

## **Porlock Parish Council – Portfolio Report – September 2025 (updated 8<sup>th</sup> September)**

(Ongoing unresolved items from previous reports have been left in)

### **High Bank Car Park**

Birch Tree - Paring has taken place to the low hanging branches of the Birch trees, which were causing damage to permit-holder's cars.

Stream – The bed of the stream and pipe has been cleared now allowing water to flow more freely. This has been added to the maintenance schedule.

High Bank to Pollards Court Footpath – Fence panels damaged by the storm were removed previously, leaving part of the footpath fenced and part not fenced. Item on the agenda for the September meeting.

### **The Meadows (No update)**

Red line markings have appeared in several places in the Meadows which is causing alarm that work is about to take place. No orders have been received council staff have made enquiries with the utility companies. Nothing is showing on the one network system.

### **Woodcott Cottage Sewer**

The sewer is overflowing again, which has been reported to Environmental Health and Exmoor National Park Authority.

### **Hawkcombe Stream**

Environment Agency are withdrawing maintenance of Hawkcombe Stream and this will now fall to each individual owner of property abutting the stream. They are unable to provide a list of the properties due to GDPR but we are working to collate a list of all those affected for future engagement. There is an item on the September agenda to consider hosting a Riparian Owners workshop with Somerset Rivers Authority.

### **Road Signs & Highways**

Porlock hill – A second request to clean the signs on Porlock hill was closed by Somerset council with the below wording:

*'The problem that you reported has been inspected but we have decided that action is not needed at this time. This is because the problem is not a safety issue and not severe enough for us to fix it. We will continue to monitor the problem when we do our planned inspections and plan work in to fix the problem if the issue gets worse.'*

Mobile Speed Indicator Device – Somerset Highways have reviewed the application and have advised which locations a MSID could be installed, an update will be given to Council during the September meeting.

Pavement Deterioration – a recent reported fall outside Holmdale on the high street, which resulted in a broken wrist was reported to Somerset Council. The report has closed with the below wording:

*'The problem that you reported has been inspected but we have decided that action is not needed at this time. This is because the problem is not a safety issue and not severe enough for us to fix it. We will continue to monitor the problem when we do our planned inspections and plan work in to fix the problem if the issue gets worse.'*

Salt Bins – A review of the salt bags and bins in the Parish is being undertaken by the caretaker, as requested by Somerset Council to inform their refilling process.

### **Website & IT infrastructure**

Website Management – A proposal is being developed for the build of the new improved website (Visual and Functionality) and how to make the move as seamless as possible for all. One of the key considerations is how to improve the process and functionality to store documents while maintaining security to council's system to provide improvements to accessibility and transparency.

### **Porlock Parish Council Logo (No update)**

Redesign – Pending final amendments. Following engagement with the Collage of Arms as to the origins of the logo as requested by Council they have advised as they can find no record of any registration of the logo that "Council may perhaps be well-advised to cease using its current logo, given the appearance of an heraldic device". Clarification has been sought from them if this is required or recommendation no response has been received.

### **Doverhay Toilets**

Toilet Reinstatement – The electrical issues have been resolved, and the toilet is now back open. A replacement toilet sign has been ordered. A light fitting needs replacing in one of the cubicles which will be undertaken as part of regular maintenance.

Emergency Call Alarms – Work has been completed by Coomber Security to install new alarms, the system is now up and running and is now remotely monitored.

### **St Dubricius Churchyard**

Unsafe Memorials - Still awaiting the go-ahead from Diocese to commence works. An appeal was made to allow the repairs to take place urgently due to the proximity of the school and the frequency of events in the churchyard; it was decided that the memorials were not sufficiently unsafe to warrant fast-tracking. Duty of care has been highlighted on the faculty submission.

Signage has been added to the eleven memorials that have been deemed unsafe. Signs have also been placed on the three entrances to the churchyard to warn of the unsafe memorials.

Broken bench slat – Bench has now been repaired.

### Additional Works –

Advice and quotes are being obtained and will be presented to Council for consideration once received. Quotes from stone masons to attend to the walls surrounding the churchyard have yet to be obtained. Work initially requested to be completed by autumn 2025 however this is subject to faculty requests being approved by the diocese of bath and wells.

- Footpath at the rear which ENPA have advised the only option is to raise the path to avoid damage to the roots of the yew tree. Quote has been received this will be presented to Council once all quotes have been received.
- Masonry wall to the south. Cavities in between stones is showing a loss of mortar. This whole wall could undergo a consolidation.
- Post finial has now been repaired and the bill settled
- Coping to the west of the gate piers to the north path need consolidation.
- Church cross on the churchyard will require minor masonry maintenance every other year.

### **War Memorial** (No update)

The new maintenance contract has been set up. The next scheduled visit will take place in October.

### **Hawkcombe Cemetery**

Work progresses on the works as identified on cemetery assessment report and agreed by council. Funding from external sources is currently being sought to enable the programme of works to be considered.

Cemetery steps – Signs have been placed to close the unsafe steps and to advise caution on the two sets of steps that will remain open.

Unsafe Memorials – Work to make these memorials safe could start as soon as 23<sup>rd</sup> September, subject to approval by Council. Work is ongoing to identify owners.

Cemetery Shed – Contractor to quote for new doors, as current one beyond repair.

Plots - Remapping of the cemetery will be carried out in relation to remaining available plots. The current mapping is now unrealistic as the space available suggests significantly fewer plots are available than are recorded. The new guideline for plot sizes has made this remapping a necessity.

Memorial Benches - All benches that had perished beyond repair have now been removed. The plaques taken from those benches are stored safely in the parish office. Unfortunately, there are no next of kin contact details on file for the owners of the plaques. Payment for the Kingdon bench has been reconciled.

### **Hawkcombe Playground**

Signage – Signage has been replaced.

Fence & Gate – Dilapidated fence posts have been replaced.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

There is an item on the agenda of the September meeting to discuss the grounds maintenance programme.

Tree Survey – Current quotes have been obtained £1150 + VAT and £1300 + VAT to survey six sites within Porlock. This will be added to the budget planning process 2026-27 for consideration. Many tree surgeons contacted do not carry out surveys.

Old School Centre (Right hand side) – Stone wall needs reviewing. A contractor will be requested to come and assess the wall.

OSC Orchard – The outside tap and post have been replaced. A small apple tree came down in the OSC Orchard and has been removed.

#### **Porlock Marsh War Memorial (no update)**

#### **Old School Centre**

Refurbishment – The Porlock Community Maintenance team have now completed the interim painting work. The caretaker has also been busy completing jobs to ensure the Community Room is ready for hire.

A review of how to make best use the space in the Parish room as the dedicated Parish Council office will take place.

Public Toilet – Baby changing table purchased and installed in OSC toilet.

Community Room – A local artist is displaying their artwork for sale in the Community Room, 50% of the proceeds will go to the Community Library fund.

OSC Shed – A contractor coming to assess the shed, as it is no longer weatherproof.

Cleaning Store – A new store cupboard has been purchased to move the cleaning supplies from the unsuitable and cellar reducing fire hazard. Cupboard has been built, awaiting area to be levelled. Once in situ, COSHH assessment can be finalised.

Pellet Boiler – The annual service was carried out which identified several faults which need immediate attention. A report has been submitted to council along with the quote for the maintenance to be carried out. One of the identified issues was the flu was completely blocked, and a sweep was called to clean the chimney as this posed a significant fire risk.

Jubilee Garden – Council will discuss proposals and options on the revival of the garden at the September meeting.

Outside Bookcases – The bookcases attached to the end of OSC building are no longer weatherproof have been emptied and are now redundant. There is an item on the September agenda for council to consider their removal.

Flagpole – A replacement flagpole has been installed and the Porlock flag is once again flying high.

#### **OSC Car Park**

Waste Bins at the OSC – The new large lockable contract waste bin is in situ, and the fortnightly collections have started.

Access – Pedestrian access to the OSC carpark has been reinstated which allows the carpark to be secured but accessible when the building is not in use.

#### **Business Risks**

Intruder Alarm System – The alarm zoning activity has now been completed.

Fire Alarm Monitoring – During refurbishment works it was identified the OSC building has no monitoring system for the fire alarm. This poses a significant risk as the alarms could sound when the building is unoccupied with no alert to such an event. Council's security contractor has been asked to fit a digital communicator to the fire alarm system and set up monitoring as a matter of priority at a cost of £175.00 for installation and £175.00 per year for monitoring.

Emergency Lighting - Survey has been carried out, the report is included as part for the papers for this month's meeting. A quote to carry out the works has been requested.

Electrical Inspection – A full report has been received for council's records.

Fire Prevention Equipment – The annual service has been carried out and additional equipment has been installed where advised.

Fire Risk Assessment – Once the emergency lighting works have been agreed and completed a reassessment will be arranged.

Waste – General waste service from BetterWaste has commenced. Awaiting PHS to deliver the sanitary waste bins on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

Staff Toilet – Loose basin has been fixed by PPC's plumber and door lock has been mended by the caretaker.

Water bottle refill unit – Wessex Water have confirmed in writing that they have no objection to the installation. They offered to come and inspect the installation, which we have taken them up on and asked that they assess the other locations for refill units at the same time.

Water heater – The water heater for the kitchen has been installed.

Internal Wall damage – Damp damage has been identified in the Parish office in the far corner. Builder has been to assess, and it requires a membrane fitting and re-pointing externally - waiting quote

Risk Assessments – Library, Doverhay Toilets, Hawkcombe Cemetery & PPC Office Risk Assessments complete. Copies of the reports will be stored on the new council website in the meantime copies are available on request from the office.

COSHH – Management Checklist and Risk Assessments complete for Library cleaning cupboard and Doverhay Toilets. Cleaner cupboard checklist and risk assessment to be completed once cleaning supplies are relocated from the cellar. Once complete then COSHH signs to be put up and the COSHH folder kept at the locations.

Emergency plan – No further progress due to current work commitments. Next meeting date to be set. Current working timeline to be reviewed with PERT: Q2 to gather and consider information, prepare and first draft documents, Q3 produce draft final proposal, circulate, seek feedback and any required approvals, Q4 Launch.

Somerset Rivers Authority Grant Fund – Somerset Prepared have confirmed the grant application PPC submitted to them for flood equipment has been successful.

OSC Bookstall – there was a recorded incident (copy of the report has been made available to Cllrs) where books fell onto a customer's feet due to the inadequate temporary shelving. Proper additional shelving has now been purchased and put in situ. The quantity of books has also been reduced and will be monitored to prevent further incident.

## **Village Hall**

Car Parking - A review of current arrangements will take place by the PME estate early July when it will be decided how it wishes to proceed. (No further update)

Flooding – The section of road in front of the Village Hall is not adopted as public highway so responsibility for managing the surface water falls to Porlock Manor Estate. Contact made with Savills to discuss options as the road height is now above the steps to the village Hall entrance and heavy rain will create further issues.

Replacement Trees - Following the request from Exmoor National Park council are required to replace the trees that were damaged due to Storm Daragh as they sit within the conservation area and were covered by a Tree Protection Order. There is an item on the agenda for council to consider:

## **Idverde**

Street cleaner – Recruitment remains ongoing, a new advert has been put up in local shops, the PPC website and Facebook

Annual Contract renewal – there is an item on the agenda for council to consider the renewal of services provided by idverde.

## **Street Furniture, Displays & Equipment**

Floral Displays – Both contractors have agreed to the new extended schedule.

Notice boards at OSC – A site survey has been carried out by Active Signs, feedback on current proposals has been given to enable finalising a proposal to present to Council, costs have been budgeted as part of the OSC project works.

Noticeboard at Central Garage – Following a review by the Porlock Community Maintenance Team it has been determined that these boards are a) beyond economical repair and b) access to see what information is on them is now restricted by the cars on the forecourt making it nearly impossible to access. The PCMT are currently looking into alternative notice board system for the church railings where current users could use these new boards. An item to consider what happens to these boards is on this month's agenda.

Noticeboard outside hardware store – Like for like replacement to be sought. (No further update)

Benches – General – Trial bench has been refurbished, the proposed method of sanding and oiling took an excessive amount of the caretakers' hours and was deemed not cost effective. A review of method for other benches needs to be discussed with the caretaker and agreed with council.

River Monitors – Porlock Parish Council has been approached to have flood river monitors fitted. Alistair Campbell has been put in touch with the team leading the work to get further information and arrange installation. (No update)

Finger Post at Villes Lane – The loose finger post has been reported to ENPA and they are looking to wall mount the post to prevent it coming loose again. (No update)

Finger Post by Methodist Church – Reported to the ENPA to advise that the sign needs amending now that the Information Centre (or as listed the Visitor Centre) has moved.

## **Elections**

Future dates to be planned. Somerset Elections to advise when their next election will take place. (No update)

## **Old School Centre Community Hub**

Official Launch: to be held on Thursday 16th October 10.00 to noon. Several outside agencies will attend, as well as Library Service personnel

### Community Library:

Summer Reading Challenge: finished on 6th Sept. 73 children signed up, with 32 completing the challenge as at the time of writing

Children's Events: West Somerset Wildways Bug Hunt incorporated making a barrel pond, kindly provided free of charge by the Ponds Alive project, funded by Somerset Wildlife Trust which is now in the OSC garden. Formal adoption of the Pond by council has been put on this month's agenda. National Trust visited and ran a Nature Scavenger Hunt, Craft morning, locally led and Children's author, B Ware, ran a children's activity morning

Autumn Talks: there are two series of talks arranged for the autumn – a set of four author talks and three entitled "Planet Under Pressure – Would Living Naturally Help?". Also, Cllr Colson will give a talk about the old Westcott Orchard.

### Lovelace Community Resource Centre:

Has successfully moved into its new space and has produced the first Porlock Vale Newsletter from the new area.

### Community Room:

Since its opening the Community Room has been hosted twenty community events, including the library's craft mornings and bug hunts, The number of people participating in these events has totalled 122. Other community groups using the space to date include, Christmas Trees & Lights working group, Ada Lovelace Committee.

Bookings are now being taken through the office and there is an item on this month's agenda for council to consider the terms and conditions of use and tariff rates.

**Doverhay Manor Committee** (No update)

**Doverly Manor Museum** (No update)

**Local Community Network** – Duncan McCanlis

At the LCN meeting on Thursday 4th September 2025, the following topics were discussed:

Avon & Somerset Police

Were not present; a report should follow with the minutes.

Community Resilience and Emergency Planning

Nicola Dawson, Somerset Council's Civil Contingencies Manager gave a talk.

Their role is to give support for emergency planning in the community.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 refers.

All councils are encouraged to sign up to Somerset Prepared.

There will be Community Resilience event at Taunton Racecourse on 15th October, 09:15 - 16:00.

They are currently conducting a survey. Closes on 19th September.

Grants

National Grid have grants available. Somerset Prepared also provide funding.

Dams

Concern was expressed over the lack of visible plans should Wimbleball or Clatworthy dam break. ND will get info from S W Water and Wessex Water - to be forwarded to the LCN.

Exmoor

A training session aimed at the issues we are more likely to meet - power outages/blocked roads/snow & ice/phones & landlines down. ND will investigate if she can arrange something.

Visit Exmoor

Emma Thomasson then gave a talk on what VE are doing for the local economy.

She works with Exmoor LCN's Economic Sub-group.

They have c. 300 members who pay between £150 - £300/year. This is now their only regular income; all other monies come from fundraising and grants.

VE focus on their website and social media. Their site gets c. 200,000 hits a year via google.

The most searched is Events. Calendar here: -<https://www.visit-exmoor.co.uk/exmoor-events/events-calendar>

Apparently people can input their events straight onto the relevant page.

Emma encouraged Parish Councils to join VE. Two currently are: Dulverton & Cutcombe.

Exmoor National Park Authority: No representative was present.

Next Exmoor LCN meeting: Thursday 6th November, 7pm, Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross.

**Late Night Shopping Working Group** – Duncan McCanlis

I have met with the one trader actively involved and we have undertaken pre-planning.

The event will revert to its well-known name, 'Late Night Shopping', held on the second Saturday of December: the 13th. A poster has been produced and put into Exmoor Magazine What's On.

It was agreed that we would involve Porlock Weir by way of organising something for the Sunday - Saturday will remain focussed on the High Street.

Entertainers have been booked, others to follow. Santa's Grotto is looking for a new home; there are three possibilities being pursued. The Santa Dash is being organised by Lesley Thornton (Bagatelle). Discussions are ongoing with the Library/Community Room.

St Dubricius are coordinating with us - Living Nativity on the Friday and Christmas Tree Festival launch on Saturday.

We will need a few volunteers on the night - any offers please let me know.

**Events and Festival Working Group – Sue McCanlis**

Apple Day is being held at the Old School Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

**The Old School Centre Community Garden Working Group – Don Heath**

There is an item on the agenda for the September meeting to consider next steps for the revival of the Jubilee Garden. Work remains underway to develop proposals for the Orchard and potential incorporation of a pond. Proposals will be put to council at a future meeting.

**Christmas Lights & Trees Working Group – Sue McCanlis**

A workshop was held in August for making of the bows that will adorn the trees, and a workshop was held in September for refurbish all of the wooden tress ready for installation. There is an item on the agenda for the September meeting to consider the date for the Light Up Porlock to be 10<sup>th</sup> December.