

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Thursday 7 March 2013
Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross**

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	
C Knight, Brushford PC	R Webber, Cutcombe PC
J Davis, Cutcombe PC	R Coyne, Dulverton TC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	N Thwaites, Dulverton TC
J Hickman, Exford PC	M Ellicott, Exford PC
P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC	T Saunders, ENPA
J Edwards	F Nicholson, SCC
K Ross, WSC	K Turner, WSC
Bruce Lang, WSC	

1 Election of Chairman

- 1.1 Agreed that Councillor S Pugsley be elected as Chairman for the ensuing 12 month period.

2 Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 A Vigers, Exmoor PC; A Palmer, Porlock PC; B Foster, Selworthy and Minehead Without PC; D Peake, Somerset County Council Highways; Cllr K Mills, WSC

3 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

- 3.1 The Chairman reported that the current Vice-Chairman, Councillor C Nelder, had indicated that for personal reasons he did not wish for his name to be put forward. The Panel unanimously agreed to place on record its thanks to Councillor Nelder for his efforts as Vice-Chairman of the Panel over the last few years.
- 3.2 Agreed that Councillor M Ellicott be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing 12 months.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2012 and Matters Arising

- 2.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.
- 2.2 Around the table discussion then ensued regarding an update of the Community Right to Bid scheme when it was acknowledged that already several local land/buildings had been included on the list of Assets of Community Value in West Somerset and more were likely to come forward in the near future. Various questions about the process were asked and answered.

5 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues

- 5.1 The Area Commander for Somerset, Nick Manning, attended and explained the financial challenges facing the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

- 5.2 A 10.3% reduction in funding for the current year had been imposed equating to £5.5 million with a further 7.3% reduction in funding expected for next year.
- 5.3 The good news was that to date there were no implications on the fire fighting services provided in the Exmoor Panel area.
- 5.4 There were, however, implications for the co-responder service currently provided and commissioned by the Ambulance Trust.
- 5.5 Currently the service would only receive payment if its co-responders attended an incident within 8 minutes of the call and 46% of events fell outside of this target and therefore would not receive payment.
- 5.6 The fire service were therefore consulting on the possibility of co-responders being contacted direct by the ambulance service (rather than routed through the fire service) and having the emergency vehicles with them at all times rather than having to go to the fire station at Dulverton to collect them in response to a call. Furthermore, at present, two staff responded to a call and it was being considered that this be reduced to one staff member to reduce delays to a minimum.
- 5.7 This proposal was currently out for consultation. It was recognised that in the Exmoor area this could cause particular problems as it would not be possible for some of the co-responders to deliver this service as they could not take the emergency vehicles to work on a day-by-day basis. There was a concern that a “one size would fit all” approach would not work for rural areas. The Area Commander emphasised that this was an opportunity for the local community to shape the service and urged people to respond – the appropriate address for the consultation was www.dsfire.gov.uk.
- 5.8 Agreed that a response be submitted to the consultation on behalf of the Panel expressing concern that imposing a one size fits all approach and seeking a fit for purpose/flexible action for rural areas such as Exmoor.
- 5.9 Agreed that an email be sent to all parishes encouraging them to respond directly to the consultation and to the local MP to support the local community in this regard.
- 5.10 Agreed that a representative from the ambulance service be invited to a future meeting of the Panel to discuss the provision of the ambulance service in the Exmoor Panel area.

6 Police Issues

- 6.1 No representative from the Police was in attendance. It was reported that from the end of March 2013 Inspector Lisa Simpson would be leaving her role as the local inspector to take up a new position at the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Headquarters in Clevedon. The Panel were very appreciative of Inspector Simpson’s work during her period as local inspector.
- 6.2 Concerns were expressed by members of the Panel in regard to the effectiveness of the “101” number.
- 6.3 A member of the Panel also raised the issue that he had tried to use the police email enquiry service but to date had not received a satisfactory response.

6.4 Panel members expressed their deep regret that no police representative had been able to attend the meeting as their input was always invaluable and much appreciated.

7 Somerset County Council Highways Issues

7.1 David Peake had given his apologies and had circulated a list of completed on-going and future works for the Exmoor Panel area – attached at Appendix A.

7.2 Panel members were sorry that David had been unable to attend and looked forward to his future attendance.

7.3 Flooding Issues

7.3.1 David had submitted information to the effect that on 27 March 2013 a meeting of relevant agencies was to be held to discuss flooding issues and consider potential for further meetings/workshops and for the scoping up of more detailed action plans.

7.3.2 On 28 March 2013 a public meeting was to be held at the Town Hall at Dulverton at 7pm with Somerset County Council Highways and Bridges being in attendance, together with representatives from the Exmoor National Park Authority and the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. The public were invited to attend to raise their concerns.

The Panel wished that the following key issues be put forward:

- (a) to review the current policy regarding how close cut timber could be left to the riverbank to avoid the risk of it being washed into the rivers and causing an obstruction;
- (b) to review the policy for clearing debris from bridges as did not seem to be as effective as in the past;
- (c) the general point of encouraging the relevant agencies to coordinate their work more effectively.

7.4 Snow Issues

7.4.1 The Panel asked that County Council to provide some clarity of who was responsible for what in terms of clearing up debris after bad snow weather. The point was also raised that, particularly in the Exford area, salt bags had not been refilled very quickly.

7.5 Pot Holes

7.5.1 An observation was made that, at least in some instances, material for the filling of pot holes had been transported from Bristol and this did not seem the best way to approach the issue.

7.6 Brompton Regis Issue

7.6.1 County Council was asked to clarify whether the proposed works scheduled in Brompton Regis were due to take 7 weeks commencing on 11 March or would be completed on 11 March.

7.7 Proposed Emergency Routes

7.7.1 Plans were circulated showing proposed emergency routes to be used in the event of the A39 having to be closed.

7.7.2 A specific point was made that one of the diversion routes appeared to direct lorries through Dunster and this was clearly not appropriate. A more general point was made that it was not considered that the consultation process was sufficiently robust by just circulating plans to meetings, it was hoped that all efforts would be taken to ensure that the detailed views of the community were gathered and taken into account on this very important matter.

7.8 Email link on website

7.8.1 A member of the Panel made the point that the email link on the website did not appear to work and following making an enquiry it had been removed. The view was that it would be very useful for a workable email link to be provided on the Highways website so that members of the public could search for proposed works in their particular area.

7.9 Ironman 2013

7.9.1 Following the meeting the following information was supplied regarding the Ironman 2013 event.

Date: 16 June 2013

Event Live: From Thursday through to Sunday evening

Athletes: 1,300

Road Closure Times: 7am to 2pm (depending on location, some roads open earlier, a full schedule will follow)

Website: <http://www.ironmanuk.com/uk-ironman-703>

Race Week Schedule: <http://www.ironmanuk.com/index.php/uk-ironman-703/event-information/race-week-schedule>

Bike Course Map:

http://www.bikemap.net/route/1529368#lat=51.075205109036&lng=-3.3526767822267&zoom=11&maptype=ts_terrain

8 Exmoor National Park Authority Issues

8.1 Draft Local Plan was due to be signed off in July as a draft for consultation when all parishes would have the opportunity to comment on the policy proposals.

8.2 In response to a question as to how the National Park work with West Somerset Council in the preparation of their respective local plans, it was confirmed that the authorities had a duty to cooperate under the legislation and did work together closely on this issue.

8.3 It was reported that the affordable housing project in Porlock was due for completion in June.

8.4 Members of the Panel were also encouraged to lobby BT regarding issues with broadband in an effort to secure better coverage in the Exmoor area.

9. Parish Lengthsman Scheme

- 9.1 Councillor Nelder reported that the scheme operates on an annual basis from 1 April each year. Although there had been some ambition to extend the scheme and review certain roads of operation, due to the on-going uncertainty about the funding it had been agreed to continue the scheme from 1 April 2013 on a similar basis to the current year with 11 parishes contributing. He expressed his thanks to West Somerset Council for continuing their funding contribution and the efforts Councillor Mills in particular. County Councillor Frances Nicholson had also been successful in lobbying for some funding from the County Council to be made available to the Lengthsman Scheme.
- 9.2 The intention was to review the operation of the scheme in July to be in a better position to plan for any changes for the following year.
- 9.3 All Panel members expressed their thanks to Councillor Nelder and Dulverton Town Council for their on-going work in supporting/running the scheme and acknowledged that some financial recompense should be forthcoming to the town council should funds be available.

10 Implications of the new Housing Benefit Impacts on Parish Precepts

- 10.1 Bruce Lang reported that from 1 April 2013 council tax support would take the form of reductions within the council tax system replacing national council tax benefit. This would have the effect of reducing a billing authority's council tax base and consequently the amount of council tax obtained. The District Council had worked with parish and town councils to minimise any detrimental impact and generally this had been achieved in respect of 2013/14.
- 10.2 It had been recognised, nevertheless, that some confusion had occurred due to the late availability of information from central government and some mixed messages.
- 10.3 It was therefore important that in regard to future financial years that parish and town councils should think ahead and contact the West Somerset Council Finance Team in early stage to clarify the current position and plan for setting the following years precept.

11 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 20 June 2013 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 3 September 2013 at 6.30pm (Warden's meeting) at Winsford Village Hall
- 7 November 2013 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross (note change from 5 November as originally scheduled)
- 23 January 2014 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 6 March 2014 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm