EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Flooding & Water Quality Working Party

Notes of the Zoom meeting held at 2pm on Tuesday 1st October 2024

Present

Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor, Littleham Ward (Chairperson)
Pauline Stott	PS	ETC Councillor, Halsdon Ward
Tim Dumper	TD	ETC Councillor, Halsdon Ward
Mark Williamson	MW	ETC Councillor, Littleham Ward
Tom Buxton-Smith	TBS	EDDC, Engineering Projects Manager
Sarah Sharpe	SS	SWW, Community Engagement Officer
Hazel Tranchant	HT	SWW, Asset Manager
Stuart Coles	SC	DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC, Note Taker

Apologies

Steve Gazzard	SG	ETC & EDDC Councillor, Withycombe Raleigh Ward
Ian Kirvan	IK	ETC Councillor, Brixington Ward
Thomas Aldridge	TA	DCC, Flood & Coastal Risk Management
Clarissa Newell	CN	EA, Land and Water Manager

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1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

GD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 16th of July 2024

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

3. Matters arising

No matters arising.

4. Update on sewage incidents in Exmouth

GD reminded members that there was a major pollution incident on the 14th of August when the rising main sewer broke, this has now been downgraded from a category 1 to a category 2 incident. The temporary “umbilical” pipes that run from Maer Road pumping station to Maer Lane treatment centre are functioning well and keeping any potential spills to a minimum. An independent audit has been commissioned by SWW to investigate the causes and actions taken in response to the incident. The report is currently under review by their legal department and will be released into the public realm shortly after.

There is also a growing movement where residents are considering legal action against SWW, GD confirmed the town council is not involved with this movement. However, ETC are interested in assessing the impact of the sewage incidents on local businesses and residents by conducting a survey to gather information about the impact the sewerage spills including

quantifying financial losses for businesses and beach accessibility. Members expressed support for the survey, highlighting the need to gather comprehensive and meaningful data. Discussions included the challenges of accurately assessing visitor losses and the broader impact of the sewage incidents on the community.

PS confirmed that the beach wheelchairs have been greatly impacted which has led to bookings being cancelled.

MW emphasised the importance of the forthcoming neighbourhood plan for Exmouth, particularly in attracting and growing local businesses. MW supported the council's investigation into these matters, advocating for collaboration with residents and organisations.

GD acknowledged the need for effective communication about Exmouth's situation, recognising the potential reputational damage due to recent events. GD emphasised that the council must develop a coordinated message for tourists and the community, understanding that immediate solutions aren't feasible. Ongoing collaboration with EDDC is essential to address water quality concerns particularly about keeping the public informed of pollution alerts, using the beach and swimming in the sea.

The working party felt the survey needed to ask the right questions for the data to be meaningful and it would be prudent to seek external assistance, and this would require a budget.

PS proposed and MW seconded, and it was agreed to recommend at the next full council meeting that a budget be allocated to develop a survey to gather comprehensive and meaningful data to assess visitor losses and the broader impact of the sewage incidents on the community.

HT was asked to confirm the arrangements following the recent spills and provide an update on plans for future work.

HT said the arrangements currently in place to ensure further spills were avoided were as described by GD and confirmed that despite heavy rainfall it was working well. HT provided members with an update on upgrade work as well as confirming that the independent report has been submitted to the EA.

PALS report submission includes:

- PALS report submitted to the EA as part of a request for information
- Report can now be shared, and copies will be provided to relevant stakeholders, including ETC, EDDC and Escape
- The report confirmed what SWW anticipated and that was that the pipes corroded due to gravel build up in the pipes.

Pipeline replacement (two phase plan) phase 1:

- Replace existing pipework from the corner of the field to the treatment facility
- Detour planned around the field to avoid future relaying as treatment works will be upgraded
- Tree screening will be implemented between the new treatment works and the lane
- Original spun iron pipe section in the field will be replaced and existing overland pipework will be removed

- Target completion will be by the end of December 2024

Phase 2:

- Replace the pipeline from the valves down to the pump station
- The existing section towards the pump station is in better condition than the top part but still requires upgrades
- Work will begin in the spring (targeting the end of March/April 2025) when the area is drier as it's located near a brook
- Plans are being drawn up considering nearby football fields and flow meter chambers

Maer Road pump station upgrade:

- The upgrade is designed to improve the resilience of the existing flow rate, not to increase it
- New storm pumps and control panels will be installed and upgrades to the power supply are in progress
- A second HV supply may be provided via an additional transformer
- Ongoing works include casting the transformer base, with reactive work causing minor delays
- The upgrade will not be live until the new treatment works outfall and diffusers are installed
- Target completion date for the Maer Road upgrade will be the end of March 2025

Straight Point pipeline

Work is delayed to the new overflow pipeline from Maer Lane treatment site out to Straight Point as filters need to be added to the end of the pipeline to meet new requirements for shellfish designated waters.

Updates and responses to questions (HT)

Pumping upgrades and pipeline replacement:

- Phase 1 of the pipeline replacement will be completed before any major upgrades at the bottom end
- The bottom end (lower pipeline section) may not be upgraded immediately. The control system could continue using the current setup until phase 2 is done
- The situation will be reviewed after the next couple of months, and decisions about potential upgrades will be made after assessing the risk

Storm tank at Maer Road car park:

- No new storm tank is planned as there is already an adequate system in place
- The existing storm tank collects water and pumps it into an above ground tank in the car park
- The current tank is deemed sufficient with the ongoing strategy. Historical modelling and hydraulic checks have shown that adding another storm tank would not be effective unless it could be emptied between storm events. Tanks need to be emptied within a day or two to prevent septic conditions

- Improvements in pumping to the treatment works. Reducing infiltration, and separating non-foul flows are expected to reduce storm related issues

EA strategy:

- The EA had initially suggested adding two large storm tanks at Phear Park and Maer Road, but further hydraulic modelling showed that they would not drain between storms. The focus has shifted towards pumping more flow to the treatment works for treatment
- EA's new strategy has been agreed upon, emphasising improving treatment capacity over simply adding storage

Escape enquiries:

- Escape has asked multiple questions about storm tanks which will be discussed at the upcoming meeting on Thursday

5. What are the proposals to separate sewage and rainwater and how will any future sewage spills be mitigated as it is likely to be far more concentrated

Sewage and rainwater separation:

GD raised a question about separating sewage and groundwater/rainwater infiltration and wondered whether removing rainwater from the system would result in a higher concentration of sewage in the pumps. He was particularly concerned of the concentrated raw sewage spills should there be an incident in the future.

HT confirmed that, during dry weather, sewage will be less diluted. However, during rainfall, the overall system will still experience large volumes of surface water, which means the concentration during spills would not change significantly.

Concentration in smaller treatment works:

HT explained that in larger towns like Exmouth, there is enough surface water (roofs, roads) still connected to the system, so the concentration change is minimal. In smaller treatment works, where infiltration reduction efforts have been made, a higher concentration of crude sewage is seen, posing a process challenge for those works. However, Exmouth's system won't see much impact.

Further discussion and survey updates:

Surface water system survey:

SWW is conducting surveys on the surface water system to address unexpected rainfall patterns in the combined sewers. The modelling indicates more rain enters the combined system in winter than in summer, which seems unusual. They are investigating potential blockages in the surface water system that might be causing these anomalies.

Collaboration with local authorities:

HT asked for any insights from the Town Council on locations where surface water behaves differently in winter compared to summer.

CJ suggested that TA from DCC, Flood & Coastal Risk Management team, who is conducting modelling work, might have better insights. SWW is already collaborating with DCC and will follow up on this.

All year-round bathing water sampling:

HT brought up the issue of enhanced bathing water monitoring. The results for Exmouth over the winter are not looking favourable, even when excluding the impact of the Phear Park burst. Monitoring is ongoing, and further guidance will be issued later this year. HT emphasised the importance of tracking the situation as year-round sampling may impact tourism. GD confirmed that they would include this in a future meeting agenda for discussion.

Dog illness reports:

HT mentioned ongoing concerns about dogs falling ill in Exmouth, questioning if there is any way to log and track these incidents to see if they correlate with sewage or other spills. GD acknowledged anecdotal reports and mentioned plans to contact veterinary practices to start quantifying the issue. CJ suggested reaching out to Sally Webster from Environmental Health at EDDC to check if they have received any formal reports, as they patrol and enforce PSPOs (Public Spaces Protection Orders) along the beach.

