

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Thursday 19 June 2014
Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross**

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	
C Knight, Brushford PC	R Webber, Cutcombe PC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	N Thwaites, Dulverton TC
R Coyne, Dulverton TC	M Ellicott, Exford PC
M Melville, Luccombe PC	J Stapleford, Luccombe PC
D Powell, Luxborough PC	J Parsons, Timberscombe PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC
PC Trimmings, Avon and Somerset Constabulary	B Heywood, WSC
D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways	K M Mills, WSC
K J Ross, WSC	B Lang, WSC
L Farrar, Village Agent	E Norman, Rest and Be Thankful Inn
A Goodchild, New Nuclear Programme Manager, WSC	

1 Have Your Say

Mr Eric Norman of The Rest and Be Thankful, Cutcombe stated that he had requested an upgrade of the CCTV cameras which were in position around his property so they could incorporate number plate recognition. The police representative agreed to check on any progress and report back to Mr Norman.

Councillor Mike Ellicott of Exford made reference to concerns regarding the speed of vehicles travelling through the village; recent research had revealed that the average speed through Exford was 44 mph which was not acceptable. During the discussion representatives from Cutcombe, Brushford and Dulverton also indicated that they had concerns regarding the speed of vehicles through their settlements.

The police representative agreed to discuss this matter with his colleagues and report back to Councillor Ellicott.

Councillor Roger Webber of Cutcombe asked whose responsibility it was to sort out problems of vehicles parking too close to a junction. It was reported that the police can take action but only if such parking was considered an obstruction and so people were encouraged to contact the police should they consider that this was occurring.

It was also suggested that if a parish considers that they have such a problem in their village they could consider making a request to the Highways Authority to introduce a traffic management scheme to solve the problem and the Highways Authority would need to consult the police as part of this process to check whether they would be prepared to enforce any restrictions that may be introduced.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 R Manicom, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service; Somerset County Councillor F Nicholson; Councillor A Vigars, Simonsbath PC; Tessa Saunders, Exmoor National Park Authority and John Edwards.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2014 and Matters Arising

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

- 3.2 There were no matters arising.

4 Police Issues

- 4.1 PC Trimmings reported on crime instances as had occurred in the Panel area since the last Panel meeting. A question was asked whether there had been a particular trend in the theft of generators and PC Trimmings indicated that this was probably to be expected in such a rural area as Exmoor.

- 4.2 An issue was raised regarding concern that some tampering of farm equipment was occurring and PC Trimmings indicated that this possibility was being investigated but at this stage it was not clear whether these incidents were deliberate or a fault in the machinery concerned.

5 SCC Highways

- 5.1 Karin Harwood and David Peake from the Highways Authority reported that County Councillor Nicholson had asked them to give an update on a series of questions that she had raised:

1. Backlog of finger post painting throughout the Exmoor Panel area – it was explained that there was a limited budget and that the work would be undertaken based on safety concerns. A discussion ensued regarding the possible involvement of the Parish Lengthsman. The officers confirmed that they would advise the County Councillor that there was a view that Somerset County Council should put more money into the Lengthsman Scheme.

Luccombe Parish Council raised the issue of a finger post that had disappeared and not been replaced for some time and the officers agreed to check whether anything was happening on this matter and report back to the parish council.

It was agreed that the West Somerset Council administrator would send out an email to all parishes targeted at those parishes who were part of the Lengthsman Scheme and urging them to let Dulverton Town Council know whether they would be interested in part of a collaborative joint project whereby the Lengthsman would undertake some of the finger post painting work in liaison with the Highways Authority who would provide the necessary materials.

2. To provide clarity on what highways work would not be done or done less due to cut backs – the officers explained that road signs that were partially damaged would not be repaired unless the damage caused a safety hazard. Grass cutting would also be undertaken based on doing that what was most

important to highway safety. On this point an apology was made for the grass cutting this year for having been particularly of a poor standard/behind and this was due to problems with the existing contractor. Arrangements were now in place to use a different contractor and so it was hoped that some improvement would be seen very shortly. It was also explained that grass cutting would be done on the basis of focussing on important visibility areas and that if anybody felt that some of these were providing a safety hazard please could they let the Highways Authority know.

Gully clearance was also having to be undertaken on a priority basis based on road safety issues.

3. The issue of criticism of the quality of pot hole filling – it was explained that following the undertaking of quality controlled sample testing it had been found that 90% of repairs had been found to be effective. Nevertheless there were problems due to a lack of funding and in this respect there was some good news in that Somerset County Council had just heard that they had been successful in gaining some additional funding from Central Government to tackle this problem.
4. Concerns regarding the quality of materials used in undertaking road repairs – it was reported that the County Council were researching options for better repair materials and were currently undertaking new trials so there should be improvements made on this aspect in the near future. During this item concerns were raised regarding drainage problems on the Luckwell Bridge road and it was reported that the contractor had been asked to ensure that any problems were put right and the Highways Authority would keep this matter under close review.
5. How best to contact the Highways Authority – it was confirmed that the most appropriate number to use if anyone wanted to report something to the Highways Authority was 0845 345 9155.

5.2 Karin Harwood reported that considerable works would be ongoing in regard to the A396 with a consultant currently undertaking a design project that would take at least eight weeks to complete. The repairs following the design work would likely take several months and the costs would likely to be in the region of ranging from a minimum of £750,000 to a maximum of £4 million.

5.3 Representatives of the Panel raised concerns regarding large vehicles using narrow unsuitable roads – Upcott Lane, Stone Lane, Halse Lane and Broad Lane were quoted as particular problems and the officers agreed to look into this to investigate the possibility of erecting appropriate warning signs.

