

Sampford Courtenay Open Parish Meeting 2024

Notes from the Sampford Courtenay Open Parish Meeting held on May 1st 2024

In attendance 29 members of the public including 7 Parish Councilors

Speakers: Cllr James McInnes - **DCC** Cllr Michele Wilson - **SCPC** Harriet Sergent **Dartmoor Line Railway**, Cllr Joe Moesel – **St Andrew's Church**, Roger Thompson, **SC Village Hall**

Chair of the meeting - Cllr Michele Wilson – Chair SCPC

Clerk to the meeting – Malcolm Harris (**SCPC**)

1. Welcome – Cllr Michele Wilson – Chair SCPC

2. 2023 Open Parish Meeting – the notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 17th May 2023 were reviewed. V.M thanked the Parish Council for their work on sheep worrying, and noted that the support for those effected need to continue as an issue for the Parish.

3. Retirement of Cllr Colin Coleman – SCPC

Cllr Wilson informed the meeting that Cllr Coleman had offered his resignation from SCPC at the Annual General Meeting. Cllr Coleman is retiring from Parish Council work, after many years of service as Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Parish Council, offering his knowledge and experience of, amongst other things, Local Planning, that helped the Parish Council support the architectural heritage of the Parish.

In recognition of his long service and with the kind permission of Ex Councilor John Love (craftsman of the presented gift) the 'Gavel and Block' is presented to Cllr Colman on his retirement.

The Council wish him success with the work that he will continue to take forward as part of the Sampford Courtenay Community Interest Company.

The Council are pleased that the first initiative following his retirement will be for the Sampford Courtenay CIC's Community Rail Partnership to take over the maintenance and preservation of the Sampford Courtenay Station through the agreement created by Sampford Courtenay Environmental & Sustainability group with Network Rail. "

4. Speakers:

Harriet Sergent – Dartmoor Line Railway

A number of issues were highlighted:

- The fencing will be fixed and reinstated at the Station.

- The license to undertake improvements, and clean up, need to clarify boundaries, and then it can be issued.

Questions

A.G – Has a survey been undertaken to assess demand for a SC Station.?

Response: Will need to follow up after the meeting.

M.W – If the Station is not to open. What links are network rail putting in place to link to the Okehampton Hub.?

C.M – What are the plans for a transport hub in Okehampton.?

P.C – Opening of SC Station have any costings been undertaken for outbound destinations?

J.Mc – Similar question on the volume of commuters on the London – Paddington line for the whole of the Western routes. Also, a question relating to the extent of area of Harriets responsibilities.

Response: No information available on these questions. Harriet agreed to research, and come back with some information. Confirm that she covered a wide area in the South West of England,

A.G/C.C – questions relating to the development of the Okehampton to Tavistock link. C.C stated that the Tavistock – Okehampton line was phase 3 after phase 2 – Tavistock to Beer Alston. A recent meeting had taken place in Tavistock with over 300 people in attendance. The local Tavy Rail group is currently lobbying M.P's.

Response: No current information on the development of phase 3. Cllr J. McInnes in a later presentation made reference to the high cost of phase 3, and the task of negotiating with land owners.

4. Cllr Michele Wilson – Chair SCPC

Parish Council Summary – Overview of the priorities for 2023/24

Highways

There have been various meetings with the Highways Officer on a number of issues across the Parish. Any incidents on the roads should be reported to M.W to record, and react where necessary.

The 20 Plenty Initiative has been researched and not progressed as in a conservation area it is difficult to gain permission for the signs to be placed on some private properties.

PBR

A Working Group has been set up to coordinate a series of events. In addition, a local history project has been established to bring together information on old properties and their history. Marion Pratt is coordinating the collection of this information, that will leave a legacy for the local community.

The Main event is planned for the 8th June. More volunteers are required to assist with the events on the day. Look out for details in local social media and Roundabout.

V.M – informed the meeting that a time traveler group is to be established, with a launch in October. History of properties, and a recollection of living in the Parish over the years.

Agricultural Issues

R.W – reported that there have been 7 incidents of sheep worrying. The response from the Police had been disappointing. Concerns continue.

M.W – agreed to reconnect with the Police to discuss the ongoing situation, and what can be done to alleviate local concerns.

Future Options for Village Green

Malcolm Harris – Clerk to SCPC

A number of future options were outlined. These included: doing nothing

- Doing nothing and allowing the equipment to deteriorate.
- Set up a budget to maintenance existing equipment.
- Research external funding opportunities to add and improve the provision of equipment, and infrastructure on the site.

Currently, there is limited financial provision for the Village Green, the option to increase expenditure on the Village Green will impact on the precept of the Parish Council. Any additional equipment will require an ongoing maintenance commitment, and this will impact again on the level of precept.

