

Charmouth Parish Council

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Cllr Clare Weight and all members of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority

30 January 2026

Dear Cllr Weight and all members of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority

Request for Reconsideration of Proposal to Close Charmouth Fire Station

I am writing to formally request that you reconsider the proposal to close Charmouth Fire Station.

Charmouth is served by an on-call fire station whose crew achieves an exceptional 93% availability record — a figure that significantly exceeds the Dorset average. This level of commitment and reliability demonstrates not only the professionalism of the crew, but also the vital role the station plays in protecting our community.

While reported call-out numbers for 2025 may appear lower than those of some other stations, this data does not fully reflect the operational reality. Charmouth crews regularly attend incidents across the Devon border and provide essential cover for neighbouring stations. This cross-border and standby support is of substantial value and should be properly recognised when assessing the station's importance within the wider fire cover network.

The population of Charmouth and the surrounding villages is also small in comparison to other Dorset fire station areas but the increase in population for the 7 month tourist season should not be ignored as the population increases three fold during these months.

Charmouth Fire Station has been a central part of community safety for as long as living memory allows. Its crews respond to a wide range of high-risk incidents, including:

- Road traffic collisions on the Charmouth bypass — a fast and hazardous stretch of the A35
- Coastal rescues, working both alongside and independently of HM Coastguard
- Flooding incidents, which are becoming increasingly frequent and severe
- Domestic and commercial fires

It is no exaggeration to say that the station's presence directly saves lives. Last year, the crew rescued two elderly residents trapped by fire in their home in the neighbouring village of Wootton Fitzpaine. On that occasion, had the nearest appliances been required to travel from Lyme Regis or Bridport just a few minutes later, the outcome could have been tragically different.

Looking ahead, there is also a significant and emerging risk in our area. A planning application for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to the north of Charmouth is currently under appeal. Nationally, there have already been three extremely serious fires at BESS facilities in 2025. Should such a development proceed locally, the proximity of a trained fire crew would provide vital reassurance and could make the difference in preventing a major environmental incident involving toxic emissions.

Removing fire cover from Charmouth would not simply increase response times — it would increase risk to life, property, infrastructure, and the environment across a wide and complex area.

I urge the Authority to fully consider the operational contribution, local risk profile, and life-saving history of Charmouth Fire Station before making any final decision. The value of this station cannot be measured by incident numbers alone.

Yours faithfully

Jane Bremner

Jane Bremner
Chair of Charmouth Parish Council