

**EXMOOR PANEL  
MINUTES  
Tuesday 4 November 2014  
Winsford Village Hall, Winsford**

**Those present:**

S Pugsley (Chair)	V White, Cutcombe PC
C Knight, Brushford PC	N Thwaites, Dulverton TC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	J Hickman, Exford PC
B Martin, Exford PC	D Langley, Exton PC
F Rawle, Exton PC	A Sparling, Luxborough PC
D Powell, Luxborough PC	B Flanagan, Winsford PC
D Walker, Skilgate Parish	D Godsal, Winsford PC
K Lindop, Winsford PC	T Howard, Withypool & Hawkridge PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	T Saunders, ENPA
PCSO B Stevens, Avon & Somerset Constabulary	F Nicholson, SCC
F Gabb, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	B Lang, WSC
K Mills, WSC	
D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways	

**1 Have Your Say**

- 1.1 There were no matters raised under this item which could not be discussed under headings later on the agenda.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

- 2.1 John Edwards, Councillor M Ellicott (Exford PC), Councillor R Webber (Cutcombe PC), West Somerset Councillors K Ross and B Heywood, and Rob Manicom (Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service).

**3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 September 2014 and Matters Arising**

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

3.2 Matters arising:

- In respect of paragraph 5.5, Withypool Parish Council reported that they had not received a report back from Tony Murray of Magna West Somerset Housing Association and it was agreed that a reminder would be sent.

**4 Police Issues**

- 4.1 PC B Stevens made reference to problems that had arisen as a result of the badger cull being held in the area. He explained that the police had a duty to allow legal protests but would and did tackle any clear criminal offences. There had been difficulties in identifying potential offenders and also knowing how to treat sensitively acts that could have been considered as demonstrating anti-social behaviour.

- 4.2 PC Stevens made a point of praising the local population for showing great restraint and tolerance relating to this issue and it was requested that the police could perhaps make this view more publically known.
- 4.3 The use of static cages had been the cause of rising crime figures as these had been often targeted for damage/theft.
- 4.4 The point was also made that when quoting the costs of the cull it should be made clear that the local landowners/farmers paid for the cull being carried out on their land and the government had to cover the costs of extra policing to deal with protestors.
- 4.5 PC Stevens raised the issue that had been causing local concern regarding poaching and illegal shooting of red deer. He reiterated that it was an absolute offence to shoot deer at night even by landowners. A public meeting had been held recently in Exford to discuss the problem and it was hoped that this would have raised awareness that could help reduce instances of such crime in the future.
- 4.6 A rural crime team had been established to spread the expertise within the police force of rural issues.
- 4.7 He also confirmed that there had been a recent trend for an increase in non-dwelling burglaries of outside buildings such as sheds and garages and encouraged people to be vigilant.

## **5 SCC Highways**

- 5.1 Karin Harwood and David Peake from Somerset County Council Highways attended this item and went through the planned works in the Exmoor Panel area – please see attached document at Appendix A.
- 5.2 Particular reference was made in regard to the proposed Dunster closure that was going to be a 24/7 closure running from 5 January 2015 until 31 March 2015. A public consultation event had been held in Dunster the previous week with over 150 people attending. Some frequently answered questions and the proposed diversion routes would be publicised and West Somerset Council agreed to help publicise such information when it was made available. The County Council would work jointly with Wessex Water in respect of the publicity campaign.
- 5.3 Special arrangements would be made for school buses to be allowed through at two specified times on school days and obviously for emergency vehicles. The other concession was that when the Brendan Hills road suffered from winter weather then the closure would be temporarily lifted.
- 5.4 Cutcombe Parish Council confirmed that the Snowdrop Valley event would still proceed and there was a request for well-lit diversion signs to be used. Wootton Courtenay Parish Council had also raised concerns at the impact of having additional traffic being diverted through the village and had requested signs to encourage drivers to keep to a maximum speed of 20 mph.
- 5.5 In response to a question the Highways representatives confirmed that work on the Winsford Ford should be being undertaken within the next two weeks.

