

ENGLISHCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Serving Barrow, Englishcombe, Haycombe, Inglesbatch, Kilkenny & Nailwell.

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Report: Update on The Old Schoolhouse

For the meeting of Englishcombe Parish Council – Wednesday 2nd July 2025.

This report has been compiled by the Parish Clerk to enable all Councilors to clearly understand that ongoing situation with The Duchy of Cornwall, regarding the Old Schoolhouse.

The below report sets out a summary of items that have happened since the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held in May 2025.

1. Meeting with Duchy Cornwall - Meeting Minutes: 21st May 2025

A meeting between the Parish Council, the Duchy of Cornwall, and the Residents Action Group discussed the future of The Old Schoolhouse. The Duchy confirmed it is unviable for commercial refurbishment and intends to sell the property. Proceeds from the sale may fund refurbishment of Wheelwrights Workshop for community use.

Key Points:

- Building has severe compliance issues.
- The Duchy will not invest in repairs.
- Sale expected to begin August 2025; lease ends September 2025.
- Community groups may submit a business case to lease or buy.
- A schedule of works to be issued.
- Resident concerns over safety and parking.
- Suggestion to create an environmental or exhibition centre.
- The Duchy will consider a charity/CIC leasing the property upon full refurbishment.
- Investment in Wheelwrights depends on sale of The Old Schoolhouse.

2. Letter from the Duchy: 27th May 2025

Emma Pryce outlined three options:

- 1. Retain and refurbish under a licence, followed by a lease.*
- 2. First refusal to purchase.*
- 3. Sell and reinvest proceeds in Wheelwrights Barn.*

The Duchy committed to providing a works schedule and valuation.

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3. Parish Assembly Minutes: 4th June 2025

Discussion Highlights:

- 33 surveys returned, all in favour of a community space.
- Support for village events, meetings, and wellbeing activities.
- Debate over feasibility of renovating The Old Schoolhouse.
- Recognition that failure to sell could result in no community space.

The Parish Council reaffirmed its neutral stance and intent to represent the community consensus.

4. Letter to The Duchy: 12th June 2025 (sent after the extraordinary Parish Council meeting)

Key messages:

- 32 of 33 survey responses supported a community space.
- Parish Council supports Wheelwrights Barn conversion.
- Acknowledged Resident Action Group's efforts but clarified they do not represent the official Parish Council position.

5. Schedule of Works and Costing for The Old Schoolhouse: 19th June 2025

Two refurbishment options presented:

- Option 1: Basic upgrades - £682,000 (excl. VAT).
- Option 2: Full energy efficiency upgrades - £747,000 (excl. VAT).

All works must be completed before a lease is issued.

6. Response to REACH from Duchy: 19th June 2025

The Duchy reconfirmed the three options and cost expectations.

- Works must be completed in full before occupation.
- Potential for a 25-year lease at low or nil rent for community use.
- Intention to market the building in August 2025.

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7. Conclusion & Recommendations

- The Duchy is not willing to invest in The Old Schoolhouse.
- Parish Council supports development of Wheelwrights Barn as the most feasible option.
- Community groups must act quickly with a professional and costed business case if wishing to save The Old Schoolhouse.
- Risk remains that without agreement, the Parish may be left with no community facility.
- The Duchy will be carrying out a survey on the Wheelwrights Barn with the report expected within the next few months.

The Council continues to liaise with the Duchy to ensure the best outcome for the Parish.