



# Local Community Network

**Avalon and Poldens Main LCN meeting notes – 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026,  
7pm. Online only.**

## **Virtual attendees:**

Cllr Stephen Page (Chair) – Somerset Councillor  
Cllr Chris Bennetts (Co Vice Chair) – Meare & Westhay PC

Cllr Ewan Cameron – Somerset Councillor  
Cllr Liz Leyshon – Somerset Councillor  
Cllr Simon Carswell – Somerset Councillor  
Cllr Heather Shearer – Somerset Councillor

Jenny Lawrence – Ashcott PC  
Mary Phillips – Baltonsborough PC  
Simon Jackson – Barton St. David PC  
Sheila Petherbridge – Butleigh and West Pennard PC  
James Hall – Catcott PC  
Chris Lane – Keinton Mandeville PC  
Sharon Bond – Meare & Westhay PC  
Rita Wren - Meare & Westhay PC  
Graham Croucher – Shapwick PC  
Hugh Gange-Harris – Stawell PC  
Phillip Jay – Stawell PC  
Richard Vowles – Walton PC

Charlotte Johnson – Somerset Council (Connect Somerset Representation)  
Fen Bagias – Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager  
Fodo Higginson – SALC  
Louise Treacher - Spark  
Susannah Clemence – Glastonbury TrainLink  
Syed Shah – Somerset Council, Public Liaison Officer  
Tanya Camberwell – Healthwatch  
Tracey Mock – On Your Bike  
James C

Autumn Mason – Somerset Council, Technical Admin Support  
Charlotte Griffin – Somerset Council, LCN Link Officer  
Gill Kenniston-Goble – Somerset Council, LCN Link Officer

## **Apologies:**

Anthony Lipmann – Ashcott PC  
Georgia Terry – Cossington PC

Harry Munt – Somerset Councillor  
John Dodson – Street Neighbourhood Watch Association  
Maureen Purdue – Burtle PC  
Ros Wyke – Somerset Councillor  
Tim Keerly – Somerset Council

*All has been used for note taking purposes. Please check for accuracy.*

## **1. Welcome**

Cllr Ewan Cameron will be joining the meeting but slightly late.

## **2. Voting for Chair and Vice Chair**

We were unable to elect a Chair/Vice Chair for the LCN due to the meeting being moved online due to the weather.

Cllr Stephen Page chaired the meeting.

## **3. Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

There were no objections to the minutes of the last meeting.

## **4. Working Group Updates**

### **Health and Wellbeing Working Group**

Fodo Higginson (SALC) and Fen Bagias (Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager) provided an overall update on the Step, Ride, Thrive project.

Natalie, previously leading the project, has now left. Fen has joined on a short-term contract (secured just before Natalie left) and is now 3 weeks into the role. Fen is working on getting up to speed, meeting partners, and strengthening community engagement.

- **Doctor Bike & School Sessions**

To date: 11 community Doctor Bike sessions and 4 school sessions completed.  
Planned totals: 15 community sessions and 9 school sessions.

Some school sessions may be difficult to deliver, but Tracey (On Your Bike) confirmed that any cancelled or missed school sessions will still be rescheduled, including St Benedict's.

A small amount of funding had to be rebalanced, reducing some unbooked school sessions, but no booked sessions have been cancelled.

- **Bus Pilot (668 Libra)**

Passenger data so far (April–September): 92 passengers used the service; more data expected next week. The pilot runs until end of March. The team would like a 6-month extension, but this requires additional funding and support from parishes, particularly Glastonbury and Street. Publicity has historically been weak, but Fen has now significantly increased promotion.

Fen has:

- Updated and redesigned the bus flyers with specific pickup and drop-off times.
- Boosted social media activity.
- Noted that Glastonbury Information Centre now carries promotional materials.
- Been producing new flyers for local venues, GP practices, libraries, and community spaces.
- Working with videographers and graphic designers to refresh project materials.

- **Upcoming Activities**

Time to Talk Day – New Health Walk Launch on 5th February from the Avalon Marshes Centre. There are activities planned with, Public Health teams (e.g., blood pressure testing), Natural England (possible nature talk), Heritage Centre involvement.

Discovering Nature Week 6-12 April - To include walking, cycling, and parish-led events. Parishes invited to host local activities with Fen's support.

