Churchyard Wall Repairs

This is a brief explanatory note. Full details and documentation can be found on the parish council's website at: www.coddenham-pc.gov.uk



As reported in newsletters previously, the wall that forms the boundary between the churchyard and the B1078 through the village is, once again, showing signs of deterioration. It was last maintained in 2016 after a bulge was discovered in some of the flint work.

The wall shows a number of construction 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 18th or 19th centuries. The southern end of the wall is fully constructed in more modern brick. A faculty was granted in 1941 and the council believes 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, flints, bricks, earth, vegetation and bones from old burials are likely to end up covering the road. Obviously, given the lack of footpath and the immediacy of the busy highway, any collapse of the wall could result in causing a significant accident on the B1078.

Unfortunately, there are once again several areas of flint work where the mortar has become eroded and the flints have dropped out as well as bulges in places. 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 has encouraged faster degradation.

The wall 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 within the Coddenham Conservation Area and is a feature of Coddenham.

Under an Order in Council for the closure of the churchyard on 3 October 1895, the then newly created parish council became responsible for its maintenance (under the Local Government Act 1894).

The parish council has taken advice on what should be done to stabilize the wall from a specialist historic fabric structural engineer who has advised that, although the churchyard wall is generally stable, it is in a delicate state of repair, with areas of highly weathered bricks and delaminating surfaces which require urgent pointing, as well as local dentistry repair to maintain its overall stability. The report is available on the parish council website and also details the works required to repair the wall. Given the risk of a serious accident occurring should the wall collapse, the parish council has, somewhat reluctantly given the cost, accepted this advice.

A full tender process has been undertaken and three specialist contractors were approached. As a result of this process, Herringbone Restoration Limited were appointed as the contractor to undertake the works (subject to contract and funding). Their quote (which was the cheapest) for the works is £69,885.20 ex VAT (£63,532 plus 10% contingency). An additional amount of approximately £5,000 ex VAT will also be due to the structural engineer who will project manage the works. The works will take approximately 10 weeks and it is hoped that work will commence in Spring 2027.

The repairs will require traffic management so that works on the outside of the wall can be undertaken safely. The current proposal is that one lane of the highway will be closed and traffic will be controlled by temporary traffic lights. The traffic management plan will be devised by the contractor and their specialist traffic management sub-contractor together with Suffolk Highways.






The council has approached Historic England to see whether a grant to assist with the cost of the repairs will be available. The council has not been able to identify any other possible grant funding sources. If this is not available, or is only for part of the cost, it is proposed that the works will be funded by a loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The council already has two existing loans from PWLB which are nearing repayment; £37,196.62 remains outstanding as at March 2026. These loans were taken out in 2008 (for £129, 630 plus interest) and 2010 (for £40,000 plus interest) to assist with funding works on The Coddenham Centre (TCC). TCC has been managed as a separate charity since 2019 albeit that the council remains liable for the repayment of the PWLB loans. The repayment of the current loans is met by the parish council portion of council tax (known as precept) and is fully budgeted each year at £13,152. One loan will reach maturity in June 2028 and the other in December 2030.

The council is proposing to borrow a new loan repayable over 10 years to cover the costs of the repairs and management of the contract not covered by grant being up to £75,000 plus interest. It is proposed that the loan would be drawn down in Spring 2027 and that repayment would start in October 2027. There will, therefore, be repayments of the existing PWLB loans and any new third loan due through 2027 until December 2030. In order to avoid impacting residents through the precept allocated to repayment of PWLB loans, it is proposed that the precept budgeted to repayment of the existing and new loans not exceed £13,152 in any financial year. Obviously, the precept could increase due to other factors.

The Day Foundation trustees met in August 2026 and have allocated a grant of up to £10,000 to be drawn down as required to the council to assist with repayment of any new PWLB loan so as to avoid impacting the budgeted precept and the council currently holds a reserve of £7, 017 for repayment of the two existing PWLB loans. It is proposed that the Day Foundation grant and current reserve are used in the early years of the repayment of the proposed new (third) PWLB loan so as to avoid increasing the annual precept for repayment of PWLB above £13,152 in any year.

