

Blackdown Hills
 Parish Network
Steering Group

MINUTES BHPN STEERING GROUP **Wednesday 14 March 2022 at 14.30 at Culm Pyne**

Attendance:

Heather Stallard	Chair, Hemyock parish rep
Catherine Bass	Co-ordinator
Daniel Lazar	Membury PC
Graham Long	Upottery PC
Ken Pearson	Clerk to Stockland PC

Apologies

Mike Canham	Otterford PC
Bob Nelson	Broadhembury PC
Alex Stevens	Upottery PC
Alison Weekes	Clayhidon PC

		Who	When
1.	Apologies received from BN, AS, AW, MC Meeting noted that RH has not attended many meetings since joining the Stg Gp, nor replied to meeting requests. CB to write from the Steering Group noting these observations and enquiring whether he proposes to retain his membership following the elections in May	CB	
2.	Minutes of last Steering group mtg and AGM Agreed minutes of both meetings as read.		
3.	No matters arising		
4.	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bank Balance £594.38, £325 in cheques to be banked, five renewals for 22/23 to date ● Zoom subscription of £143.88 (incl VAT) has been renewed, to be reconsidered prior to next renewal notice in Dec/Jan. ● Website cost has been of concern, expecting domain name renewal charge (£60 for 2 years) and the annual maintenance charge of £150. Discussed value for money and ease of use, decided to investigate a free Google Sites page instead to reduce overheads. CB to research a suitable template and start to move content over. 	CB	
5.	Update on Broadband progress via CDS and contractors Airband holds the contract for Lots covering the Blackdown Hills. Activity from other providers is increasing while the CDS contracts appear to be moving slowly. Airband community liaison officers in this area have resigned; a list of all Blackdown Hills addresses to be served by Airband ('in contract' properties) has been shared with CB, this to be shared with the relevant parish council clerks for information.		
6.	Somerset Unitary Authority The single Somerset Unitary Authority is progressing toward May 6 elections with full Unitary status to be granted one year hence. Otterford has prepared a 4 point summary for the elected candidate to address.		
7.	Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan developments: MDDC and EDDC both near to closing consultation period on proposed Local plans to 2033. Councils are all advocating more affordable /social housing., but developers are not interested in reducing their returns by raising quotas for lower cost homes and will likely continue with overpriced, overlarge dwellings which are unsuitable for local needs. ● Influencing SW&TD planning decisions: LA planners are in short supply, several LAs are contracting out planning decisions to consultants many of whom are a long way out of area and do not understand local sensitivities. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AW had emailed noting the lack of consideration given to PCs (noting some issues relating to Clayhidon) or AONB comments on planning applications, which, coming from within local communities could be given more weight. The AONB does not seem to spend much time in fighting to uphold its landscape management aims. ● BN responded by email and on behalf of the BHPN reps to the AONB management group citing the many ways that Clayhidon parish is included in AONB work, eg Connecting the Culm and Somerset Nature Conservation projects, FIPL projects (Farming in Protected Landscapes) bringing the gov agriculture transition plan into fruition. Also all parishes are entitled to discuss the AONB management plan. Currently the AONB is developing a workable Climate Action Plan for all parishes to become involved in. All parishes might benefit from a visit from one of the three BHPN AONB reps. ● The meeting discussed the possibility of using QR codes linked to relevant BH websites in parish publications to encourage more engagement of communities 		
8.	<p>Highways/transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accident blackspots are well known to highways authorities, little that the BHPN can influence this. ● Diversion signage and numerous road works are a constant nuisance in the Blackdowns with signage sometimes very inappropriately located, frequently remaining in place for weeks after works are complete, and diversions often inappropriate for the traffic flow/type involved. uk.one.network is providing a means to check on roadworks in local areas in real time. ● Bus services, public transport: Community ring & ride schemes exist in a few areas, however the Blackdowns Community Bus has been sold to the Blackdown Support Group, since it had not been used sufficiently to cover costs. 		
9.	<p>Size and Function of Parish Councils</p> <p>Broadhembury PC has successfully lobbied for 2 more parish councillors, since it was felt there were too few volunteers available to handle the numbers of actions incumbent on parish councils. Parish council constitutions and councillor numbers were fixed in an 1894 act which was not readdressed until the 2012 'Big Society' act designed to change the function and relationship between Parish and Town councils. New councils are appearing in major cities; rural parish councils are little changed, with greater expectations placed on them by local authorities but no funding allocated to achieve desired outcomes.</p>		
10.	<p>Community activities post Covid.</p> <p>DL spoke of the Eco Chardstock initiative, aiming to improve sustainability through community actions, Sustainable Stockland is a similar initiative. Suggested that the BHPN could become the hub of a mentoring system to allow neighbouring parishes to learn from one another about specific initiatives. including repair cafe contacts, reuse/recycle initiatives etc.</p>		
11	<p>Date of next meeting: to be during the week beginning 16 May</p>		