



MODBURY PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT TO LOUISE WAINWRIGHT, COUNTY COUNCILLOR

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 1 July 2025 Modbury Parish Council (MPC) was invited by our local County Councillor, Louise Wainwright, to submit a report on all the issues which we wished to raise with her concerning Devon County Council (DCC) services. This was discussed at Maintenance Committee on 22 July 2025 and a report summarising our response was approved by Council on 6 August 2025 and sent to Councillor Wainwright. A meeting between members of the Maintenance Committee and DCC to discuss the report has been scheduled for 23 October 2025.
- 1.2 Since the original report was approved, however, Modbury experienced significant town centre flooding in the early hours of Friday 29 August 2025. It was caused by a combination of unusually heavy rain and blocked highways drains. It was therefore felt necessary to further revise our views and this v4 of the report contains some important changes to our response.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 MPC, as a lowest tier authority, has little statutory power and relies on good relationships with the principal authorities to address concerns expressed to us by our parishioners. In the case of DCC (rather than South Hams District Council) this primarily relates to highways, road safety and public rights of way services.
- 2.2 MPC has long been an active partner of DCC. We maintain a large number of highways verges around the town, for which we receive a very modest grant, and have entered into two formal agreements with DCC in respect of highways maintenance and public rights of way. These are as follows:
- A Road Warden Agreement dated 24 May 2017, and;
 - A Parish Paths Partnership (P3) Agreement dated 31 March 1995.
- 2.3 As a result of these agreements, we share responsibility with DCC for approximately 37.6 km of non-A roads and around 15.5 km of public footpaths/bridleways.
- 2.4 Responsibility for providing our support rests with MPC's Chair of Maintenance and the Maintenance Committee, a total of three Councillors. They are assisted by the Parish Clerk, a part-time appointment, and our handyperson contractor who works for a number of parishes around this part of the South Hams.

3.0 Maintenance tasks

3.1 The range of tasks which we are requested to undertake includes the following:

3.2.1 For the Road Warden Agreement:

- To nominate a named Road Warden and ensure that at least one person in the Council's team is trained in the application of Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs manual;
- To undertake weed clearance from footpaths and footways;
- To clean all non-regulatory signage such as directional signs, settlement and street name plates and information signs;
- Cleaning around gullies and small drainage schemes such as buddle-hole cleaning;
- Pothole repairs (excluding those which meet the DCC criteria for their attention).

3.2.2 For the P3 Agreement:

- An annual survey of the local network to identify conditions;
- To draw up programmes of work to maintain/improve the network;
- To maintain the network by controlling under/overgrowth and repairing infrastructure;
- To cover 75% of the cost of replacing stiles and gates, and;
- Liaising with local landowners to ensure they undertake their responsibilities to provide public access.

3.3 In exchange for partnering with DCC we receive around £600 per annum for the Road Warden work and a similar sum for the P3 agreement. We also have access to some free training for volunteers (although last time we requested reimbursement for strimmer training this was rejected) and free pothole repair compound.

3.4 In addition to these two agreements we are also expected to assist DCC with flood and snow management and we have nominated Flood and Snow Wardens from the Maintenance Committee to assist the public when called upon. The Flood Warden was mobilized on three occasions last winter – for Storms Bert, Conall and Darragh and would also have been mobilized last month had he been contactable. Instead, other Councillors stood in to coordinate the community response. The Snow Warden, who is also the Road Warden, undertook the checking of the contents of grit boxes throughout the parish and arranged for the distribution of road salt to other locations vulnerable to ice during the winter.

3.5 A review of our Emergency Plan response, including the above tasks is currently under way and will pay particular attention to the lessons learnt in last month's flooding.

3.6 Despite attempting to recruit non-councillor volunteers to help fulfil these duties, more work is having to be done by our maintenance contractor and our costs generally far exceed the income received.

4.0 Resources and communications

4.1 The greatest challenge faced by the Council is our inability to recruit volunteers to undertake tasks. This is becoming more and more difficult because of the increasing

scope of work required and a reticence among the public to undertake unpaid work often with inadequate resources and recognition. An alternative to using volunteers is, of course, the use of contractors but the Council's financial resources are a constraint on their widespread use.

- 4.2 Our job is made more difficult because of the poor communications between the parish and county. There is little attempt by the County's officers to sustain personal relationships and email requests often go unacknowledged or, if they are responded to, it will be to deny help without sufficient explanation for the response.
- 4.3 The situation with the Public Rights of Way (PROW) team is particularly difficult and we have still not received our grant for this financial year. Nor have not been advised who our local footpath warden is, despite requests for both.
- 4.4 Relationships with the Highways team are better and there is regular contact between the Parish Clerk and our local Neighbourhood Highways Officer.

5.0 Highways conditions

- 5.1 Our main concern in relation to Highways is that of drainage and flooding. We are concerned that gully and buddlehole maintenance is not always being undertaken in accordance with agreed schedules. This, coupled with inadequate street sweeping by the District Council and lack of road ploughing, is making it more likely that highways drains will block causing flooding. For instance, these were the prime causes of the August 2025 flooding of the Modbury town centre which caused substantial damage to local businesses and homes.
- 5.2 This issue will only become more important with climate change. It is vital that the two principal authorities coordinate their services to ensure that gullies and drains remain free flowing and the Parish Council is willing to support them in helping secure access in streets used for parking.
- 5.3 Another major concern is that of carriageway condition. Although we are grateful for the resurfacing work undertaken on the A379 earlier this year on the Plymouth side of the town, we continue to lobby DCC unsuccessfully in respect of conditions in the Kingsbridge direction where there are dangerous potholes after Harraton Cross (admittedly outside the parish boundaries).
- 5.4 Unfortunately, conditions away from the A379 remain poor and are getting worse. Attached at Appendix A is a map showing the serious condition of some of our key cross-country routes – especially the Bastards Park Corner to Ayleston Cross road which is part of the National Cycle Network (see Appendix B). This is now barely better than a farm track and is dangerous for cyclists as a result. Moreover, there are plenty of other stretches (shown red on the map) that are considered to be very poor and where our potholing efforts are no longer able to stem the deterioration.
- 5.5 The extreme nature of the pothole problem can be gauged from the pothole survey map which dates from early last calendar year and is attached at Appendix C. Our potholing team is doing its best to tackle the problem as confirmed by the map at Appendix D

which records all the repairs undertaken during the last 24 months but is rapidly falling behind the workload.

- 5.6 Many of these routes are also suffering from encroachment by verges and build up of detritus in the centre of the carriageway. This causes problems with flooding because of the blocking of buddle holes and gullies and grounding of low-slung vehicles. A map showing the worst areas on the network for this problem is attached at Appendix E. It had become so bad that last year we proposed undertaking road ploughing ourselves to remove the problem and funding 75% of the cost from our small parish precept. Unfortunately, DCC refused to fund the other 25% so we have not progressed this any further.
- 5.7 Many of the smaller roads around last year's South West Water (SWW) road diversion are showing the greatest deterioration. We feel that had not MPC taken such a direct involvement in the management of the diversion matters would have been substantially worse and for this we must offer criticism of both DCC and SWW who both seemed to blame the other when things went wrong, as they often did. We still await the making good of the Church Lane damage although, in fairness, it may be best to wait for the completion of the potentially even more disruptive SWW works planned for the next 18 months.
- 5.8 In relation to the forthcoming SWW works, we would welcome assurances that a coordinated approach to road closures and diversions is taken by DCC and SWW.
- 5.9 Since the original road closures and diversions we have also taken steps to attempt to rebuild commercial confidence around the town centre through the Marvellous Modbury Makeover initiative. We have targeted the various items of street furniture around the town and have proposed rebedding paving slabs (in progress), weeding pavements around the town centre (undertaken on Marigolds Weekend) and repainting pavement railings (carried out last year), bollards and lamp standards. Unfortunately, the latter requires the cooperation of DCC street lighting team and, despite promises to meet with us to discuss, this has never actually taken place. There is also one non-standard lighting column in Broad St which was temporarily renewed about three years ago when the original was demolished by a passing car. Again, we have been promised action but this has never happened despite this being a breach of the Modbury Conservation Area planning standards (we continue to hold the original lamp housing in store).

6.0 Road safety

- 6.1 MPC has lobbied hard for years for a comprehensive approach to road safety around Modbury town. Appendix F identifies the location of the worst road safety black-spots.
- 6.2 Our primary concern has always been the safety of pedestrians and especially children accessing our local primary school. The roadway outside the school is both narrow and without a footway. It is also at the end of a straight road (Barracks Road) which means that traffic is often travelling too fast. It is only a question of time before there is a serious accident, especially since new housing developments are feeding greater traffic flows northwards/southwards towards and from the A3121 via Sheephams. We have requested a 20 mph restriction along the whole of Barracks Rd and Dark Lane but have simply

been added to what we have been told is a very long waiting list. However, outside the school we believe additional traffic calming measures should be considered to provide more protection for pedestrians.

