

# EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

## Flooding & Land Drainage Working Party

Notes of the Zoom meeting held at 2pm on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### Present

Steve Gazzard	TD	ETC & EDDC Councillor, Withycombe Raleigh Ward
Pauline Stott	PS	ETC Councillor, Halsdon Ward
Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor, Littleham Ward
Tim Dumper	TD	ETC Councillor, Halsdon Ward
Cherry Nicholas	CN	ETC Councillor, Brixington Ward
Mark Williamson	MW	ETC Councillor, Littleham Ward
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Tom Buxton-Smith	TBS	EDDC, Engineering Projects Manager
Thomas Aldridge	TA	DCC, Flood & Coastal Risk Management
Hazel Tranchant	HT	SWW, Asset Manager
John Halsall	JH	SWW, Chief Operating Officer
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC, Notes

### Apologies

Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor, Town Ward
Ian Kirvan	IK	ETC Councillor, Brixington Ward
Olly Davey	OD	ETC Councillor, Town Ward
Phil Morgan	PM	DCC, Neighbourhood Highway Engineer
Stuart Coles	SC	DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer
Kris Inch	KI	EA, Flood and Coastal Risk Management Advisor
Rob Butler	RB	EA, Exmouth Tidal Defence Project Manager
Jon Snowden	JS	EA, Senior Advisor Public Health
Alan Burrows	AB	SWW, Director of External Liaison
Russell Craig	RC	EA, Flood Resilience Team Leader
Charlotte Bacon	CB	SWW, Pennon Group

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### 1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

SG welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted, all members introduced themselves to JH and HT.

### 2. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2023

PS proposed and GD seconded, and it was agreed the notes were an accurate record of the meeting.

### 3. Matters arising

No matters arising.

### 4. To discuss the Phear Park and Maer CSOs and provide an update of the public virtual meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 by SWW – see attached letter distributed by SWW and link to further updates [Service Updates | In Your Area | South West Water](#)

Many people attended the virtual SWW public meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January. Unfortunately, due to the high attendance, SG asked if a list of the questions asked at this event will be shared as he was unable to get his questions put forward.

A letter from SWW was distributed to all residents affected by the burst rising main and this had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. GD was concerned about the last paragraph in the letter claiming that contractors had experienced verbal abuse and equipment had been damaged. He asked for further details on the matter. JH confirmed he had heard of many instances where there was abuse, disrespect and inappropriateness aimed at workers and tanker drivers. He confirmed that security was now in place to protect them and the equipment.

JH confirmed that there had not been any issues or concerns previously with this pipe and as such it had not been considered as a high priority. Unfortunately, due to the storms the problems were exacerbated, and no one had envisaged the outcome.

JH added that SWW should have communicated better, and the public event should have been held sooner. He hoped that the public were reassured that SWW had it all under control and would be escalating the upgrade proposals. He confirmed another meeting, this time in person, will be held in 4 weeks to give people the opportunity to ask further questions.

JH provided members with a brief update on work currently taking place and confirmed that sewage tankering had stopped.

PS queried how members of the public know when it is safe to swim in the winter when no lifeguards are on duty and suggested a flag system would be a good idea. JH replied, saying personally, he would not swim if it had been raining a lot as surface water containing agricultural and highways pollutants dispels into the beaches and estuary.

WaterFit Live provides real time information that informs people when overflows are spilling and whether this has affected the bathing water quality. SWW is developing a system that will enable people to be confident in knowing that it is safe to swim. HT made members aware that during the summer bathing season EA issue pollution forecasting alerts on their website as do Surfers Against Sewage on their mobile phone App. However, SWW will be testing all year round and will also collect tide and rainfall data to share with EA to help them predict their pollution forecast.

GD said he had a list of questions for SWW and was keen to know when the questions put forward by the participants at the virtual meeting would be answered and the results published. He wanted to avoid duplicating the questions. JH proposed that he would set up a meeting between GD and the SWW Beach Water Quality Scientist who would be able to answer all the technical questions.

SG has noticed that diggers are still in Phear Park. HT was sure that the work was completed so will investigate why diggers are still on site.

HT confirmed that the pumping station at Phear Park has been upgraded as part of the SWW improvement strategy to reduce spills at Phear Park and Maer Road. Three new pumps were fitted in September 2022 and new drives have also been fitted to control the pump speed and flow rates, so they do not deliver any more than 200 litres per second. A

new CSO screen has been fitted so when the storm tank is full it passes through the screen, and any debris is prevented from coming out of the overflow pipe.

