

# Public Agenda Pack



Notice of Meeting of

## **LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORK - EXMOOR**

**Thursday, 9 November 2023 at 7.00 pm**

**The Moorland Hall - Cutcombe, Wheddon Cross  
TA24 7DL**

To: The members of the Local Community Network - Exmoor

Chair: Councillor Steven Pugsley  
Vice-chair: Councillor Ellicott (Exford PC)  
Somerset Cllr Frances Nicholson

Brompton Ralph PC	Brompton Regis PC	Brushford PC
Clatworthy PC	Cutcombe PC	Dulverton PC
Exford PC	Exmoor PC	Exton PC
Huishchampflower PC	Luccombe PC	Luxborough PC
Oare PM	Porlock PC	Selworthy and Minehead WO PC
Skilgate PC	Timberscombe PC	Treborough PM
Upton PC	Winsford PC	Withypool & Hawkridge PC
Wootton Courtenay PC		

Somerset Council Highways  
Somerset Community Council Village Agents  
Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary  
Exmoor National Park Authority  
Exmoor Young Voices  
Exmoor Hill Farming Network

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Parking is available at the hall, including disabled access and facilities as well as extra parking in the field next door.

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Sam Murrell (sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk) or [Exmoorlcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Exmoorlcn@somerset.gov.uk).

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings and ask questions or make a statement **by giving advance notice** in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer at email: [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) by **5pm on Friday, 3 November 2023**.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Wednesday, 1 November 2023

# AGENDA

**Local Community Network - Exmoor - 7.00 pm Thursday, 9 November 2023**

**Core Membership** 7 - 8

**Click here to join the online meeting** 9 - 10

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The other registrable interests of Councillors of Somerset Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes: [City, Town & Parish Twin Hatters - Somerset Councillors 2023](#) )

## **4 Public Question Time**

The Chair to advise of any questions, statements or petitions received that are not covered by items on the agenda for the meeting on which members of the public have requested to speak.

## **5 Notes from the Previous Meeting (Pages 11 - 24)**

To approve the notes from the previous meeting.

## **6 Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

To discuss matters arising from the notes not covered in later agenda items.

## **7 Avon and Somerset Police Update**

## **8 Connect Somerset / Minehead Eye**

Paul Matcham will provide some insight into the work of Minehead Eye, and the developing role of the [Connect Somerset Champions](#).

## **9 Highways Subgroup Update (Pages 25 - 40)**

- To accept the recommendations of the Highways Subgroup meeting of the 22 September 2023. (Listed in point 7 of the attached report).
  - Highway Steward
  - Devolved Funding
  - Parish Online
  
- An update on the Exmoor Ravine Land Slippage. (B3224 Exford).

## **10 Economic Regeneration Subgroup Update (Pages 41 - 46)**

To consider the recommendations of the Economic Regeneration Subgroup meeting as listed in point 5 of the attached draft report.

## **11 Affordable Housing Subgroup Update (Pages 47 - 48)**

Notes and supplementary papers from the Housing subgroup meeting held on the 2 November are attached.

## **12 Exmoor National Park Authority**

### 13 Dates of future meetings (Pages 49 - 50)

A schedule of forthcoming Exmoor LCN meetings is attached. The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe has been booked for this purpose.

<b>Exmoor LCN Date - The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	<b>Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date - Dulverton Sports Pavilion</b>
Thursday 9 November 2023 at 7pm	Friday 24 November 2023, at 10am
Thursday 11 January 2024 at 7pm	Friday 23 February 2024, at 10am
Thursday 7 March 2024 at 7pm	Friday 19 April 2024, at 10am.
Thursday 9 May 2024 at 7pm	

A public meeting to discuss the B3224 Highway Repairs will also be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe. This will commence at 7.30pm.

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## **Core Membership**

Unitary Councillors:

Councillor Frances Nicholson

Councillor Steven Pugsley

City, Town and Parish Councils (one voting member from each):

Brompton Ralph

Brompton Regis

Brushford

Clatworthy

Cutcombe

Dulverton

Exford

Exmoor

Exton

Huish Champflower

Luccombe

Luxborough

Minehead Without

Oare

Porlock

Selworthy

Skilgate

Timberscombe

Treborough

Upton

Winsford

Withypool and Hawkridge

Wootton Courtenay

Other Stakeholders (one voting member from each):

Avon and Somerset Police

NHS

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

Education

Spark Somerset

Society Local Council Clerks

Somerset Association Local Councils

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership

Community Council for Somerset

Citizens Advice  
Department of Work and Pensions  
Somerset Rivers Authority  
Somerset Local Nature Partnership  
Business Chamber  
Exmoor National Park  
Exmoor Young Voices  
The Hill Farming Network  
Somerset Skills and Learning  
Visit Exmoor  
West Somerset Flood Group  
Home Start West Somerset  
Onion Collective  
Sustrans



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## Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Exmoor

Date: Thursday, 7 September 2023

Time: 7.06 pm - 9.08 pm

Location: The Moorland Hall - Cutcombe, Wheddon Cross TA24 7DL

Chaired by: Steven Pugsley (Chair)

### LCN core membership attendance:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Cllr Frances Nicholson	Somerset Council
Sarah Buchanan (Clerk)	Brompton Regis PC
Jan Aldridge (Clerk)	Brushford PC
Cllr Sally Moran	Clatworthy PC
Cllr Jon Levenson	Cutcombe PC
Cllr Nick Thwaites	Dulverton TC
Cllr Jeremy Hickman	Exford PC
Cllr Alan Chapman	Exmoor PC
Cllr Janette Sapsford	Exton PC
Cllr Stephen Kimsey	Huish Champflower PC
Cllr Mark Bolland	Luxborough PC
Cllr Duncan McCanlis	Porlock PC
Cllr Katy Attwater	Timberscombe PB
Fran A'Brook	Upton PC

Cllr Colin Wilkins  
Cllr Julian Soltau  
PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams  
Dean Kinsella  
Nikki Bonner  
Will Lock

Winsford PC  
Withypool & Hawkridge PC  
Avon & Somerset Police  
Exmoor National Park Authority  
Village Agent (C.C.S)  
Exmoor Young Voices

### **Officer attendance:**

#### **Name:**

Kate Hellard (Virtual)  
Jeff Brown  
Kevin Bridgwater / Kali Martin  
Colin McDonald  
Beccy Brown  
Tom Parkinson  
Sam Murrell

#### **Representing**

Somerset Council LCN Team  
Somerset Council LCN Team  
Somerset Council Highways  
Somerset Council Rural Housing Enabler  
Somerset Council Employment & Skills  
Somerset Council IT Specialist  
Somerset Council / LCN / Clerk

### **Other attendees:**

#### **Name:**

Hester Watson  
Reverend David Weir  
Tony Brooks  
PCSO Michelle Haimes  
Cllr Eric Norman (Highway Warden)  
Cllr Roger Foxwell  
Lesley Webb (Clerk)  
Alan Collins (Highway Warden)

#### **Representing**

West Somerset Community Land Trust  
Exmoor Benefice  
Crowcombe PC  
Avon and Somerset Police  
Cutcombe PC  
Cutcombe PC  
Timberscombe PC  
Withypool & Hawkridge PC

## Virtual attendees:

Name:	Representing
Patricia Bainbridge (Clerk)	Brompton Ralph PC

## Apologies:

Cllr Mike Ellicott (Exford PC), Andrew Turner (SC), Clare Pound (Homestart), Margaret Rawle (Dulverton TC), Christine Dubery (Dulverton TC), Paul Matcham (Minehead Eye / Somerset Connect), Andrew Bray (Wooton Courtenay PC), Phil Collings (DSFRS), Sally Baker (Brompton Ralph PC), Dave Powell (Luxborough PC), Norma Martin (Clatworthy PC) and Charlotte Burke (National Trust)

## Summary of discussion:

### **Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Action by: item:**

#### Item 15: **Highways Winter Maintenance Annual Meeting**

This took place before the main meeting, with the Highway Wardens representing the parishes. Kevin Bridgwater and Kali Martin provided an update on the current position.

