



# Local Community Network

**Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN meeting notes – 26 January 2026 online via Microsoft Teams 6.30 – 8.30pm**

**Attendees:**

**Chair:** Cllr Dave Mansell, Somerset Council

Cllr Gwil Wren, Somerset Council  
Cllr Janet Lloyd, Sampford Arundel Parish Council / Wellington Town Council  
Cllr Peter Berman, Wiveliscombe Town Council  
Cllr John Townend, Milverton Parish Council  
Cllr Jeremy Toye, Nynhead Parish Council  
Cllr Simon Bellamy, West Buckland Parish Council  
Charles Bisco, Grand Western Greenway  
Richard Mackrory, Wellington & Wivey Bus Group  
Gemma Beale, Thrive  
Fodo Higginson, Somerset Association Local Councils  
Caz Besterman, Together in Tone, Music Project  
Peter Joint, Wellington Town Council  
Graham Warner

Somerset Council  
Michelle Brooks, LCN Link Officer, Somerset Council  
Kylie Moore, School Nurse

**Apologies received:**

Cllr Ross Henley, Somerset Council  
Cllr Tim Parker, Wiveliscombe Town Council  
Cllr Sarah Wakefield, Somerset Council  
Cllr Rod Burton, Milverton Parish Council  
Cllr Roger Wilson, Wiveliscombe Town Council  
Pauline Homeshaw, Wiveliscombe Area Partnership  
Laura Batcha, Wellington Town Council  
Nick Harvey, In the Mix

**1. Introductions (including any apologies for absence)**

The Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Vice Chair - Somerset Councillor, Dave Mansell, introduced the meeting and welcomed all to meeting.

Apologies were received as noted above.

**2. Agreement of notes from previous meeting 2025**

The notes and actions from the meeting, held 22 October 2025, were agreed by all present.

### 3. Community Support Initiatives in Wellington and Wiveliscombe:

Peter Joint, Wellington Town Council, provided a comprehensive update on community support projects across the Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN area, including the development of the King's Arms Community Hub, the Best Start in Life Family Hub initiative, and various early intervention and youth engagement programs:

- **Expansion of Community Support:** described the extension of community support work from Wellington to the wider LCN area, highlighting his dual roles as Connect Somerset Area Champion and Best Start in Life Family Hub Coordinator. He outlined efforts to connect services, promote early intervention, and support families and vulnerable adults through coordinated projects.
- **Best Start in Life Family Hub:** explained the Government's Best Start in Life Family Hub initiative, noting that Somerset will launch family hubs from April 2026, with the King's Arms Community Hub in Wellington designated as the first hub. Preparatory work is underway to meet Department for Education requirements, and the hub will link with other community venues to provide integrated support.
- **Youth and Family Engagement Projects:** detailed several ongoing projects, including bimonthly community breakfasts, a weekly youth club at the King's Arms Community Hub, and the Cradle to Career model aimed at supporting children and families from early childhood through adulthood. He also mentioned the Young People's Independent Advisory Group working with local police and the importance of incorporating young people's voices.

#### Discussion

- **Funding and Future Plans:** In response to questions, Peter Joint clarified that significant funding for Somerset's family hubs is expected in April, with Wellington's hub currently the only one designated. He committed to sharing updates as more information becomes available and encouraged Local Councils to stay engaged for future funding opportunities.
- **Collaboration with Primary Care Networks:** Addressing Peter Berman's question, Peter Joint confirmed ongoing conversations with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and NHS Trusts to ensure integrated neighbourhood models of care, and Cllr Peter Berman suggested inviting PCN representatives to future meetings for direct engagement.

**Action:** Link Officer

### 4. Together in Tone Community Music Project:

Caz Besterman, music project manager, introduced the Together in Tone project, a new music initiative funded by the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) Community Health and Well-being Fund and supported by the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN Councils, aiming to increase community

engagement with music, reduce isolation, and create collaborative events, including:

- **Project Overview and Objectives:** outlined the project's goal to foster greater community engagement with music across the LCN area, support local choirs and ensembles, and promote well-being and reduced isolation through musical activities. The project is in its early planning stages, with a focus on both established and new music groups.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Planning:** described ongoing outreach to local music group leaders to assess their activities, membership, and willingness to participate. A planning meeting is scheduled to determine next steps, including potential workshops and collaborative events, with an emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility.
- **Project Legacy and Database Creation:** highlighted plans to create a comprehensive, up-to-date database of local music opportunities and groups, ensuring sustained access to information and fostering ongoing collaboration beyond the project's initial year. There is also an intention to develop a new musical work reflecting the area's heritage.

## Discussion

- **Addressing Rural Isolation and Accessibility:** In response to questions, Caz and meeting participants discussed strategies to reach rural communities and individuals unable to access main hubs, such as organising one-off workshops in village halls and considering transport challenges. The project aims to include those not already engaged in regular music groups.
- **Collaboration and Funding Support:** emphasis was made on health and well-being benefits, with offers of support for group leaders and encouragement for cross-parish collaboration. Contact information for Caz Besterman was shared for further engagement.

**Action:** Caz Besterman

## 5. Health and Well-being Grants and Small Parish Funding:

Fodo Higginson, SALC, provided an update on the Community Health and Well-being Fund, reporting on the distribution of over £565,000 in grants, the availability of remaining funds for small parishes, and the process for applying, including:

- **Grant Distribution and Eligibility:** reported that grants have been awarded across Wellington, Wiveliscombe, and the LCN, now with a focus on parishes under 1,000 population. The grant program is open until September 30, 2026, and all funded activities must be completed by then. Unsuccessful applications were attributed to unmet parameters or insufficient evidence of need.

- **Support for Small Parishes:** clarified that while there is no open grant program, small parishes can receive support through direct conversations, logistical help, and limited funding for community events or initiatives. Parishes are encouraged to reach out for assistance with project planning and accessing additional funding.
- **Application Process and Deadlines:** emphasised the importance of timely applications, noting that extensions beyond September will not be granted. Contact details and a website link were provided for further information and application support.

## Discussion

- **Addressing Minor Funding Needs:** In response to Cllr Simon Bellamy's question about funding for a low-cost talking café, Fodo confirmed that no request is too small and encouraged applications for even modest amounts, offering support for publicity and project setup.

**Action:** Cllr Simon Bellamy

- **Challenges with Community Event Costs:** Cllr Peter Berman raised concerns about the high cost of road closures for community events, and the challenge of Council budget constraints.

## 6. Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN Working Group Updates

**Working Group Updates:** the meeting received updates on Highways Working Group, Public and Community transport developments, and Active Travel, including upcoming meetings, recent timetable changes, and progress on active travel projects such as the Grand Western Greenway.

- **Highways Working Group:**

The meeting noted the previously circulated Wellington & Wiveliscombe Highways Working Group report, provided by Rod Burton, Chair, Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Highways Working Group.

The next meeting confirmed as taking place online 28 January 6.30 – 7.30pm, Janet Lloyd encouraged Parish councils to attend for direct engagement with Somerset Council highways officers and shared positive experiences, highlighting the group's effectiveness in addressing local issues and obtaining responses from Somerset Council.

- **Public & Community Transport (P&CT) Working Group**

Cllr Dave Mansell, Chair P&CT Working Group, provided an update on the working group, highlighting positive developments, changes and improvements in local bus services, including:

- **Community and Public Transport Developments:** Cllr Mansell reported on recent and upcoming bus timetable changes, including improvements to the 25 service and the continuation of the 27 service.
- **Bus Access to New Railway Station:** Charles Bisco raised concerns about bus route planning for access to the new railway station, noting community anxiety about connectivity. Cllr Mansell responded that detailed plans are pending station construction and advised directing questions to bus operators.

**Action:** Cllr Dave Mansell

### **Update on the Cross LCN Active Travel Steering Group**

Cllr Dave Mansell and Charles Bisco provided an update on the working group and local initiatives / projects

- **Active Travel and Greenway Initiatives:** discussed the Active Steering Group's work, including the development of a rural active travel toolkit, Somerset Council's funding focus on urban schemes, and the trial of green lanes.
- **Grand Western Greenway:** Charles Biscoe provided a detailed account of the Grand Western Greenway public meeting, community support, and next steps for feasibility studies and funding.
- **Community Feedback on Cycle Path Preferences:** feedback from the Greenway meeting indicated strong community preference for off-road cycle paths over routes alongside main roads, with examples cited of underused roadside paths.

### **7. Community News and Funding Opportunities:**

The meeting received local news and updates, including efforts to address bus access issues in Milverton due to parking, fundraising for playground improvements, and information on additional funding sources such as the social tenants group social fund, with encouragement for continued community engagement.

- **Bus Access and Parking Awareness:** Cllr John Townend reported on local campaigns in Milverton to raise awareness about considerate parking to prevent bus service disruptions, following recent incidents where poor parking led to service abandonment.

- **Playground Improvement Fundraising:** Cllr John Townend updated the group on fundraising progress for playground improvements, noting over £50,000 raised towards a £100,000 goal and seeking creative solutions for additional amenities such as picnic benches.
- **Additional Funding Sources:** LCN Link Officer shared funding options and offered to circulate information.
- **Information Sharing and Safety:** LCN Link Officer shared updates on Wessex Water's availability for community drop-ins, upcoming adult social care meetings seeking feedback, and advised members to report any weather-related issues, emphasising safety during storms.

**Action:** Link Officer

8. Future meetings

Next meeting to be held:

**When:** Monday 27 April 2026,

**Where:** The Beambridge Inn

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, for the informative presentations and valuable comments and questions reflecting the various concerns and suggestions from the attendees.

*See Annex A for Summary of Actions for the meeting.*