

Exmoor Area Panel Meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3rd September at Winsford Village Hall

Attendees

Keith Turner	Brompton Ralph PC	Mike Ellicott Exford PC and ENP	
Clive Knight	Brushford PC	A.Vigars	Exmoor PC
Vivian White	Cutcombe PC	Val Carveth	Exton PC
Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe PC	David Powell	Luxborough PC
J. Anson	Cutcombe PC	Anne Sparling	
Margaret Rawle	Dulverton Town Council	Sarah Takle	Timberscombe PC
Kathryn Vellacott	Dulverton Town Council	John Bray	Winsford PC
Keith Coulman	Dulverton Town Council	Tony Howard	Withypool and Hawkridge PC
Philip Griffin	Wootton Courtenay PC	PCSO Jo Dawson	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Andrew Bray	Wootton Courtenay PC	Ruth McArthur	ENP
Cllr Francis Nicholson	Somerset County	David Peake	SCC Highways
Cllr Steven Pugsley	SWT	Cllr Peter Pilkington	SWT
Cllr Andy Milne	SWT		

1. Apologies for Absence

M McCoy
Penny Webber

2. Minutes of last meeting

Matters arising

Police issue: KT raised concerns that significant thefts of equipment had been reported but apart from crime numbers being issued nothing had happened.

JD responded that the vehicles had been recovered and where being returned to the owner. The farmer had received advice on improving security at his premises.

5.5: SP commented that the letter regarding salting to the Leader and Deputy Leader had been rendered redundant as the winter maintenance had been returned to the same position as 2 years ago.

8.3 RF asked whether the visit to a working ENP farm to understand the problems that the farmers are facing had been arranged. RMCA informed the Panel that this was not her decision to make and had been passed to the correct person (minutes amended accordingly).

3. Exmoor National Park Update (ENP) - Ruth McArthur

3.1 Full report attached to these minutes.

3.2 Proposed closure of Porlock Fire Station. ENP have been consulted and the draft response is with the Members. The content relates to the ENP purposes.

3.3 Glover Report: Purposed to identify whether the National Parks need some changes in relation to governance, climate change and nature conservation. Findings and recommendations due to be reported in October.

RF said that there isn't enough branding of the Park in the local area and showed photo of Dartmoor beef being advertised in Morrison's in Minehead.

SP said that the point could be brought up at the Exmoor Consultative Parish Forum as it was an Exmoor wide issue.

ME informed the group that the Exmoor Hill Farming Network was looking at the issue of branding

4. Police Issues

4.1 JD informed the group that the number of reported thefts was down (apart from Timberscombe and Knowle Manor) but there had been in a rise in stealing sheep (55 sheep taken between Winsford and Exford plus incident near Brompton Regis). JD asked members to be vigilant and trailers out late at night with dogs to be treated as suspicious. Gates need to padlocked and made as secure as possible.

Reported incidents of vandalism to public toilets in Doverhay Porlock.

Slight increase in ABS in Dulverton.

4.2 ME commented that the punishment doesn't fit the crime and some cases have lenient sentences. VC pointed out that courts are frustrated but have to implement the guidelines set down on sentencing based on people's circumstances etc. Suggested lobbying MPs to get the rules changed.

4.3 JD advised that concerns and queries can be raised at on the 24th September at the PCC and Police Public Forum at the Beach Hotel between 7-9pm. Second reminder was circulated to Panel Members (4.9.19)

5. SCC Highways

5.1 SP provided an overview of the Highways Warden meeting held at 6.30. Pre salting and response salting service when cold weather conditions are due to last more than 1 day is now back to where it was 2 years ago.

5.2 Amory Road Dulverton will now be gritted by SCC Highways

5.3 If PCs have bought a salt bin they will need to contact SCC Highways to inform them where the bins are situated.

5.4 Small bags of salt are no longer available.

5.5 SP gave his thanks to FN for all her lobbying and DP for all his work over this matter.

5.6 RF raised the new code of practice for cutting back vegetation. Previously SCC Highways had cut 2 swathes twice but now it's only one. Cut can be 4ft or 6ft – requested that it be 6ft.

Vegetation is obstructing signs

5.7 DP confirmed that SCC Highways is responsible for keeping signs visible from up to 60ft away. Cutting back growth is a contentious issue and SCC Highways need to strike a balance (cost cutting). Policy is 1 cut a year on the verge but if have to cut hedges there isn't a cut on the verge. If there is an issue with visibility more cuts will be done to ensure safety.

5.8 AB raised concern of vegetation on lanes reducing visibility and for cyclists negotiating overgrowth. Wootton Courtenay and Luccombe cases in point.
FN asked whether the landowner had been written to – it is their responsibility to keep the hedges cut. PC should write to landowners and if do not receive a response, PC should contact Somerset Highways. Farmers can cut roadside hedges any time of the year for H&S purposes but are not permitted to cut inside field hedges until September 1st
DP said that there were 8000 miles of hedges in Somerset so a consistent policy had to be maintained.

5.9 RF asked if telegraph poles could be erected at least 1 metre back from the road edge.
DP said that these were the responsibility of the BT and electricity company and SCC did not have a say in where poles should go.

5.10 RF said that he has had to go through a lot of red tape to get a SID (speeding flashing warning light) erected in Cutcombe
DP said procedure had to be followed or insurances won't cover it.

5.11 JA said 3 teams had come to clean out 1 storm drain which seemed a waste of money
DP replied that Highways has funding from the River Authority to help with problems of extra clearance.

5.12 B3224 road by Bulah Chapel VW said the overhang of foliage creates very poor viability and the full width of the road is not useable.
DP said that drivers should drive according to conditions
FN considered it to be the worse stretch of road in the District and drivers drive from bright sunlight into semi darkness on occasions – very dangerous. FN went to ask if the landowner be persuaded to cut back the hedges.
SP pointed out that this issue keeps coming up and something needs to be done.
ACTION: SP to write to SCC Highways on behalf of the Panel asking them to take action and to try and persuade the landowner to maintain the hedges along the road.

5.13 TH said he has seen Highway Contractors travelling long distances to work, starting late – and asked whether there was a more cost effective model.
DP said other local contractors should be encouraged to be part of the contractors' framework. The more local the contractor the longer hours they can work and the earlier the task can be completed.

5.14 VW asked if the parapets on the bridge at Dunkery Hill Gate were on the schedule of works
DP replied he would check.
MR said the bridge requiring repairs at Dulverton were reported 6 months ago and would DP check on this.

6. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

6.1 Update from AM: Strong community support with marches and protests and 3000 signatures collected. SWT been very supportive and have written letter of support.

6.2 Stressed it is very important that the online survey is completed by as many people as possible by the 24th September.

Online response due on 5th November (Bonfire night)!

6.3 ST said she had problems with the online survey and suggested that people copy and paste response as it can be 'lost' the first time.

AM agreed that this was very useful and suggested that people comment on the difficulties of responding. The weight of response to the decisions is not known.

6.4 ST asked whether Porlock running its own fire station was still being discussed.

AM said this is would be very expensive with insurance costs, training, equipment, liability but it was still being looked at.

6.5 SP thanked AM for all his work on this matter

7. Council update

None given

8. Parish Lengthsman

8.1 KC asked PCs to respond to the letter stating what work is required in their parish.

9. AOB

9.1 PP gave an update on the letter that has recently gone out to all PCs inviting them to express an interest in applying for funding to have an electric charging point in their parish. Any question, please contact PP directly at cllr.P.Pilkington@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Dates of forthcoming meetings

The next meeting will be on:

Thursday 7th November 2019 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross

Thursday 16th January 2020 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 8.50

