing in the North Devon Football League Premier Division and North Devon Football League Senior Division, which is something we're really proud of as a village club. Both teams promoted into these leagues partly down to their success in the field and the leagues restructuring.



The 1st Team has been led by Will Lovett & Radley Watkins, who you could say have over achieved this year, but ultimately this has been down to hard work on the pitch and a positive attitude off of it. They are currently sat in 3rd in the Premier League while the 2nds have been in the hands of Ray Squire and Steve Lancey, who have struggled throughout the season but are finishing strongly so will no doubt beat the relegation battle.

We've also carried on supporting the Senior Division with the Combe Martin Cup. This year's final is being played at Hollands Park on 2nd May, with Bradworthy taking on Bideford AFC 2nds. Last year's final saw BOCA Seniors 2nds come out on top against Braunton 2nds in a good contest.

Our season wraps up with the final game (away) on 30th May 2026, bringing another busy season to a close.

Youth Football

We went into this season off the back of becoming the first recipients of the 'Gregg Spence Respect' Trophy from the ND Youth League. This award is chosen by all clubs in the league and is named in honour of the late Greg Spence, the leagues very first Respect Coordinator, who was a devoted volunteer at Chumleigh Youth FC.

Youth football continues to be a big part of the club, with great numbers across the age groups. It's brilliant to see so many local kids—as well as players coming in from surrounding areas like Berrynarbor, Lynton and Ilfracombe—getting involved, enjoying their football, and improving each season. A big thanks goes to all the coaches and volunteers who give up their time to make it happen. We have fielded 5 Youth Teams this season and look to continue this success into the Summer attending tournaments and friendlies around North Devon and at home. It's also great to see our youth players starting to step up towards senior football.

MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area)

We're still working hard to raise money to support and improve the MUGA for everyone to use. The club has put on a number of events over the year to help with this, and it's been great to see the support from the community. A big highlight was the August Funday 2025, which raised £5,000 — a fantastic effort by everyone involved. It was once again a great day for the club and the village. Plenty going on for all ages, a good turnout, and a really nice atmosphere throughout the day. As always, it helped bring everyone together and raise some important funds for the club.

We look forward to the next Funday on the 8th August 2026.

Kent Boys – 10 Year Anniversary

This year we celebrated 10 years of the Kent Boys (Whitstable FC), which is a great milestone. It's a group that's been a big part of the club over the years, and it was good to mark the occasion and recognise everyone who's been involved along the way.

Thank you!



A big thank you to the Combe Martin Parish Council for their continued support. The work done around the ground, especially improvements to parking and the steps, has made a real difference for everyone using the facilities.

And last but by no means least, a massive thank you to all of those that volunteer at our village club. Volunteering can sometimes feel thankless, but I can assure you it is appreciated by our players and community.

Looking Forward

Looking ahead, we just want to keep building on what we've got — keeping the teams going strong, supporting our youth players, and continuing to improve things where we can. We have a plan for a much-needed refurb of our club bar which is vital to the funding of CMAFC and have already started with freshening up the outside areas with the painting of the Bill Smallridge Stand and Subs Shelters. With the support we get from volunteers, players, and the local community, the club is in a good place going forward.

Nic Jenkins

On behalf of CMAFC

Combe Martin Museum

COMBE MARTIN MUSEUM has had another busy and successful year with an increased footfall of visitors to the area as well as more events being held for the village community.

We have again extended our opening hours for the spring and summer seasons, opening mornings and afternoons from 10.30 am — 4.00 pm. The Tourist Information Point, the shop area, and the collection of second hand books for sale bring in a lot of people and we persuade as many as possible to take a tour of the Museum! Visitors are always surprised by how much there is to see and most don't realise that we have three floors of interesting artefacts on display.

Our Collections Team continues to work hard at maintaining the collection in excellent condition and adding exciting new items donated by the public. This year has seen the addition of a 19th century Harvest Smock which is now housed in a new custom-made display cabinet on the mezzanine floor. The team regularly put on displays in the Sail Loft with various different themes.

We again received a County Councillor Grant, thanks to the support of Lee Lethaby, which was used to purchase new display cases for the front of the Museum. This gives people an insight into what is inside the museum and also shows what events we have coming up.

