



Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Exmoor

Date: Thursday, 7 March 2024

Time: 7.08 pm - 9.16 pm

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

Chaired by: Steven Pugsley (Chair)

LCN core membership attendance:

Name:

Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)

Cllr Frances Nicholson

Sally Baker

Sarah Buchanan (Clerk)

Jon Levenson

Christine Dubery

Stephen Kimsey

Duncan McCannlis

Roger Webber

Philip Beauvais

Lesley Webb (Clerk)

Fran A' Brook

Colin Wilkins

Julian Soltau

Andrew Bray

PCSO Michelle Haines

Representing

Exford Parish Council

Somerset Council

Brompton Ralph PC

Brompton Regis PC

Cutcombe PC

Dulverton TC

Huischampflover PC

Porlock PC

Selworthy & Minehead Without

Skilgate PC

Timberscombe PC

Upton PC

Winsford PC

Withypool & Hawkridge PC

Wootton Courtenay PC

Avon & Somerset Police

Officer attendance:

Name:

Kirsty Larkins – SD for Climate Change

Nicola Dawson – Civil Contingencies Mngr

Kevin Bridgwater – Highways Manager

Representing

Somerset Council

Somerset Council

Somerset Council

Kali Martin -Area Highways Office
Sam Murrell (Interim Link Officer)
Pip Hughes (Interim Link Officer)
Tom Parkinson – ICT Specialist
Beccy Brown – Employment and Skills

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council

Other attendees:

Name:

Cllr Dixie Darch (PFH Climate Change)
Sam Merritt
Roger Foxwell
Nick Thwaites
Margaret Rawle
Tony Brooks
Stephen Colson

Representing

Somerset Council
Brompton Ralph PC
Cutcombe PC
Dulverton TC
Dulverton TC
Crowcombe PC
Porlock PC

Virtual attendees:

Name:

Frances Schott
Alex Farris (Conservation Officer)
Jeff Brown (Interim Lead Link Officer)

Representing

Exmoor PC
Exmoor National Park
Somerset Council

Summary of discussion:

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

Item 52: **Apologies for Absence**

Wayne Stokes (Village Agent), Norma Martin & Sally Moran (Clatworthy PC) Janette Sapsford (Exton PC), Daniel Barber (Skilgate PM), Jan Aldridge (Brushford PC), Matthew Headley (Brompton Regis PC), Katy Attwood (Timberscombe PC) Daniel Barber (Skilgate PC)

Item 53: **Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

Item 54: **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions or statements presented in

advance of the meeting.

Item 55: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record and unanimously agreed.

Item 56: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

Some comments were made about the lack of ENPA input into the Exmoor LCN meetings, and the lack of engagement from Exmoor National Park generally. There were currently no Exmoor Consultative Parish meetings scheduled in the diary and the last one had been cancelled due to lack of business. Cllr Mike Ellicott was invited to respond and stated that it was important that the parishes brought matters to the ENPA's attention. If there was a requirement for a meeting to be held, then it would take place.

Alex Farris, ENPA Conservation Officer would be joining the meeting virtually to update the Exmoor LCN on current projects including the Landscape Recovery Strategy.

In the main, matters relating to the ENPA should be discussed in the Parish Consultative Forum, which included all the Exmoor parishes, (not just those on the Somerset side).

Due to the Somerset Council financial crisis, no further work had been undertaken in respect of the Housing and Economic Regeneration sub-groups, but meetings would be diarised shortly.

Item 57: **Avon and Somerset Police**

PCSO Michelle Haines was present at the meeting and provided an update from the Exmoor Neighbourhood Beat team as follows:-

"I would like to start with an update for a protracted case that the Exmoor team have been dealing with, which was mentioned briefly at the last meeting in January.

Starting at the end of August we received numerous reports that a local male in Dulverton was causing a substantial amount of Anti-Social Behaviour in the town.

Unfortunately, this one person took up most of our time, which is why it may have seemed we were not as visible to everyone as we would normally like to be. All this work, we feel, has led to a positive result.

The male in question was subsequently charged with three counts of harassment and one public order.

He appeared in Court on 7 Feb, where he pleaded guilty to two of the charges and not guilty to the other two. He will stand trial on 18 April.

Many of the other reports that were brought to our attention were used as evidence to gain a Community Protection Notice on him. This has been served and will be in place until 8 February 2025.

This has clearly not yet reached its conclusion, and we are hoping for more positive news after the trial. **Whilst this is still going through the court process, we cannot give the name of the male.**

Other crime of note.

1 - 11/01 - Theft from van at Timberscombe with approximately £8000 of power tools stolen.

2 - 12/01 - Burglary at Brushford where several chainsaws were stolen. Possible suspect vehicle seen by a nearby resident, but police were not called!

3 - 17/01 - Burglary at Allerford where power tools and a bike were stolen.

