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East Devon Highways and Traffic order Committee

On 14th February I attended the HATOC meeting at County Hall. DCC Cllr Jess Bailey and Mrs Bev Raw also attended as there was an item about the puffin crossing in Newton Poppleford. Readers may remember the tragic death of Mrs Raw’s father Mr Ken Cooper who was knocked down by a car as he crossed the road at the puffin crossing on 23rd December 2020. Further to the results of the Coroners inquest on 20th December 2021, in which reference was made to the fact the lighting at the

crossing is very poor and there appeared not to be enough time for Mr Cooper to get safely across the road. A recommendation was put forward to the committee. The recommendation read:

It is recommended that the request from the Assistant Coroner that consideration is given to allowing additional time for pedestrians to cross and to improve any existing lighting at the pedestrian crossing is noted, and a full report is presented to the next meeting of this committee.

The item started by Mrs Raw reading out a statement about the injuries her father received from being hit by a car travelling at 25 mph. Cllr Bailey then spoke at length including that there had been 60 injuries to pedestrians reported since 2000 and highlighting the need for a range of road safety improvements in the village. She also pointed out that if one is walking very slowly as you cross the road the sensors on the puffin crossing cannot detect that the crossing is in use and the lights change, indicating to drivers they can drive on. I have timed the crossing many times and it seems to allow 10 seconds for crossing which in my opinion is too short.

Cllr Bailey also read out a statement from Cllr Chris Burhop, Chair of NP Parish Council which covered a number of points, not least that his own son had been knocked down at the crossing in the past but fortunately not too seriously hurt; that the crossing timing is too short, that there are not enough crossings in the village nor safe 'island sanctuary' crossings, and two more zebra crossings should be put in at the Waterleat development and around Otter Reach area.

I made the following points:

After the tragic death of Mr Cooper, and the realization he had not had enough time to cross the road in the time allotted, I imagined that an engineer would be out adjusting the crossing time on the traffic lights without further delay and I mean within a few weeks of the accident at most to see if this helped to rectify the problem. Puffin crossings have been around for a long time and there must be vast evidence that older or less mobile people take longer to cross a road than a fit and healthy person. There must be reams of evidence about average crossing times. It is also a popular school crossing, used frequently by parents with small children, along with push chairs and dogs in tow. We know there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of cars failing to stop at all at these lights or driving around pedestrians. It's a highly visible crossing in terms of witnesses observing these incidents, right outside the village shop, local restaurants and a garage. It sometimes feels that DCC make very heavy work of the simplest of tasks, bound up by 'policy'.

I am aware that the DCC Jess Bailey and the parish council have had some very productive meetings with DCC officers lately to make improvements to road safety and I fully support the addition of two more Zebra crossings in the village opposite a new housing development that is at Reserved matters stage. The village hall is very well used, not least for local elections but also throughout the year as in terms of distance in the village it can be reached on foot relatively easily. This area has no pavements on the north side. Its accessibility is marred by the difficulty in crossing the road. The last time I consulted Cllr Hughes on traffic movements through Newton Poppleford prior to lockdown his response was that there are 16,000 vehicle movements a day through this village.

With regard to the 20 mph speed limit which we have been requesting in Newton Poppleford for some time; I note from Sidmouth cllrs that Sidmouth just recently has installed NEW 20 mph zones in Tyrrell Mead/Manstone Avenue and Alexandria Road. I am curious how this has happened so quickly given we in Newton Poppleford have been told for years that 20 mph limits were against policy until after the now abandoned Newton Abbott pilot, even though it has been pointed out that Sidford has had both a 20 mph zone and a new Zebra crossing and bears far more similarity to Newton Poppleford, being on the exact same A3052, than the town of Newton Abbott. I would like to be directed to the background papers on this work and the consultations that took place and the time frames this covered so that this information can be shared publicly so that Newton Poppleford can achieve the 20 mph zones as quickly as Cllr Hughes own ward of Sidmouth. The safety of pedestrians is also fully supported by the latest changes to the Highway code.

