



Somerset
Council

Local Community Network

Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN meeting notes – 27 April 2026 at the Beambridge Inn, Sampford Arundel, TA21 0HB and online via Microsoft Teams 6.30 – 8.30pm

Attendees:

Chair: Cllr Andrew Govier

Cllr Simon Bellamy, West Buckland Parish Council
Cllr Peter Berman, Wiveliscombe Town Council
Cllr Rod Burton, Milverton Parish Council
Cllr Janet Lloyd, Sampford Arundel Parish Council / Wellington Town Council
Cllr Jeremy Toye, Nynhead Parish Council
Cllr Geoff Skinner, Ashbrittle Town Council
Cllr Philip Wilson, Ashbrittle Parish Council
Cllr Roger Wilson, Wiveliscombe Town Council
Dave Farrow, CEO, Wellington Town Council
Paul Leyland, Clerk Ashbrittle Parish Council
Laura Batcha, Community Development Officer, Wellington Town Council
Caz Besterman, Together in Tone, Music Project
Sgt Jon O'Connor, Avon & Somerset Police
Denise Holway, Prison & Probation Services
Charles Bisco, Grand Western Greenway
Gemma Beale, Thrive
Janice Bullivant, Thrive
Nick Harvey, In the Mix
Fodo Higginson, Somerset Association Local Councils
Richard Mackrory, Wivey & Welly Bus User Group
Alan Measures, Wivey Link

Somerset Council

Chris Booth, LCN Link Officer
Michelle Brooks, LCN Link Officer
Sam Murrell, LCN Link Officer
Charlotte Norman, Public Health Team

Online Attendance:

Cllr Gwil Wren, Somerset Council

Apologies received:

Cllr Ross Henley, Somerset Council
Pete Joint, Wellington Town Council
Cllr Dave Mansell, Somerset Council
Cllr Sarah Wakefield, Somerset Council

1. Introductions (including any apologies for absence)

The Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Chair for the meeting, Somerset Councillor, and Wellington Town Councillor, Andrew Govier, 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 26 January 2026, were agreed by all present.

All actions have been reviewed and either completed or closed, with a follow-up meeting arranged as agreed with Councillor Bellamy and Fodo Higginson.

3. Neighbour Policing update:

Sgt Jon O'Connor from the Wellington Neighbourhood Policing Team provided an update on recent changes to beat boundaries, shared crime statistics for the first quarter of 2026, discussed the nature of reported crimes, and addressed recent rural burglary incidents and rogue trader activity, including:

- **Beat Boundary Changes:** explained that the main change for the policing team was the adjustment of beat boundaries, resulting in the loss of Bishop's Lydeard and other areas, but aligning the boundaries more closely with the Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN area.
- **Crime Statistics Overview:** reported a decrease in recorded crimes from 554 to 453 for the first quarter of 2026 compared to the previous year, with the largest category being 'violence against the person,' which includes harassment due to updated Home Office recording practices.
- **Nature of Crime Types:** clarified that the high number of 'violence against the person' cases is largely due to harassment, and provided context for other crime types such as public order offences, theft, arson, and criminal damage.
- **Rural Burglary and Rogue Traders:** described a recent series of rural burglaries involving theft from sheds and outbuildings, the subsequent identification and arrest of suspects, and the importance of property marking; he also warned about rogue traders targeting vulnerable residents and highlighted the role of banks in preventing scams.

Discussion

Attendees asked about the classification of vandalism and the presence of illegal encampments, with Sgt O'Connor clarifying that vandalism is recorded as criminal damage if it is permanent, and the group discussed vigilance regarding potential illegal encampments.

5. Community Payback and Probation Service Activities

Denise Holway, the Unpaid Work Community Payback Operations Manager, outlined the probation service's role in delivering unpaid work sentences, described the types of community projects undertaken, and answered questions from attendees about publicity, project suitability, and operational logistics, including:

- **Overview of Community Payback:** explained that community payback is a court-imposed punishment for certain offences, requiring individuals to complete between 40 and 300 hours of unpaid work within the community, with the aim of delivering restorative justice and benefiting local organisations.
- **Types of Projects and Community Benefits:** detailed the range of projects completed, including litter picking, graffiti cleaning, park maintenance, and work for local charities and hospices, emphasising the direct benefits to both the community and the individuals on probation.
- **Operational Procedures and Safeguards:** described the strict supervision and risk assessment processes in place for those on probation, including high-visibility vests, restrictions on movement, and project suitability based on offence type.
- **Community Payback recent examples:** -
 - **St Margaret's Hospice (Taunton):** Garden maintenance work and installation of a new boundary fence, including creating an **emergency access gate**.
 - **St Andrew's Church, Wiveliscombe:** Ongoing churchyard and site maintenance.
 - **Village litter clearance project:** Removal of significant **accumulated litter/waste** from a small local village site (linked to previous encampment use), working with the local council for disposal.

Discussion

- **Project Nomination and Suitability:** Attendees inquired about how to nominate projects and the criteria for acceptance, with Denise explaining that all proposed work is risk assessed for safety and suitability, and that the team is open to new project suggestions from councils and community groups.
- **Publicity and Community Awareness:** Questions were raised about publicising the presence and work of community payback teams; Denise confirmed that while individual names cannot be shared, efforts are being made to improve community awareness and encourage further project nominations.

6. Together in Tone Community Music Project - Update

Caz Besterman, project manager for Together in Tone, presented an update on the community music initiative, highlighting efforts to map local music groups, promote health and well-being benefits, address accessibility and transport challenges, and encourage wider participation, with discussion and questions from attendees, including:

- **Project Scope and Objectives:** that the project aims to strengthen links between local music groups, promote health and well-being through music, and increase awareness and participation in music activities across the area.
- **Mapping and Engagement with Local Groups:** reported outreach to over 18 music groups, mapping available opportunities, and meeting with group leaders to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Promotion and Accessibility Efforts:** efforts include promoting the health benefits of music, increasing visibility through digital and print media, and piloting outreach sessions in parishes to engage harder-to-reach residents.
- **Future Actions and Collaboration:** plans include developing digital content, case study videos, and exploring collaborative events, as well as encouraging parishes to utilise underused facilities for music activities and to promote opportunities for all age groups.

Recommendations to the meeting:

Based on findings, the following delivery approach was proposed

Focus on smaller, targeted activity

- Community-based workshops and “have a go” sessions
 - Delivery through existing trusted settings (e.g. hubs, groups, events)
 - Focus on:
 - Older residents
 - Isolated individuals
 - Families / young people

Attendees endorsed the proposed direction of delivery, supporting a shift away from a large-scale central event towards a more practical, locally focused approach, prioritising increased promotion and visibility of existing music activity, development of a central directory of groups, and delivery of small-scale outreach and taster sessions to engage new participants. The meeting agreed the importance of improving accessibility, particularly in rural areas, through parish-based activity and varied communication channels,

while continuing to highlight the health and wellbeing benefits of participation and strengthening links between communities and existing music group

Discussion

Attendees discussed challenges such as transport, rural isolation, and limited awareness among non-participants, with suggestions for using parish magazines, community radio, and local events to reach more people.

The meeting recognised that while the current focus is primarily on adults, there are clear opportunities to involve children and families through links with schools, family events and community activities, helping to embed music participation across all age groups.

6. Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN Working Group Updates

- **Highways Working Group and Local Infrastructure Issues:**

Cllr Rod Burton, Chair, Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN Highways Working Group, provided an update on engagement with Somerset Council regarding the enhanced highways maintenance scheme, funding and prioritisation of works, pothole repair strategies, and communication challenges, with contributions from several attendees on local concerns and collaborative solutions – report attached.

- **Engagement with Somerset Council:** that the group is seeking clarification on how Parish and Town Councils can participate in the enhanced highways maintenance scheme, including legal powers, funding allocations, and the process for prioritising additional works.
- **Reporting and Tracking Road Issues:** that a system is being developed to collate and track reported road issues, with an emphasis on using the Somerset Council reporting tool and direct engagement for issues not covered by the tool.

