

## Avalon and Poldens LCN meeting notes – Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024, held at Shapwick Pavilion

### Attendees:

Cllr Heather Shearer  
Cllr Liz Leyshon  
Cll Mark Healey  
Cllr Simon Carswell  
Cllr Tim Kerley  
Jenny Lawrence  
Fodo Higginson  
Paul Elliston  
David Mitchell  
Gus Wans  
Cllr Julie Welch  
Cllr Chris Bennetts  
Cllr Bryan Knickerbocker  
Emma Giffard  
Rachel Burden  
David Thomas  
Luke Harrison  
James Grischeff  
Micheal Hardwick-Ford  
Megan Harnedy  
Emmaline Kay

### Virtual attendees:

Georgia Terry  
Bruce Bailey  
Cllr Stephen Page  
Cllr Andy Dingwall  
Lindsay Mcdougall  
Andy Leafe  
Jessica Lewin  
Mary Phillips  
Emma Plummer

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair of the LCN, welcomed everyone to the meeting, he advised the agenda for the evening and then invited apologies from those who could not attend.

Apologies were made for: - Cllr Matthew Martin,

## 2. Notes from previous meeting and actions

Bryan Knickerbocker reviewed actions from the previous meeting, including increasing engagement with parishes, sending an email to parishes for their top five priorities, and updates on working groups and the Gravity Enterprise Zone. Emmaline provided updates on the Gravity Enterprise Zone and the local community forum meeting.

- **Engagement with Parishes:** it was discussed the action to increase engagement with parishes, involving the LCN chair and Vice-Chair's. They compiled a list of parishes and their meeting dates and will begin attending these meetings. Cllr Chris Bennetts has already reached out to Shapwick pc, Walton pc, Burtle pc and Chilton Polden pc
- **Email to Parishes:** Emmaline Kay (LCN Link Officer) mentioned sending an email to all parishes asking for their top five priorities. Emmaline noted that some parishes provided useful feedback, highlighting flooding as a major concern. It was also mentioned that some Parishes find filling in another survey to be tiresome, so it has been decided that future themes will be decided within the LCN meetings and from issues that the group raise.

## 3. Update from working groups

- **Highways Working Group Update:** Emmaline provided an update on the Highways Working Group, including meeting dates and the need for representatives from all parishes to attend. Georgia discussed the importance of focusing on key priorities and the challenges faced by the group.
  - **Meeting Dates:** Emmaline announced the Highways Working Group meeting dates: 21st October (online) and 5th November (in-person at Glastonbury Town Hall). More detailed information would be shared nearer the time.
  - **Parish Representatives:** Emmaline emphasised the need for representatives from all parishes to attend the Highways Working Group meetings to increase engagement.
  - **Key Priorities:** it was highlighted the importance of focusing on key priorities, such as traffic speed and volume, and the challenges faced by the group in maintaining focus.
  - **Enhanced Maintenance Pilot:** Emmaline mentioned the Enhanced Highways Maintenance Pilot launched by Somerset Council, which includes localised grass cutting and pothole repairs, available to parishes without obligation.
- **Health and Well-being Working Group Update:** Councillor Heather Shearer provided an update on the Health and Well-being Working

Group, including their brainstorming exercise, exploring primary care networks, and the impact of transport on access to services. The next meeting is scheduled for the 24th of October.

- **Brainstorming Exercise:** Heather Shearer mentioned that the group conducted a brainstorming exercise to identify potential partners and issues affecting residents.
- **Primary Care Networks:** The group explored the services offered by the three primary care networks in the area, noting the complexity due to overlapping boundaries.
- **Transport Impact:** Heather discussed the impact of transport on access to services, highlighting the lack of bus services to key locations like Avalon Marshes.
- **Next Meeting:** The next Health and Well-being Working Group meeting is scheduled for the 24th of October, with options for both online and in-person attendance.
- **Community Health and Well-being Officer Presentation:** Fodo Higginson, the Community Health and Well-being Officer from SALC (Somerset Association of Local councils), presented on the grant funding available for parishes to support health and well-being projects. She emphasized the importance of engaging with local councils and provided examples of successful projects.
  - **Grant Funding:** Fodo Higginson explained the three categories of grant funding available: seed funding (up to £1500), small grants, and large grants (up to £35,000).
  - **Successful Projects:** Examples of successful projects funded include bike maintenance workshops, raised garden beds for mobility sessions, and community chat sessions were presented.
  - **Engagement with Councils:** Fodo emphasized the importance of engaging with local councils to identify and support health and well-being projects in their communities.
  - **Application Process:** She explained the application process, encouraging parishes to contact her for guidance and support in developing their project ideas.

#### **4. Flooding Migration: understanding our issues, mapping and action planning with key agencies**

- **Environment Agency Presentation:** Emma Gifford and Rachel Burden from the Environment Agency presented on the recent wet weather and flooding impacts in Somerset. They discussed the challenges faced, maintenance efforts, and the importance of reporting flooding incidents.
  - **Wet Weather Impact:** Emma and Rachel discussed the unprecedented wet weather in Somerset, highlighting that the Axe and Brue catchments experienced the wettest year on record.

- **Flooding Challenges:** They explained the challenges faced in managing flooding, including high river flows and limited pumping capacity due to high water levels.
- **Maintenance Efforts:** The Environment Agency is proactively lowering water levels and conducting maintenance on high-priority sites, despite resource constraints.
- **Reporting Flooding:** Emma emphasized the importance of reporting flooding incidents to help prioritize resources and funding for flood management projects.
- **Natural England Presentation:** Simon Phelps from Natural England discussed the role of Natural England in water level management and the importance of protected sites in Somerset. He highlighted the need for maintaining water levels for wildlife and the impact of climate change on water management.
  - **Protected Sites:** Simon explained the significance of protected sites in Somerset, including SPAs, Ramsar wetlands, and SSSIs, which require specific water levels for wildlife.
  - **Water Level Management:** He discussed the role of water level management plans in maintaining appropriate water levels for these protected sites, ensuring the survival of unique species and habitats.
  - **Climate Change Impact:** Simon highlighted the impact of climate change on water management, noting the need for adaptive strategies to cope with wetter winters and potential droughts.
  - **Peatland Restoration:** He mentioned ongoing efforts to restore peatlands, which play a crucial role in carbon storage and water regulation, and the introduction of wet farming practices.
- **Somerset Rivers Authority Presentation:** David from the Somerset Rivers Authority explained the role of the SRA as a partnership organization and the importance of collaboration among various agencies. He also announced the upcoming Community Flood Action Fund to support local flood resilience projects.
  - **SRA Role:** David explained that the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) is a partnership organization involving multiple agencies, focusing on flood risk management and resilience.
  - **Collaboration Importance:** He emphasized the importance of collaboration among agencies like the Environment Agency, Natural England, and local councils to effectively manage flood risks.
  - **Community Flood Action Fund:** David announced the upcoming Community Flood Action Fund, which will provide grants up to £20,000 for local flood resilience projects, starting from 10th December.

- **Funding Allocation:** The SRA allocates around £3 million annually, raised through local Council tax, to fund additional flood risk management projects beyond the statutory duties of partner agencies.
- **Community Resilience and Flood Preparedness:** Paul from the Somerset Rivers Authority discussed the importance of community resilience and flood preparedness. He encouraged parishes to develop emergency plans, engage volunteers, and consider property flood resilience measures.
  - **Emergency Plans:** Paul emphasized the need for parishes to develop emergency plans, including identifying places of safety and establishing communication channels with official responders.
  - **Volunteer Engagement:** He encouraged parishes to engage volunteers, such as flood wardens and watercourse watchers, to monitor and report on local watercourses and potential flood risks.
- **Interest in Flooding Working Group:** It was proposed setting up a flooding working group or an emergency planning group to address local concerns and improve community resilience. The idea received mixed reactions, with some participants emphasizing the need for broader engagement from more parishes.

## 5. Date and Venues of future meetings

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – Online**

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – Cossington Village Hall**

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – TBC**

### Table of Actions

Date	Action	Action for
16/10/2024	<b>Parish Engagement:</b> Send an email to all parishes to gauge interest in setting up a flooding or emergency planning working group.	Chair/Link Officer
16/10/2024	<b>Community Flood Action Fund:</b> Circulate information about the Community Flood Action Fund to all parishes and encourage applications.	SRA/Link Officer
16/10/2024	<b>Health and Well-being Grants:</b> Share the link to the SALC website and details about the health and well-being grant program with all parishes.	SALC/ Link Officer
16/10/2024	<b>Watercourse Maintenance:</b> Share the new guidance on farming rules for water	EA/ Link Officer

	and responsibilities with Emmaline for distribution to parishes.	
16/10/2024	<b>Flood Risk and Planning Workshop:</b> Promote the Community resilience day in Bridgwater on November 6th, including the workshop on flood risk and planning.	SRA
16/10/2024	<b>Parish Conference:</b> Promote the Somerset Parish's conference on November 13th to all parishes.	Fodo