

Local Community Network

Dowsborough LCN meeting notes Wednesday 10th December 2025 Wembdon Village Hall

Attendees:

Chris Morgan, Chair / Stogursey PC
Cllr Mike Caswell, Vice Chair
Ian Atkinson, West Somerset Citizens Advice
Sue Goss, Stogursey PC
John McVerry, Stockland Bristol PM
Paul King, Wembdon PC
Richard Hubbard, Wembdon PC
Peter Major, Wembdon PC
Peter Felton, Chilton Trinity PC
Connie Sanders, Otterhampton PC
Mark Weston, Rep for Ashley Fox MP
Finlay Wallace PCSO
Jason Routley, PCSO Supervisor
Simon Stretton, Spaxton PC
Fodo Higginson SALC
Christine Conlon, guest from Combwich

Anne Shilton, SC LCN Link Officer for Dowsborough
Gill Keniston-Goble, SC LCN Link Officer
Jeff Brown, SC Service Manager Stronger Communities

Virtual attendees:

Sarah Bennet, village agent
Matt Barrow, CDS
Amanda Williams, SC Economic Development

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Apologies received from Over Stowey PC, Cllr Mike Rigby, Cllr Hugh Davies, John Roberts from SALC and Cllr Gill Slocombe.

2. Police update

Report from Jason Routley as PCSO supervisor explaining that their beat boundaries have recently changed and now include up to Minehead and Stogursey. Recent changes in local personal means that the new Neighbourhood Sergeant is Charmaine Dyer. Jason and Kat Forrest are the PCSO supervisor with a team of eleven as from January 2026. It is a large geographical area so a newsletter will be trialled in 2026, which has

been working well in the Taunton area and everyone is encouraged to sign up online. [Subscribe to email notifications | Avon and Somerset Police](#) Quarterly priorities will be set and these can be checked on the Somerset and Avon Police website by entering in the location and finding out more about what is going on. There is also a link for direct contact for less urgent crime with a pledge to respond in 72 hours.

A question was raised about the legal status of e-scooters. These are banned on the public highway and only allowed on private land and shortly will need a driving licence and insurance to be used, which will deter many people, particularly younger people. If an e-scooter is stopped whilst not on private land, it is taken away and crushed, not going back to the individual. There is a lot of public education to be done as most retailers do not inform people of the legal status when purchasing an e-scooter. The police are unable to stop e-scooters but do have powers to seize them.

S Stretton enquired about powers to control e-bikes which sometimes overtake cars on narrow country roads. The legal speed limit for an e-bike is 16.5 mph so if caught over that limit, the rider could be prosecuted but with so many miles of roads, it is difficult to catch the rider.

The PSCO reiterated that if people need to speak to someone on a non-urgent matter, they should call 101. For urgent matters, call 999 where the call analyst will go through some questions to ensure there is a correct and apportionable response,

The officers then left the meeting.

3. [Community Solution Seekers result from Fodo Higginson, SALC.](#)

Following on from previous LCN presentations from Somerset Association of Local Councils, there have been many requests for funding, some of which has been successful in this area. There is still a small amount of funding available for smaller parishes and meetings, and to contact SALC so see if a new application might be successful even if not previously.

Over the past months, Thrive (previously Somerset Community Council) have run a community seekers series of meetings to encourage local people to become involved in their communities and explore what is wanted by the community, which has now completed. As a result, transport provision, particularly for younger people getting to and from college in Bridgwater, Taunton or Minehead has been highlighted. The LCN discussed the issues and some suggestions had been offered, such as the expansion of the Slinky transport project. Another suggestion would be to establish a community transport group with a view to respond to demand particularly out of hours and at weekends. Overall the LCN were supportive of the proposal but were unable to commit to regular

support on a steering group due to lack of capacity. The LCN would like to hear of any progress with this proposal and were happy help with publicity such a displaying posters and gauging demand.

It was suggested that full use be make of the Slinky transport offer, as six new vehicles are shortly to be added to the service. This week the service celebrated 10,000 journeys per week. Link officer to put F Higginson and C Conlon in touch with the manager of the Slinky Project.

There is a car share scheme in Devon run by Devon County Council that has around 11,000 members, matching up cars with passengers after they've registered; It may be possible to explore a similar scheme in Somerset which could be particularly useful for students going to and from post-16 education, being matched with people going to/from work in the same town. Another different scheme takes place in Ullswater in Cumbria where a number of villages collaborate to use mini buses which also helps reduce the number of cars on some congested roads, particularly during the summer tourist season.

A word of caution was expressed in that currently EDF offer assistance with transport alongside their staff for which many people were grateful and should not be seen to be ignored. However, looking ahead to a time when this would not be available, local residents might like to explore transport options now as it would probably need some research or evidence to take forward for external grant funding.

Those present were happy to help with publicity and support for any suggested way forward but felt reluctant to commit their time to form a working group. There may however be other LCN members who may wish to explore the options and they should contact the LCN officer for further discussions.

C Conlon was invited to Combwich parish council meeting the following evening to discuss the need for rural transport, particularly for those in 16+ education.

J McVerry suggested asking the colleges where their students come from and getting them involved from the start too.

4. Connectivity update from Matt Barrow from CDS & Amanda Williams, Snr Economic Development Officer, SC

Unfortunately due to technical difficulties, it was not possible for this presentation to take place online and a written update was requested.