Action items:

- SWW will continue surface water surveys and work with DCC's Flood & Coastal Risk Management team to refine their understanding of local surface water patterns
- No new storm tanks will be added, as the current strategy addresses storm-related issues through better treatment capacity and infiltration reduction
- ETC to follow-up on the results of year-round bathing water monitoring and assess its impact on local tourism
- SWW to investigate formal reports of dog illnesses via environmental health channels, particularly EDDC

6. Exmouth Beach Management Plan

PS confirmed that a workshop took place on the 18th of July at the town hall to discuss draft proposals for a long-term plan to protect Exmouth beach and prevent the sea wall from collapsing in the future.

The workshop involved several proposals grouped into five categories, each focusing on different aspects.

- **Set back flood wall:** Construction of a setback flood wall along the key flood paths, adjacent to the cycle and pedestrian paths
- **Multi breakwater:** Construction of a multi breakwater made of rock armour and a series of wooden groynes along the beach
- **Property level resistance:** Strategies for protecting properties, noting that few properties are directly at risk
- **Road realignment and nature reclamation:** Realigning the road and creating a boardwalk, allowing natural processes to reclaim the beach and enhance sand dune restoration with planting initiatives

- **Sea wall encasement:** Constructing a new retaining sea wall with sheet piling to strengthen the existing sea wall

Each proposal generated comments and feedback during the workshop, which will help shape the final plans. The draft proposals will be presented to the general public for feedback in November, with a specific date for this presentation set for the 23rd of October.

7. SWW: General updates

TBS queried why SWW are back in Phear Park with tanker movement, stating that one tank was on the grass which had been previously repaired by SWW after the last time this happened. SWW need to make sure that the landowners, EDDC, are informed of any future planned work.

CJ highlighted that SS had emailed ETC to notify that planned work was taking place at Phear Park but was unsure if EDDC had been sent the update. SS will check that EDDC are receiving the updates as well. TBS made SWW aware that more communication would be needed in future especially when on EDDC land.

8. EA: Update of Exmouth Water Quality Report, tidal defence and general updates

There was no EA representative at the meeting however CJ read out the Exmouth Water Quality report supplied by CN which was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

CJ confirmed that EA will no longer report on the tidal defence as this has now been officially handed to EDDC on the 14th of August. TBS stated that there is still an extended defect period, and Kier will be coming back to do additional landscaping works. EA will do automatic alerts and EDDC Streetscene will handle the operational side and EDDC Engineering the maintenance.

CJ queried when the snagging work on the Morton Crescent gates would be completed as various issues need to be resolved. CJ will forward the gate issues to TBS who will make sure they are dealt with by EA/Kier.

TD was concerned about the number of trees that have either died or are failing on the estuary as the tree types that were historically planted were not suitable for the environment. TBS will contact EA to bring this to their attention.

9. EDDC: General updates

Seawall:

TBS updated members that phase 2 of the seawall is currently out to tender with one week remaining, contractors are aiming to be onsite in November. EDDC are currently looking at the feasibility of one of the concessions which may have to be moved. A smaller compound would be set up on the Sideshore triangle and the main compound will be located on the EDDC events space. TBS confirmed that the promenade will be closed again whilst work takes place, and a lane closure will be in place between Ocean and Sideshore.

Manor Gardens:

CCTV has confirmed that the drainage network is beyond economic repair and the soakaway has failed. EDDC have put in a capital bid which will be determined by members

in December for approval in January by EDDC Full Council. If successful, the pipes will be replaced the next financial year.

10. DCC: Flood risk general update

TA was unable to attend the meeting and there was no update regarding this agenda item.

11. DCC: Highways general update

SC provided the following report summary:

- Limited updates regarding highways drainage
- Scheduled to meet with a contractor this week to discuss ten small drainage improvement schemes
- A walk, talk and build design session is planned for Thursday to implement quick fixes in areas with ponding issues
- Seven schemes are proposed for Exmouth, pending funding availability for the next financial year (April 2025)

PS asked about a drainage issue near Woodlands Drive at the top of Holland Road, specifically around the new bus stop. SC acknowledged previous complaints and confirmed there were jetting jobs conducted. He noted ongoing ponding issues at the bus stop.

TD highlighted that the area around Halsdon Ward continues to experience significant drainage problems. Additionally, during recent rainfall there were issues at Imperial Road and Victoria Road areas, as well as ongoing issues at St Andrew's Road corner. SC will look int to this.

12. ETC Councillors: Reports and questions to representatives of external organisations

No matters were raised.

13. AOB

No other business.

14. Next meeting

14th January 2025

The meeting ended at 15:23