- There were no changes to the current gritting schedule, and these were as published on the map. (Circulated with agenda pack). During the last winter some of these routes had been gritted three times a day to ensure that bus routes and school/commuter roads were safe to travel. The Highways team recognised that weather events on Exmoor were exceptional for Somerset and would be taking the required mitigation to tackle this.
- A new Somerset Council Operative (Ollie Miller) was being employed to take responsibility for the auditing and checking of the Grit/Salt bins in each parish. He would check the locations, contents and refill them as required. It was very important that the Highways Team know where the new bins are going to be located so that nothing is missed. It was recommended that the operative was given the Highway Warden contact details so he could liaise directly with the parishes before visiting. This operation had already started in

certain parts of Somerset and was being well received.

Bins would be re-filled if a severe weather event was forecast over the winter. If there was a requirement to refill sooner, then the parishes could report this via the Defects Portal.

It was also requested that parishes publicised the sensible spreading of the salt from the bins. Only a thin layer was required to ensure that the road was safe, and ensure the supply lasted through the winter. A copy of the poster/notice was requested from the Highways team so this could be placed inside the lid of the salt bin.

Other winter maintenance issues from parishes:-

- **Clatworthy** – The sunken roads need a higher verge cut to prevent the foliage from dropping onto the road. This pushes pedestrians into the centre of the road, and cars can only travel down the central carriageway. – **Action** – Can a map be provided demonstrating the areas concerned and where the longer/higher cut needs to be undertaken. If this could be uploaded to the portal it will be programmed into the cutting schedule.
- **Upton** – Stressed the importance of maintaining the Green Gritting routes to ensure that school buses can get through.
- **Huishchamflower** – the requirement for Ice Warning signs to warn motorists that ice is present. (Various options were discussed).
- **Exton** – Very important that the Green Route including Exton Hill is regularly gritted as this is the route for the school bus.
- **Cutcombe** – Clarity asked for on when the hedges can be cut and whether a 2<sup>nd</sup> cut will be made. If it is a safety issue, then landowners have a responsibility to cut back sight lines. This should not be done in bird nesting season March-September, and all reasonable efforts need to be made from an ecology perspective. Most hedges that get reported to Highways do get attended to in the first few weeks of September. It was requested that a 6ft flail is used to ensure a longer/higher cut. Milestone is the contractor for SC Highways and will continue to be so for the winter of 2023/24. The contract is being tendered at the present time, and a new contractor will be employed from April 2024.
- **Porlock** – Questions were raised following the re-surfacing of the High Street and the reinstatement of the No-Unloading

kerb markings. It was explained that this was just refreshing the existing marking and would have been undertaken as part of the project. The parish council were aggrieved at the lack of communication and consultation. There is a requirement to consult with the public if there was a request to remove the Traffic Regulation Order. This would need to be escalated to the Traffic Management Team.

- **Timberscombe** – the drains that were flooding have been jetted.
- **Winsford** – The work at Yellowcombe Leat remains outstanding. It has yet to be established who owns it, despite repeated calls to Somerset Council and the Somerset Rivers Authority. Cllr Nicholson said she will continue to investigate.
- **Withypool** – The drains at Hawkridge (Kali Martin to follow up). Portford Bridge has been damaged. It was asked that this be reported to the Bridges team at [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) so that the team could investigate.

Further Highways Issues were picked up in the main part of the meeting under Item 7.

#### Item 16: **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:-

Cllr Mike Ellicott (Exford PC), Andrew Turner (SC), Clare Pound (Homestart), Margaret Rawle (Dulverton TC), Christine Dubery (Dulverton TC), Paul Matcham (Minehead Eye / Somerset Connect), Andrew Bray (Wooton Courtenay PC), Phil Collings (DSFRS), Sally Baker (Brompton Ralph PC), Dave Powell (Luxborough PC), Norma Martin (Clatworthy PC) and Charlotte Burke (National Trust)

Patricia Bainbridge (Clerk to Brompton Ralph PC) attended virtually.

The Chair introduced and welcomed the following people to the Exmoor LCN meeting:-

Colin McDonald – Somerset Council, Rural Housing Enabler (Exmoor)

Beccy Brown – Somerset Council, Employment and Skills

Dean Kinsella – ENPA, Head of Planning and Sustainable Development

Nikki Bonner – Village Agent for Exmoor

Reverend David Weir – St Mary Magdalene Church, Exford  
Will Lock – Chair of Exmoor Young Voices  
Hester Watson – West Somerset Community Land Trust

Item 17: **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

Item 18: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions, comments or statements submitted at the meeting.

Item 19: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record by those present.

Item 20: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

There were no updates or actions to be discussed, that did not occur in later agenda items.

Item 21: **LCN Exmoor Highways Pilot**

- **An update on the Exmoor Ravine Land Slippage;**

A printed summary of the Roundwaters Retaining Wall Scheme and a Q&A sheet was distributed at the meeting. A lot of concern was expressed by those present on the timeline, and who the preferred contractor was likely to be.

Some slippage was reported, and it now looks likely that the work will commence in January 2024.

As the contract was currently out to tender, the preferred contractor had yet to be selected. This would be subject to a scoring process which would look at logistics as well as costs.

It was vitally important however, that essential vegetation clearance to prepare the site for the work takes place in October 2023. There is a very narrow window of opportunity for this ecology work and BT Openreach to co-ordinate and operate under a full road closure. The Highways Team agreed that it would also be useful to start working on the diversionary routes in preparation for



this event.

It was reported that when the preferred contractor has been selected, and the timeline is confirmed, that a public meeting could be held with all parties to relay the information.

Further information can be obtained from [Bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Bridges@somerset.gov.uk).

- **To review the membership of the Highways Sub-group;**

Currently as follows:-

Cllr Steven Pugsley	(Chair)
Cllr Mike Ellicott ENPA)	(Vice Chair /
Cllr Frances Nicholson Council)	(Somerset
Cllrs Roger Foxwell / Jeremy Hickman	(Hill - Top
reps)	
Cllr Andrew Bray	(Vale rep)
Sarah Buchanan (Clerk)	(Brendan
Hills rep)	
Cllr Christine Dubery	(Dulverton Town
rep)	

Representatives from Somerset Council Highways  
Andrew Turner Kevin Bridgwater Kali Martin  
Bev Norman Luke Green/Ryan Chamberlain Kate  
Brown  
Craig Gowan.

There were no requests to change the group at the present time.

- **To accept the recommendations of the meeting held on Thursday 3 August in respect of the Devolved Funding Requests;**

Sam Murrell provided an update on the Highways Devolved Funding project as laid out in the agenda pack. It was requested that the LCN approve the recommendations made at the meeting with a show of

hands.

- Immediate approval of £300 payment to Dulverton Town Council (as broker) to carry out survey on the Devolved Funding Requests / Jetting Schedule. This to be carried out by their preferred subcontractor –

**APPROVED.**

- On receipt of the results of the survey to evaluate which jetting/ gully emptying requests can be progressed by Dulverton Town Council – **APPROVED.**

- To give authorisation to Dulverton Town Council on behalf of the Exmoor LCN to undertake the work, (jetting/gully emptying and disposal of all waste material) up to an agreed limit order and not to exceed the available budget – **APPROVED.**

John Levenson (Cutcombe PC) proposed to accept the recommendations and was supported by all parishes in the room.

- **To confirm frequency and meeting dates of future Highway Sub-group meetings.**

To be confirmed at the next Highways sub-group meeting which is scheduled for Friday 22 September at the Dulverton Sports Pavilion,

#### **Update on Temporary Event Notice Fees (TENS)**

Cllr Nicholson advised that due to changes in legislation and escalating printing costs, the charges for advertising Road Closures had dramatically increased. It would be a sensible approach for several parishes to advertise their TEN collectively and split the fee, rather than each pay separately. It was something to consider with the Christmas events programme about to start.

- Item 22: **To set up additional sub-groups for emerging Local Community Network Priorities**

Kate Hellard presented a series of slides highlighting some of the statistics and data available to support the emerging themes

and topics.

[The slide pack and information can be viewed on this link.](#)

Following the presentation, it was agreed that the additional sub-groups to be formed would concentrate on (Affordable) Housing and Economic Regeneration. Inaugural meeting invitations will be sent out soon, and then the pattern of meetings going forward would be in the same format as the Highways pilot. (Meeting approximately every 6 weeks and falling between the main LCN meeting). The following people initially identified as members of these sub-groups:-

### **(Affordable) Housing**

Cllr Steven Pugsley (Chair)

Cllr Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)

Cllr Frances Nicholson

Will Lock (Exmoor Young Voices)

Rev David Weir (Exmoor Benefice)

Eric Norman (Cutcombe PC)

Stephen Kimsey (Huishchampflower PC)

*Vacant – to be filled – (A Vale Rep)*

*Vacant – to be filled – (A Rep for the South of the Moor)*

Advisory – Colin McDonald (SC),

Advisory - Dean Kinsella (ENPA)

It was recognised that there were several different housing groups and platforms already operating on Exmoor. It was important that the work undertaken by the Housing sub-group complimented and worked alongside this, rather than duplicating what was already taking place.

### **Economic Regeneration**

Cllr Steven Pugsley (Chair)

Cllr Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)

Cllr Frances Nicholson

Julian Saltau – (Withypool & Hawkridge PC)

Jon Levenson (Cutcombe PC)

Katherine Williams (Exmoor Hill Farming Network)

*Vacant – to be filled – (A Vale Rep)*

*Vacant – to be filled – (A Rep for the South of the Moor)  
Will Lock (Exmoor Young Voices) to attend the inaugural  
meeting*

Advisory – Beccy Brown (SC)

Advisory – Dan James (ENPA)

It was requested that members present in the room report back to their respective parishes and organisations about filling the gaps. It was important that representation on the sub-groups was reflective of the whole of Exmoor, and that the workload was adequately spread.

Advisory members and guest participants would change as the work evolved.

Item 23: **Avon and Somerset Police Report**

Avon & Somerset Police (ASP) PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams and PCSO Michelle Haines were in attendance from the Exmoor Neighbourhood Policing Team.

They presented their update as follows:-

Since the last meeting in June the team has said goodbye to PS Kat Forrest and has been joined by PS John O'Connor.

Crime figures have been relatively low. However, a roundup of crime is:

- 2 non dwelling break ins at farms (Brompton Ralph & Dulverton),
- A garage broken into at Allerford and a shed and stable broken into at Wootton Courtney,
- A vehicle was stolen from Winsford.
- There was an assault in Dulverton (currently under investigation).

There was only one report of a vehicle being broken into over the summer at Dunkery Beacon – far fewer than summer 2022. This followed proactive visits in April to campsites and accommodation providers with leaflets to be given to visitors

reminding them not to leave valuables in their vehicles when visiting various beauty spots.

ASP have continued with “Op Landlike” alongside colleagues from Devon & Cornwall Police promoting all aspects of road safety on the moor with proactive days at various locations. Exmoor National Park Authority has worked with PC Dan Cox, traffic officers and mounted officers visiting various towns and local shows to spread the message. It has been well received by the public resulting in positive feedback.

ASP have visited various events offering cycle marking and crime reduction advice and organised a community event with help from the Exmoor Rangers at Dunster. This was after a period of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and worked well in bringing the community together.

The Team visited all local schools to deliver the “clever never goes” package (modern version of Stranger Danger) in time for the summer break. From next week, the local ASP team will be working with children from Cutcombe, Exford and Timberscombe to deliver the mini police programme.

The ASP team has continued with their monthly visits to Cutcombe market and have been actively promoting Farm/Horse Watch – signing up 12 new members at the Exford show alone.

The Exmoor Neighbourhood team has just secured another 50 selectaDNA kits to take out to victims of crime and hope to provide a further trailer marking event at Cutcombe.

They also provided details of an online Disability Hate Crime Event. (Flyer details attached).

### **Question**

Cllr Colin Wilkins (Winsford PC) reported that at a recent Hunt meet, there had been a number of hunt followers riding quadbikes in an anti-social manner and generally being disruptive. They were making a lot of noise, revving their engines and shouting very early in the morning.

### **Answer**

The ASP Rural Affairs Unit are working closely with all the local

hunts and are monitoring parking, road safety and the anti-social behaviour from both hunt followers and saboteurs. If members of the public have any concerns, they need to report them to the [Rural Affairs Unit](#).

Item 24: **Exmoor National Park Authority Report**

Dean Kinsella, Head of Planning & Sustainable Development at ENPA provided an update on current issues in the National Park.

- A Government consultation was currently being undertaken on proposed planning changes. This covers additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses, high streets and open prisons; and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification.

The link to the Government website can be found here:-  
[Consultation on additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses, high streets and open prisons; and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

- The ENPA Dark Skies Festival is now open for booking and is exceeding expectations. A link to the press release can be found [here](#).

Item 25: **Any other Business**

Cllr Roger Foxwell (Cutcombe PC) advised that that a consultation had been launched on the proposed plans for a housing development alongside The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe.

Polden Planning is asking the local community to comment on their affordable housing development in Wheddon Cross and Cutcombe.

The consultation can be found by clicking this link:  
[www.poldenplanning.co.uk/consultations/dunkeryview](http://www.poldenplanning.co.uk/consultations/dunkeryview)

Make sure you are registered on Homefinder Somerset to be included <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/choice/>

A drop in event is due to be held at the Moorland Hall on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, between 4pm – 8pm.

Item 26: **Dates for Future Meetings.**

Invitations to those that had been selected to serve on the working groups, will be sent out shortly to set up the inaugural meetings.

**Exmoor LCN Meetings at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe**

Thursday 9 November 2024 at 7pm

Thursday 11 January 2024 at 7pm

Thursday 7 March 2024 at 7pm

Thursday 9 May 2024 at 7pm

Agendas and report packs will be published in the week before the meeting and will be available to view on the Council's website.

**Exmoor Highways sub-group meeting**

Friday 22 September at 10am at Dulverton Sports Pavilion.

Contact officer for meeting: Sam Murrell [sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk).

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**Minutes of the Exmoor LCN Pilot Highways Subgroup  
Held on Friday 22 September 2023,  
At Dulverton Sports Pavilion from 10.00am – 1.30pm**

**Present:**

Cllr Steven Pugsley (Chair)	Somerset Council (SC)
Cllr Frances Nicholson	SC
Bev Norman	SC
Luke Green	SC
Kate Brown	SC
Kevin Bridgwater	SC
Kali Martin	SC
Patrick Watts Mabbott	Exmoor National Park
Andrew Bray	Wootton Courtenay (Vale Rep)
Christine Dubery / Margaret Rawle	Dulverton Town Council
Sarah Buchanan	Brompton Regis (Brendon Hills)
Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe PC (Top Rep)
Sam Murrell (Project Officer / Clerk)	SC

**1. Apologies**

Mike Ellicott (Exford PC), Andrew Turner (SC), Paul Nation (SC), Craig Gowan (SC). Craig had submitted his highways reports and these would be picked up in his absence by Kevin Bridgwater and Kali Martin.

**2. To review the Minutes and Action Points of the previous meeting on Friday 23 June 2023.**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record. Matters arising: -

- **Shearwell / Luckwell Bridge (RF)** – Collapsed and blocked drains. Roger Foxwell expressed dissatisfaction that despite repeated reminders, the drains at these locations remained blocked/broken and no solution had been found in the interim.

Kali Martin responded that following the last sub-group meeting he had attended a site visit with Roger at Shearwell. It was explained at the time that the topography of the road led to a “flattening” out of the drain run between the gratings. This would mean that even with repeated clearing, there would be a build-up of silt/debris and stones at this point. The drains had been addressed, on several occasions but unfortunately it was likely to be a recurring problem.

Luckwell Bridge – following a site visit Kali had reason to believe that the blockage was caused by a displaced pipe. Investigations were ongoing. Once again, this was not a simple fix.

- **Visibility of signs on the Highway (RF)** – At what distance should signs on the highway be visible to the road using public? Roger was unhappy that this question had not been answered in previous meetings. Kate Brown agreed to report back on the current legislation.

*The following information taken from the Traffic Signs Manual on the GOV.Uk Website.*

*Chapter 1, Paragraph 5.2.9. It is essential that road users have an unobstructed view of traffic signs. The distance which should be kept clear of obstructions to the sight line is known as the clear visibility distance. The higher the prevailing traffic speed, the greater this distance. It is important, therefore, that sight lines are maintained so that vegetation (including seasonal growth), subsequent building development and other features such as shop signs and awnings do not obscure traffic signs. It is equally important to ensure that signs are not placed where they will obstruct the view of other signs and it is essential to ensure that they, themselves, do not obstruct sight lines, e.g. for vehicles emerging from a side road or access.*

A copy of the manual is attached.

- **Cutcombe (RF)** – Resurfacing: When was this going to happen? The road was not maintained to a Highways standard. It was pointed out that this question would be answered in a later agenda item. (Resurfacing Schemes).
- **Wootton Courtenay – hedge-cutting.** Andrew Bray asked if there was any progress on the wider cut to verges in Wootton Courtenay? He considered this was essential for safety reasons and should not be classed as discretionary works. Andrew outlined an incident where he had been involved in a road accident whilst on his push-bike. He was forced into the centre of the road due to brambles and vegetation and had been hit by an oncoming car's wing mirror. The incident was reported to the police at the time. Kevin Bridgwater asked him to forward this information as evidence as to why a larger cut was considered essential for safety reasons.
- **Self-build homes (BN/LG).** Bev Norman was currently looking into this. There was more information needed to help self-builders come up with less expensive options when employing utility companies and other approved contractors. This was especially true about Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO). Luke advised that there was very little flexibility from utility companies, but the team were doing what they could to come up with workable solutions.

### 3. **Scheme Promotion / Review and Update**

In Craig's absence updates were provided by Kevin Bridgwater and Kali Martin.

- **Drainage Schemes**
  - Sanctuary Lane – Investigations into the proposed works are still ongoing.

- Brushford – This originally had two gangs working on it to expedite the work as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, due to the recent flooding in Withycombe, one gang had been diverted to conduct remedial repairs there. The priority was still to get this work done as quickly as possible to minimise disruption to the local communities.
  - 2024/25 – next years scheme for asbestos piping. The lessons learned during this period of delivery, would be taken forward especially as a new contractor would likely be undertaking the work.
- Cutcombe – Diversions need to account for market days!
- Beulah Chapel – Clearance work onsite is ongoing. The team are looking to refine the diversion routes. Most of the work will be conducted on restricted hours to ensure school buses and businesses are able to operate.

It was agreed that it was good intelligence to have sight of these proposals.

- **Resurfacing Schemes**

- “Truckers Moor to Hawtree Moor” should read Tuckers.
- B3224 Dunkery Road, Cutcombe – This was on the proposed scheme of works. Roger Foxwell had highlighted this as an area for concern at the beginning of the meeting.
- Liscombe to Tarr Steps – A general discussion took place advising that it may be prudent to inform ENPA and Tarr Steps businesses to close for the duration of the works. It was requested that the works be undertaken outside of the main tourist season and the road closures commence at Hawkridge, to provide plenty of notice to motorists. The sub-group was advised that it was still early days, and the work schedule was dependent on the resource availability.

- **Public Utility Works (LG)**

Luke Green advised of the following schemes that were coming forward: -

- A396 Bridgetown – some privately owned trees were being removed due to disease on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. This would not adversely affect Dulverton, and signs would relay that information.
- Dulverton A396 – Due to a drop in water pressure there had been a road closure requested. This to coincide with work already scheduled by Openreach on the 16 October. This would be a restricted closure operating between 9-3pm to allow for commuter and school buses to operate.
  - Disappointment was expressed about the signs for the current scheme being left out by Wessex Water Authority (WWA) overnight and creating confusion in the town. Luke Green agreed that this was not satisfactory, and he would be feeding that back to the contractor.

- Luke was also disappointed that the access to emergency vehicle arrangements that had been agreed had not been implemented. A number of the road closures were not complying with agreed discussions. He is going to escalate this with WWA.
  - Frustration was also expressed about the interim material used to make good after the works. It was agreed that if a full road closure was in place, it was more cost effective to repair the road to the full Highways Standard, rather than do an interim repair that would necessitate a repeat visit within 6 months. This had happened in both Carhampton and Porlock.
  - BT Prosecution – Openreach had been successfully prosecuted and been ordered to pay a £17K fine for conducting street works without permission. Somerset Council is very progressive in this respect and is now advising neighbouring authorities on how to proceed with prosecutions. [A full press release on this story can be found here.](#)
- **Traffic Management Schemes (KB)**
    - Kate reported back on various ongoing issues that are progressing: -
      - Porlock Parish Council had requested that the “no waiting” tick marks that were refreshed on the High Street were removed. This would require consultation to establish why they had been installed initially. (Despite protestations to the contrary they had been present as far back as 2008, as they appeared on Google mapping). There were concerns around the lack of disabled parking in the village and whether the lack of apparent lines in the recent past had caused any issues with High Street businesses?
      - Kate Brown met with Cllr Margaret Rawle representing Dulverton Town Council and Emma Wallace owner of the Anchor Herd of Exmoor Ponies on Winsford Hill. It was suggested that rumble strips and signage were implemented to reduce speed across the moor. The findings were forwarded to Exmoor National Park Authority and Kate is awaiting their response.
      - Exford Speed Limit Changes – there is a concern that one of the posts needs to be sited on land not owned by the Highways Authority. Permission is being sought from the landowner. Once this is resolved then the TRO can be advertised.
      - Cutcombe – It was requested that the traffic information collected by the box at Cutcombe be shared with the parish. It was advised that speed was not being monitored, but the weight and size of vehicles via the length of the axles. The team would assess what data was available to the parish once the information was gathered.

- **Other wicked issues!**

Not to lose sight of the current ongoing issues with the Hawkridge drains, Yellowcombe Leat and Long Lane, Winsford. These are all outstanding and officers would be following up outside of the meeting.

**4. Update on the B3224 Exford Road Slippage**

The briefing notes and Q&A document had been circulated prior to the meeting and parishes had been able to comment on this at the Exmoor LCN meeting. It was agreed that it was vitally important that the communication remained open, and communities were informed on how the works were progressing.

The timeline had slipped, but the road closure order for the October dates remained to allow Openreach to undertake their work, and for the vegetation clearance to take place. There was a very narrow window of opportunity to do this, so the team were working to the original timetable as much as possible.

At the time of the meeting, the contract was still out to tender, and the contractor had yet to be appointed. It was noted that it would be helpful if a local contractor were employed so that logistically, the works would be completed more quickly and would reduce travel times to site. A recommendation was made for the LCN to feedback these comments to Somerset Council, and not just to base scoring and evaluation of tenders on cost alone. It was highlighted that other factors should come into play including reducing the disruption to local communities whilst the work was being conducted, travel times to site and using local suppliers.

It was reiterated that once the contractor has been appointed, a public meeting would take place to inform communities on how the work would be delivered. In the meantime, if anyone has any questions, please can these be directed to Paul Nation [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk).

**5. Exmoor Pilot Update**

- **Highway Steward (HS)**

Although work requests had slowed the Highway Steward was still being employed across the LCN area. Repeat tasks had now been added to a cyclical schedule and were being picked up periodically.

Parishes, such as Winsford had added requests to clear around gullies and gratings in anticipation of the jetting works being processed. He was also attending to minor drain clearance himself. In the main, the parishes were pleased with this service and having their own operative to call on.

Dulverton/Brompton Regis said it would be helpful if they could view his work schedule and check the progress of ongoing requests, although Sam Murrell explained that the spreadsheet was not available to external organisations. The current work schedule was an experimental

document which was employed for the purposes of the pilot. Moving forward it would be necessary to expand the platform and tweak it. It would be useful if external partners could access this information, and not just Somerset Council users.

There was a bit of uncertainty expressed as he was employed by Milestone, and the parishes understand Milestone are currently in the de-mobilisation stage of the contract. A new contractor would be employed from April 1, 2024. Kevin Bridgwater stated that the existing workforce would be picked up under TUPE, and transferred across to the new contractor, so hopefully the knowledge and experience gained by the current Highway Steward would not be lost.

The importance of a Somerset Council operative, who was employed and trained to work specifically on the Highway was essential.

### **Devolved Funding – Jetting requests (Revenue)**

Dulverton Town Council (Christine Dubery) had been collaborating with a sub-contractor on inspecting and progressing the jetting requests received up until the 30 June. Despite setting the deadline, later requests had still been received.

Christine had tasked a contractor to look through the schedule and provide costings and feedback on the work. He had provided this based on site visits around the district. (Copy attached). She was concerned that whilst on-site he had been asked to undertake additional work that was not listed which would push up the costs.

It was agreed that he would concentrate only on the jetting works, which were listed in the schedule. As well as the immediate costs associated with the work, there was also the disposal of waste fee which was an unknown quantity. Preliminary clearance work could be carried out in anticipation of his visit, and in some instances, it looked like the Highway Steward had been doing this in the Winsford area. It was also stressed that in certain situations there was a responsibility for landowners to clear drainage ditches and outfalls so that the water could flow freely. This would involve machinery and was outside the scope of a single operative.

It was agreed that the contractor would tackle the quick wins and concentrate on the schedule. It was important that the parishes supplied contact details so that the contractor had a liaison point for his visit.

Christine was thanked once again for all her hard work. It was stressed that the devolved funding would not be available in the next financial year, so it was vitally important that this work was delivered swiftly and in budget.

### **Small Works (Capital)**

A proportion of the Capital budget had been spent on the supply of Grit Bins. There was money remaining which could be used to fund identified projects that had been submitted in the previous year.

Dulverton – (High Street outside Acorn Antiques). Priority Give Way traffic management installation. (Previously a bollard was requested but existing street scene could not accommodate this). Kate Brown is now progressing and awaiting costs.

Cutcombe – Speed Indicator Device. Cutcombe are awaiting costs but have already paid deposit and part funded. It was agreed that some match-funding could be made from the devolved funding budget once costs are known. Kate Brown asked to forward the costs as soon as possible.

- **Parish Online**

The free subscription period was ending, and a discussion ensued regarding the value of renewing the subscription for another year. The parishes in the room said they had not seen much value in the system, as they were small and did not own many assets. (It was recognised that some of the bigger towns/parishes in the county may find it of value). There was also not enough time for clerks to acquaint themselves with the various aspects of the system in the limited time available to them.

As a free service it was useful, but not enough to justify paying for in the future. Christine Dubery (Dulverton) said that she was the only person from the town council who used it and attended the training. Dulverton had been given a free subscription via their insurance company but did not feel the need to continue as it was not offering value for money.

## **6. Winter Maintenance**

- **Hedge Cutting / verge maintenance**

Various discussion took place around the current programme of hedge cutting and questions were asked regarding whether a larger flail could be employed in the coastal areas? The climate was milder here and thus the growth flourished in the growing season and needed a more extensive cut.

There was some confusion around terminology – some parishes referred to a “2<sup>nd</sup> cut” but in fact meant a larger swathe being taken at a single time. This was to capture the growth at height in the sunken roads. Maps were submitted and passed on from Wootton Courtenay and Selworthy, in anticipation of the next cutting season.

Clatworthy PC had also mentioned that they needed a wider cut at the September LCN meeting. It was queried whether this had been reported to the Highways team and the locations mapped? Cllr Nicholson agreed to follow up with the Clatworthy clerk.

It was agreed that the hedgerow management standard letter would be circulated to parishes to use or reference, when contacting local landowners about their boundary responsibilities and hedge management. Sam Murrell to follow up with the Highways team and circulate the letter to parish clerks.

- **Liaison between parishes and Highways Salt Bin operative.**  
The parishes were very grateful that the Salt Bin operative would be taking responsibility for the auditing and filling of the various salt bins. He would need to liaise with the Exmoor parishes prior to visiting to ensure he captured all the new bins and their locations. The new bins had yet to be sited and his Somerset Council map would require updating. (Sam has contact information and can pass this on)

**7. Recommendations to the Exmoor LCN (SP)**

**Highway Steward** – To inform Somerset Council that the services of a Highway Steward continue beyond the period of the current contract which is due to end March 31, 2024. This is essential to build on the already established relationships and networks which have resulted from the Exmoor Highways pilot.

**Devolved Funding** – Dulverton Town Council to progress with the jetting/gully sucking operations as listed in the Schedule and received up until the 30 June 2023. They will function as broker for the purposes of the work and will draw down devolved funding from the revenue budget up to the agreed limit. The Highways sub-group agreed their choice of sub-contractor for the jetting work.