5.4 The question was asked regarding clearance work from underneath the Exford Bridge and it was confirmed that this work was still in the programme to be undertaken but had slipped in priority due to the recent Somerset Levels flooding problems.

5.5 It was reported that Minehead and Selworthy Without Parish Council was very unhappy with the grass cutting in their area and officers agreed to contact them direct on this matter.

5.6 A general point was also made regarding the positioning of diversion signs which were not always very clear and helpful to motorists.

5.7 David Peake gave notice that over the next few months/year there were likely to be significant road closures needed to undertake important works at Dunster and around Washford Cross, and highways officers undertook to involve the relevant parish councils in a consultation exercise about how best to tackle this challenge.

5.8 The Panel was updated on the following highways works:

- A39 Washford Cross – new roundabout
- A396 Timberscombe to Wheddon Cross – major repairs to highway verges/embankments
- B3224 Summerways, Cutcombe – highway drainage improvements
- A396 West Street, Dunster – refurbishment of water main and service connections
- A396 West Street, Dunster – highway works and electricity supply to new doctors' surgery
- A396 West Street, Dunster – pedestrian improvements to cobbled areas
- A396 Church Street, Dunster – refurbishment of traffic signals
- A396 West Street, Dunster – carriageway resurfacing
- A358 Station Road junction, Bishops Lydeard – new roundabout
- Various locations - Connecting Devon & Somerset fibre broad band roll out

5.9 The Chairman thanked the two highways officers for such a comprehensive report.

6 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

6.1 In the absence of a representative the Watch Manager from the Porlock Station submitted the following written report:

“In the period since the last panel meeting Porlock has attended 33 incidents within its station area. These have included: 24 Co-Responder calls; 2 chimney fires; 3 small heath fires; 3 alarms activating; 1 property fire. Porlock has also attended a number of other incidents outside of their immediate area supporting neighbouring stations.

The property fire was a serious well developed fire which severely damaged a 3-storey property and some of the neighbouring property. The fire was dealt with by six fire appliances from Porlock, Minehead, Williton, Lynton and Combe Martin. The fire took several hours to bring under control and resulted in the main A39 through the village being closed so crews could work safely and access water supplies. The fire service was particularly impressed and grateful to many of the businesses and people within the village who rallied around to help the fire service by providing refreshments for the crews.

It is worth reminding everyone to look at their own home fire safety regularly and to check that smoke alarms are fitted and working. Further advice on many aspects of fire safety can be found on the website at www.dsfire.gov.uk “

7 Exmoor National Park Authority

7.1 There was no representative present at the meeting.

8 Hinkley Point C – Community Impact Mitigation Fund

- 8.1 The Panel received a presentation from Andrew Goodchild, New Nuclear Programme Manager for West Somerset and Taunton Deane Councils on how to access and bid for this funding.
- 8.2 Mr Goodchild explained the background to the scheme whereby a fund had been created whereby local communities could bid for money to help mitigate potential effects on local residents from the new nuclear development proposed at Hinkley Point C.
- 8.3 Any community based organisation operating in Somerset can apply particularly in Stogursey, West Somerset, Cannington and Bridgwater if they can demonstrate an impact on their community as a result of the development. There would be a two stage process; firstly, the submission of an expression of interest and if that was successful a full application would be invited. Applications would be judged against a list of set criteria which were: priority impact zones; quality of life; sustainability; extent of benefit; community need; community support; partner support; governance; and value for money.
- 8.4 Mr Goodchild explained that in order to increase their chances of success any bids emerging from the Exmoor Panel area would need to be innovative and demonstrate a clear link with mitigating the impact of the nuclear development at Hinkley and it may well be sensible for some joint working with other communities across West Somerset particularly those most closely affected by the development.
- 8.5 He encouraged anyone interested to look up the information provided on the West Somerset Council website www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/CIM
The contact details are as follows: West Somerset Council, West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Taunton, TA4 4QA. Telephone 01643 703704
- 8.5 Mr Goodchild was thanked for his informative presentation.

9. Presentation by Lauren Farrar, Village Agent

- 9.1 Lauren Farrar attended the Panel meeting and introduced herself in her role as one of the two Village Agents covering the Exmoor area. Her particular patch was the north of Exmoor including Oare, Luccombe, Selworthy, Porlock and Minehead Without. Their posts were part-time and employed by the Community Council for Somerset and focussed on supporting vulnerable people of all ages in the rural parishes and signposting them to appropriate agencies for assistance. People were encouraged to look on the Community Council website for further information.
- 9.2 The Chairman thanked Lauren for her presentation and extended an invitation for her to attend any future meetings of the Panel should she wish to.

10 Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Update

- 10.1 Councillor Nick Thwaites, on behalf of Dulverton Town Council, reported that the current scheme was running until April 2015. He reminded the Panel that Dulverton Town Council administered the scheme on a no charge basis and urged

those participating parish councils to be supportive particularly in regard to responding promptly to any requests for information and in respect of making prompt payments of their contribution. Unfortunately this was generally not the case and it was proving very frustrating to Dulverton Town Council on making their administration task more difficult than it ought to be.

- 10.2 It was suggested that perhaps in terms of preparing for the 2015/16 financial year that parishes be written to in September making it clear that unless responses were received by the end of December it would be considered that they were not interested in continuing within the scheme.

11 Items brought forward by Parishes

- 11.1 Councillor Roger Webber said it was important to raise awareness of the upcoming parish council elections to be held in May 2015 and particularly the opportunities for five parish representatives to be elected on the Exmoor National Park Authority.
- 11.2 Luccombe and Luxborough Parish Councils raised the issue and concerns regarding the lack of mobile phone coverage in their parishes and they were both encouraged to let David Wyborn of Exmoor National Park Authority know of their problems as he was currently undertaking a piece of research work into this very matter.

12 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 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 9.20 pm