We have a dedicated Events Team to organise monthly fundraising events in the afternoons and evenings and these have proved to be very successful.



Our regular fortnightly coffee mornings continue to be extremely popular and there is often hardly a spare seat to be had!

We also have afternoon tea and craft meetings twice a month. When the summer season is in full swing we shall again be holding our Seashore Safaris on the beach. And we have regular visits from local schools as well as welcoming students for work experience with us. All events are advertised in the Shammickite magazine, on our Facebook page and on our newly redesigned Website, Combemartinmuseum.org, as well as posters being displayed throughout the village.

We have a group of "Friends of Combe Martin Museum" and they help us financially by renewing their subscriptions annually. A lot of people are Life Members of the Friends, and many are regular attendees at coffee mornings and other events.

We still receive monthly payments from the North Devon Community Lottery as our supporters continue to purchase their tickets.

The Association of Independent Museums and Southwest Museum Development have given us invaluable specialist help and advice during the year. We have hosted some of the regular meetings of this group which is always a good opportunity to compare notes with volunteers from other local museums.

We hold monthly Management Committee meetings and these have been extended to include all active volunteers, giving everyone a chance to be involved with the general day to day managing of the museum. The Trustees, who *are* also all volunteers, hold regular meetings as needed to support the work that is being done.

We are so grateful to all our friendly team of volunteers for the many hours of work they put in at the Museum. We would not be here without them and they are so enthusiastic in their support.

And thank you to all the villagers of Combe Martin who support us in various ways throughout the year, we are very grateful.

Combe Martin Parish Council

Firstly, once again I would like to thank every one of our volunteer councillors. Without us working all together, we would not be able to continually make improvements to our village in record time. A special thanks goes to our 2 proactive councillors, Lee and Martin. Continually donating, free of charge, time, digger, dumper, labour and expertise. Without them these projects would not have been affordable and have saved thousands of pounds of parish money.

The parade carpark being one of these projects, a wall being removed, concrete foundation laid and railings being installed, completing the project with 3 benches donated by families in memory of loved ones. A great improvement and a lovely view. Not a small or easy task and very



expensive if we had subbed out to a sub-contractor, it would not have happened if we had to go down that road.

We also saw the play area completed, lovely colourful benches and seats installed, all donated by local groups and individuals, big thanks go to them.

A new shelter kindly donated by the Lovering family has now been installed at Newbery; I think we all agree it looks great.

Wood Lane project – ongoing. Unfortunately, when the planning department is involved, it slows things up a bit, but we are now on track, watch this space!

Finally, thank you to our staff, Andi, Tanya, Tom and Andy, all committed as are the councillors in continuously striving to improve our village for all of us to enjoy.

Combe Martin Village Hall

The Village Hall Community Group has had another very busy and productive year. We are saving up for a big project so have only done a few upgrades since the front was painted which included new fire doors at the rear and side doors that needed replacing. Utility bills and the general running of the hall (inspections, insurance, minor repairs & licenses to name a few) have increased so in April we reluctantly had to increase our hire charges which have not changed for years but are still very competitive compared to other venues. We have hosted some more wedding receptions and private functions as well as bingos etc. We have had some stage shows; Up Close Theatre, the local panto and also a medium, all well attended. We continue with the Farmers Market and Craft Fair every month which is very popular. Martin continues his book fairs during main holidays and also continues to run the Friday youth club, Judo and Thursday badminton, all with the help of volunteers. Monday badminton is being run by John S and we also have a new addition of indoor bowls starting again in September. A big thank you to all our volunteers who work so hard in the background, to the local groups in the village that hire the hall and to all the community that supports events and clubs which enables us to continue with the improvements and maintenance of our village hall for all to enjoy. Please visit our website, combemartinvillagehall.co.uk to see some of the improvements made to date and the calendar of upcoming events

Combe Martin Water Watch Group

Organising Team: Bryan Cath, Barbara Martin

In the last year, we have had meetings with:

- Darren Searle, ND Biosphere Reserve, Natural Flood Management & Smart Biosphere
- Will Frost, Flood Resilience and Smart Biosphere



- Karen Irwin, Environment Monitoring Officer
- Andrew Fuller, Environment Agency (EA) Officer
- Dave Brain, North Devon Catchment Coordinator, EA
- Mark Beer, Senior Environmental Protection Officer
- South West Water (SWW), various staff members
- Beachwise Forum, May 2025
- Beachwise Forum, Nov 2025
- Beachwise Forum, May 2026
- Yellow Fish stakeholders

Barbara Martin and I have attended meetings at the beach, at Roadford Lake (SWW) for the Beachwise Forum and at North Devon Council. Barbara has kept a close eye on the EA bathing water data and is quick to follow up when readings are unacceptable.

