

Minutes of the Exmoor LCN Pilot Highways Subgroup
Held on Friday 9 December 2022,
At the Dulverton Sports Pavilion from 10.00am – 1.00pm

Present:

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| Cllr Steven Pugsley (Chair) | SCC/SWT |
| Cllr Frances Nicholson | SCC |
| Andrew Turner | SCC |
| Neil Guild | SCC |
| Luke Green | SCC |
| Bev Norman | SCC |
| Mike Ellicott | Vice Chairman Exmoor Panel |
| Christine Dubery | Dulverton Town Council |
| Sarah Buchanan | Brompton Regis (Brendon Rep) |
| Roger Webber | (Moor Rep) |
| Roger Foxwell | Cutcombe PC (2 nd Top Rep) |
| Sam Murrell (Project Officer) | SCC/SWT |

1. Apologies

Kate Brown (subs by Bev Norman), Stephen Marsh (SCC), Margaret Rawle (Dulverton), Jeremy Hickman, Andrew Bray, Craig Gowan (subs Neil Guild). No representatives from Milestone were in attendance.

2. To review the Minutes and Action Points of the previous meeting on Friday 14 October 2022.

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

- **Exford Bridge Silting**

A very successful site meeting took place which was organised by Jeremy Hickman. Unfortunately, a lot of the vegetation which is causing the problem was unable to be cut due to the height of the river. It is hoped that the team will return now that the water is lower. The silt can only be removed in the summer, and budgets are very tight, but the Bridges Team are undertaking all preparatory work in case funding can be found. It was commented that it was a good collaborative piece of work between all parties. It was suggested that funding might be forthcoming from the Somerset Rivers Authority, and it would be a good idea to approach Brenda Maitland Walker from the West Somerset Flood Group. **Action Point** – Cllr Pugsley agreed to speak to Brenda Maitland Walker about funding for the silt removal.

- **Update on the Exford Road Slippage**

The Bridges Team are leading on this work, and the contractor has been carrying out exploratory bore hole drilling, to determine the core of the ravine.

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. Roger Foxwell expressed disappointment at the length of time the project seems to be taking and said that officers hadn't been on site to look at the grips which needed clearing. It was pointed out that this question had been addressed at the Exmoor Area Panel meeting. It was not safe for the specialist equipment required to clear the grips to operate within the ravine.

It was suggested that the Highways Steward may have to do this work manually as best he can, to try and alleviate the problem.

The contractors undertaking the work had wanted a full road closure in operation, but the SCC Highways team had pushed back and instead implemented a partial closure, with traffic management.

Mike Ellicott and Roger Webber requested that a public meeting was held in the New Year to inform all affected parties of the work required, and how long it would take. It was agreed that once the outcome of the report is known, this could happen. In the meantime, could a holding statement be put out to communicate what is happening?

Other comments were: -

- Could the traffic lights be widened so that there wasn't so much pressure on the pinch points? This was also causing erosion and tearing up of the verge/bank.
- Communities don't want diversions or permanent road closures due to the impact on markets, businesses and tourism.
- The engineering solution must be long term, sustainable and in the short term this may mean some inconvenience to the markets and other businesses. This will be communicated where possible, but it is more important to get the work done.

3. Scheme Promotion / Review and Update

3.1 Highways Schemes – Neil Guild

Christine Dubery – Why was the work at Milhams Lane cancelled due to utilities?

The B3188 Winters Lane Scheme. There is a very elderly couple who live at Rooks Nest, who can't manage to clear the gully outside their property, causing it to flood. It was suggested that the Highway Steward may be able to do some ongoing maintenance to keep it clear.

3.2 Surface Dressing – Neil Guild

Signage – It is very important that the signs make it clear where the road closure comes into effect. This is especially important regarding the A39 Porlock Hill / Redway drainage scheme so as not to "close off Porlock". In the past this has happened as traffic has bypassed the village. It is important that the businesses are not adversely affected. It was agreed that the yellow diversion signs need to contain more information.

Neil said that he would send sign schedules across to the group for comment. Luke Green said that the utilities team had already been working on some designs so would liaise on this.

Next years programme is in the pipeline.

Grass and Hedge Cutting

The cutting schedules are now being drawn up for the spring. Those parishes that expressed a need for a 6ft cut on vertical hedgerows such as Selworthy, need to ensure their requirements are submitted. This is now time critical.

In the new Somerset Council, the street sweeping contract will be combined into the programme and this will make it easier to liaise on general maintenance issues.

Winter Maintenance

All winter maintenance gritting routes are being maintained as in previous years.

3.3 Traffic Management Schemes – Bev Norman

General comment was made that all schemes need to be communicated, realistic timescales implemented, and expectations met.

If officers are visiting parishes in their work, can they please make themselves known and take notes of the work required. It is very frustrating if concerns don't appear to be passed on.

Some comments that were made about the schemes in the schedule were: -

3.3.1 Cutcombe - Extension of 20mph reduction in speed (TRO)

The publishing of the proposal to implement the speed limit has received some opposition and a FOI request. The detailed plans are due to be sent to the parish council in the next few days and if all in agreement with the proposals, the formal consultation will be launched in the New Year. If no objections are received then the implementation will be sometime around June/July. It is a lengthy process but this is due to the statutory requirements..

