

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Exmoor

Date: Thursday 7 November 2024

Time: 7:04pm – 8:55pm

Location: The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe, Wheddon Cross

LCN Core Membership Attendance:

Name:

Representing

Cllr Steven Pugsley (Chair)
Cllr Frances Nicholson

Somerset Council
Somerset Council

Patricia Bainbridge (clerk)
Sarah Buchanan (clerk)
Cllr Sally Moran
Cllr Eric Norman
Cllr Margaret Rawle
Cllr Mike Ellicott (Vice Chair)
Cllr Alan Chapman
Cllr Janette Sapsford
Cllr Mark Bolland
Cllr Duncan McCannlis
Cllr Dan Barber
Cllr Colin Wilkins
Cllr Andrew Bray
PCSO Katherine Williams
Sue Applegate

Brompton Ralph Parish Council
Brompton Regis Parish Council
Clatworthy Parish Council
Cutcombe Parish Council
Dulverton Town Council
Exford Parish Council
Exmoor Parish Council
Exton Parish Council
Luxborough Parish Council
Porlock Parish Council
Skilgate Parish Council
Winsford Parish Council
Wootton Courtenay Parish Council
Avon and Somerset Police
Exmoor National Park Authority (from 8pm)

Officer Attendance:

Kevin Bridgwater & Kali Martin (Somerset Council Highways), Sam Murrell (LCN Link Officer), Emily Window (LCN Project Officer).

Virtual Attendance:

Name:

Cllr Nick Thwaites
Rebecca Tomalin (clerk)
Paul Matcham
Anne Shilton
Beccy Brown
Colin McDonald

Representing

Dulverton Town Council
Withypool & Hawkridge Parish Council
Connect Somerset / Minehead Eye
LCN Link Officer (Dowsborough / B'water)
Somerset Council Employment & Skills
SC Exmoor Rural Housing Enabler

Other attendees

Name:

Cllr Simon Stretton
Cllr Jeremy Hickman
Michael Gorman
Cllr Philip Beauvais

Representing:

Spaxton PC / Dowsborough LCN
Exford Parish Council
Minehead Swimming & Leisure Ltd
Skilgate Parish Council

Summary of discussion:

Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome:

Item:

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Sue Applegate (Exmoor National Park) – joined from 8pm.
- Anne Shilton (SC LCN Link Officer – Dowsborough and Bridgwater) - Online
- Emily Window (SC Project Officer)
- Cllr Simon Stretton (Dowsborough Chair / Spaxton PC)
- PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams

2. Apologies for absence received from:

Jon Levenson (Cutcombe PC), Nikki Bonner (Village Agent), Sally Baker (Brompton Ralph PC) Matthew Headley (Brompton Regis PC), Christine Dubery (Dulverton TC), Dan Barnett (ENPA – but represented by Sue Applegate), Naomi Philp (Moorland Federation), Emma Thomasson (Visit Exmoor), Annie Cole (Magna HA), Norma Martin (Clatworthy PC) Fran A'Brook (Upton PC), Ruth McArthur (ENPA), Christine Dubery (Dulverton TC), Katy Attwater & Lesley Webb (Timberscombe PC) Tony Howard (Withypool PC).

3. Notes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record by those present.

4. Matters arising not covered in later agenda items

There were no matters arising, although the Chair and Cllr Duncan McCannlis stated that they had not heard anything from Cllr Theo Butt Philip regarding the issues that were raised at the last meeting.

5. Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Electoral Review

Cllr Pugsley explained the proposed changes to the Somerset Council division boundaries, which would reduce the number of councillors and potentially affect the Dulverton and Exmoor Division. He emphasized the importance of parishes responding to the Boundary Commission by 20 January 2025.

- **Proposed Changes:** Somerset Council division boundaries are proposed to be changed, reducing the number of councillors from 110 to 96, with a shift towards single-member wards.
- **Impact on Exmoor:** The changes would affect the Dulverton and Exmoor Division, potentially reducing the number of electors and necessitating a reconfiguration of the division boundaries.
- **Parish Responses:** The Chair emphasized the importance of parishes responding to the Boundary Commission by the 20 January 2025, particularly highlighting the need for parishes to express their views on community cohesion and interest.