- **Steering Group Needed**

A major theme was the lack of a functioning Steering Group, which has limited:

- publicity
- evaluation
- local ownership
- project direction

Fodo and Fen are asking:

- Parish and Town Councillors to volunteer for the Steering Group (ideally 6 people).
- Councillors to take this back to their parishes to identify representatives.

- **Funding, Grants & Remaining Budget**

A small amount of remaining funding is available for small parishes that have not yet received a grant. This could support future Doctor Bike sessions or other community

health/active travel projects. Councils must contact Fodo or Lily to discuss possibilities.

- **Next Meeting**

Health & Wellbeing Working Group:  
20th January, 3–5 PM, Avalon Marshes Centre (hybrid).

\*Step, Ride, Thrive-focused meeting:  
20th January, 6 PM, to establish the Steering Group and plan Discover Nature Week.

*\*(This was then changed at a later date for both aspects of the meeting to be covered in the 3-5pm meeting)*

### **Contact Details**

Fodo Higginson (SALC) hwbsupport@somerset-alc.org.uk  
Lilly Keeley-Watts (SALC) hwbadmin@somerset-alc.org.uk  
Fen Bagias (Step, Ride, Thrive Project Manager) stepridethrive@gmail.com

### **Highways Working Group**

Graham Croucher, Chair of the Highways Working Group, provided an update to the group.

### **Agricultural Vehicles – Community Communication Plan**

Following issues raised—particularly around large agricultural machinery on rural roads—the group will develop a Community Communication Plan.

This will include:

- Posters and information leaflets for farmers, contractors, and the public.
- Use of existing materials from Somerset and the National Association of Agricultural Contractors

Aim: Improve mutual understanding of speed limits, road behaviour, and safety while recognising that contractors have no incentive to cause accidents.

Baltonsborough parish's Code of Conduct for farmers and contractors has been shared as an effective model. It includes agreements on behaviour, reporting irresponsible driving, and cooperation with local contractors. The group is exploring adopting or adapting this approach for the wider LCN area.

## **Focus on Eastern Parishes**

The group intends to increase engagement with parishes east of Glastonbury. Next Highways Working Group meeting (24th Feb) is planned to take place in an eastern parish location, likely Butleigh/Baltonsborough. Parishes in that area are encouraged to propose venues and participate more actively.

## **Engagement with Highways Officers**

Three additional Somerset Highways officers covering the other parishes in the LCN—Steve Palmer, Tracy Harrison, and Chris Jones—have expressed willingness to attend future meetings.

## **Highways Information Portals**

New Somerset Highways online portals show live and planned works.

The group plans to:

- Promote their use across all parishes.
- Request improvements to help residents interpret technical codes and dates, as current formats favour internal staff.

## **A39 Corridor Issues (Ascott to M5)**

Continuing the A39 Project to manage traffic flow during blockages. Concern: When the A39 is closed, surrounding villages become gridlocked and large vehicles take unsuitable diversion routes. Aim: Improve communications to HGV drivers during major route disruptions.

## **Improving Reporting Systems**

Previous commitment: engage Somerset Highways and IT teams to improve online reporting systems. Current issue: many residents still call/email rather than use portals. Action needed: revive the earlier plan to streamline and promote portal-first reporting.

# **5. Connect Somerset Presentation**

## **Introduction to Connect Somerset**

Presenter: Charlotte Johnson, Service Manager for Family Hubs at Somerset Council stepped in for Jess Lewin, who was unwell.

Connect Somerset is a partnership model focused on improving early help for children, young people, families, and professionals across Somerset.

## **Purpose & Vision**

- Strengthen connections between professionals to improve early help.
- Improve data sharing so professionals can better coordinate support.

- Build community and neighbourhood-based support, especially important given Somerset's rural nature.
- Aligns closely with the Children & Young People's Plan.

### **Early Help System Overview**

- Around 20–30,000 professionals operate across Somerset's early help landscape.
- The emphasis is shifting from "diagnosis" to practical help, relationship-based practice, and supporting families earlier.
- A three-tier model is used: Community services, Universal services, Targeted/acute services.

### **Neighbourhoods & Localities**

Somerset now works through 12 Connect Somerset neighbourhoods supported by 12 Neighbourhood Champions. Your area's Champions: Siobhan White and Jess Lewin. These sit alongside six localities used internally for Council services (education teams, family intervention, etc.). Champions are local community experts, helping identify specific neighbourhood needs and barriers.

### **Connect Somerset Toolkit**

Charlotte highlighted several practical tools available to councillors, professionals, and community groups:

#### **a. Neighbourhood Pages**

- Each neighbourhood has a webpage showing:
  - Local hubs
  - Neighbourhood profile & data
  - Meeting schedules
  - Contact details for Champions
- Neighbourhood meetings help rebuild professional networks lost during COVID.
- Champions are planning neighbourhood meetings for **early 2026**, likely springtime.

#### **b. SEND Local Offer**

- Connect Somerset works closely with the SEND Local Offer to align information for families with additional needs.

#### **c. Transform Family View**

- A secure information-sharing system for professionals (with DBS/training).
- Lets practitioners see who else is involved with a family and their support history.
- Reduces families having to repeat their story.
- Noted as "*life-changing*" by a Somerset school nurse.

- Helps reduce thousands of hours of admin time.

#### **d. Directory of Services**

- A searchable directory (also soon viewable externally) showing:
  - Support organisations
  - Activities
  - Local hubs
  - Contact points

#### **e. Household Support Fund (now Crisis & Resilience Fund)**

- Includes:
  - Hardship support
  - Funding for community hubs
  - Support via Age UK, SASP, Citizens Advice
  - Public Health initiatives
- Somerset has maintained wide distribution through libraries, hubs, activity programmes.

#### **f. Community Hub Directory**

- Over **120 hubs** mapped.
- Includes Talking Cafés (via Frive/CCS), libraries, funded hubs, and others.
- Some hubs now open outside Mon–Fri to support working families.

#### **g. Help for All Document**

- A user-friendly guide covering help around:
  - Money
  - Food
  - Housing
  - Mental health
  - Domestic abuse
  - Alcohol/drugs
  - Parenting
- Designed for **warm introductions**, not just signposting.

#### **h. Learn for Love (Universal Parenting Offer)**

- Free online courses for Somerset families.
- Covers everything from pregnancy to teenage emotional wellbeing.
- Available in multiple languages.

#### **Impact & Evidence**

- Connect Somerset publishes an annual impact report.
- A new updated report for 2025 is being prepared.

**Contact:** [charlotte.johnson@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.johnson@somerset.gov.uk)

## 6. Spark - Youth Alliance

Louise Treacher provided an update on Spark Somerset & the Somerset Youth Alliance.

### What Spark Somerset Is

Spark Somerset is the infrastructure body that supports voluntary sector organisations across the county. The **Somerset Youth Alliance** sits within Spark and brings together all organisations that work with young people. Its purpose is to strengthen the sector, develop shared capacity, and improve youth provision across Somerset.

### Why the Youth Alliance Exists

Louise highlighted that Somerset has experienced a **significant decline in youth services**, especially since the closure of Somerset County Council's Youth Service several years ago.

The new **national "Youth Matters" strategy** (a 10-year plan launched just before Christmas) recognises the impact of this decline and aims to reinvest in youth work, skills, safe places and professional workforce capacity.

Spark's Youth Alliance aligns directly with this national direction.

The strategy focuses on:

1. Youth workers and workforce development
2. Youth spaces and place-based delivery
3. Strengthening VCSE (voluntary sector) youth provision

Louise explained that several national funding streams have been mentioned by government (e.g., Richer Lives Fund, Young Lives Fund, Dormant Assets), but the level of funding coming to Somerset is still unclear. Much may be targeted toward urban areas. The Youth Alliance is preparing to help organisations access whatever becomes available.

### What the Somerset Youth Alliance Does

1. Supporting Quality Youth Provision
  - Helping groups deliver safe, effective, youth-centred services
  - Promoting co-production with young people
  - Identifying gaps through tools like the Insights Map, which maps youth activities countywide
2. Workforce Development
  - Offering training at multiple levels (Levels 2–5 in Youth Work)
  - Free *Introduction to Youth Work* training
  - Discounted training for Alliance members

### 3. Helping Parish & Town Councils

Spark can assist councils with:

- Young people's consultations
- Designing or commissioning local youth provision
- Finding suitable delivery partners
- Funding applications
- Writing documentation or support materials
- Monitoring impact and outcomes

### 4. Building Partnerships

The Alliance brings youth-focused organisations together to share knowledge, collaborate, and develop sustainable models—especially important given limited local funding.

