

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Public Rights of Way Working Party

Notes of the Zoom meeting held at 4pm on Wednesday 13th September 2023

Present

Olly Davy	OD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Mark Williamson	MW	ETC Councillor
Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor
Heath Nickels	HN	P3 Co-Ordinator
Jan Gannaway	JG	Active Travel Exmouth & Sustrans
John Petty	JP	Active Travel Exmouth & Exmouth Community Association
Sam Jeffcoat	SJ	DCC PROW Warden for Exmouth
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC Note-taker

Apologies

Andrew Toye	AT	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Ross Hussey	RH	Footpath volunteer
Elizabeth Deasy	ED	TARA

1. To elect a chair

CJ requested nominations for chair of this working party. OD nominated LV, LV declined. OD nominated MW and LV seconded that MW be elected as chair. No further nominations were made.

Members were asked to vote, and MW was duly elected as chair.

2. Welcome and apologies

MW welcomed members and apologies were noted. MW provided members with a brief outline of his previous council background.

3. To approve the notes of the meeting on the 8th of February 2023

OD proposed, HN seconded, the accuracy of the notes from the 8th of February 2023 which were approved.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

No matters arose from the previous meeting. MW commented that although he has a map of Exmouth footpaths registered, unregistered, numerated and unenumerated he found it difficult to cross reference the location of the footpaths when referred to numerically. He requested that the footpath location be added in brackets to the notes. CJ reminded members that only Public Rights of Ways were numerically numbered and that details are on the Devon County

Council website as well the rights of way map, a copy of which is available to every member of this working party. MW and LV will collect a map when they are next in the office.

MW asked for clarification on why once the boundary is crossed from Exmouth into Budleigh Salterton the footpath numbers are different. SJ advised that every parish has their own footpath/bridleway numbers although some numbers are missed when footpaths/bridleways were declassified in the 1960's and 70's. SJ confirmed that every parish was asked to record the rights of way for their area. This resulted in a footpath which crossed a parish boundary having a different footpath number. MW queried if the PROW map was digital, SJ confirmed that a digital interactive map is viewable on the DCC website, CJ added that it can be found through searching public rights of way on the website, CJ will share the link after the meeting.

CJ advised that the DCC website holds lots of interesting PROW information including the DMR (definitive map review) which is updated every so many years to amend/add/delete footpaths. CJ updated members that it is very hard legal process to add footpaths and get landowners permission, OD tried about 3-4 years ago without success. OD added that he did not pursue this as he knew that the landowner's permission would be difficult to obtain.

JG sent an email to CJ with a link to a website which contains a map of footpaths in Exmouth including the locations, some of which were public rights of way. CJ will share the link details with members after the meeting.

5. Update from the P3 Co-ordinator on current state of footpaths (HN)

HN has just started the survey and will present his findings at the next meeting in February. HN queried strange taping that has appeared on the footpath gate that runs from Hulham Road to A la Ronde, SJ advised that taping is usually put on by residents that live nearby to stop the metal gates making so much noise when they shut.

HN bumped into the ETC maintenance team who were strimming the footpaths on behalf of DCC, OD queried if ETC had cut back the stinging nettles on footpath 9, HN confirmed that they are doing their usual footpaths and CJ mentioned that only 2 members of the team are working on footpaths so if they haven't already, they will get to it soon. MW queried the location of footpath 9, OD advised it is from the end of Maristow Avenue leading to Exeter Road.

6. Update from DCC Public Rights of Way warden (SJ)

SJ is busy in other areas, not currently in Exmouth, although he did inform members that the Exe Estuary Trail towards Exmouth will be shut from the 18th of September to completely replace Courtlands boardwalk.

SJ confirmed that the contractors are doing a second cut in Exmouth although this is later than usual due to the storms at the start of May. SJ has received complaints about the permissive path that runs along the stream near Green Farm that the landowner provides but does not maintain, SJ advised that it is difficult to warrant spending public money maintaining the path on the landowner's behalf when they should be keeping it in good condition for public use.