Regarding the capital funding, it was agreed that 2 capital schemes that had been earmarked from the previous year be progressed before March 31, 2024, to ensure the money was spent. These schemes are the Traffic Regulation Order in Dulverton High Street, (to give priority to oncoming traffic), and the Traffic Regulation Order and Speed Indicator Device at Cutcombe. Costings are awaited from the Traffic Management Team, but it expected that these works will come in under the remaining Capital Funding available.

**Parish Online** – Only to continue the subscription if it were offered for free to participating parishes or could be purchased via funding or a grant. Otherwise, this should be allowed to lapse, as offering limited value.

**Feedback to Somerset Council** – It was vitally important that the work of the Exmoor LCN was fed back to Somerset Council so that it influenced the decision-making process. This would ensure that communities were not adversely economically disadvantaged by the activities of the Council and



could inform on how local works could be undertaken to minimise disruption. An example quoted was that during the recent utilities work undertaken in Dulverton when the roads were closed or diverted, there had been a 30% reduction in takings for High Street businesses. Over a continued period, this was unsustainable.

**8. A.O.B.**

Patrick Watts Mabbott – **Fingerpost update:** Work has been taking place to reconstitute and repair the existing finger post signs. This is cheaper than a complete replacement. Patrick was incredibly grateful for all the parts which had been collected from the Minehead depot and put to good use. Kate Brown advised that replacement parts were also being stored at the Milverton depot.

**Volunteer Training** – Patrick asked if the training and insurance supplied by Somerset County Council had continued with Somerset Council. There were questions raised about volunteers undertaking Somerset Council work being covered by the council’s public liability insurance. Bev Norman said she would check this out.

**Training Delivery** – Patrick asked if the training could be carried out remotely/online to speed up the process and be more accessible. There was currently a shortage of courses, but several volunteers who wanted to get started! Bev Norman to follow up and investigate delivery providers and methods.

**9. Dates and Venues for meetings going forward**

<b>Exmoor LCN Date – The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	<b>Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date – Dulverton Sports Pavilion</b>
Thursday 9 November 2023 at 7pm	Friday 24 November 2023, at 10am
Thursday 11 January 2024 at 7pm	Friday 23 February 2024, at 10am
Thursday 7 March 2024 at 7pm	Friday 19 April 2024, at 10am.
Thursday 9 May 2024 at 7pm	

It was agreed that Cllr Pugsley would liaise with Sam Murrell about future meeting dates. It was decided to continue with bi-monthly face-to-face meetings at intervals between the Exmoor LCN meetings. Christine Dubery confirmed that the Dulverton Sports Pavilion, is available for use on Friday mornings. (Sam to schedule time with Cllr Pugsley to map future meeting times).

## 10. A.O.B

There was also a requirement to hold an inaugural meeting of the Housing and Economic Development sub-groups. It was agreed to have this discussion offline, when confirming the dates for the Highways sub-group meetings.

*Post meeting note:*

***Economic Regeneration Sub-group Meeting***

Thursday 26 October, online via Teams at 5.30pm

***Housing Sub-group Meeting***

Thursday 2 November at 5.30pm – venue to be confirmed.

## 11. Meeting closed at 1:20pm

***Attachments***

***Traffic signs manual (2018)***

***Exmoor Programme of Works (2023/24)***

***Exmoor Proposed programme (2024/25)***

## Briefing Note 2

### Summary of Events

During the winter of 2020/21, the embankment supporting the B3224, between Exford and Wheddon Cross at Roundwaters, failed. This seems to have occurred following storm/rainfall events and the resulting fall of a large tree causing embankment loss adjacent to the carriageway. The date of the failure is unknown but, on discovery, a single lane closure was put in place to prevent vehicles from running close to the unstable carriageway edge and associated drop. This traffic management remains in place at the current time.

As a result of this failure, WSP (the Council's consultant) undertook a feasibility study resulting in a steel sheet piled (SSP) retaining wall with associated drainage and highways improvements that includes a vehicle restraint system (VRS) being designed. This solution was presented to the LCN earlier in 2023 and has also been circulated to the affected landowner.

Briefing Note 2 records the continuing progress and development of the scheme and its delivery.

### Progress Since Previous Briefing Note

- Four contractors were asked for expressions of interest in tendering for the scheme.
- Two contractors returned favourable responses and asked to be included in the process.
- One contractor returned priced tender documents.
- The tender evaluation process has been undertaken and the tender was compliant and acceptable.
- A pre award meeting was held with the contractor returning the priced tender documents. The outcome of this meeting required the contractor to revisit and re-submit their programme based on community requests and concerns. (Christmas/New Year access through the site.)
- The Openreach cable diversion has commenced with new poles being installed. Openreach will need to revisit site to undertake vegetation removal, not identified by them previously, as a clear cable hanging route between the new poles is not present. We are awaiting a date for that activity and the importance of this task has been stressed. The outstanding work required from Openreach includes vegetation trimming, cable diversion, using the new poles, and old pole removal.
- The pre "main works" vegetation removal was successfully completed by 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023 ahead of our consent deadline. This was completed during the same road space booking as the Openreach works but Openreach did not identify their additional vegetation trimming requirements until after our works had been completed and our team was off site.
- The contract was let to Walters on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

### Future Activities

- TBA – Openreach diversion.
- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – LCN meeting whereby Briefing Note 2 and Q&A Release 3 will be circulated and the Panel will decide on how the wider community will be updated considering either evening, Teams or drop-in event.
- TBA – Community drop-in, evening or Teams meeting to be attended by Contractor, Designer and/or SC depending on meeting style, venue size and logistics.
- 8th January 2024 Main works start date.
- 10th May 2024 completion date – anticipated duration is 87 days.

### Further Information

Email [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) and mark for the attention of Paul Nation.

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### Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

#### **Update**

Further to the previous Question and Answer Sheets (Release 1 and 2), Somerset Council have produced this further update for the proposed B3224, Roundwaters' works to maintain a flow of information regarding the scheme.

#### **Overview**

The purpose and reasons behind the activities for this scheme have been circulated on previous Q & A sheets. A copy of those sheets can be obtained from Somerset Council using the [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) email address and with the subject heading of "Question and Answer Sheets Request - For the attention of Paul Nation"



#### **How did the vegetation works progress?**

After a tricky start the vegetation removal went well finishing on the Tuesday of the second week, (24/10/2023) (see photograph). The weather wasn't good but it seems everything was completed within the required time frame.

#### **And the Openreach works?**

These were problematic and were not completed with only the poles being erected. Openreach are programming another road closure to complete their tasks of additional vegetation removal, re-hanging cable and removing old poles. The additional vegetation removal was not identified by Openreach until late in the second week of the two week works programme when our contractor's vegetation removal subcontractor was already off site.

#### **Will you be on-site before Christmas?**

It was always going to be a big ask to be onsite before Christmas and then not to disrupt the Christmas festivities. Our discussions with the contractor have made it clear that as soon as excavation work, at the base of the toe, start then the road would *no longer be safe* for public usage; it will not be possible to re-open until works are substantially complete. If we had committed to a pre-Christmas start, then the road would stay closed for the holiday period incurring unnecessary and avoidable disruption to the community.

#### **So when will you be on site?**

Good news, we have a programme from the contractor now that indicates works will commence on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and finish on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – a duration of 87 days,

Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

longer than previously thought but this is a complex project requiring large plant and careful planning.

We are pleased to say that the contractor is a company called Walters who have worked for the Council on many schemes before. They have their head office in South Wales and a regional office at Avonmouth. Where activities permit, they intend using local subcontractors for the tasks involved in the project. However, having said that some of the activities requires very specialist plant that only a few subcontractors have available for hire and this will need to be sourced from those available outlets, wherever they may be.

