

## WIGGENHALL ST GERMANS PARISH

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11th MAY 2026 at 7.00PM, CONVENED IN THE MEMORIAL HALL, WIGGENHALL ST GERMANS.

#### **Present:**

Parish Councillors: David Rust (Chair), Robert Ward, Scilla Ash, Tony Park, David Johnson, David Harrison, Julie Massen and Ben Taylor-Wright.

Parish Clerk: Mike Inder.

Borough & County Councillors: None.

Apologies: Cllrs Paul Bridges.

Public: 6.

1. **Introduction and Welcome:** Cllr Rust welcomed everyone present.
2. **Selection of Chairman:** Cllr Rust, invited nominations to Chair the Meeting, there were no nominations or volunteers, so he offered to continue as Chair, and it was agreed.
3. **Apologies** were received as noted above with reports submitted in advance.
4. **Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 12th May 2025 were reviewed and Cllr Ash proposed them as true reflection, seconded by Cllr Harrison. Those present at the previous meeting agreed.
5. **Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council:**

#### **Acknowledgements**

My sincere thanks go to the following:-

My fellow Parish Councillors for their time, effort, enthusiasm and dedication, as individuals, and as a team. Bob Rawlings, who decided to step down as a Councillor last year, Bob has served our community for well over 45 years and it was an honour to present him with the Freedom of the Parish in recognition of his contributions.

Mike Inder, our Parish Clerk, another year however the last, as Mike has decided to step down from the role. Mike has helped, educated, informed and steered the Council through some challenging times and decisions.

Gemma, Claire, Emma, Chloe, David and Mike for pushing Project Play Park over the finish line and for arranging the opening celebrations.

James (GB Tree Services) for installing the white gates and donating woodchip to resurface the trod at Wiggenhall St. Marys

Borough and County Councillor Brian Long for his support and advice on a number of matters, and also his offer to fund the bollards on the corner of Lynn Road and School Road Parishioners who've attended our meetings providing valuable feedback.

#### **Highways, Road Safety and Public Rights of Way**

Recent data (full details available on the Council website) from our SAM2 speed awareness monitor have highlighted that vehicles are consistently exceeding the speed limit when leaving Wiggenhall St. Germans via Lynn Road and entering via Fitton Road.

The installation of the "White Gates" on Eau Brink Road would appear to have the desired effect of slowing the traffic in the vicinity of the Saint Germans Academy. A number of parishioners have noted a visual difference in vehicles approaching from the North. We will publish the data from the SAM2 monitor in due course to confirm the observations. A further set of gates has been installed at Lynn Road, Wiggenhall St. Germans.

The Council have submitted a further bid for funding to have gates erected on Lynn Road, Saddlebow and Fitton Road and Mill Road in Wiggenhall St. Germans

The Parish Council has worked with stakeholders to enable a sustainable method to keep the overgrown vegetation on the trod between Wiggenhall St. Germans and Wiggenhall St. Mary under control. Councillors have spread donated bark chipping along the trod to help improve the surface.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)

The Council continues to work with Borough Councillors and Norfolk County Council Highways to obtain signage to alert drivers to the dangers of the junction of Lynn Road, School Road and Fitton Road.

The installation of bollards and barriers at the junctions of Lynn Road and School Road, School Road and Sluice Road has been completed in an attempt to prevent anti-social driving in these areas.

### **Play Park Project**

The Play Park Project is now complete; the opening ceremony was well attended with a considerable number of children putting the new equipment to good use. We hope the new equipment will provide the younger members of our community with an exciting, adventurous and fun way to enjoy the great outdoors for years to come. We would also hope the whole community will embrace, respect and care for this new facility.

Councillors carried out a tidy up and trimmed back the perimeter hedge to increase the available space around the new equipment. The Parish Council have also installed a new litter bin in order to help everyone maintain the site in a clean and tidy condition.

### **Environment and Biodiversity**

The Wiggshall Woodland Creation Scheme has been completed with some 40,000 trees planted in the three sites and whilst the areas are currently closed to allow the saplings to settle in an Open Day is planned for later in the year. A number of children from St. Germans Academy together with individuals from Norfolk County Council, King's Lynn Borough Council, the subcontractors and the Parish Council attended the initial planting session with a further two public planting events in December and January. It is hoped to set up a "Friend of" group to help monitor the woodland and report any issues. An official opening event is planned for 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Fly tipping and litter have become a national news topic in recent weeks and following a suggestion from a parishioner at our recent Parish Council meeting the Council agreed to set up a litter picking group.

The dog waste bin on Sluice Road has been consistently filled with inappropriate general waste, this could lead to the Parish Council being fined by the Borough Council, or even worse, the Borough Council could refuse to empty the bin. In order to try and resolve the issue the Parish Council, in conjunction with, and with the approval of, The Middle Level Commissioners, will be installing a new litter bin of the same size and design as the one installed at the Memorial Hall adjacent to the dog waste bin.

The Council have obtained funding to repaint the Surrey Street bus shelter, Councillors will start the work as soon as possible. It is hoped the Saint Germans Academy will provide an item of interest to be painted on the rear wall.

The Council contacted Freebridge Housing Association re the unkempt appearance of two properties, one on Lynn Road and one on Legge Place. Both properties have now had extensive work carried out to improve the visual appearance.

### **Parish Magazine goes digital**

The Parish Council is delighted to announce an important update to the way our community newsletter will be published and shared. In response to the evolving needs of our residents and to promote sustainable practices, all future editions of the newsletter will now be available primarily in digital format. However, we recognise that some parishioners may prefer to continue receiving a paper copy delivered to their home, if this is the case please contact our Parish Clerk to have your name and address added to the list.

6. **Reports from County and Borough Councillors:** none received.

7. **Reports from Local Organisations:** None.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)

## 8. **Public Forum:**

Fenland Waterski Club – members of the club made representation and sought support from the Parish Council regarding recent notice from the Environment Agency (EA) to terminate activities by the 31 March 2027. The Clerk received an email from the EA just prior to the meeting and provided an external briefing note (Annex A) which was read out.

The Club members gave their response and raised the following points:

- The Club has c145 members from across the region and is a valued community asset, not only with the sporting and social aspects but also in assisting with discouraging and reporting anti-social or dangerous behaviour on the waterway, e.g. fly tipping, bridge jumping and littering. Indeed, they have been engaging with a volunteer to provide educations and awareness of safety in and around waterways for the wider public and children.
- The Club has a proud 100% safety record for 50 years.
- The erosion that the Club highlighted to the EA and sought help with addressing is, as the EA have stated, due to the higher water levels in the last 5 years and the waterski-ing has not significantly added to that issue.
- The Pier safety that the EA states as a concern in their recent communications does not align with the regular reports provided by the EA representative that inspects the area, the last report was that there were no immediate concerns around the pier steps.
- The fact that a bye-law limiting speed to 7mph was introduced in 2010 concurrent with the implementation of 2010 the Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010 being made which in turn made the whole of the Relief Channel statutory navigation open for use by all water-users is highlighted as poorly communicated and inconsistent. The FWSC (and Sailing Club) being informed at the time is disputed and not evidenced by the EA, and at the Downham Market Bridge there are still signs stating that the waterway is not navigable beyond that point, the EA, despite invoicing the FWSC twice a year for £1,700 total for the duration of the lease have never contacted the FWSC to inform them of the bye-law nor sought to enforce the speed-limit of 7mph. Furthermore, the last mooring point is at the Heron Public House at Magdalen, although this was closed to the public following a spate of anti-social behaviour by local youths. Although the club have seen very occasional narrow boats, kayaks and paddle boards they usually turn round and head back shortly after passing. Moreover, the EA's notion that they would encourage more non-powered water use with kayakers and paddleboarders was remarked on as potentially even more hazardous should they be caught out by an un-notified release of fast running water from the gates.
- The Sailing Club that has a similar permit and has successfully challenged previous unfavourable proposed lease changes to their club's lease by the EA; it was pointed out that the Sailing Club have the backing and support of the national association affiliation for legal advice, something the FWSC does not have.
- It was clarified that the FWSC club has operated alongside other waterway users, including anglers, in a cooperative and friendly manner without complaint by any parties and that the safety of all on the waterway is paramount to the Club.
- The Club have been in contact with the MP Terry Jermy, and he has appointed a member of his team to look into this further, that course of action was encouraged as the most likely action to find a solution to allow them to continue their activity in the long term.
- A member of the public having quickly researched the topic queried whether the EA's own procedures for addressing a complaint had been done and provided the information on how to do so to the Club as the EA have not signposted them whilst issuing notice.

The Chair asked Cllrs whether they would support the Club by writing to the EA to express their support for the Club and to highlight the inconsistencies in the matter as communicated by both parties and ask that the EA review the Order made that has been retrospectively applied or at least make an exception to allow them to continue in the same way that has been acceptable for the last 16 years since the EA made the Order. Cllrs agreed unanimously and the Clerk will draft a letter for submission to the EA.

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9. **Meeting Closed** at 7.25pm

Signature: .....

Chairman .....

Date .....

Prepared by Mike Inder, Clerk to Wiggenhall St Germans Parish Council.

**Annex A**

OFFICIAL

**Fenland Waterski Club**  
**External Briefing note**  
**(May 2026)**

**Background**

The Fenland Waterski Club (FWSC) have occupied an area of the east bank of the Relief Channel belonging to the Environment Agency just to the north of Wiggenhall St Mary and have used the Relief Channel at this location for waterskiing since 1969.

At the time that the Club started waterskiing at this location, the Relief Channel was not part of statutory navigation. In 2010 the Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010 made the whole of the Relief Channel statutory navigation. This opened the channel up to use by all water-users.

**Issues**

Two issues are of primary importance in the Environment Agency's decision-making process and relate to the safety of both club members and other water-users. One relates to the speed of water-skiers and their boats, whilst the other is concerned with riverbank erosion.

With the introduction of the Environment Agency (Inland Waterways) Order 2010, new byelaws governing the Relief Channel came into force. These byelaws include a maximum speed limit of 7mph (6.1knots) however, water-skiers need to travel at significantly higher speeds than this. This means that the Club is operating in breach of the byelaws (due to excessive speed on the water) and the risk of collision between fast moving 'skiers and other water users is much increased.

Additionally, the club reported that the riverbank from which they operate is eroding. Investigation shows that this is due to high water flow conditions experienced in the Relief Channel over the past 5 years. These levels are some of the highest ever recorded on the Relief Channel and are likely to recur more frequently in future, influenced by the effects of a changing climate.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)

Whilst this riverbank erosion does not pose any present or future flood risk, there is a safety risk as the Club's landing stages will eventually be undermined and be unsafe to use. As this erosion at the site does not pose a flood risk, the Agency cannot justify the cost of repairing the bank

### **Alternative options**

The Environment Agency has spent time exploring every possible option that might allow the Club to continue operating, including exemptions or alternative permitting routes, and the potential for relocation. Unfortunately, none of the avenues we have reviewed can legally or safely support continued waterskiing on the Relief Channel.

### **Decision**

It is with considerable regret that the Environment Agency has made the difficult decision to terminate the Fenland Waterski Club's licence to use the site and adjacent stretch of the Relief Channel for waterskiing.

We will be issuing the Fenland Waterski Club with a Notice to Terminate the licence.

The Club must therefore cease all waterskiing operations on the Relief Channel by 31 March 2027.

We will work with the Club to make this process as manageable as possible under the circumstances and fully appreciate the impact of this decision.

### **Enquiries**

All enquiries should be addressed to Environment Agency Estates team via:

[AreaManagerCorrespondence.EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:AreaManagerCorrespondence.EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### **Calum Dow**

Engagement Specialist (Customers & Engagement Team)

Environment Agency | East Anglia Area (Great Ouse Catchment)

Brampton Office, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon PE28 4NE

Email: [areamanagercorrespondence.eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:areamanagercorrespondence.eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk)