

Chairman's Report - Donyatt Parish Council - Financial Year 2025/2026

In my third year as Chairman, we have continued to work our way through our list of objectives to the extent where, unless unforeseen issues come along next year, we have almost completed what we set out to do with our current team in place.

The one exclusion from our list of achievements is the full implementation of our flood-alleviation proposals for Donyatt, which whilst progressing frustratingly slowly, still remains uncompleted, more on this later.

Our actual achievements include:

1. Finally seeing the completion of the new 40mph speed limit through Sea during the summer of '25.
2. The final acceptance of our flood-alleviation plans by County Estates, FWAG and County Highways.
3. The flood-prevention work at the bottom of Stibbear Lane was finally carried out by County Highways.
4. DPC organised a V.E. Day 80th Anniversary Event at the village hall during May of '25.
5. Donyatt was instrumental in setting up a new 'Riverwatch' Scheme for the River Isle.
6. DPC's finances are now in better shape than ever.
7. Donyatt Halt has been cleared and looks better than it has for many years.
8. A new 'Friends of the Cycleway' group was formed to look after the cycleway between Ilminster and Chard.
9. DPC agreed to set up a Parish Emergency & Contingency Group.
10. The process of changing the status of the Recreation Field has begun.
11. We continue to work with Ilminster to affect the outcome of Persimmons' plans for their Canal Way development.

I will run through the detail of these achievements:

1. The stretch of the old A3037 that runs through the community of Sea has for years been plagued with speeding motorists. Finally this year, in agreement with Ilminster Town Council to split the cost 50/50, a full 40mph speed limit was imposed along this entire section of road from the A358 through to the outskirts of Ilminster. This has had an obvious and beneficial impact in slowing down the traffic passing through Sea. Our thanks go to councillor Julia Mc. Kenzie who worked tirelessly for several years to get this agreed and implemented.
2. Following a site-meeting between County Estates, FWAG, the landowner of the fields along Crow Lane and Highways, it was agreed to finally do something about the surface water that runs down Crow Lane and regularly floods the A358 in Donyatt. FWAG will oversee this work, which will include, in the early stages, soil-compaction tests and work on the field entrances to reduce the flow of surface-water onto Crow Lane. County Highways have already started their work on clearing vegetation and drains along the A358. This will be a long and laborious process I'm afraid but with perseverance and continually chasing those involved I am determined to get this sorted.
3. The flood-alleviation work at the bottom of Stibbear Lane was done during the year and whilst it has not stopped surface water building up to some degree during exceptionally heavy rainfall, residents have commented that the flooding is nowhere near as bad or as often as it has been in the past.
4. Councillor Kay Light organised a V.E. Day 80th Anniversary Event in the village hall in May. This was a huge success with many attending from within Donyatt and outside the village. Food and drink was provided by the Gemini Carnival club and local musicians provided live music which included some 1940's favourites. The grand finale was the singing of "I vow to thee my country" round and open fire in place of a beacon after dark. Our thanks to Kay for organising this event and making it such a great success.
5. We set up a new 'Riverwatch' scheme in conjunction with Somerset Council's Ranger for the Chard Reservoir. This scheme uses individuals who live by the river in Donyatt to keep an eye on river levels and to report the the Ranger if capacity becomes limited. This information will

then be used to decide whether to open or close the sluice gates from the reservoir into the river. The scheme has recently been implemented in Ilminster.

6. Thanks to our Clerk Zannette, our finances are now in good shape with a growing 'war chest' should we need funds to carry out work no longer provided by Somerset Council. Zannette has also knocked our DPC website into shape and has ensured we are compliant with all statutory local council requirements. Our thanks to Zannette for her continued good work.
7. Thanks to Seth Dellow, a Donyatt resident, the Halt has been cleared of overgrowth and now looks much better than it has for many years. Seth works tirelessly to keep the Halt clear for the many visitors that enjoy a rest on the benches or take shelter from the rain in the hut.
8. A volunteer group of around 40 individuals has been formed to look after the stretch of the National Cycleway between Ilminster and Chard. This group includes people from both Ilminster and Chard cycling clubs plus others. This is in reaction to both Somerset Council's and Sustrans' inability to fund the proper maintenance of the Cycleway into the future. The groups' first task has been to remove soil and grass build up from the side of the path thereby increasing its' width back to the original.
9. In response to the growing popularity of Emergency Response Groups around the country, DPC has now formed our own Emergency & Contingency Planning / Action group. Chard already have their own Chard Area Resilience Group (CARG) with IARG having been formed more recently in Ilminster. Councillor Steve Payne is heading up this project for us with completion now imminent, our thanks to Steve for taking on this task. The recruitment of volunteers will follow shortly.
10. In order to save our recreation field from possible future housing development, we have begun the process of taking it under local council control.
11. We continue to work with individuals from Ilminster to meet with representatives from Persimmons on a regular basis in order to have an influence on their plans to build more homes off of Canal Way in Ilminster. This is a slow, grinding, thankless and frustrating process but as they say "someone has to do it" otherwise developers go unchecked.

Other bits of news:

Our Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) continue to work silently and tirelessly to slow traffic before it enters Donyatt from either direction and apart from the odd idiot who will never change their behaviour they are still having a positive impact on drivers travelling through Donyatt.

I recently stopped on the Cycleway and watched as half a dozen motorbikes noisily approached Donyatt, at 70mph plus, on the A358 from the direction of Chard.

As they each realised the SID was there all the brake lights came on and there was a rapid noisy changing-down through the gears. They must have thought the SID was capturing speed-data as well , long may they continue to think so!. A real joy to watch.

Our village defibrillator continues to be expertly maintained by Rosie Payne, special thanks to her for keeping an eye on this for the benefit of the whole village,

My thanks also for the small group of volunteers who keep an eye on the 19 footpaths in the parish, I cannot manage the maintenance of these paths on my own and your help is very much appreciated.

DPC have approached County Estates with the proposal to look after Long Rapp Plantation as it is in dire need of some serious maintenance. Just waiting for Estates to give us the go ahead. I have volunteers on standby ready to take this on.

Special thanks to my Vice-Chair Jimmy who has continued to support me at every stage despite the arrival of a new baby in the family and having to deal with a massive house and land renovation project all in the same year.

Personnel Issues:

Councillor Kay Light has recently resigned from the Parish Council, she served for 8 years having joined in 2018.

Apart from being involved in all aspects of DPC business, Kay's key role was that of Events Co-ordinator for the village. She organised celebratory events for the Jubilee, Coronation and for the anniversaries of both D-Day and V.E. Day . She also effectively managed the relationship between

DPC and DRAC (Donyatt Recreation Area Committee), not an easy task at times. I know other councillors will join me in saying she will be sorely missed.

The grants we have awarded this year are;

Donyatt Village Hall £2,000

Recreation Field (DRAC) £1,500

St. Mary's Church - (grounds maintenance) £1,250

One final word, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all DPC Councillors for their continued support and willingness to roll their sleeves up and get involved with tasks and projects that demand a great deal of stamina and perseverance.

I have a great team around me and I'm sure we yet have a lot to achieve.

My thanks to you all!

David Light - Chairman Donyatt Parish Council - April 2026