



Tatworth and Forton Parish Council Newsletter March 2025

Contents: Parish Survey, Flooding, Amenities, Parish Council, Response to the article in the Drift, Dates for your Diary, Parish Finances.

Hello, Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025 for the residents of Tatworth and Forton Parish.

The weather has improved hopefully spring is not far off, it is lovely to see the daffodils lowering, planted by the Parish Council over recent years.

Parish Survey

What do you think about Tatworth and Forton? What would you like to see happening here going forward?

The Parish Council aims to represent majority points of view in our community, but we really want to know what these points of view actually are. For this reason, we are organising a short parish survey.

It just takes a few minutes to complete online, or if you prefer, you can use a paper version. We really want to get a good cross-section of opinion, and so we are inviting everyone over the age of 14 to let us know what they think.

How does it work? If you live in Tatworth, go to www.tatworthopinions.co.uk if you're in Forton it's www.fortonopinions.co.uk (same survey but it's useful to distinguish between the two localities). Alternatively use the QR codes below. If you prefer the paper version, please either email admin@tatworthandfortonparish.org.uk or leave message on 01460 220063 with address. We will be publishing a summary of the key findings. Don't delay, let us know what you think now. We look forward to hearing from you.



Tatworth



Forton

Flooding



Lower Coombes



Forton Brook

It has been a busy couple of months with the most recent flood incident effecting members of the parish. Since the most recent flood we have now got the flood wardens onto a **whatsapp group**, and they are getting keys to enable them access to the resilience shed and have the code to use the equipment when needed. In addition, some of the wardens and myself attended the resilience training at Neroche Hall on 26.2.25 to update our preparedness for emergencies. Sue Adams, Les Mattey and myself also attended the Flood meeting at the Shrubbery on 13.02.2025 with members of Somerset Council, Highways and SRA including Jimmy Divall Head of the Climate and Natural Environment Department, Vicky Farwig the Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy Manager at Wessex Water and James Grischeff from the Somerset Wildlife Trust. I was able to speak to the meeting about the issues of dangerous levels coming down Forton Brook into Forton and Tatworth, particularly Lower Coombes and I am hoping to have a meeting with James D, Vicky and James G to discuss a strategy to slow the flow with other Parish Council members. I attended the Flood recovery drop in at the Guildhall on 26.2.25 to discuss the problems of the volume and rate of water reaching the Forton Brook and water flows from Parrocks Lodge across the road into Tatworth not being picked up by the bund that was presumably put there years ago to address this issue. Rick Chubb and I did a site visit the other week near Parrocks Lodge and it was clear that the bund had not filled and the water had just poured down the road through Houses Lane, Waterlake Rd, Tatworth Street, Loveridge Lane etc. Please report any flooding however minor, the Council needs evidence to build a case for more works. Report on form that can be found at <https://fort-somerset.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk> **If you don't report the council will presume there is not a problem and it won't get fixed.**

Kate Patay



Pictures of the Parish Wassail.

Amenities

The last amenities committee meeting was on the 23rd January 2025 at Forton Community Hall where one keen member of the public attended and made some excellent contributions.

Jubilee Field

Despite the winter conditions in January the first Parish Wassail was held in our orchard which was appreciated by all who came. The path from School Lane was illuminated by flaming candles and we gathered near the jubilee beacon that lit the proceedings with a warm glow. Everyone joined in the fun with a procession around the orchard led by our two young Wassail Princesses. Many of us making as much noise as possible with saucepan lids, drums, whistles amongst the instruments to chase away the evil influences that may harm the fruit. With some enthusiastic and the careful placement of toasted bread high in the trees the good spirits were encouraged to bless the trees. Some mulled cider helped to keep the cold away and lubricate the singing voices. The children of all ages had a great time and our thanks goes out to everyone who supported this lovely event, that we hope will become an annual Parish Wassail. The sum of £50 was raised and donated to a new local charity "Pregnancy Associated Osteoporosis UK" (PAOUK).

This invaluable amenity for us all has suffered from the storm winds and winter rain with many trees also damaged by deer chewing the bark at the base of the trees. This is so bad that several are unlikely to survive. Other trees have been blown over by the wind and need urgent support and maintenance including pruning. We will try and protect the remainder of the trees as soon as possible with the help of volunteers. Anyone who would like to help with the orchard management is asked to give their contact details to the Parish Clerk.

More work continues and the management of this facility remains a priority, the whole area of the Jubilee Fields should develop into a beautiful site with specimen native oak, sweet chestnut, copper beech and wild cherry trees in the park field with wild flowers and benches to sit and enjoy this special parish amenity. The Sandringham Royal Oak is to have a commemorative plaque listing details.

Allotments

The allotment entrance gate is difficult with a new boggy area that has developed. The council have approved some work to improve this and requested the completion within this month. Allotment holders have provided a number of ideas for improvements that could be made to this very important and well supported parish amenity. Additional tenanted plots would also make the improvements easier. With the very reasonable rents, the council are pleased with the recent demand with 4 new plots taken and a further 2 in process. The council look forward to working closely with representatives of the allotment holders. Anyone interested in taking up an allotment should apply to the Parish Clerk to have their names added to the list.

Shelters, Bins, notice boards and Seats.

All our bus shelters are kept clean and maintained by the parish.

Damage to the bench at Two Ash has been repaired. Additional benches can be installed in memory of members of the parish, we are particularly interested in placing a bench in the top field, details of which can be obtained from the Parish Clerk.

The restoration and maintenance of existing community notice boards is planned, the new installation of a restored community notice board at the entrance to the Jubilee fields is complete.

Coombses Pond

The winter is not the best time to work and maintain the pond area. There are many improvements planned but limited finances force slow progress. The surface is badly contaminated with duckweed and has been for some time. This weed stops light from penetrating the water and effectively kills all other life. The Iris growth has also taken over a huge part and must also be controlled. Dead wood and trees overhanging the water must be removed as well as the trees now at a dangerous angle due to wind damage. The pond perimeter banks need to be made secure before restoring the path. Please go and explore the pond but remember great care must still be taken by anyone in this wild area with deep water and other hazards. The access and perimeter path will be kept clear of undesirable vegetation and log piles. The Amenities committee are working with the excellent suggestion for a plan to prepare the entrance and the near pond bank for limited access.

All owners of land bordering on watercourses have critical responsibilities. A high priority is given to the clearance and management of the leat bordering the pond and the banks of the brook to ensure the unrestricted flow of storm water. Contractors will be found to begin this work but we need volunteers to maintain it.

Insurance limitations restrict working party activities using power tools. Only those who carry a recognised certificate in using power tools in a public area will be permitted to volunteer in this way.

Parish Green Verges and Solar Lighting

Hundreds of daffodil bulbs were planted by volunteers in Forton and Tatworth, look out for flowing first sign of spring.

The new solar lighting will be repaired under warranty very soon we hope. This is the footpath alongside the Forton Brook from Waterlake Road near Perry Street Club to Holway.

Les Matthey

Parish Council

In defence of the Parish Council

There has been a fair bit of criticism of the Council recently, and maybe it's time for a response.

People who sit on Tatworth and Forton Parish Council are all volunteers: no pay, no perks. Ideally, we would all be elected by residents in the parish, and whenever a vacancy arises, the community can require an election. In practice, however, we have to put out feelers to secure even one candidate for each vacancy, in which case that person is interviewed by the existing Council members and 'co-opted', i.e. invited to join.

Due to the resignation last year of David Peake and Christine Heal the Council have co-opted Rebecca Jacobs and Christopher Doel as replacement Councillors.

The next Parish Council election for all 12 Councillors will be in May, 2027. Should we have more than 12 applicants, there will be an election, if not, all applicants are automatically appointed.

Names and contact details of current Councillors may be found on the Council website; we may be approached at any time. The Council also employs a part-time Clerk, who may be contacted via email or in person on Tuesdays or Friday mornings at the Memorial Hall. We are not 'faceless bureaucrats!'

