

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SHEPTON MONTAGUE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 13th NOVEMBER AT 7.00pm in the VILLAGE HALL

Present: Paul Williams (Chair), John Sykes (JS), Julia Hunter (JH), Ali Willasey-Wilsey (AW), Richard Ellis (RE), Margaret Bowden (MB) clerk and Tom Power (TP) Somerset Council. Also in attendance were ten members of the parish and Paul Rawson of Emily Estates.

- 1 **Apologies for absence:** Lucy Trimnell (Somerset Council).
- 2 **Declarations of interest.** None.
- 3 **Minutes of the last meeting and the meeting on 26.7.23** were signed as a correct record.
- 4 **Matters arising from meeting on 26.7.23:** Earth banks at Stokeford Farm: PW, JS and JH had attended a site meeting with Planning and other involved parties. A report is awaited from the planning officer.
Matters arising from meeting on 23.10.23: An email circulation list had been suggested for those wishing to be kept informed of developments at The Newt/Emily Estates however it was now felt that another group may not be helpful. Parish Council connections were being established for this purpose and the group Black Eight had been set up – see item 7.
- 5 **Flooding in village:** JS presented his report as follows:

Emergency planning and Flood Report 13th Nov 2023

John Sykes, Shepton Montague Parish Council

In recent weeks I've attended the following:

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|----------------------|--|
| Oct 5 th | Somerset Prepared (Community Resilience event) |
| Oct 18 th | Flood warning meeting with Gareth Varney (EA),
Dr Paul Elliston, Community Engagement Officer (Flooding), ¹
Lucie Reader (Pitcombe PC)
Mareike Beyer (N Cadbury PC) |
| Nov 9 th | 2nd Flood warning meeting (ditto attending, follow up to 18 th Oct) |

1. SECTION 19 REPORT

¹ **Somerset Rivers Authority** / Somerset Council – Civil Contingencies Unit

A lead investigator has now been appointed (Anna? tbc). The ambition (subject to potential delays during the scrutiny process) is that a 'light' version of the Section 19 report (in other words, a preliminary version) will be published by the year anniversary of the floods, with a full report to follow sometime after.

2. EMERGENCY PLANS

Comment from Paul Elliston above: "if your Parish doesn't yet have an Emergency Plan as yet, we would like to suggest that the Parish Council consider developing one. To guide you, templates are available here: [2. Communities Prepared - Somerset Prepared](#), and any draft versions can be sent to me for comment if that's helpful."

3. WATERCOURSE MAPPING

Paul again: "It is my observation as I meet with communities across the county that a common denominator is the lack of clarity over who owns and has responsibility for which watercourse. When an issue arises it is, therefore, often unclear who should be contacted to resolve it before it contributes to a flooding event. Once an Emergency Plan has been constructed (we see this as the priority), we would like to encourage Parish Councils to consider undertaking a mapping exercise of watercourses, drawing on local knowledge to build as complete a picture as possible of where responsibilities lie. Such a map could prove a very useful tool further down the line..."

Nb you cannot legally discharge water onto a highway unless you have permission from the Highways Authority.

WATERCOURSE WATCHERS & FLOOD WARDENS

"The Parish Council may also wish to consider recruiting a team of volunteer **Watercourse Watchers** who can keep an eye on local drains, gullies, culverts etc. and report any issues they find so that there is opportunity to resolve them before they become significant problems. In the experience of my own parish, dog-walkers in particular are well placed to do this but, of course, it can be done by anyone who regularly walks around the community."

"There is some limited crossover between this role and that of trained Flood Wardens (anyone in the community can access that training for free from the Environment Agency - if that is desired, I can make enquiries to identify who to talk to). If key individuals are identified by a Parish Council as being able to respond in an emergency, then please let us know about them via this link: [Somerset Emergency Community Contacts – Are You Signed Up? – Somerset Prepared](#)

4. VILLAGE FLOODS

We experienced another flooding event on Saturday 28th October. The roads in both Higher & Lower Shepton flooded again, but not to the extent of 9th May. Paul Williams, Vanessa Stubbs and a team of villagers arranged for sandbags, sand etc. in order to shore up houses which were at risk of flooding. Jo and Lee have taken out a section of earth-bank from the road into their field to allow road surface-water to escape. This prevented the water-level build-up which caused extensive flooding back in May. Two or three homes in Higher Shepton

13.11.23

suffered minor water penetration but it is believed no damage was done. Paul Elliston visited the village and made notes of who was affected.

Horns Lane surfacing, which was renewed a few weeks ago, was washed down into Lower Shepton (again). Several road drains throughout the village are currently still blocked. At least two exhibit 'reverse drainage'. i.e. water is coming **out** of the drain and running down the road.

