EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Public Rights of Way Working Party

Informal notes of the Zoom meeting held at 4pm on Wednesday 11th February 2026

Present

Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor, Chair
Tim Dumper	TD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor, Ex Officio
Elizabeth Deasy	ED	TARA
Sam Jeffcoat	SJ	DCC PROW Warden for Exmouth
Heath Nickels	HN	P3 Co-Ordinator
Jan Gannaway	JG	Active Travel Exmouth & Sustrans
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC notetaker

Apologies

Olly Davey	OD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Nicky Nicholls	NN	ETC Councillor
David Poor	DP	ETC Councillor
Ross Hussey	RH	Footpath Volunteer

1. Welcome and apologies

LV welcomed members and apologies were noted.

2. To approve the notes of the meeting on the 24th of September 2025

As the meeting was not quorate the meeting proceeded on an informal basis for information only, the previous meeting notes from the 24th of September were approved in principle by LV proposing and TD seconding the accuracy of the notes but will need to be ratified by members at the next meeting.

3. Matters arising from the previous meeting

LV queried if there was any update on the Bapton Valley signage. CJ reported that she had followed up with EDDC however, due to significant pressures arising from seafront issues and matters concerning Foxhole's car park, they currently lack the capacity to advance the signage work.

LV sought clarification on whether an official opening was planned for the recently completed works on Footpath 11, also known as Weasel Run. CJ explained that the project had been undertaken by the EDDC Countryside Team, who had previously indicated that an official opening would take place, though no further communication had been received since the previous spring. HN added that he volunteers on the site with John the Ranger, who is overseeing an extensive and ongoing programme of work involving the clearance of several decade's worth of accumulated waste. While the majority of the footpath improvements and bench installations are complete, additional work continues, including the installation of a

further bench overlooking the estuary. HN noted that he had not been informed of any plans for an official opening but agreed to contact John for clarification.

ED informed members that the Victorian lights on Madeira Walk had been removed and replaced with new lighting, which is not yet operational. CJ advised that TBS had previously confirmed the works were scheduled and supported by a capital bid and suggested the delay may be attributable to staff being diverted to urgent tasks. CJ will contact TBS to ascertain the reason for the lack of functionality.

4. Update from the P3 Co-ordinator on current state of footpaths

HN updated members on the recent procedural changes introduced by DCC, which now require both updated documentation from CJ and a revised method for reporting faults. HN explained that any issues found on the footpaths, including the exact location of the fault, must now be submitted the “report it” section on the DCC website alongside the annual survey. Alongside this, DCC has altered the criteria for what information HN is required to log during inspections. ED queried whether members of the public can report footpath issues directly through the DCC website, CJ confirmed that they can.

HN reported that he had not identified any major problems with the footpaths and completed most of his inspections in September and early October, and although the paths were muddy due to the prolonged wet weather, this was entirely expected for the time of year. All issues previously raised with SJ in September have since been resolved.

ED reported a significant problem on the pathway below the attenuation pond at Plumb Park which is now being affected by water overflowing from the pond. The overflow has created what she described as a waterfall running across the farmer’s field and onto the footpath, forming a stream that continues along the path towards the gate. CJ identified the area as the point where footpaths 2 and 6 meet and confirmed that the attenuation pond has filled to capacity and is now overflowing. HN questioned whether this indicated that the design or planning of the attenuation pond had been inadequate, while LD suggested that the issue might instead be due to incomplete or insufficient drainage infrastructure.

SJ responded by explaining that responsibility for the issue would depend on whether the developer had fulfilled all the requirements set out in their planning approval from East Devon District Council. If the developer has complied with the agreed plans, the planning authority may not have further involvement. He noted that he had already received reports of waterlogging in the area but emphasised that the exceptionally wet weather could be contributing significantly to the problem. SJ will visit the site and attempt to speak with the developer to understand the situation more clearly. LD offered to take a video of the overflow to help illustrate the issue and report it through the online system.