We have 12 full council meetings a year, usually on the first Thursday of every month, at 7pm in the Memorial Hall. In addition to attending these meetings, most councillors serve on two of four committees, which also meet regularly. These are amenities, planning, finance and cemetery.

All our meetings are advertised, with agendas, a good few days in advance, and are open to the public, who are given the opportunity to speak. In practice, very few members of the public, if any, do generally attend. We wish there were more!

Most Councillors also do a lot of unpaid work around the community in connection with their roles. At different times of the year, special events take up a fair bit of time. One of these is the annual Christmas lunch, offered to as many of our elderly residents as we can realistically cater for. Councillors may be supported by their spouses, who also put in a lot of hours.

The Council does try to publicise its activities and to encourage participation on the part of residents. We produce a newsletter four times a year, we have a website and a Facebook page. We are also carrying out a survey to get a better feel for what our residents want to see.

We probably don't get everything right, but we do try.

Response to Article in the Drift

We appreciate the feedback shared in The Drift regarding the Christmas Lunch for residents living alone.

We understand that this event is valued by many in our community, and we would like to address some of the concerns raised.

The Christmas Lunch is an initiative fully provided and funded by the Parish Council.

As with any event, there are logistical limitations, which meant that numbers had to be restricted. We would like to clarify that the Parish Council also asks residents to put their names forward for attendance advertised within Facebook and word of mouth. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and we regret that some residents were disappointed.

We would like to clarify that personal financial information, such as bank statements, was not required to determine eligibility. The criteria are based on residency and living circumstances, with the aim of supporting elderly residents who may otherwise spend Christmas alone to provide companionship and festive cheer. Additionally, the physical card given to attendees is solely for meal choices and to record any food allergy requirements to ensure that dietary needs are met. It is not used for any other purpose.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many volunteers who give their time to make this event happen. Their dedication and effort play a crucial role in ensuring the lunch is a success and that attendees have an enjoyable experience.

We acknowledge the feedback and will take this into consideration when reviewing the event for 2025. Looking ahead to 2025, the Parish Council will review the event to determine whether it can continue in its current form and whether any adjustments can be made to improve accessibility.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 23rd March 10.30am Parish Community Litter Pick. Meet at Memorial Hall Car Park.

The Parish Council is supporting the “Great British Clean Up” campaign with our own litter pick.



Grabbers and Hi Vis will be supplied. Please attend to make Tatworth area a nicer place to live.

Monday 28th April 7.00 pm. Defibrillator Training

Delegates will learn how to operate a defibrillator and how to perform effective CPR. Funded by the Parish Council and restricted to 20 persons. To apply please email: clerk@tatworthandfortonparishcouncil.org.uk.

There are 7 Defibrillators in the Parish, Forton Community Hall, St Johns Church, Tatworth School (Daytime), Memorial Hall, Playing Fields, Perry St Club and Wheatons Transport Chard Junction.

Parish Finances

The Parish Council Costs cover:

Community – youth provision, newsletter, grants, defibrillators, Christmas meal and remembrance.

Public facilities – ground maintenance, but shelters, seats, cemetery.

Running expenses – staff and other costs, insurance, audit fees, website.

Our 2024- 25 spending against budget has been analysed and it forecast that we may have a small surplus. Over the last few months the budget for 2025 -26 was formulated and approved by Full Council. As anticipated, Somerset Council will be starting to charge us for services that previously they provided for free. We are also looking to maintain and improve the amenities in the Parish, both for Tatworth and Forton, but these costs are always increasing. The Council has approved an increase in the precept (that is the element of your Council Tax that the Parish Council receives) which means for a band D property and extra £5.71 a year, a much smaller increase than 12 months ago.

Tatworth School Christmas Tree donated by the Parish Council.



Dates of meetings: 3rd April, 1st May and 5th June 2025.

Residents are very welcome to attend these meetings and have an opportunity to speak before the meeting about any matter not on the agenda. If you have any questions or feedback arising from this newsletter, please send them to admin@tatworthandfortonparishcouncil.org.uk