M.P – unable to attend the meeting, but suggested that a phased development of the site, may be the best approach, given the financial situation. This would involve purchasing one or two additional items of equipment on a year-by-year basis.

V.M – what is the availability of funding for new play equipment.

Response: There are funds available, but in a rural area, it will depend on the criteria of the Fund

It was agreed that a future Open Meeting is required to consult Parishioner's on the future options for the Village Green.

Public Footpaths - Village Green

Cllr Mike Carpenter gave an outline of work undertaken on the footpath network in 2022/23. In the proposed development this year, £10,500 is to be spent this financial year on enhancement to the Village Hall and Green. Funds are set aside in EMR. A bid for further funds has been submitted to WDBC.

He outlined the proposed plans for the Water path, and enhancement to the Village Green. To improve disability access across the Waterpath, and access to the Green. Quotes for the work will be take place in the next two weeks.

Question:

P.C – are there plans to improve the state of the cobbled area on the Village Green.

Response: yes, there are plans to remove some and replace with an improved pathway.

Public Toilets – Phase 2

Cllr Mike Carpenter outlined the plans for Phase 2 plan for the public toilets. The plans include provision for improved disability access, and the provision of a wheelchair accessible toilet, and ancillary community space. Initial costings indicate a price of just under £50,000.

This cost would require external funding bids.

It was suggested that an Open Public Meeting on the Village Green, include the toilets, and the proposed development. To ascertain if there is an appetite for the development of the Parish Councils two assets.

Cllr James McInnes – DCC

Cllr James McInnes informed the meeting that a copy of his full report is available on the DCC website <https://www.devon.gov.uk>

Some key information:

- New CEO shaking up the organisation.
- Budget for 2024/25 is £743 million
- Highways – an extra 10 million for highway maintenance.
- New devolution deal with Torbay. Improves access to national government.
- A reminder that bids are open to the Locality budget for local community projects.
- New integrated Care System with Plymouth-Devon, and Torbay.
- Okehampton Hospital Health Hub to continue to be developed, but very unlikely Hospital beds will be available again.

Questions:

P.C – raised concerns over the cleaning of ditches in the Parish.

Response: Some of the 10 million additional funding will be allocated into drainage, and ditches.

C.C – the devolution deal perhaps provides the opportunity to apply for funds to develop the Okehampton to Tavistock line.

Response: There would be challenges in making this happen owing to the high cost of reinstatement of the line.

JW - raised the issue of the poor state of the roads in the Parish.

C.M – Had the Parish Council considered community self-help.?

Response: M.W said that a local Community Scheme had been discussed, there were no volunteers.

Joe Moesel – St Andrew’s Church

It was noted that the St Andrew’s AGM was taking place at the same time as the SC Open Parish Meeting. In the future communication needs to take place between the main providers of community facilities to avoid a clash of dates in the future.

Joe then outlined some key issues for the Church.

- The size of the congregation has continued to grow, with evidence of more involvement from the younger generation.
- Important that the integration of the Church into the wider community continues.
- A programme of events across the year is being developed, to enhance outreach to the community.
- Pastoral Care Team now in place.
- 18th August a special evening song to be held for the PBR initiative
- Recognition of Chris Owen retirement from Church work.

Question:

V.M – could the Church consider the provision of disability access, and toilets.?

Response: suggest there is a need for a feasibility study for the Village to consider this option.

J.M wanted to offer his thanks on behalf of the whole parish for the great work that Julie Carpenter does in updating and administering the website and keeping everyone informed.

Roger Thompson – SC Village Hall

Roger updated on a number of issues.

- New roof, windows, and toilets now in place.
- Events at the Hall are proving popular. Films/music nights are taking place, new screen in place.
- A request for any new ideas for events, as attendance at regular events are declining.
- The feasibility of a commercial dishwasher is being considered.

- Floor surveys are to be arranged to consider works for the future.
- To note – event on 22nd June – Grand Opening of refurbished Hall.

Question:

M.W – could the provision of a commercial heater be considered to replace the need to use the kettle?

Response: This idea would be investigated, and costed.

Other items raised:

M.W – the need for volunteers for the PBR event on the 8th June.

C.C – reminded the meeting that May was no cut on verges, and no mow month

4. Questions

There were no further questions. The meeting concluded at 9.40pm.

List of Attendees taking part

MW Michele Wilson

VM Veronica Matthews

ATG Andrew Townsend Greene

CM Claudia Moesel

JMc James McIlwraith

PC Philip Collins

CC Colin Coleman

MP Marion Pratt

RW Richard Weeks