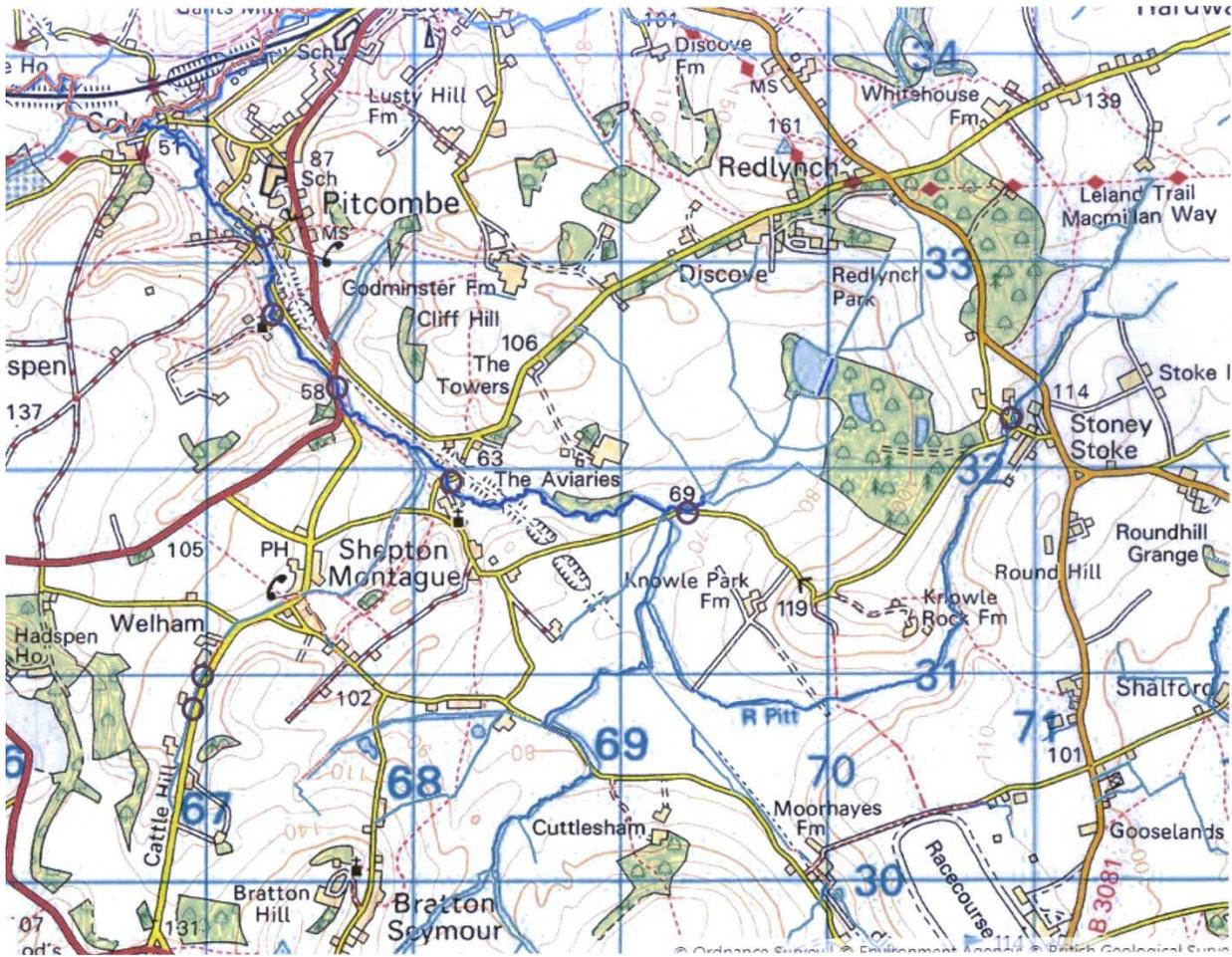
Robert Dimond created a temporary flume* off East Street to allow water to drain down off the road opposite the Chapel. **This now requires further action to avoid vehicles coming off the road and also to restore proper access to the public footpath which leaves East St. at this point .**

The new concrete access track leading to the Searts development discharged water down onto Cattle Hill, and much of the gravel in the adjacent drains washed out into the drainage system (again).

5. FLOOD WARNING PROJECT

During the Flood warning meetings on 18th Oct and 9th Nov we walked around Pitcombe and Shepton Montague to try to identify suitable locations for river-level meters (or equivalent for ditches/streams). A good candidate for the Pitt is shown at location 69 on the SM-Knowle Rock road.

Gareth Varney has kindly given us a professional tipping-bucket rain gauge, which with the addition of some kind of remote communications interface could be used to measure rain-rate at a suitable location in Shepton Montague.