I concluded that the recommendation needed strengthening as *'the committee should consider'* adjusting the timings on the crossing was just not strong enough and that two more recommendations should be made comprising the addition of 2 new zebra crossings outside the Waterleat and possibly by the village hall or Otter Reach and that there should be a 20 mph zone through the village. I was then told that I was not in a position to make a recommendation as I was only an EDDC member of the committee and not a full DCC cllr so Cllr Bailey picked this recommendation up. Cllr Gent seconded this. Cllr Hughes then read out a summary of this including the words *'Newton Poppleford should have the first new 20 mph zone'*. It was put to the vote and only Cllr Bailey and Cllr Gent voted for it with Cllr Phil Twiss abstaining as he had arrived late to the meeting Cllr Richard Scott not voting at all and 4 other members present voting against so the recommendation was defeated initially being recorded as 2 votes for and 4 votes against. But again, what Cllr Hughes said was wrong because there are already 20 mph zones in Sidford, Sidmouth, Topsham and others I am sure so Newton Poppleford couldn't be the **first** to have one when there are numerous examples of existing 20 mph zones.....

Cllr Hughes responded that I was incorrect in my comment about the new 20 mph zones in Sidmouth and all that had happened was that new repeater signs had been put up. Whilst I can possibly understand the need for this around Manstone in Sidmouth and the primary school, bizarrely, even a small cul-de-sac in Sidford, which consists of bungalows mainly owned by older residents, has new 'repeater' signs erected. I shall be putting in an FOI about the cost of this and how the decision was made because again, I cannot imagine other parishes being given the go ahead so easily for additional speed repeater signs.

Cllr Bailey, Mrs Raw and I felt that we had been batted away as usual at the East Devon HATOC but we will continue to pursue these road safety improvements as will the parish council.

I would like to collate a table of accidents and near misses from pedestrians to strengthen our argument with DCC and would be grateful of any information residents can give me.

At the same meeting consideration was given to a new traffic light crossing on the A3052 around the Crealy and Hill Barton industrial estate to help people to access the businesses if they travelled there by public transport. The local parish council also requested to extend the 40 mph zone outside St Bridget's Nursery to cover both Hill Barton and the Cat and Fiddle residential park to improve safety for the many elderly residents. Once again, the speed reduction was considered to be 'counter to policy'. It was pointed out that DCC set the policy and could change it if they had a mind to. They claimed that as more new housing was likely to be coming forward in the new Local Plan, that was the time to change the speed limit. So the proposal was to leave the speed limit at 50 mph but to seek funding for a new £225,000 road crossing with funding yet to be found. I commented that I supported a crossing but thought a new crossing on a 50 mph road where the average speed is around 45 mph (and hence many vehicles will be travelling much faster) was asking for trouble and that if pedestrian got hit at that speed through a drivers inattention they would undoubtedly not survive.

Update on the above meeting – I have submitted a formal complaint to DCC.

Since this meeting, I have put in an official complaint to the Interim County Solicitor. It has been confirmed that I did have voting rights at the meeting as did other EDDC Ward Cllrs. The initial response to this was that it would have made no difference as my suggestions were defeated 3 votes to 4 even if my vote had been counted. However I had asked another member of the committee why he had felt unable to support me on this vote and he said it was because he was also an EDDC representative and therefore also didn't have voting rights. Both the Chair of this committee Cllr Stuart Hughes and the officer supporting the meeting have been in place for many years and should perfectly well know the rules of their own committees. I therefore see their refusal to allow me to vote as a manipulation of the system to determine a particular outcome and I won't accept this, it is

completely against the NOLAN principles in public life and needs to be challenged on each and every occasion where it occurs. I will update you further in future reports.

Car parking charges in East Devon

East Devon District council has by law to present a balanced budget each year. If they were unable to do this, the Secretary of State would intervene and there is a danger that the council would be taken into emergency measures. The council has to keep at least £3M in reserves and has dipped into these reserves occasionally to cover shortfalls, but this is not a prudent way of working. In the medium term budget the council faces a shortfall of another £2.7 M over the next four years.

There have been numerous meetings over the past few months where the budget was discussed and cllrs had opportunities to put forward different options as to how we balance the budget including two full Overview and Scrutiny meetings in January where the budget was the focus of the meetings and there was cross party support for the recommendations.

For the past two years Scrutiny, Chaired by Conservatives Cllr Brown and now Cllr Tom Wright was supposed to be running a car parking Task and Finish Forum to get to the bottom of car parking charges. Both have failed to even call a TAFF meeting over this time.

It has been pointed out in previous articles that under a decade of austerity measures, councils have lost 60% of the funding they previously were entitled to, the council now has to pay VAT on car parks, and in addition have had more legal responsibilities imposed on them, for example The Homelessness Reduction Act, retrofitting of all council properties to address the Climate Change Emergency and so on.

Over the same period wages have increased, ticket machines need updating and replacing, car parks are due for resurfacing and lining, electric charging bays introduced and Eco-bikes provided and so on. The council has resisted using automated camera systems for monitoring car parks run by ruthless private parking companies. Just recently a visitor complained to me he had overstayed his parking by 6 minutes in Exmouth in a car park run by Premier Parking and been slapped with a £100 fine, even though he and his wife were in the car at the time admiring the view. He got nowhere with trying to appeal as no one was answering the phone, he has said the whole thing gave him a very poor impression of Exmouth and he will not be visiting there again. Interestingly the owner of the private land also provides Conservative MP Simon Jupp with his constituency office, and Mr Jupp has been publicly critical of East Devon putting their car parking charges up saying it will discourage visitors and damage local business. It seems its one rule for your friends and another for the council.

All councils are raising their car parking charges and Exeter has recently introduced a 2 hour minimum stay, whereas locally we still have free on street parking until 10.00 am, and the option to pay for half an hour in the car parks if you just need to nip in and out of the shops quickly.

This is the information that fails to get publicity:

- For 5 months of the year (Oct-March) it costs £2.00 to park all day in EDDC car parks
- You can buy 3 hours of parking and get 1 hour free
- No charges after 6.00 pm to encourage evening use
- No charge is greater than £8.00 per day even in High Season
- Annual ton Permits are available at £100.00 now, rising to £120.00 per year from April. It is hoped that this will be on a rolling monthly direct debit basis although frustratingly this system has been slow to set up. This would equate to £2.31 per week.

I urge you to compare the above with other authorities and you will still find that parking in East Devon is favourable compared to other authorities. Local parishes are being offered their currently

free car parks to run on behalf of residents remaining either free or charging and we are fortunate in Newton Poppleford that the parish council has indicated a willingness to keep our local car park free if a lease can be agreed with EDDC.

I do think that Sidmouth is one of the most controversial towns in terms of parking charges as other seaside towns clearly have 'beach and tourist car parks' and separate shopping car parks; hence charging more for the beach car parks (and hence often tourists in the summer season) does not affect those who wish to support the local shops.

I think it is likely that some revisiting of charges in certain car parks is likely to ensure there is parity and equality across the towns.

I was quite astonished though to see the support given by Sidmouth Town Council to the removal of all parking and in particular disabled parking around Fields and Church street by Devon County Council and do not see how this fits with an equality policy. I understand the desire to make this area pedestrians only but it does leave those with limited mobility in a rather difficult situation.

Some people have commented on the inability to find a car parking space at all in Sidmouth at busy times and I'm sure we have all experienced that. When parking is very cheap, local workers tend to park in the car parks and I can't blame them for that but it does reduce customer parking. An element of turnover is desirable to ensure everyone can have an opportunity to park close to the shops.

I am sure we have all seen the queues at the more expensive and privately owned Bedford car park, where cars queue to get in clogging up the road down to the seafront. The picture to the right shows the fees for that car park which have been in place for some time. The advantage of this car park is that if you overstay your hours you simply pay for the additional time on your way out, no fines etc which is very reassuring. The more expensive parking is worth it for some people for the convenience of being near the beach, some cafes, the seafront hotels and restaurants etc.



No one wants to see car parking charges raised, nor do we want to be paying £1.50 per litre of petrol, nor have our energy prices nearly double. Prices in the shops have rocketed but these are the times we are in and what we are faced with.

Should residents feel so strongly about car park charges being raised that they choose only to vote for Conservative councilors at the next round of elections on that basis, I shall be very surprised if charges are reduced by the Conservative party as cuts to council budgets are only going to increase.

Full Council Meetings

There were two evening meetings this past week, the first meeting on Monday 21st February via Zoom covered the usual agenda items and the meeting on Wednesday 23rd February was solely to finalise the budget. Nearly two hours was spent with the Conservative party coming up with reasons not to raise car parking charges, even though they had many opportunities since October 2021 to put their arguments forward before this. When asked which services he would like to cut in order to present a balanced budget, Leader of the Conservative party Cllr Colin Brown said that the past four months of discussing car parking charges wasn't enough time to fully consider the options. He then suggested he could come up with some cuts to the council short and medium term budget in the next 24 hours and call a meeting for Tuesday night 22nd February (completely unconstitutional as proper notice of meetings must be given for meetings) that could be voted on at the Budget meeting

24 hours later on Wednesday 23rd February. He then started to pluck numbers out of the air, suggesting that staffing could be cut, that a staffing review to look at teams and a pay review was simply a wish list that could easily be done away with, that he would cut the £45,000 given to the lifeboats and cut the £50,000 tree budget which was part of the Climate Change Emergency policy. He expected this to happen in 48 hours. I think in some ways it sounded so mad, he probably drove a few councilors who were undecided how to vote, to vote against him. His 'Leadership' of the Conservative party really is a gift to the other parties.

Realising the seriousness of needing to vote for a balanced budget going forward to meet its legal obligation to do so, the indicative vote to support all budget proposals was won 32 to 19 on the Monday.

However the final vote legally had to be a 'vote in person' at the Extraordinary meeting held on Wednesday 23rd February.

The Final Item in the Full Council meeting was a Motion by Jess Bailey calling on MP Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling up, and asking for support from local MPs, to challenge housing numbers for East Devon. She made the following points:

There are currently 2650 households in housing need (affordable housing/council housing), 1201 houses standing empty in East Devon, 2300 are not primary homes but second homes, 2/3 of our district is in the AONB and there are few brownfield sites available for development so most of the new building will be on green fields. We will probably need a new town. The government dictates that we must build 918 houses per year up to 2041 in East Devon based on a top down government approach using a mathematical formulae/algorithm based on the National Office of Statistics historic figures.

This motion was fully supported and the recommendations will be followed up. The final recommendation that was agreed was:

Mindful of this and fully accepting that it is imperative that we continue our progress with the draft Local Plan this Council also agrees to write to Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities:

- (a) calling on him to review the standard methodology in the light of concerns about the reliability of the algorithm used and the AONB designations and other environmental constraints in the district; and*
- (b) calling on the government to identify a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis rather than requiring the granting of more planning permissions.*

In addition this Council calls on its MPs to support us in our representations to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up'

Extraordinary Meeting of the Council Wednesday 23rd February.

The meeting on Wednesday 23rd February was held at the Ocean in Exmouth to ensure all councilors who wanted to attend and vote in person on the proposed budget could do so safely. The total cost of hiring a venue for that meeting which lasted less than an hour was £2400 approximately. Hardly good value for money, but the main meeting room in the relatively new council premises of Blackdown House is too small to house a Full Council Meeting and meet social distancing and air circulation requirements.

The conservative government said that local councils would not be financially disadvantaged by the money they have had to pay out to support local businesses and residents during Covid-19 but in truth this is not the case.

The vote to approve the budget so the council could meet its legal obligation to do so was carried with 12 Conservatives voting against, and the remainder voting to support the proposed budget.

