EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Flooding & Water Quality Working Party

Notes of the Zoom meeting held at 2pm on Tuesday 27th January 2026

Present

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

Apologies

Cherry Nicholas	CN	ETC Councillor, Brixington Ward
Steve Gazzard	SG	ETC Councillor, Withycombe Raleigh Ward
Mark Williamson	MW	ETC Councillor, Littleham Ward

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1. **Welcome, introduction and apologies**

   GD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted. GD paid his respects to Geoff Crawford who sadly passed away.

2. **To approve the notes from the meeting on the 21st of October 2025**

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

3. **Matters arising**

   No matters arising.

4. **SWW: Update on the Maer Valley upgrade work for phase 2, Hartopp Pumping station and flooding concerns, recent activities relating to leak repairs and other general updates**

   SB opened with an update that the new rising main is currently operating through a temporary connection while upgrade work continues on the permanent one. The expectation is that the rising main will be fully operational by the end of February. Questions were raised about delays to the Maer Valley upgrade, specifically whether the hold-up was due to outstanding physical work or the application of permits. The response clarified that the permit applications were pending. Although the new rising main is in use, the long sea outfall cannot be used until a permit is granted, and pump settings at Maer Road pumping station cannot be changed to increase the overflow rates. This restriction limits pumping capacity to around 200 litres per second instead of the intended 700.

HT confirmed that flooding is still occurring on the Maer and that teams continue to clean up after each event. The reduced pumping rate was identified as a major factor, with the expectation that operating at 700 litres per second will significantly improve the situation on the Maer once the increase is permitted by the Environment Agency.

HT clarified that all infrastructure required for the switch to the long sea outfall is already in place. Ongoing discussions continue with the Environment Agency. HT clarified the permit application is solely intended to change the discharge coordinates, whereas the treatment works upgrade is a separate project that is not yet fully designed.

Concerns were raised about whether increased flow could exceed the treatment works capacity. HT explained that higher flow will increase the volume of spills but not the frequency, and that spills from the long sea outfall have far less environmental impact than those from Maer Rocks. This point continues to be revisited in discussions with the Environment Agency.

CJ queried if increased discharge volume could lead to waste washing up on the beach under certain wind conditions. HT clarified that all combinations of wind, tide and current were assessed, and no significant impact on designated waters was predicted at that time. Sandy Bay Shellfish Waters has since been designated, but no shellfish harvesting is currently taking place there. The treatment works upgrade aims to bring effluent and storm spill quality up to shellfish water standards so that the beds could be used in the future.

CJ mentioned that Budleigh beach has lost its blue flag status, despite recent investment in lifeguards and facilities. HT confirmed that the change in water quality classification from “excellent” to “good” was attributed to bacterial samples, though this is not necessarily linked to the outfall. It was noted that the likely source is material coming down the River Otter or from another stream entering Budleigh from the High Street.

TD raised the ongoing issues at Hartopp Pumping Station, where flooding is occurring from a manhole that should be sealed. HT explained that the line from Phear Park is designed to be fully pressurised with reinforced, watertight manholes, and the leak is likely coming from one of the specialised ceiling plates. A contractor will be brought in to investigate, using the original as-built drawings. TD raised concerns about an earlier utility survey which left markings on the highway, but these are now fading. He was also concerned that the contractor carrying out the survey may have loosened bolts on the manhole cover, which coincided with the start of the leakage. HT noted that survey markings on pavements fade but the information is recorded, and that the flat valve on the outfall would not prevent water ingress because the brick culvert beneath the railway and car park is not watertight. Surface water separation work is still planned, with modelling underway to determine the required interventions, and contractors will re-check the integrity of the plates. HT also suggested that TD should check WaterFit Live during leaks to see if Phear Park is spilling, as surface water from Marpool Hill can affect flows during high tides.

When asked about timelines for removing surface water, HT said the wider Exmouth catchment plan is still being scoped and major work is unlikely before 2030, though earlier action may occur for some parts.

HT had no official update on previous high water-quality readings and suspected misconnections in the Littleham Brook area.

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5. EA: Water Quality results, update on SWW permit application for upgrade work and general updates

No EA representatives were present at the meeting and no report was received.

