

Parish Council News September

Marine Drive Car Park Ticket Advertising Invitation - the council will shortly be arranging for the printing of 100,000 tickets for the car park. If you would like to advertise your business on the rear of the tickets, please contact the Parish Clerk for more information or submit a tender. Any tenders received will be considered at the August meeting of the Parish Council to be held on the 16th September

Tel; 01271 870247 or email: sallyatmorteheopc@gmail.com

Proposed Closure of Woolacombe Fire Station - a 12 week consultation period started on July 3rd and will end on September 22nd. The Parish Council are opposed to the proposed closure and urge residents and visitors to the area to take part in the on line consultation. At a packed public meeting in Woolacombe Village Hall there was unanimous condemnation of the proposals which would mean the loss of both the Woolacombe Fire Station and Co-Responder scheme. The council are working to campaign against the proposals and met with Devon & Somerset Fire Service in August to further express their concerns. The next Parish Council meeting is on September 16th. You can help by the following methods:

Respond to the consultation by:

- a. Completing the online questionnaire on DSFRS website – www.dsfire.gov.uk
- b. Email with your comments to safertogetherprogramme@dsfire.gov.uk
- c. Write to DSFRS at Communications and Engagement

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Service Headquarters, The Knowle
Clyst St George, Exeter EX3 0NW

2 Email or Write to the Fire Authority Members voicing your concerns.

- a. The full list of members is available from on the Parish Council website or available from the Parish Clerk. Address: sallyatmorteheopc@gmail.com
information pack

3 Email or Write to your Local MP, Mr Heanton-Jones and Councillor

Andrea Davis peter.heatonjones.mp@parliament.uk
andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

Parish Council Letter and Response to Mr Peter Heaton-Jones

“Dear Sally,

Thank you for contacting me on behalf of Morteheo Parish Council regarding the consultation on the future of our Fire and Rescue services, and in particular the changes being proposed to fire stations in North Devon.

I am deeply concerned by some of the proposals currently being considered by Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. I have had detailed discussions with the Chief Fire Officer and heard the community’s concerns at public meetings, so I have now considered both sides of the argument. As a result, I am firmly opposed to the closure of Woolacombe Fire Station and am deeply sceptical about the wisdom of the other changes being proposed at Ilfracombe, Lynton and Barnstaple.

In my meetings with the Chief Fire Officer, he assured me that the overall changes are about making the service better and more resilient for the future, as well as matching resources with changing demands. Whilst I accept the need for such a review, I cannot accept the proposed closure of Woolacombe. I have already challenged the Chief Fire Officer on this point, and he encouragingly said that it is not a done deal. If, for instance, the Station Crew and wider

community can come together with a plan to maintain the presence in Woolacombe, that would be considered.

I will be writing to the Chief Fire Officer and every member of the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority directly, and I will be encouraging everyone to fill in the questionnaire online at www.dsfire.gov.uk.

As an MP, neither I nor the government has the power to overturn any decision that might be made by Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. But what we can do is seek to influence that decision. That is why I will be making it clear that the community will not accept these proposals and that I will continue to oppose them.

On the specific questions that the Parish Council has sent me I have enclosed the responses that DSFS have provided me to these questions.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me on behalf on your Parish Council and do please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Peter Heaton-Jones MP

Conservative, North Devon

Original letter to Mr Heaton-Jones and Responses from Devon and Somerset Fire Service

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.

“As detailed within our Consultation materials, the papers presented to the Fire Authority and the range of supporting documents within the Consultation area on our website, we have carried out full risk response modelling to ensure we continue to respond to the risks we face.

Woolacombe has low levels of risk. In 2018 all incidents attended in the station area totalled 21 of which 8 were fires and there were no RTCs (road traffic collisions). Our Fire Service statutory work is fire and RTCs response. Of the total 2018 incidents in the station area, Woolacombe station attended 8, and of the 8 fires in the station area, the station attended 2. Of the total 2018 incidents, 7 were medical co-responding within the station area. The first appliance had 51% availability to respond in 2018 which means it often was not available and appliances from other stations would have attended.

Further station data is available within ‘Supporting Documents’ in the Consultation area of our website (www.dsfire.gov.uk) and we have attached the information poster shared at the drop-in exhibition in Woolacombe.