### **Example Project: Hestercombe / West Monkton “HYPE” Project**

Louise presented a practical model developed through an LCN:

- 8 parish councils pooled their precepts and managed funding collectively through West Monkton.
- Spark supported their consultation with young people.
- They now run a mobile youth club (“Boom Box”), holiday activities, a community fridge, and wider youth participation projects.
- The model demonstrates how rural parishes can jointly fund sustainable, high-impact youth work
- (This example was also highlighted as a potential model to support the Step, Ride, Thrive health & wellbeing project.)

### **Membership of the Youth Alliance**

- Free to join
- Open to:
  - Youth clubs
  - Parish/Town Councils
  - VCSE organisations
  - Groups running youth activities
- Members gain training discounts, resources, newsletters, and access to events.

Contact: [Louise.Treacher@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:Louise.Treacher@sparksomerset.org.uk)

## **7. Glastonbury TrainLink**

Susannah Clemence presented an update on the emerging Glastonbury TrainLink initiative — a proposed bus connection between Glastonbury and Castle Cary railway station, operating 7 days a week and timed to meet trains. The aim is to significantly improve transport access for residents, visitors, workers, and local businesses.

## Why the TrainLink Is Needed

Feedback from multiple sources shows *strong community and visitor demand*:

- Local residents repeatedly rank a Castle Cary connection as a top transport priority.
- Visitors often arrive at Castle Cary and ask “*Where’s the bus to Glastonbury?*”, only to discover there isn’t one.
- Businesses, particularly in hospitality, say customers and staff would benefit from the link.
- Workers have told the team they would use it to access jobs along the route.
- A lack of transport currently forces people into cars or taxis, making travel costly or inaccessible.

## Planned Route & Operation

- The service would run between Glastonbury → Castle Cary, via Pylle, Pilton, West Pennard, and the Bath & West Showground area.
- Seven-day operation, early–late, with timetables designed around incoming and outgoing trains.
- Possibility of adding Ansford (very close to Castle Cary) as an additional stop.
- Timetable includes peak services and reduced but workable Sunday provision — enabling Sunday returns from London, a request raised frequently.

## What the Service Would Enable

Susannah highlighted how the link unlocks multiple opportunities:

- Direct connections to London, the South Coast, Devon & Cornwall, Bath, Frome, and wider national rail.
- Access to work, education, hospital appointments, nights out and events.
- Easier travel for festival visitors, local residents without cars, and mainland tourists arriving via airports or major cities.
- Reduction in car trips along the A361/A371 corridors — relieving local congestion.

## Funding Requirements & Current Progress

- A full-year service costs £242,000.
- However, Somerset Council’s Transport Team has offered a pragmatic phased option - If the project can raise half the cost (£121,000) then the Council can tender a six-month pilot contract to launch the service sooner.
- Current fundraising status = £21,000 already secured from grants and pledges.
- GoFundMe campaign live.
- Outreach efforts include printed leaflets, a professionally built website, surveys, and direct presentations to councils.

## **Next Steps**

The project team is now focused on:

1. Major fundraising drive (businesses, parishes, individuals).
2. Submitting a formal funding request to Somerset Council from the £800k county bus improvement pot for 2026.
3. Continued public awareness — sharing surveys, leaflets, and media communications.
4. Encouraging parishes and LCN attendees to voice formal support.

## **Team Leading the Project**

Susannah Clemence, Pearl White, Nick Hall (Pilton Parish Councillor), Tony Zangoura (web/marketing), plus wider supporters.

## **8. Healthwatch**

Tanya Camberwell provided a concise but detailed overview of Healthwatch Somerset, their statutory role, current priorities, and how they collect and use public feedback to improve health and social care services.

### **What Healthwatch Somerset Is**

A statutory, independent, not-for-profit organisation that listens to public experience of health and social care.

Part of a wider national Healthwatch network of 150+ bodies created under the Health & Social Care Act (2012).

