

Local Community Network

Bridgwater LCN meeting notes

4th December 2025

UCS (Bridgwater & Taunton College), Bridgwater

Attendees:

Gill Keniston-Goble – LCN Link Officer
Chris Booth – LCN Link Officer (supporting various areas incl. Bridgwater & Exmoor)
Gary Perrett (Active Travel) – representing the Bridgwater Transport Forum and Somerset LCN Active Travel Network
Jo Lowther - Village Agent – serving surgeries across Bridgwater
Jane Irons – Assistant Principal (Student Experience) & Designated Safeguarding Lead, BTC
Alison Ward – Course Leader, Foundation Studies
Tanya Camberwell – Healthwatch Somerset
Sally Diaz (online) – Clerk, Puriton Parish Council (attending to understand Bridgwater LCN as many Puriton services connect to the town)

Apologies:

Cllr Diogo Rodrigues
Cllr Hilary Bruce
Cllr Kathy Pearce
Cllr Gil Slocombe
Cindy Furse, Spark Somerset
Jane Knowles, SASP
Kate Franklin, Victoria Park Community Centre
Kate Lang, Bridgwater Without PC

1. Welcome, Housekeeping & Introductions

Gill opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and thanked the hosts for the venue and coffee. Housekeeping reminders were given.

A full round-the-room introduction followed. Participants included:

- **Gill Keniston-Goble** – LCN Link Officer (Bridgwater & Burnham)
- **Chris Booth** – LCN Link Officer (supporting various areas incl. Bridgwater & Exmoor)
- **Gary Perrett** (Active Travel) – representing the Bridgwater Transport Forum and Somerset LCN Active Travel Network
- **Jo Lowther** - Village Agent – serving surgeries across Bridgwater
- **Jane Irons** – Assistant Principal (Student Experience) & Designated Safeguarding Lead, BTC
- **Alison Ward** – Course Leader, Foundation Studies

- **Sally Diaz** (online) – Clerk, Puriton Parish Council (attending to understand Bridgwater LCN as many Puriton services connect to the town)
- Apologies were received from a range of partners and elected members including Cllr Diego Rodrigues, Jane Knowles, Shona Stone, Emma Robinson, and others.

2. Agreement of Previous Minutes

The previous meeting (September) was reviewed. Key points noted:

- Presentation from **Community Foundation** on Hinkley Point C (HPC) funding and guidance on applying.
- Update from **YMCA** including historical context about George Williams' Bridgwater links.
- Meeting was not quorate; therefore, no chair/vice-chair election took place.
- Active Travel update from Gary.
- Core membership review flagged issues around lack of faith-group representation—this will be considered as part of the countywide LCN review. Existing actions (attending Town Team meetings; joining Town Council forums) were confirmed as ongoing.

3. Presentation – BTC: *Avon & Somerset Police Pathways to Employment*

Presented by Alison Ward.

Course Overview

- Full-time programme; not a Supported Internship/traineeship.
- Learners attend the police station 2–3 days/week, post-October half term.
- Target group: learners with diagnosed learning needs and EHCPs seeking their first workplace experience.
- Job coach provides continuous on-site support.
- Learners receive systems training, complete necessary modules, and are issued a police-station lanyard, which greatly boosts confidence.

Approach & Support

- Individualised learner profiles provided to police mentors.
- Learners gain hands-on experience across departments.
- The programme does not guarantee police employment but builds employability foundations.

Outcomes

- Many learners move on to Supported Internships or paid work.
- A standout success story was shared: Learner progressed from BTC Public Services → Pathways placement → applied for PCSO during placement → completed 12-week training in Bristol → now employed as PCSO.

Presentation 2 – BTC: *Hinkley Point C (HPC) Supported Traineeship*

Also presented by Alison Ward.

Programme Structure

- **16-week supported traineeship**, with partners EDF and Discovery.
- **8 weeks classroom** at NCfN Cannington, followed by full-time on-site placement.
- Learners complete CITB and Health & Safety assessments enabling safe site access.

- Discovery provides job coaching; BTC oversees training and learner readiness.

Roles & Placement Settings

- Broad range—logistics, PPE stores, admin, data analysis, warehousing etc.
- Programme emphasises that roles are varied; learners do **not** need to become nuclear engineers.
- Learners wear HPC-branded PPE and gain exposure to real site environments and major contractors (Wilson James, Mace, Somerset Passenger Solutions, etc.).

Outcomes

- Multiple learners have transitioned into **paid employment**, e.g.:
 - **Callum** – PPE stores; gained skills in stock systems and workplace integration.
 - **Ollie** – TCI placement turned into full employment.

Q&A – Learner Suitability & Assignment

A question was raised regarding how learner capabilities are assessed and matched to suitable placements (particularly within policing roles that require resilience and communication).

Response from BTC:

- Extensive pre-course assessment (6–12+ weeks) including liaison with schools, parents, external agencies and review of EHCPs.
- Learners are **never placed without readiness**.
- Pathways are targeted at 18–19+ to ensure workplace maturity.
- Regular re-assessment and ability-based placements; some learners redirect pathways (e.g., from policing interest to healthcare or maintenance roles).

4. Presentation – Healthwatch Somerset (Tanya)

Role & Statutory Function

- Independent statutory body written into the Health & Social Care Act.
- Gathers anonymous public feedback on any publicly funded health or social care service.
- Shares insight with NHS Somerset, Adult Social Care, Health & Wellbeing Board, and providers.
- Helps residents navigate health/social care systems.

Activities & Engagement

- Attend community events (libraries, public spaces, Walk for a Life Suicide Prevention event).
- Volunteers deliver Enter & View visits (lived-experience assessments of surgeries/care homes—not inspections).
- Recent reports include:
 - *Who Cares?* – accessible information needs for carers.
 - Minehead Medical Centre deep dive.
 - Annual report & People’s Vote priority setting.

National Issue – Closure of Local Healthwatch Bodies

- Government plans to dissolve local Healthwatch and absorb Healthwatch England into DHSC.
- Risk: loss of an independent local voice; services would in effect be “marking their own homework”.
- Attendees were encouraged to sign the petition.

5. Working Group Updates – Active Travel (Gary)

Primary Schools Programme – “On Your Bike”

- Active in 23 schools, focusing on Years 5–6.
- Includes bike safety checks, Adopt-a-Bike, training, and supported road cycling.
- Focus on equitable access, especially where families cannot afford safe bikes.
- Example: Somerset Bridge has strong cycling infrastructure; others (e.g., Hamp) require more targeted support due to location and safety constraints.

Aims

- Build early cycling culture → improve long-term physical/mental health → future cycling commuters.
- Secondary school engagement desirable, especially bike maintenance skills.

6. Any Other Business

- A member expressed concern that the LCN is not fulfilling its intended role as a voice for local organisations, given the absence of elected members.
- The Bridgwater Bus Group Survey is live on Bridgwater Town Council website; aims to assess real-time community bus-use patterns.
- Hinkley Point C – Workforce Uplift. An extra 3,000 workers to app 15,000 in total are expected. Bridgwater LCN was represented at public meeting on 17 November.
- NHS Somerset & Spark Somerset are offering £350 community conversation grants as funding for groups to host discussions on public involvement in health research.

10. Next Meeting

Monday 2nd March 2026