CJ queried if the new increased unit of pressure could have factored into the burst pipe. HT confirmed they had performed a risk assessment before the flow rate was increased and contractors performed a replicated assessment to confirm what flow rate would be acceptable. The Phear Park pipe was lined and replaced all the way up through the park and through Plumb Park, the burst pipe was an old pipe from 1994 whose structure failed. The pressure was increased from 2.3 bars to 2.4 bars which is an insignificant pressure increase and would not have caused the pipe to burst as the pipe can take up to 6 bars.

A query was raised about how often the pipes were checked and maintained. HT confirmed that rising mains are difficult to check as they are always in use and CCTV equipment can only be used when the pipe is empty. SWW have a rising main risk register which indicates the asset life. They have looked at other techniques and have trialled a product called Sahara, a device that enables a probe to be inserted into the rising main. As it goes up it collects data. Unfortunately, this device was not taken forward as there were concerns that it may get stuck and cause a blockage. Other techniques have also been considered. Another is where you dig around the pipe and clamp on a device that scans the pipe to ascertain the thickness of the walls. Again, they decided against this technique as the product did not give them enough accuracy of thickness. There was also concern that digging would disturb the pipe and potentially cause a pollution event.

The top section of the Maer Road rising main is still in SWW's plan for replacement. They are proposing to purchase the field/land adjacent to the Maer Lane treatment site to enable an expansion programme. This will also enable the existing rising main to be re-directed. This work has been brought forward as a high priority but there is no exact time frame for when this is likely to be.

PS made SWW aware that lots of water mains have burst around Exmouth and wondered if there were any plans to replace pipes. JH has a programme for replacing pipes but explained that when water temperatures drop in the pipes especially in the winter they contract, and any weaknesses can cause a crack and in most cases, this will rectify itself as temperatures increase.

## **5. Update on Maer Rock investigations (attached letter from EA and corresponding update from SWW)**

HT attended a meeting earlier with the SWW Project Manager where they discussed the concerns that discharges could be taking place over Maer Rocks, what could be causing it if it is discharging on the rocks rather than further out and what can be done to resolve the issue. A further investigation took place using CCTV to carry out surveys.

SWW confirmed that thanks to the spring low tide, the team managed to survey 190 meters in distance along the outfalls near to the edge of the rock formation.

The outfall is several hundred meters in length from the last manhole access point. SWW reached the 190m mark from this point, which is the maximum length the cable for this type of CCTV equipment will reach. SWW will reattend on Feb 12<sup>th</sup> with a 500m reel which should allow them to go all the way to the tide low water level within the pipe. Unfortunately, they cannot CCTV underwater for risk of getting the equipment stuck on any debris or visibly gain any use from the footage, so this tide level is the furthest they can CCTV being

a low tide, and the furthest they can realistically CCTV within the pipe. They hope this will allow them to get close to the end so any sand build up/blockage would be relatively small near the end and within normal techniques to clean. Once the next CCTV is done, they will know more on this and the pipes condition.

SG thanked JH for attending, who gave his apologies as he had another meeting to attend.

GD queried why the sand was discoloured last year and how do SWW prevent shifting sand within blocked pipes. HT confirmed that SWW checks were carried out and the discolouration of sand was not sewage or pipe corrosion related. A different team will provide an update of work to clear out sand.

## 6. SWW: General updates

MW enquired how SWW were going to deal with future local development in Exmouth. HT confirmed that SWW can improve their infrastructure to deal with additional housing and longer-term investment. This investment strategy, which has a design horizon to 2050, was discussed in the virtual meeting. The Maer Lane treatment works is easily coping with the current population.

The capacity of the Maer Lane treatment works needs to be increased by 50 percent; this is not because it cannot deal with the population but because SWW need to process the storm flows during rainfall to reduce the spill frequency. This will give SWW the opportunity to design the treatment works for a future design horizon and provide a better quality treatment for the recently designated Sandy Bay shellfish area.


SWW will be upgrading Maer Road pumping station with new pumps, panels, and a second high voltage supply going in as a backup should the first fail.