### **What They Do**

- Gather feedback (positive or negative) on any health or social care service, including:  
GP practices, hospitals, community providers, dentists, pharmacies, care homes, social care and more.
- Ensure feedback remains anonymous and is passed to the NHS, Somerset Council, and the Integrated Care Board.
- Provide a freephone advice line, tailored information, and signposting to appropriate support.

### **How They Work**

- Offer clear, jargon-free health and care information.
- Conduct public engagement, research projects, reports and recommendations.
- Attend community events, parish meetings, and run outreach activities.
- Operate with a small team supported by trained volunteers (including Enter & View representatives who can visit GP surgeries, hospitals, and care homes to review experience in public-facing areas).

## **Enter & View Programme**

- A legal power allowing trained volunteers to visit care settings to observe waiting areas, talk to patients/residents, relatives, and staff, and identify good practice or areas for improvement.
- Not a CQC inspection—it's a community voice mechanism.

## **Current Issue: Risk to Healthwatch's Independence**

- Tanya Camberwell highlighted a national proposal to abolish independent Healthwatch bodies and bring their function in-house under NHS organisations.
- She stressed this risks losing an independent public voice, especially since research shows low public confidence in feeding back directly to NHS providers.
- A national petition is open until February to oppose this change.

## **“People's Priorities 2026” – Asking for Public Votes**

- Healthwatch is about to launch its annual “People's Priorities” vote.
- Four proposed focus topics for 2026 include:
  1. Community health & wellbeing support
  2. Improvements to the NHS referral process
  3. Men's health and wellbeing
  4. Support for parent-carers of adult children
- Residents will be able to vote online, via QR code, or by posted form.

## **Accessible Information Work**

- Tanya shared an example of their recent project on **Accessible Information for Unpaid Carers**, noting:
  - Carers often put their own needs aside and struggle to digest complex information.
  - Health and care services often provide inconsistent or unclear information.
- Recommendations included:
  - Better visibility of “Who is a carer?” materials in health settings.
  - Routine reminders and training for staff to identify and support carers.

## **Contact & Follow-up**

Tanya Camberwell encouraged organisations to contact her directly for collaboration: [tanya.camberwell@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:tanya.camberwell@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk)

For members of the public, she asked that they are directed to:

- Freephone: **0800 999 1286**
- Email: **info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk**
- Website: **www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk**  
(Details were also shared in the meeting chat.)

## **9. Postponed: Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service presentation**

We are planning for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service to present at the next main LCN meeting.

## 10. AOB

### Emergency Planning Session

There is an Emergency Planning session being delivered by Somerset Rivers Authority on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 6-9pm 2026, Tor Rugby Football Club, Glastonbury, BA6 9GY. This is for parishes in the Avalon and Poldens/Wells and Rural LCN's wishing to develop their Emergency Plan. Please email [avalonandpoldenslcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:avalonandpoldenslcn@somerset.gov.uk) to book your place.

### A39 Street Traffic Lights

Syed Shah gave an update on the traffic light replacements on the A39, Street. The traffic lights reached end of life, and their replacement was already scheduled. On 1 January, one section failed completely, making the timing ideal for the upgrade. The works form part of the broader *Street in Somerset* project and include improvements for active travel (walking and cycling).

He highlighted how interconnected Somerset's highways programme is and referenced work at:

- Wellington – Junction 26 (completed)
- Dunster / Minehead – works started this week
- Burnham-on-Sea – Love Lane / Tesco traffic lights
- Junction 22 – vegetation clearance (awaiting confirmation)

Drone footage is being used to document projects (he referenced the "*Dumble roundabout*" before-and-after footage as an example).

Syed stressed he prefers phone calls over email for quick updates and is available evenings and weekends for parish contacts.

Contact: [syed.shah@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:syed.shah@somerset.gov.uk) 07812449605

## 11. Date of Next Meetings

- **Round 3 Main Meeting:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026, 6.30pm, Baltonsborough Village Hall, Ham Street, Glastonbury, BA6 8PX
- **Round 4 (AGM) Main Meeting:** Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026, 6.30pm, Tor Rugby Football Club, Glastonbury, BA6 9GY
- **Health and Wellbeing Working Group:** 20<sup>th</sup> January 2026, 3pm, Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Glastonbury, BA6 9TT
- **Highways Working Group:** 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026, 10am, Venue TBC.