3.3.2 Exford Speed Indicator Devices (SID)

The position of the posts for siting the SIDs has been identified. The works order is currently with Milestone and they will be chased for a time frame to do the work. The white lining road markings did not get completed due to parked cars blocking access. It was requested that if SCC could give 24 hours' notice to the parish then steps would be taken to ask the owners to remove their vehicles.

ACTION POINT – Kate Brown to liaise with Milestone.

3.3.3 A39 Tivington / Selworthy

Reduction in the speed limit to 50mph at the request of Luccombe and Selworthy PCs. There were no objections to the proposal and work is due to go ahead at the same time as the road re-surfacing to minimise disruption.

Bev said that TRO's take time to realise. Kate Brown is under considerable pressure because she covers the whole of the SWT area, and until recently she didn't have any technician support. Bev will take the concerns of the sub-group back to the office and look into how service can be improved. Greater collaboration with parishes could help alleviate these pressures.

3.4 Public Utilities (Luke Green)

The location of diversion signs has now been addressed and put on the one.network. Statutory Undertakers must refer to this when carrying out their duties.

Due to the frequent problems with leaving signs up when not needed, a new permit condition is being trialled. Financial penalties will be applied if signs are left out and work is not being done. This is being confined to Exmoor now, and dependent upon success could be rolled out across Somerset. Luke Green is doing his best to ensure sub-contractors comply. This is happening alongside more information being added to the diversion signs.

4. Devolved Funding

4.1 The Exmoor Area Panel unanimously approved the recommendations which were submitted on Thursday 24 November.

Green schemes to be progressed: -

- Sam and Sarah Buchanan to have an offline conversation on how to pay the traffic monitoring invoice. Small amount of money. May be done internally without the need to send an invoice.
- Jetting – Local suppliers to be approached via Andrew Turner and Sam. Will liaise with the Highways depot to progress this.
- Grit bins – Some parishes submitted late applications, but all will be honoured. To be secured with a hasp and staple fastener. Will be delivered to the depot and then distributed from there.

Amber Schemes

- Cllr Pugsley enquired whether there was any progress on the ice warning signs? This was an ongoing problem at Huish Champflower. No progress so far. More work needed to determine suitability and type of signs and costs.

Post Minute Note

Current SCC policy states “Ice” warning signs are not for general use for ice found on the normally untreated network as ice would reasonably be expected to be encountered here at any point. If Ice Warning signs were to be implemented on this untreated route then it would leave the Highway authority open to litigation at other sites on untreated routes where there are no warning signs. Unfortunately, the policy does not make allowance for temporary signs either.

Once the green schemes are costed and spent, then an assessment can be made on amber schemes. It was acknowledged that the jetting works would have a considerable impact on the revenues budget.

5. Highway Steward (Andrew Turner)

5.1 Update on Highway Steward Scheme

Interviews were held on Thursday 1 December and Sam Morgan-Russell was appointed. He will start after Christmas and will be employed until March 2024. He has good local knowledge of the area, as lives in North Devon and previously worked as an on-call fireman at Lynton.

5.2 Update on Programme

A meeting / handover will be arranged in the New Year so that Sam Morgan-Russell can liaise with the outgoing Highway Steward (Richard Gay). It would also be useful for him to meet Sean – the parish lengthsman. The handover of work should be straightforward as the work planner is still being updated.

It is also planned to have more liaison between the Highway Steward and the SCC Highways Superintendents in the future. This will identify the gaps where the Highways Steward encounters problems which he can't tackle, and his concerns can be passed on more quickly. This will be finalised when Sam Morgan-Russell comes into post.

6. Parish Online

6.1 Action Point – Sam to send chaser to those not applied.

Most parishes have now applied and have been sent information on how to sign up for the various training forums. Sam admitted to not having time to co-ordinate this, but the information had been circulated.

Councillor Nicholson expressed the hope that the parishes could be able to upload their data and knowledge into the parish online system and enhance the information bank. Parishes knew better than anyone where gullies etc could be found and it would be useful if they could do this.

7. Recommendations to the Exmoor Area Panel

None at the present time.

8. A.O.B

- Terms of reference had been circulated prior to the meeting for discussion. The Sub-group agreed that these should be approved.
- Roger Webber felt there should be more emphasis on flooding issues. Somerset Prepared will be sending a representative to the January Area Panel meeting to discuss how communities can be ready to tackle flooding issues.
- Andrew Turner said that he will be writing a report about the Exmoor Pilot which will go before the Local Government Reorganisation Committee. It will cover such themes as “what works and what doesn't?”, officer capacity

and lessons learnt. It would be useful to have some thoughts and feedback from members of the sub-group in the New Year. Cllr Pugsley stressed that it was very important to stress the positive outcomes, and if things were not working to offer possible solutions on how improvements could be made.

9. Dates and Venues for meetings going forward

| Exmoor Panel Date | Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date |
|--------------------------|---|
| 12 January 2023 | 9 December 2022 |
| 16 March 2023 | 10 February 2023 |

Meeting closed at 13:18

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