



WEST SOMERSET FLOOD GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting held at Minehead Community Centre on
Wednesday 11th September 2024 starting at 2.00.pm.**

Present : Chair/Secretary Brenda Maitland-Walker (Carhampton): Vice Chair Ian Aldridge (Williton) Christine Dubery (Treasurer – Dulverton): Craig Palmer (Minehead): Brian Martin (Sampford Brett): Polly Soltau (Withypool & Hawkridge) Sue Smith (Carhampton) Mary Coles and Dave Sherman (Roadwater) Heather Wilson (Crowcombe): Heather Wilson (Crowcombe):

Also present John Buttivant (Coastal Engineer for the Environment Agency) Councillor Mandy Chilcott (Minehead Division)

Apologies for absence were received from John Stace (Monksilver)

John Buttivant gave a presentation showing what was happening along the West Somerset Coastline and what works have been completed during the last few years. He said that since the beginning of the century the sea level had risen 100mm, and whilst that didn't sound like a lot with increased storm surges and heavier rainfall events, this is having an effect on the coastline.

John explained that Wessex Water had undertaken a study of their water and sewerage systems in Minehead, as have the Environment Agency. He said the Unitary Council now need to come to the table to agree the long-term plan for Minehead i.e., whether to 'hold the line' or create a 'set back' arrangement, and if so, where. Mandy agreed to liaise with John to establish contact with officers to progress this work.

The presentation slides are attached to these minutes.

Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes having been circulated prior to the meeting were duly agreed.

Treasurer's Report

Christine reported the invoice for the £5 membership subscription had received limited response. The members who have paid for this year are: Carhampton: Dulverton: Sampford Brett: Old Cleeve: Monksilver: Luxborough and Porlock. The £5 is necessary to support the Flood Group website, so we would be grateful if members could check to ensure their cheque has not gone astray.

Christine also reported that Sonder Digital had still not sent their invoice.

Members Reports

Crowcombe – Heather said that the issue of the Pond which is subject to a retrospective planning application had still not been resolved. The Pond causing flooding elsewhere. Brenda had forwarded the name of the LLFA officer who deals with issues in the area to the Chair of Crowcombe, but suggested the Parish Council should also contact the Unitary Councillors representing their area to ask for help with the problem.

Dulverton

Christine asked if any flood groups used Walkie Talkies to communicate with their members during flood events, as she was hoping to purchase them as communications from one area to the other presented problems. No-one at the meeting used them, but Ian said she should look at what sort of communication system she wanted, ie., would it have a central command centre, or would it be a system where everyone could speak to everyone else.

Sampford Brett

Brian was able to report there had been very little precipitation over a the summer in his area, with no flood events - despite other areas in the SW having much more rain Sampford Brett seemed to miss any localised intense rainfall when it was around. The last significant rain since May 2nd, when 24.4mm (1") fell, was 37.6mm (1.5") on September 5th. The two stream gauges reflect this: very low level all summer, meaning no alerts were triggered.

On Friday, September 6th, Brian reported a blocked drain outside Longcroft on the main street. Less than an hour and a half later there was someone from Highways examining the drain! Commendable. He confirmed it appeared the recent work on the adjacent stretch of the stream has inadvertently blocked the outlet from the road drain. It hasn't been resolved yet, but is in hand.

Withypool

Polly said the issue of silt build up was still unresolved. She said she was going to meet the Chair of Exford as they have similar problems, and she has been in touch with a nearby university to see if they had a student who might be prepared to undertake their PHD study work on the composition of silt build-up and excess sedimentation around the bridges at both Withypool and Exford, and the effects this has on the flow, flooding, and the integrity of the piers of the bridges

Carhampton

Brenda met with a number of property owners to discuss issues about how they could manage their riparian responsibilities as much of the work had to be done off the highway. The highway authority are responsible for the silt under the bridge on the A39 but they were not prepared to do the work until the owners downstream undertake their maintenance work. After discussion a maintenance plan was agreed, and letters and Flood Hub leaflets were handed around to people upstream reminding them of their riparian responsibilities.

The Parish Council are obtaining quotes to install a door on their redundant bus stop to store flood equipment.

Williton

Ian said Paul Rutter had recently joined the Williton Town Council. He is keen to look at ways the Council can liaise with FWAG and landowners to get them to undertake their responsibilities for ditch and stream maintenance, and look at best practice for ploughing and planting to reduce runoff. A meeting has been organised in Williton for 19th September. Ian said Paul was unable to attend this meeting, but hoped he will be able to attend the next.

Any other business

Veronica Wilson who attended the last meeting had now written to say the Minehead Rotary Club have now established their Satellite EVAC centre. The contacts are:-

Dan Cuevas – dancuevas1@yahoo.com and

John Baker – jfdbaker@btinternet.com

Time Date and Place of Next Meeting

It was agreed Brenda should try to find a venue to hold this sometime in January, and Brenda agreed to look at the availability of the Carhampton Village Hall.