

Local Community Network

Avalon and Poldens Main LCN meeting notes 23rd April 2026, 7pm

Baltonsborough Village Hall
Ham Street, Glastonbury, BA6 8PX and online.

In-person attendees:

Cllr Stephen Page (Chair) – Somerset Councillor
Cllr Chris Bennetts (Co Vice Chair) – Meare & Westhay PC

Cllr Ewan Cameron – Somerset Councillor
Cllr Harry Munt – Somerset Councillor
Cllr Liz Leyshon – Somerset Councillor

Angus Wann – Ashcott PC
Jenny Lawrence – Ashcott PC
Mary Phillips – Baltonsborough PC
Sheila Petherbridge – Butleigh and West Pennard PC
Geoff Barnett – Catcott PC
James Hall – Catcott PC
Chris Calcutt – Keinton Mandeville PC

Fen Bagias – Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager
Fodo Higginson – SALC
Simon Nicholls – Devon and Somerset Fire Service

Charlotte Griffin – Somerset Council, LCN Link Officer
Nataliya Wills – Somerset Council, LCN Link Officer

Virtual attendees:

Francis McGrath
Georgia Terry – Cossington PC
Jessica Lewin – Connect Somerset
Mark Willcox – Connect Somerset
Syed Shah – Somerset Council, Public Liaison Officer

Apologies:

Jacqui Cross – West Mendip PCN

****AI has been used for note taking purposes. Please check for accuracy.***

1. Welcome

Cllr Stephen Page welcomed everyone to the meeting, both in the room and online.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting

There were no objections to the minutes of the last meeting.

3. Working Group Updates

Highways Working Group

Update was given on behalf of Graham Croucher, Chair of the Highways Working Group, by Geoff Barnett.

Key Positives

- **Improved engagement with Somerset Highways officers**
 - With support from the Link Officer, the group has successfully:
 - Identified relevant officers
 - Arranged officer attendance at Highways Working Group meetings
 - This has enabled direct dialogue on parish-raised issues.
- **Attendance at a Somerset Highways management / officer meeting**
 - This provided an opportunity to address specific concerns raised by parish councils.
 - An example cited was an update on the enhanced highways maintenance scheme, delivered by Jeremy Fry.
- **Improving working relationships**
 - The relationship with officers was described as:
 - More relaxed
 - More open
 - The group expressed interest in understanding how officers themselves perceive this improved relationship.
- **Broader highways officer engagement**
 - Contact has been made with additional highways officers, expanding the group's reach.
- **Improved geographical representation**
 - The group has engaged with parts of the Avalon & Poldens LCN that were previously under-represented.
 - Specific individuals were credited with helping widen engagement.
- **Promotion of highways information tools**
 - The group is actively promoting the use of:
 - "Report a Problem"
 - Highways online portals
 - Parish councils are encouraged to:
 - Use these systems themselves
 - Promote them to councillors and residents.
- **A39 closure impacts**
 - Engagement has begun with Highways officers on finding ways to:
 - Reduce disruption to Polden villages when the A39 is closed.
 - Recent events were noted as evidence that this remains a live and unresolved issue.
- **Agricultural vehicle issues**
 - As a result of matters raised by the group, Highways provided useful guidance and information regarding agricultural vehicles on roads.

- **Learning from enforcement presentations**
 - A presentation by PC Dan Cox was highlighted as particularly informative.
 - There had been initial hope this might lead to wider LCN-led activity on driver behaviour awareness, but it was concluded that there was insufficient capacity/energy to progress this further at present.
 - This was described as a learning point.

Negatives and Challenges

- **Low parish council attendance**
 - Ongoing disappointment that more parish councils are not attending HWG meetings.
 - A desire was expressed for:
 - Ideas and suggestions on how to improve take-up
 - More consistent representation
- **Engagement ambition**
 - The group wants to develop a more attractive offer for parish councils, recognising that:
 - The HWG's role is largely about relationship building and information sharing
- **Communications focus**
 - The group would like clearer guidance from Highways colleagues on:
 - What information is most useful for parish councils to share with residents
 - How communications can best improve understanding, compliance, and efficiency.

General Reflections

- Members commented that:
 - Listening to officers explain constraints and reasoning has helped improve understanding.
 - HWG meetings are valuable forums for learning why decisions are made, even when outcomes are not ideal.
- An open invitation was reiterated to parish and town councils to attend HWG meetings.
- Officers and elected members acknowledged that:
 - These forums provide insight that is not always apparent from written correspondence alone.

Wider Highways Discussion Later in the Meeting

(Following Syed Shah's update and subsequent highways items)

Upcoming Works: Street–Glastonbury Causeway

- A new highways project will begin immediately after the Street scheme completes:
 - Location: Between Street and Glastonbury (Causeway section)
- Overnight closures only:

- **Purpose of works:**
 - Resurfacing a known poor-quality section of road near the Causeway and Bridge.
- **Impacts raised:**
 - Bus services will need to divert.
 - Potential closure of the adjacent walking and cycling path for safety reasons.
 - Significant concern about workers' access, particularly:
 - Tesco staff working early mornings and late nights
 - Safety risks on alternative routes with limited verges.

Concerns About Road Closures and Diversions

- Members raised ongoing frustration about:
 - Road closure signage being misleading or positioned too far from the actual works.
 - Lorries entering villages unnecessarily when roads are marked "closed" but are still passable locally.
 - Diversion signs being left in place long after works have finished.
- It was noted that:
 - Diversion signage is often handled by different agencies/contractors, which can reduce accountability.
 - Members of the public sometimes remove or discard signs out of frustration.

Reporting and Escalation

- It was clarified that:
 - Issues with traffic management and signage can be reported directly online via the Highways portal.
 - Councillors can also escalate issues through Streetworks / Traffic Management teams, which are separate from Highways delivery teams.

General Acknowledgement

- There was broad agreement that:
 - Highway works are necessary but inherently disruptive in such a busy area.
 - Balancing safety, infrastructure improvement, and community impact remains complex and challenging.

Health and Wellbeing Working Group

Overview

- Charlotte provided a brief verbal update on behalf of the Health & Wellbeing Working Group.
- She confirmed key information about past activity and the next scheduled meeting.
- The Working Group is shifting focus towards strategic, evidence-based planning, aligned to wider NHS and Somerset priorities.

Previous Meeting

- The last Health & Wellbeing Working Group meeting took place in January.

Next Meeting – Confirmed Details

- Thursday 30th April 2026, 2-4pm at St Dunstan's House, Community Health and Wellbeing Centre, Magdalene Street, Glastonbury
- Attendees were encouraged to attend in person if possible.

Purpose and Focus of the Upcoming Meeting

Charlotte explained that the next meeting will have a strategic and evidence-based focus, including:

- An overview of the NHS 10-Year Plan, concentrating on:
 - The three key national shifts within the plan
 - How these shifts translate locally
- Exploring how the NHS plan links to:
 - The Somerset Plan
 - The Integrated Care Board (ICB) cluster
 - Primary Care Network (PCN) arrangements
- Discussion on the use of community facilities, including St Dunstan's House, as part of place-based health and wellbeing delivery.

Speakers and Contributions

- A presentation will be given by Jacqui Cross (PCN) and Somerset Councillor Ewan Cameron.
- Charlotte confirmed that at least one stakeholder has already submitted concept ideas for consideration at the meeting.

