EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Wednesday 20th November 2024 in the Town Hall Chamber

Present

Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Louise Venables	LV	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mike Rosser	MR	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Zoey Cooper	ZC	Exmouth Town Council
Adrian Toole	AT	Transition Exmouth
Harry Bonnell	HB	ECO Advice (formerly Exeter Community Energy)
Maggie Irving	MI	Comedy Matters

Apologies

Councillor Andrew Colman	AC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Andrew Woodward	AW	Exmouth Town Council
Catherine Causley	CC	East Devon District Council

1. **Welcome and apologies**

TD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. **Approval of previous meeting notes held on 23rd October 2024 and any matters arising therein**

The notes of the previous meeting were proposed for approval by MR, seconded by SG, and agreed by all.

3. **To receive a proposal from ZC and external guest Harry Bonnell (ECO Advice) regarding a potential partnership opportunity.**

ZC and Harry Bonnell from ECO Advice (formerly Exeter Community Energy) presented a proposed partnership to provide detailed energy-saving advice and retrofitting assessments to a select few homes in Exmouth, to share this information with a wider audience.

The proposal is to conduct detailed surveys on homes in Exmouth, particularly focusing on various property types (e.g., houses from the late 1800s, 1920s, and 1960s), to offer tailored energy-saving recommendations which can then be shared with similar residences.

Harry explained that this newer retrofit advice service targets homes not covered by grants. The proposal suggests a 50/50 funding arrangement with Exmouth Town Council to provide free surveys to homeowners interested in retrofitting. These reports would include

recommendations for energy-saving measures, heat loss, and potential cost savings, with follow-up support from ECO Advice.

The proposal aims to raise awareness and foster conversations about retrofitting in Exmouth. The reports would also serve as a resource for people looking to take action on reducing energy consumption. A key component of the initiative is to share the knowledge gained from the surveys with the wider community through workshops, pamphlets, and follow-up assessments.

Members understood the need to be cautious about framing this initiative, as the council cannot use funds to assist individuals directly. The focus should instead be on broader community benefits to avoid criticism of using public money for personal gain.

The costs of the energy audits were explained, ranging from £600 to £1000 depending on the size and complexity of the property. The investment from ETC would be in the range of £2,000. It was emphasised that the information gathered from retrofitting surveys could be shared with other homes in the community, especially where properties are similar (e.g., Waverley Rd), to provide broader value. There was discussion about encouraging people to apply for this retrofitting service, to help address concerns about fairness and eligibility.

The proposal was generally supported, with the idea that more thought should be given to how it could be marketed and framed. The council would likely proceed, given further details on how to implement the proposal effectively. There was an overall consensus in favour, with only one member abstaining.

The meeting concluded with the agreement to move forward with the project and a commitment to further discussions on implementation.

4. **To receive a proposal from ZC and external guest Maggie Irving (Comedy Matters) regarding ETC supporting x3 "What's So Funny?" workshops**

ZC and Maggie presented a proposal for workshops focusing on humour, particularly around climate change and community building. Maggie, a professional with a PhD in clowning, explained her background in teaching humour as a tool to boost confidence, communication, and wellbeing. She proposed running three workshops (on 3rd January, 19th February, and 19th March 2025) that will combine humour with climate awareness, using comedy and play to encourage creative thinking (and action) on climate change and other serious issues. The workshops will also focus on public speaking, confidence building, and fostering a supportive community environment. Maggie was proposing that ETC cover the cost of the venue hire (£270).

There was also discussion about how humour can help address various social issues and how the workshops could help create common ground and improve group dynamics. Maggie emphasised that the workshops are flexible, allowing people to attend one or all three sessions, and would be supported by local funding and venues.

The importance of involving multiple levels of government (town, district, county councils) in addressing climate change and ensuring they work together effectively was emphasised.

There was strong support for the idea, especially given the challenge of engaging the public and councillors on climate change. Humour was seen as an effective way to make serious issues more approachable and to generate positive discussions and action.

The proposed dates for the workshops were discussed. There was concern about potential scheduling conflicts with district council meetings, but it was agreed that these initial sessions could be flexible to accommodate more attendees.

The workshops will be marketed through posters and flyers, with slight differences in the themes for each workshop. The cost of the workshops was discussed, with a suggestion to charge a small fee (e.g., £5) to increase perceived value and ensure commitment.

The ideal number of participants for each workshop is around 12-25, balancing viability with ensuring personal engagement in the session.

Members agreed that feedback from these workshops will help refine the approach and possibly lead to more specialised sessions for different groups, including councillors.

There was unanimous support for the initiative, with a recognition that humour could be a powerful tool in advancing discussions on climate change.

5. To receive an update from EDDC

No update from EDDC.

6. To receive an update from Transition Exmouth

AT provided an update from Transition Exmouth and said it has been a busy year for Transition Exmouth and their involvement with the Friends of The River Exe.