4 - 17/01 - Burglary at Porlock Weir. High value E-bikes stolen.

5 - 19/01 - Burglary at pub in Porlock. Alcohol stolen.

6 - 27/01 - Attempt burglary Porlock.

7 - 01/02 - Burglary at Winsford. Garden tools stolen.

8 - 01/02 - Theft from vehicle at Dunster. Number plates stolen.

9 - 11/02 - Burglary, Dulverton. Unoccupied house entered. Items stolen.

10 - 12/02 - Burglary at Winsford. Stables entered and items stolen. Possibly linked to #7.

11 - 14/02 - Burglary, Dulverton. Same location as #9.

These have been non-dwelling burglaries overall. Numbers 9 and 11 at the same location are an unoccupied house. A possible offender has been identified for these and enquiries are ongoing.

I have focused on these as I feel it is important to stress to everybody that your security is reviewed regularly.

For people unfortunate enough to have been a victim of a crime like this, we have property marker kits that we provide. We can also refer people to our “Be Home Safe Team.” These will be done on a case-by-case basis.

We also have our Horse Watch and Farm Watch schemes. These can be an invaluable source of information as alerts are sent to members when crimes such as the ones mentioned here have taken place. If you want more information or would like to sign up, please ask”.

Comments arising:-

Christine Dubery, Dulverton TC thanked PCSO Haines for the police work which led to the arrest of the harassment suspect.

Andrew Bray from Wootton Courtenay PC asked if there was any further update on the wanted person – Richard Scatchard from Minehead? PCSO Haines said enquiries were ongoing but there were no updates at the present time.

Mike Ellicott, Exford PC – the public conveniences in the village had been subjected to ongoing vandalism recently, which was proving costly to repair. PCSO advised that the police had not received any reports on this. Mike Ellicott said that he would ensure a police report was filed ASAP.

PCSO Michelle Haines was thanked for her attendance and then left the meeting.

Item 58: **To receive an update on the proposed plans for the Dulverton Recycling Centre**

Cllr Dixie Darch, Lead Member for the Environment and Climate Change, and Kirsty Larkins, Service Director for Climate and

Sustainability were present to provide an update on the current situation. They had also been present at a public meeting hosted by Dulverton Town Council which took place on Tuesday 27 February. This had been very well attended, with people travelling from all parts of West Somerset to put their views. It was stressed that this meeting would not repeat the points made there.

Somerset Council had managed to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 but were in consultation with the contractor to identify savings that could be made on the existing contract and reduce costs. If a decision was made to proceed with the closures, then a county wide consultation would take place.

Cllr Dixie Darch spoke passionately about the decisions that are being made and expressed her dismay at the current financial situation. It was important that services were preserved, but the current deficit in the statutory areas of protecting the vulnerable (Adult Social Care and Children's Services) meant that Somerset Council was faced with a stark choice. Ideological concerns could not take precedence over these demands. It would be far easier, if the amount of waste going to recycling was reduced all together, either through Freecycle, reuse, restore, repairing or removing the need for the items in the first place.

Somerset was currently "well served" with the number of available recycling centres which was not a statutory service. Cost savings had to be realised to ensure that the Council could continue to operate legally.

Questions arising:-

- How are the number of visits to each recycling centre measured?

The number and type of vehicles is logged on camera and the data collated. This provides an overview of the number of visits. (It is not able to identify repeat visits from the same vehicle).

- Won't the cost of clearing up the increased fly-tipping outweigh the perceived "benefit" of closing the recycling centre?

There is an awareness that there could be an increase in

fly-tipping but it will not be more than the perceived saving that could be made. Past data has revealed that it is not usually householders that have been responsible for fly-tipping but rogue traders who have been paid to remove items, and then subsequently dumped them.

- There are currently three recycling centres in the former West Somerset Area and the proposal is to reduce this to one. This doesn't seem fair when there are "clusters" of recycling centres in other parts of the county.

From ongoing discussion with communities it has been revealed that there is a general acceptance that changes will need to be made, but there is also a perception of fairness, and that the identified savings need to be equitable across the county.

- Will the remaining sites have the capacity to cope with the increased demand? Minehead already has long queues waiting to use the site, but this could increase by at least twice as much if the alternative recycling centres close!

This is why the consultation is important. Benchmarking information is available and can be shared but it is necessary to determine who uses the existing sites, how far they travel and the nature of the waste disposed of.

- Green waste disposal – Is there a possibility of amalgamating this into the green waste kerbside collection, to reduce demand on the recycling centres?
It is a possibility but may require some legislative changes. The existing green waste collection is paid for by the householder, and usually involves the emptying of a standard green container of general garden waste. (Usually hedge and grass clippings). Recycling centres usually take larger items such as trees, or farm/agricultural debris. Again, this information needs to be captured in the consultation.

Details of the consultation will be shared on the [City, Town and Parish Councils webpage](#) once available.