5. Update from DCC Public Rights of Way warden

SJ reported that his recent work in Exmouth has been limited because he has been dealing with numerous issues in Exeter and along the estuary paths. However, he did attempt to progress a resurfacing scheme on Footpath 1, the route that leaves Foxholes and climbs to meet the Coast Path near the zigzag section from the coastal car park. The path had an old, deteriorating tarmac surface that had become uneven, and SJ secured funding to have it fully re-tarmacked. After meeting the contractor and measuring the route, the work was scheduled, but persistent heavy rainfall left the ground saturated. When the contractor began laying tarmac, the compacting machinery—despite being relatively light—sank into the waterlogged

ground, pressing the new material into the soft surface and causing significant disruption. Because the ground conditions made proper tarmac resurfacing impossible, the team switched to laying and compacting stone instead. This improved the path but did not achieve the original goal of a continuous renewed tarmac surface. SJ hopes that once the ground dries in summer, a surface layer of tarmac can be applied over the stone to complete the job as intended.

SJ discussed the estuary trail near Lympstone, where long-standing cracking in the surface has worsened. A major repair project is planned involving repatching the damaged areas and installing GlasGrid, a reinforcement product designed to prevent future cracking. This work will require closing the trail for three to four days, likely in April or May, with scheduling planned to avoid bank holiday periods. SJ explained that although users will be able to divert by leaving the trail at the start of the Courtlands Boardwalk and heading up to the National Trust shared path, DCC will not formally promote this diversion. The alternative route involves a short stretch along Exeter Road, which, despite being a 30-mph zone, is not ideal for families. The intention is to give users advance notice so they can decide for themselves whether to reroute, turn back, or walk their bikes along the footway if they feel comfortable doing so.

SJ mentioned concerns about the paths around Green Farm, which have become muddy and unpleasant due to increased footfall from nearby new housing. The paths are fenced in and receive heavy use, accelerating their deterioration. The team hopes to gradually improve these routes by laying stone along them, though this will be a slow and labour-intensive process. Work is expected to begin incrementally over the coming months.

6. To discuss the changes to the P3 Scheme, agree the annual survey, P3 forms and improvement bid

The annual survey, P3 Summary of Expenditure, Grant Form, PROW criteria for P3 volunteers and P3 Guidance was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

CJ focused on recent changes to the P3 scheme following the transition from long-serving officer Ros Davis to her successor, who has spent the past year reviewing and streamlining the system. Although the adjustments do not significantly alter the work itself, they introduce a clearer administrative structure. One of the main updates is the new approach to identifying and reporting faults: instead of using codes, issues are now described in plain language and categorised by type, such as street furniture, gates, or path surfaces. This makes it easier to record problems accurately. Members were reminded that DCC prefers faults to be submitted through the “Report It” page on their website, although SJ is still happy to receive reports by email from members to ensure nothing is missed. The survey circulated with the agenda reflects the new format and guidance.

Changes have also been made to the finance forms, largely because the town’s work under the P3 scheme is supplementary to the maintenance arranged by SJ for the wider footpath network. Exmouth Town Council primarily focuses on urban footpaths, which are more accessible and more heavily used for everyday travel, rather than the more remote rural routes. Although they still keep an eye on paths such as Footpath 6, the bulk of their effort remains in the town’s built-up areas. If the town ever chose to take on the entire network themselves, they could submit a vegetation-cut form and be paid for the full programme, but the time and logistics required for the rural sections make this unrealistic. Instead, they will continue the current arrangement: carrying out some work ahead of contractors and returning later in the summer to follow up. Because improvement work must now be recorded

separately, the finance forms may appear lighter than in previous years, but this reflects the new structure rather than a reduction in activity.

During discussions between CJ, SJ, and HN, Footpath 2 emerged as a priority for improvement. The path has become increasingly difficult to use and is now approaching impassable in places. With the construction of a large housing development of more than 300 homes nearby, footfall has risen significantly, making the condition of the path a more pressing issue. CJ circulated an improvement bid proposal, explaining that although the path is not long, the work required is substantial because vehicles cannot access the full length. Materials would need to be delivered to one end and then transported along the route using small machinery such as dumpers or track barrows. This slow, labour-intensive process is what drives up the cost. The project may need to be completed in two phases, with each arm of the path costing between £5,000 and £10,000. Although CJ has the authority to submit the forms, she sought the group's agreement for the improvement work, and members confirmed their support for proceeding.

Questions were raised about the type of surface that would be used. CJ explained that the material would either be recycled roadstone from roadworks, or crushed limestone. LD asked about drainage, noting that parts of the path flood easily. SJ clarified that while no drainage works would be included, the installation of a geotextile layer beneath the stone would prevent the surface from sinking into the mud. A layer of three to six inches of stone would then be laid on top, creating a dry, durable surface that sheds water to the sides. Although roadstone is technically free, SJ noted that haulage costs can make it no cheaper than crushed limestone. Once he has estimates for the work, he will send these to CJ to submit with the other P3 paperwork.

