

FULL COUNCIL

6th March 2023

UPDATES AND INFORMATION

Councillor updates, conferences and events

Cllr Lannin – 26th January 2023 – Councillors of Parishes in the River Erme Catchment (notes attached)

Cllr Dredge – 6th February 2023 - DALC County Committee

Cllr Dredge – 9th February 2023 - Devon Bus Forum

Cllr Dredge – 10th February 2023 – D&C Police South Hams Councillor Advocate Meeting

Cllr Dredge – 21st February 2023 - GWR Devon & Cornwall Local Transport Forum

Notes from Meeting Thurs 26 Jan 23 with Cllrs from Parishes in the Erme Catchment

Cllrs from ITC, Modbury PC, Ermington PC, Ugborough PC, Kingston PC, & Holbeton PC.

General points- all the parishes are concerned about water quality in the Erme and reduced wildlife within river/tributaries.

It was acknowledged that SWW has a lot to do to reduce the amount of raw sewage that is going into the river, but that there are 3 challenges we have to get SWW to address this.

1. The cost/slow speed of SWW to separate surface water drainage from sewage/waste water pipes due to v long timescales set by national govt. Discussion also included the difficulties SHDC & parishes had due to lack of adequate national planning rules. This made trying to future proof new developments eg more challenging when requesting new developments did more to reduce water run off. Also that often, even when waste and run off water were separate in the new build schemes, they were often then joined to shared waste sewage infrastructure down the road!
2. There may be illegal sewage releases, but difficult to ascertain from data, and lack of teeth to EA in taking action anyway.
3. lack of baseline data, eg lots of anecdotal evidence re reduced fish numbers, increased slime in rivers, etc, but not much in way of empirical data, and should have been started over 15 years ago to get a clear picture of changes over time.

Other points raised:

Water quality not just due to failing SWW, but also agricultural run off, and degradation of moorland peat/overgrazing. National Govt had provided more funding recently for farmers to cover slurry pits and yards, and increase slurry storage capacity to cope with periods of high rain fall and many local farmers were taking this opportunity to make these improvements.

Yealm project has a number of key individuals with both time and knowledge resources to push the project forward. Would need similar volunteers for Erme to get change moving at speed.

Holbeton PC had done well raising the issue with MP, and SWW, and local response very strong, however they felt it was now just back to SWW saying yes it's going to take a lot of time - what next?.

Many PCs keen to get more info on citizen science water quality monitoring/ data collection/testing kits to see if can widen the area where monitoring is being done/recruit enough volunteers. What funds needed for testing kits/ organising training etc.

All Cllrs agreed to go back to Councils and propose ongoing joint meetings for both short and long term joint working. Meetings to be widened to include other stakeholders eg local environmental groups, interested residents, and landowners (Flete estate very keen to get involved and enable further water quality monitoring) and Harford Parish.

While there is much that will be long term lobbying, there is more we have control of. Education within PCs regarding what people flush (should only be the 3 ps), and reducing the amount of litter than makes its way into river via surface water run off drains, and by directly washing into streams and the Erme.

Eg Kingston in process of putting article in parish mag (also online) - we can share or adapt this for our communities

What gets in the river and where does it end up? Cigarette butts. Plant labels commonly found on Wonwell Beach.

Increasing river cleans similar to that done by PL:21 in Ivybridge & other litter pick work.

Getting local maps of sewage/surface water drainage systems to feed into planning requests, and increasing awareness: Putting fishes on waste water drain covers to remind people where the water goes.

Getting Erme Estuary Beaches; Mothercombe public (not Meadowsfoot) & Wonwell designated as bathing waters is long process and requires lots of historical data.

Devon County Council BUS (Bus User & Stakeholder) Forum - Thursday 9th February 2023 Teams Meeting

Brief Notes

Why are we here?

In 2021 the government announced its new National Bus Strategy – Bus Back Better.

Local authorities were asked to set up Enhanced Partnerships (EPs) and to write a Bus Service Investment Plan (BSIP)

An EP is an agreement between the Local Transport Authority and local bus operators to work to improve bus services. The Devon EP was formed in November 2022.

The BSIP is an ambitious plan to make the required improvements.

The Bus Forum is a necessity to qualify for the government grant - acting as an informal forum to look at all aspects of bus travel across Devon.

A forum chairperson will have to be elected and will sit on the EP

The grant allocated by government to Devon is £14m and comprises £9m capital expenditure and £5m revenue expenditure over 3 years.

The top priority for the DFT is capital expenditure.

Revenue is not to support existing services.

Capital

Bus stop upgrades

Improve bus stations

Street lighting at bus stops computer controlled

Multi-purpose transport centres

Small 'pinch point fund – e.g. dropped kerbs

Improved ticketing

Revenue

£2.00 fare initiative by DFT and other fare projects which will now come to an end at the end of March 2023.

A number of fare initiatives for the 3 years of the grant

Smile campaign

Increased number of bus services – a handful of schemes possible with longer term funding.

Brand 'Devon Bus' to give confidence in the consistent level of bus services.

Bus Passenger Charter (to be circulated). Also a shortened version '**Passenger Priorities**' document to be displayed on buses.

A comment was made by the secretary of TravelWatch SouthWest about co-ordinating with other geographical areas to produce common standards – best practice.

Address made by Peter Knight Managing Director of StageCoach South West

Historically operating at around 95% service efficiency with services being missed owing to shortage of drivers. The business is now having more success with its recruitment. A full timetable is now being delivered with a 0.9% deficiency owing to roadworks and congestion. *Note bus services have been reduced.*

Although driver numbers are much better, the company is continuing its recruitment programme.

Passenger usage is 75% of the pre-pandemic level for fare-paying passengers but only 65% for those with concessionary passes.

Nationally, the DFT is withdrawing the £2.00 fare but can a response be found to extending the scheme?

The Bus Recovery Grant also ends at the end of March and it is uncertain whether it will continue.

Although deep rural areas must be taken into account when planning bus services, it is up to passengers to make them viable. We can't serve every community every hour.

Costs have risen by 30% from pre-pandemic levels and research is being undertaken for the replacement of diesel power with electric or hydrogen power. This would also be for ecological reasons.