



# Local Community Network

## Yearly Report 2023/2024

Bridgwater



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# Local Community Networks (LCNs)

## Purpose

“To be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at local level; improving the outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and partners.”

## Map

There are 18 LCNs in total.

They cover every city, town, and parish within the local authority area.

Full details of each LCN, including their demographics, characteristics, agendas, and meeting dates, can be found online.

Please visit the following webpage:

[www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/)

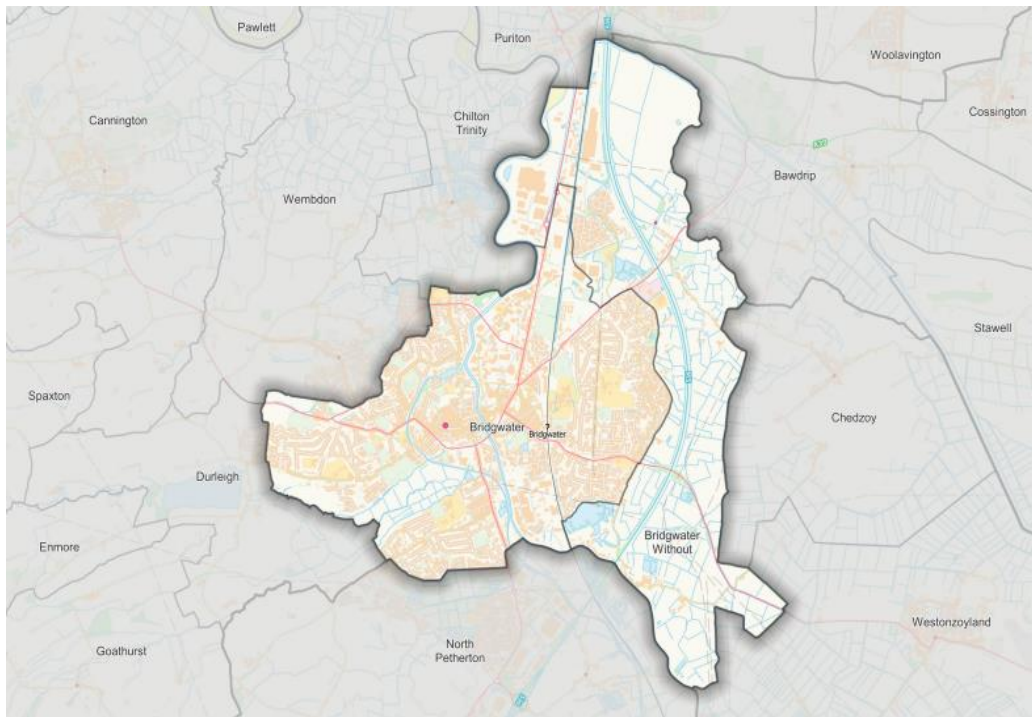


# Bridgwater LCN

Bridgwater LCN has the smallest number of parishes within an LCN area, consisting of two councils. They are Bridgwater Town Council and Bridgwater Without Parish Council.

However, membership of this LCN is both varied and diverse as it represents a large population of more than 41,000 people – the third highest of all the 18 LCNs in our local authority area.

## Bridgwater LCN Area



Bridgwater Without includes the districts of Dunwear and Horsey.

Dunwear is home to the Brick and Tile works, and the popular Dunwear Ponds, a four-lake complex enjoyed by anglers and packed with wildlife.

This area is also where you'll find the iconic 'Willow Man'. A 40ft-tall outdoor sculpture located in a field, visible from the M5 motorway.

Horsey is to the north and features a deserted medieval village (now Horsey Manor Farm) which is a protected Scheduled Monument.

Visit: [www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/bridgwater/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/bridgwater/)

# Bridgwater LCN

Bridgwater is an historic market town, known as 'the home of carnival' because of the world-famous Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival which is based there.

The town has excellent canal, rail, and motorway links to the rest of the country and has seen its fair share of economic growth.

As a recipient of the Government's Town Deal funding, totalling £23.2 million, Bridgwater is undertaking 11 projects to rejuvenate the whole area.

## Bridgwater LCN

The Bridgwater LCN inaugural meeting took place in June 2023.

Its core membership included local councillors, police, fire, and VCFSE organisations. Plus NHS partners, residents associations, and education establishments.

Professional sector-focussed representatives from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) also attended.



Bridgwater's Platinum Jubilee Cart - Getty Images



Willow Man  
Serena de la Hey, 2000

# Chair and Vice Chair



## Chair: Bridgwater LCN

### Cllr Diogo Rodrigues

Diogo is Somerset Councillor for the Bridgwater East and Bawdrip Division. He is the Opposition Lead Member for Transport and Digital.

He attends the following Somerset Council committees: Bus Advisory Board, Full Council, Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee, LCN Avalon and The Poldens, LCN Bridgwater (Chair), LCN Levels and Moors, Planning Committee North (Substitute), Regulatory Sub-Committee, Scrutiny Committee (Corporate and Resources).

## Vice Chair: Bridgwater LCN

### Cllr Tim Mander

Tim was elected as Bridgwater Town Councillor for Westover in May 2022. He's a member of the Bridgwater Bus Group and campaigns for better public transport in Bridgwater and beyond.

A qualified chartered surveyor (now retired), Tim was part of the Estates and Property Services Team at Sedgemoor District Council for 36 years. His interests include the arts, Active Travel and promoting Bridgwater as a tourist destination. He is also an active supporter of Bridgwater's international twinning groups.



# Chair's Introduction

“Over the past year we have seen the successful coming together of Somerset Council, the Town Council and Parish Council, plus various partners. United by a shared commitment to enhancing our local community, this collaborative effort has started a new chapter of working together in our area.

The establishment of the Bridgwater LCN has provided a valuable platform for open dialogue and joint initiatives. By fostering an environment of mutual respect and shared purpose, we have been able to leverage the strengths of each member to benefit the whole community. I am proud of the steps we've taken in our first 12 months.

We began with a focus on Youth Provisions, and with a determination to shine a light on the gaps in the service, to work towards reducing these, and to bring partners together to improve the outcomes of our young people. The knowledge that's been shared has been invaluable and I'm confident the networks we've established will continue to flourish.

We also tackled Active Travel, which has been uniquely spearheaded by a local Active Travel campaigner. Their expert guidance early on, ensured a real focus and vision of desired outcomes, enabling us to have meaningful discussions and quantified objectives. We are delighted with the work the Active Travel Working Group has undertaken.

Bridgwater LCN has shown itself to be both practical and impactful, demonstrating the value of local debate and collaboration. What we discovered along the way was there were pre-existing networks of strong partners and organisations in the LCN area already doing much for their communities. Going forward, Bridgwater LCN must tap in to that support and promote it.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to this LCN in its inaugural year. As we look forward to Year Two I'm confident we will build on our achievements and explore even more opportunities for growth and improvement.”

**Cllr Diogo Rodrigues**  
Chair, Bridgwater LCN

# Priorities and Ambitions

## Data

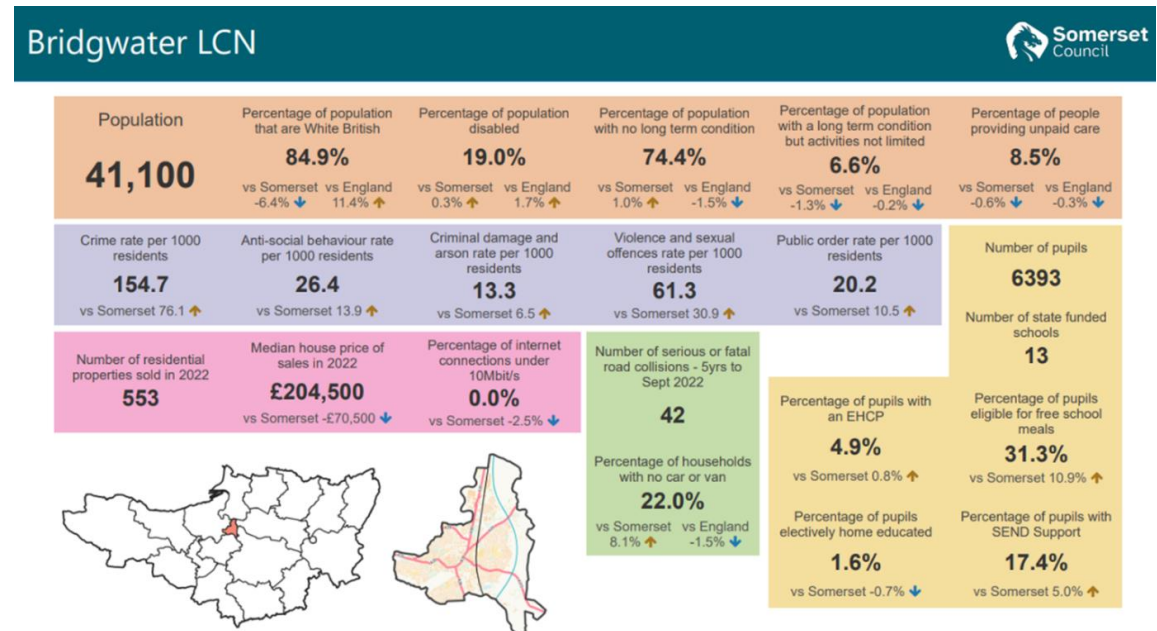
At the initial Bridgwater LCN meeting, attendees were shown a data set (see below). It provided useful statistical information aimed at generating initial thoughts and discussions.

Those present at the LCN were asked to consider what this data meant to them in relation to their specific knowledge of the area.

They were asked to consider what they felt was important to their community, residents, and local businesses.

The answers from the data set discussions were grouped into themes.

You'll find a larger image of the data set at Appendix B of this report.



# Priorities and Ambitions

## Themes

The answers from the data set discussions were grouped into themes. These themes were then used to generate future 'to do' topics and eventually led to the initiation of working groups (and sub groups) to carry out any actions needed, and agreed.



# Priorities and Ambitions

During our main LCN meetings we further explored the emerging priorities with regard to Youth Provisions, Active Travel and Bridgwater Town Deal.

There was discussion regarding an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), particularly in the town centre. Concerns about young people being intimidating and causing a nuisance to those visiting the town centre as well as for local businesses, was mentioned as particularly prevalent.

The Police attended an LCN meeting in November 2023 to highlight some of the issues they faced within the town centre.

They recognised that within the town centre, there were 'hotspots' of youth ASB. However they pointed out that of the 3,166 reported incidents of ASB within the previous three months, the police said only 107 of them were youth related.

The police did agree, nevertheless, that the lack of youth provisions played a pivotal role in youth related ASB and that they would welcome working alongside any initiatives launched to prevent it.

Businesses were given detailed consideration during these discussions, as they often witnessed ASB outside their premises and would want to be part of the solution to decrease it.

Following on from these focused meetings, the Bridgwater LCN set up two working groups. They were **Youth Provisions** and **Active Travel**.

# Working Groups

## Youth Provisions

Initial working group discussions around issues for residents within Bridgwater LCN, was the lack of provisions for young people and a concern for increased youth related ASB. LCN members felt the lack of provisions meant local young people were disadvantaged in comparison to their counterparts in other similar-sized towns in the county.

To ensure the working group was fairly represented, an invite went out to the entire LCN membership for Bridgwater, plus any contacts already available via the LCN link officer.

Membership of this working group currently stands at 29 individuals (and counting). They represent the following organisations: Police, Young Somerset, SASP, Somerset Youth Work Alliance, Connect Somerset, Bridgwater Town Council, Somerset Works, Barnardo's, local schools, Youth Unlimited, Volunteer-led play groups, and Somerset Youth Theatre.

The working group sought to better understand the issues for children and young people so they could define the actions they need to undertake and add value to any existing work or schemes.

They identified that whilst there were many opportunities out there for children and young people, there was a lack of available information for youngsters and their families.

The working group began the process of mapping youth provisions available locally. This included the type of provisions, their geographical area and which day/time those provisions ran.

It was felt that although more provisions would be needed to provide the greatest cover and advantages for young people within Bridgwater LCN, showcasing the ones in existence would be an effective starting point.

# Working Groups

Working with the Somerset Youth Work Alliance and local Youth providers, the working group is now in the process of collating and advertising all clubs, groups, drop-ins, and sessions currently set up in the area, with young people in mind.

This map of provisions will go on to a dedicated website ([Bridgwateryouth.co.uk](http://Bridgwateryouth.co.uk)) providing young people, parents, and carers with a 'go-to' location for information. This host website can be updated regularly, and instantly, as new facilities emerge.

## Next steps ...

With the evolution of mobile technology and connectivity, the next steps for this group is to collaborate with local media students to help co-produce a corresponding app.

It is envisaged that the app, designed by young people, for young people, could be downloaded and used to search, on demand, youth provisions available and closest to them.



LCN meetings are held in-person and online, to ensure maximum opportunity for participation. This image depicts an online 'screen shot' of the Bridgwater LCN meeting in action, in March 2024.

# Working Groups

## Active Travel

Interlaced with the topic surrounding Youth Provisions, was Active Travel.

The preliminary concern was the lack of direct and safe links to other areas of Bridgwater, and the distance between the North/South and East/West of the area.

There was particular focus on how to get people from their homes to local provisions/services/youth provisions.

This working group has been chaired throughout by the Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign (BACC). Their mission is to connect Bridgwater using travel links (cycle paths etc) and making travel within Bridgwater safer for all.

They compiled a priority list of three key issues, which were presented to the working group.

1. Street lighting
2. Cycling proficiency for young people
3. Active Travel hub

Each priority has a different timeline and requires an expertise of Subject Matter Experts (SME). It was decided that in this instance, the working group would break into 'sub-groups' to effectively tackle the actions raised.

# Working Groups

## Actions

1. The street lighting would to be audited and the findings submitted to the relevant Town Council via [fixmystreet.com](http://fixmystreet.com).

This action has now been completed by BACC.

2. Cycling proficiency teaches young people how to cycle safely, tackling 'road sense' and encouraging alternative ways to travel to school other than by car.

A local school is an exemplar of this program, and the sub-group has been tasked with encouraging other schools to invest in the cycling program and also seek out the tutors who are able to go into the schools to coach.

This sub-group is made up of PE teachers, SASP, Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign and Bikeability colleagues within Somerset Council.

3. Active Travel hub is a large-scale project that is multi-faceted in its offer.

Taking on ideas from other large local Town's as well as ones out of area; the sub-group are looking at prime locations that would suit an Active Travel hub.

There will be talks with the local Town Council to see if disused buildings could be repurposed to become a hub.

The hub will have links to other modes of transport (Train/Bus) and also accessibility services, café, maintenance facilities and local information services.

# Reflections

During the first 12 months of the Bridgwater LCN we have brought together multiple stakeholders that are integral to their communities.

The collaborative approach has paved the way for the establishment of two effective working groups (and sub groups) who have been able to identify and prioritise actions needed – and work together to provide a greater offer of service for all.

The working groups fed into the main LCN meetings, ensuring efficient use of everyone's skill sets, and their time. There were many positive outcomes for Year One!

And all this was achieved amongst a backdrop of disruption and uncertainty across the Local Government sector.

In November 2023, when Somerset Council declared a financial emergency, we reconfigured our regular LCN meetings to accommodate the latest updates and information. This helped our local councils explore and engage in asset and service devolution conversations directly with Somerset Council.

Bridgwater Town Council was the first in the county to take on an historic devolution deal that secured much-valued facilities for residents, placing the likes of street-cleaning and road-sweeping, to the management of parks and open spaces, back in town hall hands.

**Emmaline Kay**  
LCN Link Officer, Bridgwater

## Contacts

Email: [Bridgwaterlcn@Somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Bridgwaterlcn@Somerset.gov.uk) Website: [www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/)

Bridgwater LCN: [www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/bridgwater](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/bridgwater)

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Core Membership

### Parishes

Bridgwater  
Bridgwater Without

### Electoral Divisions

Bridgwater East and Bawdrip  
Bridgwater North and Central  
Bridgwater West  
Bridgwater South

### Organisations

Avon and Somerset Police  
Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce  
Community Council for Somerset  
(Village Agents)  
Citizens Advice  
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue  
Education  
NHS  
Spark Somerset  
Society Local Council Clerks  
Somerset Association of Local  
Councils  
Somerset Activity Sports Partnership  
Department of Work and Pensions  
Somerset Rivers Authority  
Somerset Local Nature Partnership

## Appendix A - continued


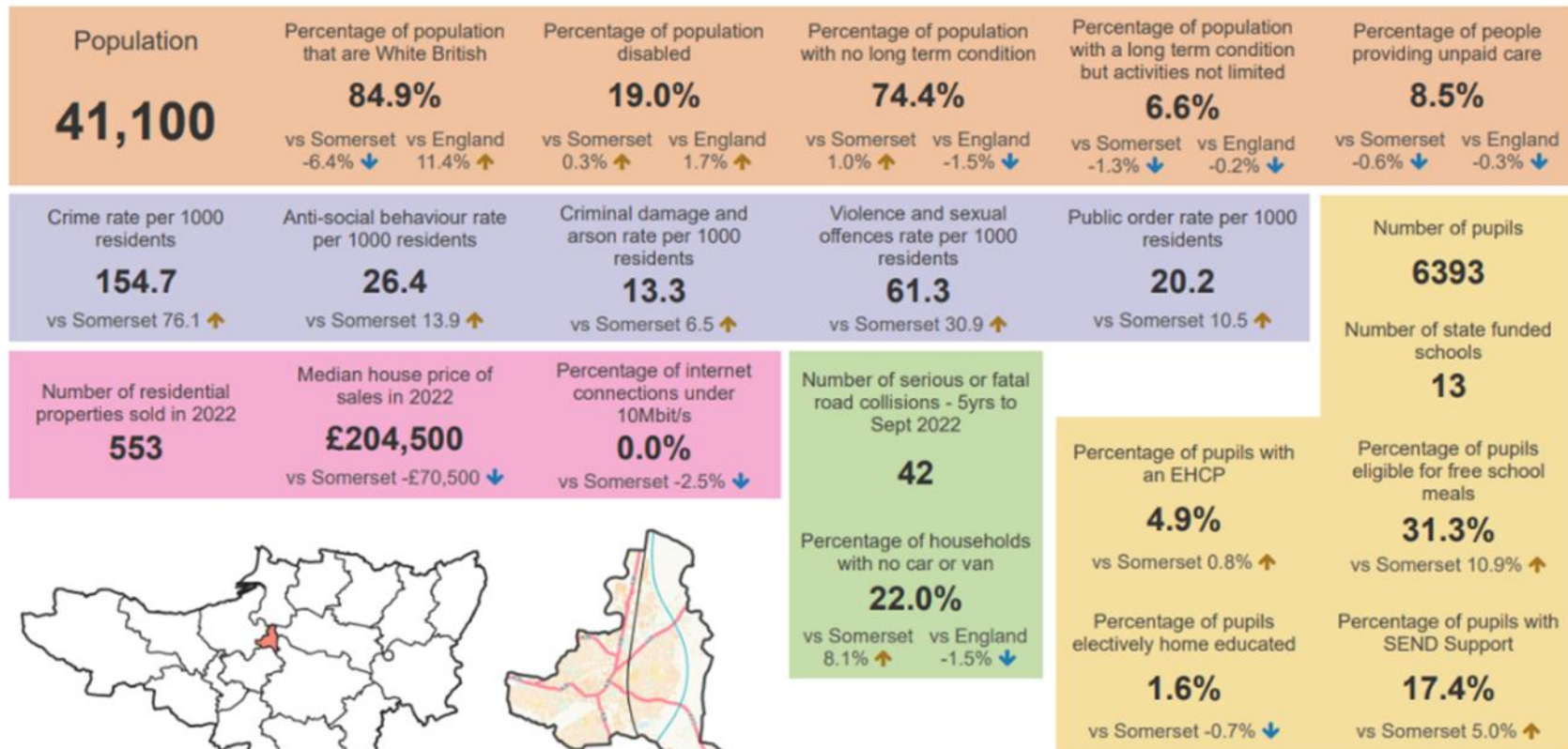
### Other Partners and Stakeholders

Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign  
Bridgwater Area Support Alliance  
Bridgwater and Taunton College  
Town Team (town centre management and promotion)  
The Hub  
East Bridgwater Local Pantry  
YMCA Dulverton Group  
Inland Waterways  
Hamp Community Association  
Seed Sedgemoor  
Food bank  
Shal Housing  
Homes in Sedgemoor (HIS)  
CCS - Village agent  
One Team - East and South Bridgwater  
Holy Trinity Church, Hamp  
Hamp Community Association  
Tourist board  
Connect Somerset

Bridgwater Food and Support Alliance  
Core20Plus5, COPD project  
Westfield Untied reform Church  
Somerset Foundation Trust  
Open Mental Health (adult mental health)  
Youth Unlimited  
First Aid for Mental Health Instructor  
Bridgwater Cultural Partnership (Arts group)  
Bridgwater Together (Migrant Communities group)  
Sydenham Improvement Group  
Bridgwater Baptist Church  
Inland waterways Association  
First Aid for Mental Health Instructor

## Appendix B – Data

# Bridgwater LCN

## Appendix C – Meeting Dates and Notes

To browse all Bridgwater LCN minutes visit: [democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=892](https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=892)

### **June 2023**

Determining of priority issues for Bridgwater LCN.

### **September 2023**

Topic areas selected: Wellbeing and Active Travel, Anti-Social Behaviour, Businesses.

### **November 2023**

Guest speaker from Avon and Somerset Police – Neighbourhood Policing Team. Focusing on Anti-Social behaviour locally and its prevalence amongst various demographics.

Introduction of the Youth Provisions Working Group. Including membership and priority areas of focus.

### **January 2024**

Introduction of the Active Travel working group. Including membership and priority areas of focus.

### **March 2024**

Presentation of Bridgwater Town Deal and the 11 projects to be undertaken.