

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Thursday 6 March 2014
Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross**

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	R Webber, Cutcombe PC
C Knight, Brushford PC	M Rawle, Dulverton TC
J Davis, Cutcombe PC	J Hickman, Exford PC
M Ellicott, Exford PC	J Parsons, Timberscombe PC
W Hellewell, Timberscombe PC	P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	T Saunders, ENPA
B Stevens, Avon and Somerset Constabulary	J Edwards
F Nicholson, SCC	B Lang, WSC
K J Ross, WSC	
K Turner, Brompton Ralph PC and WSC	
R Cooksey, Somerset Rural Youth Project	
L Tasker, P Watts-Mabbott, D Weir, Exmoor Community Youth Club	

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 F Gabb and R Manicom, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service; District Councillors B Heywood and K Mills; D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways; Councillors N Thwaites and R Coyne, Dulverton TC.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 January 2014 and Matters Arising

- 2.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.
- 2.2 Agreed that a reminder be sent to Simon Edwards, the Commissioning Manager of the Clinical Commissioning Group requesting any further information regarding response times as referred to in paragraph 5.9 of the minutes.
- 2.3 Agreed that the Somerset County Councillor would remind Highways officers to provide clarity regarding the clearing of blockages under and around bridges; Exmoor Parish Council was still awaiting feedback on this matter.

3 Exmoor Community Youth Club

- 3.1 The Panel received a presentation by Patrick Watts-Mabbott and the Rev David Weir regarding the activities of the Exmoor Community Youth Club. The presentation took the form of a slide show together with a short video.
- 3.2 The Exmoor Community Youth Club is for young people between the ages of 6 and 18 from all across the Exmoor area. The Club is well attended and endeavours to engage its members with the local Exmoor environment and also gain wider prospective of areas outside of the moor.
- 3.3 Councillor Roger Webber suggested that parishes should consider donating to this worthwhile cause as many of its own youngsters were benefiting from its activities.

3.4 The Club was self-funding with six trustees who were responsible for fund raising to cover the costs of the Club's activities.

3.5 The Chairman thanked the presenters for a most interesting presentation.

4 Somerset Rural Youth Project (SRYP)

4.1 Ruth Cooksey made a presentation to the Panel regarding the Somerset Rural Youth Project which had been in existence since 1997.

4.2 The Project had two main areas of activities:

- a) Rural employment and learning, including such initiatives as the Moped Loan Scheme and training for rural skills.
- b) Clubs and communities through which approximately 50 clubs were supported, including undertaking DBS checking for youth leaders.

4.3 Ruth explained that the precise activities undertaken were, by necessity, somewhat funding driven.

4.4 A question was asked as to whether the Project had close links with the West Somerset College and Ruth undertook to check on this and feedback to the Panel.

4.5 Ruth provided copies of a booklet for members of the Panel to take away; the appropriate website is www.sryp.org.uk

4.6 The Chairman thanked Ruth for her presentation.

Administrator's Note: Following the meeting, the following response was provided by SRYP on paragraph 4.4 above – "At present we are not actively working with West Somerset College. We do have a link via our CEO, Nik Harwood, and Marguerite Bowden who is involved with their vocational courses. We certainly would be happy to consider undertaking work with them in the future, should you or they become aware of any opportunities where this might happen."

5 Police Issues

5.1 PCSO Bryan Stevens reported that a very small number of crimes had occurred in the Exmoor Panel area since the last Panel meeting including one violent incident and two thefts from motor vehicles in Dulverton; some signs being stolen from the Snowdrop Valley park and ride scheme; a domestic incident at Exford and criminal damage to a vehicle at Simonsbath.

5.2 In response to a claim that in Devon when somebody attempted to report a poaching incident it was not taken seriously, Bryan indicated that this should not be an acceptable practice and urged anybody to report such incidents in West Somerset and persist to make sure that they are recorded; any problems please contact himself or a colleague direct.

5.3 In response to a question about what checks were done on holders of firearms licences, Bryan confirmed that all licence holders are visited prior to applying for renewal and they would investigate any claims of suspicious activity regarding firearms.

- 5.4 In response to a question Bryan confirmed that if somebody was confident that they were aware of the specifics of an alleged incident of poaching they could dial 999 if the act was still in progress but if reporting a rumour or something that has happened previously the number 101 should be used.
- 5.5 It was also reported that as far as anyone was aware, no one in West Somerset currently holds a Defra licence to shoot deer and deer should not be shot in the dark (after an hour after sunset or before an hour before sunrise).
- 5.6 Bryan reminded everyone that the Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable were attending the Beach Hotel, Minehead on 25 March 2014 and encouraged people from rural areas to attend the event to make sure that the prospective of rural areas was properly represented.

