
RUSPIDGE & SOUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING held on Tuesday 9th June 2026.

(These minutes remain in draft form until approved at the next meeting of the Council)

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllrs. Tony Matthews, Norman Snell, William Acland, Denis Bagwell-Johnson, Nicky Packer, Priya Shukla, Paul Firth.

County Councillors Present:

Beki Hoyland.

District Councillors Present:

None Present.

Parish Council Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Apologies:

Cllr's, Helen Medcraft, Bernie O'Neill, Ray Donaghue, Richard Burton, Andy Moore.

Standing Declarations of Interest

- a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston.
- b) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Norman Snell.

Public Present: Glenn Turner, Rob Stubbs.

- 6.1. **Apologies** received and recorded from absent members.
- 6.2. No declaration of prejudicial interest was declared by members present.
- 6.3. **Minutes** - The minutes of the council meeting held on the **12th of May, 2026** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman, Cllr. Tony Matthews.
- 6.4. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 6.5. **Parish Snow Wardens & Grit Stores** - Members debated the viability of maintaining a Highways grit stores for the Parish. The Parish Council are informed by GCC Highway in writing that as GCC Highway provide an annual grit delivery, this makes the Parish Council responsible for refilling the blue grit bins should they run low due to usage over the winter months. The members present decided it is impractical for the Parish Council to take responsibility for refilling the parish blue grit bins. The Parish Council does not have a budget to cover this task or the staff to attend to said task. Our Snow Wardens cannot be asked to take on said task and issues regarding insurance and liability affecting both the Parish Council and Snow Wardens were discussed. The members present voted unanimously to decline any further grit deliveries from GCC Highways.
- 6.6. **District Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

6.7. **County Councillor Reports**

Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

6.8. **Planning** – The completed schedule for **June** is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes. Cllr. Paul Firth is nominated along with Cllr. Tony Matthews to represent the parish on planning matters.

6.9. Following a report by the Honorary Treasurer, Cllr. Norman Snell the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for **June**, payment totalling **£5,325.75**. These figures are inclusive of confidential expenditure. A financial report is included for **June** in the appendix to these minutes.

6.10. **AGAR Annual Governance Statement.** The members present approved the Annual Governance Statement and the Chairman, Mr. Tony Matthews & Clerk, Mr. Roland Dowding duly signed the document.

6.11. **AGAR Accounting Statements approval.** The members present approved the accounting statements and the Chairman; Mr. Tony Matthews duly signed the document.

6.12. **Mr. Andy Blake. Parishioner Concern regarding the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.**

Mr. Andy Blake failed to attend the meeting or submit any apology.

6.13. **May Operational Reports – Recreational Areas.** The members present noted receipt of the reports. No questions.

6.14. **Acceptance of Quote and Appointment of Copeland Maintenance for the three recreational grounds in the Parish.** This includes three quarterly Operational Inspections & the Annual Inspection. Formal member approval. The members present voted unanimously in favour of appointing Copeland Maintenance in this role.

6.15. **Liaison's Report for Soudley Village Hall.**

- Finances are in the black.
- The committee remains stable after the recent AGM.
- The changing rooms conversion is due to start soon.
- Soudley Fete 11th July. Please attend.

6.16. **Liaison's Report for Ruspidge Memorial Hall.**

Deferred.

6.17. **Clerk's Report to Council.**

- VAT Quarter four. £7,415.15 received.
- NEST submissions are still unresolved.
- Play Area inspections and maintenance. New contractor quote for quarterly and annual inspections.
- FoDDC St Clean Payment Remittance Advice Received. £ 2,951.08.
- Mrs. Weyman's Memorial Bench sited on Top Rd Soudley.
- GCC Grass Roots Grant Payment for Ruspidge roundabout received.
- GCC Grass Roots Grant Awarded for Soudley Village Defib Cabinet.
- Caloo. Roundabout install proceeding in Ruspidge.

- 6.18. **Correspondence** - The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence:
P1361/25/FUL Planning Application Consultation.
AGAR Submission Documentation. From the Clerk.
No concerns regarding receipt of emails by the members were recorded.

- 6.19. **Next Meeting** - the next meeting of the council will be held in the **Ruspidge Memorial Hall at 7.00 p.m. Tuesday, 14th July 2026.** The agenda deadline for the full council meeting is **Monday, 6th of July 2026.**

- 6.20. **Exclusion of the Press and the Public** - The council **RESOLVED** that for any remaining business of a confidential nature, the press and the public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 10.xi (2020).

