

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Minehead and Watchet LCN

Date: Thursday 8 January 2026

Time: 6:30 – 8:30pm – ONLINE ONLY

LCN Core Membership Attendance:

Name:

Cllr Mandy Chilcott (Chair)
Cllr Hugh Davies
Cllr Andy Hadley
Cllr Marcus Kravis
Cllr Cara Strom
Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Vice Chr)
Cllr Tony Brooks
Cllr Ian Timmins
Cllr Robin Wichard
Cllr Judith Stabb
Cllr John Irven
Cllr Loretta Whetlor
Cllr Mark Philipson
Jessica Coles
Ray Tew
John Richards

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Carhampton Parish Council
Crowcombe Parish Council
Monksilver Parish Council
Nettlecombe Parish Council
Old Cleeve Parish Council
Watchet Town Council
Williton Parish Council / SALC
West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Thrive
Minehead and Coast Development Trust
WACET

Officer Attendance:

Sam Murrell
Chris Booth
Laura Smedley
Michelle Brooks
Syed Shah
Colin McDonald

LCN Link Officer (Exmoor, Minehead & Watchet)
LCN Link Officer (Crewkerne, Ilminster, Levels)
Somerset Council Partnerships Officer
LCN Link Officer (Taunton, Wellington and Wivey)
Somerset Council Public Liaison Officer
Somerset Council, Exmoor Rural Housing Officer

Other attendees

Dave Northey
Fiona Toms
Martin Stevens

Somerset Bus Partnership
Minehead People and Place Partnership
Watchet Coastal Community Team

Name:

Apologies:

Cllr Andy Sully
Cllr Rosemary Woods
Cllr Jan Swan
Michelle Francis (Clerk)
Cllr Peter Payne
Cllr Sue Smith
Craig Palmer / Ben Parker

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Sampford Brett Parish Council
Williton Parish Council
Williton Parish Council
Carhampton Parish Council
Minehead Town Council

Summary of discussion:

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

1 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies noted as recorded above.

Staff Introductions: Colin McDonald introduced himself as the Somerset Council Exmoor Rural Housing Enabler., Laura Smedley joined as the Partnerships Officer, and Chris Booth as a new Link Officer (Levels and Moors, Crewkerne and Ilminster), each outlining their roles and areas of support.

Lilly Keeley Watts represented Somerset Association of Local Councils

2 Update from Avon and Somerset Police

The police were not online but a written police report had been submitted in advance of the meeting. (Attached). Ongoing police engagement was discussed, while Cllr Hugh Davies raised concerns about traffic violations on Bridge Street, which Sam Murrell addressed by clarifying reporting procedures and the need for evidence.

- **Police Report Circulation:** Sam summarised the police's written update, mentioning their attendance at Talking Cafes, youth engagement, and fraud awareness initiatives, and offered to circulate the full report to attendees.
- **Fraud Awareness Sessions:** Sam suggested inviting the police fraud team to a future LCN meeting to discuss scams and cyber awareness, with Mandy agreeing to consider this based on agenda availability.

- **PCSO Recruitment Update:** Sam explained that the police were one PCSO down but had recruited a probationary PCSO and were in the process of recruiting another, attributing their absence to shift patterns and the online meeting format.
- **Bridge Street Traffic Violations:** Cllr Hugh Davies reported ongoing issues with drivers ignoring the one-way system on Bridge Street during road closures, expressing frustration at the lack of police follow-up and concern for public safety.
- **Reporting and Evidence Requirements:** Sam clarified that police action on traffic violations requires evidence such as dashcam footage, as word-of-mouth reports are insufficient for prosecution, and encouraged reporting with supporting data.

3 **Dunster Steep Traffic Light Upgrade Scheme**

Syed Shah introduced himself as the public liaison officer for the Dunster scheme, addressed questions from attendees about traffic management issues, communication, and safety, and outlined ongoing adjustments and monitoring.

- **Scheme Introduction and Communication:** Syed Shah explained his role as public liaison officer, described his approach to community engagement via newsletters and direct contact, and acknowledged the importance of timely, accurate information for residents.
- **Correction of Misinformation:** In response to John Richards, Syed apologised for incorrect information in the initial newsletter, committed to issuing an updated map and newsletter, and confirmed that the website would be updated promptly.
- **Traffic Flow and Sensor Issues:** Syed reported that a sensor failure had caused traffic management problems, which had since been rectified, and described ongoing monitoring of traffic flows, including coordination with Butlins and Dunster Castle to address congestion.
- **Access and Safety Concerns:** Cllr Judith Stabb and Cllr Hugh Davies raised concerns about unclear signage, right turns, and access for local businesses and emergency services; Syed confirmed that signage improvements and business access signs were being implemented, and that emergency vehicle access was being prioritised.
- **Community Feedback and Adjustments:** Syed encouraged direct communication with him for rapid response, assured attendees that feedback was being relayed to contractors and management, and outlined plans for ongoing adjustments, especially in anticipation of increased traffic during holiday periods.