**But the period 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 includes Good Friday and Easter Monday Bank Holidays!!**

Yes that is correct, Easter Sunday falls on 31<sup>st</sup> March next year and is within the programme. However, Easter is a shorter holiday period than the combined Christmas and New Year one and hence disruption will be significantly less with the road closed then.

**Will the road be closed all of the time works are being undertaken?**

It is envisaged that the road will remain closed during the complete period of the works. The site will be given over to the contractor for the during of the works and they will manage all activities for safety and efficiency.

I re-emphasis that we anticipate that the road will not be opened for any activities, events or occasions during the works. However, the contractor will obviously endeavour to do what they can when they can but to work outside of their proposed methods could well be impractical and unsafe and actually delay completion and incur greater inconvenience and let's not lose sight of the fact, it may give rise to greater cost.

**Can you expediate the works?**

This is a lengthy answer, but here goes.

Expediation is neither simple, without consequence nor, always, safe or sensible.

As is public knowledge, we originally estimated that the construction costs would be between £250k and £500k; this upper limit has been significantly exceeded in the tender value received. Expediation would incur more costs requiring out of normal shift working (weekends, evening, bank holidays, etc). It could also incur premiums being applied to materials costs as the supply change charge to open depots and factories that would normally be closed at that time; if, of course, they agree to open at all.

Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

Increased costs, however generated, have a secondary impact and detracts from our budget, which means that other schemes are delayed due to budgetary pressure, exacerbating the cycle of workbank need and community expectations.

Furthermore, programming may simply not benefit from expeditation; all activities may already be on the critical path and, hence, there is no scope to do things more quickly. Materials may need time to cure, gain strength or obtain a working resilience and need to do this in the correct environment of temperature etc. If deprived, they will be detrimentally affected and have an inferior working life.

Sites can become dangerous if flooded with too many operatives or plant or worked on in inappropriate weather or lighting conditions.

Plant can be so specialist that there are not duplicates to double up and, even if there was, some activities can only be done in a specific way; imagine working from both ends of this piling run and finding the two lengths do not align or that they overlapped,

All in all, the contractor knows the tasks, constraints and pressures and they are best suited to programme them for the most advantageous completion date; if they can expediate they will.

**How can I find out more?**

Your Local Community Network (LCN) group are being presented with this Q&A and a Briefing Note for their 9<sup>th</sup> November meeting. They will be debating the scheme and agreeing the form of a future update there.

It is also intended to put this briefing note on the SC website where further updates may be posted. Press releases are also planned over the coming months.

Alternatively, you can email [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) and mark your questions for the attention of Mr Paul Nation.

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## Minutes of the EXMOOR LCN – Economic Regeneration Subgroup Held on Thursday 26 October Via Microsoft Teams from 5.30pm – 7.00pm

### In attendance:

Cllr Stephen Pugsley (Chair)	Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)	Top of the Moor Rep
Cllr Frances Nicholson	Somerset Council
Julian Soltau	South of the Moor Rep
Jon Levenson	Top of the Moor Rep
Matthew Headley	Brendon Hills Rep
Nick Thwaites	Dulverton Town Council
Will Lock	Exmoor Young Voices
Dan James (Advisory)	Exmoor National Park Authority
Katherine Williams	Exmoor Hill Farming Network
Jeff Brown (Lead Officer)	Somerset Council
Sam Murrell (LCN Link Officer)	Somerset Council

### 1. Apologies

Andrew Bray, Beccy Brown

### 2. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting. The main purpose was to determine what work has already taken place, where any gaps can be identified and how Somerset Council could potentially pull all the threads together in the coming months.

ENPA discussed recent work that has been undertaken that can feed into these discussions.

ENPA co-ordinated work on the Rural Enterprise Exmoor vision which included a large amount of research which was undertaken just before COVID-19. This provided some base-line data which has obviously changed and is a bit dated now but is the most recent information collated. It was looking into rural businesses and asked the following questions:-

- What are their needs?
- What are their challenges?
- What are their opportunities coming out of that research?

ENPA then worked very closely and had lots of engagement with individual businesses and business groups, etc to develop a kind of vision for Exmoor's economy.

The links to this work on the ENPA website can be found here:-

[Exmoor - Rural Enterprise Exmoor Vision \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

The main challenge identified in the report was around capacity and staffing. It was considered that an individual in a networking role who could point businesses towards funding or other economically advantageous opportunities would be a very good resource. (At some level this was already happening within the Hill farming network via Katherine Williams but it would be an expansion of that role into other business sectors).

The post would need to be funded, and there were various funding pots available but councils and other public bodies are not eligible to apply. It would need an imaginative solution working collaboratively with a business partner such as a CIC or charity to make the application. The main aim of the post would be to become more sustainable long-term and work on improving the local Exmoor economy.

Nick Thwaites reminded everyone that the business community also included the Town and Village High Street traders and other small retail businesses on Exmoor. It was also important not to forget the tourist economy and visitor experience.

ENPA had tried not to rely on the census information because this only picked up those businesses that were registered for VAT, PAYE or business rates and it was a wider remit than that. (The official statistics listed 600 businesses registered on Exmoor).

Dan James said that the ENPA report identified approximately 1300 businesses. It included people working from home or operating as mail order or online trading. They had tried to capture as much data as possible. They had looked in parish newsletters, newspapers, social media and online as well as examining the non-domestic rates data.

### 3. Discussion Points:-

- **What Somerset Council employment land and business units are available on Exmoor? What options are available for businesses who want to expand their premises?**

Cutcombe – Low specification, basic and low rents to encourage take-up. Variable rents to suit the business space. Starter units which some existing businesses have outgrown. No opportunity to expand in the current space so they are advised to relocate but they will then lose access to the agricultural sector they work in. It will also divert future economy away from Exmoor.

Diversification of existing farm buildings to serve businesses rather than built housing. Bring buildings into use. (ENPA would support as per their local plan).

Potential to re-develop existing brown field sites. Winsford Garage was sited as an option for possible re-development.

Hot-desking facilities / Hub locations – Dulverton School (promote existing facilities). Some potential customers are not aware of the offer.

Brushford business units were unaffordable – too high a specification and very expensive. Due to a change in agent, these have now been let, but lessons should be learnt from the length of time they were vacant.

- **What employment and training opportunities are available and how are these accessed?**

Somerset Council - Beccy Brown – Where can we signpost? How do we fill the gaps? How is it accessed?

West Somerset College – Expand the offer on employment and training/skilling opportunities. A limited curriculum at present.

Access to training (dropout rate from Bridgwater Taunton College (BTC) and Richard Huish (RH) is huge from Exmoor). This is partly because transport options are limited. This applies to adult training as much as young people.

Childcare – affordability and availability – can we encourage providers to start up or widen the existing offer? Limited access to childcare provision is a barrier to people returning to work or training.

Collective transport options to reduce costs. Encourage car-sharing or private transport operators to increase access to training, and or employment. Current offer is limited.

- **Digital Connectivity and mobile coverage**

Mystified about the providers, what they are doing and where? Digital connectivity is vitally important. Not consistent across the moor, or even in the same village sometimes.

A mapping exercise to be undertaken with Connecting Devon & Somerset (CD&S). It was suggested that for commercial reasons they will be reluctant to share.

A survey of each of the parishes? Could we ask them to participate to assist with mapping of Exmoor. Would be able to identify those that don't have coverage. Advertise widely – social media, parish newsletters, email, online.

