

# Local Community Network

**South East LCN meeting notes – Wednesday 23 October 2024, at Caryford Community Hall, Maggs Lane, Castle Cary, BA7 7JJ**

## Attendees:

Ewan Jones	Bruton Town Council / SALC (LCN Co-Chair)
Judi Morison	Castle Cary Town Council (LCN Co-Chair)
Cllr Nicola Clark	Somerset Council (LCN Vice-Chair)
Cllr Henry Hobhouse	Somerset Council
Beth Poole	LCN Link Officer
Micheal Hardwick-Ford	LCN Project Officer
Fodo Higginson	Community Health & Wellbeing Officer, SALC
Sue Place	CEO, The Balsam Centre
Terena Isaacs	Castle Cary Town Council
Ken Courtenay	Henstridge Parish Council

## Virtual attendees:

Tim Adams	Compton Pauncefoot Parish Council
Chris Edwards	
Cllr Tom Power 'Norman'	Somerset Council
Mike & Cherry Toop	Clerk, South Cadbury & Sutton Montis Parish Council
Lisa Davies	Clerk, Castle Cary Town Council & Sparkford Parish Council
Jim Frampton	
Frazer Cooker	Parish Path Liaison Officer, Henstridge Parish Council
Kate Hellard	LCN Development & Engagement Manager
Beth Poole	LCN Link Officer

## Summary of key points of discussion and outcome:

### Item 1: Approval of AGM Minutes

The minutes from the Annual General Meeting (AGM) were reviewed and approved as an accurate record of the AGM's discussions and decisions.

### Item 2: Working Group Updates

- **Flooding Working Group:**

- **Flood Warning App Development:** Tim Adams introduced a new flood warning application, **Pegel Alarm**, aimed at providing real-time alerts to users. The app is customisable, allowing users to set individual alert levels and notification preferences (push notifications, SMS, or email). It will integrate additional flood gauges by early 2025, funded with support from

Somerset Council. Tim emphasised the app's potential to significantly improve community preparedness for flooding events.

**The free apps** are available (for iPhone/iOS & Android) with alerts, which people are encouraged to download:

- **PegelAlarm** currently does not include the latest River Level Gauges on River Cam but will do in New Year (upgrade with support of Somerset Council via Henry Hobhouse) <https://pegelalarm.at/>
- **RiverApp** to view live & historical river levels <https://www.riverapp.net/en>
- **WhatsApp Alert Channel:** Tim also mentioned a WhatsApp channel providing early flood alerts, which has been actively used by residents and road users to follow the Upper River Cam & Tributaries. The channel complements the app, offering residents a quick and reliable source of flood-related information.

The 'Flood Alerts from Blackford River Level Gauge Channel' on WhatsApp can be accessed via the following links:

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaDbh9KCXC3GHj3iAv3t> or <https://tinyurl.com/BlackfordAlerts>

- **Section 19 Report on May 9, 2023 Flood Events:** A draft report on the severe flood events of May 9, 2023, is undergoing internal review within Somerset Council. It includes data from consultations across impacted villages. The finalised report, once released, will be a critical resource for understanding the events and improving future flood response.
- **A number of useful links were also shared:**
  - **New Environment Agency website** with live & historic river & rainfall levels in Somerset: <https://cfh.aquaticinformatics.net/AQWebPortal> or <https://tinyurl.com/SomersetGauges>
  - **The Community Engagement Officer (Flooding)** for Somerset Rivers Authority / Somerset Council – Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery is Dr Paul Elliston. He can be contacted on by mobile 07825 054667 or email [paul.elliston@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:paul.elliston@somerset.gov.uk)
- **Footpaths Working Group:**
  - **Ongoing Footpath Maintenance Issues:** Frazer Cooke addressed long-standing footpath maintenance challenges, particularly around delayed communications with Somerset Council and difficulty in enforcing landowner responsibilities. Issues such as overgrown vegetation and damaged styles were discussed as persistent problems requiring quicker intervention.
  - **Landowner Data Access:** Frazer highlighted the limitations in accessing landowner data, which has slowed efforts to hold landowners accountable

for footpath maintenance. Frazer suggested that improved data sharing with Somerset Council could enhance maintenance response times.

- **Pathway Liaison and Volunteer Coordination:** Beth Poole, the LCN Link Officer, was asked to coordinate with Frazer to streamline communication and facilitate quicker maintenance responses. This included linking Frazer with volunteer coordinators and exploring more efficient reporting systems for maintenance needs.

- **Highways Working Group:**

- **Enhanced Highways Maintenance Pilot – Cllr Nicola Clark:**

**Pilot Overview:** The Enhanced Highways Maintenance Pilot is an initiative allowing parishes to directly request highway maintenance services from Kier, Somerset Council's contractor. Services provided under the pilot include pothole repairs, localised grass cutting, sign cleaning, and drainage repairs. Parishes can access a full cost breakdown for services, with rates varying by day of the week.

- **Parish Coordination with a Community Engagement Manager:** A designated Community Engagement Manager serves as a liaison between parishes and Kier, streamlining communication and ensuring parishes have a dedicated contact for maintenance requests. This role is expected to improve scheduling efficiency and address maintenance backlogs.
- **Volunteer Training Program:** Kate Hellard introduced a volunteer training initiative that provides parishes with an alternative to Chapter 8 certification. This training, focused on hand tools for simple maintenance tasks, is free and will be available online after Christmas. Volunteers must operate under the policies, procedures, and insurance of a local organisation, such as a parish council.

