



# Local Community Network

**Levels and Moors LCN meeting notes – Wednesday 18th  
September 2024, held at Westonzoyland Village Hall**

## **Attendees:**

Diogo Rodrigues	Somerset Council
Mike Stanton	Somerset Council
Richard Wilkins	Somerset Council
Matthew Martin	Somerset Council
Emily Pearlstone	Somerset Council
Tim Kerley	Somerset Council
Caroline Dunn	Somerset Rivers Authority
Jonathan Hudston	Somerset Rivers Authority
Bel Deering	Somerset Rivers Authority
Paul Elliston	Somerset Rivers Authority
John Rowlands	Somerset Rivers Authority
Marcus Hembrow	Curry Rivel
David Vigar	High Ham
Sean Dromgoole	Langport
Rupert Cox	Long Sutton
Paul Helyer	Martock
Andrew Flower	Muchelney
Anthony Betty	Othery
Gordan Swindells	Martock Flood Coordinator
Fodo Higginson	SALC
Sally Drew	Public - Somerton
Ewan Jones	SALC & SE LCN
Steve Lawrence	Compton Dundon
Martin Minogue	Public - Knole
Ross Edwards	Environment Agency
Simon Phelps	Natural England
Ian Campbell	Middlezoy
Phil Stone	North Curry
Iain Study	Drainage Board
Melanie Lavender	Somerton
Ray Holland	Somerton
Alex Mountain	LCN Team
Megan Harnedy	LCN Team
Micheal Hardwick-Ford	LCN Team

## **Virtual attendees:**

David Fothergill	Somerset Council
David Mitchell	Somerset Rivers Authority
Fleur Wood	Curry Mallet
Tim Westworth	Isle Abbotts
Mike Greatwich	Public - Drayton

Amanda Chuter  
Cllr Stephen Page  
Harriet Willis  
Grace Salter  
Kate Hellard

High Ham Parish Council  
Somerset Councillor

LCN Team

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair of the LCN, Sean Dromgoole, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and did a short conversation on housekeeping. He then asked for any apologies, the apologies he received: -

Andy Dingwall	Somerset Council
Jo Roundell Greene	Somerset Council
Mike Dennis	North Curry
FWAG	Farming Groups
Damon Bridge	RSPB
Xanthe Waite	RSPB
Andy Buchan	
Julia Gadd	Huish Episcopi

## 2. Actions from AGM

Date	Description	Responsibility
11 <sup>th</sup> June	How many Parishes are not engaging in the LCN? Can we look at the list for the all the staff invited, contact them and asking them to engage	LCN Link Worker Sean and Tim
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Active travel working group to connect with other LCN groups from across somerset.	Active Travel working groups.
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Chair and Vice-chair to attend local parishes, meeting the parishes getting them more involved.	Sean Dromgoole & Tim Kerly
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Share the report with the LCN Members and stakeholders to celebrate the achievements.	LCN Team
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Organise a LCN Meeting focused on flooding with relevant stakeholders and experts	Kate and Sean
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Attend the Biweekly clerks meeting with planning colleagues and get	Parish Clerks

	updates on planning enforcement, local plan, and call for sites	
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### 3. Brief presentation from Environment Agency (EA), Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) and Flood Wardens

#### Environment Agency

EA discussed the agency's current investments and projects in Somerset, including the Bridgwater barrier project, pump replacements, and flood storage reservoirs. The EA prioritises projects and flood defences by the consideration of the wider public good, so it can often feel like their resources are focused into more urban and densely populated areas.

#### **- Structure management:**

Covering the infrastructure management approach of the EA, touching on sluices, pumps, and flood storage reservoirs. It was queried why local people are no longer directly involved in sluice gate management as it is recognised that those living in an area know best and often decisions made don't reflect need.

The reason for this is most sluices have moved to remote sensing and decisions are made with consideration for the wider area rather than just risk to the immediate locality.

The EA have moved away from traditional dredging mechanisms as these are not efficient, they now use water injection to dislodge the bed. This is done annually.

#### **- Flood wardens:**

The EA continue to work closely with local flood wardens and when flood risk is high, flood wardens can operate sluice gates. The communication between flood wardens and the EA was questioned and some local groups feel cut off and that communication only comes after a flood event rather than before.

#### **- What can communities do?**

EA gave examples of how communities investing in the sensing technology to get water level info and gate levels automatically rather than waiting for this to cascade from the EA.

Highlighting the importance of building resilience in the face of climate change and encouraging community involvement in determining the future of the landscape. Communities can have a greater role in building resilience through flood groups and emergency plans.

#### **Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)**

SRA reflected on the importance of resilience within our communities considering the natural landscape where risk will continue to increase.

SRA community engagement officers, gave an introduction to the SRA. The SRA is a partnership of risk management authorities, including the Environment Agency, Somerset Council, Wessex Water, Internal Drainage Boards, Natural England, and regional flood representatives.

They mostly fund projects to be delivered by their partner organisations, the SRA itself has no powers to carry out works but is about enabling extra works above the responsibilities and activities of its partners, with consideration of local issues and priorities. This can include extra dredging (or injections), ensuring SUDs are functioning, and working with local groups and facilitating work with landowners, with a focus on resilience and the human side of flooding.

They gave an overview of the work currently taking place across our LCN area (found on map in presentation).

**- Community grant scheme**

They announced the upcoming [small grant scheme](#), whereby community groups can apply for up to £20,000 to fund localised projects to reduce flood risk. This highlights the need to better understand the flow of our water ways and work with landowners and parishes upstream within our catchment areas.

**- Landowners**

After establishing that the landowner has the ultimate responsibility to maintain waterways (and agencies have the power to act where they deem appropriate) there were question regarding how to work with landowners and share what it is they need to do. Liability was discussed, with difficulties experienced in working with landowners to do work where they perceive they will then be liable. It was established that they would only be liable when they have not maintained the work, and that flood wardens are most likely covered under parish employee insurance, but it is always best to check with your own insurer.

**- Internal Drainage Board:**

IDB emphasised that should be discussing with EA funding for maintenance and infrastructure works, at parish level.

**- Langport Flood Group:**

Langport Flood Group explained the group's operations, including their use of WhatsApp for communication.

There is an emphasis on the importance of community involvement and collaboration in flood management.

There was a discussion around which parishes already have flood warden groups and how we can support others in setting them up. We identified a need to work across parishes, particularly those upstream to reduce risk.

#### 4. Discussion: answering the questions below.

Questions were asked at the end of each presentation; so group discussions took place throughout, information shared during the Q&A sessions can be grouped below.

**i) What can the LCN facilitate?**

Sharing information of upcoming flood cafes, resilience workshops, and the work of flood groups across parishes would be useful. Those wishing to set up a flood group can work with established and well-functioning groups to get off the ground.

**ii) What can residents do themselves? And how can the LCN support?**

Residents can be part of flood groups to help protect their communities. They can attend flood cafes to get advice. Residents should always report a flooding event and how they were affected, this is so the area received funding and support for future events.

**Information to share:** SRA [reporting](#) mechanisms

**iii) What is the role of a flood warden? Can we close roads locally?**

We have some successful flood groups in our area, they work with the EA to monitor water levels and are active when an area has flooded to work with partners.

**iv) What local resilience groups already exist and are there gaps?**

Each parish present shared if they had a flood group, it was identified that those that don't and see themselves at risk should work with upstream parishes.

**v) How can we work better with the key lead agencies?**

Improve communication between flood wardens and the EA.

#### 5. Actions and Next steps

Date	Action	Responsibility
Ongoing	Consider if the LCN would benefit from setting up a cross-parish flood working group	All
Ongoing	Individual parishes to work with their insurers to establish if flood wardens are covered under their policies.	All affected
Ongoing	Encourage parishes to consider forming flood groups and support logistics of this	All parishes, LCN link officer, SRA
Ongoing	Promote use of <a href="#">flood online</a> and other mechanisms to allow accurate flood reporting	All

ASAP	PC to work with SRA to overcome landowner liability for flood resilience works	Affected PC and SRA
Ongoing	When the county is developing land use strategies (local plan) use engagement opportunities to address flooding concerns and the opportunities for land reclamation and planned flooding.	LCN link officer, all parishes
Next meeting	Consider inviting NHS and other health and well-being professionals to discuss strategies and services with the LCN. (LCN Members)	LCN chair and link officer
Ongoing	Parishes and landowners to consider the positive landscape opportunities that come from climate change to focus on land use and adaptation in the future.	All
Ongoing	Parishes to make themselves aware of who to contact in the event of an emergency. Please see the attached document – Flood emergency contacts.	All
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Emergency Planning working shop 3 <sup>rd</sup> of December, Chedzoy Village Hall.	All

**6. Date and Venues of future meetings**

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 – Online only**

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – Venue to be confirmed**

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – Venue to be confirmed**