



WEST SOMERSET FLOOD GROUP

MINUTES

**of the Meeting held at Carhampton Village Hall on
Wednesday 22nd January 2025 starting at 2p.m.**

Present : Chair/Secretary Brenda Maitland-Walker (Carhampton): Vice-Chair - Ian Aldridge; Peter Payne and Paul Rutter (Williton): Christine Dubery (Treasurer – Dulverton): Mel Mileham (Winsford): Brian Martin (Sampford Brett): Mary Coles and Dave Sherman (Roadwater): Paul Mappleton (Monksilver) Duncan McCaulis (Porlock): Justin Nicholls (Nettlecombe):

Apologies for absence were received from Ted Williams (Exton): Craig Palmer (Minehead): Sue Smith (Carhampton) Jenny Ody (Stogursey) and Heather Wilson (Crowcombe): Polly Soltau (Withypool & Hawkridge)

The Minutes of the last Meeting having been circulated prior to the meeting, were duly agreed.

Treasurers Report

Christine reported there was £167. 30 in the account. She reported having recently received one further membership fee. Brenda said she had received emails asking for the invoice again from two other parish councils, which she has duly sent on to them.

Information from the Chair

Brenda said she had received a notification stating the “*SSL certificate for westsomersetflood.org.uk has not been renewed.*” This was presumably for the domain name, but access appears to only be available via a password which it is assumed is via Sonder Digital. There was a general discussion about the need for retaining a website, and it was agreed Brenda would contact Sonder Digital to find out what the position was with regard to the website etc.

Previously Dave said had tried to get access to update the information on it, but after Sonder Digital had agreed to give him access to do this, communication with the company stopped. Concern was also expressed as to whether the Sonder Digital was still in existence especially as they had not sent an invoice. Brenda will try to contact them and report back at the next meeting.

Somerset Rivers Authority Community Fund

Small grants for works to reduce flooding are now being offered directly to Somerset communities by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). The SRA's new Community Flood Action Fund will help people with good local knowledge of flooding problems take the initiative and get things done.

Up to £200,000 is being made available in 2025 for practical actions with obvious benefits that can be achieved quite quickly. The Fund is aimed at not-for-profit organisations, such as town and parish councils, charities, social enterprises and community benefit societies. Some conditions need to be met to be sure of eligibility. Community groups or flood groups who would like to apply are being encouraged to work with their local parish or town councils.

Application packs for Community Flood Action Fund grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 are now available through [the Grants section of the Somerset Rivers Authority website](#). The deadline for the first round of applications is 25 February 2025. Successful applicants will get funding from April. Three more funding rounds are due later in the year.

The Grants section of the SRA website also includes details of some other possible sources of Somerset flood-related funding, such as grants for training and equipment.

Somerset Prepared Resilience Roadshows 2025

Somerset Prepared is a partnership that includes the Environment Agency, Somerset Council, Somerset Rivers Authority, the Emergency Services and Voluntary Sector organisations.

After the success of the 2024 roadshows, we plan to hold four more roadshows in 2025. Our first will be on Tuesday 25 February at Neroche Hall, Bickenhall (between Taunton and Ilminster). This event will offer a resilience drop-in session from 4pm - 6pm, followed by a Flood Warden workshop that will run from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. The workshop is for both experienced and new community volunteers, as well as those interested in supporting their communities with flooding. There will be tea, coffee and cake - and plenty of free parking. Please fill out [this form](#) to let us know if you would like to attend the Flood Warden session.

A Minehead roadshow will follow in the summer, but after that we need your help. We are looking for two other locations across the county. Is your area in need? Get in touch if you would like us to visit using this [quick form](#).

Somerset Plan

Brenda also reported a meeting has been arranged for Parishes and Towns to send a representative to view the new emerging Plan for Somerset. Parishes and Towns should have received an invitation which is due to be held (for West Somerset area) at John Merkle Room, Taunton at 4pm on Monday 24th February. She urged members concerned about flooding and infrastructure issues to raise them at the meeting.

Update from Members

Carhampton

Brenda said the volume of rainwater from the recent storms overwhelmed the village's combined sewage system, and properties at the lower end of the village experienced sewage coming up through the manholes in their driveways. The issue is ongoing with Wessex Water and the Planning Authority as it appears the surface water drains may have been connected to the sewage system.

Concern is also ongoing about the construction of surface water attenuation ponds installed in another new development in the village. Since the installation of the ponds there has been an instance of overtopping as well as what appears to be water seeping out from

the sides and base of the ponds, causing flooding to land and properties downhill although it is difficult to prove.

During the two last storm events the road at the bottom of Eastbury Hill flooded again, with the volume of rain overwhelming the highways drains. This is despite the drainage improvements made by highways in 2018/19, due mainly to silt from the river overflowing onto the road, and from runoff from adjoining fields.

Exton –

(Update forwarded by Ted Williams with his apologies for absence)

While we have a significant flow of the river Exe through Bridgetown, and a long steep road down through Exton, we have had no flood issues to report. The storms through autumn and thus far this winter have had a significant impact in the Exe and Quarne valleys upstream. Many large ash and beech trees particularly have fallen.

There is significant debris in the Exe between Exford and Winsford, some distance upstream, though much has been done copping Bankside trees below Winsford, and above and below Bridgetown. The local farming community have been brilliant clearing roads, even during some wild gales, There is much “non-essential” debris, some riparian, still to clear. Curiously, the only tree (blocking one half of the carriageway on the A396 some way below us for approximately ten days!!), was between river and road, presumably the responsibility of E. A. or the Highways Agency. We are aware of significant increases in river-flow during and after heavy rains, and we continue to make pre-emptive contact with those who need to be aware at Bridgetown.

Withypool & Hawkridge

(Update forwarded by Polly Soltau with apologies for absence).

She said she is still hoping to find helpers to support flood prevention work in my local area.

Sampford Brett

Brian reported that there were no flooding incidents to report since the last meeting. There was a power cut to the village for 40 hours due to Storm Darragh in early December. There have been a number of occasions when the two trash screens on the stream down the village main street have needed to be cleared of hedge cutting debris which was causing the stream level to rise dramatically.

The stream gauge alerts helped alert us to this problem especially during nighttime.

Brian held a Sampford Brett Flood Volunteers Committee meeting on November 25th. There were 16 attendees, of the 21 registered volunteers. **We hold two of these each year in order to ensure that all volunteers are covered by the Parish Council insurance.** Rain data for the previous 6 months were discussed, including data from the two stream gauges, as well as an update on the Community Flood Plan and flood equipment.

Annual updates were completed for the PC Community Emergency Plan, which includes the Community Flood Plan and these were published online on the Parish Council website.

Dulverton

Christine reported they had several trees down and Marsh Bridge has not been cleared of debris. She praised the local volunteers and farmers who rallied around to clear roads and ditches. She said Dulverton has decided to pay a local contractor to undertake some drainage work rather than use Kier who are much more expensive. Ian Woollacott has

the appropriate certification to work on the Highway. As requested by members his mobile is 07702021088 and email: icwoollacott@gmail.com.

Winsford

Mel reported much the same problems of fallen trees in the river and debris collecting under bridges. The issue of riparian responsibility is ongoing. During the storms the electric went off for 2 days and the ambulance has problems getting through due to fallen trees on the highway. She tried to call Highways but there is no service after hours and she was told she would have to ring 101 and get the police to check the situation and they would have to call someone out if it was an emergency.

Monksilver

Paul said Monksilver also suffered from silt and debris blocking/clogging up the river which resulted in it flooding onto the road.

Nettlecombe

Justin was able to report they had no flooding incidents.

Williton

Peter reported Williton Parish Council are holding a meeting on 11th March at The Pavilion to look flood mitigation and grant funding for EVAC equipment from Minehead Rotary.

In addition to responding to support Statutory Authorities in the event of civil emergencies, EVAG's role has expanded and it is now able to offer advice and to supply items which help to mitigate the impact of flooding on individual households. Thanks to funding received from Somerset Council, EVAG it is able to provide items on a highly subsidised basis, and they ask only for a small donation to enable new stock to be ordered. For details of Minehead Rotary EVAG (Emergency Voluntary Action Group) please contact Mr John Baker jfdbaker@btinternet.com.

Ian reported that the NHS had raised the issue of emergency access for Ambulances etc., during flood/storm events. He also raised the issue of flooding along the A39 from Williton to Dunster where there is no alternative route if the road is flooded. It was agreed this issue should be raised with the MP Rachael Gilmore, and members suggested she be asked to attend the next meeting.

Paul Rutter explained he had been working with the National Trust, the Friends of Quantock Hills, and other organisation, and was in the process of producing a leaflet on soil management, biodiversity, and looking at the possibility of setting up nature conservation corridors. Particular concern has also been expressed about the increase in the growing of biofuels in the area. Paul agreed to copy in the group when the leaflet is available.

Porlock

Duncan reported there had been no flood incidents in Porlock and the work the Exmoor National Park had undertaken at Hawkcombe appears to be still working well. He was however concerned that he had been unable to find out about the road sweeping contract, as no-one appears to be doing this now. He had tried to find out from the Somerset Council but had been told the information was unavailable. Members suggested he contact Julie Lynch Lynch@idverdi.co.uk telephone : [01643 703710](tel:01643703710)

Roadwater

Dave said there were problems with a tree in the river and some of the bank was unstable and slipping/eroding into the river. Concern was also raised about the tree plantation clearance above Roadwater and the possible issue of mud sliding down the hill into the river.

Time Date and Place of Next Meeting – Christine very kindly offered to host the next meeting which will be the **AGM** at **The Sports Field Building, Dulverton TA22 9HQ** on **Wednesday 14th May starting at 2pm.**