Cllr Dixie Darch and Kirsty Larkins were thanked for attending

the Exmoor LCN, and then took their leave.

Item 59: **Civil Contingencies - Places of Safety and Community Resilience Grants**

Nicola Dawson, Somerset Council's Civil Contingencies Manager presented a series of slides on Building Resilience and Places of Safety. The presentation is available to view [here](#).

There was a noticeable gap in provision of places of safety on the top of the moor, and Nicola asked that those parishes considered signing up to the scheme.

Comments arising:-

Nicola was thanked for her very informative presentation, and several of the parishes indicated they would be following up with enquiries at the end of the meeting.

Some of the parishes were unaware that they had a designated place of safety but were gratified to know about the scheme. There was considerable interest in the grant schemes available.

Questions were also asked about individual ongoing grant applications, and Nicola asked that those enquiries were followed up with her at info@somersetprepared.org.uk or Nicola.dawson@somerset.gov.uk.

The Chair remarked that a Resilience Working Group would be something to consider in the future, especially for those parishes who were considering writing/updating their emergency plans.

Item 60: **Exmoor Highways Sub-group Update**

The minutes of the Exmoor Highways working group from the 23 February had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Somerset Financial Emergency

The Chair advised that following the setting of the Somerset Council 2024/25 budget, the services at risk of being cut in the Highways budget had been granted a temporary reprieve. It was now for the parishes within the Exmoor LCN to decide how they wanted to deliver on the priorities which had been set.

A letter had been circulated in the agenda pack which outlined the various services available to the LCN in respect of Highways. Somerset Council was in the process of putting together a parish price list, which would be coming from their preferred contractor, Kier. Cllr Pugsley stated it would be interesting to see whether this would be the best price from the parishes point of view. (As had been proved by the devolved funding exercise, some sub-contractors could come in at a lower price).

Highways Subgroup

The recommendations in Item 9 of the minutes were accepted. This included to continue with the Highways working group after the 31 March, and to consider working with another LCN to progress with a Highway Steward. (The Chair accepted that there was still a considerable amount of work to do to ensure fairness for the different parishes).

Christine Dubery/Dulverton Town Council were thanked for facilitating of the Devolved Funding Jetting Schemes. This had proved the value of the pilot but involved a considerable amount of Christine's personal time. It was unfair to load parish councillors (who are largely volunteers) with this level of work. It was important that an equitable way was found to administer the work, if the LCN was to succeed.

B3224 Roundwaters (Exmoor Ravine)

A public meeting to update the parishes on the progress of the scheme was due to be held at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe on Wednesday 13 March. Doors would open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. The Chair advised that this would be an information event, which would showcase the machinery and meet the contractor and engineers associated with the project.

Officers from Somerset Council Highways and Bridges/Structures would be present on the evening. Cllr Jon Levenson from Cutcombe PC thanked Ross Matthews (Somerset Council Bridges) for his efforts to ensure that the Snowdrop Valley Festival was accessible despite the diversions and disruption. It was also noted that Walters had been carrying out daily checks on the signage.

Comments on the project were very positive, and Cllrs present were grateful for the opportunities presented to visit the site and view the machinery in action.

- **Winsford PC** – Cllr Colin Wilkins highlighted the various issues arising due to the increased traffic flow through the village – damaged verges, mud on the road and general deterioration of the road surface. Kali Martin said that Somerset Highways were monitoring the situation and would carry out remedial works once the work had been completed. It had been suggested to site some temporary SIDS in the village to address the anti-social driving.

Winter Maintenance

Kevin and Kali were present at the meeting, and advised that the new Somerset Council contractor, Keir would be starting on April 1, 2024. (Taking over from Milestone).

There were currently 900 jobs outstanding on the highways portal, which was sometimes recording up to 300 new incidents daily. These would back up if other emergency response work took priority. Overall, the winter had been very mild on Exmoor, with more water than ice/snow falling. This had reduced pressures on the gritting service, which was a relief. It was envisaged that the full complement of gritters would be available for the 2024/25 winter.

Item 61: **Exmoor National Park Authority**

Alex Farris, Natural Environment Manager from ENPA, joined the meeting virtually and presented a series of slides on Landscape Recovery. The presentation can be viewed [here](#).

More information on Farming in Protected Landscapes and how to access the funding can be found on the [ENPA website](#).

Some questions were raised to do with ENPA matters, but it was decided that the Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum would be a more appropriate place to air these concerns.

Item 62: **Dates of Future Meetings**

There would be a public meeting held on Wednesday 13 March at The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe to review the Roundwater B3224 project. Doors will open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. It will be a chance to meet the contractor (Walters) and view some videos of the machinery in action.

Cllr Jon Levenson highlighted that the 8 parishes, Rural Housing Meeting Group was convening on the 20 March 2024. It would be good for the respective parishes to send a representative.

Contact officer for meeting: Sam Murrell sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk