

Wellington and Wiveliscombe LCN meeting notes – 22 July 2026 at the Wiveliscombe Rugby Club

Attendees:

Chair: Cllr Dave Mansell

Cllr Andrew Govier, Somerset Council
Cllr Gwil Wren, Somerset Council
Cllr Peter Berman, Wiveliscombe Town Council
Cllr Janet Lloyd, Sampford Arundel Parish Council / Wellington Town Council
Cllr Dennis Venn, Bradford on Tone Parish Council
Cllr Roger Wilson, Wiveliscombe Town Council
Laura Batcha, Community Development Officer, Wellington Town Council
Gemma Beale, Thrive
Mark Bell, Wessex Water
Charles Biscoe, Grand Western Greenway
Nick Harvey, In the Mix
Fodo Higginson, Somerset Association Local Councils
Alan Measures, Wivey Link
Jeremy Toye

Somerset Council

Michelle Brooks, LCN Link Officer
Sam Murrell, LCN Link Officer
Laura Smedley, LCN Senior Link Officer

Apologies received:

Cllr Ross Henley, Somerset Council
Cllr Sarah Wakefield, Somerset Council
Richard Mackrory, Wivey & Welly Bus User Group
Sgt Jonathon O'Connor, Avon & Somerset Police
Bel Deering, Somerset Rivers Authority
Caz Besterman, Together in Tone, Music Project
Sue Levinge
Claire Louise Care, Reminiscence Learning
Cllr John Townend, Milverton Parish Council
Cllr Simon Bellamy, West Buckland Parish Council
Cllr Philip Wilson, Ashbrittle Parish Council
Cllr Rod Burton, Milverton Parish Council
Cllr Georgina Robart, Bradford on Tone Parish Council

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 27 April 2026

The notes and actions from the meeting, held 27 April 2026, were agreed by all present.

3. Update on Together in Tone – a musical collaboration update – Laura Batcha, Wellington Town Council

Laura Batcha, via PowerPoint presentation, provided an update on the Together in Tone project, highlighting its aims to improve wellbeing through music, recent activities, community engagement, and plans for future events, with support from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and local partners.

- **Project Goals and Activities:** the project aims to enhance wellbeing, reduce isolation, and increase social connection through inclusive music activities, working closely with rural groups and local councils to promote and streamline opportunities for participation.
- **Recent Actions and Community Involvement:** recent actions include workshops with local bands and choirs, exploration of transport links to improve access, and the development of both online and print materials to raise awareness of local music events.
- **Upcoming Events and Promotion:** plans include a community singing day at Wellington School, the launch of beginner music courses, and the creation of a community video to further promote participation, with efforts to ensure events are low-cost or free and accessible to all.
- **Feedback and Legacy:** feedback from participants has been positive, with increased confidence and enjoyment reported, and the project is working to expand the number of beginner-friendly groups and maintain an online directory.

Together in Tone highlights summary:

- Work has focused on improving accessibility and visibility of local music opportunities, including both online and printed information.
- Participants of events shared positive feedback, reporting increased confidence, enjoyment, social connection and improved wellbeing from taking part in singing activities.
- Transport was discussed as a barrier to participation, and the project is exploring ways to improve access for residents who may struggle to reach activities.
- A key success has been increasing the number of music groups offering beginner-friendly pathways, making it easier for new participants to get involved.
- Meeting participants were encouraged to promote the upcoming Community Singing Day and support participation, as feedback gathered will help demonstrate impact and support future funding bids.

Action: Laura Smedley

4. Guest Speaker: Wessex Water Information and updates - Mark Bell, Community Engagement Officer, Wessex Water:

Mark Bell, Community Engagement Officer, Wessex Water, via PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the Wessex Waters operations, infrastructure investments, community engagement, and customer support initiatives, including: service challenges.

- **Company Overview and Performance:** explained that Wessex Water serves nearly 2.9 million customers across the west of England, is consistently ranked among the top water companies, and has maintained high standards in drinking water quality and customer satisfaction, with 14 years of the lowest complaints and no hose pipe bans for 50 years.
- **Infrastructure Investments and Upgrades:** detailed a £3.7 billion investment over five years, including £500 million to reduce storm overflow discharges and over £1 billion for nutrient removal from wastewater, as well as the rollout of smart meters and major works such as phosphorus removal and sewer lining projects in the local area.
- **Water Supply and Sewage Services:** the presentation covered the scale of water supply (1.4 million customers, 274 million litres daily) and sewage services (2.9 million customers, 487 million litres daily), with explanations of treatment processes, the importance of groundwater sources, and the resilience of the system against droughts.
- **Customer Support and Priority Services:** emphasised the Priority Services Register for vulnerable customers, flexible payment plans, and partnerships with Citizens Advice, highlighting the importance of spreading awareness about available support, especially during incidents like the recent South Petherton main break.
- **Community Engagement and Education:** Wessex Water engages with the community through educational programs for students, environmental and community funds, volunteering opportunities, and free water-saving devices, encouraging local groups and schools to participate and apply for funding.

Discussion

Questions on Leakage and Development Impact: In response to questions, Mark Bell agreed to provide updated leakage figures and explained that while Wessex Water cannot refuse new housing connections, they assess and upgrade infrastructure as needed, focusing on separating rainwater from se and updating pumping stations to handle increased demand.

Action: Mark Bell

Wessex Water – Useful Information for Residents:

Priority Services Register – Free support for vulnerable residents, including people with disabilities, medical conditions, carers, older people, and those experiencing financial hardship. Support can include bottled water during supply

interruptions, account assistance, password schemes and referrals for additional support.

Help with Bills and Debt – Wessex Water offers a range of reduced tariffs, payment plans and debt support, working alongside Citizens Advice to help residents who are struggling financially.

Community Grants - Up to £4,000 available through the Community Fund for projects benefiting local communities / Up to £2,000 available through the Environment Fund for biodiversity and environmental projects.

Free Water-Saving Products - Toilet save-a-flush devices (Hippo/Buffalo bags) / Leak detection strips / Four-minute shower timers / Sink hair catchers / Fat and oil collection pots / Reusable make-up removal pads / Toilet tissue spray as an alternative to wet wipes.

Educational Visits and School Support - Free visits to schools and educational sessions for young people. Over 2,200 students engaged in June alone.

Water Recycling Centre Open Day - Wellington Water Recycling Centre will be open to the public on 1 October, giving residents the opportunity to see how wastewater is treated. Free to attend.

Community Drop-ins - Regular face-to-face drop-in sessions held at libraries, community centres and talking cafés, next sessions:

5 October 2026 from 10am – 12pm Wellington

12 November 2026 from 10am – 12pm Wiveliscombe

Residents can discuss bills, water supply issues, roadworks, support schemes and other Wessex Water services directly with staff. No appointment required.

Contact and Support - Community enquiries – Mark Bell
mark.bell@wessexwater.co.uk Website: [In your community | Wessex Water](#)

5. Guest Speaker: Youth work and activities in the LCN area - Nick Harvey, In the Mix

Nick Harvey, Charity Manager, In the Mix, via PowerPoint presentation, presented an update on youth work activities, expansion, funding, and partnerships, responding to questions about capacity, funding sources, and the impact of their programs on young people and the wider community.

- **Youth Work Philosophy and Activities:** described the organisation's approach to youth work, emphasising professional standards, trusted relationships, and a focus on social, economic, educational, and experiential development, with activities ranging from open access youth clubs to targeted support for SEND groups and alternative education.

- **Expansion and Impact:** explained that the organisation has expanded significantly over the past 18 months, now covering four core areas and engaging over 3,000 young people annually, providing more than 1,300 free meals and organising trips, residentials, and volunteering opportunities.
- **Funding and Sustainability:** explained that funding is split roughly 50/50 between commissioned services (such as contracts with Somerset Council for alternative education and young carers) and grants/donations, with ongoing challenges in securing sustainable funding for universal youth work.
- **Recent and Upcoming Projects:** recent initiatives include the Happy, Healthy Holidays scheme, Wellington Youth Project in partnership with Wellington Town Council, and plans to expand open access youth work in new areas, supported by lottery and community funding.

Discussion

Capacity and Access: In response to questions, Nick confirmed that summer activities are at or near capacity, with some events still open, and clarified that access criteria vary by project, with some universal and others referral-based, depending on funding and local needs.

Participants welcomed the organisation's preventative approach, recognising the importance of providing trusted relationships, positive activities and early intervention opportunities for young people before problems escalate.

There was discussion about the increasing demand for youth services and the challenge of securing sustainable funding, particularly for open-access youth work which is often harder to fund despite its community benefits. Members discussed the value of community-based youth work in addressing isolation, supporting wellbeing, developing life skills and creating positive opportunities for young people across rural communities

Nick encouraged Town and Parish and Councils to engage with In The Mix to help identify local needs, support consultations with young people, explore partnership funding opportunities and develop local youth provision.

Action: Nick Harvey

6. Update on the Highways Working Group

Participants discussed the previously circulated Highways Working Group report, prepared by the group's Chair, Cllr Rod Burton. The discussion covered the group's activities and effectiveness, including reporting processes, pothole repairs, signage issues and funding opportunities for local infrastructure improvements, including:

- **Reporting and Tracking Issues:** the group emphasised the importance of reporting highways issues online to generate reference numbers, which are then tracked through an action tracker managed by the Link Officer, allowing for better follow-up and accountability.
- **Pothole Repairs and Prioritisation:** discussion covered the prioritisation of pothole repairs, with acknowledgment of an exceptional year for potholes, the

need for common sense in addressing borderline cases, and the role of superintendents in inspections.

- **Signage and Road Closures:** signage issues, particularly around road closures and contractor responsibilities, were raised and added as an agenda item for the next meeting, with criteria for signage being circulated to all members.

Action: Michelle Brooks

- **Flood Group and Funding Opportunities:** a subgroup on flooding was noted, with mention of £50 million available over two years for projects, and encouragement to apply for both Somerset Rivers Authority and other community funding sources.

Cllr Janet Lloyd highlighted the value of the Highways Working Group, noting that regular attendance by Somerset Council highways officers provides an effective forum for raising local issues and monitoring progress. She encouraged parish councils and residents to report concerns online so reference numbers can be generated and tracked through the group's action tracker, helping communities and highways officers identify outstanding issues and support timely follow-up.

7. Update on the Public & Community Transport Working Group

Public and Community Transport Updates: Cllr Dave Mansell summarised recent developments in local bus and transport services, including the continuation of the 27 service, digital booking for the Slinky service, and changes to the 25-service tendering process, with discussion of funding and future improvements, including:

- **Bus Service Continuity and Changes:** the 27-bus service has continued beyond its trial period with positive feedback, while the Slinky service now offers digital booking up to an hour before travel, improving convenience for users in areas not served by main routes.
- **Tendering and Funding for Bus Services:** the 25 service is now a fully subsidised route and will be tendered every 18 months, with expectations that the current operator will continue; Somerset Council has received an additional £340,000 for bus services, potentially enabling further improvements.
- **Future Focus and Improvements:** the working group will focus on optimising existing resources, exploring opportunities for the 27 route to serve more parishes, and monitoring the impact of new funding and potential changes in regional transport governance.

8. Update on the Cross LCN Active Travel Steering Group

Active Travel and Greenway Initiatives: The group discussed progress and challenges related to active travel projects, including the Grand Western Greenway and Quiet Lane initiatives, ongoing engagement with Somerset Council officers, and the integration of active travel in new housing developments.

- **Project Progress and Challenges:** while priority projects have been identified and some work has been done, participants expressed frustration with the pace of progress and lack of early consultation but noted ongoing

engagement with planning officers and the inclusion of active travel in new developments.

- **Future Opportunities:** Somerset Council is piloting 'green lanes' similar to quiet lanes, and the group is advocating for their inclusion in future phases, maintaining dialogue with officers to advance these initiatives.

9. Election of Chair

Somerset Councillor, Andrew Govier, was nominated for Chair of the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN by Dave Mansell and seconded by Cllr Janet Lloyd with no other nominations put forward.

Cllr Andrew Govier accepted the position and was elected as Chair of the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN.

10. Election of Vice-Chair

Sampford Arundel Parish Councillor / Wellington Town Councillor, Janet Lloyd, was nominated for Vice-Chair of the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN by Cllr Gwil Wren and seconded by Cllr Peter Berman, with no other nominations put forward.

Cllr Janet Lloyd accepted the position and was elected as Vice-Chair of the Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN.

11. Reflection Annual Report / Next steps and ideas for the coming year

- **New Link Officer Introduction:** Laura Smedley was welcomed as the new Link Officer, with appreciation expressed for the outgoing officer's contributions and anticipation of continued positive collaboration.
- **Health Sector Engagement:** Zoe Buffkin, representing health engagement for the area, will join the next meeting, aiming to improve integration between health services and community initiatives.
- **Governance Review and Future Changes:** discussion noted ongoing reviews of community engagement and the potential for new government guidance on neighbourhood committees, which may influence the structure and operation of LCNs in the future.

Small Grant Applications

Small grants for Community Health and Well-Being: Parish Councils were encouraged to get in touch with Fodo Higginson, SALC to discuss potential applications, details below:

Fodo Higginson, Community Health & Wellbeing Officer

HWBSupport@somerset-alc.org.uk / Mb: 07932265419

12. Dates of future LCN meetings

Wellington & Wiveliscombe LCN 2026/27 Dates / Venues to be confirmed

Wednesday 4 November 2026 at 6.30pm

Monday 25 January 2027 at 6.30pm (Online)

Monday 26 April 2027 at 6.30pm

Wednesday 21 July 2027 at 6.30pm (AGM)

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

Meeting closed 8.30pm

See Annex A for Summary of Actions for the meeting.