MW thanked HT for the comprehensive update and requested a more detailed report on how the Maer Lane treatment works will be increased by 50 percent. HT confirmed that the flow rates will be increased from 273 litres per second to at least 546 litres per second to take into consideration any future design aspirations. SWW hope to purchase the field next to the treatment works to divert the rising main within the next year and the treatment upgrade works has a current completion target date of March 2028. A breakdown of the 38 million being spent was provided in the virtual meeting, however the costs are continually rising. HT provided the following breakdown:

**Reducing spills and increasing treatment capacity**

Project Element	Benefits	Approx Cost	Complete so far	Delivery Date
Groundwater reduction and Surface Water Separation	Reduced discharge volume	£1.0m	52%	Sept 2024
Phear park / Maer Road pumping station upgrades	Reduced spill frequency	£3.0m	56%	Sept 2022 Sept 2024
Sewage treatment works outfall capacity upgrade	Reduced spill frequency at Maer Road & Phear Park	£14.0m	24%	Sept 2024
Sewage treatment works capacity upgrade	Reduced spill frequency at STW and improved final effluent for Sandy Bay shellfish	£20.0m	Concept only	Mar 2028
Investment at other overflows	Reduced spill frequency at target overflows	£10.5m*	Concept only	Mar 2030

\*In addition to the £38m estimate on Waterfit Live



## **7. EA: Tidal Defence and general updates**

RB was unable to attend, however provided the following report:

- Royal Avenue has a partial road closure booked for this week, to enable to tarmac an area next to the existing pavement of which a photo was provided. This was discussed with EDDC who felt that tarmac, rather than bare earth/grass would be preferable there in the long run.
- Completion of waterproofing measures for a property on Camperdown Terrace.
- Road works at Alexandra Terrace Junction are due to begin on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January for 2 weeks. These will be minor changes to the road layout (e.g. raising of a kerb, sign changes) as requested by the DCC Highway Authority, although 2 weeks have been booked it is expected to be completed sooner.
- Other defects, such as the posts for Morton Crescent flood gates, should be sorted within the next month.
- Additional planting is expected to take place along the Royal Avenue to supplement what is already growing there.
- Flood warning issues should be sent to the Flood Resilience Team, contact details can be provided on request.

Morton Crescent resident volunteers raised concerns about partially installed telemetry on the gates and wondered when work would be completed. When EA were asked about this both RB and KI stated that there was no funding available, TBS confirmed that the telemetry was to allow any future additions to be added to the gates should they be required.

## **8. EDDC: General updates including Exmouth Beach Management Plan**

The BMP meeting took place this morning and EDDC have appointed AECOM who have started data gathering work to deliver the Beach Management Plan. TBS said that it was likely the first public consultation meeting will take place on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of February in the Town Hall.

The ongoing seawall failure was also discussed in the meeting. Due to the length of wall that is failing, EDDC are considering a vertical sheet pile option which will mean the slope revetment will be lost. Work should start late February 2024 through to Easter and the wall on the path side will be reclad with reclaimed stone with an aspiration to reclad in stone on the beach side in the future. A further public consultation meeting will take place once they have a design and programme in mind.

TBS shared images of the section of seawall that is damaged. He explained that when the beach dropped considerably there were no supporting foundations below the sloped revetment, and this led to water rushing under the wall and bringing out and loose material. This caused voiding and resulted in the wall cracking and dropping.

Through surveys they have discovered that there are no proper foundations in this stretch of beach. There is a danger that if the wall is not repaired properly the damage could stretch past Sideshore toward the car park and amusement arcade.

TBS has not received any reports about flooding issues on any other EDDC assets.

## **9. DCC: Flood risk general update**

TA had left the meeting by this time but provided the following email report:

Our study into surface water flood risk in Exmouth has been delayed, they are still ongoing and will be shared with the group at the relevant point.

We are in discussions and information sharing with stakeholders including SWW and EDDC, to ensure we can work together for mutual benefit wherever possible.

## **10. DCC: Highways general update**

No representatives were in attendance and no report was received.

## **11. ETC Councillors: Reports and questions to representatives of external organisations**

TD queried if any reports or programmes of work being carried out were available on burst pipes around Exmouth and how should they be reported. HT will contact the team involved to provide TD with the information requested.

Members discussed burst pipes and surface water freezing on the roads in various places around Exmouth. HT urged members to phone SWW to report any incidents which will be raised through their systems so that SWW can investigate/repair the issue.

## **12. AOB**

GD will forward his questions to HT and JH after the meeting who will arrange a meeting with a SWW Quality Scientist. SWW are looking at surface water separation in Halsdon/Hartopp Road pumping station so residents may notice SWW carrying out checks.

Members thanked HT for joining and providing an informative update and hoped she would join future meetings.

## **13. 2024 meetings:**

16 April 2024

16 July 2024

15 October 2024

The meeting ended at 15:58