HT explained that three permit amendments have been requested from the Environment Agency. These cover the increased flow rate at both Phear Park and Maer Road, as well as an updated National Grid Reference for the Maer Lane site.

CJ will circulate the link to EA's dedicated page for Exmouth following the pollution incidents which includes an update regarding the SWW permit applications as well finding out more about the EA permit application process.

HT, SB and SS left the meeting.

6. EDDC: Update on Sea Wall by Imperial Recreation ground and general updates

TBS reported that Manor Gardens remains on EDDC's list of planned works although progress has been delayed due to competing operational priorities. The resurfacing of the Foxholes car park has taken precedence, although persistent wet weather has caused further delays. TBS confirmed that the team continues to work through tenders to progress outstanding projects.

The slipway beside the old lifeboat station, adjacent to the NCI, had been affected by recent storms. A slab has dropped due to the beach level falling by approximately one metre, causing the end slab to rotate and create a trip hazard. The area has been marked with yellow paint to reduce risk. TBS confirmed that the damage does not pose a structural danger but will require future repair. TBS added that he had carried out a wider inspection around Exmouth and had not identified any further damaged sea walls.

TBS noted that the screens at Littleham are being heavily impacted by debris. Although only one of the two screens belongs to EDDC, they clear both. The Rodney Close screen is currently being cleared twice daily due to the volume of debris.

As discussed in the previous meeting EDDC has requested 90K funding from the Environment Agency to support the design and study of improvements to the Imperial Rec. Although formal approval has not yet been received TBS believes that 30K has been secured, which would be sufficient to complete phase one of the project.

CJ raised a matter previously highlighted by SG regarding blocked drainage holes along the seawall between Mamhead Slipway and the first beach steps. The blockages were caused by seaweed and rubbish accumulating behind grills installed over the drainage holes. TBS acknowledged that the planned clean-out had not yet taken place and that he had not checked whether the recent storm had naturally cleared the blockages. He confirmed he would contact Andy Gordon-Raby to arrange an inspection. CJ noted that during a recent Waterfront Working Party meeting, AGR had confirmed that the drainage holes at the Orcombe Point end had been cleared, allowing water from the highway to drain effectively onto the beach. However, with the sand build up this may not be the case anymore.

CJ asked for an update on maintenance plans for the floodgates, noting that councillors had received queries from residents regarding their condition and upkeep. TBS reported that Deputy Operations Manager, Vicky Saunders, has now been appointed and will take the

lead on floodgate matters. This provides a direct point of contact for organising inspections and maintenance. The floodgates have been inspected from an asset-performance perspective, but a further inspection focused specifically on maintenance requirements is still needed.

7. DCC: Flood risk general update

No DCC representative was present at the meeting, and no report was received.

CJ mentioned that the DCC Flood and Coastal Risk Management Team has circulated an email requesting information from residents about recent flooding incidents. They are asking for details such as the dates, times and locations of flooding, whether any properties were affected, whether key roads were impacted and whether any photographs are available. The intention is to gather this information to build a clearer picture of the areas in Devon that have been affected.

8. DCC: Highways general updates

SC focused on the ongoing struggle to manage the impact of repeated storms and explained that teams are dealing with fallen trees, heavy water damage, and very limited breaks between weather events. All gully machines have been diverted from routine work to reactive tasks in an effort to keep the drainage network functioning. He reinforced the police message that only essential travel should occur during the storms.

SC noticed cones placed near the octagon, likely due to sand being blown back onto the footway and road rather than any seawall damage. Strong winds have made clearing the sand difficult, but the team hopes to address it once conditions improve.

SC raised an issue about a missing folding sign at the junction of St Andrews Road and Morton Crescent. TBS confirmed the sign had been damaged or blown off and is currently in their yard awaiting repair. SC emphasised that when it is reinstalled it must be positioned above 2.1 metres to ensure safe pedestrian clearance, referencing past problems with signs being mounted too low.

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

No further reports were received, and no further question were asked.

10. AOB

No other business

The meeting ended at 15:03

2026 meetings: **28th April 2026**
28th July 2026
27th October 2026