EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Public Rights of Way Working Party

Notes of the Zoom meeting held at 4pm on Wednesday 11th September 2024

Present

Mark Williamson	MW	ETC Councillor, Chair
Andrew Toye	AT	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Olly Davey	OD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor
Elizabeth Deasy	ED	TARA
Ross Hussey	RH	Footpath Volunteer
John Petty	JP	Active Travel Exmouth & Exmouth Community Association
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk

Apologies

Heath Nickels	HN	P3 Co-Ordinator
Sam Jeffcoat	SJ	DCC PROW Warden for Exmouth

1. To elect a chair

CJ requested nominations for chair of this working party. AT 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.

3. To approve the notes of the meeting on the 14th of February 2024

ED proposed, RH seconded, the accuracy of the notes from the 14th of February 2024 which were approved.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

No matters arose from the previous meeting.

CJ updated members that DCC Public Rights of Way Officer Ros Davies has moved to another department and John Boyd has taken over the role. He has been in contact with CJ about P3 grant payments.

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

HN was unable to attend and therefore provided the report below, which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting:

I have only just started my annual walk of all the footpaths (two completed, with no issues to report). My aim is to complete the survey of all the paths during September and I will send the completed document to CJ.

Any issues arising, that need urgent attention, will be relayed to SJ, as and when they arise.

On other matters, I have met with MW, this week regarding Item 8 on the agenda and I believe MG will express my thoughts on that.

Just as a piece of information, the EDDC Countryside Team are starting some redesign and clearance work on areas next to Footpath 11, where it runs through the Nature Reserve also known as Weasel Run next to the estuary beyond the Marine Services Boat Yard.

There are also other works that EDDC Countryside are aiming to obtain a grant for, at this Nature Reserve, but I do not know the full details of what that contains.

RH will walk FP11 and provide a report.

MW thanked HN for his report.

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

SJ was unable to attend and therefore provided the report below, which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting:

I completed surface improvement work along Exmouth FP12 this spring (photos attached).

I completed surface improvement work along Exmouth FP11 this summer (photos attached) – this job took a bit of work to arrange as I needed to get permissions from Natural England to access the site across the estuary and Network Rail to work alongside the railway.

Rodney Steps unfortunately are due to be removed (not sure of timescales but hopefully this year) and can't be replaced due to the cliffs being very unstable.

I rerouted Exmouth FP1 (Coast Path) away from the edge of the cliffs nr West Down Beacon a few months ago.

One matter I wanted to raise – the paths around Green Farm are often a muddy mess over the winter months, especially where they have been fenced off. More and more people are trying to use them now the new housing estates have been/are being constructed. I wondered if ETC or EDDC had any knowledge of any potential developer funding available to go towards stoning up these paths. The work I did on FP12 was largely paid for by the developers building new housing on that side of the town.

Members were disappointed that Rodney Steps were being removed but understood that the geotechnical survey highlighted the cliffs around the steps are experiencing significant on-going erosion and the approach to the upper steps is expected to be lost in the near future.

Six large red “Path Closed” signs will be displayed to the structure and around the area to ensure that members of the public approaching the steps/setting out to walk around Rodney Point can clearly see that the steps are closed.

DCC have been made aware that signage will need to be improved to make it clear that there is no access off the beach and tide times need to be noted to avoid being cut off. MW was keen for tide times to be included on signage.

Members discussed the muddy state of paths around Green Farm, CJ advised that footpaths 2 and 6 cross Clinton Devon agricultural land but if SJ receives funding to re-surface the paths they might be improved. Plumb Park S106 funds could possibly be available to fund improvements but this would need to be discussed at the next S106 & CIL meeting to see if funding was put aside for Public Rights of Way. ED confirmed that the Green Farm path is pedestrians only and suggested installation of a boardwalk rather than gravel path as it would be more suitable for this countryside path.

7. Update on Bapton Valley project

MW thanked JP for cutting the ribbon when the park was officially opened on the 5th of August 2024.

The EDDC Projects Manager Louis Hoyle is no longer in that role so CJ will contact TBS for size of signage information that would be acceptable. CJ has been working with JG and HN to come up with some signage designs to highlight points of interest and is now waiting for the proofs. A sign will be installed on each of the three entrances of Bapton Valley and going forward one at Goodmores if DCC are agreeable.

OD suggested more signs be put up around Exmouth to show where cycle paths are located, it was agreed this should be discussed through the Exmouth Transport Partnership WP as DCC Highways would be responsible for highway signage. MW requested that this is put to DCC in the next ETP meeting on the 15th of October and he will ask if he is able to attend to put the signage request forward.

ED wanted to express her thanks to JP and JG for their involvement keeping the Bapton Valley Park project current. ED was pleased that cyclists have the option to use shared paths although added that some cyclists should be more mindful of other path users.

JP made members aware that councils can only publish maps of paths to encourage cycling if the ownership and maintenance can be established which would be an onerous task due to the vast number of paths. The Getting Around Exmouth map available on the Active Travel website lists all the rights of ways and official cycle paths. RH confirmed that Bapton Valley Park is recognised on Google maps as being cyclable and thought signage at Goodmores was crucial.

8. To agree to request DCC to inform this working party of their maintenance schedule for Long Lane in view of the frequency of use by residents

MW and HN walked Long Lane and MW notified DCC of the overgrown brambles using the online portal, 3 reports were received in total, some brambles have been cut back since then, but MW was unsure if this work was carried out by DCC.

MW stated that Long Lane is not a public right of way and queried its status. CJ checked on the DCC Land Charges viewer which shows the lane to be a DCC Highway and confirmed she has repeatedly stated ETC does not have the resources to take this on.

MW asked members if they were all in agreement to contact DCC to ask for a maintenance schedule for Long Lane, and all members agreed.

CJ will contact DCC highways and ask for a maintenance schedule.

9. Any other business

RH walks the western side of Exmouth and queried if Helen Bennett who is no longer a footpath volunteer who walked the eastern side could be replaced. CJ explained that volunteers were recruited during the period when there was not a P3 Co-ordinator but now that HN has taken on this role the need for more volunteers was not as critical.

ED suggested contacting the developers Blue Cedar Homes who might have some funding available for footpath 6 resurfacing.

10. Next meeting – 12th February 2025

The meeting closed at 17:08