

## Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting: Minehead and Watchet LCN  
Dunster Room, West Somerset House, Williton (Hybrid)

Date: Thursday, 9 April 2026

Time: 6:30 – 9:30pm

### LCN Core Membership Attendance:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Cllr Mandy Chilcott (Chair)	Somerset Council
Cllr Hugh Davies	Somerset Council
Cllr Cara Strom	Somerset Council
Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Vice Chr)	Carhampton Parish Council
Cllr Ian Timmins	Monksilver Parish Council
Cllr Tracey Skinner	Sampford Brett Parish Council
Cllr Loretta Whetlor	Watchet / Williton Parish Council / SALC
Cllr Peter Payne	Williton Parish Council
Izzy Silvester	Thrive
Cllr John Richards	WACET
PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams	Avon & Somerset Police

### Officer Attendance:

Sam Murrell	LCN Link Officer (Exmoor, Minehead & Watchet)
Laura Smedley	Somerset Council Partnerships Officer
Michelle Brooks	LCN Link Officer (Taunton, Wellington and Wivey)

### Other Attendees

Dave Northey	Somerset Bus Partnership
PCSO Sammi Virgin	Avon & Somerset Police
Ali Sanderson	Spark
Fodo Higginson	SALC
Hayley Bullock	Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)
Bruce Lang	Minehead Swimming Pool / Citizens Advice WS
Katrina Midgely	West Somerset Food Cupboard

## Online Attendees

Ray Tew  
Fiona Toms  
Cllr John Irven  
Syed Shah

Minehead Coastal Development Trust  
Minehead People and Place Partnership  
Watchet Town Council  
Somerset Council Public Liaison Officer

### Name:

### Apologies:

James Divall  
Cllr Jan Swan  
Cllr Sue Smith  
Cllr Tony Brooks  
Craig Palmer / Ben Parker  
Paul Matcham  
Kerry Westcott

Somerset Council  
Sampford Brett Parish Council  
Carhampton Parish Council  
Crowcombe Parish Council  
Minehead Town Council  
Connect Somerset / Minehead Eye  
PCN Manager (NHS)

### Summary of discussion:

### Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Items:

#### 1 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies noted as recorded above.

#### Staff Introductions:

Michelle Brooks and Laura Smedley were providing meeting support.

#### 2 Update from Avon and Somerset Police

PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams and PCSO Sammi Virgin attended to discuss recent police activities. This included interventions for antisocial behaviour, youth engagement, and ongoing challenges with evidence collection and community reporting. Input was provided from community members such as Syed Shah and Cllr Hugh Davies regarding local issues and police responses.

- **Antisocial Behaviour Interventions:** Katherine detailed the use of various police powers and interventions to address antisocial behaviour, including Section 35 dispersal orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), community protection warnings and notices, and civil injunctions. These measures are applied progressively depending on the severity and recurrence of offences, with a focus on early intervention and legal escalation when necessary.
- **Youth Engagement and Safety:** The police team, including PCSO Mike Deer and PCSO Harriet James, have been conducting walk-and-talk

events with local girls to identify areas where they feel unsafe, aiming to use this feedback to improve community safety. Plans are in place to extend similar engagement to boys, and ongoing efforts include visible patrols and partnership work with schools and local agencies.

- **Challenges in Evidence Collection:** Katherine explained the difficulties in collecting timely evidence, particularly from businesses lacking technology to upload CCTV footage, which can delay or hinder police action. The importance of prompt reporting by victims and witnesses was emphasised to ensure effective intervention.
- **Community Concerns and Police Response:** Syed raised concerns about ongoing youth disturbances at Minehead McDonald's, particularly regarding underage girls and drug use. Katherine confirmed police awareness and ongoing interventions, including bans and ABCs for known offenders.
- **Bridge Street One Way System:** Cllr Davies raised an issue with a road closure in Williton and traffic management, prompting discussion about police coordination with local councils. Cllr Davies was asked to email his particular concern to Katherine so that it could be investigated.

The full statement is attached to these notes.

### 3. **Chairs Opening Remarks: Community Engagement Review**

The Chair provided an update on the Community Engagement Review, including:

- The context for the review;
- Its relationship to future governance and decision-making; and
- The intention to strengthen how communities are engaged across Somerset.

