

Minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel Meeting

Held on Thursday 1 September 2022,

At the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe

Time Commenced 6.30 Highways Warden Meeting – Notes of the Highways meeting are captured in Item 4, SCC Highways Update.

Present: Maggie Abel & Sarah Buchanan (Brompton Regis) Sally Moran and Norma Martin (Clatworthy), Roger Foxwell (Cutcombe), Margaret Rawle & Christine Dubery (Dulverton), Mike Ellicott & Jeremy Hickman (Exford), Dave Powell (Luxborough), Chris Wood (Porlock), Scilla Barney, Max Lawrence, Penny & Roger Webber (Selworthy & Minehead Without), Colin Wilkins (Winsford), Alan Collins & Tony Howard (Withypool & Hawkridge).

Also Present:

SWT/SCC Cllr Steven Pugsley, SWT Cllr Nick Thwaites, SWT Cllr Andy Milne

Officers:

Andrew Turner & Kevin Bridgwater (SCC)

Sam Murrell (SWT)

PC Dan Cox, PCSOs Michelle Haines & James Calloway (ASP)

Alex Farris (ENPA)

(The Exmoor Panel meeting commenced at 7.05pm by segueing into Item 4 – Highways Update from SCC).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from John Elliott and Patricia Bainbridge (Brompton Ralph PC), Matthew Headley (Brompton Regis), Vivian White (Cutcombe) Mark Bolland (Luxborough), Peter Pilkington (Timberscombe), Fran A' Brook (Upton), Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay), Janette Webber (Exton), SCC Cllr Frances Nicholson, SWT Cllr Dave Mansell, David Peake and Ruth McArthur.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting the Exmoor Area Panel 9 June 2022, and matters arising.

(Minutes of the meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 9 June 2022 were circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 9 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

Matters arising: -

Update on B3224 Landslip Update – Kevin Bridgwater (SCC Structures)

WSP who are the surveyors commissioned to undertake an assessment of the work. The ravine below the level of the road is at least 100ft and a number of methods are being considered to protect the integrity of the highway.

1. Reroute the road	Est. cost	1.2million
2. Bridging over/across the gap	Est. cost	1 million
3. Rebuilding the Embankment	Est. cost	750K
4. Steel Sheet Piling	Est cost.	500k-750k

Geotech drilling and coring is taking place. This section of the road has been added to the SCC Highways Emergency Plan, and contingency plans are being drawn up.

It was asked if the WSP report could be made available to Cutcombe and Exford Parish Councils. **Action Point** – Andrew Turner/ Kevin Bridgwater agreed to email the report to the clerks. *WSP report emailed to parishes on 23/09/2022 PDF will also be made publicly available via the SCC website.*

3. Exmoor Local Community Network (LCN) Pilot – Andrew Turner

Report back on the Highways Subgroup – *draft minutes of the Exmoor Area Highways Subgroup meeting were circulated with the Agenda.*

Andrew advised the Panel that SCC has employed Sam Murrell to take on the Brokerage Role. She would be a conduit between the parishes and SCC and would ensure that good relations were maintained, and support is provided to enable the parishes to access services. Sam was currently setting up the Parish Online roll-out, promoting devolved funding applications and communicating with the parishes about the LCN consultation.

- The devolved budget is 20K set aside for Revenue Works and 10K for Capital Projects. So far only one scheme has been submitted from Brompton Regis parish council for a nominal sum of money. Parishes were asked to submit their schemes as soon as possible.
- It was agreed that it was not clear how to submit a request and to whom.
ACTION POINT – Sam Murrell to reissue the guidance about devolved funding to parishes, together with the application form. In the first instance requests to be returned to Sam and then onto the Highways Subgroup Committee for determination. *(Application form attached)*
- Some of the parishes have been visited by Kate Brown in recent weeks and are awaiting a response on when recognised defects are going to be delivered? On receipt of this information, they will be better placed to submit a devolved funding request.
- The Service Request will be evaluated and costed by the Sub-group panel. This will formulate whether the scheme is put forward for consideration or not. This will ensure that all highway works meet the required quality standard and are delivered consistently.

- It was also pointed out that some of the works could be delivered jointly if parishes wanted to match fund on projects or deliver them using local contractors and thus price very competitively.
- The devolved budget is specifically for discretionary expenditure, and not items that have already been identified as SCC responsibility.
- Salt Bins – follow up as devolved funding request. (As Item 4)

3.2 Highway Steward Update

So far, only eight parishes have employed the services of the Highways Steward; were very pleased with his work and had no issues with communicating with him. He was working well alongside some of their parish wardens and had even attended parish meetings by invitation.

The scope of the Highway Steward work has included:-

- Verge maintenance – grass cutting, hedge cutting, general amenity areas, etc.
- General service improvements – Additional grass cutting / strimming, sweeping, litter collection, weed removal, weed control, encroachment of vegetation over footways, removal of fly posting, street name plates cleaning and repair, fence repairs.
- Drainage maintenance - cleaning existing grips and outfalls, localised ditching, hand cleaning gullies/channels, rodding of pipes
- Signs (including reflector posts) - cleaning / painting and minor repairs.

It was stressed that those parishes that had yet to engage should make contact and utilise his services. Routine works should continue to be promoted through the web form shared previously. This way the team can keep tabs on programme, record keeping, and make sure his time is utilised in the most effective way possible.

Please [click here](#) to access the Exmoor LCN – Highway Steward Job Request.

General repairs such as potholes, road damage and other problems outside of your parish boundary should continue to be reported via the SCC online portal. www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/

The team are also proposing to put together a feedback form so that the effectiveness of the service can be monitored. It should help keep the parishes and members informed of progress, so please keep a look out for that!

3.3 Asset Information – Parish Online

As part of the LCN Pilot, SCC has arranged for the participating Exmoor parishes to subscribe for a trial period to Parish Online. In order to get signed up to the system please do the following: -

1. Go to www.parish-online.co.uk/signup
2. Type your parish name into the box, select your parish as the search box find it.
3. Click Next

4. Click the Subscribe Now option
5. Enter the discount code “**sccgroup**” and click Apply
6. Follow the rest of the steps in the sign-up form.

This will then send you details for how to log in.

There is online help available if parishes are having difficulties with the system, and a weekly zoom meeting to assist users. Please let Sam Murrell know if you want more information on this.

LCN Public Consultation

A public consultation on the development of Local Community Networks (LCNs) has been launched.

People are encouraged to have their say on plans to develop LCNs across the county, to support decision-making at its most local level. Opinions are being sought on a range of aspects, from LCN roles and responsibilities, boundary options, to choosing a suitable name.

Check out the interactive map, to see where your parish fits in relation to the three boundary proposals [HERE](#).

The consultation on LCN boundaries went live on the 5 of September and will run for 6 weeks (**17 October**). In-person and online engagement events are taking place across the county.

- **Friday 16 September – 10am-3pm, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**
- **Monday 10 October – 10am-4pm, West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Somerset, TA4 4QA**

City, Town and Parish Conference – Tuesday 4 October 2022

The Local Community Network (LCN) Project Team are inviting Parish Clerks and Chairs to join them at the City, Town and Parish Conference on **Tuesday 4 October at Westlands in Yeovil**.

Information on how to register to attend has been emailed to parish and town clerks.

4. SCC Highways Update – Andrew Turner / Kevin Bridgwater Winter Maintenance Programme

Andrew Turner opened the meeting by stating that David Peake sent his apologies as for the first time in 22 years he would not be present to deliver the winter programme. He sent his best wishes and asked to be remembered fondly to the panel.

This year an additional 900miles of road has been added to the existing infrastructure, which is the responsibility of SCC to maintain. On Exmoor there

will be no change to the routes, and pre-salting as well as reactive maintenance will be replicated as in previous years.

Winter Equipment - 2 new snow-ploughs have been purchased, and some farmers will be given front ploughs for their own tractors as replacement for end-of-life equipment. If diversion routes need to be gritted can these be reported via the portal as a matter of urgency.

Salt bins – Salt levels are being checked and the parish clerks have been notified about monitoring and returning their winter requirements to the team. During the course of the discussion it was commented that in some places, salt containers would be more suitable than bags to prevent livestock from disrupting the supply. Can salt containers also be placed away from signage on the highway because the signs get bent when the animals lean on them! **ACTION POINT** - identified as a devolved funding request for 3 new salt bins. *An alternative to bags so that livestock can't get into the contents. 3 locations identified in the meeting – follow up required. (Mike Ellicott is aware of requirements, but wider than just Exford parish).*

Hedge-Cutting and Maintenance – Selworthy Parish Council reported that 1 cut a year on hedges in their parish was not sufficient to keep the highway safe for pedestrians. The hedges were at height as the fields were above highway level, and the overhang from overgrowth above 4ft meant that pedestrians were forced into the middle of the road. Dulverton and Porlock also had this problem.

- Currently cut to 4ft in height (and not 6ft as required) as the machinery employed did not have capability to go higher.
- The observation was made that hedge-banks in these parishes have possibly been overlooked in the maintenance programme. **ACTION POINT** – Can the affected parishes please report the defect via the online portal. If possible with a map clearly identifying the respective hedgerows. It was suggested that Parish Online may be able to assist with this? It would only need to be done once because once the data is gathered it would be added to the cyclical maintenance programme.
- SCC has a safety responsibility but is not in the business of maintaining privately owned verges and hedges.

Following on from the Highways warden meeting the points below were also raised with the Highways Team.

- Cutcombe Drains – (Roger Foxwell) Outside Shearwells entrance. Advised that following works undertaken by sub-contractors the drains are now blocked with tarmac. **ACTION POINT** - Kevin Bridgwater will send a Highways team out to investigate.
- Exford Bridge – Flooding was being caused due to the main arch silting up. Need to be cleared. **ACTION POINT** – Report to SCC Bridges and Structures. *(Andrew Turner reported. – Completed. Report from Paul Tucker, SCC Structures - This is a very tricky site and any works are ultimately governed by the Environment Agency. When this issue was last broached back in 2019, the EA would only allow very limited works,*

in so far as removing the weeds/vegetation growth from the silt banks/island with no lowering of the silt bank/island itself. A further update will be provided once the outcome of the inspection is known.

- If road diversion signs are in place then the contractors should be working and the road should be closed. If contractors are not working then the road should be accessible.
- Venniford Cross A39 – Plans to reduce the speed limit are currently with the Road Safety Unit and are being worked through.
- White-lining on junctions are carried out to the schedule of the A and B road classification. If there are concerns about road safety then they should be reported via the portal.

8.30pm Andrew Turner / Kevin Bridgwater left the meeting.

5. Avon and Somerset Police Road Safety – PC Dan Cox

PC Dan Cox presented a set of slides on road safety statistics (*attached*) and demonstrated the latest speed camera technology in the hall. He also talked about the work of the road safety team in Avon and Somerset. As well as patrolling, monitoring and enforcing speed awareness, the Road Safety Team regularly promote road safety initiatives at public events.

They work closely with other public services such as SCC Highways, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Highways England and event organisations.

Some current initiatives that are being promoted to improve the safety of road users are:

- Encouraging the use of dash-cams for drivers, cyclists and horse-riders.
- Promoting Driving Assessment centres to elderly drivers. This enables older drivers to drive longer. Older drivers are more likely to cause an accident due to age, infirmity and /or medication. An assessment can highlight the risks and ensure that they are informed about how to drive safely.
- Trailer maintenance and safety. Towing and ensuring that towed vehicles are fit to be on the road.

It was highlighted that it would be good to have more Community Speed Watch initiatives on Exmoor. These were easy to establish and would be a good way of encouraging drivers to slow down. More information about Community Speed Watch can be found [here](#).

The Road Safety Fund is funded by Avon and Somerset Police to help community programmes prevent injuries caused by road traffic incidents.

The Fund aims to:

- improve road safety in local communities to reduce accidents and casualty figures.

- provide better education and training for children, young people, learners and inexperienced drivers.
- reduce the economic and the personal costs of fatalities and serious injuries.

The fund is open to local community and voluntary organisations in the Avon and Somerset police force area. Please [click here](#) to find out more on the website about the Road Safety Fund.

Dan was thanked for attending and remained to circulate with the Panel after the meeting. He also advised that he was happy to promote road safety at local events and left his contact details.

6. Avon and Somerset Police Report – PCSO 8913 Michelle Haines and James Calloway.

It was reported that PCSO Bryan Stevens has now retired and Michelle Haines is the replacement PCSO on Exmoor. Neighbourhood beat surgeries would continue and the Exmoor Neighbourhood Beat Team newsletter had been shared in advance of the meeting.

The crime statistics for the last quarter were read out at the meeting.

7. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues (DSFRS)

No representative in attendance.

8. Exmoor National Park Authority Issues (ENPA)

Alex Farris, Conservation Manager was in attendance for the ENPA as Ruth McArthur was on annual leave. He had no items to bring forward to the panel but was available for questions if needed. afarris@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

9. Parish Lengthsman Scheme

All money has been collected and scheme is up to date.

10. Items brought forward by parishes

None.

11. Dates and Venues for meetings going forward.

Exmoor Panel Date	Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date
24 November 2022	14 October 2022
12 January 2023	9 December 2022
16 March 2023	10 February 2023

(The Meeting ended at 9.30pm)

Attachments:

Devolved Funding Request / Paperwork
ASP Road Safety Presentation 2022

DRAFT