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.)

“The Woolcombe public drop-in exhibition was scheduled for Wednesday 17th July between 1:30-5.30pm. We had booked the village hall for convenience to local residents and some of the venues we have booked only had availability (for 4 hour slots) at certain times. Depending on the resident groups, such as the elderly, some times of day are better than others and we have tried to find a balance with venue availability and potential groups in the area. The session ran until 5.30pm.”

- 2. 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”. (Braunton 5.1 miles) 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.

“The facts used and presented are fully available on our website. As detailed in the Fire Authority paper and the consultation document, these options are based on our statutory response (which we are funded for), for fires and road traffic collisions.

Each station supports neighbouring ones where greater responses are needed which will increase the number of times the fire engines are used, this is based on the next nearest asset that is available being mobilised. To be fair and equitable however, we have based the review of the station on the work in their station area as this enables a direct comparison between stations.

Alternative stations of Ilfracombe and Braunton have estimated 16mins and 19mins response times respectively to Woolacombe station (estimates as there are many factors that can affect the response time for any incidents on the day and the same approach is used across the Service). The distance is not ‘as the crow flies’ and represents road routes. On the information poster shared at the drop-in exhibition the map had been simplified for ease of reading.”

- 3. 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 t 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.**

“Woolacombe station attended 16 co-responding incidents in 2018. 7 of these were within its station area and 9 were in other station areas. Co-responding is not a statutory function for the Fire & Rescue Service and is a voluntary activity carried out on only 20 fire stations. The statutory obligation for attending medical incidents lies with the Ambulance Service.”

- 4. 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.

“Woolacombe will continue to be provided with a Fire and Rescue service, and depending on the outcome of the proposals consultation, this may be from alternative nearby stations as

detailed above. Residents of Devon and Somerset are directly precepted by the Fire & Rescue Authority for Council Tax and the same emergency response standards apply across both counties. There are many towns and villages that are of a similar or higher risk profile than Woolacombe that do not have a fire station, therefore the same level of basic cover is being provided. The savings are provided in the paper presented to the Fire Authority. They include £300,000 relating to Estate and Fleet savings (reflecting the appliance etc.) and £41,953 representing revenue savings, such as running and maintaining the building, appliance etc. On-call staff costs are not included as the incidents, depending on the consultation outcomes, will still be responded to but potentially by staff from other stations

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)

“Depending on the outcome of the proposals consultation, we may be looking at staff relocations packages, if staff would like/are able to transfer to other nearby stations. In terms of Woolacombe staffing, there is currently one new recruit undergoing training who was offered a contract of employment in May this year and two others who are still within the recruitment process. Separate to these proposals we are looking at new duty systems (ways of working) that will hopefully improve our recruitment of on-call staff and retention overall.

7. Proposals for a Retained Night-time crew 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 questions: 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?

“Through these option proposals we are looking to improve our overall response across the two counties, reallocating resources to where they are needed. We are currently under-resourced in some areas, unable to meet our response demand, and over-resourced in others. We are looking to improve our ability to meet our Emergency Response Standards across the whole service through reallocation of our resources. This is especially true of option 6 which introduces the concept of roving appliances that can be deployed flexibly throughout the two counties dependent upon changing risk levels. Therefore if a seasonal change in risk is apparent then the Service will be able to dynamically respond to this. We are also looking to invest further in prevention and protection activities to avoid the incidents happening in the first instance. This is an important point as the provision of a response service only will not necessarily save lives. The reason incident numbers have decreased over the last 20 years is due to increased safety work undertaken by the Service.

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?

“As detailed, in total last year there were 16 co-responding responses from Woolacombe station, and of which 7 were in the Woolacombe station area. “

Devon and Somerset Fire Authority Members

Authority Chair

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Mortehoe Parish Council and Wessex Community Land Trust



PUBLIC MEETING

A Public meeting will be
held in Woolacombe
Village Hall On Thursday
October 10th at 7 .00 p.m.

This affects you and the future of your Community

- *Community Land Trusts help local people to remain living in the community*
- *Come and find out about more about how a CLT could be set up in our parish*
- *Hear a presentation from the Wessex CLT Project, an advice service supporting some 50 CLTs in the South West*

