

# Newton St Cyres Network Co-ordinators meeting

## Notes from meeting 10 November 2022 at 7pm in the Club Room

**Present:** Jim Enright, Jock Campbell, Roger Cashmore, Graeme Barnell, Jane Hole

**Not Present:** Damien Hodge, Graham Scopes and Chris Southcott.

**1. Notes from last meeting (9 December 2021)**

All items from the last meeting were on this agenda, apart from Defibrillators and there were no issues with these.

**2. Brief update by each area on preparation for coming winter season**

**I. Flood Group to include update on CR sheds and contents – GB**

Jock would check the CR sheds contents.

Flood Warden training from the EA was required and this would include use of radios and would be parish specific. Jane would follow this up with the EA. Scenario planning with the EA was required.

The tipping rain gauge would be recalibrated to reduce the number of alerts. Consideration would be given to adding parishioners names upon request if their property was a flood risk. There was a charge for text messages.

**II. Neighbourhood watch/Covid support – DH**

No report

**III. Road/Rail – CS**

No report:

Roger noted that the Road Wardens were unblocking culverts and had rediscovered some lost drains.

**IV. Snow wardens – GS**

No report

**3. To note GB is stepping down as Chair of the Flood Group. To consider GB proposal to combine the various groups into a single resilience group with a single chair.**

Graeme stood down as Chair of Flood Group with effect from this meeting. Roger and Graeme would make some enquiries around the parish to find a replacement.

**4. Availability and recruitment of volunteers to different groups – can we share volunteers across groups?**

Roger noted that the Raddon Hills group were looking to share knowledge/resources with regard to volunteering.

Jock shared a possible structure (see below) for volunteering.

“Community volunteers”?

Possibly a topic for the Annual Parish Meeting?

**5. Wildfires – information circulated on Wildfire reduction and response**

Noted as a potential area of concern in the parish due to thatched properties, woodland and arable land. Graeme suggested identifying the high-risk areas in the parish and asking the fire services to suggest mitigation measures. Jock was in contact with the Firewise team and would advise further following discussions with them.

It was agreed to circulate the information – see below - on wildfire reduction and response to the Newton Wonder in the Spring and to send to land owners for information.

**6. Resilience Plan review and update – copy circulated**

Jock was currently updating the hypertext links and checking the contacts and phone number lists. It was noted that a further update would be required in May next year, following the elections.

The risk of wildfires had been added to the plan

Roger would speak to the church about adding the church as a meeting point in the event of an emergency.

Updated plan to be circulated to PC for agreement at next meeting. Once agreed, copies would be printed for the hall, school and rec and Roger would put it online

Is there a map showing where the fire hydrants are?

**7. For info funds available (£268 ringfenced)**

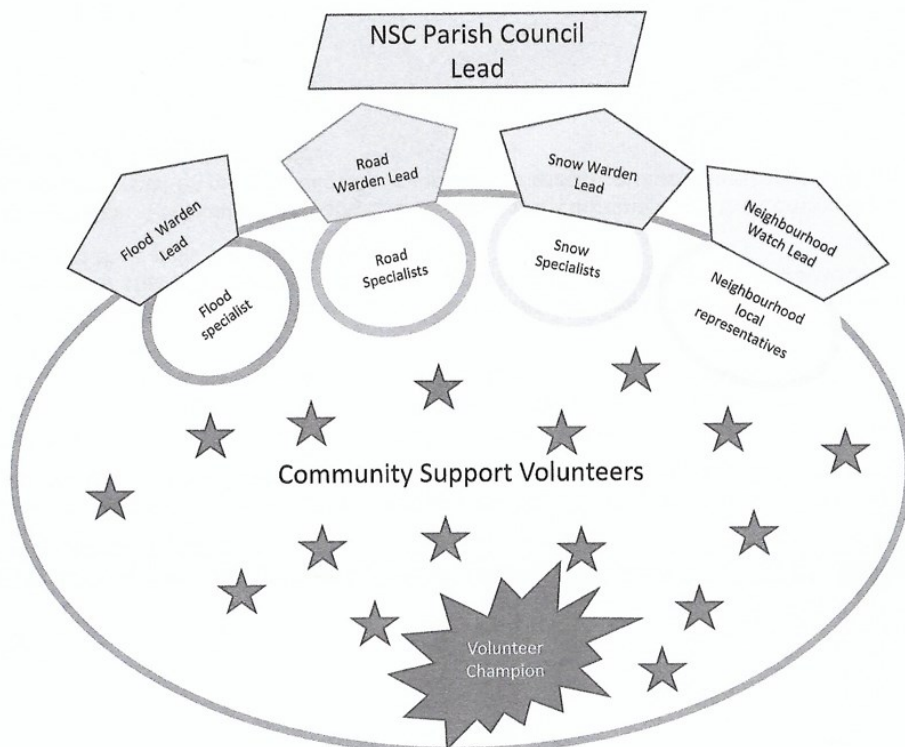
Noted

**8. Any other business**

Devon Communities Together were holding a virtual Community Resilience Forum, 14-16 November.

**9. Date of next meeting**

February 2023 to discuss volunteering structure and then November 2023



# Roles:

- **PARISH COUNCIL LEAD:** To liaise with the Lead Wardens, to advocate on their behalf, to provide guidance and to report back to the Parish Council. (1 x person)
- **LEAD WARDENS:** To coordinate, manage, direct and support the Group Specialists and Community Support Volunteers in all matters related to their specific areas, especially in the event of an emergency. (1 for each group)
- **SPECIALIST VOLUNTEERS:** These are Volunteers who have received specific training in their area of concern. They are responsible for the day-to-day operations in the specific areas. They will also be responsible for guiding and supporting the Community Support Volunteers whilst they are engaged in specific activities associated with their area e.g. flood, road repair. (2-4 for each group)
- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS:** This represents a wider group of volunteers in the community who are willing and able to help in whatever area of responsibility that help is needed. They will be asked to participate in a range of different activities according to their skills, interests and capabilities.
- **VOLUNTEER CHAMPION:** The Volunteer Champion will act as the coordinator of the Community Support Volunteers and will recruit new volunteers when needed, allocate Volunteers to specific groups when requested by Lead Wardens, and support and champion the Volunteers needs.

## **NEWTON ST CYRES PARISH COUNCIL – BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON WILDFIRE REDUCTION AND RESPONSE**

### **BACKGROUND**

A wildfire is any uncontrolled vegetation fire which requires a decision, or action, regarding suppression. (Source: Scottish Wildfire Operational Guidance). Wildfires are particularly common and dangerous where housing development is interspersed with heathland, scrub or agricultural land. This mix of housing and vegetation is referred to as the **Rural-Urban Interface (RUI)**. It is at this interface that wildfires can lead to significant loss of life.

The risk exists in the UK in two main forms – from ignition by direct flame and ignition from embers. Direct flame occurs where a fire reaches housing and sets it alight. A much less obvious threat is from embers. Embers are carried by the wind and may travel considerable distances from the main fire. When these fall into leaves in gutters, onto or under decking, or into garden waste or dried garden bush these act as a secondary fuel that can cause a rapid spread of a fire. Without any intervention these fires can then pass from structure to structure right across a community.

One of the most common, yet often overlooked, (direct flame) risks in the UK is that posed by crop fires, typically those including hay, corn and timber. With regards to hay and corn the risk is at its height when the crop is 'cured' and able to sustain burning and, in the case of hay, this may only be after cutting and baling when the crop is lying in the field. Often it can be the process of harvesting that starts the fire, particularly with corn crops as these are ready to burn at this time.

Most wildfires in the UK originate from human activity. These will often be leisure activities or deliberate acts and, more often than not, will be carried out by people unaware of the risks associated with fire. Educating individuals, organisations and communities as a whole about these risks can therefore go a long way to forging an understanding of how these behaviours contribute to the problem, and how modifying them forms part of the solution.

### **DEALING WITH THE RISK OF WILDFIRE**

The risk of wildfire in the UK has been increasing and attempts are now being made to address this from a number of different directions. At the regional level each Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) provides

advice on the website e.g. <https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/safety/outdoors/wildfires> for Devon and Somerset. This focuses on raising awareness amongst the public about how to avoid fires, how to prepare for a fire, and what to do if one is seen.

At the national level there is an initiative called **Firewise UK** which has grown largely out of the US wildfire experience but has been adapted for the UK conditions. The programme encourages communities to work together to reduce the risk to homes from wildfire by taking practical steps in the area around the home and garden. This has been piloted in Dorset under the Urban Heaths Initiative where government, NGOs and communities are working together to prepare for, and respond to, wildfires. This is now being extended to engage with communities across the UK to establish **Firewise Communities**. Some of the benefits of being a Firewise Community are:

- Makes your own home and neighbours more resilient to wildfire
- Helps to build community resilience and good citizenship
- Communities are proactive in reducing their risk from wildfires
- Communities learn more about wildfire
- Gives the community a plan to work to
- Creates opportunities to connect with Firewise Communities in other areas and countries.

I am currently in contact with the Firewise team with a view to assessing how this might help the situation in NSC Parish.

## **DEVELOPING A PARISH-SPECIFIC RESPONSE**

In the main, the view of the FRS is that the public should avoid trying to put out fires as this is likely to increase the risks of injury or death. However, there are ways in which the community can become involved by:

- **Reduce the risk of fires:** Stopping fires starting through education and behaviour change
- **Support FRS Response:** Making the role of the FRS easier in the event of a fire
- **Limit the spread of fires:** Stopping the spread of fires by reducing threats to homes

If Newton St Cyres parish wanted to move towards being more wildfire prepared then activities that could be adopted might include the following:

- Raising awareness through Newton Wonder and through community gathering, and through the school about the causes of fire and how to avoid them
- Distributing fire awareness literature
- Encouraging people to call in fires using the **What3Words** app
- Mapping land ownership in the Parish so that owners can be contacted in the event of a fire
- Mapping access points to assist the FRS to access fires
- Ensuring that access to fires, by FRS, is not blocked by bad parking
- Educating the public on how to stop the spread of fire from crops/grass to housing
- Educating the public on what to do in the event of wildfires spreading to buildings

There is a good supply of literature available which can help in these stages in the Parish Council felt it was appropriate to move forwards on any of these opportunities. In addition, there may be support and guidance for the Firewise programme to further this.

Jock Campbell

05/11/22