The meeting closed at 7:40 p.m.

Signed:.....Chairman.

Dated:.....

APPENDIX

FINANCIAL REPORT for the meeting in: June 2026					
1. Reconciliation of Account as at:					
					end May 2026
Ledger		£		Bank	£
Balance b/f		134,798.69		<i>(Com Acc)</i> Lloyds Current A/c.	11,840.62
Interest Lloyds		22.65		<i>(Com Instant)</i> Lloyds Inst. Access A/c.	63,712.50
HMRC VAT Refund		7,415.15		Unity Current A/c	906.00
FoDDC		2,951.08		Unity Inst Access A/c	64,487.96
GCC Grant		3,000.00			
Total		148,187.57		Total	
Less Expenditure May		7,240.49			
Balance		140,947.08		Balance	
				140,947.08	
2. Accounts for Payment					
<i># = Paid in May but on June's ledger.</i>					
#	EE Ltd	01. (DD)	17.83		Mobile Phone
#	Lloyds Bank	02. (SC)	4.25		Bank Charges
	Module IT	03 (DD)	158.50	26.42	IT Support & MS OFFICE
	Module IT	04 (DD)	19.79	3.30	VOIP & Calls
	KOMPAN	5	523.26	87.21	Play Area Inspections
	Sjs Book Keeping	6 (SO)	30.00	5.00	Payroll
	Soudley Village Hall	7	25.00		Grass Cut
	KOMPAN	8	198.00	33.00	Cradle Swing Seat
	Tim Harris	9	475.51		St Clean. Park
					Checks, Defibs, Bus Shelter.
	Tim Harris	10	165.00		Grass Cutting
	Complete Landscapes	11	1,104.00	184.00	Parish Grass Cutting
	Merlin Waste	12	300.00		Dog Waste Bins
	RMH	13	12.00		Hall Rental
	RMH	14	18.00		Hall Rental
	Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	15	250.00		Biodiversity Report Ruspidge Park
TOTAL			3,279.06	338.93	

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule June, 2026

Planning Reference

Site Address & Detail

Parish

Comment

P0523/26/FUL

11 Peacock Lane, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.

Erection of a first floor extension

No Obj

Decisions notified by the Planning Authority

Planning Reference

Site Address & Detail

Parish

Comment

District

Decision

Date

P0310/26/FUL

1 Eastern Way, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.

Erection of a side extension and raising of roof to form a first floor extension along with the demolition and erection of replacement detached garage

No Obj

Consent

08/06/2026

June 2026 -County Report

beki.hoyland@gloucestershire.gov.uk

07815660013

Transport

Please continue to use and promote the use of [FixMyStreet](#) to report issues on the roads.

I am now chair of the Forest of Dean Road Safety Group which brings together highways, fire, police, councillors from parish, town, district and county, Forestry England and others as required. The aim of this meeting is to highlight areas in the whole district that need attention and work done to improve safety. If there is something you would like to add to this agenda do let me know.

I thought rather than only letting you know about roads I would highlight public transport availability in the Forest. It is still capped at £3 for a single journey on stagecoach busses. With fuel costs increasing it may be worth considering taking the bus.

[About 5 — FoDCAP](#) to download the transport map of the Forest of Dean, including links to all the timetables.

[traveline sw - welcome](#)

[County bus network maps | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

[How to book a journey | Gloucestershire County Council](#) The Robin

A40, Over Bridge

8th June to February 2027, A40 Over Bridge works with various contra flows in place.

I will be attending a meeting in Minster worth village hall on the 16th to ask more questions. I have written to Matt Bishop MP, Stagecoach, Transport for Wales, Cross Country, National Highways and the GCC cabinet members for Highways asking them to provide more public transport for those of us living in the Forest of Dean during the work.

Closed Roads

- 9th February to August 2026 Lydney to Whitecroft road is closed for structural maintenance.

The no. 23 bus is rerouted as follows: Lydney, Bream, Whitecroft, Parkend, Sling.

