EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Public Rights of Way Working Party

Informal notes of the Zoom meeting held at 4pm on Thursday 24th September 2026

Present

Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor, Chair
David Poor	DP	ETC Councillor
Elizabeth Deasy	ED	TARA
Heath Nickels	HN	P3 Co-Ordinator
Chetna Jones	CJ	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Mark Devin	MD	ETC Deputy Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC notetaker

Apologies

Olly Davey	OD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Tim Dumper	TD	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Andrew Colman	AC	ETC Councillor
Sam Jeffcoat	SJ	DCC PROW Warden for Exmouth
John Petty	JP	Active Travel Exmouth & Exmouth Community Association
Jan Gannaway	JG	Active Travel Exmouth & Sustrans
Ross Hussey	RH	Footpath Volunteer

1. To elect a chair

Due to the meeting not being quorate the election of chair was postponed until the next meeting on the 18th of February 2027 and the meeting proceeded on an informal basis.

2. Welcome and apologies

LV as the existing chair was invited to proceed with the meeting on an informal basis. LV welcomed members and apologies were noted.

3. To approve the notes of the meeting on the 11th of February 2026

As the meeting was not quorate, the accuracy of the notes will need to be ratified by members at the next meeting.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting

Prior to the meeting, ED requested an update on the lighting along Madeira Walk. CJ explained that the matter had first been raised in last year's meeting, and she had contacted EDDC straight after. EDDC advised that funding had been secured through a capital bid and that materials were being procured. Following further enquiries, EDDC reported that progress had been delayed due to issues relating to underground works and bollards. However, CJ confirmed that she had received an email this morning from EDDC stating that all of the lights were now operational. CJ noted that this had not yet been verified as the lights would need to

be checked during the evening. ED advised that she had visited the site on Tuesday morning and observed the lights flashing, although she had not been there at night to confirm whether they were functioning correctly.

ED offered to revisit the location in the evening and report back and clarified that the original lights had been completely removed and replaced with new units and that electrical supply work had been undertaken approximately three weeks earlier. CJ suggested that the underground works previously mentioned by EDDC may have been responsible for the flashing problems but reiterated that EDDC now considered the lighting system to be fully operational.

In the absence of RH, CJ shared a question he had submitted prior to the meeting regarding the Bapton Valley path. RH had recently walked the route and commented positively on the facility but noted that it remained unsigned. He asked whether there were any plans to install signage for the path and for the wider route of which it forms part.

CJ reported that she had raised the issue with EDDC in previous years and had even produced and submitted example designs for the proposed signs, incorporating photographs provided by JG and HN. EDDC advised that the work would need to be commissioned through Strata, despite CJ providing a quotation from a local business. CJ had informed EDDC that private arrangements could be explored if any difficulties arose, but EDDC confirmed it was proceeding through Strata. CJ also contacted EDDC's Engineering team recently and a response had been received confirming that the matter has been raised with Strata as urgent. CJ stated that she would allow a few more weeks for progress to be made and, if no action was forthcoming, would push for the signage to be commissioned privately due to the length of the delay.

LV raised the matter of the official opening of Weasel Run (FP11), which had also been discussed at the previous meeting. LV explained that she had spoken with CJ before the meeting about contacting those responsible for securing funding for the project, as she felt there was a valuable opportunity to promote the improved route. LV highlighted that the path had been made accessible for wheelchair users and offered an attractive route through the area. LV suggested that promoting the improvements could encourage greater use of the PROW network and would be a positive initiative for the community.

CJ explained that the improvement works had been undertaken by the EDDC Countryside Team, with funding secured through East Devon National Landscape. CJ noted that ETC had previously asked to be informed when a formal opening event was planned. However, the most recent communication she had received indicated that the project had not yet been completed. CJ agreed to contact the Countryside Team for an update and also planned to ask OD, EDDC Councillor for Town Ward, to pursue the matter, given that the route falls within his ward, and he may have been informed of developments.

HN provided additional background on the project, explaining that work on Weasel Run remains ongoing. He noted that one of the key motivations behind the scheme was to address longstanding issues of anti-social behaviour, including unauthorised camping and drug-related activity in the area. HN praised the work undertaken by Jon Gardner, Nature Reserves Ranger with the EDDC Countryside Team, who secured funding through the National Landscapes programme and had invested significant effort into improving the site.

Despite the progress made, HN explained that challenges remain. There have been incidents involving bonfires and vandalism, including one of the newly installed benches being burnt. More recently, several individuals had resumed camping in the area, requiring intervention from the EDDC Rough Sleeping Team. HN reported that one individual had been particularly abusive towards Jon Gardner, although that person has since been housed in Exeter.

HN advised that the project was not yet complete and that significant work remained to be undertaken. He explained that Jon Gardner's original plans included clearing and restoring three remaining allotment sites that are currently in a very dilapidated condition. Considerable progress has already been made, but the scale of the task means that the remaining work could occupy another two to three winter seasons. HN suggested that it would be worthwhile speaking directly with either Jon Gardner or James Chubb from the Countryside Team to gain a clearer understanding of the current position and future timetable.

LV acknowledged that landscape and environmental projects of this nature are rarely ever truly finished but maintained that there could still be merit in celebrating the accessibility improvements already achieved. HN agreed, noting that accessibility was the primary objective for which the funding had originally been awarded.

CJ noted that increased promotion of Weasel Run and greater public use of the route could help discourage anti-social behaviour by increasing the presence of legitimate users in the area and encouraging wider community engagement with the site.

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

HN reported that all issues identified during his inspection of the PROW network had either been submitted through the DCC reporting system or discussed directly with SJ. The most significant issue remains FP1, where the current diversion route continues to cause confusion for walkers due to inadequate signage. During his site visit, HN encountered several individuals who had become lost while attempting to follow the diversion, including visitors unfamiliar with the area. He also spoke with an employee from EDDC who was directing members of the public along the former route, apparently unaware of the new signage. HN explained that the diversion, which routes users through the caravan park before reconnecting with the original path, is now considerably longer and less straightforward than the former alignment. SJ has already raised concerns with EDDC and requested improvements to the signage, but despite making contact a week before the survey, no changes had yet been implemented. Members agreed that clearer and more prominent waymarking is required as a matter of priority to prevent confusion and ensure public safety.

HN provided a positive update on FP2 at Plumb Park, where substantial improvement works have now been completed. He confirmed that both arms of the path had been resurfaced and improved, representing a significant enhancement since the matter was discussed at the previous meeting in February. The only section that remained untreated was a short stretch of approximately twenty metres where the path crosses the farmers concrete path and follows the edge of the field where the original FP was supposed to go. Although this section has not been upgraded, HN noted that it is relatively minor and is unlikely to have a significant impact on users, many of whom already make use of the permissive route around the field boundary. Members welcomed the improvements, with several commenting on the considerable difference they have made to the accessibility and overall quality of the route.

ED expressed particular appreciation for the work undertaken on FP2, describing the improvements as transformative. However, she raised a concern regarding the steep gradient at the point where the path meets Plumb Park. While the slope is manageable for some users, she noted that it may present difficulties for those with mobility challenges, less physical ability, or anyone requiring easier access. HN agreed that the section in question is the final ascent from the farmer's field onto Plumb Park. CJ suggested that the land may still form part of the Plumb Park Estate rather than the public right of way itself and proposed that the matter be raised with SJ to establish whether the landowner might be willing to support a variation to the route or permit works to improve accessibility. It was agreed that enquiries should be made to determine ownership and explore possible options.

HN reported a localised drainage issue on FP7 near the barn conversions on Maer Lane. Water is currently flowing across the path, requiring walkers to use stepping stones in order to continue. Although passable at present, the situation may deteriorate during periods of wetter weather and has therefore been reported to SJ for consideration and possible remedial action.

HN advised that one of the gates on FP6 previously identified as requiring attention has now been repaired, representing a welcome improvement for users. The elevated path running from Rodney Close towards Sandy Bay above the main road will require ongoing monitoring in the longer term as a section of tarmac has begun to erode and fall away. HN explained that this deterioration has been evident for some time, but was not currently an immediate hazard, but he believes it should be monitored to ensure that the condition did not worsen and create a future safety issue.

HN reported that he was unable to complete an inspection of FP10 due to utility works taking place behind Travershes Close. The path was temporarily closed while contractors carried out work within the area, preventing access along the route. CJ assured members that this path forms part of the Town Maintenance Team's regular maintenance programme and that the closure appeared to be solely associated with the ongoing works. She advised that the route should otherwise be in good condition both before and beyond the affected section.

