

**Minutes of the Exmoor LCN Pilot Highways Subgroup**  
**Held on Friday 14 October 2022,**  
**At the Dulverton Sports Pavilion from 10.00am – 1.00pm**

**Present:**

Cllr Stephen Pugsley (Chair)	SCC/SWT
Cllr Frances Nicholson	SCC
Andrew Turner	SCC
Craig Gowan	SCC
Jon Weeks	SCC
Mike Ellicott	Exford Parish Council
Jeremy Hickman	Exford Parish Council
Margaret Rawle	Dulverton Town Council (Town)
Nick Thwaites	Dulverton Town Council
Andrew Bray	Wootton Courtenay PC (Vale)
Roger Webber	(Moor Rep)
Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe Parish Council
Sam Murrell (Project Officer)	SCC/SWT

**1. Apologies**

Sarah Buchanan (Brompton Regis rep), Kate Brown (subs by Craig Gowan), Stephen Marsh (SCC), Mike Egleton / Scott Davies (Milestone Infrastructure), Christine Dubery & Margaret Rawle (subs by Nick Thwaites), Luke Green (subs by Jon Weeks) Bev Norman.

**2. Feedback on the Parish, Town and City Conference at Yeovil**

The slides for the presentation of the LCN Conference had been circulated with the agenda. Feedback on the conference was very positive, with lots of comment about how well the Exmoor pilot had been working. In comparison with some of the other pilots in Somerset, it had achieved a lot and was laying some solid groundwork for future development. Comment was made that this was possibly due to some of the other pilots dealing with more complicated casework in the areas of children and families, youth work and adult social care. These themes are naturally more complex because they deal with people related issues, which generally are not simple fixes.

It was pointed out that the Sedgemoor pilot was dealing with the devolvement of assets, and no progress had been made at all.

Cllr Pugsley attributed the Exmoor Pilots success to: -

- Already having in place, a strong governance framework, which was well established and encouraged active participation from member parishes,
- Picking a common theme such as “highways” which was a key issue for most Exmoor parishes and invited them to be a part of the pilot community. (Common themes bind communities together!)
- Other comments included “strong leadership” and an “active and interested team who wanted to make the pilot work”.

- Good communication was also considered vitally important. (It was agreed that there were places this could be improved, but the mechanism was in place to drive this forward).
- Andrew Turner said that there was a challenge from communities that the work of the pilot “is doing what should have been done anyway!” and it was re-connecting SCC back into it’s core customer base of the road using public and forcing accountability.

### 3. To review the Minutes and Action Points of the previous meeting on Friday 22 July 2022.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record. Matters arising: -

**Action point** – Luke Green and Kate Brown had met with Roger Webber following the last Highways Sub-group meeting. Roger reported general dissatisfaction with the length of time it has taken to get any further action since. Following the site meeting, which was very positive there has been no follow up action, and no changes to the working behaviour of sub-contractors regarding the placement of diversion signs. He wanted to see this standardised, so that routes were only closed, when necessary, there was less confusion for the road going public and key market days were avoided. **Follow up with Luke Green required. Now urgent.**

**Action Point** – All parishes need to appoint a Highways Warden who will ultimately be responsible for liaison with the Highways Steward, and SCC officers if necessary – *The September meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel was well attended by Highways wardens, so this is getting better. (Progressing).*

**Action Point** – Scott Davies / Milestone – To draw up generic traffic management plans – with bespoke offer based on zones. – Andrew Bray said that he had received training from Luke Green about how to use the One. Network plotter and this was working reasonably well. He received “pings” and alerts when work was going to be undertaken in his parish, which was very useful. He had noticed a problem however, in that once the parameters were set, they couldn’t be tweaked further. So, if he wanted to interrogate One.network about a neighbouring parish it would always default to the first system setting. *Jon Weeks agreed to feed the comment back to the third-party software developer. (Progressing)*

**Action Point:** Sam Murrell reported Marsh Bridge defect on 26/07/2022 via the SCC Reporting Defects portal. *Structures reported back on 4 August that they had visited and noted the works required. None are of an urgent nature so will be added to Bridges and Structures outstanding works database where they will be pick up in the fullness of time. Completed*

**Action Point** – How are schemes communicated? Is there a standard reporting feature for parishes to submit their requests so that all EOIs are treated fairly and equitably? – Picked up under Agenda Item 5. **Completed**

**Action Point** – Recirculate the Highways link / work request form. – Picked up under Agenda Item 6. **Completed.**

**Action Point** – Disposal of green waste on road verges - Andrew Turner confirmed that all green waste needs be taken to the SCC Highways depot for disposal and should not be returned to the verges due to contaminants. **Completed.**