- 8th June to 16th June Awre Road, Blakeney drainage works
- 23rd -26th June A4151 between Littledean and Cinderford closed for resurfacing

13 Jul 08:00 - 31 July Upper Road Pillowell for rebuilding a collapsed wall

17th August – 28th August road resurfacing around Whitecroft,

Autumn. Surface improvement work between A48 to Parkend and around Bream.

GCC Meetings

Committee Meetings

Environment Scrutiny Committee, Planning Committee, Adult, Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee. Full recordings can be found [here](#). (Bold are the ones I am part of)

Full Council

During this month's Full Council meeting, a new Chair of the Council for 2026/27 was elected. Cllr Steve Robinson (Labour), who was Chair for 2025/26 was replaced by Cllr Sarah Hands (Lib Dem), with Cllr Robinson elected as Vice Chair.

Cllr Joe Harris (Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Communications) informed Council that he was resigning his seat and that this was his last Council meeting. Members from across political groups paid tribute to Cllr Harris for his long years of service and wished him well in his new role. He will be replaced in his Cabinet position by his father, Cllr Mark Harris (Lib Dem).

Three motions were also debated. The first was brought by the Conservative group concerned house building numbers. The motion called for a reduction in overall house building targets, a cross-council, county-wide strategy and an infrastructure first approach.

The Green group proposed an amendment to emphasise the need for truly affordable and social housing and to broaden the infrastructure-first approach to include physical (e.g. transport, health facilities) and social (e.g. community hubs) infrastructure. An additional amendment was also tabled by the Lib Dems. Both were accepted as friendly and the motion passed unanimously.

The second motion concerned the disproportionately high suicide rates among men in Gloucestershire and called for greater support and preventative strategies. The third motion concerned fairer funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) education, following the Government's recently published [White Paper](#). Both motions also passed unanimously.

Links to the full motions can be found [here](#), with a full recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Cabinet

Two key decisions were discussed during this month's GCC meeting of the Cabinet. A recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

- Tailored Learning and Adult Skills Programme for 2026/2027

Cabinet resolved to delegated authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to enter into a funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) for the purpose of funding the delivery of Tailored Learning and the Adult Skills Programme during the 2026-2027 academic year and then to procure and award a number of contracts for the provision of adult learning services.

- Allocation of Substance Use Grant Funding (Public Health Grant) 2026

Cabinet approved the allocation of the ringfenced substance use element of the Public Health Grant (issued by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities) for the period 2026–2029, enabling the continuation and enhancement of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services in Gloucestershire in line with national grant conditions and local priorities.

County News

[County council's new supported lodgings service receives Ofsted registration](#)

Gloucestershire County Council is looking for hosts for its new supported lodgings service after receiving Ofsted registration.

Green councillors also visited the Gloucester [Nightstop](#) centre, a UK-wide network of same-night emergency accommodation services that support young people at risk of homelessness. Nightstop is continually looking for new hosts, so do share with your networks. More information can be found [here](#)

[Three county council children's homes rated 'Good' by Ofsted](#)

Three children's homes run by Gloucestershire County Council have been rated as 'Good' by Ofsted following recent inspections.

[New A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve Cycleway to officially open](#)

Gloucestershire County Council is inviting residents to celebrate the official opening of the new A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve Cycleway at a free, drop-in event.

[Improved road safety as new traffic enforcement measures set to go live](#)

Residents across Gloucestershire will benefit from improved road safety and reduced congestion as new powers to enforce moving traffic offences are introduced at 15 locations across the county.

[New report highlights how housing shapes health in Gloucestershire](#)

A new report from Gloucestershire County Council shows that the quality, cost and security of our homes have a major impact on people's health and wellbeing across the county.

Consultations

[Have your say on the future of SEND in Gloucestershire](#)

Gloucestershire County Council wants to hear your views on the future of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision for children and young people.

[Have your say on the future of transport in Gloucestershire](#)

People in Gloucestershire are being invited to help shape the future of transport across the county.

Library Challenge 2026

Gloucestershire Libraries Library Challenge 2026 is nearly here!

The Library Challenge will be running in July and helps children stay connected to reading over the school holidays, when literacy levels can often dip.

The challenge is simple, free and open to all children through their local library. Children sign up, borrow books, complete fun tasks and work towards Bronze, Silver and Gold awards — all designed to keep reading enjoyable and help families visit libraries regularly.

This year's theme is Tales Through Time, celebrating history, imagination and discovery. Each library will bring the theme to life in its own way, with eye-catching displays and activities throughout the summer holidays.

Library staff will be taking the message into schools with around 100 assemblies planned before summer, alongside online resources and in-library promotion.

But Gloucestershire Libraries are also asking councillors (at all levels) to get behind the campaign: Please encourage schools in your area to take part, celebrate the value of libraries, and help us raise the profile of reading across Gloucestershire.

Please do get involved on social media too: visit your local library, take a selfie, and share it alongside our campaign content to help spread the message further. A visible show of support from councillors will make a real difference!

Greener Gloucestershire News

NEW Library of Things!

Gloucestershire Libraries offer more than books! On Tuesday 5 May, [The Library of Things](#) launched at two new locations: Quedgeley Library and Up Hatherley Library. These two new locations are an addition to our first Library of Things in Charlton Kings Library. Last year, from this one location alone:

 482 items were loaned

 16.74 tonnes of Co2e were avoided

 £53,490 was saved by our service users

If you're looking for tools or equipment for a one-off project or event, why buy when you can borrow?? It's FREE to join! Just make sure you're a [library member](#) so you can access the service.

Community climate change fund success stories

The third round of community climate change funding has now been completed and there have been some fantastic projects undertaken with the grant money. [Take a look at the case studies on the website](#) to see what impact the grants have had on local communities and their carbon footprints 🦶

Applications for the next round of projects have now closed with the successful projects to be announced shortly.

Cinderford & Ruspidge County Councillor Report May 2026

Cllr. Ray Donaghue.

Town Centre Regeneration – The Heritage Stones from the Highways budget that can be placed around Cinderford that will display the history is in process.

Public Transport – the 710 & 711 bus services are being stopped this month. GCC Transport Team held a public consultation event at CTC. Highways and FODDC Active Travel also attended. GCC stated that it was extremely well attended compared to some other areas. The Bus Station is next in line for a revamp and I will keep up to date on any developments. Please share my video and/or the consultation document on social media.

Youth ASB/Engagement –Awaiting SARA plan from the Police (overdue). Attended meetings on this matter – I hope to use some Grassroots Funding to help with activities. I have contacted GCC Children’s Services, OPCC, Youth Justice, Families First Gloucestershire Gateway Trust and explained our plan for activities and engagement. The Head of Children’s Services is trying to get some services to “run point” with us on this plan to utilise all of the resources available BUT with us (CTC, Traders, Families, Councillors) having a leading role.

Speedwatch – unfortunately I am still awaiting some new sites to be approved (Station St, St Whites Rd, Valley Rd) and awaiting training for volunteers. All are welcome! GCC have pulled funding for this but existing schemes like ours can continue.

I’ve asked for a traffic survey in part to potentially support traffic calming measures in Steam Mills and Cinderford.

Revelopment - Graham and I have a meeting with Keith Chaplin and Jacqui Wright to discuss the issues Brownfield Regeneration Grants for some of the long-term derelict sites in Cinderford in June.

We also attended a meeting set up by Catherine Lines and Julian Tooke to input ideas for a plan for Cinderford. This led to the meeting about Brownfield Regeneration grants and also a suggestion of what GCC services could be placed in the town, one idea floated was the Library coming to the town (this is obviously just an idea) but I will meet with David Owen (Director of Economy & Environment) to discuss ideas.

There have been lots of applications for the fund County Councillors can access and many have been approved or are on the way. These include children’s park play furniture, outdoor gym equipment, walking groups, youth clubs, sensory projects and office IT equipment.

I have continued to have regular meetings with Police and I the next meeting is the 19th – of June. Please pass on to me any issues you wish to bring up. Other work with the Police & Trading Standards is – trying to arrange a meeting about alleged illegal car repair and sales work, alleged illegal cigarette shops, ASB in Rowandene, Youth ASB (SARA plan).

I am invited to the Countywide Community Drugs Partnership in June. This will complement the work I am trying to do on rural substance misuse support.

We have Neighbourhood Watch meeting on the 8th of June. Although the last meeting wasn’t well attended, there were some concerns that we are trying to address already. The FB has around 500 members so that’s a good start.

Other constituent work includes highways, planning and policing issues. That includes – Working on flooding issues in Valley Rd and Albion Rd. Work has started in Valley Rd (now awaiting a couple of quotes before the second stage can be completed) and the services involved have agreed to get a survey done on the flood drainage system in Albion Rd/Springfield Drive. I will know more after a June 17th meeting.

Meetings with – Active Travel Reps.

Set up meeting regarding Forest High which has brought us some new information as shared previously. Looking into getting figures/numbers for speed cameras/mobile vans and how many people they have caught speeding for Cinderford & the Forest.

Trying to arrange a meeting with Forest Traffic Data Officer.

Requesting to find out who the School Crossing Patrol Officer for my area to speak to them/discuss issues or visit Steam Mills & St Whites School.

I am hoping to go through the Compass data for Cinderford at some stage.

Streetworks Wardens – I have asked if it's possible, we join or be considered for Cinderford and the Forest.

I am seconding a Highways motion for - Introduction of Local Highways Champions to Support Minor Works Across the County.

I am moving my Councillor drop in time to 4pm – 6pm on the second Tuesday of each month in order to try and give more of an opportunity for people who work standard hours to attend.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

News Briefing for Town, Borough and Parish Councils

May 2026

Summary

This May 2026 news briefing outlines key operational updates, policy developments, and community initiatives from Gloucestershire County Council.

Key highlights include:

- Enforcement action against illegal tobacco sales
 - Opening of the A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve cycleway
 - Introduction of new ANPR traffic enforcement from June
 - Positive Ofsted ratings for children's homes
 - Long-term funding for drug and alcohol recovery services
 - Public health findings on housing and wellbeing
 - Expansion of free school meals through automation
 - Consultation on a new SEND strategy (2026–2031)
 - Increased support for kinship carers
-

1. Largest Ever Seizure of Illegal Tobacco

Gloucestershire Trading Standards achieved a major enforcement success through intelligence-led operations targeting the illegal tobacco trade.

A sophisticated supplier attempted to evade tax duties using false identification to lease storage space, resulting in a successful prosecution.

Key points:

- Over 50,000 packets of cigarettes and 500 pouches of tobacco seized.
- Offender sentenced to 28 months custody
- £429,498 in duty evaded.

Relevance to local councils:

Please report intelligence on illegal tobacco sales to Trading Standards on 01452 426060.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/largest-ever-seizure-of-illegal-tobacco-by-gloucestershire-trading-standards/>

2. A435 Cycleway Official Opening

The A435 cycleway between Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve has now been completed, providing a continuous and safe route for cyclists and pedestrians.

Key points:

- Official opening marks completion of the full route
 - Community celebration held on 22 May
 - Supports active travel and reduces congestion.
-

Relevance to local councils:

A strong example of sustainable transport and infrastructure investment.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/major-projects-list/a435-improvement-schemes/latest-news/>

3. New Traffic Enforcement Measures

The council is introducing ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras to improve road safety and reduce congestion.

Key points:

- Goes live 1 June 2026
- Covers 15 locations.
- Six-month warning period before fines
- Revenue reinvested into transport network

Relevance to local councils:

May affect local traffic patterns and resident journeys.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/improved-road-safety-as-new-traffic-enforcement-measures-set-to-go-live/>

4. Children's Homes Rated 'Good' by Ofsted

Recent inspections have confirmed high standards across council-run children's homes.

Key points:

- Three homes rated 'Good'.
- Positive feedback on staff and care environments
- Strong evidence of children's progress

Relevance to local councils:

Reassurance of quality care for vulnerable children.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/three-county-council-children-s-homes-rated-good-by-ofsted/>

5. Continued Funding for Drug and Alcohol Services

The council has secured funding for addiction recovery services through to 2029.

Key points:

- £5.9 million investment
- Covers youth and adult support services.
- Includes employment support for recovery.

Relevance to local councils:

Essential for community safety and reducing pressure on services.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/county-council-confirms-continued-funding-for-drug-and-alcohol-services/>

6. Public Health Report: 'Home is Where Our Health Is'

The Director of Public Health highlights the major impact housing has on wellbeing.

Key points:

- Housing quality, security, and affordability are critical.
- Strong link to physical and mental health
- Calls for health-focused planning policies.

Relevance to local councils:

Important for planning and tackling health inequalities.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/new-report-highlights-how-housing-shapes-health-in-gloucestershire/>

7. Automated Free School Meals Enrolment

A new automated system is increasing uptake of free school meals.