A further issue was identified on FP5, where a fingerpost marking the route is missing from its location opposite the fire station on Salterton Road. HN confirmed that this had already been reported to SJ. LV thanked HN for carrying out such a detailed and comprehensive survey of the network and commented that she had personally experienced the same difficulties navigating the diversion on FP1. As someone familiar with the previous route, she found the new alignment difficult to follow and felt that the existing signage failed to provide adequate direction for users. LV also echoed the positive comments regarding FP2 and agreed that the improvements had made a noticeable difference.

LV reported that a gate on FP5 at the end furthest from Salterton Road appeared stiff and may require attention. HN responded that he had used the gate during his inspection and had not experienced any significant problems, which suggested that while the gate may be difficult to operate for some users, it was not currently causing a major obstruction. Nevertheless, members considered it useful to keep this under observation should further complaints be received.

6. Update from DCC Public Rights of Way warden

SJ was unable to attend the meeting but provided the following report, relayed by MD, confirmed that FP2 had been resurfaced with stone between August and September to improve

year-round accessibility. Approximately 500 metres of the path was improved, with significant support from the landowner, who provided access through Green Farm and allowed materials to be stored on site. DCC had confirmed that a £2,500 P3 capital grant contribution was awarded towards the project.

A further update concerned issues arising from the Devon Cliffs Coast Path diversion. EDDC had delivered the diversion and was responsible for maintaining the coast path on behalf of DCC, and SJ had requested that any unresolved concerns be directed to EDDC or raised through the DCC Public Rights of Way team.

HN raised concerns regarding FP1 near the cliff path between Sandy Bay and the golf course at Budleigh, where significant erosion and cliff falls have occurred. Although warning signs have been installed, there was a section where the path is estimated to be only one and a half metres from the cliff edge. HN highlighted the potential health and safety risks and noted concerns about liability should an accident occur. While acknowledging that paths close to cliffs were a grey area in terms of assessment, CJ suggested that the path should be reviewed again before the annual submission in March, particularly after it has been exposed to winter conditions.

HN described the location of concern in more detail and confirmed that he would revisit the site to assess the extent of the erosion. Other members were also invited to inspect the route so that a collective view could be reached on whether the condition of the path warranted a formal failure assessment.

ED asked whether any immediate action should be taken. HN suggested that additional warning signs could be installed as a temporary measure. However, CJ expressed concern that further signage could be seen as acknowledging a known risk without taking corrective action. It was agreed that, if HN provided the What3Words location, the issue would be reported to DCC through its online reporting system for further investigation.:

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

Members were not aware of any planning applications that impacted PROW.

8. Any other business

CJ reported that the annual parish grant application had been submitted, detailing the Town Maintenances strimming and general maintenance work. While a one-off grant of £3,000 had been received last year, this year's funding was significantly lower at approximately £640, and now included strimming training costs as part of the grant. As a result, available funding remained limited.

Following changes to the grant application process earlier in the year, an improvement bid form was completed for FP2 with support from SJ, including cost estimates and landowner permissions for material storage. However, delays and communication issues arose due to the relevant officer's prolonged sickness absence. CJ had been informed that funding had been allocated but had not been claimed, despite no notification having been received. The officer had also requested that the improvement bid form be resubmitted, in order that it may be processed. ETC would continue pursuing the application and, if additional funding is awarded, either allocate it towards further work identified by SJ or reserve it for future projects.

LV discussed the possibility of working with landowners and the Public Rights of Way team to plant trees or hedgerows in locations that could help reduce surface water runoff, alleviate flooding and improve biodiversity. LV suggested FP's 2 and 6, which become especially muddy during winter. MD has written to DCC and was awaiting a response from SJ regarding the proposal.

CJ updated members on the chemical pollution incident that had primarily affected FP6 and FP2. As DCC, EA and EDDC did not take responsibility for managing the public rights of way aspect of the issue, wording was agreed with the EA for warning notices. GD and ED subsequently installed signs advising walkers, particularly dog owners, not to enter the affected brook. Concerns remain that if the EA communicates only with DCC and EDDC, ETC may not be informed when conditions improve as the signs will need to be removed. In GD and ED's absence LV offered to take down the signs when instructed to do so.

9. Next meeting – 18th February 2027

The meeting closed at 16:42