

Wells and Rural Local Community Network Meeting Notes

Date: 14th January 2025

Time: 7pm

Location: Wells Little Theatre

Attendance:

Name:	Representing
Abi David	YMCA
Adrian I'Anson	Public
Christopher Charnes	Public
Denise Dennis	Wells City Council
Fodo Higginson	SALC
Heather Shearer	Somerset Council
Ian Bowen	Mendip Hills National Landscape
Jim Reeves	St Cuthbert Out Parish Council
Martin Cooke	St Cuthbert Out Parish Council
Ros Wyke	Somerset Council
Rosa Kells	Wells Bus Users Group
Sarah Powell	Wells City Council
Simon Shimmin	North Wootton Parish Council
Theo Butt Philip	Somerset Council
Tony Hathway	St Cuthbert Out Parish Council

Tony Robbins

Somerset Council

Officer Attendance:

Natalyia Wills

LCN Link Officer

Megan Harnedy

LCN Link Officer

Andre Sestini

Planning Policy Officer

Virtual attendance:

Name:

Representing:

Jessica Lewin

Connect Somerset

Jon Abbott

Binegar Parish Council

Katy Love

The Bishop's Palace

Lisa Pool

St Cuthbert Out Parish Council

Siobhan White

Connect Somerset

Summary of discussion:

1. Welcome and introductions

Apologies were received from Philip Welch

2. Updates from working groups

Our Active Travel group are meeting with an active travel officer at 6pm Tuesday the 21st of January, in the Portway Annexe.

The Highways Working Group are meeting on the 3rd of February at 2pm, in the Portway Annexe. We will be joined by Kier's community engagement officer and Somerset's highways maintenance officer.

Our flood working group met in December and agreed that the best use for the group was to be a central base to hear what each parish or catchment specific flood group is doing and share updates, challenges and learning experiences.

The group can also be used to facilitate conversations and form links with agencies and the council as needed. So, for each of those groups to contact the group and LCN when something comes up and a meeting can be arranged. Where other groups don't already exist, the group can support on localised issues and focus our efforts on one area.

We spent a lot of time discussing gullies and drains. It was decided that this would be followed up as part of our highways working group meeting.

3. SALC Heath and Wellbeing Grant: Youth Outreach Proposal, Wells City Council

Denise (Wells City Council) and Fodo (SALC Health and Wellbeing Officer) proposed that the LCN apply for SALC's Health and Wellbeing grant. The grant would initially fund a scoping exercise to assess the need for youth outreach in outer parishes, followed by a larger grant application if a need is identified.

Timeline

The application for the scoping grant (£1,500) must be submitted within a month. Any full project must be operational by May 2025 to allow for reporting by April 2026.

Grant Prerequisites

1. Council support for the initiative.
2. Commitment to eventual match funding.
3. A new or significantly developed project.

Youth Needs in the Area

A review of parish data (2021) highlighted that, while youth numbers are relatively low, they are proportionally similar between Wells and rural areas. However, young people in outer parishes lack access to groups and services available in Wells.

Scoping Grant Application

- Wells City Council could lead the scoping grant application, incorporating feedback from interested parishes.
- Alternatively, another council could apply for the grant, either engaging external partners (e.g., Connect Somerset, YMCA) or conducting the research directly.
- One council must hold the grant and act on behalf of participating parishes.

Future Project Funding

- Parishes must consider sustainability beyond the first year of funding (up to £35,000) through match funding.
- Wells City Council will present the proposal to its full council in January and is willing to lead the application if interest is shown.

Outreach Provision

The scoping exercise will define outreach services, but initial suggestions include:

- Utilising existing community transport.
- Leveraging village facilities and halls.
- Extending Wells' current provisions.
- Delivering services directly in parishes to support local engagement.

Scouts, Guides, and other youth organizations will be engaged to assess current provision and needs.

Wells City Council invites interest from parishes and is prepared to lead the application if there is sufficient engagement. Please consider whether this initiative aligns with your council's priorities and would be interested in participating in the initial scope funding application.

Action: Get in contact with Denise (d.denis@Wells.gov.uk) or the LCN inbox (Wellsandruralcn@somerset.gov.uk) if your parish would be at all interested in being part of the initial scoping grant application, that may or may not lead to a subsequent large grant application. This does come with a level of commitment that in the future your parish would be happy to put aside funds to ensure a project is sustainable.

*Contact Denise or Megan to discuss this further or indicate interest by the **26th of January**.*

4. Local Plan Engagement

We began with a video presentation from The Local Plan Team, which introduced the Somerset Local Plan and the waves of engagement taking place until March 2025.

The approach being taken by a whole Somerset Plan was queried, given that each of the former districts had very different approaches. Whether there will be one common approach, or a hierarchy of settlements has not yet been decided but the plan will be Somerset wide and they are in the process of collecting data from settlements across Somerset.

The importance of the current [call for sites](#) was highlighted to gather an up to date picture of what is available and what development may come forward for housing, employment sites, community infrastructure.

Engagement with these early stages of plan development was discussed to be valuable as the new planning authority and wide team developing the strategic view for the plan will not be aware of localised conversations.

Discussions took place under the following headings with the detailed questions in the attached slides. The general conversation points are covered below:

- Decent homes for all
- Health and wellbeing
- Education and employment
- Movement and travel
- Shops and services
- Sustainable and resilient places
- Culture, community, and play
- Character, heritage, and design

Detailed feedback, our meeting transcript, and copy of notes made will be provided to the local plan team, our responses will be shared for further input before finalising and sending to the team.

Action: collate all notes and input on each theme and share with all LCN reps for further input before sharing with local plan team.

5. Planning for next meeting: 18th March at Gurney Slade and Binegar Hall

Suggestions for how to use our upcoming meeting were collated and include:

- Public Transport and integration of bus routes
- Police and Crime prevention
- Green corridors and links between villages and towns
- LCN communications and engaging smaller parishes
- Community Land Trusts
- How to be proactive in delivering social housing across community boundaries
- Feedback from local plan engagement
- Follow-up on children and young people proposal

If you have any further requests, please get in touch with the LCN inbox.

Actions

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
Contact Denise or Megan to express interest in being part of SALC grant application	All	Before January 26th
Collate and share notes from local plan engagement for further information to be added if necessary	Link Officer	To be shared by end of January, for final responses by mid-February