

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Tuesday 1 September 2015
Winsford Village Hall, Winsford**

Highway Wardens Meeting at 6.30 pm

Highway Warden representatives from parish councils met with Somerset Highways to discuss various issues with a particular emphasis on proposed arrangements for winter highway maintenance.

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	J Stringer, Brompton Regis PC
C Knight, Brushford PC Clerk	V White, Cutcombe PC
J Davis, Cutcombe PC	J Anson, Cutcombe PC
E Norman, Cutcombe PC	M Rawle, Dulverton TC
M Willison, Dulverton TC	L Schofield, Dulverton TC
M Ellicott, Exford PC	A Vigars, Exmoor PC
D Sherrin, Exton PC	D Powell, Luxborough PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	T Howard, Withypool & Hawkridge PC
J Edwards	I Liddell-Grainger, MP
B Stevens, Avon & Somerset Constabulary	F Nicholson, SCC
F Gabb, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	T Saunders, ENPA
D Peake & K Harwood, SCC Highways	N Thwaites, WSC
B Heywood, WSC	B Lang, WSC

1 Have Your Say

1.1 No issues were raised under this item.

2. Apologies for Absence

2.1 R Manicom (Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service), West Somerset Councillors R Clifford and K Mills, Councillor A Sparling (Luxborough PC), Councillor P Griffin (Wootton Courtenay PC) and Councillor J Hickman (Exford PC).

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2015 and Matters Arising

3.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3.2 Matters arising: The response from the Watch Manager from Dulverton Fire Station to a question raised at the previous meeting was set out in a note to the minutes.

3.3 It was confirmed that the police were advised that the Exmoor Panel had unanimously agreed to support Cutcombe Parish Council in its request for funding towards a CCTV camera with vehicle registration recognition in the village.

4 Police Issues

- 4.1 PSCO B Stevens reported on incidences of crime that had occurred in the Panel area since the last meeting.
- 4.2 He particularly highlighted a spate of thefts of fuel from vehicles in the parishes of Winsford and Exford. It appeared that these incidents were happening during the night and given that there were likely to be additional police resources in the area for a period of time during the forthcoming badger cull, it was the intention to take the opportunity to increase night time patrols of the Exmoor area which may help with this particular issue.
- 4.3 A point was raised that it was proving difficult to access the information under the police's "track your crime" system; PSCO Stevens said that he would look into the particular matter raised and would also report these concerns to relevant colleagues.
- 4.4 A general point was raised that it was felt that there were less police resources available in the Exmoor Panel area than there used to be which was a major concern for the long term.
- 4.5 Cutcombe Parish Council reported that they were struggling to make progress on their ambition to secure funding to install a CCTV system including vehicle registration number recognition in the village.
- 4.6 It was agreed that further representations would be made to the police at the appropriate level to reinforce the Panel's support of this project; a copy of this correspondence would be provided to the Member of Parliament for the area (who was present at the meeting) so that he could lend his support.

5 SCC Highways

- 5.1 David Peake and Karin Harwood from Somerset County Council attended for this item and went through the planned works in the Exmoor Area Panel as set out in the appendix to the minutes of this meeting.
- 5.2 Specific mention was made of proposed flood alleviation works at Luckwell Bridge which were to be undertaken in conjunction with Wessex Water Authority. The first phase of the works were due to be carried out during the third week in September with the second phase to be undertaken sometime in 2016.
- 5.3 Good news was reported in that there had been some money made available to do more work – on a priority needs basis – to clear gullies.
- 5.4 A request was made from SCC Highways for the parishes to let them know about any properties that were liable to flood so that they could be considered for assistance from the flood alleviation scheme.
- 5.5 In response to a question, the Somerset Highways representatives agreed to look into concerns regarding the variable quality of surface dressing work that had been carried out in the parish of Clatworthy.

6. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues

- 6.1 Frank Gabb reported that there were no issues of note to report in respect of activities for the Dulverton Fire Station since the last meeting of the Panel.
- 6.2 He added that his colleague at Porlock had asked him to mention that a new response vehicle was being trialled at the Porlock station that enabled a response to be initially made by at least two or three persons (as opposed to the current requirement for at least four operatives to be available). This would enable a quicker response to be made to carry out preparation/exploratory work in advance of a main pump attending. If any further information be desired on this initiative the parishes were requested to contact Rob Manicom of the Porlock Fire Station via West Somerset Council.

7. Exmoor National Park Authority Issues

- 7.1 Tessa Saunders confirmed that the consultation period for the Exmoor National Park Local Plan had expired on 31 July 2015. 120 responses had been received including 400 individual comments that would be carefully considered.
- 7.2 A briefing session as part of the next ENPA Consultative was to be held in regard to the roll out of phase two of the broadband project on 24 September 2015 at 7.00 pm at Moorland Hall, Cutcombe. Parishes were encouraged to send along a representative.
- 7.3 The Chairman congratulated Councillors Ellicott and White for being elected as parish representatives on the Exmoor National Park Authority.

8. Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update

- 8.1 Councillor M Rawle enquired of both West Somerset Council and Somerset County Council as to the possibility of continuing with funding the project in regard to 2016/17 financial year.
- 8.2 The Somerset County Councillor indicated that it was most unlikely that the County Council would be able to find funds for the project and West Somerset Council confirmed that their annual contribution would be included in the draft revenue budget but, at this stage, no guarantee could be made.
- 8.3 Councillor Rawle indicated that a letter would be sent out to all participating parishes advising them that in the event of funding not being forthcoming from SCC and WSC, the cost per hour of the Lengthsman Scheme would need to be increased and enquiring whether the councils still wished to go ahead with the scheme. All parishes were requested to respond promptly so that decisions could be made in regard to the future of the scheme in good time.

9. Items brought forward by Parishes

- 9.1 None at this stage.

10. Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2016/17

- 10.1 Bruce Lang handed out copies of a consultation document on a council tax rebate scheme for 2016/17 operated by West Somerset Council.
- 10.2 The document provided individuals with the opportunity of indicating any preference to proposed options for funding of the West Somerset council tax rebate scheme for 2016/17. Responses needed to be completed by 7 September 2015.

11. Isolation and Loneliness Conference

- 11.1 Parishes were encouraged to send representatives to the 'Let's make isolation and loneliness history in West Somerset' conference which was to be held on Saturday 17 October 2015 at 9.15 am at The Beach Hotel, Minehead.

12. Historic Signposts Update

- 12.1 The Somerset County Councillor reported that a steering group had been set up to organise a project to renovate historic signposts in the Exmoor Panel area.
- 12.2 The first phase of the project would be to conduct a survey of these signs so that they can be accurately recorded to then enable decisions to be made in regard to priorities for renovation.
- 12.3 In this regard a meeting was to be held on 11 September 2015 at Winsford Village Hall commencing at 2.00 pm with a view to identifying volunteers to undertake the research element of the project. The County Councillor would be providing delicious homemade cake (which came highly recommended!) as an incentive for attendees!
- 12.4 It was hoped that the recording element of the project could be undertaken within a 6-8 week period after which the focus would be on making appropriate bids for funding to carry out renovation works.

13. Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP

- 13.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, the local MP who was present at the meeting briefly addressed the Panel.
- 13.2 He confirmed that it would continue to be central government policy to keep tight control of the public purse and this would obviously have implications for local public services particularly in rural areas such as Exmoor and it was therefore important that the local community and local authorities worked together to find ways of dealing with this challenge. He acknowledged that in some instances it would be very difficult for areas such as Exmoor to provide services themselves and he would be making representations on this issue.

- 13.3 He indicated that he was also concerned at the apparent reducing police resource available in rural areas such as Exmoor and had been making representations to the Police and Crime Commissioner in this regard.
- 13.4 He highlighted the ongoing problem of recruiting volunteers for the fire service and asked that if anybody knew of anyone interested in putting themselves forward to encourage them to do so.
- 13.5 He was hopeful that further news would be forthcoming on the future of the Hinkley Point C project by the end of the year which he hoped would be good news for job creation. This was especially important particularly having regard to the very sad news that the Paper Mill at Watchet was due to be closed by the end of December 2015 with the loss of 176 jobs.
- 13.6 Finally, he acknowledged that further work was still needed to be done to support the tourism industry which was essential to the future economic wellbeing of the area.

14. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 3 November 2015 at 7.00 pm – Winsford Village Hall, Winsford
- 19 January 2016 at 7.00 pm – Winsford Village Hall, Winsford
- 3 March 2016 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm