

Exmoor Area Panel Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 7th November 2019 at Winsford Village Hall

Attendees

Clive Knight	Brushford PC	A. Vigers	Exmoor PC
Vivian White	Cutcombe PC		
Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe PC	David Powell	Luxborough PC
John Anson	Cutcombe PC	Anne Sparling	Luxborough PC
Mike Ellicott	Exford PC & ENP		
Jeremy Hickman	Exford PC	Colin Wilkins	Winsford PC
Malcolm McCoy	Porlock PC	Tony Howard	Withypool and Hawkridge PC
Philip Griffin	Wootton Courtenay PC	PCSO Bryan Stevens	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Andrew Bray	Wootton Courtenay PC	Ruth McArthur	ENP
Cllr Frances Nicholson	Somerset County Council	Jane Lillis (Village Agent)	Somerset Community Foundation
Cllr Steven Pugsley	SWT	Cllr Nick Thwaites	SWT
Cllr Andy Milne	SWT	Sam Murrell	SWT Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

David Peake – SCC Highways
 Val Carveth – Exton Parish Council
 Margaret Rawle – Dulverton Town Council
 Kathryn Vellacott – Dulverton Town Council

2. Minutes of last meeting

Min 5.6 Regarding frequency of cutting back vegetation – was an “as and when” approach cost effective? Surely more beneficial to maintain a regular regime of cutting rather than responding to individual requests. **ACTION POINT – Cllr Frances Nicholson to report to SCC for comment**

Min 5.12 Regarding Beulah Chapel overgrown vegetation – SCC had been written to. The response was that the landowner had fulfilled his obligation to keep the highway clear. The trees were creating a tunnel effect as they were very high. Drivers would have to take care when navigating the highway and drive to the conditions of the road.

Min 6.1 D&S Fire Service - Amendment from 3,000 signatures to 3,800. Survey has now been extended until 18th December 2019.

3. Avon and Somerset Police – Report attached.

Matters arising:-

3.1 Use of mobile phones whilst driving – current legislation only covers prosecution in the event of “use for communication” purposes. This is likely to be reviewed, in light

of the fact that most mobile tech devices are used for a multitude of applications not just for messaging and phone calls.

- 3.2 Avon & Somerset Police will respond to all reports and incidences if conveyed through the proper channels (Not social media). Particularly would like intelligence and information relating to suspect vehicles on Exmoor, possible drunk/drug related drivers and poaching.
- 3.3 Concerns about road safety issues should be addressed to the Somerset County Council Highways in the first instance – i.e. missing diversion signs, road closures and traffic snarl ups.

4. SCC Highways – Reports attached

David Peake had tendered his apologies and Frances Nicholson spoke in his absence. A revised Highways report in respect of Exmoor works is attached. Frances reviewed this at the meeting.

4.1 A great deal of discussion took place around the 5 week road closure on the B3223 between Simonsbath Road and Whitecross. SCC had decided to undertake these vital works at this time, because they wanted to complete before Christmas without impacting on the tourist season. Opening the road temporarily for Cutcombe market meant that the works scheduled to take place over a four week period, stretched to five. These were the main areas of concern brought to the meeting:-

- a. SCC – Road safety signs had been removed – thrown into hedges or disappeared altogether. Can these be returned and or retrieved please as there is a cost implication for replacement.
- b. SCC- The removal of Heras Fencing in certain places is dangerous. Stressed that it was placed in situ for H&S reasons, and anyone caught tampering with the fencing could face prosecution
- c. Exford PC – Contractors were starting late and finishing early, causing the works to take even longer to complete. (Nobody on site until 9:30 and usually gone by 15:30)
- d. Exford PC – Diversions not working. Some villages were shut altogether as traffic advised to re-route too early. Not enough local knowledge employed. Some placement of signs confusing and misleading.
- e. Traffic light usage inconsistent – Sometimes not used at all
- f. Exford PC - Damage to road verges at Gypsy Lane where cars have been passing. Who will be responsible for reinstatement?
- g. Drainage and gullies likely to be blocked as a result of the works, and will require jetting. (Not scheduled to happen until the spring at the earliest).

In summation Cllr Steven Pugsley said that a five week road closure on a main arterial route across Exmoor, was not economically or socially sustainable. More consultation is needed by SCC with the Parish Councils, before works of this kind are undertaken. **ACTION POINT - Cllr Frances Nicholson to feed this back to SCC.**

4.2 Winsford Parish Council reported that salt bags had just been dropped into the Village. Unsure if these were to top up the existing salt bins, or were additional? Unsure if the bin had been filled or new just tipped onto old salt? Other parishes to check their supply of salt, and report back to SCC as necessary.

4.3 Gully emptying schedules – Cllr Steven Pugsley was aware that West Somerset jetting takes place in the summer months, whilst the traditional Taunton Deane area is done in the winter. He was going to approach SCC and ask if this could be reversed so that leaf fall and blockages could be dealt with more speedily.

5. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

No representatives of the Fire Service were present but SWT Cllr Andy Milne provided an update at the beginning of the meeting. It was likely that the decision to close Porlock Fire Station will be taken through a Judicial Review process. A joint approach with North Devon Councillors is being considered, working together with Parish Councils. As this will involve legal costs, pledges are being asked from Parish Councils to support it. Work in progress and outcome of the consultation as yet still unknown.

6. Exmoor National Park Authority – reports attached

Matters arising:-

- 6.1 The Dark Skies event had been very successful over the half term period with 2,000 visitors in attendance. Lots of events including a mobile planetarium
- 6.2 Removal of BT Phone Boxes from Bridgetown, Luckwell Bridge and Exford. Consultation taking place at the moment, and challenges being made on heritage and lack of mobile phone signal grounds.
 - a. Jane Lillis also stated that she was aware Luckwell Bridge was an accident black spot and the phone provided an invaluable emergency service. (No mobile phone signal here either).
 - b. Ruth MacArthur asked if SWT had responded to the consultation document as the deadline was approaching.

ACTION POINT – Sam Murrell (SWT) to follow up this request.

Subsequent to this meeting, it has been confirmed by Amy Tregellas at SWT that the consultation has been responded to, online prior to the deadline.
 - c. It was suggested that Luccombe Parish Council were contacted as they had successfully challenged the removal of a BT telephone box in their parish.
- 6.3 Glover Review – massive restructuring of the National Park governance procedures. Concern was expressed that there was still very little knowledge of the report and its implications in the wider community. Roger Foxwell asked if seminars could be held by ENP to inform and raise awareness of the Review, thus enabling more people to participate in the consultation.
- 6.4 Halse Telephone Masts – Complicated planning issue regarding the distribution of the phone signal and coverage. Still unclear how many masts are required, and whether it will improve the signal in the area.
- 6.5 **Finger Signpost Maintenance – Update by Steven Pugsley**

The funding that was set aside to repair and renovate the finger posts has now been used up, but volunteer groups to clean and repaint and regularly maintain the existing posts are being overseen by a Steering Group. ENP will be enabling training, co-ordinating and certificating the volunteers, who once qualified will be able to continue to operate for three years. There is little money available for capital repairs such as new arms (£700 each made from cast iron), so ideally damaged fingers should be retrieved and reconditioned. New Fingerpost wardens are required to monitor and help coordinate maintenance of the fingerposts.

ACTION POINT - Suggested that the existing Highways wardens widen their remit and take on the responsibility for Finger Posts and monitoring their condition. Need to clarify who and where they report any concerns, so that ENP can centralise and respond to any maintenance requests.

7. Parish Lengthsman Scheme

7.1 The Dulverton Clerk has received confirmation from all parishes except Wootton Courtenay this year. In the absence of a representative from Wootton Courtenay, the Ward Councillor, Andy Milne was asked to contact the PC and ask if they wanted to make a submission.

7.2 All Parishes were reminded that their payments to the Lengthsman Scheme, need to be submitted to the Dulverton Clerk by the end of the Financial Year.

8. AOB

Jane Lillis (Exmoor Village Agent) was introduced to the Panel. She briefly explained about her job role and how she could be contacted.

Dates of forthcoming meetings

The next meeting will be on:

Thursday 16th January 2020 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross

Further meetings to be determined

The meeting closed at 21:00hrs