Intended Outcomes

The Working Group aims for the meeting to:

- Develop strategic, evidence-based priorities for health and wellbeing work over the coming months.
- Provide oversight rather than operational detail, helping to set direction rather than individual projects.
- Create space for attendees to:
 - Bring their own local insights
 - Contribute parish-level perspectives
 - Highlight unmet needs or emerging issues

Wider Context and Importance

- The Health & Wellbeing Working Group is a particularly important forum at present due to:
 - Major changes underway in the health service, including system restructures and mergers
 - A growing emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- The LCN area includes communities with:

- An ageing population
- Potentially distinct or unmet health needs at parish and town level
- The meeting provides a key opportunity to:
 - Engage directly with people involved in shaping health services
 - “Put a marker in the sand” about what matters most to local communities
 - Ensure local health priorities are visible to the ICB and wider system

Engagement Encouraged

- Parish and town councils were strongly encouraged to attend.
- Previous engagement with ICB colleagues had revealed that local health needs can sometimes be underestimated until explored in detail.
 - Attendance helps ensure community perspectives are understood and cannot easily be overlooked.
- St Dunstan’s was described as:
 - A good, accessible venue
 - Close to other amenities
 - Recently refurbished and suitable for partnership working.

Step, Ride, Thrive Project

Fen Bagias (Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager) provided an overall update on the Step, Ride, Thrive project. The Steering Group has been meeting roughly every 2-3 weeks since February.

Overview of the Project

- Step Ride Thrive is an LCN-led pilot initiative, funded through SALC.
- The project focuses on active travel and health & wellbeing, with three core strands: Cycling, Walking, Bus / public transport access
- Overall objectives are to:
 - Reduce barriers to accessing the Avalon Marshes
 - Improve active travel links between parishes
 - Support community health and wellbeing

Cycling (Bike) Strand

- The project has delivered a series of Community Dr Bike sessions:
 - 161 people have had their bikes repaired or checked so far.
 - 11 sessions have already taken place, with two further sessions still to come.
- Upcoming cycling sessions mentioned:
 - West Pennard Village Hall – session scheduled for the following afternoon, running 2.30 pm – 6.30 pm
 - Shapwick
- **Schools involvement:**
 - A total of five or six school-based cycling sessions will have taken place once the programme is complete.

- Positive outcomes noted:
 - High levels of uptake and community engagement
 - Feedback from parishes indicating interest in commissioning their own sessions next year
- It was noted that additional independently commissioned bike sessions are being organised locally (e.g. in June), reflecting growing confidence and demand.

Bus / Public Transport Strand

- The pilot bus service has been extended until the end of August.
- Service details:
 - Operates Monday to Friday
 - Two journeys in the morning and one journey in the afternoon
 - Route runs from Street through to Shipham
- Future developments under consideration:
 - Potential weekend services over the summer
 - Intended to complement leisure destinations, including Avalon Archaeology, which currently has limited opening days

Walking Strand

- Health walks launched:
 - One Level 1 (gentle) walk starting from the Avalon Marshes Centre
 - One Level 3 (more strenuous) walk starting from Sweet's Tea Room
- Mental health and wellbeing activities:
 - A successful "Time to Talk" event held in February
 - Around 50 attendees
 - Strong partner involvement, including:
 - Public Health colleagues
 - Blood pressure testing
 - Creative and wellbeing activities
 - PCN attendance

Discover Nature Fortnight

- A major upcoming piece of work is Discover Nature Fortnights, running:
 - 18 May – 31 May
- Planned programme includes:
 - Talks and events with organisations such as:
 - Wessex Archaeology
 - Somerset Wildlife / Ecology partners
 - Honeygar Reserve (including discussion of newly discovered prehistoric trackways)
 - The Strawberry Line
 - Heal Somerset rewilding project
- Partnership activities:
 - Collaboration with Glastonbury Abbey, including:
 - Herb garden tours
 - Nature-based wellbeing sessions
 - Activities at Bride's Mound
 - Nature mapping exercises

- Important emphasis:
 - All 23 parishes across the LCN area are encouraged to be involved
 - Some parishes will host their own locally-led events, alongside the central programme

Legacy and Supporting Outputs

- The project is producing legacy materials, including:
 - Three different walking/active travel maps
 - Routes linked to bus timetables
 - Circular and parish-based walking routes
- These are intended to:
 - Sustain activity beyond the pilot period
 - Make active travel opportunities easier to access and understand

Communications and Engagement

- Information will be shared with parishes to support local promotion.
- Online resources highlighted:
 - Website: stepridethrive.org
 - Facebook: Step Ride Thrive
- Photography competition launched:
 - Separate adult and children's categories
 - Judged by a local photographer
 - Winning images to be displayed at the Avalon Marshes Centre
 - Prizes include Abbey-related experiences

Key Messages and Reflections

- The update emphasised:
 - Strong partnership working across health, transport, environment, and community sectors
 - Positive early outcomes and high levels of community interest
 - Importance of parish-level engagement to maximise reach and legacy
- Members were encouraged to:
 - Share information locally
 - Promote activities within their parishes
 - Encourage residents to take part, particularly during Discover Nature Fortnights

Contact Details

Fodo Higginson (SALC) hwbsupport@somerset-alc.org.uk

Fen Bagias (Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager) stepridethrive@gmail.com

4. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

A representative from Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service gave an update focused on home fire safety and prevention.

- The Fire Service offers free Home Safety Visits for residents, including:
 - Fire safety advice
 - Installation of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms where needed
 - Targeted support for vulnerable residents

- Emphasised the importance of early identification and referral of residents who may be at higher risk, including:
 - Older people
 - People with mobility issues
 - Those with dementia or memory difficulties
 - Residents who smoke or use mobility aids/e-bikes indoors
- Key safety messages highlighted included:
 - Correct use and placement of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors
 - Electrical safety (avoiding overloaded adaptors and unsafe charging)
 - Risks associated with charging devices overnight
 - Kitchen fire risks and safe cooking practices
 - Safe use and age limits of hot water bottles
- The Fire Service confirmed they can provide specialist equipment, where appropriate, such as:
 - Smoke alarms for people who are hard of hearing (with strobe/vibration)
 - Fire-retardant bedding for people who smoke
 - Automatic cut-off devices for appliances
- Parish and town councils were encouraged to:
 - Promote Fire Service safety messages locally
 - Signpost or refer residents they are concerned about
- Leaflets and contact details were made available for sharing with communities.

For more information on fire safety visit:

[Fire Safety | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)

5. A39 update – Syed Shah

Context

- Syed Shah attended the meeting online to provide a highways update relating primarily to Street, including the A39 / Clarks Village / traffic signal and surfacing scheme.
- He noted at the outset that it had been a particularly challenging day, as he had been in Taunton dealing with preparations for the Bus Service Improvement Scheme, which has implications across Somerset.

Progress Update – Street Highway Works

- Syed confirmed that works are progressing very well overall.
- **Traffic lights commissioning:**
 - Commissioning depends on all elements being sufficiently complete for safe operation.

- At the time of his most recent site visit:
 - New surfacing was already in place.
 - Most road markings had been completed.
 - Remaining work related largely to tidying and finishing.

Safety & Operational Issues Raised

- A councillor raised a specific safety concern about vehicles being stopped on the junction when pedestrian signals were triggered.
- Syed acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and confirmed it was not part of the main project design and should be reported back for investigation.
- He reassured attendees that once the signals are fully commissioned, they should operate correctly and consistently.

Programme and Funding Context

- Syed confirmed:
 - The project is funded through government funding, not local authority revenue budgets.
 - Cost figures are available and he offered to find and share them, although exact amounts were not provided during the meeting.
- It was clarified (with input from others) that the scheme effectively combines three elements:
 - Replacement of 30-year-old traffic signals
 - Resurfacing between roundabouts
 - Active travel improvements near Clarks Village
- Syed stated:
 - He had not been told the project was a formal “pilot”.
 - However, he acknowledged that delivering multiple elements together is unusual and has required careful coordination.
 - From his perspective, the combined approach has worked well and minimised repeated disruption.

Overall Assessment

- Syed described the project as having:
 - Progressed quickly, particularly given weather challenges and scale.
 - Been delivered through strong teamwork between contractors, officers, councillors, and clerks.
- He expressed confidence that:
 - The area will benefit from a safer, higher-quality road environment.
 - Despite disruption, the end result is positive.
- He thanked colleagues and communities for cooperation and feedback and reiterated his openness to ongoing learning.

Contact: syed.shah@somerset.gov.uk 07812449605

6. AOB

1. Community Health & Wellbeing Event (Update shared by Charlotte)

- Charlotte shared an update received during the meeting from Jaqui Cross (PCN / Primary Care Network).
- Community Health & Wellbeing Event details:
 - Date: Monday 18 May
 - Venue: Glastonbury Town Hall and St Dunstan's House (Atrium)
 - Timing: Running throughout the day
- The event is being organised collaboratively by:
 - Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP)
 - NHS Foundation Somerset
 - West Primary Care Networks and GP Practices
- Format and aims:
 - Focused on neighbourhood working and transforming approaches to care
 - Creation of a "community village" bringing together:
 - Physiotherapists
 - Local services
 - Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Attendance:
 - Combination of invited patients registered with Glastonbury and nearby GP practices
 - Opportunities for community drop-in
- Marketing and communications materials are being prepared and will be circulated once available.

2. LCN Executive / AGM and Governance Matters

- Members were reminded of the upcoming:
 - LCN AGM
 - Date: Thursday 2 July
 - Format: In person only
- Key business at the AGM:
 - Election of a Chair and Vice-Chair
- Members were encouraged to:
 - Put themselves forward for these roles if interested
 - Submit agenda items in advance via Charlotte
- The importance of achieving quorum was emphasised to allow elections to proceed.
- Apologies were noted from at least one member who confirmed they would be unable to attend the AGM, but assurance was given that their parish would be represented.

3. Community Working Review – Questions and Discussion

- A question was raised regarding progress on the Community Working Review, which members noted had been long-anticipated.
- Charlotte confirmed:
 - The review has been carried out by an external company (Citizens Network).
 - Multiple workshops and engagement stages have taken place.
 - The review covers how LCNs operate and more broadly, how Somerset Council works with communities.
- Timeline clarification:
 - The final report is nearing completion.
 - It will go first to Scrutiny, then to Executive.
 - Publication expected by the summer.
- Concerns raised by members included:
 - Whether sufficient engagement had taken place with parishes not regularly attending LCN meetings
 - Lack of visibility about who had been consulted
- Responses highlighted that:
 - Not every parish or organisation could be consulted individually.
 - A representative sample of stakeholders was used.
 - Independence of the reviewer was important to ensure objectivity and reduced bias.

4. Scrutiny Process Explained

- Members were advised that:
 - Once published, the draft review report will be considered by the appropriate Somerset Council Scrutiny Committee.
 - Scrutiny meetings are:
 - Open to the public
 - Available to attend in person or online
 - Recorded and accessible via YouTube
- The Scrutiny Committee may:
 - Recommend amendments or changes
 - Require officers to revise the report before it moves forward
- After Scrutiny, the report will proceed to Executive, with possible further revisions.
- Members were encouraged to:
 - Engage with the Scrutiny process if they have concerns or wish to make representations.

5. Closing Remarks

- The Chair thanked attendees for:
 - Their participation
 - The constructive discussion
- Members were invited to stay after the formal close of the meeting to:
 - Network
 - Speak informally with officers or councillors

- The meeting formally closed with reminders about:
 - Upcoming meetings
 - Continued engagement and representation from parishes.

7. Date of Next Meetings

- **Round 4 (AGM) Main Meeting (in person only):** Thursday 2nd July 2026, 6.30pm, Tor Rugby Football Club, Glastonbury, BA6 9GY
- **Health and Wellbeing Working Group:** Thursday 30th April 2026, 2-4pm at St Dunstan's House Community Health and Wellbeing Centre, Magdalene Street, Glastonbury

Following Health and Wellbeing Working Group: 4th June 2-4pm, St Dunstan's House Community Health and Wellbeing Centre, Magdalene Street, Glastonbury and online.

- **Highways Working Group:** Wednesday 27th May 2026, 10am-12pm, West Pennard Village Hall, Newtown Lane, BA6 8RT and online. (***Please note change of date**)