- 6.3 Our next priority is the pedestrian link via Chatwell Lane to the QE2 Recreation Ground. Although the stretches of roadway at the northern end of Barracks Rd and the western end of Dark Lane don't have pavements, the link to the pedestrian entrance to the Recreation Ground also has no street lighting. Again a 20 mph limit has been requested here along with street lighting – if necessary funded by ourselves. Unfortunately, despite many attempts to discuss with the Street Lighting team, we have had no response to our pleas.
- 6.4 Our third priority is the location of the pedestrian crossing in Church St on the main A379. We note that on the evening of 29 July 2025 the zebra crossing markings were all refreshed for which we are extremely relieved. However, there have been so many near misses on the crossing (personally witnessed by virtually all councillors), and one recent fatality at the cross-roads, that again we ask DCC to give serious thought to a safer solution. We would, for instance, draw the attention of DCC officers to ROSPA guidance which refers to the risks of divided attention by drivers who spend much of the time trying to negotiate an informal one-way system down the hill.
- 6.5 Our final priority concerns the widespread illegal parking at the junction of Broad St and New Road, outside the Coop. We have long been monitoring this area with video surveillance (in accordance with privacy legislation) and have furnished the authorities (DCC and Police) with the evidence to be told it is not admissible in court and so useless to deal with the problem. There is therefore currently no substitute for traffic warden patrols but these are so infrequent to also be ineffective.
- 6.6 Most of these schemes, along with others, were the subject of a report from a Highways Consultancy – Callidus Transport and Engineering Ltd – in December 2023. It was funded solely by ourselves to help us with our lobbying for improvements and was the subject of a site investigation by your senior Highways officers who denied that there was any need for significant action on the basis that insufficient people had been subjected to RTAs. Indeed they spent much of the time criticising the competence of the consultants which we found unprofessional and unconvincing.

7.0 Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 7.1 A map of the PROW routes throughout the parish is attached at Appendix G.
- 7.2 For many years MPC enjoyed excellent relationships with DCC PROW team and Modbury was considered one of the stars of the Devon P3 network. This was in no small measure due to the efforts of two or three individuals within the town led by Brian Weeks who was the Council's P3 Coordinator for well over 20 years.
- 7.3 Unfortunately, Mr Weeks retired from the role in the autumn of 2023 and since then we have struggled to provide the same level of support to the DCC PROW team. We did recruit a replacement in early 2024 but he also resigned in early 2025 since when we have had no volunteers to undertake the work envisaged under the agreement.

- 7.4 Instead, the load has fallen to the Chair of Maintenance and one other councillor who, between them have undertaken the annual condition survey and try to keep an eye on the network infrastructure, making essential repairs to finger posts, stiles and gates via the Council's handyman contractor.
- 7.5 We have now received a formal complaint that Footpath 3 (East) is overgrown and impassable. This is a route favoured by campers at Broad Park Caravan Club site and may, according to the warden, have an impact on the economic viability of the site. We made it clear in this year's survey that we had no-one to maintain this path and have referred the matter to the DCC portal without response. We are also aware of other sections of FP3 and Runaway Lane becoming impassable but again we have no-one to maintain these routes and need to discuss DCC's proposals for the future viability of the network. However, we do need a response from the PROW team to open up communications which we are unfortunately not getting.

8.0 Conclusions and priorities

- 8.1 This report summarises the concerns which MPC has over its relationships with DCC. There seems to be little regard for the role being played by unpaid Councillors and the Council's volunteers. For instance, we have no doubt that our efforts are saving DCC many thousands of pounds in expenditure with only marginal impact on Council Tax payers in the parish but there is no acknowledgement of this.
- 8.2 Although we do not need the thanks of DCC in this regard we would welcome having a more interactive relationship and greater recognition of some of the concerns which our community have told us we must pursue on their behalf.
- 8.3 For the avoidance of doubt we consider our priorities to be as follows:
- 8.3.1 Improving highways drainage and street cleaning to minimise flooding;
- 8.3.2 Addressing concerns over road safety:
- a. Outside the school;
 - b. To and from the QE2 Playing Fields;
 - c. Pedestrian Crossing in Church St;
 - d. Illegal parking at the corner of Broad St/New Rd/Galpin St;
- 8.3.3 Improving the street scene in the centre of Modbury;
- 8.3.4 Improving carriageway condition on the road network;
- 8.3.5 Improving coordination of future SWW road closures;
- 8.3.6 Improving PROW maintenance.

Modbury Parish Council 7 October 2025

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