The precept for year 2026/27 is £37,035. The largest component is the amount required to repay the loans taken out for the building of TCC. The other major elements of the budget are the upkeep of the green spaces for which the parish council is responsible (Broom Hill, Mill Hill, Three Cocked Hat, the closed churchyard and the allotments) to ensure their safe enjoyment, maintenance and tree stewardship and the cost of the clerk being salary, training and employment taxes. Details are below.

CODDENHAM PC BUDGET PRECEPT	Budget Year 26/27
Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) repayments	£13,152
Clerk's salary & NI	£7,910
Contribution to TCC to support non-revenue generating activities	£4,400
Tree surgery	£1,700
Grounds maintenance	£2,200
Churchyard maintenance	£2,000
Legal fees (re churchyard wall)	£1,000
Audit fees	£625
Clerk's training	£100
Newsletters and printing	£520
Waste management (litter and dog bins)	£550
Subscriptions	£468
Insurance	£480
Postage, telecoms, consumables	£416
Street lighting	£270
FOIA request responses	£230
PWLB contingency fund	£350
Software licences	£220
Grants (s137)	£200
Web fees	£210
Hall rental	£120
Defibrillator maintenance	£120
Bank charges	£102
Election costs	£100
Info box	£50
Data protection annual registration fee	£54
Wayleave income	-£(12)
Bank interest receivable	-£(500)
TOTAL - PARISH PRECEPT 25/26	**£37,035**
TAXBASE - Number of Band D equivalent dwellings	294.78
Band D property annual precept	£125.64

FAQs

1. **Why is Coddenham parish council responsible for the churchyard wall and not the church or the district council?** See above. Under later local government acts, a different regime was introduced whereby a parochial church council (PCC) remained responsible for upkeep of a closed churchyard (keeping it in decent order and the walls/fences in good repair) unless a formal transfer to the parish council or district council was triggered. This regime did not exist in 1895 when the council believes that it became responsible for the wall. In fact, parochial church councils did not exist until 1921.
2. **Why is this work necessary?** The wall is bulging in places and flints are falling out. A structural engineer has advised that, although the churchyard wall is generally stable, it is in a delicate state of repair, with areas of highly weathered bricks and delaminating surfaces which require urgent pointing, as well as local dentistry repair to maintain its overall stability. There is a risk of wall collapse onto the busy B1078.
3. **What is the work? Can it be spilt up?** The works will involve repairing the wall and replacing flints using traditional methods. The work cannot be split realistically. Any splitting up of the work would incur significant additional demobilisation and remobilisation costs such as traffic management and it is not feasible to divide the work so that the more urgent work is done immediately as this is not concentrated in one section of the wall.
4. **Why can this not be fully grant funded?** The parish council has been unable to identify any possible grant providers save, possibly, for Historic England which the council has approached. Even if Historic England do provide assistance, this is unlikely to be for the whole cost of the repair work so a loan from the PWLB of all or part of the cost is more than likely to be required.
5. **What is the impact on council tax?** The annual council tax will not increase as a result of any new loan from the PWLB. More details are given above.
6. **Where can I find out more information?** Full details and documentation can be found on the parish council's website detailed below.
7. **How do I raise questions?** Please email the clerk at the address below with any questions. If you consider that it would be useful for the parish council to hold a public meeting at which questions may be raised, please email the clerk and the council will arrange a public meeting, if requested by enough residents. Councillors are more than happy to share the detail of the considerable work undertaken on this project. However, having received expert advice and the risk to life and limb should there be a collapse, the council does not see another course other than to undertake the proposed repair work. By way of mitigation, the council is aiming to ensure that any loan obtained does not contribute to an increase in the precept while dealing with what is hoped to be a generational piece of work.



How to contact the parish council.

Please contact the parish council through the clerk, Maggie Burt. Email: clerk@coddenham-pc.gov.uk Phone: 07548 152181. The parish council's website address is: www.coddenham-pc.gov.uk