4 Exmoor Rural Housing Enabler

Colin McDonald presented the Exmoor Housing Survey, explained local letting policies, and discussed survey logistics and collaboration with parishes.

- **Survey Purpose and Methodology:** Colin McDonald described the rationale for conducting surveys in rural areas, highlighting limitations of housing registers and the need for periodic, detailed surveys to capture local demand, including for affordable home ownership.
- **Survey Distribution and Access:** Colin explained that the survey would be distributed to all residences within the Exmoor National Park boundary, with online and paper options, and that posters with QR codes would be sent to affected parish councils and libraries to maximise accessibility.
- **Boundary and Eligibility Clarification:** Colin clarified that residents outside the National Park boundary could still participate in the survey if they wished to move into the park, and that the survey aimed to capture a broad range of housing needs, including those of adult children living at home.
- **Local Lettings Policy Explanation:** In response to Cllr Marcus Kravis, Colin detailed the differences between Exmoor and West Somerset local lettings policies, including the stricter local connection criteria in Exmoor (ten years versus five), and explained how Section 106 agreements and local lettings plans operate.
- **Survey Timeline and Promotion:** Colin announced the survey would launch on 1 February and run until 31 March, with a social media campaign and requests for parish councils to help promote participation, aiming for comprehensive community input.

Colin McDonald – Requests to Attendees:

- Asked parish councils to help promote the Exmoor Housing Survey by displaying posters (with QR codes and web links) in visible local places and distributing paper copies if requested.
- Encouraged attendees to support the social media campaign for the survey by sharing posts to increase participation.
- Invited questions about the survey and offered to provide links and further information to Sam for wider circulation.

5 West Somerset Food Cupboard

Sam confirmed that Katrina had previously expressed interest in attending and would be followed up to ensure her participation at the next meeting, as there were ongoing issues to be highlighted.

6 To receive the Minehead and Watchet LCN, End of 2025 Yearly Report.

The draft report was circulated with the agenda pack and is attached to these notes. It has been published on the website and will be circulated to portfolio holders. It can be viewed on this link: [Minehead and Watchet LCN Report 2025](#).

Cllr Mandy Chilcott and Sam presented the Minehead and Watchet LCN end of year report, highlighting achievements, data insights, and ongoing projects, and received positive feedback and additional contributions from attendees

- **Report Compilation and Data Sources:** Sam explained the process of compiling the report, using updated data from Somerset Business Intelligence and other sources, and acknowledged contributions from officers and community members.
- **Key Achievements and Themes:** The report outlined major themes such as highways and traffic management, transport and active travel, coastal protection, and the Stronger Together project, with Cllr Mandy Chilcott and others emphasising the importance of these initiatives for the local area.
- **Community Engagement and Testimonials:** Attendees, including Loretta Whetlor (SALC/ Watchet and Williton PC) and Fiona Toms (Minehead People & Place Partnership) discussed the value of community engagement, the need for broad participation in local plan consultations, and the importance of sharing good news and testimonials to showcase local successes.
- **Adoption and Dissemination:** The group agreed to support the report, with plans for Sam to publish it on the website and circulate it to directors and portfolio holders, aiming to use it as a model for other LCNs.

7 Agree the Notes/Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 16 October 2025 at West Somerset House were approved without amendment.

8 Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)

Issues around bus stop information, active travel group formation, and coastal protection updates discussed.

Coastal Protection and Environmental Issues

- Cllr Mandy Chilcott shared an update from James Divall, Somerset Council Head of Climate and Natural Environment who is prioritising coastline risk and flood mitigation for 2026, including work on Minehead's attenuation ponds and a program to assess North Hill, Cleeve Hill, Doniford, and Queen Bee cliffs, as well as harbours.
- There is ongoing commissioning for a Somerset coastline vision and progress on a new shoreline management plan and asset register.
- Cllr Mandy Chilcott welcomed the increased focus on the coastal strip and noted it was the first time such attention had been given, expressing appreciation for Officer Divall's continued engagement with the group.

SALC Health and Wellbeing Fund

Lilly explained her role as working on the Community Health and Wellbeing Programme for the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC), supporting city, town, and parish councils in Somerset.

- SALC can assist with community engagement, developing community plans, organizing events, fundraising beyond the precept, and writing grant applications.
- SALC still has some funding available for parishes with populations under 1,000 and is keen to support smaller parishes.
- Lilly and Cllr Loretta Whetlor confirmed SALC can help promote local plan consultations by including them in their weekly reports and newsletters.

9 Update from Highways Working Group

The minutes of previous working group meetings had been circulated with the agenda pack. Speeding issues, 20mph scheme, and B3191 discussed; ongoing work and officer engagement noted.

- **Speeding and 20mph Schemes:** Cllr Judith Stabb and Cllr Marcus Kravis reported ongoing efforts to implement a 20mph scheme in Washford, noting contradictions between current policy and the emerging transport plan, and described collaborative work with officers and the school to fundraise for the initiative.
- **Mud on Roads and Planning Enforcement:** Cllr Loretta Whetlor raised concerns about mud on roads from construction sites and heavy vehicles, with Sam and Andy Hadley advising immediate reporting via the council portal and highlighting the role of planning conditions in enforcing road cleanliness.

- **Potholes caused by utility work reinstatement:** Utility companies are responsible for reinstating the road to highway standards after their work; they have up to 18 months to return and fix defects at their own expense. If the council repairs the road before this period ends, the cost comes from council taxpayers, so defects should be reported promptly to ensure the utility contractor is held accountable.

10 Update from Transport and Active Travel Working Group.

The minutes of the previous working group meetings had been circulated with the agenda pack. Electric bus reliability, bus shelter design, mud on roads, and bus stop announcements discussed; QR code rollout and bus partnership actions noted.

- **Bus Stop Announcements and QR Codes:** Mandy reported progress on implementing QR codes at bus stops for real-time information and the potential for on-board announcements, following discussions with John Perrott and First Bus.
- **Terms of Reference for Transport Group:** Sam presented draft terms of reference for the Transport and Active Travel working group, which were accepted with minor amendments, and outlined four key focus areas: bus route communication, timetable optimisation, hospital transport links, and bus stop announcements.

11. Parish Matters – Community News

It was confirmed that sharing good news stories and community updates would remain a standing item on future agendas, recognising its value in fostering collaboration and celebrating local achievements.

- It was requested that the LCN newsletter include a standard "useful info" section at the end, with contact numbers and details such as the Spark link for funding, Somerset Community Foundation funding, and other relevant resources.
- There was also a request to share information about free events, funding sources, and training opportunities (like bid writing courses) through the newsletter, with a minimum frequency of once a month.

Good News Stories Shared:

- **Old Cleeve Parish (Washford Recreation Ground):** Secured £14,000 lottery funding and £21,000 Section 106 money for new play equipment, with installation underway.
- **Watchet Town Council:** Received a £10,000 grant from SALC, used to support a new event (Santa Fun Run) and other community activities.

- **Watchet Skate Park:** Raised £150,000 through Somerset Rural Action Fund, Hinkley Fund, and council reserves for a new concrete skate park, with work starting soon and strong youth involvement.
- **Green Action Group (Minehead Coast Development Trust):** A successful inaugural meeting was held, with a follow-up scheduled to promote community adaptation to climate change and environmental collaboration.
- **Community Collaboration:** Emphasis on successful joint efforts between councils, SALC, health, and third sector, leading to impactful projects and funding wins.
- **Offer of Grant Writing Support:** Judith Stabb (Chair of Old Cleeve PC) offered free advice and review for anyone preparing grant applications, based on her experience securing significant funding for local projects.

12. Dates of future LCN meetings

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 8 January 2026 at 6.30pm —ONLINE ONLY	Wednesday 4 February 10.15am – 1pm
Thursday 9 April 2026 at 7pm	Wednesday 13 May 10.15am – 1pm
Thursday 16 July 2026 at 7pm (AGM)	

- **Meeting Administration and Future Planning:** Attendees confirmed future meeting dates, discussed the preference for face-to-face meetings with flexibility for weather, and agreed to maintain a standing agenda item for sharing good news and community updates.
- **Scheduling and Venue Arrangements:** The group agreed to plan face-to-face meetings at West Somerset House, with contingency for moving online in case of severe weather and clarified meeting times to ensure accessibility for all members.

