

Crewkerne and Ilminster LCN meeting notes – Thursday 30th January 2025 – Held via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

CLlr Mike Best (MB)– Chair Somerset Council
Nicola Dawson - CCU Somerset Council
Paul Elliston CCU Somerset Council
Mike O’Dowd-Jones - Service Director Transport Somerset Council
Kate Hellard - Somerset Council
Fern Pearce - Somerset Council
Michelle Brooks - Somerset Council
CLlr Val Keitch - Somerset Council
CLlr Steve Ashton - Somerset Council
CLlr Sue Osborne - Somerset Council
Peter Seib - Somerset Council / SALC
Nathan Turnbull- Kier Transport

Paul Bradley – Misterton PC
Lianne Taylor Ilminster Town Council
David Shillibier – Merriot PC
Hugh Williams - Haselbury Plucknett PC
Julie Chant - Hinton St George PC
Lorraine Pike – Ilton PC
Nigel Wylie – Shepton Beauchamp PC
Nikki Handley – Dowlish Wake PC
Julia Boland – West Crewkerne PC
David Steele – South Petherton PC
Billy Vance – Ilton PC
Katie Head – Crewkerne Town Council
Matt Day - Crewkerne Cycling

Prior to the official start of the meeting Kate Hellard asked for updates from each represented Parish regarding the recent flooding They shared details about the number of affected properties, evacuations, and damage to infrastructure.

- South Street, Crewkerne: Mike Best reported a small flood at the bottom of South Street, affecting one or two small houses.
- Ilton Flooding: Lorraine mentioned that while many roads were flooded in Ilton, no houses were reported to be affected.
- Shepton Beauchamp Flooding: Nigel reported that 17 houses were affected with about half a dozen experiencing actual flooding.

- Dowlish Wake Damage: Nicky reported that two houses and one business were flooded in Dowlish Wake, with additional damage to at least 12 properties' gardens and a strip of tarmac on the road.
- Hinton St. George: Julie reported no flooding in the village itself but noted that all routes out were blocked due to slides or floods.
- Merriott: David Shillibier mentioned a lot of surface water but no serious flooding.
- South Petherton: David Steel reported significant flooding in the village centre, with 3-4 businesses and several houses affected.
- West Crook: Julia noted usual road flooding but no houses affected.
- Ilton: Billy Vance reported only Frost Lane was flooded, which is a common occurrence.
- Oxenford: Sue mentioned three properties were flooded, with extensive road resurfacing failing in the area.
- Lopen: Val and David Steel discussed road closures due to landslides and flooding, with barriers placed on the road.
- Evacuation Issues: Val mentioned the evacuation of people from park homes to Minster rooms and the unnecessary evacuation of people in Ditton St, which caused fear among residents.
- Road and Infrastructure Damage: Nicky and Matt reported damage to roads and infrastructure, including a collapsed retaining wall in North Street and a fallen wall at the top of Stony Lane, which closed the road.
- North Street Wall Collapse: Val reported that a retaining wall behind the Bell pub in North Street collapsed, causing debris to pile up at the junction with Silver Street.
- Stony Lane Wall Collapse: Matt reported that a retaining wall at the top of Stony Lane fell, closing the road and requiring significant rebuilding efforts.
- Actions: Follow-up on road resurfacing quality and emergency communication improvements.

1. Agree the minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2. Confirm the nomination for the Chair of the Local Community Network

It was agreed that Nominations and voting for the Chair of the LCN would take place at the next in person meeting. MB agreed to act as Chair in the interim period.

3. Request for nominations for the Vice-Chair of the Local Community Network

MB thanked Leanne Taylor for her support as Vice Chair but due to her standing down, nominations are sought for the position. It was agreed that Nominations and voting for the Chair of the LCN would take place at the next in person meeting.

4. Working Group updates:

Highways and Transport Working Group from Mike Best

Mike O'Dowd-Jones and Kier Transport Community Engagement Officer, Nathan Turnbull

Highways and Maintenance Concerns: Mike Best and participants discussed issues related to highways and maintenance, including the need for a reduced Chapter 8 training package, pricing for services, and the impact of recent road resurfacing failures.

Reduced Chapter 8 Training: Mike Best inquired about the status of a reduced Chapter 8 training package for smaller parishes. Mike O'Dowd-Jones confirmed that a new training package is ready to be launched, pending formal sign-off.

Service Pricing: Mike Best raised concerns about the timing of price adjustments for services, which currently occur mid-year. Mike O'Dowd-Jones agreed to look into aligning price adjustments with the financial year to aid in budgeting.

Road Resurfacing Failures: Sue Osborne raised concerns about the failure of new road resurfacing in her area, particularly in Dawlish, where the surface has broken up and gone down to the original road. She emphasized the need for warranty and follow-up on the quality of work.

Mike O'Dowd-Jones acknowledged the issue and committed to looking into it, noting that extreme weather events could have contributed to the problem.

Road Closures and Communication: Val Keitch and others discussed the need for better communication regarding road closures during emergencies. Specific incidents included unexpected landslides and flooding that led to road closures without clear information for residents.

Mike O'Dowd-Jones agreed to review the communication process to ensure timely and accurate information is provided during such events.

Local Contractors and Licensing: Nigel Wylie Carrick expressed frustration with the difficulty of using local contractors for highway maintenance due to licensing and safety requirements. He emphasized the need for a straightforward process to enable local action. Mike O'Dowd-Jones clarified that while parishes are not tied to using Kier, they must ensure appropriate health and safety measures are in place. He committed to providing clearer guidance on what tasks can be done locally without extensive licensing.

Local Contractor Licensing: Nigel emphasized the need for local contractors to perform maintenance work, such as clearing blocked drains, and the challenges in obtaining necessary licenses and training. Mike O'Dowd-Jones acknowledged the issue and agreed to provide clearer guidance on what tasks require authorization.

Blocked Drains: Nigel highlighted the issue of blocked drains in Shepton Beecham, which local contractors are unable to clear due to licensing and training requirements. Nathan mentioned that Drain Line, the company responsible for jetting, had a temporary work stoppage but is now operational again.

Actions:

- **Training Package** - Mike O'Dowd-Jones to finalize and launch the reduced Chapter 8 training package.

- **Road Resurfacing Quality** - Mike O'Dowd-Jones to investigate the quality issues and ensure follow-up on warranty claims.
- **Communication Improvements** - Review and improve the communication process for road closures during emergencies.
- **Guidance for Local Contractors** - Provide clearer guidance on licensing and safety requirements for local contractors.

Active Travel Working Group: Matt provided an update on the Active Travel Working Group's work and discussed their key recommendations following the last meeting:

a. Improve Active Travel safety and connectivity between Ilminster Town Centre and Southfields roundabout

The Southfields roundabout on the A303/A358 is a dangerous barrier for walkers and cyclists. We want National Highways to make improvements, including reducing the speed limit from 60mph to 30mph and a staggered crossing of the A303 Honiton arm.

Station Road from the Stonemasons roundabout to Southfields roundabout is intimidating for cyclists. There is carriageway width to accommodate an extension of the shared path from Rose Mills Lane up to the zebra crossing near Home Farm Way, with a cycle lane from there to the Stonemasons roundabout. This could be funded by the Horlicks site s106 or CIL or by applying for UK Government AT funding.

b. Maintenance of the Chard-Ilminster Shared Path

The two Town Councils have agreed a programme of cutting back vegetation for 2024-25, and Persimmon have agreed to give £81k for resurfacing and new connections to the path from their site off Canal Way.

Somerset Council Estates have not engaged at all with this issue, despite owning the northern section. We demand that an Officer from Somerset Council plans and coordinates future maintenance and improvements, including asking for contributions from developments in Parishes neighbouring the Path.

c. Create a safe and direct Shared Path from the Taylor Wimpey site to Crewkerne Town Centre

Given Crewkerne's challenging topography and road network there is a one-time opportunity to create a good quality cycling and walking route from the town centre out to the major Taylor Wimpey development and onwards to Misterton.

A strategic Active Travel route features in the town's Neighbourhood Plan and the Town Council's Strategy.

The Town Council, Taylor Wimpey and a landowner are in discussions about a path starting in East Street. This is not safe or direct for cyclists.

The route needs to lead into the town centre car parks, which is the shopping destination. A Shared Path (to LTN1-20 standard) from the Henhayes Recreation Ground to the Taylor Wimpey site is required. All options for the route should be discussed.

Major funding could be from the s106 with Taylor Wimpey or from Sustrans Paths For All or similar. We suggest a working group is setup with representatives from the Town Council, Taylor Wimpey, Sustrans and Space4Crewkerne.

d. Promote Walking in our area

All LCN members should share information about walking activities and routes in our area.

There was discussion around the creation of a booklet/guide of all local walks in the LCN, discussion around funding of printing of this, suggestion of utilising SALC Health and Wellbeing Fund. VK expressed that she would also speak to Public Health colleagues around this matter.

The next meeting of the Active Travel Group TBC.

4. Cross LCN Active Travel Group

A countywide and cross LCN Active Travel Group has been created and we require a LCN representative for our LCN, Matt Day was agreed as Crewkerne and Ilminster's representative.

5. Local Plan Engagement

MB introduced the local plan, explaining that Allies and Morrison were commissioned to support the development of Somerset Council's new local plan through an early engagement exercise that is a precursor to the formal consultation process that will take place in the coming months.

A short video was played to advise of the early engagement taking place to support the development of the new Somerset Local Plan, to gather insight into challenges and opportunities facing communities across Somerset.

Discussion:

- Call for Sites: This is an open invitation for landowners and others to suggest potential development areas. This process will continue for the next six weeks.
- Early Engagement: This stage involves gathering ideas and priorities from residents, parish councils, and other stakeholders.
- Focus on Seldom-Heard Groups: The engagement process aims to include hard to reach groups to ensure a balanced understanding of the diverse needs within Somerset.
- Ongoing Engagement: The engagement process will continue throughout the plan-making stages, with opportunities for public consultation and feedback.
- Engagement with Stakeholders: Ensure that stakeholders, including small businesses and community groups, are engaged in the consultation process.

The next steps include stage two, "Setting the Scene," which will combine early engagement activities with other evidence bases and site assessments. This will lead to

the first draft of the local plan, followed by wider public engagement in 2025. Stage three, "Have Your Say," will involve statutory consultation with key stakeholders and the public. The plan is expected to be adopted in 2028

A workshop is scheduled for Monday, 10th February at Chard Guildhall, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, for Somerset councillors and parish councillors to provide input.

There was a discussion on whether to hold a separate workshop for the LCN to focus on specific local issues. It was suggested to use a doodle poll to find a suitable date for this workshop, ensuring feedback is provided by the 28th of February.

Action: FP to send out a poll to identify a suitable time for this workshop.

6. Discussion to identify topic / items for future LCNs (Yearly Plan)

This was not discussed and will form part of the agenda for the next meeting.

7. Dates for future LCN meetings

Thursday 3rd April 2025 – Microsoft Teams

Wednesday 11th June 2025 – AGM Venue TBC

Date	Action	Completed by
30.01.2025	Highways Training Package - Mike O'Dowd-Jones' team to finalize and launch the reduced Chapter 8 training package	MODJ/Highways
30.01.2025	Road Resurfacing Quality - Mike O'Dowd-Jones to investigate the quality issues and ensure follow-up on warranty claims.	MODJ/Highways
30.01.2025	Communication Improvements - Review and improve the communication process for road closures during emergencies.	MODJ/Highways
30.01.2025	Guidance for Local Contractors - Provide clearer guidance on licensing and safety requirements for local contractors.	MODJ/Highways
30.01.2025	Suggestion of utilising SALC Health and Wellbeing Fund. VK expressed that she would also speak to Public Health colleagues around this matter.	Cllr VK
30.01.2025	Action: FP to send out a poll to identify a suitable time for this workshop.	LCN Link Officer

