

CPRE SOMERSET

ACTION MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT WEST MONKTON VILLAGE HALL ON 12th June 2018

Present: Chris Lewis (Chairman), Stuart Eyles, David Lloyd, Cathy Nicholls, Don Parkinson, John Roberts, Fletcher Robinson, Tim Whittingham, Becky Collier (Branch Manager), Liz Payne (Planner)

Apologies: none

1. **Minutes:** 22nd March 2018: Approved
2. **Matters Arising:** BC had looked into Ramblers awards for footpaths as promised at the last meeting. They have a [Pathwatch app and facility on their website](#) to allow people to report problems on rights of way; this also allows people to commend well maintained paths.
3. **Reports**
Treasurer's Report - see report, plus report on income raised by recent events. Income and expenditure is as expected but John reiterated that we are using our reserves and will need to identify new sources of income. JR said that claiming the Gift Aid from donations had been a complicated process to set up but should run smoothly from now on.

Chairman's Report - CL had been away for a long period so he delivered a verbal report. The campaign to stop building houses on Cuckoo Hill, Frome was very well run by a local group and there have been reports that the application is likely to be refused due to flooding concerns - but not confirmed as yet. Despite valiant efforts, CL had not been able to get to the Green Scythe Fair on 10th June as the site was full but BC stayed on and until the end instead. BC and CL had been interviewed via telephone by a consultancy doing research for National Office (NO) on volunteering. All volunteers have been sent a link to an online questionnaire asking for their experiences of volunteering. The results of the research will be presented to the Staff Network meeting on 26th June which BC is attending.

ACTION: BC to report back on findings of volunteer survey after Staff Network meeting

CL was due to attend the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership meeting on 13th June and would raise the topic of a potential extension to the AONB boundary, now that the Govt has announced a review of National Parks (NP) and AONBs. It was agreed that, if the Mendip Society and the AONB Unit are supportive of the concept, then CPRE Somerset will also support it.

Post-meeting note: *This was discussed at the AONB meeting and the Mendip Hills AONB will be submitting written evidence to the Glover committee looking into this, which will be shared in draft with partnership colleagues, including CPRE.*

DL reported rumours that the Quantock Hills might become part of Exmoor NP. Friends of Quantock would rather it remained as an AONB and there is concern that the status of the Quantocks might get rather diluted if it was absorbed into Exmoor. There is also a proposal to create a new AONB, the Exe Valley AONB, south of Exmoor - part of which would be in Somerset. JR said that reviews were usually looking for ways to save money and BC said that other SW branches shared this concern re proposals for a Cotswolds NP and a Dorset NP; there is a worry that existing funds will become more thinly spread. FR was in favour of extending protected landscapes but TW said there was a danger that the remaining countryside just gets more pressure for development. LP said the NPPF

review included recognition of the intrinsic value of the countryside and the value of ancient woodland. CN said the Exmoor Society is doing a plan of the natural capital assets of Exmoor.

CL will attend the CPRE Wiltshire AGM on 18th June at Sarum College, Salisbury. He will attend the national AGM on 28th June in London and invited anyone else to let him know if they would like to attend too.

Post-meeting note: Preparation for the Beckington appeal (mentioned later in these notes) took up more time than expected and he was not able to attend the Wiltshire AGM.

Branch Development - see report. GDPR preparations have been very time consuming and we have lost almost 100 subscribers to our e-newsletters as we had to ask for them to consent to stay in touch.

BC showed cuttings from Wells Journal and County Gazette which have been featuring the Best Village Shop competition and the Landscape Photography competition (respectively) each week. BC is pleased with this level of exposure but there have been snags with the design of the application form (village shop) and it has been hard getting information back from both papers about the level of interest.

BC submitted the application for the fingerposts project to the Hinkley C Small Grants fund. If successful, we will have £4000 over the next 2 years to offer to Parish Councils within a 10 mile radius of Hinkley to help restore their historic signposts. PCs will be asked to match any money we give them. We will retain a further £1000 to cover BC's admin costs and will work closely with Somerset County Council Highways. The panel meets in late June so we should hear relatively soon.

Planners Report - see report and planning cases spreadsheet. FR asked if CPRE could write in support of applications which we considered to be "good" and all agreed that we should do more of this. LP said she had made a positive effort to support good policies in the Mendip Local Plan Part 2. There was some discussion about modern design and architecture and how some people find modern buildings hard to accept as they break outside the comfort zone of our "visual vocabulary". LP explained that for affordable housing, there are so many restrictions and rules regarding energy efficiency and building "homes for life" that these cut into the (already tight) budgets so it is almost inevitable that you end up with standard "boxes" with the only variation being materials.

The CPRE Gloucestershire event confirmed LP's fears that Neighbourhood Plans are proving far too cumbersome for many communities and those that have been completed are now getting pulled apart by Planning Inspectors. FR has been reading the draft Castle Cary Neighbourhood Plan and fears it is too restrictive.

James Heapey MP is still pushing for a new bypass (A361) from Shepton Mallet to Ashcott but has distanced himself from Glastonbury Town Council's recent questionnaire. JR explained that any funding for a new road would come from the Strategic Road Network Fund which addresses issues on 8000 miles of road in the UK. The review will be based on economics and funding will go to areas with major traffic problems; he believes Glastonbury will be way down the list of priorities.

David Warburton MP has spoken out against the Sparkford Garden Village proposal.

SE mentioned the appeal case in Beckington, which has seen a lot of "executive home" development catering for people commuting to Bristol and Bath. Redrow homes are appealing against refusal of their housing application (19 homes plus 8 affordable homes), claiming that Mendip DC does not have a 5 year housing land supply, but

Mendip DC insists that it does. Redrow says they only have 4.8 years supply. The appeal starts on 19th June and the decision will be sure to influence other developments in the district. The site is outside Beckington's development area. The response from local people has been rather apathetic and the Parish Council is worried. SE will attend the inquiry and LP and CL hope to attend parts of it too. LP said Mendip Policy Planning Unit now only has 2 people.

FR raised the prospect of Somerset becoming a unitary authority and the possible implications were discussed but it was agreed that CPRE could not influence this so we will have to wait and see.

4. Branch Videos: BC explained, as in her recent email, that CPRE SW has commissioned a film company to produce 2 videos for each SW branch - each about 2 minutes long. CPRE Somerset is opting for one about "who we are and what we do" and one about "the right housing in the right place". They will be coming to film in Somerset on 27th June. BC asked for suggestions of filming locations to add to her list and ideas included Deer Leap, Rode, Hinkley, Morrison's Depot at Bridgwater. TW has offered to present the video along with his son.

ACTION: BC to liaise with TW re script ideas and locations

5. AGM: BC explained that she and LP had come up with a theme for the AGM of "Rural Affordable Housing". It was agreed to try to put together a panel of speakers on this topic, similar to the "End of the Road" event at last year's AGM. BC suggested starting by approaching Shaun Spiers, author of the book "How to Build Houses and Save the Countryside" and all were in favour of this. Liz would be happy to speak and other potential speakers to approach include: a housing association, a private developer, an architect and a Local Authority Policy Planner. DP suggested Strongvox who have a new development in North Curry and FR suggested William Habershon, of Habershon Land. FR suggested he might be able to talk briefly on the problems facing small and middle sized developers who want to build high quality well designed homes with eco - credentials, making best use of local materials. A provisional date of 24th October was suggested and various potential venues discussed.

ACTION: BC to contact Shaun Spiers. If he is willing to come, BC to agree a date asap and take on arrangements from there.

6. Any Other Business: DP expressed concern about large scale farming and the pollution it can cause. He feels all farms should have to produce an environmental impact policy which should be monitored, perhaps by the Environment Agency. If they were in breach of their policy, they should have their subsidies reduced. DL explained that any farm receiving basic payments has to sign up to cross-compliance conditions and subsidies can be cut if they breach these conditions. This is policed by the Rural Payments Agency but is rarely enforced. Most farmers get £200/hectare per year but extra payments are available for environmental initiatives. Most dairy farmers don't sign up for the extra as they find it too restrictive.

FR said that, as Yeovil and Chard are under-delivering on housing and villages are continuing to bear the brunt of development, SSDC have said that they will "remodel" Yeovil. He asked if CPRE should be involved in this process and mentioned that there is talk that Yeovil Cattle Market may be redeveloped soon.

ACTION: LP to look into this and to liaise with FR about the whole issue of revitalising town centres.

7. Date of next meeting: 13th September - venue tbc but hopefully Quaker meeting House, Street.

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Chair, CPRE Somerset

Date: