

# Parish Network Steering Group

**MINUTES BHPN STEERING GROUP**
**Wednesday 17 Mar 2021 at 14.30 via Zoom**
**Attendance:**

|                  |                           |                  |                       |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Heather Stallard | Chair, Hemyock parish rep | Ken Pearson      | Clerk to Stockland PC |
| Catherine Bass   | Co-ordinator              | Alex Stevens     | Upottery PC           |
| Graham Long      | Upottery PC               |                  |                       |
| Mike Canham      | Otterford PC              |                  |                       |
| Alison Weekes    | Clayhidon PC              | <b>Apologies</b> |                       |
| Daniel Lazar     | Membury PC                | Roger Habgood    | Cllr Monument, SW&TD  |
| Bob Nelson       | Broadhembury PC           |                  |                       |

1. **Apologies** received from RH

2. **Minutes of Steering group mtg**

a. **Agreed** minutes of 29 Jan 2021.

3. **Matters arising**

a) MP meeting follow up re broadband: June meeting to be requested (subsequently overtaken by Govt announcements re Gigabit capable Broadband and actions taken by stg gp).

b) Carbon Footprint tool: feedback suggests there are anomalies introduced by the variation in populations and their locations, also the national infrastructure that interferes with directly local results eg A303 effect. Discussion re opportunities for introducing hydro schemes for renewable energy. In general schemes that can be operated are small and not suitable for more than a single low wattage output.

c) Remote meeting protocols: views divided between those whose experience is that Zoom is not popular and demanding on the chair who needs to operate the technology as well as run the meeting, whereas others were convinced that Zoom or similar meetings are successful, with good participation, good attendance from the general public. Clear that views vary widely across the BH area, with different experiences often dependent on access to adequate broadband. Concern among the steering group that the forthcoming May 7 reversion to face to face meetings may be too soon and unpopular; Upottery PC has written to MP Neil Parish and Minister Robert Jenrick requesting an extension. No reply so far.

4. **Hiding large agricultural structures**

DL raised this matter, noting that grants are available to enable suitable screening measures for new structures to be shielded from plain sight. Suggested that planning application comments should include tree plantings for reduction of visual impact of silos, tanks, barns. Colour of structural elements is also important. AS commented that all lines of sight should be considered to avoid altering the character of the AONB, reinstate hedgerows/banks where possible, consider views not only from residential and road perspective but also footpaths/bridleways.

GL suggested that this could be incorporated in the BH AONB Planning Guidance. Also need to consider light pollution, there are many agricultural buildings with over bright security lights. Consider working with Lisa Turner on this, AS keen that farmers are sufficiently engaged with the rural agenda to comply with reasonable suggestions without enforcement.

**5. AONB request to be included in future BHPN meetings with MPs**

This is in response to a request from Tim Youngs to be present at future meetings. Steering group was not in favour, suggesting instead that the AONB should invite MPs to one of their own partnership management group meetings as the agendas of the BHPN and AONB are not aligned.

**6. Unitary status for Somerset**

There will be no elections for the County Council in May 2021, whatever unitary status is granted will go ahead in 2023. Options are either for a single unitary to cover all of Somerset (favoured by the County Council) or that 2 unitaries be formed by amalgamation of existing districts into Somerset East and Somerset West (favoured by the Districts). Much discussion, particularly in relation to the cohesion of Somerset parishes within the BHPN. The general view was that Somerset is in financial difficulty on many fronts, and that the Govt is likely to go with the least expensive option when the decision is made later this year. There has been no mention in any discussion as yet regarding the position of town and parish councils after the decision is made. Agreed that this is not an issue for the BHPN to take a particular stance on, although it will be important to be available for the parishes.

**7. Finance:**

- Annual Zoom licence purchased for BHPN, will review before renewal in 2022 depending on the prevailing Covid situation.
- Current balance £574.82, with remaining parish contributions due before June 30.

**8. AGM date, format, topic:**

Deferred to next meeting

**9. AOB**

DL noted that Membury had had a talk from a member of the BH Moor Meadows group about creating meadows, may be of interest to other PCs.

**Date of next meeting tbd**