

RIVER ERME COUNCILS MEETING: SEPTEMBER, 14TH2023

Present: Barbara Price (BP), Modbury, John Dunlop (JD) Ermington, Jon May (JM) Ugborough, Tessa Lannin (TL), Ivybridge, Harry Baumer (HB) Holbeton, Ann Turner(AT) Modbury, Merv Freeman (MF), Kingston. Emma Magee (EM) Environment Agency.

Observing: Tony Price (TP) Modbury

Apologies: Helen Nathanson, (HN) John Sherrill, (JS) John Mildmay White (JMW)

1. Minutes from previous meeting agreed. Actions arising to be discussed under further agenda items.

2. Reports from Councils

○ Ugborough

JM commented on the amount of correspondence parish clerks are getting on water related issues. Need to emphasise our role as coordinators and use us a liaison point.

Action: Ask our respective parish clerks to refer requests for attendance at meetings or contribution to the work of external groups to us to deal with individually or as a group."

○ Holbeton

Agreement has been reached regarding separate surface water drainage for 14 new homes in the village. The developers are paying .Councillors continue to meet with community engagement representatives from SWW.

All other Councils, matters dealt with in other agenda items.

3. Expenditure

Issue of joint expenditure for group and how this should be managed equitably.

Agreed priority was for administrative time, preferably from a parish clerk

Some councils already have delegated powers to spend on this whereas arrangements need to be clarified for Ivybridge and Kingston.

Actions: Circulate group with estimated costs **AT**

Amend Terms of Reference section on funding.**AT**

Each council to consider a contribution of £200 for the first year to cover anticipated administrative costs, **ALL**

4. The group welcomed Emma Magee from the Environment Agency. Discussion on a number of issues

- **The proposed sewer replacement work in Modbury** and concerns that replacement piping would be a combined pipe rather than two separate pipes for clean and foul water. Separate pipes are now considered best practice in new developments. SWW have said that separate pipes in this location would present major engineering challenges due to the number of other utilities under the ground.

EM commented that there was often a trade-off between what was logistically possible and cost but was unable to comment further as this was an operational matter for SWW.

Concern from the group about the difficulty of obtaining an independent opinion on SWW works.

- **Ermington and Modbury Treatment works** and timescale for treatment with UV disinfectant as recommended in the SWW report of 2022 (as circulated and discussed in previous meeting).

The next round of investment decisions (WINEP)) will be from 2024 onwards. Mechanism for influencing priorities was discussed. EM said that a key process for this was to engage with SWW at stakeholder events. Also important to work with other groups and organisations to highlight the issues. She acknowledged that the Erme was noted as having problems. If there was evidence of non-compliance with standards highlighted during testing, the EA would take action.

Actions:

- Request correspondence between EA and SWW regarding the 2022 report. **EM, SWW** Community engagement staff or failing that FOI request. **HB**
- Circulate to other local groups such as WATER and organisations. **AT**
- Arrange meeting with SWW Community Engagement staff. EM to send contact details. **EM**

- **Review of permit arrangements for discharges from treatment works.**

The group questioned the process for allocation of discharge permits given the high number of discharges from treatment works. OFWAT and the EA are the regulators.

EM said that some permits had been in place for a number of years and there was variation in the stipulations for discharge.

The group questioned the criteria and timescales for permit reviews and accessibility of this information as well as content.

This is particularly a concern in Ivybridge where large amounts of new building has taken place over recent years.

There was discussion about SWW's insistence that they could only measure discharge duration and not volume. EM requested written evidence on SWW's statement if available.

Actions:

- HB to forward slides from SWW presentation at Holbeton (Nov 2022) **HB**
- Write to SWW requesting information on issue of measurable discharge sizes if not otherwise available. **HB**
- Request copies of all permits relating to the Erme. **EM, SWW** Community engagement staff or failing that FOI request. **HB**
- Write to our MP expressing concern and also send copy of our Terms of Reference for his information. **HB**

- **Invasive species on SWW land**

Himalayan balsam, an invasive species has been spotted on SWW land at Ugborough.

Action: JM to pass details to EM for investigation. **JM**

5. Proposed changes to legislation for developers on nutrient neutrality.

AT circulated an item from Modbury Parish Councils discussion on this. The matter was raised at a recent meeting between Modbury Council and representatives of SHDC. Cllr Mark Long said that he

did not believe there was any immediate local threat, he acknowledged the importance of taking a position on this for the future. SHDC would prepare a statement on this.

Since then, the legislation has been defeated in the House of Lords. However, the group considered it important to maintain opposition in the event that the government should attempt to reintroduce legislation.

Action:

- Write to Cllr Long and other interested Councillors urging them to maintain a stance on this. **AT**
- Contact Sustainable South Hams (Su SH) and WATER to coordinate position. **AT**

6. WATER John Mildmay White having sent his apologies for being unable to attend, an update from WATER was circulated. JMW to be invited to next meeting.

7. Coastguards Beach

- Information given about the campaign for clean bathing water and a request for response to the consultation on this issue.
- Form to be circulated to all councils with a request to complete the questionnaire **AT, ALL**
- Write to our MP requesting his support and also send a copy of our Terms of Reference for his information. **HB**

8. Dartmoor Review

Request for participation in this review. Members of the group have not yet had a chance to read all the information on what is a controversial topic. **Agreed each council should respond on their own behalf.**

Action

- Link to review and template response to be circulated **AT**
- Provide a draft response for other councils **HB**

9. Forthcoming events: AT has been invited to speak at a Su SH event next week designed to encourage councils in other catchments to form clusters.

Date and Time of next meeting: Thursday, Nov 2nd at 7.30pm. Venue QE11 Pavilion, Modbury (TBC)