**Action Point** – Andrew Turner and Steve Marsh to revisit the appointment of the Broker Role and speak to HR regarding recruitment / readvertisement. – **Completed.** *Sam Murrell came into post w.e.f. 1 September.*

### **Update on the Exford Road Slippage**

This work has been contracted out to WSP who are specialist technical engineers and they have been carrying out site surveys to determine the scope of the works. The Exford Ravine report has now been distributed to various interested parties including the parish councils. Andrew Turner has requested that it goes on the SCC website for clarity and FOI. Mike Ellicott and Roger Webber suggested that a public meeting was called to talk about the options. It was agreed that it was a complicated issue and would be expensive to fix. Once the options have been explored and there is something to report on, then perhaps a public meeting would be a way to inform local people about the options? Mike Ellicott said that Exford Parish Council would be happy to host such an event if required. **Action Point** – Roger Foxwell reported that the grips near the ravine need clearing. This is causing the additional water and compromising the stability of the road. Andrew Turner agreed to flag this with the SCC Area office.

### **Exford Bridge Silting**

This has been reported to SCC Bridges and Structures but the county team need a licence/permit from the Environment Agency (EA) before they can tackle the silting under the main archway of the bridge. **Action Point** – Andrew Turner agreed to follow up with the EA.

## **4. Scheme Promotion / Review and Update**

### **4.1 What is or isn't part of the pilot? – clarity on highways matters.**

Work relating to the Highways Steward and Devolved Funding is the responsibility of the LCN pilot. All other work such as abandoned vehicles, and general defects where there is a process already in place, need to be reported via the usual channels. This includes structural defects such as bridges, drains and gullies. There is also the option to report faded or worn white lining on the roads via the defects portal.

### **4.2 Highways Schemes – Craig Gowan**

Craig went through the different schemes in the works programme. General comments were made as follows: -

- Drainage Scheme – Brompton Ralph B3188. Cllr Frances Nicholson asked to be kept fully informed of the progression on the works, so that she can update residents.
- Concern about the diversion regarding the B3358 Simonsbath to Challacombe patching works. There are livestock markets at either end of the route, and this is a long stretch of road. Can the work be undertaken during the daytime only, and signage be clear about where exactly the works are taking place?

- In cases where road closures are required, these usually take place during the day, whilst the crews are working. School transport always takes priority on both inward and outbound journeys.

#### **4.3 Surface Dressing - Craig Gowan**

- Concerns about rat-running especially where there are lots of side roads off the main road. Is it possible to implement one-way systems in such cases, to prevent traffic blockages in single carriageway lanes? Andrew Bray was particularly concerned about this in respect of the parishes either side of the A39 between Minehead and Porlock, where work is due to take place soon. Large vehicles will be stacked but the smaller ones will divert through the quieter parishes and cause disruption. Craig Gowan and Andrew Bray will have a further discussion about out this outside of this meeting.

#### **4.4 Traffic Schemes – Craig Gowan (subs Kate Brown)**

General comment was made that all schemes need to be communicated, realistic timescales implemented, and expectations met. It was frustrating not knowing what was happening, and then when sub-contractors finally arrived on site – they only carried out half the job!

##### **4.4.1 Cutcombe - Extension of 20mph reduction in speed (TRO)**

The parish has agreed to subsidise the cost. TRO is currently underway. Frustration was expressed at the time taken to implement, but there is a legally binding consultation process which must be followed before works can be carried out. Progressing. Sam has identified this as a possible scheme for devolved funding.

**4.4.2 Dulverton – General query about TRO.** Nick Thwaites queried whether consultation was always necessary regarding a TRO? *John Weeks replied that it is a statutory requirement to consult on the changes when a TRO is applied for.*

##### **4.4.3 Exford Speed Indicator Devices (SID)**

The position of the posts for siting the SIDs has been identified. The road markings (white lining) need to be refreshed. Kate was aware that some of the white lining had not been completed and was getting the sub-contractor back to finish the work. Mike Ellicott expressed his annoyance at this due to time wasted and increase in costs.

##### **4.4.4 A39 Tivington / Selworthy**

Reduction in the speed limit to 50mph at the request of Luccombe and Selworthy PCs. Subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). Progressing.

