

DRAFT

MARTIN PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish of Martin held on Monday 24th March 2025 at 7pm in the Hart of Martin

Present: Cllr S Greenwood (Chair, Martin Parish Council), Cllr S Hooper (Vice Chair), Cllrs J Richards and E Horley
Melissa Hildreth (Parish Clerk) and 35 members of the public.

The meeting started promptly at 7.00 pm with a welcome from Cllr S Greenwood. Minutes were approved and signed as accurate.

The following groups were asked to make a presentation about themselves, their accomplishments in the past year and what plans they have for the future.

Natural England- Guest speak Alan and Theo who is the HCC site manager spoke about the plans for the new work base. The planning application has been submitted. NFDC is waiting for more ecological surveys. The site is at the top of Sillens Lane. It is to create a workshop and storage. It is not on the Downs reserve so not designated but right next to the Downs. Hopefully once the ecological surveys are done NFDC will make a decision. An artist's impression was shown. The money for the project comes from DEFRA. One to one and a half million pounds. From Theo – the bridleway was closed due to dangerous ash trees for 14 months. It is now all cleared and can be used again. They are working on habitat restoration for rare habitat. Martin still has good butterflies even after a bad year. There were 4 breeding pairs of turtle doves. It has been hard for grazing die to wet winters and springs.

Cllr Heron – This year Band D homes were at £1600. There is a 97.5 million hole in the budget. Spending is prioritized by risk. Extra money goes to the care of the elderly, there is an 18 million increase a year due to social care. There will be elections in May 2026. There will be a Mayor in future when the unitary authority is decided. Hampshire County will no longer exist. New Forest is trying to work with other districts to make a rural authority. Cllr Heron thinks New Forest may very well be combined with Southampton. He feels that rural and urban are not the same. Cllr Heron will no stand again for re-election but elections have been delayed until 2026. He feels devolution is a good argument when you are the opposition but not such a good stance when you are in power. He feels it will be interesting to see what happens. Concerning roads, the contract for repair goes out by tender. There is not enough staff to monitor how well the contractor is doing. It does help that many roads have not been constructed properly. The are old tracks that have just been paved. Most roads in the county are on a managed decline. £37 Billion would be needed to properly construct roads in Hampshire.

Blandford Hall – John Butler -Changes at Blandford Hall are almost complete. It is on track to finish by Easter. April 26th is the date for re-opening. All events will then be back on. Repainting of the outside and new notice boards still need to take place in future. Disabled access for the hall has been done, but phase 2 will need to be the ramp to the building. Thank you to all who have helped. We have a great set of supporters.

Asian Hornets- Last year there were 24 nests found in England. Two nests in Southampton destroyed. DEFRA and the National Bee Unit are in charge of destroying any found nests. This year one found in Shropshire in January. Our area is low risk but please stay aware. Look for and download the app. It asks you to take a photo. This helps and there is nothing to organise. If there is activity closer to us John will let the community know.

PCC- There are services every two weeks. Attendance for the holidays is about 50 people. There are 50 volunteers. There are about 15 to 20 regulars that come to services. The Electoral Roll for the parish is currently being updated. Jenny G. is in charge. It costs £24,000 a year to keep the church running. There will be a £10,000 increase to the Diocese. Safeguarding is a big issue but not a problem for this year at our parish. Anyone in the parish can be buried in the church cemetery. There will be a couple of weddings, choir events and children's choir event. Once Voice Choir is coming to perform. It is open to everyone in the village. We had Palm Sunday with a donkey this year and there will be an animal blessing in May.

Martin Community Association- Gillian spoke for the MCA. Everyone in the Parish are members of the Association. No application or fee. We only cover our costs and some stays in the bank account. We don't raise funds. The MCA does events to promote happiness and well-being. There are many events in Martin. A calendar of events is produced and posted on the notice boards. Hopefully, this years weather will be better for events. Easter Monday there will be an egg hunt. In May we promote 'No Mow May' to boost wild flowers. Even leaving a small patch to grow is a good idea. The Village Fete is 21 June. We will need gazebos. We will also need help the day before with set up. The last one was three years ago. It will be ½ hour longer and there will be some parking close by.

Dark Skies - Jeff Bailey is the Martin Dark Skies Custodian for Martin. It is a free group that has been going for five years and is part of Cranborne Chase. We are now an accredited Dark Skies friendly parish and we are aiming for a 4 star rating. There has to be 67% compliance for 4 stars and 90% compliance for 5 star. Steve Tonkin is the Cranborne Chase advisor and he says we are almost to a 4 star. He takes four quality readings a year. Martin averages about 21.13. We are down to 21.03 this year which is very good. The lower the better. The reading on 22 Dec at 11pm with the Christmas lights did change our average. Only 10% of the country can be considered dark and Martin is in one of these areas. 'Be a big dipper' and dip your lights. 500 lumens or less recommended. Warm light rather than cold. Timers and motions sensor help. Recommend to time the lights to stay on 5 minutes not more, but can be less. Please see Jeff Bailey for more information. There will be a stargazing evening in the Hart of Martin for next year. This year the evening had some clear sky for viewing. Will have a star party in Aug and Dec if the sky is clear. There will be a partial morning eclipse. If weather is good will make arrangements to help with viewing. Please join the Martin WhatsApp Stargazers group.

Hart of Martin –In 2024 there were more events and kinds of events. Sunday lunch is a highlight. In finance there has been a 50% increase to 47,000 in turn over this past year. The money is re-invested into the Hart. Re-invest so far has been in efficiencies and green ways. There is re-wiring to be done. There is a new heat pump in the snooker room. We are having a sponsored sleepout for the homeless. Sponsor on the bar or online the Great Sponsored Sleepout.

Community Shop- Richard Sampson -It has been just over a year since the changes with the shop. There is now an EPOS machine and things have been refreshed as part of the refurb of the hall. Operations were started again with donations and loans. Things have been successful and more profitable than was thought. Loans have been repaid. It is now open all day Wednesday for extra hours. We will try to stock local products as much as possible. We have a gluten free section. We have a new freezer and planning permission for air conditioning for the shop. There are 24 volunteers we are thankful for. Things we have sold this year include: 365 avocados, 469 sourdough loaves, 880 boxes of Future Farm eggs. We are open to suggestions for different products.

Wessex Internet- Regional Engagement Manager- Fibre came to the village in February of 2024. In 2018 it was decided that all copper lines were to be scrapped and replaced with fibre. Open Reach was not able to handle the scale of the project so it was opened to other contracts. This is how Wessex started and brought fibre to Martin. Copper to be fully decommissioned by 2027. Wessex currently have 11,000 customers and head quarters is in Blandford Forum. As a thank you to Martin there are some give aways. Please see the local team. Eventually, other companies will be able to offer fibre packages but it will still be the same fibre system. All complaints so far have not been system wide but down to individual properties. Sometimes there are problems with older homes.

Parish Council report – Cllr Greenwood invited everyone to come to the Parish Council meetings to see how things are done. Some items MPC has completed this year.

- New SID is working. So far it looks like most are going the correct speed.
- Affordable housing survey has determined a need in Martin. We are working with New Forest District Council to provide affordable housing.
- A new gate has been installed along the Sillens Lane footpath along with improvements to the steps.
- Our emergency planning group could use more volunteers.
- We had a D-Day celebration and added a plaque to a bench on the green.
- Cllr Richards is working with Hampshire County Council to help improve flooding.
- A new replacement notice board has been purchased for the Townsend Lane area of the Village
- There have been 13 planning applications and 7 tree works applications this year