Members will be updated on the outcome as soon as it is known.

CJ also noted that although there is no longer a formal deadline for submitting forms, it is still advantageous to send them in before the end of March, as additional funding sometimes becomes available at the end of the financial year.

Members were advised that the grant for the current year has been received, despite the expenditure form that was circulated prior to the meeting showing TBC, and that there are some supplementary funds available if the full amount is not awarded.

7. To discuss the impact on PROW on any potential planning applications and provide feedback to the ETC Planning Committee

Members centred on several planning applications that could affect public rights of way in the area, with particular attention given to footpaths 5, 6 and 1. LV asked for updates on current and future developments that might impact these routes, especially the Bloor Homes application and the footpaths already discussed. In response, CJ explained that an update from Bloor Homes was expected soon and that previous consultations had included extensive feedback about footpath 5. CJ expressed hope that the new plans would reflect this input and highlighted footpath 6, which runs under Green Farm, as the route most at risk. If development there were ever to progress, it could have significant consequences for the footpath network.

TD added that the second round of Bloor Homes' pre-planning consultation was scheduled for March. He recalled that at the last working party meeting there had been concerns that the developer and the highways authority had not been coordinating effectively. CJ noted that she did not know the current status of communication between the two sides but hoped that the

forthcoming update would show progress. She emphasised that public rights of way form part of the wider highway network, meaning that planning consultations should always include comments on any footpaths affected. CJ pointed to Plumb Park as an example where footpath 2 had been overlooked entirely, missing an opportunity to secure developer contributions for maintenance and improvements. CJ stressed the importance of maintaining regular dialogue with the planning committee to prevent similar oversights in future.

CJ reminded the group that any footpaths likely to be impacted by planning applications should be flagged early so that the planning committee can comment as a consultee. TD expressed hope that the relevant authorities had already begun coordinating, as the March meeting would include all councillors and representatives from the developer and Clinton Devon Estates. He suggested that this would be an opportunity to ensure the issues were being properly addressed and to lay the groundwork for potential CIL funding once a final application is submitted.

CJ introduced a new matter raised by Lisa Bowman concerning a proposed diversion of footpath 1 within the Sandy Bay holiday park. The diversion is linked to redevelopment work following landslides along the cliff. The original plan involved moving six caravans away from the cliff edge and relocating the footpath to the space they previously occupied. However, this would have placed walkers dangerously close to the unstable cliff. After objections, the application was withdrawn and replaced with a new proposal that diverts the footpath further inland. This alternative route is significantly longer, doubling the walking distance from around 200 metres to 400 metres, and requires walkers to go up and down the tarmac access road.

The application has been submitted through East Devon District Council, which is using its powers under the Town and Country Planning Act to divert the path alongside the development. SJ explained that although DCC normally handles footpath diversions under the Highways Act, district councils can divert paths as part of planning applications. He noted that district councils do this infrequently, which can sometimes lead to a less smooth process.

LV queried whether members had any thoughts on the proposed diversion or potential alternatives. HN described the layout of the site in detail, explaining how the caravans, access road and original footpath relate to one another. GD confirmed that the application includes a sitemap that clearly illustrates the proposed changes.

LD queried how the working party should handle future planning applications affecting footpaths, given that it meets only twice a year and asked whether someone should take responsibility for monitoring applications. CJ responded that such applications are likely to be infrequent, but if an important issue arises, an additional meeting could be set up if needed and the planning administrators have already been asked to notify the working party of any relevant applications so that the working party can contribute appropriately without duplicating the planning committee's work.

8. Any other business

No other business.

9. Next meeting – 23rd September 2026 (TBC)

CJ raised a point about SJ's availability after noticing in his email signature that he does not work for DCC on Wednesdays and thought it would be better for members to consider a different meeting day to avoid potential clashes. SJ was happy to continue attending on Wednesdays if that suited everyone else, but he cautioned that there might be a higher chance of him being unavailable due to other commitments on that day. CJ invited members to share their views, and it was agreed that choosing another day would help ensure more consistent attendance. CJ will explore alternative days and report back once a new day has been identified.

The meeting closed at 17:03