#### **4.5 Public Utilities (John Weeks)**

This is the area which is most divisive with the road travelling public. Openreach whilst not SCC, often gets confused as such and causes complaints to be made about diversions and delays. It seemed to be common practice to apply to Streetworks for a permit, obtain the

permission and then not progress with the works. However, signage was sometimes left in situ for months, which was annoying for businesses who relied on tourism. Was there a way this can be reported so that action can be taken against the offenders? Would be a good idea to put studs in the road and standardise diversion signs, so that everyone knows what is happening. *It should be reported to Streetworks in the first instance, so that it can be followed up. Currently it is most cost effective for Milestone to put out the signage, but there are lots of staff and high turnover. This means learning can get lost in the churn.*

John reported that the biggest cause of signs not being in the right place or damaged was due to motor vehicles and generally being trashed by the road using public!

In some cases, 3 gangs will be employed to undertake the works. One will do the preparatory excavations, the second will do the repair or lay piping etc, and the last gang will be responsible for back-filling and making good the surface of the road. They work to a schedule of works around the county, but this explains why sometimes nobody appears to be on site. John Weeks agreed that terms and conditions may need to be re-drawn to ensure that procedures are tightened.

Jeremy Hickman left the meeting at 12.18pm.

## **5. Devolved Funding**

### **5.1 Review of the candidate schemes submitted by parishes.**

Successful schemes should add value, be community oriented and demonstrate local need. They should be submitted via the parish council clerk, but letters of support from partners will be taken in consideration.

All requests should be sent, irrespective of cost so that an overall picture can be obtained of the aspirations of communities. The general opinion was that it was better to be oversubscribed with applications until the money was spent, than underspend and have a surplus remaining.

Sam had collected various emails, applications and conversations and captured them in a spreadsheet, to look at the various proposals that have been submitted. There seemed to be some common themes and these concerned jetting, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and the provision of salt bins. A review meeting will be held on 9 November to look at the schemes which have been submitted and decide which ones can be taken forward. (Decision making will ultimately rest with SCC Elected Cllrs). It was agreed that the process needed to be transparent so that those parishes that were unsuccessful would have a clear idea of why their application would not be taken forward at this time.

Sam has also included the Cutcombe TRO scheme which had been submitted to Kate Brown (Traffic Management) in the early days of the pilot. Cutcombe have progressed with the scheme and are planning on

meeting the costs themselves. It has been added to the devolved funding data, as it meets the requirements of the pilot.

**All applications submitted before the 1 November will be included in the review.** A reminder was sent to parishes on 17 October to advise of the deadline.

## 6. Highway Steward (Andrew Turner)

### 6.1 Update on Highway Steward Scheme

More parishes have signed up for the services of the Highway Steward, but still a few that are reluctant. The best form of promotion is the parishes themselves, who have been reporting back about how pleased they are with his work. (Brompton Regis have given a shout out on their website). Sam Murrell also visiting parishes and promoting the service and how to use the online form. Some parishes have commented that they prefer to use the Parish Lengthsman scheme.

**Action Point** – Andrew Bray reported that there were tasks in the work planner (Items 20 – 22) that had been signed off as complete, but the work had not been undertaken. He wanted to know why this has happened? Was there a reason and could this be fed back to the Wootton Courtenay parish clerk. – **Completed 18/10/2022** – *Two out of three tasks on the planner had been completed and photographs taken of the work. The third issue related to a drain repair which was beyond the capability of the Highways Steward to fix. He had advised that the clerk would need to report this via the SCC Defects portal. This has highlighted a communication issue – how do we ensure that such messages are passed back to the clerks/SCC portal? – Suggested – weekly monitoring of the spreadsheet to ensure these queries are not missed.*

**Action Point** – Recirculate the [Highways link / work request form](#).  
*Completed – Sam sent email on 17/10/22 as a reminder.*

### 6.2 Update on Programme

A feedback survey has been distributed to parishes inviting them to comment on the Highway Steward service. Not many responses had been received so it was requested that this was re-distributed.

**Action Point** - Recirculate the Feedback request form to all parishes.  
*Completed – Sam sent email on 17/10/22 as a reminder.*

## 7. Parish Online

Five parishes have signed up to Parish Online since it was made available in September. These are Winsford, Luxborough, Luccombe, Clatworthy and Cutcombe. Some parishes already have access prior to the pilot so are continuing with that. The user group have said that the biggest barrier is generally making the parish aware of the system, it's capabilities and why it is being provided.

**7.1 Action Point** – Sam to send reminder for parishes to sign up. Also access to user group information and helpdesk.  
*Completed – Sam sent email on 17/10/22.*

**8. Recommendations to the Exmoor Area Panel**

None at this time but likely to be updates on devolved funding applications following the meeting on the 9 November.

**9. A.O.B**

**10. Dates and Venues for meetings going forward**

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

**Meeting closed at 13:18**

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