

Holbeton News Climate Change & Environmental section

A report on the Erme Estuary sewage discharges meeting



Held in All Saints Church on the 18th November. 88 people attended, of whom 53 live in Holbeton parish, plus the 4 visiting speakers.

There were 2 speakers on behalf of South West Water, 1 speaker from the Environment Agency & our local MP. We had over an hour for questions, having restricted the time for presentations.

Unfortunately the first speaker from SWW spoke too fast to be comprehensible, delivered an overview of SWW's plans and did not appear to have addressed the questions we had put to them in advance.

What we heard suggests that they do not have any timetable for action, and we were told that we were not their priority. Their forward plan stretches ahead to 2050, when I certainly do not expect to be around!

We achieved some of the aims of the meeting:

- To give those attending time to ask questions &/or make comments.
- To give all representatives a message on the strength of feeling in the community.

We also got an agreement from Sir Gary Streeter that he will forward our detailed proposals for a joint collaboration with SWW to put together a strategic plan that will eventually abolish the sewage discharges.

The need for a separated surface water drainage system is clearly a key aspect of the solution for the increasingly frequent and heavy downpours we can expect. Further storage tanks &/or ponds may also be needed.

It was suggested that we should explore the use of reed beds to assist in the treatment of sewage: this also needs to be followed through.

A strategic plan would have the benefits for the community:

- Ensuring that piecemeal developments are consistent with the overall strategy
- Getting some aspects of the solution in place earlier (eg making the most of the surface water arrangements for the Church Hill development)
- Reassurance that something is being done about the problem

For South West Water there would be the benefits:

- Potential sharing of some costs
- Having local knowledge of the whereabouts of existing drainage, some of which is very ancient
- Getting the support and cooperation of the village
- Being seen to collaborate with local communities

A number of questions came from those using the estuary and beach for swimming, surfing, etc. They expressed frustration at the difficulty of getting up to date information about when sewage discharges have occurred. Surfers against sewage provide information, but this can be a day or two later.

The responses from SWW did not provide any reassurance about their ability or willingness to provide solutions to the problem: one suggestion was not to swim when it has rained recently!

The Environment Agency is reducing the amount of water quality monitoring it carries out, and made no offer to help with this problem.

As a result of the meeting John Mildmay-White is collecting a number of volunteers to be trained to provide monitoring of water quality in the estuary as a way of getting more up to date information for users, as well as providing extra information on discharges. He is doing so in collaboration with the Westcountry Rivers Trust. If you would like to help please contact John.

There are 3 tangible outcomes that we are pursuing:

- To approach SWW through our MP Sir Gary Streeter asking them to join with the parish council in developing an agreed strategic plan.
- John Mildmay-White and his planned Citizens Science group to enhance monitoring in the estuary.
- To approach the other relevant councils asking them to support the development of a whole river group, the River Erme Water Quality Group.

A community composting facility. A parishioner has now come forward willing to get a community composting facility up and running within the parish. There is much to be done to achieve this and we will keep you posted on progress.

A free landmark tree to be planted this winter. The Saving Devon's Treescapes project has asked the parish if it would like to plant a free landmark tree. They plan to plant 250,000 native trees in Devon in response to the devastating effect that ash dieback disease is having. The PCC has expressed an interest in planting a suitable tree in the new part of the churchyard, with a dedication of their choosing.



If anyone has a suggestion for planting another tree in a public place the parish (excluding existing woodland) please get in touch, and the parish council will be happy to consider sponsoring the tree.

Life On The Edge Project

Since 1945 it is thought the UK has lost 98% of its wildflower meadows. Habitat loss and fragmentation is thought to be one of the one of the driving forces around the declines of our native wildlife.

The ambitious and exciting Life On The Edge (LotE) project aims to re-wild the strip of land next to the South Devon coast stretching from Wembury in the west to Berry Head in the east.

It is going to help restore populations of some of the UK's rarest insects by expanding and reconnecting the traditional coastal landscapes on which they depend.

This will include Holbeton. They want to involve not only landowners, farmers and parish councils but also school children and any individuals and groups wanting to help and be helped achieving these aims.



We need together to expand and create flower-rich fields and verges, hedgerows parks, churchyards, school grounds and private gardens.

Rob Skinner, the project manager for LotE, wants us to develop our ideas to encourage pollinating insects and is keen to support us in doing so.

As well as all the things we are already doing, the ideas being considered include

- Looking at ways to discourage the use of pesticides in gardens and community spaces in the parish.
- Arranging a bug watch during the summer of 2023 in which all residents will be asked to look out for maybe a dozen specific insects, some more rare than others, and report them.
- Approaching the village school to see whether they would like to be involved in the project.
- Training volunteers to undertake regular weekly butterfly watching walks over a 6 month period round the same route they have chosen (so called butterfly transects), to provide information for national datasets.
- Use the LotE project seed harvester to harvest Holbeton wild flower seed to spread on other areas around the parish.

If you wish to learn more or get involved with the LotE project, just contact me or go to the useful links page within the climate change section of the parish council website.

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Yealm Community Electric Transport gets ready to launch

We would like to introduce you to Yealm Community Electric Transport (YCET), a not for profit Community Interest Company.

We intend to generate income by the provision of an electric water ferry/taxi service to visiting yachtsmen, locals, walkers along the Coast Path, private hirers and local groups. Income will be earned by the operation of an environmentally cleaner and quieter passenger boat service (not only those on the ferry but also other Estuary users on or off watercraft) .

The Yealm already has an existing water ferry. Our planned hours will complement the current service and will be mornings 8am - 10am and from 4pm until late. This will be on demand, when the tide and weather permits of course. You may see us on the river during the day, but this would be for longer educational or school trips and for the disabled to experience our wonderful river. Any surplus will be donated back to support local environmental causes.



Our flat bottomed, aluminium boat has been named EVY. We are very pleased to say that we have successfully recruited a highly experienced Boat Master and a team of willing volunteers!

Whilst the project has secured some start up grants and funding, we do need more donations to get the service launched. If you would like to donate, do please visit www.ycet.co.uk to securely donate or drop us a line at info@ycet.co.uk

A flyer for a free event. The top left features the logo for South Dartmoor Community Energy, which consists of a stylized green and blue circular emblem. The text "South Dartmoor Community Energy" is written in green and blue. The main title of the event is "Domestic Heating Advice and Support" in large, white, sans-serif font, set against a dark green background. The event details are listed in a light green box: "FREE to attend", "Saturday 18th February 2023", "10-12 noon", and "Yealmpton Community Room at YCA, Stray Park, PL8 2HF". Below this, a list of topics to be discussed is provided: "Practical solutions for energy saving", "Guidance and support available (SDCE/LEAP)", "Financial opportunities/initiatives in the current funding landscape", "Retrofit – what is it? what are the potential benefits?", and "Future opportunities". At the bottom, a teal box contains the text: "Any specific questions on domestic heating can be emailed ahead to environment@yealmpton-pc.gov.uk".