



WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

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WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL **MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING** **Re: Forest of Dean Biosphere**

Number: EGM260416

Meeting Date: 16th April 2026
Meeting Time: 6pm
Location: The Meeting Room, Yorkley Community Centre

Present: Cllrs A Grant, B Freshwater, M Bennett, S Yeates, J Richmond, S Dunford,
A Batchelor and S Lewis.
J Miles (Clerk) and P Holland (Deputy Clerk)

PUBLIC FORUM – there was no public forum

260416	<u>Council Formal Business</u>	
260416.1	Declarations of Interest • Cllr Yeates declared he is a Heritage Expert and also a member of the Green Party • Cllr Lewis declared that his partner was the admin for the Facebook page on behalf of the Commoners Association.	
260416.2	Motion to exclude the public and press – Hold this meeting in closed session (in-camera) under the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following business to be discussed is considered to be of a confidential nature was discussed, Cllr Freshwater stated that there did not seem to be anything on the agenda which could not be seen by the public. Cllr Grant proposed keeping the meeting as an open forum , seconded by Cllr Richmond and agreed by resolution of the Council.	
260416.3	Forest of Dean Biosphere	
260416.3i	Cllr Grant spoke to what had been done on this subject up to date, including the fact that Cllrs had been meeting, outside of the normal	

Council Meetings, to discuss this subject as it was a fast-moving subject, with new information coming out in quick time frames. Cllr Freshwater spoke of the meetings being held by other organisations and the information which had been gleaned from these. He spoke of an observations document which had been produced by Cllrs Dunford, Freshwater, Lewis and Bennett, this had been circulated to all WDPC Cllrs by the Clerk. He then spoke of a meeting at which WDPC Cllrs had been approached to align themselves with a political party, further discussion was held on this. Cllr Dunford spoke to those present about the way things were going outside of West Dean and noted there were 2 real public driving forces at this time, the first being Stop or Pause the Biosphere Petition and the second being the Commoners. He felt that WDPC needed to be very strong in what we feel and what we suggest to our parishioners. He felt that we should work with the Commoners as we have a good relationship with them, but would not want to see WDPC's name along side theirs in the public sphere. Cllr Grant agreed that this was very wise as the Council needed to be seen to be A Political, and should therefore not align ourselves with any other organisation. Cllr Lewis noted that it was the methodology which was in question, not the question of being for or against the biosphere. Cllr Freshwater proposed that WDPC do not align themselves with any other organisation and if asked should make the statement that "WDPC do not align ourselves with anyone", seconded by Cllr Lewis and agreed by resolution of Council. Cllr Lewis made a statement on how difficult it was to delineate anti green and anti-biosphere as it was only the Green Party and some Labour Cllrs who were making decisions. Further discussion was held and it was agreed that it was the process which WDPC had an issue with, the lack of consultation and the speed with which the Biosphere Application was progressing. Discussion was held on the meaning of Biospheres, the zoning issues and what it meant for residents, businesses and local groups such as Freeminers and Commoners. Cllr Lewis mentioned that if WDPC's request for the Biosphere Application to be stopped was unsuccessful there was an Ombudsman Office to which WDPC could write. Cllr Grant then read out the proposals which had been put forward, Those being:

	1. West Dean Parish Council (WDPC) representing 10,000 residents and having the biggest geographic area of the Statutory Forest, have grave reservations with the opaque way the Biosphere is being progressed by Foret of Dean District Council (FODDC). To this end it is proposed that WDPC formally request FODDC to suspend, as a matter of urgency, the UNESCO Biosphere Application and engage in full and proper consultation with all landscape options explained and considered. After some discussion on what should be within the letter and to whom it should be copied Cllr Dunford proposed that a letter be written to FODDC as stated in proposal 1, seconded by Cllr Richmond and agreed by vote of 7 for with 1 abstention. 2. A proper Sub-Committee be formed from WDPC to further the Council's aims. The need for a new committee was discussed and it was agreed that a Working Group should be formed instead of a Sub-Committee, members of this working would be agreed at this meeting. Cllr Richmond proposed that a Biosphere Emergency Working Group be formed, which would report back to Full Council as and when required, with delegated authority to act on urgent matters, seconded by Cllr Dunford and agreed by vote of 7 for with 1 abstention. Members of the working group were elected as follows:- Cllr Freshwater – Chair Cllr Lewis – Vice Chair Cllr Bennett And Cllr Dunford. As with all Committees it was agreed that all Members of WDPC would be ex-officio members of this working group. It was agreed that Cllrs Dunford, Lewis, Bennett and Freshwater would meet at the Parish Office on 20.04.26 to complete the letter to FODDC. The meeting ended at 17.50	
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