

Porlock Parish Council – Portfolio Report – June 2025

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

The Meadows

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.

Neglected shrub – there is a neglected shrub and brambles blocking the junction exit view at the meadows. It has been reported that rats are living in there. The grounds contractor will take a look and advise best course of action cut back remove and turf or remove and replace with tree and bulbs.

Road signs

Porlock hill – A request to clean the signs on Porlock hill was closed by Somerset council and marked complete. This has now been reopened.

Website & IT infrastructure

Website Management - Next steps will be to plan what the build of the new improved website (Visual and Functionality) and how to make the move as seamless as possible for all.

Porlock Parish Council Logo (No further 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 (No further update)

Toilet Reinstatement – Electrical issues remain unresolved, The original schematics are sourced to see if this provides and addition input to getting the electrical problems that supply power to the services resolved. Racking has been purchased and is in place for storing cleaning materials, a COSH assessment and notice will be put in place.

Emergency Call Alarms – These should be installed during the refurbishment works wc 23 June.

St Dubricius Churchyard

Unsafe Memorial Works – Work has been put on hold by request of the church until approval to proceed has been granted.

Additional Works – Advice and quotes are being obtained and will be presented to Council for consideration once received. Work should be completed by the autumn 2025.

- 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)

Hawkcombe Cemetery

Cemetery Site Assessment – Work is underway to progress the actions following the meeting of the council in March. An update will be provided to Council in July. Temporary signage is being put in place on the steps that have been taken out of use.

Unsafe Memorials – Following the meeting an updated quote has been received and a reduction of Circa £18k has been obtained. Council will be asked to consider this in July along with other works.

Memorial Benches

Kingdon – Invoice for installation has been received and payment from the Kingdon family has been requested. A payment for the same amount of money has been received but not by Kingdon family - remains under investigation.

Other Benches – Following the recommendations to council in March any decaying benches beyond repair will be removed. Works to be carried out.

Hawkcombe Playground

Signage - A resident has reported that the 'no dogs allowed' sign has been taken, this has resulted in the area being used as a toilet for dogs. As a popular picnic spot this is causing great upset. A new sign will be sought and installed (subject to costs)

Fence & Gate – After inspection work was approved to fix the several fence posts and the gate to make secure and prevent further damage or cost £180.00. Works to be carried out.

Grounds Maintenance

Coach Road Gate – The gate has been temporarily fix (not by Council). Once the adjoining fence has been repair (not council's responsibility) then the gate will be replaced..

Tree Survey – Currently sourcing a new contractor to provide a quote to carry out council's tree survey.

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

Porlock Marsh War Memorial (no update)

Old School Centre (Building)

Business Risks

Alarm System – All works required are now booked to be completed end of June.

Fire Risk Assessment – All works required are now booked to be completed end of June. Once complete a reassessment will be arranged with the Fire Officer.

Electrical Inspection – All works required are now booked to be completed end of June.

Waste – Sanitary and General waste contracts are on the agenda for consideration by Council. Green waste will be included in the Maintenance Contract.

Flagpole – A quotes is on the agenda for consideration by council for consideration.

Outside lights, fairy Lights & Socket fault – All works required are now booked to be completed end of June.

Staff Toilet – Waiting date for lock change to be made. Task deferred as issue seems to have temporarily resolved.

Water bottle refill unit – this has now been installed next to the seat by the public toilet. Request to Wessex water for approval is outstanding, this is being followed up.

Overhead Heaters – Two overhead heaters have been removed to allow future works to be carried out in the community room

Car Park at the Village Hall

A positive meeting was had with Savills who have requested information on use and current revenue for the car park as well as information about the types of events and usage at the village hall (a request for information has been sent to the chair of the village hall) . A review of current arrangements will take place by the PME estate early July when it will be decided how it wishes to proceed.

Idverde bins

Reinstating of three bins – Completed and now on the collection schedule.

Street Furniture, displays & equipment

Waste Bins as the OSC – These are repeatedly being filled to capacity overnight which is causing a waste capacity issue for the council's bins.

Floral Displays – An agenda item is on the June agenda for council to consider .

Notice boards at OSC – A site survey has been carried out by Active Signs on the 9th April. Still waiting feedback and quotes to present to Council as part of the OSC project works.

Noticeboard at Central Garage – Following a review by the Porlock Vale 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. It has been suggested that the Council talks with current users to see what alternatives there are and to remove these boards. An update will be provided in July.

Noticeboard outside hardware store - replacement to be sought.

St Dubricius Notice Board - Refurbishment completed

Benches – General – The caretaker's belt sander has been repaired by the repair café for a donation reimbursed by council.

Bench at the Meadows – Somerset Council's Road Records have responded favourably, we have now supplied them with bench specifications for their approval. Once permission is granted Council will then be required to approved spend for purchase, installation and up keep.

Defibrillators – (No update)

Emergency plan – Next meeting date to be set. Current working timeline Q2 to gather and concise information prepare and first draft documents, Q3 produce draft final proposal, circulate, seek feedback and any required approvals, Q4 Launch.

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.

Somerset Rivers Authority Grant Fund – Clerk is working with Somerset Prepared on an application for funding through their own grant scheme.

Pollards Court No Turning Bay – Both signs have now been put in place.

Central Car Park Overnight Sleeping Camping – Two additional signs have been requested that will be erected on the entrance of the car park. The parking orders may well have no over night camping however there is no parking contravention that allows the enforcement officers to issue a penalty charge, t's more of an environmental / anti-social issue, plus it is nearly impossible to prove that an individual is sleeping in a vehicle. Therefore extra patrols are not proposed.

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)

Elections

The current casual vacancy window closes on the 27th June, so far one application has been received.

Porlock Community Library – written by Mary Perkins

Author Talk held on 15th May. Only three people attended.

Nursery - the Oak Nursery is visited every week during term time and contact established with the new Little Fishes Nursery group who meet every Tuesday in the Methodist Hall.

Half Term Crafts two events held and well supported - Make a Robotic Hand and Space in a Shoebox!

Groups and Clubs Library Poets, Plato Group, Cribbage and Scrabble Clubs, Family History are all well supported monthly/weekly

Summer Reading Challenge begins on 5th July. A visit to the school to promote this annual event is booked for 27th June and craft mornings centred around this year's theme - Story Garden - are being planned.

OSC Building Work the library will be closed from 23rd June to 3rd July (incl) for the internal building work to be completed. Books due to be returned during this period will have their return date extended to allow for this, ensuring borrowers do not incur fines. The library email account will be monitored during this time too.

Fixy Drop Off Point the library service and Fixy are currently in negotiations re libraries being drop off points for old tech etc. A funding bid is being put together to buy fire resistant boxes and how to deal with GDPR. If successful, then libraries could become tech drop off points.

Doverhay Manor – The next meeting of DMC was postponed to 25th June..

Porlock Village Hall – No Update

Local Community Network – PPC Rep Report – June 2025 – By Duncan McCanlis

At the LCN AGM on Thursday 5th June 2025, the following topics were discussed:

Elections for the Chair and Vice-Chair - The incumbents were re-elected: Steven Pugsley & Mike Ellicott respectively.

Avon & Somerset Police - They reported a few thefts of trailers and sheep. Some PCSO's have left the force, with little sign of replacements. Linda will continue to be Porlock's PCSO.

West Somerset Citizens Advice - Their Chief Officer, Ian Atkinson, gave a presentation of their work. They are not funded by national Citizens Advice; West Somerset pay CA for use of their data handling systems. They are open for phone calls/email response 08:00-18:00 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday. The office is open for in person meetings from 10:00-13:30 on those days. WSCA are keen to expand their service west into Exmoor. A number of representatives offered to help. The principles behind their work are to avoid escalation of clients' problems and to empower people.

Devolution from Somerset Council - SC has devolved many services to the larger Town Councils and will shortly be engaging with the parishes. The Scrutiny Committee met on the 28th May and issued a 16 page report. The Chair is planning to attend a Teams meeting with Sarah Skirton (author of the report) to discuss developments and the possible role of Exmoor LCN in the devolution programme.

Car Parking Charges - SC are still working on this and had planned to implement changes this October but have advised they won't meet this date. Once the Executive and the Scrutiny Committee have considered the issues, there will be public consultation. And they promise engagement with Town & Parish Councils. SC continue to aim to harmonise charges across their car parks. They have confirmed that overnight charges will not be applied. It is likely that where on-street parking is installed, the first half hour will be free.

Exmoor National Park Authority - No representative was present.

LCN Working Groups

HIGHWAYS – Kali Martin was present, even though he had been advised that he was not expected to attend evening meetings now. As usual he was on top of his responsibilities and answered many questions. Kevin Bridgwater has left the department, and others. Restructuring is continuing and a temporary Head of Highways is in place. Kali's department is now part of a larger "Area West" with Sedgemoor. Surface dressing of many roads is about to commence. This work will now have two phases: the initial dressing then, two weeks later, 'KielyLock' an additional surface dressing which improves water resistance and longevity of the surface. During this update, there was a wide ranging discussion on the problems of overnight camping in camper vans.

HOUSING – Colin McDonald has had his contract extended a further three years.

ECONOMIC – This group continues to meet periodically.

Boundary Changes - The Boundary Commission has issued its first draft report (the Chair reported that this was largely in line with local wishes) and a second consultation period now runs until 11th August. The final report is due on 2nd December; then to Parliament for OK and then in place for elections in 2027.

Exmoor LCN Priorities and areas of focus - No changes were made – we await developments with SC devolution.

Next Exmoor LCN meeting - Thursday 4th September – earlier start at 6.30 for Highways meeting/Winter operations.

Late Night Shopping Working Group – Written by Duncan McCanlis

A WhatsApp message was sent to all traders on 21st May inviting them to be engaged with LNS this year. Two responses were received, one of which was to organise an element of the event, rather than be involved in the general planning. This offer has been accepted. Meanwhile a meeting with the other trader shortly to draft a plan for sharing with the others.

Events and Festival Working Group - No report

The Old School Centre Community Garden Working Group – On the agenda for the June meeting.

Christmas Lights & Trees Working Group – No update