6 SCC Highways

- 6.1 In the absence of a representative from SCC Highways, attached is the appropriate progress report as an appendix to these minutes.
- 6.2 The following points were raised to be passed on to SCC Highways:
- a) A request to know when resurfacing work at Fore Street, Dulverton was to be undertaken.
 - b) A request that parking lines in Fore Street, Dulverton should be marked out in an echelon fashion.
 - c) A request that the surface of Chapel Street, Dulverton needed to be properly reinstated.
 - d) Higher Riscombe, Exford – an application for a licence to cut trees had been outstanding for at least 10 weeks and it was agreed that Exmoor National Park would look into this and any update provided to the members of the Panel.
 - e) Hawkwell Lane, Dulverton – was full of potholes.
 - f) Gulland, Dulverton – a landslip had not been sorted out.
 - g) Northbank Farm, Knightcott, Brushford – poor road surface.
 - h) Bridge Sully's Corner, Timberscombe – landslide waiting to be sorted out.
 - i) Landslide near Church, Timberscombe – not been sorted out.
 - j) Thorne Lane, Cutcombe – in poor condition.
 - k) A section of road between Wootton Courtenay and Burrow was flooded.
- 6.3 A discussion then ensued stating that it would be helpful if members of the Panel could be properly advised as to what were the most appropriate processes/procedures to be followed to approach/raise matters with the Highways Authority to get things done.
- 6.4 It was explained that generally speaking any reported matters would be kept under review by the Highways Authority with the order of repairs being determined primarily on public safety considerations.
- 6.5 A view was expressed that there could be a risk of highways resources being prioritised elsewhere in Somerset especially in the Levels area given the recent flooding problems.

Administrator's Note: Following the meeting, Tessa Saunders, Planning Policy Officer, ENPA provided a response to paragraph 6.2, d) – "A Felling Licence is always issued by the Forestry Commission. Any case within Exmoor National Park is passed to Graeme McVittie at Exmoor National Park Authority (who is also the

Forestry Commission Woodland Officer) to make a recommendation and the licence would be signed by the Forestry Commission Area Field Manager.

The Forestry Commission (FC) received a felling licence application for the trees in November last year (near Higher Riscombe Farm, Exford). A case file was generated and the file should have been passed to the FC Woodland Officer at the Authority. However, the file failed to appear and therefore the case has not been progressed as the file seems to have gone missing somewhere in the FC office. Our understanding is that there is unlikely to have been any technical problem issuing a licence but we have only just become aware that there seems to be some administrative problem. The matter has already been highlighted and is being addressed.”

7 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

7.1 There was no representative present at the meeting.

8 Exmoor National Park Authority

8.1 Tessa Saunders reported that officers were in the process of analysing responses to the recent consultation process on the Local Plan. 143 responses had been received making in the region of 900 individual points.

8.2 Some progress had been made in regard to the provision of affordable housing with 82 units being completed and of 195 occupants, 80% of these were aged 39 or under.

8.3 There were also proposals to make planning policy regarding affordable housing more flexible to encourage the provision of more affordable units, for example through the cross-subsidy with market housing.

8.4 A “call for housing sites” have been made since January and there was just over a week left for any further submissions to be made.

8.5 A change in legislation meant that the conversion of redundant farm buildings would not be permissible as part of permitted development within National Parks.

8.6 Concern was expressed at the levels of social landlord rents that would be too high for people on local wages.

8.7 Councillor Roger Webber encouraged as many people as possible to attend Exmoor National Park consultation forums to discuss and raise affordable housing issues.

8.8 Councillor Keith Turner, as portfolio holder for housing at the District Council reported that he had set up a meeting with the agents for the Crown Estate to discuss worrying rumours that the Crown were proposing to sell up a considerable number of properties in West Somerset which could have the impact of making many of its current tenants homeless.

9 Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Update

- 9.1 Councillor Margaret Rawle, speaking on behalf of the Clerk to Dulverton Town Council reported that £3,000 contribution from West Somerset Council towards the Lengthsman Scheme for the 2014/15 financial year had been confirmed.
- 9.2 The Clerk was very disappointed at the lack of response to her request for participating parishes to confirm their continued involvement for 2014/15 financial year and for the slow response to the request for the payment of respective contributions.
- 9.3 Further work was being done to chase up on this issue with parishes over the next few days.
- 9.4 Councillor Turner reported that the Brendon Hills sub-group of parishes had indicated that they were keen to join the scheme and Councillor Rawle welcomed this initiative as this could increase the chances of the scheme continuing to be sustainable in the future.

10 Items on Future Agendas

- 10.1 After some discussion it was agreed not to make any changes to the current format of agendas for the Exmoor Panel but to keep the matter under continuous review.

11 Somerset Minerals Plan

- 11.1 A notice providing details of a consultation process on the Somerset Minerals Plan was attached to the agenda indicating that the public consultation period would run from 3 March to 14 April 2014 and appropriate details could be found at www.somerset.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste
- 11.2 Councillor Roger Webber reported that he was frustrated that current regulations by the Environment Agency resulted in aggregates removed from local rivers having to be taken out of the area for special treatment rather than being recycled usefully locally. It was explained that this was due to the current regulations relating to the risk of contamination from crayfish eggs.

12 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 19 June 2014 at 7.00pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 2 September 2014 at 7.30pm (Warden's Meeting at 6.30pm) – Winsford Village Hall
- 4 November 2014 at 7.00pm – Winsford Village Hall
- 20 January 2015 at 7.00pm – Winsford Village Hall
- 5 March 2015 at 7.00pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm