

MINEHEAD AND WATCHET LCN
Transport and Active Travel (TAAT) Working Group
Thursday 23 April 2026 at 10:30am
Held online via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Cllr Mandy Chilcott
Cllr Andy Hadley
Cllr Cara Strom

Somerset Council (Minehead)
Somerset Council (Minehead)
Somerset Council (Dunster)

Cllr Peter Murphy
Cllr Mark Philipson
Fiona Toms
Izzy Silvester
David Northey

Watchet Town Council
West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Minehead People Place Partnership
Thrive (Village Agent)
Bus Improvement Partnership

John Perrett
Stuart Kennard
Sam Murrell (LCN Link Officer)
Anne Shilton (LCN Link Officer)

Transporting Somerset – bus services
Principal Transport Planner – active travel
Minehead & Watchet / Exmoor LCNs
Dowsborough LCN

1. Introductions

The meeting opened with Sam Murrell confirming that the meeting was being recorded and transcribed for note-taking purposes.

2. Apologies:

Brenda Maitland Walker, (Carhampton PC), Mark Shields (Village Agents)
Cllr Marcus Kravis, (Somerset Council) Peter Hobley (Somerset Council, Public Rights of Way), Sunita Mills (Transportation)

3. Good news story – Request Stop added to 28/28A Service

It was reported that First Bus has implemented an additional request stop on the 28/28A route, effective w.e.f. 20 April 2026.

Attendees noted:

- Early feedback indicated improved access and reduced walking distances for passengers.
- The change was welcomed as a practical example of partnership working between the Bus Improvement Partnership, First Bus, and local advocacy via the LCN and parish engagement.
- There was support for publicising this as a positive LCN-enabled outcome, subject to appropriate comms clearance and pre-election sensitivities.

4. Active Travel – Stuart Kennard

No substantive update was provided at the meeting.

It was noted that:

Active Travel issues were picked up elsewhere on the agenda, particularly in relation to vegetation clearance and rights of way.

Updates will be requested for a future meeting where appropriate.

5. Rights of Way – Peter Hobley (apologies tendered)

Attendees noted the standing Rights of Way item.

It was reported that:

A question had been submitted by the Link Officer regarding additional highways funding, specifically seeking clarification on whether vegetation clearance funding for Active Travel and pedestrian routes would include rural areas.

How the additional funding will be used for vegetation clearance

Somerset Council has approved time-limited additional funding for high-visibility highway maintenance, specifically to address issues that are not always resolved through the normal, safety-led highways programme. One of those issues is overgrown vegetation affecting footways and cycleways, where it reduces accessibility, visibility, or usability for pedestrians and people travelling by bike or mobility aid.

The intention is to respond to well-evidenced public concern about the condition of walking and cycling infrastructure and to deliver visible improvements on the ground.

What vegetation clearance the funding supports

The additional funding can be used to support:

- Vegetation clearance on highway footways where growth is encroaching into the walking route or reducing safe passage.
- Vegetation clearance along highway cycle routes and active travel corridors, particularly where overgrowth affects width, sightlines, or user confidence.
- Increased operational capacity for vegetation clearance, including additional operatives focused on walking and cycling routes, rather than replacing routine maintenance activity.

The funding is intended to target high-impact, high-visibility locations, rather than providing blanket coverage or increasing cutting frequency across all routes.

How sites are prioritised

The additional programme is overseen by a Somerset Council Steering Group, which is responsible for agreeing priorities and directing resources. Prioritisation is informed by:

- Public and member reporting of problems.
- Local intelligence from highways teams and LCN highways working groups.
- Asset and condition data used by the council.

While LCNs and parishes can highlight problem locations and patterns, final decisions on what is delivered, where and when remain with Somerset Council officers through this programme.

What the funding does not apply to

It is important to distinguish this programme from Rights of Way maintenance:

- Public Rights of Way (footpaths, bridleways, rural paths) sit outside the scope of the additional highways funding.
- Rights of Way vegetation clearance is managed through a separate planned programme, with most routes cut once or twice a year, and a small number more frequently.
- Scheduled Rights of Way vegetation clearance can be viewed on Explore Somerset using the vegetation-clearance layer.

As confirmed by [Peter Hobley](#), rural routes are not the target of the additional highways vegetation funding.

An update was also noted on:

Ongoing coastal path and Rights of Way works, with no significant new issues raised at this meeting.

6. Update on the four key TAAT focus areas

a) Improved bus route communication (QR codes and real-time information)

Attendees received updates that:

- QR codes linking to live bus information are being rolled out across the 28 route where street furniture allows.
- Approximately 80% of eligible stops have now had QR codes installed, with remaining locations to be completed where feasible.
- Not all stops can accommodate QR codes due to lack of physical infrastructure.

Discussion included:

Opportunities for low-cost real-time information displays in community buildings (e.g. visitor centres, town council offices).

The importance of ensuring consistent, clear messaging for passengers who do not use smartphones, including paper timetables and parish-based communications.

The need for better promotion of existing tools (e.g. Travel Somerset / Think Travel), as awareness remains low despite availability.

b) Bridgwater bus service – timetable optimisation and Hinkley collaboration

Attendees discussed:

- The Hinkley Point worker bus timetable and its interaction with commercial services (14/15/28). Clarification that the Hinkley worker bus is not a registered local bus service, meaning it does not appear in standard journey planners. Feedback that some restrictions previously shown in timetables have been removed, and drivers have been instructed to operate the route as a normal stopping service.
- Fiona clarified that the community bus timetable has been updated and publicized to address the issue of limited awareness, with efforts to distribute information through social media, libraries, and parish outlets to reach those without digital access.
- Timetable Optimisation and Service Gaps: David and John discussed the potential for optimizing bus timetables to provide better spacing between services and to extend routes to key destinations like Bridgwater Hospital and the train station, as well as the possibility of using college buses for public service on non-college days.
- Public Access to School and College Buses: John confirmed that certain school and college bus services, such as the 23B, are registered as local bus services and open to the public, though they primarily operate during term time, and Mark emphasised the need for better publicity of these options.
- Centralized Information and App Development: Izzy and others discussed the ongoing need for a centralised source of transport information, referencing previous work on an app to aggregate all transport options, and the importance of both digital and paper-based solutions for inclusivity.

Concerns raised included:

Perceived gaps in service frequency and limited dwell time at Bridgwater.
Anxiety for users regarding where buses will or will not stop.

Ongoing challenges in public awareness of lesser-known services (e.g. 23/23B services).

It was agreed that:

Improving clarity and accessibility of information is a priority before pursuing further service changes.

Engagement with education providers (e.g. colleges) to capture future demand was welcomed as a constructive approach.

c) Hospital and diagnostic centre transport links

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, David, John, Peter, Sam, and others addressed the challenges of accessing hospital and diagnostic centres in Taunton and Bridgwater, exploring bus route adjustments, signage, community car schemes, and the need for better information for patients.

- **Bus Access to Diagnostic Centres:** David and John reviewed current bus routes serving diagnostic centres, noting improvements such as the open pedestrian gate at Blackbrook and the potential for new bus stops and clearer timetables to facilitate easier access for patients.
- **Signage and Patient Information:** Peter and Mandy highlighted the lack of clear signage and information for patients traveling to diagnostic centres, suggesting that the NHS include detailed travel options in appointment letters and that a fact sheet be developed for community distribution.
- **Community Car Schemes:** Peter and Izzy described the role of community car schemes in providing transport to medical appointments, noting the decline in volunteer drivers post-COVID and the need to expand and publicise these schemes, especially in underserved areas.
- **Digital and Print Information Resources:** John and Izzy discussed the Somerset Think Travel website as a resource for journey planning, but acknowledged that awareness is low and that additional efforts are needed to ensure both digital and non-digital users can access comprehensive transport information.

Points noted:

Recent changes to the 28 service have marginally improved access to parts of Taunton, including links to park-and-ride.

Access to the Blackbrook diagnostic centre remains challenging, though pedestrian access via a rear gate exists from nearby bus stops; signage is currently poor.

Timetable alignment with appointment times continues to be problematic, particularly for rural residents.

Costs of taxis were noted as prohibitive for many patients.

Attendees also highlighted:

The role of community car schemes, while valuable, is constrained by declining volunteer numbers and uneven geographic coverage.

A strong case for clearer information being provided with NHS appointment letters on travel options.

There was broad support for:

Writing formally (as an LCN) to request that NHS appointment communications include clearer transport guidance.

Continuing to pursue dialogue on retaining and expanding diagnostic provision closer to Minehead.

d) Bus stop announcements – “alight here for...”

Attendees noted:

Work is ongoing to review bus stop naming and automated announcements to better reflect recognisable destinations.

There was support for sharing draft wording with towns and parishes before final implementation, to avoid confusion and improve accessibility for visitors and infrequent users.

7. Minutes of the previous meeting (27 February 2026)

The minutes were noted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
No amendments were raised.

8. Update on outstanding actions

The action log was reviewed.

Key points:

Many actions remain “in progress” due to their ongoing nature.

Clarification actions (e.g. Hinkley worker bus stopping arrangements) were noted as substantially complete, subject to communication.

New actions were identified relating to transport information coordination, diagnostic centre access, and consultation responses.

9. Any other parish concerns / reports

Connectivity Plan Consultation

Attendees noted with concern:

A newly opened **Somerset Council connectivity and integrated transport consultation** (opened 17 April, closing 22 May 2026).

Somerset Council is creating a new Somerset Connectivity and Integrated Transport Strategy (SCITS).

Building on the work already done for Local Transport Plan 4, SCITS is about making it easier for people to get around by making different types of transport work better together. It will look at how people travel day--to--day, how they could mix different ways of getting around (like walking, buses, cycling, or trains), and what infrastructure and services they need for access.

Instead of planning transport projects in isolation, SCITS will help the Council plan improvements that link up across entire corridors and areas.

The development of SCITS follows the publication of the Government's Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport. SCITS will closely align with the strategy and focus on how people experience Somerset's transport system overall, rather than looking at each type of transport separately.

Overall, SCITS will help Somerset Council set clear transport priorities, secure funding, and create a strong pipeline of future transport projects to improve connectivity across our most important transport corridors.

- *The consultation is an opportunity to shape transport policy and delivery over the next 20 years*
- *Your response will represent the wants and needs of the residents and businesses in your LCN area, therefore it must seek to be as inclusive as possible*
- *It should not be personal or single issue led, there is space for suggestions and ideas but we need to capture all the issues*
- *This is an opportunity to shape what the Council will do before any decisions or plans have been agreed*
- *This engagement questionnaire is part of the collection of data and evidence, we will be using it alongside traffic data, planning, health and economic information and projections as well as engaging with mode, accessibility, network and safety specialists.*
- *Once the Strategy is prepared, we will be consulting with the general public, that may directly reference the thoughts and/or ideas contained within your responses.*

Here is the link: [Connectivity Plan Consultation - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)

The consultation is open until Friday 22 May 2026.

Please email the Transport Planning Team with any questions or queries: transportpolicy@somerset.gov.uk

Attendees noted:

Limited direct engagement with LCNs despite references, in external communications, to LCN consultation.

There was agreement that:

The TAAT Group and the wider LCN should actively engage with and respond to the consultation.

A separate meeting of elected members and officers would be convened to agree a coordinated response, particularly in relation to the B3191 and coastal connectivity.

10. Dates for meetings going forward:

Meeting will be scheduled once annual leave and year end commitments finalised.

Proposed Minehead and Watchet LCN meeting Dates Dunster Meeting Room (TBC) West Somerset House	Highways Sub-Group Dates Dunster Meeting Room West Somerset House
Thursday 9 April 2026 at 7pm	Wednesday 13 May 10:15am – 1pm
Thursday 16 July 2026 at 7pm (AGM)	

To take place at West Somerset House or online unless otherwise advised.

The meeting closed, noting that it overran the intended 12:30pm finish due to the breadth of discussion.