It is intended to publish draft recommendations in June 2025, with a further period of consultation on draft recommendations, with final recommendations expected to be published in December 2025.

The new electoral arrangements will come into effect at the local elections in 2027.

There is a webpage dedicated to the review of Somerset Council, where you can find all the relevant information, access interactive maps of the current ward boundaries, and give your views, please follow the link below:

[Somerset | LGBCE](#)

6. Avon and Somerset Neighbourhood Policing update

PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams provided an update on recent police activities, including thefts of vehicles and livestock, an illegal rave, and issues with off-road motorbikes. She also mentioned the importance of not using unregistered quad bikes on the road.

- **Theft Incidents:** Katherine reported on recent thefts: including a pickup truck, sheep raids, a pressure washer in Brompton Regis, and a truck and quad bike in Skilgate. The quad bike was recovered near Taunton.
- **Livestock Thefts:** There were reports of livestock thefts, with over 30 sheep stolen from a farm near Brompton Regis and three near Dunster. Another report of sheep theft near Upton was also mentioned.
- **Illegal Rave:** An illegal rave occurred at Croydon Hill, with several vehicles identified and their keepers being spoken to. The event was resource-intensive and challenging to manage.
- **Off-Road Motorbikes:** Issues with off-road scrambler motorbikes using bridleways and lanes in Dunster were reported. Katherine urged the public to report such incidents, ideally with registration numbers.
- **Unregistered Quad Bikes:** Katherine highlighted the importance of not using unregistered quad bikes on the road, as they lack the necessary documentation and insurance, risking seizure if stopped by the police. If this happens the vehicle will be taken away and destroyed.

7. Highways update

Kevin Bridgwater and Kali Martin discussed the proposed restructuring of the highways service, which would significantly reduce staff numbers and impact service levels. They urged members to write to the chief executive and other relevant officials to express their concerns.

- **Restructuring Details:** Kevin and Kali detailed the proposed restructuring of the highways service, which includes reducing the number of highway service managers from three to two, assistant highway service managers from ten to four, and superintendents from twenty to fifteen.
- **Impact on Services:** The restructuring is expected to significantly impact service levels, with a reduction in the number of inquiries handled and a lowering of standards and communication expectations. It was anticipated that there would be a heavier reliance on AI and the internet to report concerns.
- **Staff Redundancies:** Kevin mentioned that all staff are under notice of redundancy, with a 45-day consultation period. The hope is to cover the reductions through voluntary redundancies, but compulsory redundancies may be necessary.
- **Call to Action:** Kevin and Kali urged members to write to the Chief Executive, Duncan Sharkey, and Mike O'Dowd Jones to express their concerns about the proposed restructuring and its potential impact on services.
- **Winter Maintenance and Road Works:** Kevin and Kali provided updates on winter maintenance, including the distribution of salt bags and recent road works in

various locations. They mentioned the early start to gritting this year and ongoing construction projects.

- **Road Sweeping Contract Issues:** Cllr Steven Pugsley and Kevin discussed the difficulties in engaging with the relevant officers connected with the road sweeping contract. They expressed frustration at the lack of proper communication and the need to resolve the issues quickly.

The minutes of the last working group meeting were circulated with the agenda pack.

It was highlighted that there was no scheduled Highways subgroup meeting before the next LCN meeting in January. Sam agreed to try and get something in the diary prior to Christmas.

8. Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) Issues – Active Travel Consultation.

Sue Applegate presented the Exmoor Active Travel Plan, explaining its purpose to improve opportunities for active travel in and around Exmoor National Park. She encouraged members to participate in the online survey and provide their ideas for potential projects. The closing date for the consultation is 22 November 2024.

- **Plan Purpose:** Sue Applegate explained that the Exmoor Active Travel Plan aims to improve opportunities for active travel, including walking, cycling, horse riding, and wheeling, in and around Exmoor National Park.
- **Funding and Timeline:** The plan is funded by Active Travel England, with £100,000 allocated to each of the 10 English national parks.

ENPA is keen to hear from local communities on their ideas about Active Travel. It is also pertinent for those parishes and residents who live outside the ENPA boundary but who travel into it. More information about the survey and how to participate can be accessed via the link below:-

[Active Travel Plan for Exmoor](#)

Or using activetravel@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

9. Update on Working Groups:

Moorland Foodbank, Dulverton

LCN Link Officer Sam Murrell and Cllr Frances Nicholson provided an update on the Moorland Food Bank, including the relocation to the Riverside Youth Centre, the appointment of a food coordinator, and the involvement of various organizations and volunteers. They emphasized the importance of securing the long-term future of the Riverside premises, which is a Somerset Council asset.

- **Relocation:** The Moorland Food Bank has been relocated to the Riverside Youth Centre, with special thanks to the efforts of Dulverton Town Council and volunteers from Kier who all provided manpower and vehicles.
- **New Team Formation:** Frances and Sam have been instrumental in forming a new team and recruiting volunteers for the Moorland Food Bank. They are also working on identifying potential trustees to take over responsibilities.
- **Food Coordinator:** Ali Sanderson has been appointed as the food coordinator, bringing her experience from the West Somerset and Wivey Food Cupboards respectively. This was enabled via Dulverton Town Council who secured a seed funding grant from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC), to pay for her post. Ali has a wealth of experience which will be invaluable in helping the steering group to move towards a more sustainable long-term organisation.
- **Organisational Involvement:** Various organizations, including the Moorland Federation (schools), Somerset Community Foundation, CCS village agents, Magna Housing, and Citizens Advice, are involved in supporting the food bank. More organisations are coming forward all the time to be involved, either in terms of funding and grants and or practical assistance. A public meeting was held on Monday 4 November to update people on the progress of the foodbank and recruit potential volunteers. 56 people and organisations attended or were represented.
- **Long-Term Future:** Sam and Frances emphasized the importance of securing the long-term future of the Riverside premises and establishing the food bank as a constituted body to enable it to bid for grants and enter into lease agreements.
- **Upcoming Presentation:** Sam Murrell is scheduled to present the work done on the Moorland Food Bank at an upcoming strategic LCN meeting, (Chairs Day) highlighting the LCN's role in ensuring the food bank's continuity.

Economic Regeneration

Cllr Pugsley provided an update on the Economic Development group's work, including discussions with Emma Thomason from Visit Exmoor. The group is evaluating the impact of recent economic changes on local businesses. They plan to identify blockages and opportunities for businesses in the area and produce a report for Somerset Council.

The notes from the last meeting of the working group had been circulated with the agenda pack.

Housing

Colin McDonald discussed the housing needs and surveys for the Exmoor area,

highlighting the importance of identifying suitable sites for affordable housing. He emphasized the need for parish councils to consider potential sites and engage with the process. The group aims to produce a comprehensive report by Spring of 2025.

The next Housing subgroup meeting is due to take place on the rearranged date of Thursday 12 December at 2pm. This will be held in the Garden Room of Exmoor House. Housing Associations have been invited to attend to highlight the issues and challenges they experience when bringing forward developments on Exmoor.

The notes from the last meeting of the working group had been circulated with the agenda pack.

10. A.O.B

A representative from Minehead Swimming Leisure Group introduced their project to build a new swimming pool in Minehead, emphasizing health and well-being benefits.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Exmoor LCN Date – The Moorland Hall, Cutcombe	Highways Sub-Group Dates – Dulverton Sports Pavilion
Thursday 7 November at 7pm	Friday 29 November 10am – 1pm
Thursday 16 January at 7pm	Friday 21 February 10am – 1pm
Thursday 6 March at 7pm	Friday 25 April 10am – 1pm
Thursday 5 June at 7pm (AGM)	

Housing Working group

- Thursday 12 December at 2pm – Garden Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton

Economic Regeneration Working group

- Tuesday 19 November 2024 – Online at 5:30pm
- Tuesday 28 January 2025, Online at 5.30pm

Moorland Foodbank Steering Group Meeting

- Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 11am – The Riverside Centre, Dulverton.
- Meetings held weekly as moving at pace.

Meeting closed at 8:55pm.

