

MIDDLETON & SMERRILL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on 11th March 2026

Attendance: Councillor Dianne Jeremy (Chair)

Other Electors of the Parish: Lisa Bingham, Paul Jeremy, Pat Musgrave, Jamie Wigley,

Non-electors: Matthew Lovell (Parish Clerk), PCSO Anthony Boswell & DDDCllr Laura Mellstrom

1. Appointment of Clerk to the Meeting.

The meeting appointed the Parish Clerk to take the minutes.

2. Apologies – Cllr Helen Brocklehurst, Mark and Donna Sealey

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th March 2025

The minutes were confirmed and signed

4. Chair's Report

Middleton and Smerrill Parish Council was formally established in 1976, so this is its 50th anniversary. It is interesting to reflect how many of the issues that were challenges to the first parish council are still current and relevant today.

Council has held six regular meetings this year to consider planning applications and other issues. Reports from PCSO Anthony Boswell and DDDC councillor Laura Mellstrom and updates from representatives from the Middleton Village Hall committee have also been received.

Roads and drainage -This year the spring and summer drought, followed by winter storms and persistent rain, have caused several problems. The river in the Dale had almost completely dried up in May when the well-dressing boards needed to be soaked in the sheep-wash; frequent rain caused continuing problems with potholes and drains, and falling branches have been an additional hazard. The gully in the triangle at the top of the Dale had not previously been included on the DCC's mapping system but this has now been addressed. Potholes are regularly reported on the Derbyshire County Council portal <https://myderbyshire.gov.uk/>

The grit bins were replenished this year before the snow and additional supplies have been purchased. The damaged seat in the wall at Roughwood Hollow was repaired by the County Council FS-Case-641015726, but the metal support bar which was removed during the rebuilding work has yet to be replaced.

Toilets - Middleton's public toilets have been open from April 2025 for a trial period of twelve months supported by the Derbyshire Dales District Council. Footfall is being monitored during this time to assess the need for all year-round opening. It is hoped that this experiment will result in a positive outcome as having the toilets open for twelve months of the year will restore the legal agreement made in 1994, which was a commitment by the DDDC to maintain the toilets open all year. It was requested last spring that a 'Toilets' sign would be supplied to the village by the Derbyshire County Council to make visitors more aware of their location, but this still has not arrived. Increasing visitor numbers make public toilets an urgent priority.

Bateman's Tomb - In March 2025 a grant was received from the Peak District National Park Foundation Community scheme to improve the approach to Bateman's Tomb by planting shrubs and some hedging plants to create a 'biodiversity corridor'. The Climate

and Nature group has had discussions with park rangers to plan the most appropriate planting and this project will enhance support for pollinators and provide a more attractive pathway for visitors as parts of the existing path are currently overgrown with brambles. The tomb is regularly inspected and the area inside the fence cleared of debris and any weeds. Work to clear some of the area for planting will commence once the weather improves. The path to the tomb is also the site for the memorial trees which were planted to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and King Charles III's Coronation.

Memorial Playground - The ROSPA Playground Inspection Report which was received in May found that the Multiplay equipment will need to be repaired and upgraded. The cost of this work will be £3,800 and the parish council has been contacting some local businesses to ask for their support. Derbyshire Aggregates has contributed £1,000 and Dowlow has also granted £1,000 for the project. This support is much appreciated. The playground is extremely popular and the Bateman board by the gate is very well used by visitors throughout the year. A notable addition to the playground shed this year is an illuminated 'MIDDLETON' sign donated by Charles Monkhouse. The sign lit up the playground as part of the Christmas lights in the Square and will be used in other events during the year.

VJ Day - On 31st of August the parish council used funds provided by the DDDC to host a community event in the village hall to celebrate the anniversary of VJ day (15th August 1945). Residents were invited to an afternoon tea and a display of information and photographs accompanied by a talk by Paul Jeremy that gave details of the men from Middleton and Smerrill, and the Australian air crew who all lost their lives in World War II. The fallen were also commemorated in a church service at St Michael and All Angels' church on September 7th. A report of this event will be available on the parish council website.

Church Garden - The Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Grant for the garden at St Michael and All Angels' Church was used to fund plants, trees, hedgehog shelters and feeders and a seat for residents and visitors. The money was all spent last year and a final report submitted, but the project continues. An information board sponsored by Youlgreave Garage has been installed and seasonal planting has continued. The church wildlife garden contains native plants all chosen to help pollinators and to provide an attractive environment.

Caring for Middleton's public spaces - The Parish Council's Climate and Nature Group volunteers continue to meet weekly to maintain and develop all the public spaces in the village. These include the playground, picnic and herb garden, scented garden, 'triangle' at the top of the Dale, the village planter, church garden and the memorial garden. This year the memorial garden adjacent to the playground has been extended to include three new 'Peace' rose bushes, planted as part of the VJ memorial tribute. Moss growth in the playground is a continuing challenge – a sweep by the gardener from Middleton Hall in December was effective and it is hoped that it will be repeated before the village market. There is a considerable amount of effort needed to keep all these areas well maintained – the dedication of the volunteers is appreciated by residents and visitors who frequently comment on the attractive environment in the village.

The Community Greenhouse - it is now fully used throughout the year. In spring it is full of seedlings and plants being prepared for the Village Market plant stall, then in June it is residents' opportunity to grow their own tomatoes and other crops throughout the summer. In the autumn the greenhouse is cleaned and disinfected for the next season, and even during the winter it is used to house some plants that would not otherwise have survived outside. The area behind the village hall, adjacent to the greenhouse, now has two composters and three large homemade tables to accommodate increasing numbers of trays of flower and vegetable plants for sale in May. The storage units in the renovated toilet block are fully used to store community equipment and it is a real advantage to have these weatherproof storage areas.

The annual litter pick is held in March each year before the vegetation in the grass verges is too overgrown. Litter is not a great problem in the village thanks to ongoing vigilance of residents and this year four bags were collected.

Other initiatives - In addition to regular local meetings, parish councillors have attended DCC meetings about local government reorganisation and Peak District National Park Authority meetings about the Local Plan Review. Responses to the PDNPA plans have been submitted on behalf of the parish council and there will be a further opportunity to comment on the updated plans later in the year. Parish council members were also invited to attend a presentation by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on re-introducing wild beavers to Derbyshire. This was followed by a Derbyshire Association of Local Councils' online event and full details of this consultation are included on a display in the village hall which will remain until the summer.

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Parish Council, the Climate and Nature Group and members of the Village Hall Committee for all their work and dedication throughout the year. They have contributed their energy, time, ideas, support, generous donations and much more. The community benefits greatly from the combined efforts of these volunteers.

Thanks also to Councillor Laura Mellstrom for her continuing support on important issues in the parish during a very busy year.

Council is also grateful to PCSO Anthony Boswell for his attendance to meetings and regular updates on local matters and priorities.

The financial support received from PDNP Foundation Community Scheme for the Bateman's tomb biodiversity corridor project and the generous donations from Derbyshire Aggregates and Dowlow for the Multiplay in the playground, are greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank Parish Clerk Matthew Lovell for his work in providing advice and support to ensure that the business of the parish council proceeds efficiently. His experience, expertise and knowledge are invaluable and very much appreciated.

Dianne Jeremy, Chair.

Thanks were expressed for the major efforts the chair puts into all the projects and groups in the village as well as the Parish Council

5. District Councillor – Laura Mellstrom noted that 6 months data on 2nd home taxation shows a decrease of 2nd homes by 10% with only a minor increase in holiday lets so more are returning to full time occupancy. Central Government is prioritising Urban deprivation so DDDC grants are at their lowest and the 2.99% cap will need reserves using to maintain the District Council for its last 2 years of existence. DDDC elections are due in 2027 for a 1 year term which is also supposed to be the time the Unitary authority is elected to shadow districts for a year before taking over in 2028 under its new ward system so could cause confusion. The Bakewell banking hub is proving a success and our Ward has seen the affordable homes planning application for an extension of Hannah Bowman Way in Youlgrave granted.
6. County Councillor Nick Adams – did not attend.
7. Police – PCSO Boswell report noted 1 crime of possession in the last 2 months related to a prior offence but in the wider Police Neighbourhood incidents of a charity door-to-door collection not using clear identification and visiting after dark led the police to ask them to leave and aggressive tarmac laying and charging incidents with false claims to be from Highways warnings not to engage with. The Priorities system now requests that Parish Councils also submit their village priorities to ensure visits by officers on the 3 monthly campaigns. Typical requests are for Anti-social behaviour, drug dealing or motorbike nuisance. The local team are keen to be invited to coffee mornings and village events to listen to parishioner views – the meeting noted the forthcoming Market and Middleton Rocks dates.
8. To consider any other Parish matter that may be brought forward by the Council or local government electors.

A parishioner raised the lack of signage for the toilet block and noted the lack of action by the County Council to the Parish request for a sign at this meeting last year. DCC officers still regard the block as seasonal despite being informed that DDDC has opened them year round again with footfall monitors to check usage. Many parishioners are asked if there are toilets and those who visit more regularly unaware that they are open which a sign would avert. Defacating and urinating outside by those unaware who can't make it to the nearest loos in Youlgrave due to the inadequate signage is anti-social behaviour. The lack of a visit by the new County Councillor all year and his inaction despite the repeated requests, was deplored by parishioners present.

The District Councillor will feed back to DDDC officers who maintain and clean the block that DCC need reminding its open 365 days and also asked to extend the monitoring period for a further year to enable DCC to install a sign and the footfall thereafter monitored. Our PCSO noted that a What 3 Words notice on our board would assist pinpoint the exact location off the square.

The meeting ended at 8:05 pm