Mobile coverage – some mobile providers are reluctant to come to Exmoor because it is not commercially viable. CD&S only come when government grants are available to subsidise their offer.

What do we do with the data once it's compiled? Who do we speak to after that? Openreach? – Providers are reluctant to make decisions.

Copper line terminated in 2025. Fibre is the option going forward. What happens after 2025 to those properties not served by fibre? Nick Thwaites said that Digital will be offered but is a more expensive alternative.

Star-link satellite link is fine providing no cloud cover or fog.

Will Lock reminded everyone that aside from digital connectivity, there is also a requirement for Utility connectivity following on from new build or new development. Gas, Water and Electricity all need to be considered when converting existing buildings especially agriculture out-buildings resulting in a change of use.

#### **4. Who else needs to be here?**

- Matt Barrow – Connecting Devon and Somerset (CD&S)
- Somerset Council – Economic Regeneration colleagues. Beccy Brown preferred due to her Exmoor connections.
- Emma Thomasson - Visit Exmoor (Tourism)

#### **5. Recommendations to the Panel (SP)**

- To look at funding opportunities which would enable the appointment of a Rural Business Enabler – (ENPA have already evaluated this work and drawn up a business specification).
- Business Users and space. Look at how the current units are marketed. Identify opportunities for existing businesses to expand. Promote the Dulverton hub as a hot-desking space.
- Employment Opportunities – identify the gaps and or barriers to employment and training, and evaluate how these can be overcome.
- Connectivity: Who has broadband / mobile connectivity and how is this delivered – satellite, fibre and or mobile phone providers. Undertake a parish survey to determine who has access to wi-fi and identify any gaps.

#### **6. A.O.B. / Dates and Venues for meetings going forward**

- To be determined – it was requested that these are held every other month between the main LCN meeting. A face-to-face meeting preferred, but with the option of joining online for those that have work commitments further afield.

#### **7. Meeting closed at 6:50pm.**

DRAFT

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I hereby give you notice that a Meeting of the Exmoor LCN, Housing Sub-Group will be held at the Exmoor House, Dulverton TA22 9HL on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 5:30pm to transact the business detailed on the agenda below.

**EXMOOR LCN – HOUSING SUB-GROUP**  
**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**  
**Exmoor House, Dulverton from 5.30pm – 7.00pm**

**Expected:**

Cllr Stephen Pugsley (Chair)	Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)	Top of the Moor Rep
Cllr Frances Nicholson	Somerset Council
Will Lock	Exmoor Young Voices
Rev David Weir	Exmoor Benefice
Eric Norman	Top of the Moor Rep
Stephen Kimsey	Brendon Hills Rep
(Vacant)	Porlock Vale Rep
(Vacant)	South of the Moor Rep
Katy Attwater	Timberscombe PC
Colin McDonald	Somerset Council (Advisory)
Dean Kinsella / Ruth McArthur	Exmoor National Park Authority
Jeff Brown (Lead Officer)	Somerset Council
Sam Murrell (LCN Link Officer)	Somerset Council

**1. Apologies**

**2. Introductions**

**3. Discussion points:-**

- ENPA Local Needs Affordable Housing Assessment Final Report.
- What is Somerset Council doing to advance housing initiatives in the Rural Areas (especially Exmoor)?
- What is Somerset Council doing to bring empty homes back into use?
- What provisions are being made to facilitate local people accessing housing advice and assistance, especially around Homefinder?

**4. Who else needs to be here?**

**5. Recommendations to the Panel (SP)**

**6. A.O.B. / Dates and Venues for meetings going forward**

**7. Meeting will close at 7:00pm**





**Exmoor Local Community Network Draft Schedule of Meetings**

<b>Exmoor LCN Meeting</b>	<b>Draft Agenda Items</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>LCN Priority</b>
<b>09-Nov-23</b>			
<b>venue = The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	Apologies		
RD = Friday 27 October	Declarations of Interest		
Publishing Wednesday 1 November	Public Question Time	Clerk/Chair	Democracy
	Minutes of the previous meeting	Clerk/Chair	
	Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)	Chair	
	Avon and Somerset Police	ASP - PCSO	Partnership Working
	Somerset Connect / Minehead Eye	Paul Matcham	Partnership Working
	Exmoor LCN Highways Pilot Update	Andrew Turner / K Bridgwater / K Martin	LCN Priority
	B3224 Repair (Exmoor Ravine) Exford Update	Somerset Council Bridges Team	
	(Affordable Housing) Sub-group update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	Economic Regeneration Update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	Exmoor National Park Authority	ENPA officer	Partnership Working
	Dates of Future Meetings		
<b>11-Jan-24</b>			
<b>venue = The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	Apologies		
RD = Friday 22 December 2023	Declarations of Interest		
Publishing = Wednesday 3 January 2024	Public Question Time	Clerk/Chair	Democracy
	Minutes of the previous meeting		
	Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)	Chair	
Confirmed Oct 23 - Email agenda in December	Annual Update from the ASP Crime Commissioner	Mark Shelford ASP	Annual Update
	Avon and Somerset Police	ASP - PCSO	Partnership Working
	Exmoor LCN Highways sub-group Update	Andrew Turner / K Bridgwater / K Martin	LCN Priority
	Economic Regeneration Update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	(Affordable Housing) Sub-group update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	Exmoor National Park Authority	ENPA officer	Partnership Working
	Dates of Future Meetings		
<b>07-Mar-24</b>			
<b>venue = The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	Apologies		
RD = Friday 23 February 2024	Declarations of Interest		
Publishing = Wednesday 28 February 2024	Public Question Time	Clerk/Chair	Democracy
	Minutes of the previous meeting		
	Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)	Chair	
<b>Email in January - Diarise appointment</b>	<b>Somerset Prepared / Community Resilience</b>	<b>Nicola Dawson</b>	<b>Annual Update</b>
	Avon and Somerset Police	ASP - PCSO	Partnership Working
	Exmoor LCN Highways sub-group Update	Andrew Turner / K Bridgwater / K Martin	LCN Priority
	Economic Regeneration Update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	(Affordable Housing) Sub-group update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	Exmoor National Park Authority	ENPA officer	Partnership Working
	Dates of Future Meetings		

<b>09-May-24</b>			
<b>venue = The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe</b>	Apologies		
RD = Friday 26 April 2024	Declarations of Interest		
Publishing = Wednesday 1 May 2024	Public Question Time	Clerk/Chair	Democracy
	Minutes of the previous meeting		
	Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)	Chair	
Email in February - Diarise appointment	<b>Magna Housing Association</b>	<b>Christine Boland</b>	<b>Annual Update</b>
	Avon and Somerset Police	ASP - PCSO	Partnership Working
	Exmoor LCN Highways sub-group Update	Andrew Turner / K Bridgwater / K Martin	LCN Priority
	Economic Regeneration Update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	(Affordable Housing) Sub-group update	Chair - Lead Officer	LCN Priority
	Exmoor National Park Authority	ENPA officer	Partnership Working
	Dates of Future Meetings		
<b>Proposals from Parishes</b>			
Item of Interest - To be confirmed	5G Broadband and ENPA issues with connectivity	Duncan McCanlis - Porlock Parish Council	
	Housing Executive Member from Somerset Council	Chair / Clerk	
	Transport and Infrastructure Executive Member from Somerset Council	Roger Foxwell - Cutcombe Parish Council	
	Somerset Health Board	TBC	TBC