



Mortehoe Parish Council
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Proposed Closure of Woolacombe Fire Station

Dear Mr Heanton –Jones

Mortehoe Parish Council wish to express our disappointment and concern at the proposed closure of our fire station here in Woolacombe and the manner in which the current consultation is taking place.

Members have raised the following points:

1. **Increased Risk** - Proposed changes presented in all 7 options will have a drastic effect on the safety of visitors and residents in both our Parish and across the whole of North Devon.
2. **Public Consultation** The public consultation has been held for a very limited time slot when most residents are at work. (Wednesday 1.30 - 5.30 p.m.)
3. **The Presentation of facts** - The way in which the facts and figures have been presented for the consultation has been disingenuous and misleading. The figures do not show the full workload of the fire stations with no mention of support/call outs for other stations or for routine calls outside the narrow category chosen by the Fire Service.
Nearest Fire Stations - in an attempt to show that the neighbouring fire stations are nearer than in reality, an official at the consultation confirmed that the mileage quoted in the official documents presented was “as the crow flies”. Congestion on the narrow roads leading to Woolacombe and Mortehoe in the season would lead to dangerous delays in reliance on the retained neighbouring stations.
4. **Impact of the loss of the Co-Responder Scheme** – the figures for Category1 call outs in our Parish show 7 critical cases last year i.e. 7 lives potentially saved.

The resident population of Mortehoe Parish is 1178 but with 1,700 registered bed spaces plus touring pitches on the 12 sites available, the population of both villages can shoot up by over 13,000 + day visitors to the beach (approx. 3,000 parking spaces).

Mortehoe Parish Council fought a long campaign to have the co-responder scheme in the Parish and know that reliance on the ambulance service will result in loss of lives.

5. **Cost-saving** - members question the £350,000 savings as quoted for the closure of Woolacombe Fire Station. These include the infrastructure and equipment already in place. The staff costs are approx. £41,000
The council believe that the cuts will delay emergency response and will have very serious consequences.

All residents of Somerset and Devon pay the same rates for the fire service and therefore should expect the same level of basic cover.

6. **Retained Crews** – in the event of an incident the residents or visitors in the Parish Woolacombe would be severely disadvantaged in their reliance on the retained crews of adjoining stations of Ilfracombe; Combe Martin and Braunton who of whom are understaffed at present. (Woolacombe station currently have 3 volunteers undergoing training taking the retained crew to 9 and are in a better position than many of our neighbours)

Barnstaple - a further retained night-time crew in Barnstaple (Proposal 4) would leave all residents in North Devon severely disadvantaged. It is the opinion of the council that the statutory duty of the Fire Service to provide an effective fire and rescue service across the two counties to ensure that help arrives quickly when needed.

Members ask you the following question:

1. **Do you believe that any of the 7 options presented will lead to an improvement in the services that residents of the two counties can expect in the event of a fire, road traffic accident or other incident?**
2. **Do you think that lives will be put at risk by the loss of the co-responder schemes across the affected rural stations in Devon Cornwall and how will this be addressed by the already over-stretched ambulance service?**

Public Meeting Wednesday July 31st 7.30 p.m – the Council have organised a public meeting to be held in Woolacombe Village Hall and would be pleased to extend an invitation to you.

The council hope that you will be able to support us in our fight.

Yours sincerely

Sally Hocking

Clerk to Mortehoe Parish Council