

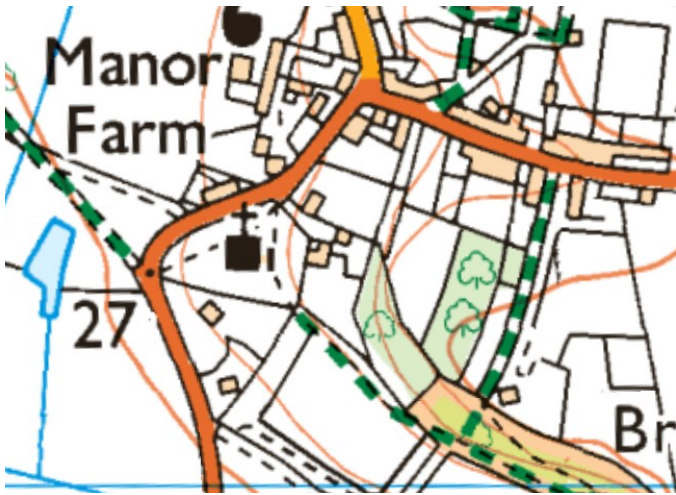
# Coddenham Parish Council Newsletter

A warm welcome from your Parish Council. Working for You. January 2025

Welcome to our newsletter which aims to keep you in touch with the work of the parish council so that everyone in the community feels involved and connected. There are contact details at the foot of this newsletter. Please do get in touch.

## Public Footpaths in the Churchyard

The official record of public footpaths shows that footpath No. 20 from Broomhill ends at the east entrance to the churchyard. This means that the triangle of paths across the churchyard are not public rights of way and permission to use them could be withdrawn. Although there is no suggestion of the church being closed, none of us has a crystal ball.



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To ensure that the public retains the right to walk the paths through the churchyard, a claim has been lodged with Suffolk County Council (SCC) to add these paths to the official record of public rights of way. Evidence has been gathered to demonstrate continuous unimpeded use by the public for many years. The oldest map that could be found clearly showing the paths was the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. SCC will explain how the claim will be progressed this month. It is likely that the paths will simply be added to the definitive map but, if there are objections, which seems very unlikely, there could be a public enquiry.

## 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)

The parish survey, conducted in 2022, asked for more local recycling for those items which are not collected kerbside. Having failed to convince Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) to install a recycling bin for 'small electricals' at The Coddenham Centre (TCC) – they are now trialling receptacles at seven other locations across the district – members of the parish council

decided to hold 3Rs events for residents to bring in items for onward recycling.

In 2024, we held three 3Rs Saturdays at TCC collecting: coffee pods, disposable batteries, corks, scrap metals, plastic plant pots, unneeded tools, tetra packs as well as small electricals. Many of those leaving items either do not drive or would find a trip to the local recycling sites, at best, inconvenient. Hopefully we have reduced the amount of refuse being 'black-binned' and lessened the number of individual trips to 'the tip'.

We attempted to theme our 3Rs Saturdays in 2024, something we intend to expand in 2025 with three themed 3Rs events at TCC. These are planned for Saturdays on 8 March (spring cleaning/de-cluttering), 3 May (seed/plant swap and sale and composting) and 1 November (food waste/planning for Christmas). Please do visit. There will be an opportunity for refreshments and to sit down and have a chat when dropping off items for recycling; helping Coddenham reduce its waste footprint, sociably.

In 2026, in line with national guidance, kerbside waste collections will change. For example, glass bottles and cartons such as tetra packs will be collected. Throughout 2025, we will be assisting MSDC in communicating these changes and providing feedback on behalf of residents.

## Budget and Precept

The parish council must agree a budget at the January meeting to cover the upcoming year from 1 April to the following 31 March. The amount required to fund the running of the parish council is called the precept. MSDC collect that money from parish residents as a small part of the wider collection of council tax that funds the County, District, Parishes and the Suffolk Police. For Coddenham residents in 2024/25, for every £1.00 collected by MSDC, 73.3p is sent on to SCC, 12.8p is sent on to Suffolk Police and 5.7p is sent to the parish council. MSDC retain 8.2p from each £1 collected to fund the services it provides.

The parish budget for 2024/25 was £34,217. For the coming year 2025/26, parish council has determined

that £35,259 is required, an overall increase of 3.0% (which does not equate to an overall 3% increase for each household).

There are 24 individual budget headings but the six largest items account for 87.2% of the total. Those are (i) loan repayments relating to TCC, £13,152, (ii) clerk's costs, £8,577, (iii) recreation ground maintenance £4,200, (iv) tree surgery work on parish-owned land £1,700, (v) other open space grounds maintenance £1,625 and (vi) £1,500 in relation to the churchyard. All other budget item lines are below £1,000. The full breakdown is shown in the table below.

Public Works Loans Repayments	£13,152
Clerk's Salary & NI	£8,577
Recreation Ground Maint. (CIO)	£4,200
Tree Surgery	£1,700
Grounds Maintenance	£1,625
Churchyard Maintenance	£1,500
Audit Fees	£600
Clerk's Training	£510
Newsletters	£500
Waste Management	£460
Subscriptions	£450
Insurance	£420
Postage, telecoms, consumables	£400
Street Lighting	£350
Clerk's Time - FIO Requests	£328
Software Licences	£210
Grants (S137)	£200
Web Fees	£170
Hall Rental	£120
Bank Charges	£102
Election Costs	£100
Info Box	£50
Data Protection	£35
Bank Interest Receivable	-(£500)
<b>TOTAL - PARISH PRECEPT 25/26</b>	<b>£35,259</b>

Our parish is blessed with an abundance of public open space, including the recreation ground, Mill Hill and Broom Hill, but their safe enjoyment comes with ongoing maintenance costs. Those costs are less than 60p per week for a typical household. TCC loan repayments are made semi-annually to the Public Works Loan Board and cover both capital repayment and interest costs. There are two loans, one expires in June 2028 and one in December 2030. Together they account for 37.3% of the total precept, so once both are repaid, the parish precept should reduce.

Over the course of the year, parish councillors will be provided with monthly updates on actual expenditure against the budget and the year-end outturn is also subject to both an internal audit and an external

examination; the audit documentation is available to the public on the parish council website.

## Churchyard Wall Maintenance

The wall that forms the boundary between the churchyard and the B1078 through the village is, once again, starting to show signs of deterioration. It was last maintained in 2016 after a bulge was discovered in some of the flint work. This wall is the responsibility of the parish council who maintain the closed churchyard.



The wall shows a number of constructions phases. The original wall was made of flint and lime mortar. The upper section is brick which looks to have been added on top of the flint work in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The southern end of the wall is fully constructed in more modern brick. We have been told that this part of the wall was realigned and re-built during the second world war to allow tanks to navigate the bend in the road. The top of the flint work roughly coincides with the level of the ground inside the churchyard, which can be up to 1.2 metres above the road surface. This means that the flint work is technically a retaining wall and, should it collapse, earth, vegetation and bones from old burials are likely to end up covering the road.

Unfortunately, there are once again several areas of flint work where the mortar has become eroded and the flints have dropped out. Although spray generated by passing vehicles can erode the lime mortar, sometimes it is just the passage of time and freeze thaw in winter which loosens the mortar. Also, previous repairs have sometimes used cement mortar rather than lime mortar and this encourages faster degradation.

The wall now forms part of the curtilage of the grade 1 listed church and therefore wholesale rebuilding in modern brick as undertaken during the second world

war would not be permitted. The wall is also a feature of Coddendam and should be preserved if possible.

The parish council has considered what could be done to stabilize the wall. Possible repair options range from re-pointing or rebuilding to removing some of the earth from inside the churchyard to reduce pressure on the wall. All these options would be costly and disruptive to traffic as the B1078 would be closed to allow safe working, probably for some months, whilst works took place,.

Before taking any decisions or seeking the necessary permissions for any work, the parish council wants to understand all the options available and, to that end, has decided to appoint a specialist historic fabric structural engineer to provide advice. When the structural engineer's report is received, it will form part of the consultation evidence as permissions and funding for the repairs are sought.

## **Broom Hill, Litter Picking and Allotments**

The parish council has long accepted that we are in a constant battle to stem the invasion of brambles and bracken on Broom Hill. However, an invasion of vandals damaging signs, footpath posts and waymarkers was an upsetting discovery. In November we found that two of the original black signs installed in 1988 and three Nature Trail posts had been wrenched from the ground and thrown away. Intrepid councillors crawled under thorn bushes and brambles to retrieve all but one of the posts. The damaged posts have been replaced and have been reinstalled by volunteers.

The autumn volunteer work mornings were well supported with a total of 48 person hours given to bramble clearing and hedge cutting on Broom Hill. The council, however, acknowledges that the work involved in maintaining our green spaces far exceeds the volunteer hours available. The heavier work of coppicing the southern hedgerow to the wood on Broom Hill and the invasive snowberry will be completed by contractors. When the lower hedge has been coppiced, new hedging donated by MSDC will be planted by councillors.

Our green spaces have also benefitted from volunteer hours given by two youngsters of Coddendam working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award. William Rutland and Ben Pachebat volunteered for over 40 hours each and cleared footpaths and litter picked in the community.

The September litter pick was also supported by the younger generations, with the highest turnout of "wombles" so far. Between them they collected 25 sacks of litter, 18 of which were from the B1078 from the bridge to the A140.



Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help maintain our green spaces in 2024 and we look forward to seeing you again for the working group mornings and litter pick in the Spring.

Additionally, two further water tanks have been installed for rainwater collection on the allotments for use by allotment holders during dryer patches of the growing season.

## **Highways and Traffic**

All village residents will be familiar with the traffic congestion issues experienced over many years on Coddendam High Street. It is clear from discussions that the roads group has had with SCC that there is currently little, if any, likelihood of any major road improvements in the area. Therefore, any changes to mitigate the congestion that occurs on Coddendam High Street are likely to be relatively minor or low cost. As has been reported previously, the roads group explored several initial ideas with SCC only to be advised that they cannot be implemented because they would fall foul of national traffic regulations. The B1078 is a Designated Lorry Route and SCC will not consider changing this. It is hoped that the improved signage recently implemented at the B1078/Rectory Road junction will lead to a reduction in the number of large vehicles (over the 7.5T weight limit) travelling from east to west down the High Street. Regular traffic monitoring should provide data on this in 2025. Enforcement of the weight limit would be required – something that has been sadly lacking to date. Recent national changes to Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) legislation may assist with this going forward. The road group remains in discussion with Highways and the Suffolk Police to explore this development.

Beyond this, the other alternatives to improve traffic flow- which have been explored and discarded previously - are some sort of gyratory system and/or finding a way that works for residents to remove parked cars from the High Street. However, whilst traffic flow would be improved, these options may increase traffic speed, each option would impact some residents more than others and all will involve cost, the funding for which may not be available. Given the frequent complaints received about the current situation, the parish council is considering ways of gathering residents' views to see if there is any consensus on revisiting any of the other options again.

## Housing

Housebuilding is one of the government's priorities. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 12 December 2024. MSDC will be expected to raise its annual house-building target from 535 to 734, an increase of 37%. Local authorities are expected to respond to the NPPF and the targets with timetables for new house building plans within 12 weeks. MSDC has indicated that it will publish a document outlining options (where most housebuilding should take place) and issues (the challenges of each option). There are likely three options, (a) to develop a new town – this was put forward as an option previously, (b) to continue building out existing settlements – largely along the A14/ Ipswich to Cambridge railway line or (c) to build in other areas along the A14/Ipswich to Cambridge railway line. The last option could include the parish of Coddendam.

Ahead of changes in timetable of the national and district policy, in September 2024, the parish council decided to undertake a parish-wide household housing survey. This was hand-delivered to all properties. Just over 30% were returned. Apart from a handful of outliers, the consensus was for modest and in-keeping development primarily of smaller units, as starter homes and for down-sizing, to be located in both in the village and elsewhere in the parish.

At the November 2024 meeting of your parish council, the decision was taken to present the results of the survey at the next Annual Parish Meeting (to be held on 29 April 2025) once MSDC's options and issues

## How to contact us

Please contact the parish council through the clerk, Maggie Burt. Email: [clerk.coddendampc@gmail.com](mailto:clerk.coddendampc@gmail.com); Phone: 07548 152181. The parish council website address is: <https://www.coddendampc.org.uk>

document is available so as to allow us to present a fuller picture for residents.

## Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) provides public access to information held by public authorities by obliging public authorities to publish certain information about their activities and entitling members of the public to request information from public authorities.

The Act covers any recorded information that is held by a public authority which includes the parish council. The parish council publishes, as a matter of course, a significant amount of information on its website in order to make this available to parishioners.

The Act does not give people access to their own personal data. If a member of the public wants to see personal information held by a public authority, they should make a data protection subject access request.

The FOIA contains a number of exemptions that permit public authorities to withhold information from a requester. Additionally, the FOIA does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious. While most people exercise their right of access responsibly, a few may misuse/abuse FOIA by submitting requests which are intended to be annoying, disruptive or have a disproportionate impact on a public authority. It is recognised that dealing with unreasonable requests can strain resources and get in the way of delivering services; this is particularly the case with parish councils which have very limited resources to deal with FOIA requests given, typically, parish clerks are employed for only a few hours per week.

## Become a Parish Councillor

We are keen to encourage others to join the parish council to fill all or some of the five open positions through the co-option process. Parish councils benefit from having a range of views from residents who want to contribute for the good of the whole community. We encourage anyone interested in becoming a councillor to come and talk to one or more of us and to sit in on a parish council meeting. These are held six times a year. Please contact the clerk or feel free to approach a councillor known to you.