SJ is hoping to cut back the hedge that is encroaching onto the cycleway which runs past the Withycombe rugby ground and do some remedial work on the tarmac, HN stated that this is a DCC path not a PROW.

SJ updated members that funding has been received from Sustrans and will be used to modify some of the chicanes on the Exe Estuary Trail coming into Exmouth which will hopefully reduce cycle speeds.

CJ asked SJ if he could provide a name of someone at DCC who may be able to help/provide permission to improving the chicane entrances and exit points at Bapton Valley, SJ advised that the cycleway network office deal with background work and SJ deals with ongoing maintenance that has been allocated to him within his network area. SJ made members aware of the cycleways that were part of his network which did not include Bapton Valley although probably should. SJ provided CJ with the name of the DCC road safety officer who would complete a minor scheme safety assessment in that area. JG stated that Bapton Valley is an EDDC matter and improvements to the chicanes were part of this project. However, CJ reminded members that EDDC did not necessarily own the land at the entrance/exit points so permissions may be needed.

CJ advised that ETC keep urban footpaths 9, 19, 11, 14 and a little of 6 accessible as well as others when possible so SJ's contractors may not have as much to do as expected, SJ was pleased that ETC have had the capacity to help as his manpower and budget has been cut and agreed that ETC and DCC should liaise with each other in future to know who is cutting and when. As DCC cut twice a year in June and September, SJ will supply ETC with a schedule of work to use as a guide so that any work ETC complete can be in between to make the cutting process more efficient.

MW asked SJ to forward the DCC document outlining council weed killing and cutting responsibilities in Exmouth to CJ to circulate to members, SJ will send a cutting schedule. CJ requested that SJ also share the policy links, SJ will circulate a copy of the condition criteria which is a set of standards.

SJ urged members to contact him directly if any problems arise with footpaths, MW thanked SJ for all his hard work and HN added that the network has been much improved since SJ took over.

7. Update on Bapton Valley project

MW confirmed that Bapton Valley project is a commitment within the Neighbourhood Plan and requested an update for new members. CJ confirmed that it is a Neighbourhood Plan action and ETC has agreed to set aside CIL funds to make improvements but must work with EDDC as they own the land. CJ advised that ETC will provide the funding and EDDC will provide resources to put the project together and oversee the work.

CJ updated members that the Engineering Projects Manager of the project, Tom Buxton-Smith and Projects Engineer, Louis Hoyle were working on this project. CJ confirmed that the tenders have gone out to appoint a contractor and once the tender is awarded, they will announce the revised programme of works. TBS advised CJ that once the contract had been awarded the details will be published and a schedule of work will be shared.

CJ advised that EDDC CIL funding team are pushing ETC to use the CIL money or the money will have to be returned. CJ has used this to push back on the Bapton Valley project.

CJ confirmed that we are waiting to see the programme of work and have agreed to make staged payments. JG reminded members that as we were not happy with the proposed design, we were promised the opportunity to revise the design and route, but this has not happened, JG requested a meeting to look at the design before any work starts. CJ confirmed that a zoom meeting took place with LH specifically about the design and he did offer a site visit but only gave 2 hours notice and unfortunately this was not enough time to enable someone to attend. CJ will arrange for a copy of the tender or design document to be emailed to ETC and will organise an onsite meeting with LH and/or TBS to view the design drawing and specification.

CJ confirmed that the project has taken more than 2 years to get to this point and ETC had earmarked £200k of CIL money to deliver this project.

8. Next meeting – TBC (February 2024)

MW thanked members for attending and suggested scheduling quarterly meetings rather than meeting twice a year, JP agreed. CJ advised MW that the reason that 2 formal meetings take place a year is to tie in with P3 requirements. Furthermore changes to the terms of reference would need full council approval. CJ suggested ad hoc meetings be held in between the formal meetings if required to discuss specific matters. MW agreed with this for now and will provide a report at the next Full Council meeting to advise that the WP is planning a site visit to Bapton Valley.

MW thanked members for attending the meeting.

HN queried when the next meeting would take place, CJ confirmed that 2024 meeting invites will be sent out as soon as the meeting dates for next year were agreed by the Town Council.

The meeting closed at 17:27