Discussion

- **Pothole Repair and Communication:** Attendees discussed frustrations with Somerset Council strategy and communications, including pothole repairs, the need for better communication about repair strategies and schedules, and the importance of transparency to manage public expectations.
- **Collaboration and Resource Sharing:** The group explored opportunities for parishes to collaborate on maintenance work
 - The CE, Wellington Town Council, provided the below information on the full range of open spaces and grounds maintenance services, including playground inspections, grass

and verge cutting, available through Wellington Town Council Open Spaces Team.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Darren Hill, Open Spaces Manager. He would be happy to meet with you to discuss your requirements and provide a price - darren@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk

- **Additional Infrastructure Topics:** Updates were provided on car parking surveys and ongoing efforts to secure funding and coordinate with relevant authorities.

Public & Community Transport (P&CT) Working Group

Cllr Dave Mansell, Chair P&CT Working Group: *post meeting note* –

There has not been a recent meeting of the working group, but this is still planned and suggestions for new initiatives that could be pursued are welcomed. The Council's 27 service between West Buckland, Wellington and Wiveliscombe now has an extra day and runs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday every week (except on public holidays). There have also been recent small improvements to the 22 and 25 timetables.

Richard Mackrory, WiveyWelly Bus User Group, provided an update on improvements to the No. 27 bus service, now operating three days a week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday), and emphasised the importance of increasing passenger use to ensure its long-term viability.

Discussion

- **Limited rural bus service provision:** Attendees raised concerns about limited rural service provision, including infrequent timetables, lack of Sunday services and barriers for older residents accessing activities in Wellington. A suggestion was made to explore minor route and stop adjustments to the 27 route, with issues to be fed back through the bus users group and operators for further consideration.

Action: Link Officer

- **Slinky Services / Wivey Link:** Attendees noted the role of Slinky/Wivey Link / community transport services in helping address rural connectivity challenges, particularly for residents unable to access fixed bus routes. It was highlighted as part of the wider transport picture supporting access to activities, health services and community provision, though limitations remain around coverage and availability. The need to continue promoting and integrating such services

alongside bus provision to improve overall accessibility across rural parishes was recognised

Cross LCN Active Travel Steering Group:

Cllr Dave Mansell, Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN representative, post meeting note –

There have been further meetings of the Steering Group when it has been informed about some council plans and projects. The purpose and working of the group remains unclear, although it is still hoped that it will contribute to plans for future active travel routes in Somerset, including for the Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN area. Concerns and questions have been raised. Locally, there have been recent consultation events on shaping a sustainable future for Tone Works, which have included helpful discussions on connections for the community.

Charles Bisco, Grand Western Greenway provided an update on the Grand Western Greenway as below:

- * Advised that progress on the Grand Western Greenway is currently limited, pending a full feasibility study and changes to anticipated funding.
- * Noted that future progress is linked to key development decisions, including those relating to the Wellington Railway station area.
- * Highlighted the need to focus on interim, deliverable routes, including existing paths and quieter links
- * Reported early work exploring quiet route / pilot schemes to improve local connectivity.

7. Community News and Funding Opportunities:

The meeting received local news and updates as below:

Youth Provision Initiative: Nick Harvey, The In the Mix, announced a new lottery-funded initiative to consult with parishes about youth service needs, inviting interested councils to participate and highlighting available funding and support mechanisms.

Public Health Outreach and Community Health Checks: Charlotte Norman, Somerset Council Public Health Team, invited Councils and Community Groups to host NHS health checks and nutrition workshops in their community venues, offering outreach services for residents aged 40 to 74 and promoting food sustainability education.

- **NHS Health Checks and Outreach:** Charlotte explained that the outreach team can deliver NHS health checks for cardiovascular, kidney, and liver disease in community venues, and encouraged Councils to offer suitable spaces for these services.

- **Nutrition and Food Sustainability Workshops:** Charlotte also promoted local cookery and food sustainability workshops, noting that the team pays for venue use and is seeking additional locations to run these educational sessions.

8. Items of AOB

No items of any other business

9. Future meetings

Next meeting to be held:

22 July 2026, from 6.30pm

Wiveliscombe Rugby Club

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.