



Local Community Network

Wells and Rural LCN AGM 2026, Wells Golf Club, Veal Lane, BA5 3DS, 13th July 2026, 7pm, in person only.

Attendees:

Chris Winter (Wells Civic Society)
Denise Denis (Wells CC)
Charlotte Griffin (LCN Link Officer)
Diane Abbott (Binegar PC)
Edric Hobbs (Somerset Councillor)
Elizabeth O Sullivan (Member of the Public)
Jim Reeves (St Cuthbert Out PC)
Jon Abbott (Binegar PC)
Liz Pedley (Member of the Public)
Nataliya Wills (LCN Link Officer)
Philip Welch (Wells CC)
Simon Shimmin (North Wootton PC)
Theo van Hensbergen (Accessible Wells)

Apologies:

Fodo Higginson (SALC)
Philip Blatchford (Emborough Parish Meeting)
Ros Wyke (Somerset Councillor/Westbury sub Mendip PC)
Tony Hathway (St Cuthbert Out PC)

1. Chair's Report

The Chair (Denise) reflected on the previous year and read out her report as included in the Wells and Rural LCN Annual Report. (This will be sent out as an attachment with the notes).

2. Annual Report

Charlotte briefly explained the contents of the Annual Report.

3. Chair and Vice Chair for 2026-2027

Chair - Councillor Edric Hobbs
Vice Chair - Councillor Ros Wyke

4. Priorities for the Next Year

A detailed discussion took place regarding future priorities. Cllr Edric Hobbs took over chairing the meeting.

Proposed Priority – Highways

Members supported maintaining highways as a core priority due to:

- Road maintenance concerns.
- Footpath accessibility issues.
- Road closure proposals.
- Consultation and communication concerns.

Proposed Priority – Accessibility

There was strong support for:

- Improving access for disabled residents.
- Improving pavement quality.
- Accessible transport.
- Public realm accessibility.
- Wider inclusion of accessibility considerations in local planning and services.

Proposed Priority 3 – Environment

Members identified:

- Flooding.
- Wildfire risks.
- Climate resilience.
- Food resilience.
- Sustainable environmental management.

as important themes requiring ongoing attention.

Additional Discussion

Members discussed:

- Flood risk management.
- Differences between river flooding and surface water flooding.
- Environmental risks crossing parish boundaries.
- Opportunities to use future meetings to focus on environmental resilience issues.
- A need for an organisational chart for Somerset Council

The Chair suggested limiting the number of priorities to allow meaningful discussion and focus.

5. Local Plan Consultation

Denise Denis led part of the meeting which focused on the Somerset Local Plan 2045 consultation.

Presentation Summary

Members heard that:

- The Local Plan will replace former district council plans.
- It will guide planning decisions across Somerset from 2025–2045.
- The consultation closes on 24 July.
- The plan covers areas including:
 - Climate resilience
 - Housing
 - Health and connectivity
 - Transport
 - Employment
 - Place-making
 - Infrastructure delivery

Key Issues Raised

Consultation Timescales

Members expressed concern that:

- The consultation period was too short.
- Parish councils had insufficient time to properly consider and respond.
- Important consultations require wider public awareness and longer response periods.

Public Engagement

Concerns included:

- Lack of public awareness.
- Reliance on parish councils and clerks to distribute information.
- Limited use of social media and local media channels.
- The challenge of reaching residents who do not actively engage with council communications.

Housing and Planning

Participants discussed:

- National planning requirements.
- Housing supply targets.
- Risks associated with developers obtaining permissions but delaying construction.
- The impact of potential future Government policy changes.

Accessibility and Housing Needs

A detailed accessibility issue was raised regarding:

- Wheelchair-accessible housing provision.
- Concerns that existing assessments do not adequately capture housing needs for wheelchair users.
- Differences between adaptable and wheelchair-ready homes.
- The need for further evidence gathering and improved understanding of accessibility requirements.

Advice Given

Members were encouraged to:

- Register for Local Plan updates directly from Somerset Council.
- Submit responses even if commenting only on selected sections.
- Encourage wider public participation in the consultation process.

6. Any Other Business (AOB)

Public Engagement and Awareness

Discussion focused on:

- How residents learn about LCN meetings.
- Attendance levels.
- Communication through newsletters, magazines and social media.

Members noted:

- Public participation often increases when a specific local issue arises.
- Greater effort is needed to raise awareness of the LCN's role and achievements.
- There remains uncertainty among some residents about the purpose of Local Community Networks.

Relationship with Somerset Council

Members highlighted:

- Difficulties navigating Somerset Council structures following local government reorganisation.
- Challenges identifying appropriate officer contacts.
- The importance of support from LCN officers.

Positive feedback was given regarding officer support and responsiveness in helping residents and parish councils find appropriate contacts.

7. Date of Next Meeting

After discussion regarding suitable meeting days and times:

Agreed Provisional Date

Monday 21 September

Time

7:00 pm start

Duration

- Meetings will continue to run for up to two hours.
- Aim to finish by 9:00 pm.

Venue

To be confirmed.