

Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Meeting Title: Minehead and Watchet LCN

Date: Wednesday 16 October 2025

Time: 6:30 – 9pm

Location: Dunster Room, West Somerset House, Williton

LCN Core Membership Attendance:

Name:

Cllr Mandy Chilcott (Chair)
Cllr Hugh Davies
Cllr Rosemary Woods

Representing

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Somerset Council

Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker (Vice Chr)
John Passingham
Mel Catchpole
Cllr Ian Timmins
Cllr Judith Stabb
Cllr Tracey Skinner
Cllr Loretta Whetlor
Michelle Francis
Peter Davis

Carhampton Parish Council
Combe Florey Parish Council
Crowcombe Parish Council
Monksilver Parish Council
Old Cleeve Parish Council
Sampford Brett Parish Council
Watchet Town Council / SALC
Williton Parish Council
Williton Parish Council

Rhiannon Watts
PCSO Katherine Williams

Thrive
Avon and Somerset Police

Officer Attendance:

Sam Murrell
Michelle Brooks

LCN Link Officer
LCN Link Officer (support)

Other attendees

Dave Northey

Somerset Bus Partnership

Online Attendees:

Name:

Anne Shilton
Cllr Mark Philipson
Fiona Toms

LCN Link Officer
West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Minehead People and Place Partnership

Apologies:

Cllr Andy Hadley
Cllr Andy Sully
Cllr Sue Smith
Cllr Tony Brooks
Craig Palmer / Ben Parker
Jan Swan
Cllr John Irven
Ray Tew
John Richards

Somerset Council
Somerset Council
Carhampton Parish Council
Crowcombe Parish Council
Minehead Town Council
Sampford Brett Parish Council,
Watchet Town Council
Minehead and Coast Development Trust
WACET

Summary of discussion:

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

1 Introductions and Apologies

Attendees introduced themselves and apologies were recorded as above. David Northey from Somerset Bus Partnership was welcomed to the meeting.

2 Update from Avon and Somerset Police

PCSO Supervisor Katherine Williams provided an update on recent police activities, including:-

- Police presence has increased in the area, with more officers and PCSOs working to address recent incidents, particularly those involving young people and anti-social behaviour.
- The police are collaborating with local partners, including McDonald's and social behaviour teams, to engage with young people and support parents.
- Recent successes include seizing a vehicle for no insurance, responding to shoplifting and a large theft at a local store, and recovering stolen motorcycles, with arrests made for theft of a motor vehicle.
- Police are distributing posters to shops and residents ahead of Halloween, advising not to exclude young people and providing information for those who do not wish to participate in trick-or-treating.
- Victims of crime are being offered follow-up visits and DNA property marking kits, though funding for these kits is limited.

- The police encourage the community to report concerns, as this helps set policing priorities.

3 Guest Speaker: David Northey, Bus Somerset Partnership

David is a member of the Somerset Bus Partnership, which provides a platform for bus users to make their views heard about the services they need. The Somerset Bus Partnership was established in April 2021 by bus passengers, councillors, transport campaigners, transport enthusiasts, bus user groups and individuals living in the Somerset Council area.

Bus Services and Public Transport Issues in Somerset

- All participants discussed ongoing challenges and recent developments in Somerset's bus services, including overcrowding, cancellations, lack of direct routes, the introduction of new electric vehicles, and the need for improved communication and infrastructure, with input from bus user groups and local council.
- The lack of a direct, reliable connection to Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton was highlighted as a significant issue, with current journeys requiring multiple changes and being difficult for those reliant on public transport.
- Real-time information at bus stops and improved infrastructure (e.g., shelters, signage) are needed to give passengers confidence and clarity, especially during diversions or roadworks.
- David advocated for a working group to address these issues, gather data, and build a business case for improved services, with collaboration between local groups, councils, and transport providers.

Service Reliability and Overcrowding

- Attendees described persistent issues with bus overcrowding and cancellations, particularly on the 28 routes, and highlighted the impact on students and commuters. The introduction of new electric vehicles was noted as a positive step, but concerns remain about the adequacy of services, especially for those travelling to colleges and workplaces.

Communication and Notification of Service Changes

- Frustration was expressed over insufficient advance notice of route changes and cancellations, especially during roadworks. The group discussed the challenges faced by parish councils and user groups in disseminating timely information to the community, and the need for better coordination between transport authorities and local stakeholders.

Infrastructure and Real-Time Information

- The meeting addressed the removal and delayed replacement of bus shelters, the need for real-time information displays at key stops, and the allocation of improvement funds. Cllr Mandy Chilcott explained that while funding has been secured, Somerset Council has yet to finalise a rollout plan, and participants

emphasised the importance of prioritising busy stops and integrating digital information systems.

Lack of Direct Routes and Timetable Gaps

Participants raised the long-standing absence of a direct bus route between Minehead and Bridgwater, despite growing demand due to Bridgwater's increasing attractions. Discussion included the limited frequency and inconvenient timings of existing services, particularly for students and workers, and the need to restore or enhance direct connections.

- There is a longstanding lack of a direct Minehead–Bridgwater bus route, which limits access for students, workers, and residents; the current service is slow and infrequent, with only a term time morning bus and a return in the afternoon, making it impractical for many.
- The EDF-funded free bus between Bridgwater and Minehead is heavily used by students but only runs at limited times and its future is uncertain once funding ends; there is concern about what will replace it.

Special Services and Funding Uncertainty

The group discussed the EDF-funded free bus service and its uncertain future, noting its importance for students and the wider community. Concerns were raised about the sustainability of such services once external funding ends, and the need to develop a long-term strategy for maintaining essential routes.

- Calls were made for a faster, more regular service to Bridgwater, especially to support college students and those seeking work, and for better communication about route changes and cancellations.

Formation of Active Travel and Transport Working Group

Attendees agreed to establish an active travel and transport working group to address complex local transport issues, including bus service improvements, real-time information, and on-demand services, with broad support from representatives across towns and parishes.

- **Working Group Objectives:** The group identified key priorities for the new working group, including improving the Bridgwater bus link, implementing real-time information boards, launching the 28 service, and exploring on-demand transport options for underserved areas. The aim is to coordinate efforts and present a unified voice to Somerset Council and transport operators.
- **Membership and Participation:** Cllr Mandy Chilcott invited interested parties to join the working group, encouraging representation from all major routes and parishes. Fiona Toms and others expressed willingness to collaborate, and the group agreed to include stakeholders from neighbouring areas to ensure comprehensive coverage of local needs.
- **Initial Focus and Meeting Arrangements:** The first meeting of the working group will focus on funding opportunities and the feasibility of a direct bus

route, with a preference for face-to-face discussions. The LCN Link Officer will coordinate logistics and collect expressions of interest from potential members.

Discussion on the Impact of the HPC (Hinkley Point C) Worker Uplift to 15,000

- The meeting noted that EDF is planning to increase the workforce at Hinkley Point C to 15,000, which is a significant uplift.
- Concerns were raised about the local impact, especially regarding transport, congestion, and the need for additional bus services and community transport to accommodate the increased number of workers.
- The group discussed the importance of linking this uplift to arguments for improved public transport funding and infrastructure, as the increased workforce will have a direct effect on local congestion and service demand.
- It was suggested that the active travel and transport working group should address these issues and potentially use the uplift as leverage in discussions with EDF and local authorities for mitigation funding and service improvements.
- The need for timely feedback from the LCN on the local impact of the workforce increase was emphasised, as EDF is seeking input for their mitigation proposals.
- The discussion also highlighted the broader implications for young people, training, and social mobility, as improved transport links are essential for access to employment and education opportunities related to the HPC project.

A special meeting to discuss the HPC Uplift, chaired by Cllr Mike Rigby, will take place on Monday 17 November, at Wembdon Village Hall. Two representatives from Minehead and Watchet LCN are invited to attend. The HPC uplift report is attached to these minutes.

4 Approve the minutes of the previous meeting

These were agreed by those present as a true record of the meeting.

5 Matters arising (not part of later agenda items)

Due to the A396 Emergency, some actions had not progressed as quickly as hoped as resource was diverted to support the major incident recovery.

- **Winter Maintenance:** Parishes purchasing new grit bins should inform Somerset Council for replenishment; efforts are underway to fill bins before icy weather. Parishes wishing to purchase new grit bins may wish to partner with other parishes to reduce costs.
- **Road Safety Event:** Postponed due to venue issues; plans to reschedule at a new location and expand the event.
- **Highways Meetings:** Ongoing engagement with parishes and highways teams; winter maintenance and road condition concerns discussed.

6 Update on the Highways Working Group

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24 June at Beckett House had been circulated with the agenda pack. There were a number of questions and matters arising.

- Issues from the Highways working group included concerns about road closures, diversions, lack of clear signage during work, and the poor condition of certain road sections, especially the A39 and B3191.
- The need for better planning and communication during roadworks was highlighted, as well as the impact of closures on local traffic and access.
- There was agreement to form a new working group specifically to address B3191 concerns, including coastal protection, flooding, and the lack of alternative routes if the main road is blocked.
- The new group will also consider broader issues such as the impact on all affected parishes and the need for a comprehensive options appraisal.

7 Coastal Protection Update

Still pending; no recent updates, but work is ongoing despite delays due to other priorities. This is now being coordinated by James Divall (Somerset Council) and John Buttivant (Environment Agency). The Link Officer was asked to follow up and ask for a report on recent activities.

James Divall is due to attend the next meeting of the West Somerset Flood Group in January.

Environment Agency Maintenance Changes

The Environment Agency's proposal to withdraw maintenance from certain streams and rivers was discussed, with clarification that riparian owners are responsible for maintenance except in cases of major blockages or emergencies, where the Agency retains an oversight role.

8 Emergency Planning Workshop

Plans have been made for an emergency planning workshop focusing on power outages and severe weather events, with support from the Somerset Council Community Resilience Team. The workshop will be held in person and is open to interested parishes, aiming to improve local preparedness and response.

Thursday 20 November at Timberscombe Village Hall at 6:30pm.

There are a few spaces available although they fill up fast. If you would like to attend, please contact Sam Murrell, LCN Link Officer.

Community Resilience Survey

Some parishes have not yet returned the survey; a general call was made to complete it to inform Somerset's emergency planning.

9 Community News / Partner Updates

Spark Update

Ali Sanderson introduced Spark Somerset's services, including advice, funding guidance, and volunteer recruitment support for local groups. A survey was launched to identify community needs and inform future support strategies. Here's the survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KPSTH5H>, which closes at the end of November.

Minehead Town Council Report on 2 SALC Projects

Minehead Town Council received funding for two major projects aimed at supporting young people and community well-being.

- The first project, the **Enhanced Youth Worker Project**, secured the maximum funding of £35,000 and involves a triple partnership with the Primary Care Network and Minehead Eye to deliver a full-time young people's health coach, combining youth work, health coaching, and mental health support. This service is already active and targets early intervention for young people, with guaranteed funding through 2027. This project is funded through 2027, but Minehead Town Council encouraged neighbouring parishes and organisations to consider partnership and additional funding to ensure long-term sustainability and expanded reach. The initiatives are seen as models for community-led support and collaboration.
- The second project, "**Stronger Together**," is a community response to the recent A396 accident, providing activities for children and families outside school hours, including weekends and holidays. Activities focus on music, arts, creative play, and building resilience, delivered in partnership with Minehead Middle School and local organisations.
- Both projects emphasize collaboration, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability, with a call for neighbouring parishes and organisations to join funding partnerships.

The council highlighted the importance of these initiatives in fostering community support, resilience, and positive outcomes for young people.

Value of Local Community Networks

Participants discussed the benefits of LCNs in facilitating communication, joint action, and resource sharing among parishes and community organisations, with calls to maintain and strengthen these networks despite some areas opting out.

Annual Report / Yearly Roundup

It was agreed that the January meeting would receive a written report on the progress of the Minehead and Watchet LCN, throughout the 2024-25 year. This Report to be coordinated by the LCN Link Officer.

The LCN Link Officer would be grateful if participants could provide testimonials or items of interest for inclusion.

10 Dates of future LCN meetings

It was agreed to hold the January meeting online to prevent unnecessary travel at this time of year.

Trauma Informed Communities – Hosted by Minehead Eye

In response to the A396 Emergency (A flyer is attached).

Friday 14 November – to book a place, please contact

[An evening with Trauma informed schools](#)

Emergency Planning Workshop – Hosted by Exmoor LCN

Thursday 20 November 2025 – at Timberscombe Village Hall

Emphasis on Power Outages – To book a place, please contact

sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk

Public Transport Workshop – TBC

First meeting online – to discuss Terms of Reference and diarise future meeting dates. Expressions of interest from attendees are invited.

B3191 – Working Group

To be chaired by Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker. Formed as a sub-group of the Highways Working Group. To be discussed at the next meeting Friday 14 November 2025.

Proposed Minehead and Watchet LCN Dates Venues to be confirmed	Highways Sub-Group Dates Dunster Meeting Room West Somerset House
Thursday 16 October 2025 at 6.30pm	Friday 14 November 10am – 1pm
Thursday 8 January 2026 at 6.30pm – ONLINE ONLY	Wednesday 4 February 10am – 1pm
Thursday 9 April 2026 at 7pm	Wednesday 13 May 10am – 1pm
Thursday 16 July 2026 at 7pm (AGM)	