- Transition Exmouth has been focused on sustainable development, with Transition Exmouth playing a key role in applying for grants.
- The future relationship with Friends of the River Exe is still under discussion, with no conclusions yet.
- The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be on 20th March 2025, but the venue is not confirmed yet.
- Work is being done to update membership lists and prepare for AGM discussions, including membership fees.
- Representatives continue their involvement with the Eco Hub at Sideshore and are supporting the climate change exhibition “Letters from the Global South” at the library.

Letters from the Global South

ZC mentioned information had been circulated about the climate change exhibition to councils and staff. The exhibition, focusing on climate change and the global south, is available at the library until Friday.

The exhibition is managed by Jo Swift, an environmental campaigner, and aims to gather support for a revised Climate and Nature Bill.

Attendees are encouraged to send cards to MPs supporting the bill, which will be brought forward in January.

The exhibition might be moved to Barnstaple or could stay in Exmouth for longer if suitable locations are found. Suggestions for future locations are welcome, with transport available if needed.

7. **To receive a brief update from ZC on:**

- **Chasing the Sun film screening and Active Travel Exmouth group**

The film screening was held in the Chamber and was well-attended, with 57 people present. Attendees were asked to fill out surveys about their transportation choices, with 40 out of 57 completing the surveys. The film focused on the power of cycling and was motivational, generating a positive atmosphere after the screening.

A Q&A panel discussion followed, featuring Will from Ride On, Emily Moore from Active Devon, and Pip Piper (the filmmaker). Topics included encouraging cycling in Exmouth and reducing car use.

The event included breakout groups where attendees brainstormed ideas for promoting cycling and active travel in Exmouth.

The feedback from the film and discussion will be shared with the growing Active Travel Exmouth group, which is now convened informally (it is not a formal Town Council group).

Future actions include ideas such as pop-up events, winter bike preparation at local events, and efforts to engage district and County Councillors.

The group aims to raise awareness about bike paths versus footpaths, increase cycling confidence, and improve infrastructure and safety for cyclists.

The Active Travel Exmouth group may eventually become a community group supported by Transition Exmouth, though it's still in its early stages.

The focus will be on improving infrastructure, building confidence for cyclists, and educating motorists about cyclists' rights and responsibilities.

There was positive feedback from the event, with appreciation for the energy and ideas generated.

- **Craft Your Christmas**

The event will take place at the Salvation Army Hall from 10am to 2pm, coinciding with the Winter Festival (in the evening).

The focus is on an environmentally friendly Christmas, with activities including natural decoration making, lantern making for the evening parade, gift wrapping with fabric (no tape), card and tinsel making, and Christmas baking (plant-based).

The community tree from last year will be decorated with handmade items.

The event is free, hosted by the Salvation Army, with plenty of volunteers but additional help is welcome.

There will be a "Pimp and Pump Your Bike" station for winter bike checks and decorating bikes for Christmas card delivery.

An eco store will be set up in the Strand to showcase the crafts made during the event.

A Christmas jumper swap will also be available for those wanting to exchange or donate a jumper.

Several members shared they will not be able to attend the event due to travel plans but are still contributing, such as donating Tetra Paks for craft decorations.

- **The Melt artwork**

The working party had initially considered participating in an art installation by artist Anthony Garrett, in the estuary near Exmouth. But as it was eventually displayed in Exeter Quay, ETC didn't contribute. However, the artist has kindly offered to give ETC a print of the artwork as a 'thank you' to the Town Council for all their efforts to combat climate change.

- **Landmark Tree**

A walk was conducted in Cranford Avenue with Councillor Mark Williamson, ZC and Simon Pardoe, to locate the three empty tree pits where trees could be planted.

There is leftover funding from a previous tree project (around £80), which can be used to plant trees in these pits. One tree has already been secured through a "landmark tree" program to commemorate Christine Channon's retirement, leaving two trees still needed.

Members discussed using £80 to buy the third tree, with stakes and ties, and potentially using additional custodial funds set up by Brenda Taylor for tree planting to cover any shortfall.

Members agreed to use the custodial funds to purchase the third tree. Everyone supported the plan to plant all three trees.

Mark Williamson will be informed that the group has secured all three trees.

- **Marpool School video**

ZC was invited to Marpool School, where Year 5 students are making videos about sustainability. The students were divided into four groups: waste, plastics, water, and the natural environment. ZC was interviewed by each group and also encouraged them to contact local groups like Plastic Free Exmouth and Exmouth Wildlife Group.

This was a pilot project, and more videos and interviews will take place next term. ZC said that the children were engaged and well-informed about the subjects.

- **Upcoming talks (Rotary and the Labour party)**

ZC has been invited to give a talk next Thursday to the Labour Party, discussing climate change and actions individuals or small groups can take to mitigate its effects. The talk will be given as the Climate Officer for Exmouth Town Council, but in a personal capacity.

