

Levels & Moors Local Community Network

Annual report 2025/26

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Levels & Moors Local Community Network

The Levels and Moors LCN sits in the centre of Somerset, bordering seven other LCNs. Primarily a rural area, its parishes include Burrowbridge (famed for its Burrow Mump), Martock in the south, and North Curry to the southwest.

The LCN also includes the market towns of Somerton and Langport with their well-established grassroot community groups, local organisations and networks. The area is characterised by the inland peat-based Moors and unique Somerset Levels – the Levels being the only place in the United Kingdom where basket willow is grown commercially.

Tributaries of the rivers Tone, Parrett, Axe and Brue run across this LCN area.

Visit:

<https://lcn.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/local-community-network-areas/levels-moors/>



Introduction

It has been another vibrant and productive year for the Levels and Moors Local Community Network. Hybrid meetings have enabled strong participation throughout the year and we have been well supported, directly by our link officers, and indirectly by the time and commitment of agencies like the Police, the Environment Agency, the National Health Service, The Society of Local Councillors, The Somerset Rivers Authority and the many officers of Somerset Council who have engaged with our LCN. Our strength and usefulness lies in the efforts made by participating parishes and their councillors who have attended and contributed. Without the above we would be nothing. With it we have the chance to engage with Somerset Council and other agencies so that we can do more than single parishes can achieve for the people we represent.

With humble thanks to all that have helped I remain your chair.

Councillor Sean Dromgoole

Chair

Levels & Moors Local Community Network



Levels & Moors Local Community Network Chairs 2025/26



LCN Chair

Cllr Sean Dromgoole
Langport Town Council

Cllr Sean Dromgoole is a councillor on Langport Town Council, where he serves as Chair and is Lead Councillor for the Environment, acting as the town's Climate Champion. He represents Langport and is actively involved in local committees and outside bodies, including active travel and community groups. With a background in national and local politics, Sean previously stood as a parliamentary candidate in Somerton and Frome and has held senior campaign and party roles. His interests focus on environmental sustainability, active travel, and strengthening local democratic engagement.



LCN Vice Chair

Cllr Emily Pearlstone
Somerset Council

Cllr Emily Pearlstone is one of the Somerset Council members for the Martock division. She serves on a range of key committees, including Full Council, the Constitution and Governance Committee, the Human Resources Committee, and the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee. Emily is also actively involved in the Levels and Moors and Yeovil Local Community Networks, supporting partnership working with towns, parishes, and community groups. In addition to her council roles, she represents Somerset Council on the Martock M3 Community Partnership and has a strong interest in community engagement and effective local governance.



Chair of the Active Travel Working Group

Cllr Gerard Tucker

Aller Parish Council / Clerk at Langport Town Council

Cllr Gerard Tucker is Chair of Aller Parish Council, a clerk on Langport Town Council and a prominent community advocate within the Levels and Moors area of Somerset. He plays a leading role in local partnership working and chairs the Levels and Moors Local Community Network's Active Travel Group and the Cross-Somerset LCN Active Travel Working Group, working closely with Somerset Council, parish councils and landowners to improve walking and cycling links across the Somerset Levels. Gerard has a strong background in economic development, having held senior roles supporting business growth in South Somerset. His local priorities include sustainable transport, rural connectivity and strengthening collaboration between councils and communities.



Chair of the Highways Working Group

Cllr Marcus Hembrow

Curry Rivel Parish Council

Cllr Marcus Hembrow is Chair of Curry Rivel Parish Council. Raised locally, he has a background as a chartered surveyor and has worked extensively in property development and planning, bringing professional expertise to local decision-making. At parish level, Marcus leads on planning, estates, allotments, trees and community initiatives such as Curry Rivel in Bloom. He is also involved in active travel, conservation and parish planning work, with a strong focus on localism, good design, sustainability and protecting the character of rural Somerset.

Levels & Moors LCN Link Officer

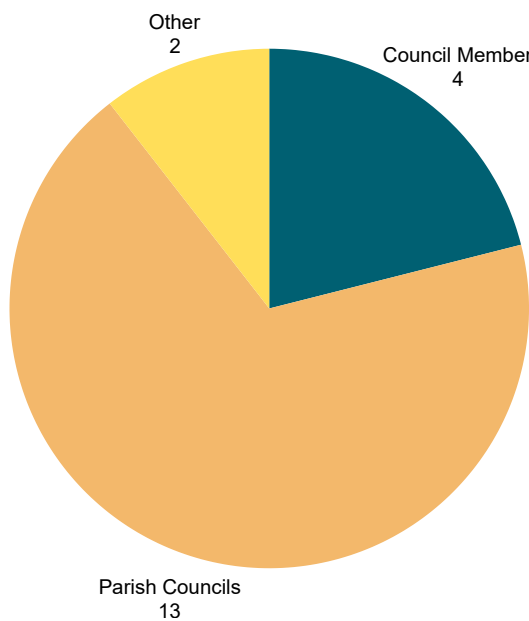


Chris Booth
Somerset Council

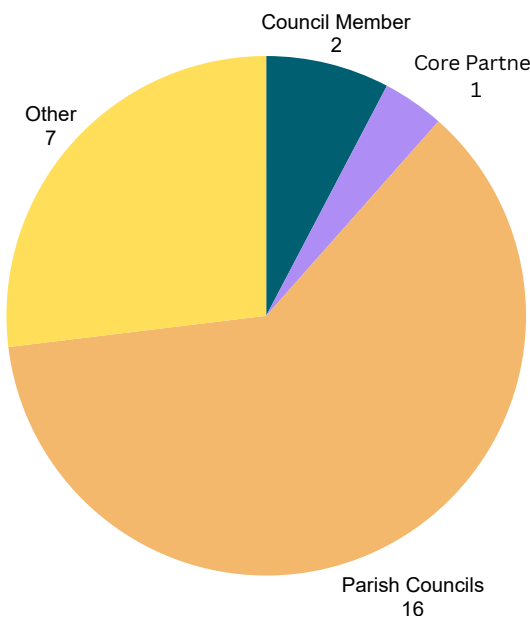
Chris Booth is an LCN Link Officer at Somerset Council, supporting partnership working across towns, parishes and community organisations. Having started in November 2025, his role focuses on enabling collaboration between Somerset Council, local councils and voluntary sector partners to deliver practical improvements for residents. Chris works closely with Local Community Networks, helping to coordinate meetings, develop local priorities and progress projects covering highways, transport, community development and environmental issues. He has particular experience supporting parish councils, managing stakeholder engagement and producing clear communications, reports and newsletters to keep communities informed and involved in local decision-making.

Attendance (of the Main Meeting)

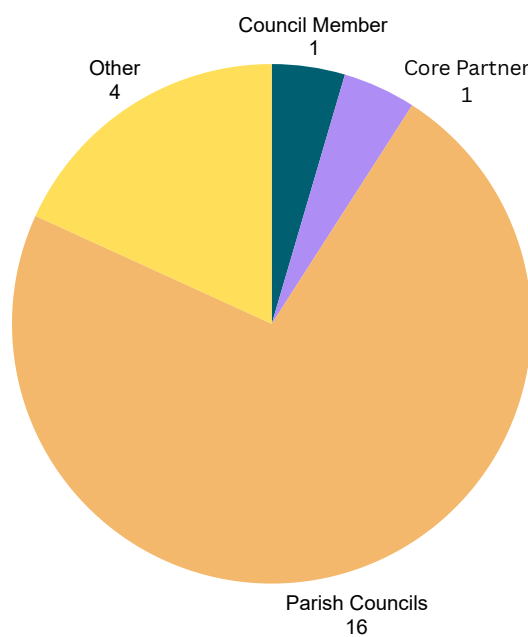
Since the 2025 AGM, there has been gradual increase in attendance with a peak of 35 attendees in the March 2026 meeting. The average attendance for the year is 25 and only the January meeting was completely online.



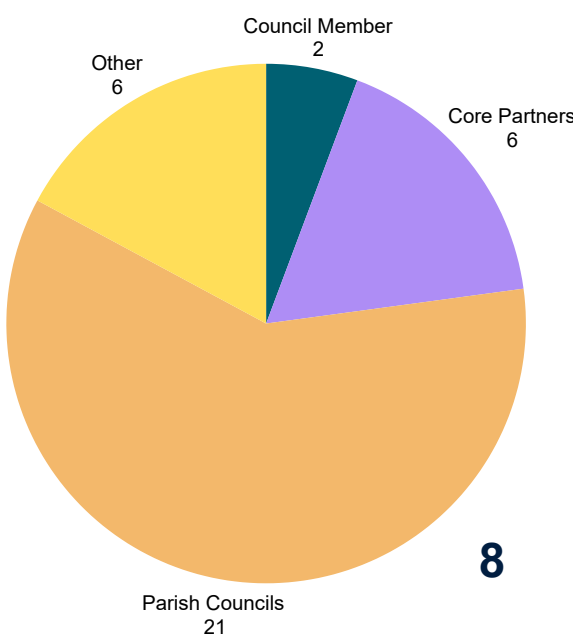
June 25
Total: 19



January 26
Total: 26



October 25
Total: 21



March 26
Total: 35

Agreed Priorities – 25/26

1. Active Travel: The group emphasised the importance of continuing to support and expand active travel initiatives. They highlighted the success of the active travel network and the need to maintain and improve existing public footpaths. There was also a focus on creating new paths and ensuring they are well-maintained.

2. Collaboration and Communication: There was a strong emphasis on improving collaboration and communication among different working groups and Somerset Council. The idea of having regular meetings for the chairs of various subgroups to share best practices and coordinate efforts was discussed.

3. Environmental Projects: The group discussed the importance of environmental conservation and the need to support projects related to species diversity, healthy habitats, and access to nature. They mentioned the potential for creating new working groups focused on these areas.

4. Community Engagement: The importance of community involvement in various projects was highlighted. The group discussed ways to encourage more volunteers to participate in maintaining public footpaths and other community initiatives.

5. Planning and Development: There was a discussion about the challenges related to planning and development, particularly in rural areas. The group emphasised the need for better communication with planning authorities and the importance of addressing issues related to phosphates and other environmental concerns.

Overall, the future priorities focused on enhancing active travel, improving collaboration, supporting environmental projects, increasing community engagement, and addressing planning and development challenges.

Year Review

The Levels & Moors Local Community Network (LCN) had a challenging yet constructive year in 2025/26, continuing to strengthen partnership working across a large, low-lying and predominantly rural area of Somerset. Covering more than 30 parishes alongside the market towns of Langport and Somerton, the LCN brought together parish councils, councillors, community organisations and statutory partners to address shared priorities shaped strongly by place and environment. Hybrid meetings and active working groups enabled broad participation and helped ensure that rural perspectives were consistently heard.

A defining feature of the year was the impact of flooding on parts of the Levels and Moors, which reinforced the importance of community resilience and coordinated response. Several parishes experienced the effects of prolonged high water levels and saturated land, affecting access, transport routes, farmland and daily life. These conditions highlighted the vulnerability of communities living and working on the Levels, and the need for joined-up planning between local councils, Somerset Council, the Environment Agency, Thrive and other partners. Flooding issues were reflected in discussions around emergency planning, highways resilience and long-term environmental management.

The LCN continued to focus on practical, place-based problem-solving. Working groups on highways, active travel, community transport, health and wellbeing and community emergency planning allowed issues to be explored in detail and supported constructive dialogue with council officers and external agencies. This approach helped strengthen understanding of how flooding, transport, health and social infrastructure intersect in rural communities.

A key development during 2025/26 was the People, Places and Things project. This provided a useful framework for understanding how community wellbeing is shaped by relationships, local spaces and everyday assets, particularly in areas affected by environmental pressures such as flooding.



By linking people, places and practical initiatives, the project supported more joined-up thinking about resilience, connection and quality of life across the LCN area. This was able to progress thanks to funding from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) received by Langport Town Council.

Overall, 2025/26 demonstrated the growing maturity of the Levels & Moors LCN as a trusted forum for collaboration, enabling communities and partners to respond collectively to both immediate challenges, such as flooding, and longer-term ambitions for the future of the Levels and Moors.

Case Study

The ***People, Places and Things*** project continued to develop through 2025/26 as a practical, community-led response to social isolation across the Levels and Moors. Building on earlier work, the project focused on maintaining and expanding a shared, free-to-use community activity list that brings together local activities, venues and support services in one place. The live community activity list was kept under review, with updates encouraged from parish councils, community groups and individual organisers to improve its accuracy and reach. The work was undertaken by Cllr Phil Sharratt, thanks to funding from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC), applied for and held by Langport Town Council.

Throughout the year, the project was actively promoted through Local Community Network channels, with parish chairs and clerks encouraged to share the resource locally and contribute new information. The project remains focused on being accessible, adaptable and locally owned, with aspirations to move towards a searchable website when funding allows.

Active Travel Working Group

During 2025/26, the Levels & Moors Active Travel Working Group provided a focused forum for parishes to explore walking and cycling priorities across a largely rural area. Chaired by Gerard Tucker, the group brought together parish representatives to discuss local routes, safety concerns and opportunities to improve everyday connectivity.

Key areas of work included reviewing existing and potential walking and cycling routes, understanding the use of Section 106 and external funding, and responding to emerging national and county-level active travel policy. Members consistently highlighted the challenges faced by rural communities, including narrow roads and flooding impacts, speed and limited infrastructure. The group also engaged with cross-LCN active travel discussions, ensuring rural perspectives were represented.

Overall, the year strengthened collaboration between parishes and officers, improving shared understanding of constraints and funding routes.



Case Studies

During 2025/26, the Curry Rivel Active Travel Group continued to play a central role in progressing the **active travel path linking Curry Rivel to Langport**. Working in partnership with neighbouring parishes, landowners and wider stakeholders through the Levels & Moors Active Travel network, the group focused on turning long-standing aspirations into deliverable sections on the ground.

Another key achievement was securing and coordinating the use of Environment Agency stone to enable new path construction, helping to connect Curry Rivel towards Langport via Frog Lane, Black Bridge and Huish Episcopi. This approach allowed progress to be made cost-effectively, using local effort and volunteer support alongside parish collaboration. Throughout the year, the group also contributed to wider discussions on route alignment, safety, surfacing and year-round accessibility, ensuring the path meets everyday walking, wheeling and cycling needs. Engagement through Active Travel Working Groups helped align local ambitions with county-wide active travel policy and future funding opportunities, keeping momentum behind a strategic, rural active travel link for residents and visitors alike.

Another notable achievement was the project led by Gerard Tucker to republicise and improve signage for the South Somerset Circular Cycle Path. After gaining approval from the Crewkerne & Ilminster LCN (where the bulk of the route is), Gerard got support from Langport Town Council to print leaflets which promote the route, with Langport being the start and finish of the 80 mile route. Volunteers will spend coming months placing updated signs around the route to ensure users stay on track.

Highways Working Group

During 2025/26, highways remained a key priority for the Levels & Moors Local Community Network, reflecting the rural nature of the area and the scale of issues raised by parish councils.

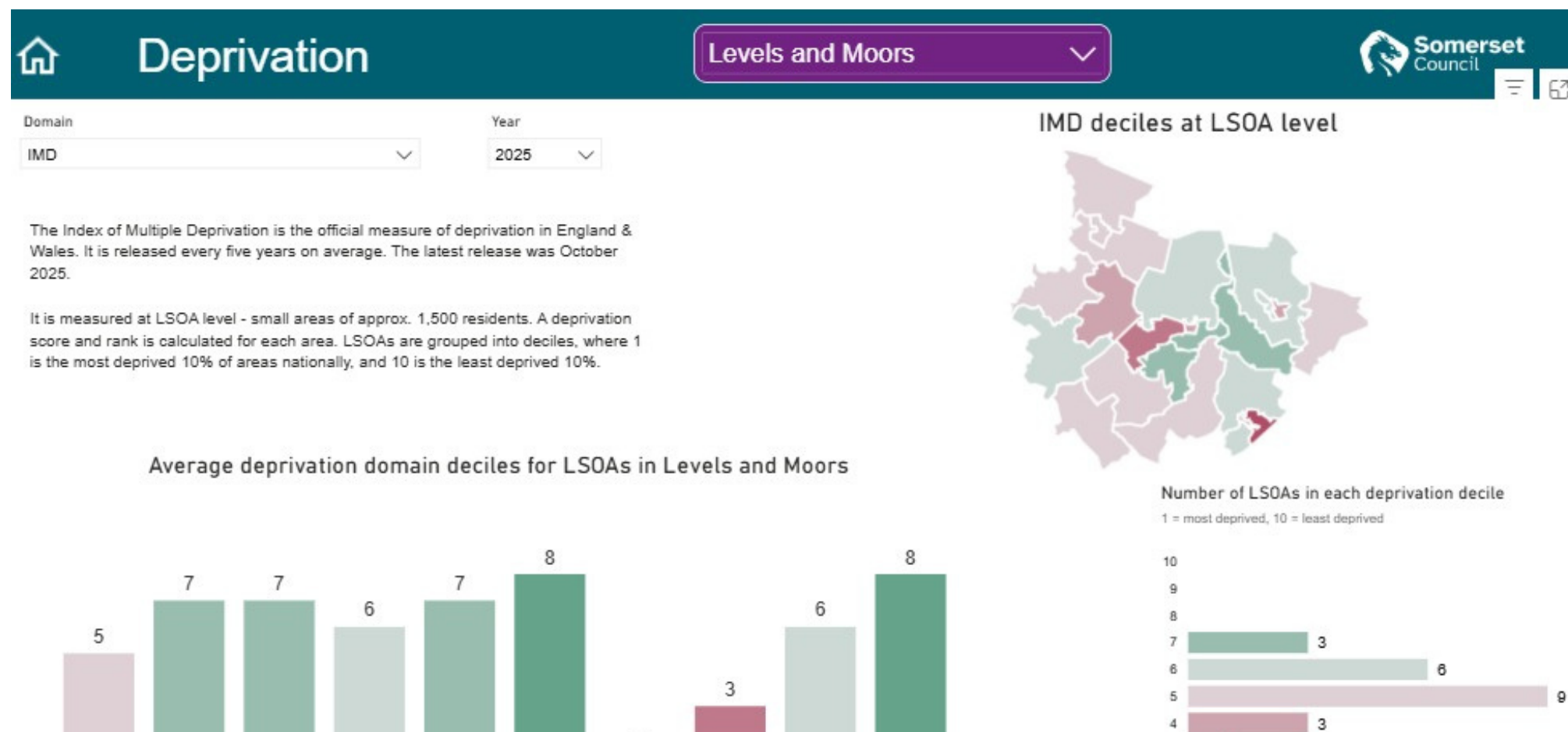
The Highways Working Group provided a consistent forum for parishes to raise local concerns directly with Somerset Council officers, helping to improve understanding of processes, constraints and timescales. Key themes included road condition and maintenance, drainage, flooding impacts on the highway network, speed management and safe routing for residents and farm traffic. Periods of prolonged wet weather and flooding highlighted vulnerabilities in sections of the local road network, reinforcing the importance of drainage maintenance and coordination with wider flood-management activity. The working emphasised the need for clearer communication between parishes and highways teams, enabling issues to be grouped, prioritised and fed into council programmes more effectively.