- **Health & Wellbeing Working Group:**

- **Youth Outreach Programs:** Successful youth engagement projects were highlighted, including youth clubs in Queen Camel, Wincanton, and Milborne Port, funded by partnerships with the Somerset Association of Local Councils. These initiatives foster community connections and provide young people with constructive outlets.

### **Item 3: Parish Priorities Questionnaire**

**Overview:** The **Parish Priorities Questionnaire** was introduced as a tool for gathering input from parishes, community groups and people who live, work or visit the LCN area to review update its current priorities, now it's in it's second year.

**Objective:** This questionnaire seeks to confirm whether these priorities continue to align with local needs or if additional focus areas should be considered. The LCN encourages wide participation to ensure all relevant community concerns are addressed and everyone is encouraged to promote and share the questionnaire

across the LCN. It can be completed via the following link (or by scanning the QR code) and closes on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The link <https://sومersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/3cf2f3c6>

The QR code:



## Item 4: Guest Speakers

### 1. Fodo Higginson, Community Health & Wellbeing Officer - SALC

**Health Grants and Initiatives:** Fodo outlined grants available to support projects enhancing community well-being. Seed grants fund exploratory initiatives, while larger grants support sustainable projects, such as fitness programs and social events. Fodo emphasised the importance of evidence-based applications, inviting parishes to collaborate on designing impactful programs.

**Examples of Funded Projects:** Shepton Mallet piloted a youth council to involve young residents in decision-making; other parishes implemented programs like “chatty hours” to reduce social isolation, and cooking workshops to teach families affordable, nutritious meal preparation. Fodo’s PowerPoint Presentation is attached.



Microsoft  
PowerPoint Presentat

### 2. Sue Place, CEO, The Balsam Centre

**Connect Somerset - Community Champions:** Sue described her role as a community champion, which involves supporting local services and filling gaps, especially in educational and social support. Initiatives include addressing high rates of exclusions and absenteeism in schools, as well as working with local organisations to improve social cohesion.

**Central Hubs:** The Balsam Centre acts as a local hub, coordinating resources across villages to improve access to services. Successful projects include a youth club in Queen Camel and a youth outreach initiative in Wincanton and Milborne Port. Sue encouraged continued engagement in the hub model to amplify service impact across South East Somerset.

## Item 5: Table Talk – Reflection and Project Pitching

### Group Discussions:

**Reflections on Presentations:** Participants discussed insights from the presentations and explored how similar initiatives could be implemented locally. Emphasis was placed on projects that build community health resilience, such as fitness programs, youth facilities, and enhanced social spaces in parks.

**Feedback:** Attendees underscored the need for youth engagement, with ideas such as establishing a **community app** to inform and connect young residents, creating new spaces for youth activities, and building partnerships with local schools to foster community pride. The possibility of partnering with local Young Farmers was discussed, who are involved with the Balsam Centre.

## Item 6: Any Other Business

- **Community Places of Safety Registration:** Village halls were encouraged to register as **Community Places of Safety** as part of Somerset Council's emergency preparedness initiative. This designation could benefit communities during adverse events and may offer additional access to funding and support.
- **Upcoming Events and Conferences:**
  - **Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Conference** scheduled for November 6, 2024, will feature workshops and support sessions on topics related to resilience.

## Item 7: Dates of Future Meetings

**Weds 22 January 2025** - Wincanton Sports Ground and online

**Weds 30 April 2025** - Henstridge Village Hall and online

**Weds 16 July 2025** - Queen Camel Memorial Hall (AGM) and online

## ACTIONS

Action	Action Owner	Date
<b>Flood Warning App:</b> Finalise and integrate new gauges with Pegel Alarm for community flood alerts and provide update when occurred.	Tim Adams, Henry Hobhouse	Early 2025
<b>Flood Warning App:</b> Circulate links to Flood Warning apps.	LCN Officer	25/10/2024
<b>Footpath Communication Improvement:</b> Streamline communications, data access and reporting with Somerset Council to address maintenance delays.	LCN Officer, Frazer Cooker	Ongoing
<b>Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme Pilot:</b> Parishes to consider cost-sharing and efficient use of resources to bring to next Highways Working Group meeting.	LCN Parishes	19/11/2024

<p><b>Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme Pilot:</b> Raise concerns about budgeting for potential costs and the impact on parishes not participating in the pilot.</p>	Highways Working Group / Ken Courtenay	19/11/2024
<p><b>Volunteer Training:</b> Work with parishes to coordinate volunteer training and identify suitable date for delivery.</p>	Highways Working Group	22/01/2024
<p><b>Volunteer Training:</b> Circulate link to register as a volunteer.</p>	LCN Officer	25/10/2024
<p><b>Distribute Parish Priorities Questionnaire:</b> Send out the questionnaire to gather feedback on current and future LCN priorities.</p>	LCN Officer	25/10/2024
<p><b>Community Places of Safety Registration:</b> Encourage parishes to register village halls to improve emergency preparedness and access to resources.</p>	LCN members and parishes	Ongoing