



## **WEST SOMERSET FLOOD (& EMERGENCY PLANNING) GROUP**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held at The Sports Hall, Dulverton, on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May starting at 2.00.pm.**

**Present** : Chair Brenda Maitland-Walker (Carhampton): Christine Dubery (Treasurer – Dulverton): Ian Aldridge – Vice-Chair (Williton): Mel Mileham (Winsford): Brian Martin (Sampford Brett): Sue Smith (Carhampton): Mary Coles (Roadwater): and Jenny Ody (Stogursey).

**Apologies for absence** were received from Peter Payne (Williton): Polly and Julian Soltau (Withypool & Hawkridge): Heather Wilson (Crowcombe): Dave Sherman (Roadwater): Justin Nichols (Nettlecombe): and Porlock Parish Council.

#### **Minutes of the last Meeting**

These having been circulated prior to the meeting, were duly agreed.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Christine Dubery reported the balance in the account as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was £127. 30 but one more payment is due to Sonder Digital for hosting the website, so after payment this will leave £91. 30 in the Bank Account.

It was agreed we keep the annual fee of £5 for membership, and this is now due for payment. This payment is to cover the cost of the website hosting, and an invoice is attached and we would be grateful if this could be put to your next committee meeting.

#### **Election of Officers**

**Chair:** Proposed by Christine Dubery, seconded by Ian Aldridge and duly agreed.

**Vice Chair:** Proposed by Brenda M-W, seconded by Brian Martin and duly agreed.

**Secretary** As there were no proposals for Minute Secretary Brenda agreed to continue.

**Treasurer:** Proposed by Brenda M-W, seconded by Mel Mileham and duly agreed.

#### **Update from members**

At the last meeting it was agreed we invite Rachel Gilmore MP to our meeting. Brenda reported she had emailed and invited Rachel Gilmore to this meeting, but she had not received a reply or an acknowledgment. Christine said there is an up and coming event in Dulverton which she is due to attend, and she will try to speak to her and try to get her to attend our next meeting.

#### **Dulverton – Christine Dubery**

Christine reported a continuing issue in Town Marsh – It appears South West Water only clear the system when its full – there is no annual clearing or maintenance. She also reported

Dulverton Town Council has also decided to pay an outside contractor to clear the grips and gullies in the town as the Somerset Council only undertakes reactive clearance.

Christine reported she had to complain to South West Water about the length of time their workmen had been working on the Sewage Treatment system (situated on the far side of the sports field). The works were initially supposed to take 6 months, but it has been nearly 3 years. These works have been very disruptive as the workmen have had to access the treatment plant via the sports field, as there is insufficient width for their equipment and vehicles to get down the lane.

### **Winsford -Mel Mileham**

Mel produced a copy of 'Spring Conference 2025: The Waters of Exmoor which sets out the various speakers' profiles. She asked if anyone had been aware of this event, which was run by the Exmoor Society. No-one had been aware of it, and only one person had seen a report issued after the event.

Mel said that unfortunately there was little opportunity to ask questions of the speakers at the meeting, so she wondered if we could try to get Dr David Smith to attend one of our future meetings. Dr Smith is South West Water's Natural Resources Team Manager, working on species, habitats, biosecurity and invasive non-native species, fish & eels. He is also a lead on peatland restoration, catchment management and biodiversity.

There was a general discussion from members about the amount of pollution in the rivers, some of which flow down from Exmoor down to Dunster Beach, Blue Anchor, or down to the beaches on the Devon coastline. Farmers are being blamed for much of the pollution, but it was agreed some of the pollution may be coming from old septic tanks where the discharge is still going straight into nearby watercourses. It was felt more investigation needs to be carried out by the E.A. on old sewage systems, and the lack of appropriate drainage for surface water.

### **For information**

Homeowners are responsible for their choice, installation and maintenance of their wastewater system under a new code of practice introduced by the Environment Agency. They have a legal responsibility to minimise the impact of their sewage waste if they manage it within the bounds of their property e.g. with a septic tank or sewage treatment plant. (Binding Rules - England, DEFRA, January 2015).

