

## Chair's Annual Report for 2025/26

The achievements of the ECPC have been exceptional this last year.

**New Pavilion.** Following on from Planning Permission which was granted earlier in 2025, a budget was agreed and a national tender for a building contractor was instigated. Various fund-raising activities were held (see below) and a loan from the Public Works Loan Board was applied for. Once the loan had been secured, the tender concluded and a contractor chosen, the old building was emptied and prepared for demolition, which started in July. The contractor warned of delays early on and the actual date for taking over the building slipped somewhat but was largely on budget. This was a huge effort by most of the Councillors but especially the Pavilion Modernisation Committee who oversaw the project from start to finish. Considering the idea had first been proposed in 2018 but was delayed due to Covid and subsequent large building cost increases, this became an endurance feat but hopefully will be appreciated by many in the Parish for many years to come.

This new pavilion greatly enhances the facilities available in the parish and has been designed to comply with FA standards so that increased use can be made by the Cockerels Football Club and perhaps persuade a new East Coker Cricket Club to form. It also has a spacious (but much smaller than the Village Hall) meeting room and kitchen that can be hired by parishioners for meetings, parties, exhibitions or talks etc.

Running costs will also be kept to a minimum by incorporating the latest technologies in solar panels, battery storage, thermal insulation and heating systems.

**Fund-raising.** In order to help meet the large costs of the new pavilion it was decided to raise as much money as we could by holding local events. Several initiatives were implemented including the 100 Lottery Club, a Summer Lunch at Hymerford House, a Race Evening and the Nativity Play in the Paddock.

Each event was fully attended, was great fun and due to the hard work of the Councillors raised a considerable amount of money – all of which went to the Pavilion Modernisation Fund. We would like to thank all the members of the public who came to these events and were so generous with their contributions.

**Planning.** The Keyford development plan in the north-east of the parish has started again with a new planning application which now includes Phosphate Mitigation measures. The ECPC has been keeping a close eye on how this is evolving and will be involved in the process as much as is allowed to make sure that the best result is achieved for the Parish. Currently we are waiting for the Planning Committee Meeting to be convened by Somerset Council and will keep the Parish up to date on the website and in newsletters.

Although a planning application for 14 industrial units to be built at Halves Lane was, after much opposition by the ECPC and locals, rejected by Somerset Council, to our dismay the applicant appealed against this decision. Having heard the extent of the local opposition we were determined that the appeal would not be granted. A planning consultant was again hired to write a professional rebuttal of the developer's ideas and a petition was raised to show the Inspector how much the local people were against this unnecessary and ugly idea on a

greenfield site between the beautiful villages of North and East Coker. The door-to-door petition showed an almost unanimous rejection of the application and gathered nearly 700 signatures. We are awaiting the final decision.

**Cemetery.** The cemetery alterations are now complete and the badgers have been safely moved on (for now at least!). There is still some tidying of the new ground to be completed and the rabbits to be discouraged, but the space that has been found for new graves, combined with opening up views to the north, have greatly enhanced this well-loved space.

**Nativity Play.** The Live Nativity Play in the Paddock was held again in December and, although it involves a lot of work and planning by the councillors, due to its popularity has become a popular fixture in the parish diary. We will advertise the date well in advance and hope to build on the successful format that has been developed over the last 3 years.

**Website.** The ECPC website ([www.eastcokerparish.gov.uk](http://www.eastcokerparish.gov.uk)) has been completely overhauled and is now kept up to date with not only Parish Council details and news but also with local events and useful information such as bus timetables, mobile library dates and road closures - well worth a regular visit.

**Thanks.** Many thanks are due to our two county councillors, Oliver Patricka and Mike Hewitson who have been a constant source of information and willingly assisted our causes.

Our Village Ranger has been very busy for us throughout the year and does a fantastic job in keeping the drains clear, the litter picked, the footpaths open (with safe styles) and a hundred other necessary jobs around the parish. We are very grateful for his hard work.

Our Clerk, Jude Heggarty, also deserves our praises and thanks for all the work she does for us while trying to keep us in order.

We look forward to another successful and rewarding year ahead.

Huxley Cowen  
Chair of the ECPC