Omicrom Grant Scheme

The closing date of this has been brought forward owing to the number of applications that have come in and all the money provided by Central Government is well on its way to being allocated. The new closing date is 28th February 2022. Here is the link for full details:

[Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant \(OHLG\) - East Devon](#)

Small Community Grants

1. Introduction to Small Community Grants

Small Community Grants provide small, one-off non-repeatable, grants of up to £500 to support community-led ideas and initiatives across the area of East Devon administered by East Devon District Council. Properly constituted not for profit organisations can apply. These grants have proved really popular and the application process is very simple. So far in excess of £11,000 has been granted. This is a one off fund and once the money is gone, that's it. This is what the EDDC website says:

We will fund:

- Community led ideas and initiatives that will benefit East Devon's communities.
- We can give grants of between £300 and £500.
- We would prefer to fund smaller projects, rather than be contributing a small percentage of big costly projects.

Projects must help achieve either or both of the following:

1. One or both of the following key priorities listed in our Council Plan:

- Better homes and communities for all.
- A greener East Devon.

Please [see more details about what is included within each priority](#) and so whether your application would be eligible.

2. One or more of the priorities / actions listed in our [Poverty Strategy](#).

3. Who can apply

Applications are accepted from properly constituted and not-for-private-profit:

- Voluntary and community sector groups and organisations
- Parish Councils
- Charities
- Others such as Community Interest Companies

Or a combination of such groups working together.

******(a) Non-constituted groups without their own, separate bank account may apply but will need to do so by an accountable constituted organisation acting on their behalf. If you fall into this category, you may wish to seek the support of an eligible organisation such as a town or parish council, village hall or another local voluntary group that qualifies. If you're not sure who this would be then please contact jbuckley@devon.gov.uk.

You must have at least two unrelated signatories / trustees.

Here is the link for full details:

[Small Community Grants - East Devon](#)

I am on the committee that grants these awards and I have been very impressed by the range of work done by volunteers in the community and the commitment volunteers have shown.

EDDC weekly residents update

This week's EDDC update covers the following:

[Have your say on the future of leisure centres, sports facilities and other opportunities for physical activity like cycle routes in East Devon.](#)

East Devon District Council (EDDC) need residents' views, before 6 March 2022, to create a clear vision to work towards, for the next 10 years.

EDDC needs your views on:

- What physical activities you take part in now and what you would like to do in the future so that you can be more active, more often, whether this be, for example, through walking, playing football or dancing.
- What you think is good about our existing leisure facilities; our sport, health and physical activity services available within the community; and our great outdoors, and what could be improved.
- Whether and how the Coronavirus pandemic has affected the physical activity you do.

The council has employed consultants to develop a Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy for East Devon. To have your say please go online and fill in the questionnaire located below. The document will allow EDDC to:

- Ask for money from new home developers, in East Devon, to help pay for things like leisure centres, sports facilities, and other outdoor or indoor leisure opportunities.
- Understand if the leisure facilities and services that the council subsidises offers residents value for money.
- Understand whether the council's current focus to provide built facilities for residents to undertake physical activity is right or whether it should focus on providing more outdoor informal opportunities such as open spaces.

[**Questionnaire**](#)

[Private landlord slapped with £400 fine for fly tipping in Uplyme](#)

A private landlord has been slapped with a £400 fine for allowing a tenant's waste to be flytipped in Uplyme.

This is the scene (see picture) left at Yawl Cross Woods Trail for East Devon District Council (EDDC) officers to clean up in October.

The £400 fixed penalty notice, reduced to £200 after being paid within 10 days, was given for the landlord's lack of care after a mess was left by one of the landlord's tenants.

The landlord was then unable to demonstrate they had used a licenced waste carrier to dispose of it. EDDC is investigating the unlicensed waste carrier and further enforcement may occur.



[Read more](#)

Grants update for East Devon businesses

Due to exceptionally high demand, the deadline for submitting an application to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG4) scheme has been brought forward from 7 March 2022 to **28 February 2022 at 5pm**.

The scheme is being closed early because the ARG allocation from Government is on course to be fully spent. Please be aware that due to limited funding, grants may not be awarded to all eligible applicants.

[Read more](#)

Property 'MOTs' will be carried out on hundreds of East Devon council homes over the next 12 months

Property 'MOTs' will be carried out on hundreds of East Devon council homes over the next 12 months.

Ian Williams will be visiting 500 homes annually to identify if any repairs are required, some of which will be carried out whilst on site that day.

Ian Williams will be in contact with residents directly to arrange the MOT appointments, where workers will be all be wearing the required PPE.

SWR installs eBikes at Cranbrook and Honiton stations

South Western Railway (SWR) has completed the installation of Co Bikes docking stations plus 30 e-bikes at Cranbrook and Honiton stations, launching a new eco-friendly onward travel option for their customers.

The e-bikes, supplied by Co Bikes, will provide SWR customers with a green and efficient transport alternative, helping to tackle congestion on roads, improve air quality and give locals and visitors alike an alternative way of travelling around Exeter and East Devon.

With 20 e-bike docks available at Cranbrook Station and another 10 at Honiton, the partnership with Co Bikes highlights the growing number of convenient yet sustainable modes of transport across the SWR network.

To use the new Co Bikes, customers will need to download the Nextbike app on a smart phone and register for an account. To activate the account, customers make a £10 payment which is then used for their first e-bike trips.

[Read more](#)

Rights of Way Review

At the last parish council meeting in January our PP3 officer Ted Swan reported that this review started in 2000 and that there are still 6 parishes in Devon yet to be assessed. Newton Poppleford is being reviewed this spring. Ted is reclaiming at least 5 footpaths that are in danger of being lost for ever and anyone can contact Ted about concerns they have over the loss of an existing footpath so this list can be added to.

Local Matters

The Waterleat development

This is now out for consultation for Reserved Matters so it's important to follow that closely. I have queried the lack of detail, the haste in which the site has been cleared, everything razed to the ground, without appropriate wildlife surveys and tree surveys. Applicants need to be aware the Google Earth shows not only what is on the land now but also at points historically so there is no point trying to hide what trees and hedges have been destroyed. I have asked the planners to ensure that no foundations or footings are dug before detail and approval is given. The EA have at last started to do their job and objected on the grounds of flooding – where were they when outline was given? I am concerned no Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is in place, yet the above work has taken place.

Erosion to Back Brook in the Meadow Drive area – the officer has attended and plans are in place to rectify this. A contractor has been found and they intend to use rock mattresses staked down behind the existing rock armour. Should further movement happen, they won't roll into the watercourse like the existing rocks do. Before any work can begin the council have to obtain an environmental permit which can take some time. The rock mattresses can be built from the land and so work will not disturb the water and hence should not fall foul of fish spawning embargos. Rock mattresses also allow small creatures to nestle amongst the smaller rocks and thus are a more environmentally green approach to protect the banks.

Lighting in Turner Close – update

The officer working on this has confirmed that *“Enerveo have advised that the new replacement lighting columns are programmed to be installed on 10th March 2022. We are still waiting to be advised who will carry out the wiring to connect up the columns and when this work will be carried out. Small steps but at least we have some progress”*.

Unauthorised parking of camper vans in the Pavilion car park

The parish council raised this at their last meeting and are considering how to address this.

Unauthorised fencing of gardens in Millmoor Vale

The Enforcement officer is looking into the unauthorised fencing in the gardens of the Warden sheltered housing in Millmoor Vale. These properties are supposed to be for those living with life limiting health conditions.

Direct neighbours of one planning application in Venn Ottery not contacted.

EDDC have apologised for this oversight and explained how the situation arose and how it would be addressed in future.

Discourteous motorbike riders on the Green Lane in Venn Ottery

I understand there is legislation being considered to ban motorised vehicles from using Green Lanes, some users only have themselves to blame for this for their lack of consideration of others. In the meantime the matter has been reported to the local police.

With grateful thanks as always to residents for helping to raise local issues so they can be addressed.

Val Ranger , Ward Councillor, Newton Poppleford and Harpford

Tel 07475 201 340 or email vranger@btinternet.com.