Key points:

- 591 additional children enrolled.
- £1.6 million extra funding for schools
- Removes barriers and simplifies access.

Relevance to local councils:

Support by raising awareness among eligible families.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/hundreds-more-gloucestershire-children-now-receiving-free-school-meals/>

8. Consultation: SEND Sufficiency Strategy (2026–2031)

A public consultation is underway on the future of SEND provision.

Key points:

- Focus on increasing local specialist places.
- Aims to improve outcomes for children with SEND.
- Deadline: 23 June 2026

Relevance to local councils:

Encourage feedback from parents, schools, and professionals.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gcc-news/news-may-2026/have-your-say-on-the-future-of-send-in-gloucestershire/>

9. Kinship Carers Engagement

The ‘Kinship Voices’ event gathered insight from carers raising relatives’ children.

Key points:

- Direct engagement with councillors
- Identifies financial and support challenges.
- Feedback will inform future policy.

Relevance to local councils:

Improves understanding of kinship care needs.

Link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/kinship-voices-listening-to-kinship-carers/>

New civic and committee appointments confirmed for 2026/27

At the Annual General Meeting of Council, councillors confirmed the civic roles and committee appointments for the 2026/27 civic year.

These appointments set the political and governance arrangements for the year ahead and ensure the continued operation of the Council's decision-making and scrutiny functions.

Civic roles

- **Chair of Council:** Councillor Di Martin
- **Vice-Chair of Council:** Councillor Harry Ives

Appointments to committees were made at the same meeting and are available on the council's website [Councillors and committees - Forest of Dean District Council](#)

2026/2027 Community Grants are open for application

Forest of Dean District Council has opened applications for its 2026/2027 Community Grants Fund, inviting not-for-profit voluntary and community groups to apply for financial support that strengthens local connections and empowers residents across the district.

A total of £52,500 is available for 2026/2027. Constituted groups may apply for one-off grants of up to £3,000, while non-constituted groups may apply for one-off grants of up to £500. Closing date is Friday 10 July, 2026 by 4 pm.

Key priorities for funding for 2026/2027 include those that support, strengthen, and empower communities to support each other. This may include initiatives such as food-sharing activities, community growing schemes, as well as projects that help to reduce social isolation and enable and establish inclusive activities.

Full details, including eligibility criteria, guidance notes and information on support events, are available on the District Council website: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/communities-health-and-leisure/community-grants-and-funding/>

A fresh start for Five Acres as construction officially begins

Residents will soon see the new community facility at Five Acres begin to take shape, with construction work now officially underway on phase one of the project.

Phase one of construction includes soft play, party rooms, power-assisted exercise rooms, group exercise space, a 53-station gym and café. The former Speedwell Building will also be repurposed to create new office and community spaces, along with an outreach space for Hartpury University's Aspiration Centre. Outside, there will be new car parking and secure cycle parking.

Phase two will deliver a 3G artificial pitch suitable for rugby and football, along with floodlights and a dedicated spectator zone. This addition has been made possible thanks to a successful funding bid to the Football Foundation in January 2025.

For further information on the future vision for Five

Acres, please visit: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/regeneration/five-acres-redevelopment-site/>

Forest of Dean continues journey toward UNESCO Biosphere designation

The Forest of Dean District is continuing its journey towards becoming the UK's eighth designated UNESCO Biosphere - a positive step focused on celebrating the area's people, place, and proud working landscape. An initial nomination form has now been submitted to the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee for consideration. This represents the first stage of a longer process and does not result in any designation at this point. If the nomination is invited to progress, a full application would follow in September, before entering a formal international review process.

UNESCO Biosphere designation is best understood as a badge of recognition, not a rulebook to follow. It is an internationally recognised way of highlighting what makes the Forest of Dean District distinctive, helping to raise awareness, attract positive attention, and support the area's long term future. To help ensure residents, businesses, and stakeholders have access to clear, accurate, and up to date information, a detailed FAQs section is available online, alongside information about the journey so far and what each stage of the process involves. Frequently Ask Questions (FAQs) providing clear information on a wide range of common questions can be found here: www.fdean.gov.uk/biosphere-faqs At the last council meeting, it was decided that consultation would be extended for another six months to make sure all interested groups were consulted.