The report and recommendations are currently being worked through and will be shared once available.

#### **Somerset Electoral Boundary Review**

The Chair highlighted the Somerset Electoral Boundary Review process. Links to official Boundary Commission maps and draft recommendations were shared to support understanding.

The map of the new electoral boundaries can be accessed on this link: [Somerset | LGBCE](#) .

The item emphasised:

- **Proposed changes to electoral divisions**  
The Chair outlined the process undertaken by the Boundary Commission, which resulted in a reduction from 110 to 96 councillors and the creation of new single- and two-member divisions. The review aimed to balance workloads and representation, considering population growth and new housing developments.
- **Community Concerns About Representation:** Cllr Loretta Whetlor questioned whether the review considered the mileage and complexity of rural divisions, as well as whether local knowledge was adequately incorporated. The Chair clarified that the process was numbers-driven but allowed for some flexibility, and that maps and details are available online for public review.
- **Implementation Timeline and Effects:** The changes will take effect from 2027, with some areas experiencing significant adjustments in representation and polling arrangements. The Chair noted that while most residents will see little change, some divisions will have altered boundaries and names to better reflect local communities.

#### 4. Coastal Visioning

Unfortunately James Divall was unable to attend and tendered apologies. He has agreed to attend a future LCN meeting and is due to speak at the next West Somerset Flood Group meeting. In his absence, Sam Murrell was asked to provide an update on current ongoing initiatives.

Sam described recent collaborative efforts among council officers, the Environment Agency, and local stakeholders to address coastal and environmental challenges in Somerset, including workshops, partnership formation, and ongoing projects.

An update was provided on developing a Somerset-wide coastal vision. Discussion focused on a recent workshop that brought together practitioners, stakeholders, and council officers to map out and discuss key coastal issues. The session aimed to foster collaboration and identify priority areas for action.

- Coastal resilience
- Cross-agency working
- Longer-term strategic planning for coastal communities
- Learning from coastal visioning workshops and Environment Agency engagement.

**Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement:** The meeting highlighted the formation of the SASP partnership and the need for greater inclusion of leisure

and health sectors in environmental planning. Sam Murrell noted ongoing efforts to ensure all relevant parties are involved in future initiatives.

### **Positives**

- Strong recognition of the need for more joined-up working.
- Improved dialogue between Somerset Council, the Environment Agency and partners.
- Growing willingness across organisations to address coastal challenges collectively.

### **Challenges**

- Work remains at an early, strategic stage, with limited clarity on timescales.
- Complexity of coastal issues (flooding, infrastructure, climate impacts) acknowledged as resource-intensive.
- Progress described as slow, with competing pressures on officer time but recent major incidents, such as flooding, have tested and reinforced the need for coordinated responses.

## **5. Third Sector Focus – Health and Wellbeing**

### **a. Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)**

#### **Coastal Place Partnership – Speaker, Hayley Bullock, Strategic Place Manager: Coastal.**

The Somerset Coastal strip through Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP), as lead body, has received funding from Sport England to boost levels of physical activity among those in greatest need, from the most inactive communities.

A copy of the slide pack presentation is attached to these notes.

SASP presented on the **Coastal Place Activity Partnership**, funded by Sport England.

The focus was on:

- Increasing physical activity among the least active communities;
- Addressing inequalities along the Somerset coastal strip;
- Adopting a place-based, system-wide approach.

The presentation emphasised collaboration with local partners and communities.

- **Funding and Strategic Focus:** Hayley described significant investment from Sport England into local place partnerships, with Somerset receiving funding to increase physical activity, tackle inequalities, and support children and young people. Priority areas and groups were identified based on needs assessments and data analysis.

- **Barriers to Participation:** The discussion addressed challenges such as transport, access to facilities, and confidence in joining activities. David Northey highlighted the availability of bus services for older adults and suggested exploring youth fares and accessibility improvements.
- **Programme Delivery and Community Engagement:** Hayley Bullock outlined ongoing and planned activities, including yoga sessions, school support recruitment, and collaborations with health and community partners. Efforts are being made to publicise activities through local networks, social media, and health centres.
- As part of the SASP Coastal Place Partnership update, Bruce Lang from Minehead Swimming Pool Limited noted that swimming provision in Minehead has been identified as a priority area within wider health and physical activity discussions. The inclusion of swimming facilities was welcomed in principle, recognising their potential contribution to community wellbeing. The matter remains at an early, strategic stage and will continue to be considered as partnership work develops.

**b. West Somerset Food Cupboard – Speaker, Katrina Midgely.**

The West Somerset Food Cupboard has been run from the Parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Alcombe since 2007. Katrina provided a detailed overview of the Food Cupboard, including:

**CALL TO ACTION: - The Food Cupboard is actively seeking new Trustees (in particular a Treasurer), and larger operating premises.**

- **Origins and Growth:** The food cupboard began as a church project in 2007, using agency partnerships to distribute food discreetly and address wider needs. The project has since expanded significantly, now requiring much larger storage and operational space.
- **Pantry and Volunteer Operations:** A local pantry was added with support from council funding, offering affordable fresh food to members. The project relies on over 40 volunteers for food collection, sorting, and distribution, and is seeking additional trustees to support its governance and sustainability.
- **Recognition and Social Impact:** The Food Cupboard has received national recognition through the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.
- **Future Plans and Challenges:** The organisation is looking for new premises to accommodate its growth and provide space for additional services, such as advice sessions, especially in light of the impending closure of local Citizens Advice services.

### c. Spark, Somerset – Speaker, Ali Sanderson

Spark Somerset is the local infrastructure charity, supporting and championing voluntary and community organisations to help change lives and build healthy, resilient communities.

Ali Sanderson discussed the role of Spark Somerset in supporting voluntary and community groups, focusing on volunteer recruitment, organisational development, and addressing sector-wide challenges.

- **Support Services and Networks:** Spark Somerset offers advice, training, volunteer matching, and specialist forums (such as HR and digital support) to help local groups build capacity and sustainability. The organisation also facilitates collaboration and advocacy for the sector.
- **Sector Challenges:** Key challenges identified include securing diverse funding, recruiting and retaining volunteers (especially trustees and treasurers), and strategic planning. The reduction in statutory services has increased pressure on voluntary groups to fill gaps in community support.
- **Paid Support for Small Groups:** Cllr John Irven raised the issue of small groups needing part-time paid administrative support but lacking the expertise to employ staff. Ali Sanderson advised on using Spark's HR network and Skillshare programme to access mentoring and guidance on employment matters.

#### Positives

- Wide range of practical support available to community organisations.
- Strong intelligence gathered from VCSE engagement across West Somerset.
- Commitment to strengthening collaboration and sector resilience.

#### Challenges

- Acute shortage of trustees and volunteers, especially treasurers.
- Increasing demand on VCSE services without matching funding growth.
- Rurality and transport barriers continue to affect access and sustainability.

### d. Additional Item: Update on West Somerset Citizens Advice

A Fact Sheet is attached to these notes.

Members discussed the current challenges facing Citizens Advice provision in West Somerset, noting significant financial pressures and uncertainty

around future service sustainability. The importance of the service to residents and partner organisations was emphasised, alongside recognition that informal or volunteer-led alternatives cannot replace specialist advice provision. While community concern and local mitigation efforts were acknowledged, no decisions were made and the situation remains ongoing.

## 6. Update on Working Groups

A variety of attendees provided updates on transport and highways issues, including funding opportunities, service planning, maintenance priorities, and recent community-led improvements.

### a. Transport and Active Travel Update

The minutes of previous working group meetings had been circulated with the agenda pack.

- David Northey from the Somerset Bus Improvement Partnership reported on a three-year government grant for bus services, noting that most funding is allocated but some flexibility exists in the first year for new schemes. The group discussed the need to brainstorm and propose local initiatives for funding.
- **Community-Led Transport Solutions:** Fodo Higginson (SALC) shared experiences of organising local bus services through parish contributions, highlighting the importance of careful coordination to avoid duplication or disruption of existing services.
- David Northey outlined a request for an additional bus request stop on the No28 service route at Musgrove Park Hospital to improve accessibility and reduce the need for passengers to cross a busy road when transferring between services. Members were invited to support the proposal by submitting responses using a template letter, with town and parish council support welcomed to help demonstrate local backing.

David drafted the letter template (attached) and asked that requests were emailed to [Rebecca.Mantyk@first.co.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Mantyk@first.co.uk) before the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

The next TAAT meeting is due to take place on Thursday 23 April, online via Microsoft Teams at 11am. A Hold the date invitation has been sent.

### b. Highways Working Group

The minutes of the previous working group meeting had been circulated with the agenda pack.

- Sam Murrell described the allocation of a new maintenance budget and the formation of a steering group to prioritise these works. Concerns were

raised about communication with parishes, notification of roadworks, and the need for inclusive representation in decision-making.

### Action

- Request clarity from Somerset Council highways on:
  - How the enhanced maintenance budget will be targeted.
  - Whether LCN and parish-identified issues will inform prioritisation.
  - How drainage, vegetation clearance, and rural routes will be assessed.

The next Highways meeting is not scheduled until May, so a request was made to discuss these items sooner if possible.

**Post Meeting Note:** Chair of Council, Cllr Mike Best has requested that a senior highways officer attends the Crewkerne and Ilminster Highways Group at 10am on Thursday 23 April to provide an update on the schemes. This is to outline the detail around:

- The Additional Highways Maintenance and Environmental Budget
- The Enhanced Highways Maintenance Letter to parishes

Other LCNs are invited to attend for these items if they wish. The meeting will be held online via Microsoft Teams and will be chaired by Cllr Mike Best.

### Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN Highways

Microsoft Teams meeting

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 374 434 065 186 0

Passcode: oe7gm9rn

There is a diary conflict with the TAAT meeting which starts at 11am, but these items are early on the agenda.

**Recent Improvements and Ongoing Issues:** Updates included the implementation of a weight restriction on the B3188, completion of traffic light works at Dunster, and ongoing challenges with pothole repairs and utility company coordination.

## 7. Agree the Notes/Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting held online on Thursday 8 January 2026 were approved without amendment.

## 8. Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)

Matters not covered elsewhere were briefly acknowledged. – B3191 Meeting. Due to conflicting priorities it has not been possible to convene this meeting. The elected members present agreed to collaborate on escalating this matter.

- Maintain follow-up with senior highways officers in relation to:
  - The **B3191 Planning Meeting (date TBC)**
  - Securing appropriate officer attendance
  - Clarifying how B3191 issues feed into wider transport planning and prioritisation

**Context**

- An email had already been sent to Chris Hall (26/03/2026); members agreed further follow-up is needed to progress meaningful discussion.
- Sam will diarise a post meeting catch up with Chair and Vice Chair of the LCN to compose a follow up email on behalf of the LCN.

**9. Parish Matters – Community News**

**Good News Stories Shared:**

**Thrive :** Attendees were updated on emerging *On Your Bike / Build-a-Bike* activity, including cycle drop-ins where participants are supported to build or refurbish a bike and take it home for ongoing use. The approach builds on successful post-COVID initiatives that enabled residents to access education, services and activities through cycling, particularly across Minehead, Dunster, Carhampton and Watchet. The scheme was welcomed as a practical active-travel intervention, though it was noted that activity remains at an early stage and is dependent on funding, capacity and safe cycling infrastructure.

**Williton Parish Council** reported positive news that it has purchased the former Williton Library building, securing it as a community asset. This was welcomed as a proactive step to protect local infrastructure and provide opportunities for future community, advice and wellbeing use, particularly in light of wider pressures on local services.

**10. Dates of future LCN meetings**

**Transport & Active Travel (TAAT) Group – Online**

Thursday 23 April 11:00 – 12:30pm via Microsoft Teams

<b>Proposed Minehead and Watchet LCN meeting Dates Dunster Meeting Room (TBC) West Somerset House</b>	<b>Highways Sub-Group Dates Dunster Meeting Room West Somerset House</b>
Thursday 9 April 2026 at 6.30pm	Wednesday 13 May 10.15am – 1pm
Thursday 16 July 2026 at 6.30pm (AGM)	

Meeting closed at 9:30pm.

## **Attachments**

### **Presentation Slides**

- Coastal Place Partnership – SASP
- Spark Somerset In West Somerset
- SALC – Community Health and Wellbeing

**Avon and Somerset Police - Statement**

**Enhanced Maintenance Pilot Letter**

**WSAB – Fact Sheet about the closure**

**Somerset Bus Partnership – Template Letter for town/parish councils.**

DRAFT