**ALL septic tanks that currently ultimately discharge into watercourses will have to be either:-**

**Replaced using a sewage treatment plant with full EN 12566-3 certification,  
or**

**The discharge to the watercourse must be stopped, and diverted to a drainfield, designed and constructed to the current British Standard 6297:2007**

### **Sampford Brett - Brian Martin**

Brian said that the **Community Emergency Plan** has been updated and is available on the Sampford Brett website: [www.sampfordbrett.org.uk](http://www.sampfordbrett.org.uk) The **Community Flood Plan** is an appendix to this. A further appendix, the **Emergency Communication Plan**, has now been written and approved and will be published soon. The latter plan comes into action in an event in which both power and all communication is lost (no mobile signal or land lines), such as

happened in Storm Darragh last December. Two walkie-talkies are being purchased to see if these will be of benefit during such an emergency event. If trials are successful, we will purchase more.

Brian said it has been the driest spring on record, with April being the sunniest on record. Rainfall from Jan 22nd to date: remainder of January 57mm (2.2 inches), February 60mm (2.4 inches), March 17mm (0.7 inch), whole of April 78mm (3 inches) nearly all falling between the 15th and 22nd, and May to date 1mm (essentially zero inches) - a total of 212mm (8.3 inches). There was 50% more rain in the same period last year.

Brian said he had showed Paul Rutter (Williton) around our village on March 18th to see the stream gauges, drain markings, the equipment in the flood shed and discuss how we manage flood events using our WhatsApp group, etc.

There was a general discussion about the need to update Flood Plans to include other emergency issues, such as the issue of lack of phone service, planning for a major incident in the area and/or long periods without electricity etc. Brian was complimented on the amount of work he had put into producing a very comprehensive set of plans. Brenda suggested Town and Parishes look at the Sampford Brett Plans to use as a possible template when updating their plans.

Ian Aldridge proposed the West Somerset Flood Group "*Resolve to broaden the scope of the group to reflect the need to plan for all other types of emergencies.*" It was agreed with would add (& Emergency Planning) to the Groups heading although we will still keep the West Somerset Flood Group as the name on the Bank Account.

### **Williton**

Ian said Paul Rutter had run a meeting at Williton with the Rotary EVAC equipment which was well attended, but he was not sure whether anyone had purchased any equipment with the 80% grant which was available.

He also reported a Tree which had fallen over the Monksilver Stream which was the responsibility of the Town Council as landowners of the Recreation Ground. He explained this had caused damage to property on the other side of the river, but the council had to obtain consent to work on the river from the E.A. as it was designated as a 'Main River'.

### **Roadwater**

Mary updated the group about the tree that had fallen across the Washford river. She was able to report that Neil Binding of SRA had been in touch with the landowner, to arrange for someone to clear this.

Mary said the National Grid had to cut the electricity off in the village for 4-5 days, but Roadwater had organised a Big Breakfast which coincided with this. National Grid couldn't change the dates of the power cut, but they very kindly brought a generator for them to use, so the village breakfast could go ahead. People in the village also received compensation from National Grid for the loss of electricity. The villager shop is considering getting a generator as a back-up in case of emergencies.

### **Carhampton**

Sue updated the group on the issue of sewage coming up through the manholes in residents' driveways. Wessex Water have now undertaken a detailed inspection of the drainage and sewage system and found that the developer had not (a) had their plans agreed by WW and (b) the surface water drainage system had not been built to building regulation standard. Both

WW and the developer were now in the process of dealing with the problem. Also, one of the holding tanks in the field below the development was totally blocked.

Sue reported the gullies in Withycombe Lane which were installed in 2018 as part of a 'Flood alleviation project' were still blocked, mainly due to the debris which falls from the steep banks and covers the gullies. After reporting them Somerset Council cleared the two at the bottom of the lane but not the ones further up, probably because they couldn't see them!

The 8 drains (also as part of the flood alleviation project) installed at the Eastbury Hill side of the village are also totally blocked. These have been reported three times, but they have still not been emptied. This means every time we have heavy rain the road at the bottom of the hill into Carhampton floods.

### **Stogursey**

Jenny reported a problem with water coming up in the road in Castle Street. It doesn't appear to be a broken water main, so it is probably a spring. Highways will need to investigate. Jenny also reported the local farmers have been told that if they clear the soil out of the ditches by the road, the arisings may be considered to be contaminated, and this soil will need to be disposed of appropriately.

**Time Date and Place of next meeting to be held Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025 starting at 2pm at Roadwater Village Hall**