ZC has also been invited to talk to the Rotary Club in December, likely on a similar topic related to climate change.

It was suggested that, to remain unbiased, similar talks could be offered to other political parties or groups interested in the topic.

- **Cigarette butt ballot bins**

The cigarette ballot bins have been ordered and should arrive soon. One will be placed outside the Bath House, and another outside the Pavilion. Confirmation is still pending from the Beach pub about placing one there. A total of 3 bins have been purchased, to date.

- **Reusable period products**

ZC has been attending a youth group called Toast at Opendoor on Tuesdays, where she brings samples of reusable period products to discuss with young people. Additionally, ZC has contacted primary schools in Exmouth to offer training for teachers and nurses on reusable period products but is still waiting to hear back from most schools.

- **AMOC event detail**

Members discussed a potential event featuring a talk on the collapse of the Gulf Stream, hosted by Annmarie Cohen, with a speaker from the Met Office. The talk would cover the science behind this phenomenon, but there was concern about how to present it in a way that avoids alarming attendees without offering constructive solutions. The group agreed that the event should include a Q&A or panel discussion to provide actionable steps, addressing potential fears with practical advice on mitigation and adaptation.

Concerns were raised about the event's focus on a single topic, with suggestions to bring in additional perspectives, such as Peter Lefort from Exeter University, who advocates for positive tipping points and practical solutions. The event would need careful framing to avoid creating a sense of helplessness, ensuring the message remains hopeful and actionable.

- **Bike repair stand**

Members discussed the proposed installation of a bike repair stand as part of a local active travel initiative. The feedback from the Active Travel Group was positive, particularly from MR, who thought it was a good idea. The bike stand is planned for a trial at Sideshore, with potential for another one at the station if it proves popular. However, there are challenges with land ownership and permissions at the station.

The cost of the bike stand, around £1,000, was debated. Some members were concerned about the expense without clear immediate benefits, while others felt it could be useful for basic repairs and puncture fixes. There were also concerns about whether enough people would use it regularly.

Members discussed the possibility of using the stand at the Eco Hub for demonstrations and repairs during active travel sessions. Some members questioned whether it would be well-utilized, citing similar initiatives, such as a phone-charging station, which had not been very popular.

It was agreed that ZC would gather more information about the success of similar installations elsewhere before a decision is made. No vote was taken at this time.

8. To discuss regularity, times and locations of 2025 CEE WP meetings

Members discussed whether the meetings should remain monthly or be spaced out to every six weeks. Some members expressed that monthly meetings felt too frequent and administratively demanding, suggesting six-week intervals as a compromise. Members

agreed that meetings every six weeks would provide more time for preparation and better outcomes.

There was consensus that face-to-face meetings were preferred.

It was agreed that evening meetings would be more suitable for most members, particularly those with daytime work commitments.

The meeting schedule for 2025 will be set for every six weeks, with face-to-face evening meetings. The final schedule will be confirmed in the calendar, and the group agreed to check availability to avoid scheduling conflicts with other council meetings.

9. To receive an update on other relevant matters from Town Council working parties and outside body representatives

There was an update on the involvement in award nominations. ETC is waiting to hear if they've been shortlisted for the NALC Climate Response award, with the final decision expected in December. The group has already been nominated for several awards, including the Southwest Tourism Awards, where they are finalists. The group plans to publicise this achievement depending on the outcome of tomorrow's ceremony.

The group expressed appreciation for the hard work that contributed to the nominations, recognizing the effort involved in securing these recognitions.

10. Any other business

- **Climate Café – support venue hire?**

There was a discussion about supporting the Climate Cafe in Exmouth, which has struggled with finding a permanent venue. The group has been meeting at various locations, including Sundowners and Palm, but they are now seeking to meet at the Open-Door venue for six months of the year. The venue rental would cost £252 per month, and the Quakers can contribute half, asking if the group could cover the remaining £126.

However, there was concern about setting a precedent for funding meeting space for organizations. It was suggested that the Climate Cafe apply for a grant to cover the costs, which would allow for proper scrutiny and ensure transparency. The group agreed that this approach would be more appropriate, emphasizing that funding requests should go through a formal process rather than being decided subjectively.

- **Launch Pad looking for new venue in Exmouth**

There was a discussion about Launchpad, a charity that works with children with learning difficulties, teaching them cookery and service industry skills. Currently based in the Sea Change building in Budleigh, their time there is running out, and they are looking for a new venue with a large kitchen. Launchpad requires a kitchen space Monday to Friday (and occasionally on weekends) to continue their training and catering services. They do not need a cafe, just a kitchen for their activities.

Various venues have been suggested, including churches and community centres. The group agreed to share any potential venue ideas with ZC.

11. Date of next meeting: 11th December 10am – 12pm online meeting (Zoom)