There is great disappointment over our water quality classification dropping from 'Good' for the last 3 years to 'Sufficient' for the 2026 season. To regain a 'Good' rating will be an uphill struggle because the system considers the results over a 4-year period. This means that even if our results are excellent this year, we may still be rated as 'Sufficient', which is extremely frustrating.

The work that SWW has been doing in our catchment in the past year has resulted in far fewer combined sewage overflows (CSOs). So, the sea was actually very clean for a lot of the year, but there were still a few very high readings for bacteria in the sea and river, which resulted in the downgraded classification. The EA has already attended several reported sources of possible pollution, given advice to farmers and followed up on private sewage installations. They will continue to investigate over the winter.

To try to gain a better understanding of our water quality issues, Barbara and a willing team worked with the North Devon Biosphere on a citizen science project, collecting water samples and recording the levels of phosphates, nitrates, PH, salinity, E. coli and total coliforms in the sea and river every week for a year. This made it clear that when it rains heavily, there is an increase in the amount of runoff from the roads and land, which carries pollutants into the river and then the sea. This project was time-consuming but worthwhile.

We also asked the EA to carry out DNA testing on some of the samples with very high levels of bacteria to try to identify where this was coming from. The results showed faecal matter from humans and ruminants, but the highest levels of bacteria in the river were from dog poo, which has a very high bacterial load and therefore has a significant impact on water quality.

As a group, we did our own checks on the salinity of the water in our bay and found that the weir has a major effect on readings. Water entering the sea from the River Umber pools behind the weir, greatly reducing the salinity of the seawater and thus its ability to mitigate any pollution that might be present. Our tests showed that the greater the salinity, the cleaner the water usually is. The EA takes its samples at different times throughout the season in the middle of the bay. At high and low tides, the salinity recovers, but the weir



reduces the ability of the tide to clear the river water from behind the weir. This means that at times they are testing river water instead of sea water, as that is what is present in the middle of the bay.

The new wall retaining the river water, which we were given permission to build by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), was meant to go further down the beach, which could have prevented the river water from running across the beach and pooling behind the weir. But unfortunately, this was thwarted by some villagers and the work was halted. Finding new funding and obtaining fresh permission from the MMO to complete this work may prove difficult.

We are in the process of considering the Yellow Fish scheme, which aims to raise awareness about sources of water pollution and the quality of water in streams, rivers, lakes or ponds. In our case, yellow fish would be stencilled next to road drains to remind people that anything that goes down the drains can harm aquatic life and impact our bathing water results. It is vital that parishioners understand that their actions can affect the quality of our sea water. Anything that they deposit in or near the river or down a drain will end up in the sea. If cigarette butts, dog poo, weedkiller, car washing shampoo, building materials, cable ties, paint flakes etc are allowed to enter the drains – or even worse are deliberately dropped, washed or swept into them – they will later be in the sea, directly risking the health of swimmers, paddlers, kayakers and other beach users!

We are contributing many voluntary hours and covering the cost of fuel to attend all the relevant meetings as representatives of our village. We are keeping Combe Martin at the forefront of all these people's minds while continually monitoring the quality of our sea and river water and actively seeking solutions to the ongoing issues.

Leys Charity

Leys Charity continues to give grants to people of all ages living within the parish of Combe Martin, for further education at university, college, apprenticeships and people who may decide on a career change or returning to employment after raising a family and require some training.

This year grants were given to sixteen people, some for the first time, others for the second, at slightly less than the previous year.

There is money available so if you know anyone who may be eligible, they can apply in writing to Jill Sidebottom, 1 Westbourne Terrace. The trustees meet in late September to discuss the applications.