Overall, the year strengthened relationships and improved the flow of information, supporting a more joined-up and realistic approach to highways challenges across the Levels & Moors LCN.

Going forward, the aim is to have more separate meetings rather than being discussed as part of the main meeting. We will have a mix of online meetings featuring officers and in-person meetings where local priorities can be discussed.

Data Update: Deprivation

October 2025 saw the release of data for each LCN area based on government analysis in relation to deprivation. The data demonstrated a mix of results across different neighbourhood areas with barriers to housing and services being the most common high scoring factor on the deprivation scale.



LSOA - small neighbourhood areas used for statistics by the government
Deciles - ranked in 10 bands

Looking Forward

While there is a major review taking place of the LCN structure, the work of the Levels & Moors will continue with future priorities likely to include:

- Continue strengthening the Levels & Moors Local Community Network as a trusted forum for collaboration between parish councils, Somerset Council, partners and community groups.
- Building on the previous priority for environmental conversation.
- Prioritising highways resilience, particularly drainage, maintenance and the ongoing impacts of flooding on roads and access across the Levels and Moors.
- Progressing active travel through realistic, rural-appropriate walking and cycling solutions, supported by dedicated working group activity and cross-LCN engagement.
- Strengthening community resilience and emergency planning, building on learning from recent flooding and supporting more coordinated local responses.
- Embedding the People, Places and Things framework to support more joined-up thinking about community wellbeing, assets and local capacity.

For more information on any of the activities detailed in this report, please contact:

levelsandmoorslcn@somerset.gov.uk

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Meetings (June 2025 - June 2026)

Main LCN Meeting

- 2 October 2025 - Middlezoy Village Hall
- 15 January 2026 - Online
- 26 March 2026 - Edgar Hall, Somerton
- 25 June 2026 - Charltons Community Centre, Charlton Adam

Active Travel

- 30 October 2025 - Langport Town Hall
- 19 February 2026 - Langport Town Hall
- 28 May 2026 - Langport Town Hall

Highways Meeting

- 21 April 2026 – online

Health and Wellbeing

- 6 November 2025 – online

Membership and Participation (June 2025 - June 2026)

Parishes

- Aller
- Barrington
- Beercrocombe
- Burrowbridge
- Chedzoy
- Compton Dundon
- Curry Mallet
- Curry Rivel
- Drayton
- Fivehead
- Hambridge & Westport
- High Ham
- Huish Episcopi
- Isle Brewers
- Isle Abbots
- Kingsbury Episcopi

- Kingsdon
- Langport
- Long Load
- Long Sutton
- Lyng
- Martock
- Middlezoy
- Muchelney
- North Curry
- Othery
- Pitney
- Puckington
- Somerton
- Stoke St.Gregory
- The Charltons
- Westonzoyland

Electoral Divisions

- Bridgwater East & Bawdrip
- Curry Rivel & Langport
- King Alfred
- Martock
- Monkton & North Curry
- North Petherton
- Somerton
- South Petherton & Islemoor

Core Membership and Stakeholders

- Avon and Somerset Police
- NHS
- Education
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
- Spark Somerset
- Connect Somerset
- Somerset Association Local Councils
- Somerset Activity Sports Partnership
- Thrive
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Somerset Rivers Authority
- Somerset Local Nature Partnership
- Business Chamber
- Young Farmers
- Langport Transport Group
- Kingsbury Episcopi Community Centre
- Thorney Lakes
- North Curry Pavilion
- Somerton Recreation Ground Trust
- High Ham Community Land Trust
- Connect Somerset
- Somerset Foundation Trust
- WellBe Link

Organisations involved in 25/26

- The Environment Agency
- CHP Healthcare
- FLAG
- Mind in Somerset
- NHS Somerset Foundation Trust
- Spark Somerset
- Somerset Bus Partnership
- Somerset Council Civil Contingencies
- Young Somerset