

DRAFT

Minutes of Meeting with Level Water, organisers of the Bantham Swoosh and Thurlestone Parish Council. Feb 8th 7.30pm, Yeo Room, Thurlestone Parish Hall

**Present: Cllr Paul Gunning, Cllr Gill Stone, Cllr Jill Munn, Cllr Sian Williams, Cllr Adam Ryan-Carter
Mark Fox - head of community and events Level Water, Lucy Powell - head of operations Level Water**

This meeting was a follow up from Mark's visit to the parish council meeting last October regarding arrangements for the Bantham Swoosh Saturday July 8th 2023, particularly regarding traffic and road closures.

Level Water has been reflecting on the traffic problems and issues from last year and agree that they didn't invest heavily enough in traffic management. This year they are bringing in an outside organisation called 'Road Traffic Management' (RTM) who are specialists and will plan and run the traffic arrangements. Cllr Ryan Carter emphasised the problems last year through West Buckland and highlighted the incident regarding a resident who needed to get to hospital urgently, however the ambulance could not get down the road due to all the traffic coming through the village. This could have resulted in a fatality and it was made clear that if this had happened, it would have been very unlikely that the Swoosh could run again at Bantham. Mark and Lucy from Level Water understood this and want to make sure there is not a repeat of this in 2023. They agreed that it was a mistake to close the Bantham road all day which caused most of the outgoing traffic to go through West Buckland and Thurlestone leaving the Bantham road relatively empty for most of the day.

This year the Bantham road will remain open but will have traffic marshals at either end stopping all traffic other than the event vehicles solely during the periods of time when coaches are bus-ing participants between Bantham and Aveton Gifford. The marshals will be a combination of swoosh staff and RTM staff. Cllrs emphasised the need for marshals to have a good local knowledge of the roads as last year they did not. Councillors asked if the specialist traffic control company were local to us in order to understand the road and traffic problems we have here. Level Water said they are not.

Level Water had a map of the proposed closures and/or diversion routes

and discussed with Cllrs what they thought would be the best options. A new 'orange' route is proposed as an inbound diversion route when the Bantham road is not accessible which goes from the main A381, through Upton, leading down towards South Milton, turning right past Terawhiti Farm, past the Golf Club, through Thurlestone Village, left towards West Buckland, down the hill, left at The Chapel and then down to Bantham along the West Buckland Road. However, Cllr Gunning raised some concerns about the route particularly past Terawhiti, a working farm with lots of agricultural movement plus a campsite could be problematic, there also tends to be a lot of mud on the road. Cllr Munn also had concerns about traffic coming through the village which is single lane with vehicles often parked on the side of the road. Level Water say that marshals could be stationed at the Upton Cross-roads to make sure traffic follows the correct diversion route, there was further discussion about this route and this needs to be followed up at the next meeting.

Level Water explained that the reason for the orange route was to avoid the pinch point in WB where incoming and outgoing traffic were meeting and causing the jams. However, Cllrs thought that the 2022 inbound diversion route (green route on their map) from the A381 along the Thurlestone road, past the school and then right towards WB would avoid traffic going through Thurlestone village would be better and should be retained. The blue outbound diversion route which again would be through WB could work if the Bantham Road is to remain open and there are traffic marshals in place to stop any traffic coming down when the diversion is in operation.

It was suggested this could be something to discuss further and tighten up at a future meeting with Level Water, RTM and TPC next month.

Level Water said they would be coming down again at the end of April/ begin of May and will do a 'door drop' with information about the swoosh and traffic plans to all households in the area. 2 weeks before the event they will be putting up road signs informing residents and visitors of the diversions.

Cllr Stone also raised the issue of proper marshalling on the water as last year when she was coming into the estuary by boat, they met the swimmers coming down-river and there was no-one on the water stopping any water traffic. This could have resulted in a collision and was extremely dangerous. Level Water agreed this was unacceptable and noted that the company they use for water marshalling should be made aware.

Cllr Munn explained it was important to advertise the event well in local media, the Village Voice etc to make people aware.

The 'Cricket Field' in Aveton Gifford is being used for participants parking this year (approx 300 spaces) and swimmers are being encouraged to park here. Parking permits are being issued when people register to park either at Bantham or AG but Level Water is encouraging as many as possible at AG. There was also some discussion about numbers and the fact that organisers can't always control additional people who might just 'turn up' or swimmers changing their mind about where to park. Mark and Lucy described the system where swimmers have to show a bus/parking permit and that they will do their best to make sure those taking part park in their allocated areas and parking marshals will prevent anyone parking without the correct permit.

To try and take more cars off the road, guided walks are being arranged between the start and finish point (and also the return back to AG) along the estuary for spectators to watch.

Coaches (which are 28 seater) will run from Bantham at 8.30, 9.15 and 10am to take swimmers to the start point. There is also a spectator bus at 11am. (Marshals would stop any inbound traffic on the Bantham road at these times) The swim starts at 11.15 and participants are likely to come out of the water any time between 12.15/30 and 2pm.

Return buses to AG are at 1.30, 2.30, 3.15 and 4pm. Swimmers will have already booked which buses they are taking for both journeys.

The mini swoosh for approx 40 children takes place towards the end of the main swim and starts at Bantham quay. Cllrs raised the issue of the current closure of the road/slipway down to the quay and that children may have to use the scaffold bridge diversion and who would be liable if there was an accident? Level Water said they would need to talk to the Estate about this but ultimately LW would be liable. Lucy said they are carrying out all the necessary health and safety risks so would need to take a closer look at this.

Level Water made it clear their ideal future plans are to increase the number of events here and to continue with the Boomerang event on Friday or Sunday, which would affect the whole weekend. The point was made by Councillors that the road network and accessibility to Bantham is simply not able to cope with the current number of participants and

events, and it was mentioned by some of us that numbers per event would have to be limited if they did that. Last year both events on Friday and Saturday brought 1200 people to the village and that proved unsustainable.

Mark and Lucy will arrange to speak to Cllrs again in March with the RTM team and propose another meeting with us end of April / begin of May to finalise plan

Meeting closed at 8.30pm