6. FUTURE MEETINGS

An email has been received from Paul Rawson asking for details of the Hydrologist who commented on the Lily Farm application. In a positive move, Emily Estates appear to want to engage with the village to resolve the flooding down Cattle Hill.

I'm arranging a meeting with the hydrologist to see if he'd be happy to assist, and if so, on what terms.

7. ACTION LIST

- Recruit team to draft Emergency Plan
- Recruit team to research & document land-ownership & watercourse/ drains mapping
- Appoint Watercourse Watchers and a Flood Warden
- Agree process for possible collaboration with land-owners regarding flood-prevention works.
- Develop rain-rate gauge telemetry system and install at suitable location

13.11.23



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End of report.

Paul Rawson added on behalf of Emily Estates that they take their responsibility as a landowner very seriously and recognize the importance of protecting people's homes, particularly as Cattle Hill is at the top of the water catchment area. He said that the Estate wishes to work with the experts the Parish are using, and with the community to constructively and quickly improve the situation. The Estate is carrying out its own work to keep the water **on** the land and slow down inundation events.

It was resolved to set up a flooding working party to make a start on the Action list in JS's report i.e. in the first instance to identify all the relevant landowners and identify and map all the drains. This information will contribute to an eventual Emergency Plan.

Volunteers for the Flooding Working Party were: Lee Tibbatts, Fynn, Sue Hester, Paul Rawson, Vanessa and Sarah. It was hoped that a further volunteer from Lower Shepton could be found. JS will contact all the volunteers to co-ordinate. Clerk to email a copy of JS's report to each volunteer.

6 Financial review and budget and precept setting for 2024/25: Members considered the income and expenditure figures for 2023/24 that had been circulated prior to the meeting by the clerk. There were several items budgeted for in 2023/24 that were unlikely to now involve any expenditure this financial year (e.g. CIL of £1,356, costs of footpaths project, councillor training) so it was anticipated that an amount in the region of just over £5,000 would be carried forward to 2024/2025 financial year.

Council then considered the budget or 2024/25 with a view to setting the precept. The following issues were taken into consideration:

- The Community Infrastructure Levy amount of £1,356 is required to be spent in 2024/25, which will reduce considerably the small reserve held.
- Somerset County Council are in severe financial difficulty and TP explained that it is likely that many services currently paid for at County level will have to be cut, for example bus services.
- Some services therefore will necessarily become 'devolved' to town and parish councils.

13.11.23

- The clerk's pay is below the national minimum wage and 2022 Local Govt. Pay scales recommend that Parish Clerks be paid a minimum £11.22 an hour. At even 10 hours per month this equates to £1,346 per year, not including expenses. As the current clerk is resigning and a new clerk will have to be found, this (along with some provision for training, particularly website training) needs to be included in the budget.
- Known expenditure for 2024/25 already adds up to over £4,000.

In view of these matters the estimated expenditure in 2024/25 will be approaching £6,000.

Council members felt they had no option but to budget for this amount and to increase the precept accordingly, despite the fact that this represents an increase over last year's precept of 100%.

PW proposed that the precept should be increased to £6,000 for 2024/25. This was seconded by AW and resolved unanimously.

- 7 Planning: Council representation at 'Black Eight':** Black Eight is a group of individuals formed in Yarlington to share concerns and information on local planning developments. Black Eight acres is local farmland that is subject to a planning application from The Newt/Emily Estates. Some members of the parish had attended recent meetings. Council considered whether the PC itself should be represented. It was decided that individual representation was the better option with no formal Council representative. Information and a link to Black Eight is available on the Shepton Montague website.
- 8 Replacement of clerk:** The clerk said that she does not wish to continue with the role as 16 years is enough. In order to find a replacement: The clerk will update the job description, TP said he would put a word out, the clerk will post an ad on the website and notify SALC so they can advertise it, JH offered to post an ad on Facebook, other local clerks can be notified in case they wish to add to their portfolio. If anyone knows someone who may be interested then please contact the current clerk for more information.
- 9 Meeting dates for 2024:**
Agreed scheduled meeting dates were:
- Tuesday 13th February,
 - Tuesday 7th May (Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council meetings),
 - Tuesday 13th August,
 - Tuesday 12th November.
- 10 A.o.b.** Paul Rawson re-iterated Emily Estate's offering of constructive help with flooding issues. He stated that the Lily Farm planning application which Council had not supported, would be pursued. PW thanked him for his attendance at meetings and offer of support.
- 11** It was noted that the noticeboard by the bus shelter was now in a very poor state. RE,JS and PW will fix it between them.
- 12 Open discussion**
There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 13th February 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall, (subject to earlier meetings being required to deal with e.g.planning applications).

Chairman _____ Date _____