Cllr Mike Rigby from SC had been asked to attend for his input and update. Cllr Mike Caswell asked it be noted that he was deeply unhappy

about Cllr Rigby's lack of attendance and interest in this topic and in the situation for residents and businesses being unable to access reliable, reasonable and accessible broadband. Cllr Rigby's reply would be requested. Cllr Rigby had sent his apologies due to a clash of diary appointments.

5. Citizens Advice West Somerset – Ian Atkinson, Chief Officer

The West Somerset Citizens Advice (CA) covers 60 parishes across the area and has a small team of 5 paid members of staff (one full time) and four volunteers and five trustees; more volunteers and trustees are always welcome. Request for clerks to relay invite to their parish councils/ meetings. Most of the work falls into housing, benefits, debt and relationships/family, with the main objectives of trying to encourage and give people tools to take control over their lives, to understand how they've arrived at a certain point and to take action to move forward. People can be seen in person but many enquiries are by email or phone often working with the village agents. The outreach work in villages will depend upon footfall and does change with demand.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 2327 people were given assistance and support, 1300 of which were seen as simpler cases and 988 as more complex, taking more time and resources. 70% of these expressed a long term health issue which may make finding employment more difficult. 57% of the service users are female (63% male).

The work undertaken means that the CA are responsible for returning £1.4 billion back into the community but this cannot be seen in simple cash terms. There is a social value concept but not an easy figure to substantiate. Over the past three years there has been an increase in the number of people seen per advisor from 397 to 1465 and have doubled the amount of financial support available to these people. The CA is on target to see 2 million people this year.

The CA is an independent charity so funding and future planning beyond 18 to 24 months is difficult. They often sign post to other more experienced and expert organisations, often using local knowledge.

6. Agree notes from last meeting

Agreed with no matters arising.

7. Actions arising not covered elsewhere

The Head of Transport was invited to speak but it was decided to focus the AGM on the topic of transport and will be invited back then, to be confirmed.

8. Update from highways working group.

Next meeting 27th Jan 2026, Stockland Bristol social club, to be confirmed. *[Now confirmed.]* The notes from the previous highways group had been circulated. It was noted that the group worked well and was proactive, with attendance from the Highways officers from SC who often responded to queries at that time or shortly afterwards. Queries could be submitted in advance if wished.

9. Report from HPC Workforce Uplift engagement – Sue Goss, Chair, Stogursey PC

S Goss was planning to promote connectivity as a mitigation for the area but felt that Somerset Council and EDF has already decided this and not offered for discussion unfortunately. S Goss had enquired about the deployment of the two planning officers, funded by HPC to work on enforcement issues, many of which were outstanding. SC agreed to look into this and respond in due course. Since then, there has been an improvement in enforcement issues particularly in relation to illegal car parks and parking.

10. Emergency Plan Workshop Proposal

Anne Shilton, Link Officer, asked if any parish council would be interested in joining a training session (around 3 hours) on preparing an emergency plan for their village following the Prepared Day in early October which had been well attended and received. Otterhampton and Wembdon have already expressed an interest but if any other village would be interested, please contact Anne. This training can be delivered at any time as long as there are sufficient numbers (which could be made up by another nearby LCN) and can focus on different emergencies, not just flooding, such as power outages, road/rail/plane accidents and so on. It is strongly recommended that each emergency plan is reviewed annually to ensure that contact details are updated if necessary.

11. Any other business

None.

12. Next meeting: Now agreed to be 31st March 2026 and not 18th March 2026 as previously planned, venue to be confirmed, likely to be Stogursey's Jubilee Hall. Speaker: Clare Moody, Police and Crime Commissioner

13. Schedule of meetings for coming year:

17th June 2026 (AGM, with likely focus on rural transport – other suggestions/speakers welcome).

Date	Action	Completed by/date
10/12/25	Encourage sign up to Avon & Somerset Police newsletter: Subscribe to email notifications Avon and Somerset Police	all
	Contact SALC for remaining possible funding for parish councils for health and well being projects	PCs.
	Update on Slinky project for possible transport working group – contact to be passed to F Higginson/C Conlon.	Link Officer
	Request for people with transport concerns / issues to come forward to create a working group – contact link officer	all
	Help with publicity for transport group – displaying poster, mention on social media etc	All
	Combwich Parish Meeting to invite C Conlon for further local discussion	Combwich PM
	Investigate including Bridgwater & Taunton colleges in transport discussions.	F Higginson & C Conlon
	Cllr M Rigby to be contacted regarding connectivity and apparent lack of support and his response requested.	Link Officer / Cllr M Caswell
	Request for volunteers and/or trustees for West Somerset Citizens Advice – Clerks to please mention at next PC/PM meeting.	Clerks
	AGM – suggestions for theme welcome by end of March 2026, otherwise will be transport. <i>Quantocks National Landscape will present new 3 year plan at AGM.</i>	all
	Queries to Highways working group can be submitted in advance, by 12 th January 2026, to Link Officer	Link officer
	Highways working group venue to be confirmed at Stockland Bristol social club. Now confirmed as venue.	Link Officer 29/12/25
	Emergency plan workshop – attendees names/organisation to Link Officer by end of January 2026 latest for workshop in February or March. <i>Planned for 23/03/26 – further details from link officer.</i>	all
	Request written update from CDS and SC regarding connectivity.	Link officer. Email 18/12/25 & 07/01/26