- 5.6 It was reported that EDF Energy would be making a public statement regarding proposals for the construction of a roundabout at Washford Cross – it was being planned to ensure that there would be no overlap with the Dunster street closures.
- 5.7 In response to a question the Highways representatives confirmed that surface dressing work was still being monitored before being signed off due to concerns about the quality of what had been undertaken.
- 5.8 A request was made for the Highway Authority to give consideration to the use of salt bags as many of these were being eaten through by cows.
- 5.9 The Highways representatives also confirmed that discussions had been held with the Exmoor National Park with a view to working in partnership to enable fingerposts to be repainted. The plan was to accumulate a pot of money partially through a bidding process and for the County Council to carry out the works themselves. To assist this all parish councils would be asked to nominate say their top five priority fingerposts for renovation so that a programme of work could be undertaken during the remainder of the current financial year. Information in respect of how to submit requests for priority work would be circulated when available.
- 5.10 In response to a comment the Highways representatives agreed to take back an observation that the website which should be able to be used to report highway matters was not working properly.
- 5.11 The Highways representatives were thanked for a most useful discussion.

## **6 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

- 6.1 Frank Gabb reported that since the last Panel meeting the Porlock Station had responded to 32 co-responder calls and 5 fire calls whilst the Dulverton Station had responded to 27 co-responder calls and 12 fire calls.
- 6.2 Both stations were still encountering problems with recruiting new officers and parishes were asked to spread the word to encourage people to apply.

## **7 Exmoor National Park Authority**

- 7.1 Tessa Saunders reported that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which was a statutory part of the local plan process was about to be considered by the Council within the next few weeks. This document will identify potential suitable sites for housing and settlements and it was stressed that the inclusion of any site in the document did not guarantee that planning permission would be forthcoming and in any event permission would only be considered if the need was there for local affordable housing. Representatives of the parishes were asked to explain this when the matter became public as there was often some misunderstanding of the status of this process.
- 7.2 In response to a question Tessa Saunders confirmed that the Exmoor National Park was working closely with the mobile infrastructure project to try to achieve the right balance between securing greater mobile phone coverage in the National Park without damaging the natural environment.

## **8. Hinkley Tourist Action Partnership**

- 8.1 Councillor Karen Mills advised the Panel that as part of the Section 106 Planning Mitigation Agreement in respect of the site preparation works for the new Hinkley Point Nuclear Reactor, the sum of £160,000 per year for a two year period had been secured for an action plan to support the local tourism economy. A partnership consisting of West Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council had been set up to liaise with tourism businesses and organisations/stakeholders including the Exmoor National Park, the Exmoor Tourist Association, EDF Energy and the Somerset Tourism Association, had met and drafted a strategy that would be made available for consultation.
- 8.2 An initial proposal was going to the West Somerset Council the next day to consider allocating a sum of £40,000 to undertake a monitoring survey by an outside body to help inform what mitigating actions the balance of available money should be spent on to address challenges that the development might have on the local tourism industry. For example, potential visitors could be put off from selecting the area as a holiday destination or find that travelling to and from would be hindered by delays. It was made clear that this pot of money was not available for individual businesses to bid into but should be used on actions that would benefit the industry as a whole.
- 8.3 Councillor Mills encouraged any of the parishes to let her know of any ideas for the use of the funding that she could discuss with the partnership. Councillor Mills' West Somerset Council email address is [kmills@westsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:kmills@westsomerset.gov.uk)
- 8.4 One example raised at the meeting was for some of the money to be used to help fund the renovations of fingerposts referred to earlier in the meeting and Councillor Mills agreed to take this idea back for consideration.

## **9 Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update**

- 9.1 Dulverton Town Council representatives reported that letters had gone out to all existing parishes that were part of the scheme asking if they wished to re-join for the 2015/16 financial year with a deadline being given of 31 December 2014 for responses.
- 9.2 It was stressed that it was very important for parishes to respond within this timescale and the Town Council were asked to email a copy of the letter to West Somerset Council so that it could be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

## **10 Items brought forward by Parishes**

- 10.1 None

## **11 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings**

- 20 January 2015 at 7.00pm – Winsford Village Hall
- 5 March 2015 at 7.00pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm