



Exmoor

Local Community Network

End of year report 2025 - 2026



Contents

Exmoor Local Community Network Map	4
Exmoor Data Profile	5
Chair and Vice Chair	6
Chair's Introduction	7
Themes and Topics	8
LCN meetings and venues	9
Attendance at Meetings: Years 1 - 3 (2023 - 2026).....	10
Highways and Traffic Working Group.....	11
Housing Working Group.....	12
Emergency Planning Workshop.....	14
Stronger Together.....	15
Access to Funding – SALC Health and Wellbeing.....	16
Testimonials and Endorsements.....	17
Looking Forward - The Year Ahead.....	18
LCN Link Officer	19
Membership and Participation.....	20

Exmoor Local Community Network

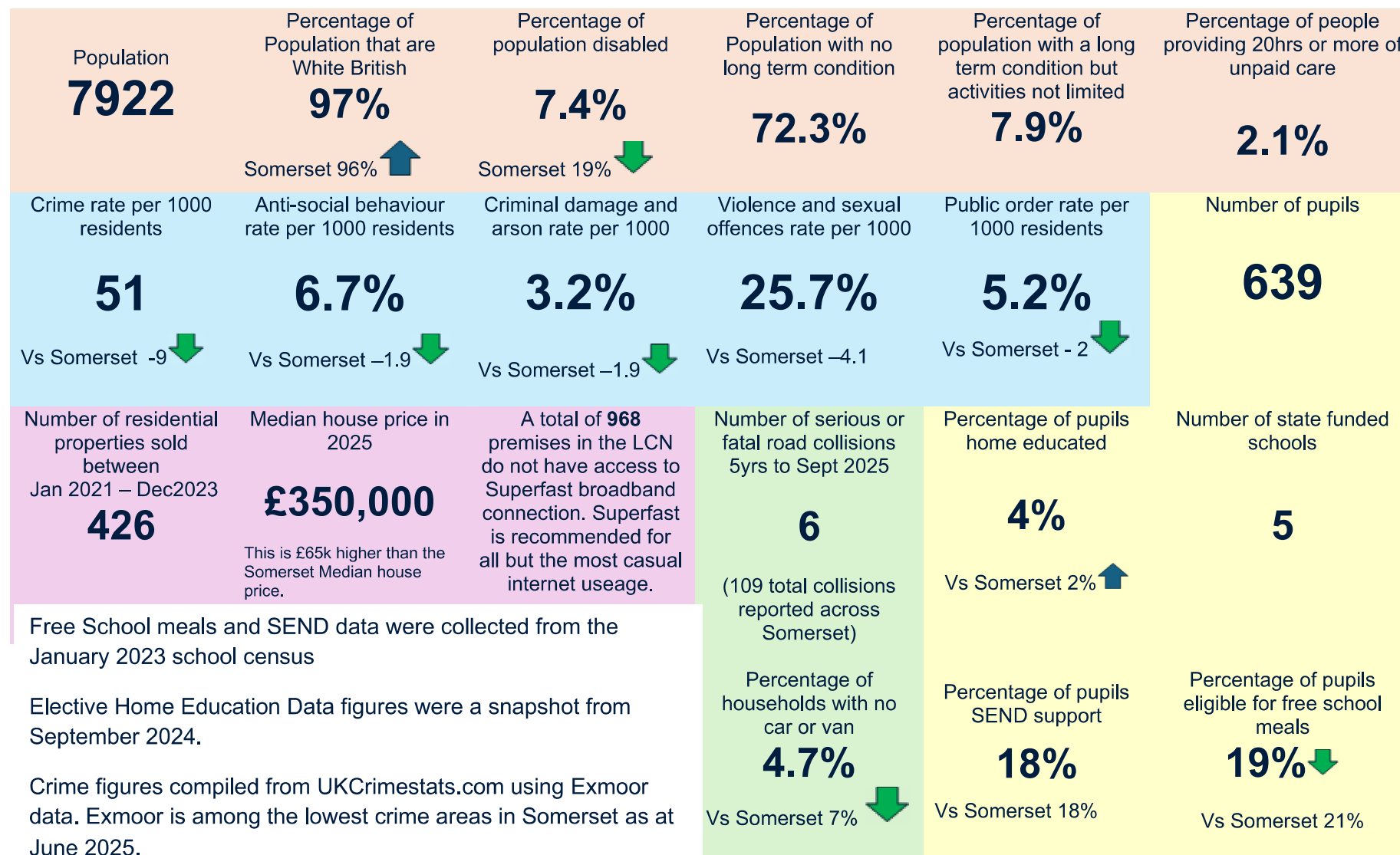
Exmoor

1

Local community Network Areas



Exmoor Data Profile



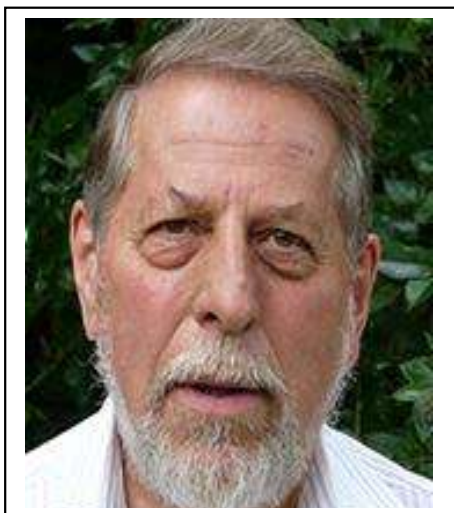
Chair and Vice Chair



Somerset Cllr Steven Pugsley
Chair of the Exmoor LCN

Cllr Steven Pugsley is one of the Somerset Councillors for the Dulverton and Exmoor Division and has represented parts of Exmoor on District, County and now Unitary since 1987.

As well as Chair of the Exmoor LCN, Steven also chairs the ENPA Planning Committee; and the Somerset Council Corporate & Strategic Scrutiny Committee. He also sits on the Planning West Committee and Constitution and Governance.



Cllr Mike Ellicott
Vice Chair Exmoor LCN

Cllr Mike Ellicott is the Chair of Exford Parish Council. Mike is one of the parish members who sit on the board of the ENPA and is responsible for representing local people more widely than just his own parish.

Chair's Introduction

The Exmoor LCN has become established as a key means of giving local people a voice.

In our very scattered and sometimes remote community, Town and Parish Councils working together with Somerset Council and other organisations like the Police and the Exmoor National Park Authority under the LCN umbrella, are able to influence directly other public bodies, share good practice, and support common activities. This makes us all on Exmoor stronger and more resilient.

During the course of this last year we have experienced the tragedy of the A396 school coach crash. We have collectively learnt from that sad, sad day and now many parishes are making sure that they have preparedness plans in place to deal with sudden crises. Flood, snow and ice often figure in our concerns but now the hazard of drought and fire will also have to be factored into our forward thinking.

The Exmoor Foodbank which the LCN helped to facilitate has gone from strength to strength and has now acquired premises which have been transferred from Somerset Council.

Our work on highways continues to achieve better outcomes for our residents and businesses, with quicker action, work programmes timed to suit local people, and much better information so that we can know what is happening , why and when.

There are more things that we want to do and aspire to. Directly holding budgets so that we can attract grants, and commission and target our own work where it is most needed on behalf of Exmoor Towns and Parishes, continues to be something that we believe will be hugely beneficial. The Exmoor LCN, with its strong local engagement, continues to demonstrate its ongoing worth and its potential to be even more effective in the years to come.

Cllr Steven Pugsley

Themes and Topics

The Exmoor LCN identified a variety of evidence-based themes and priorities to drive activity at a local level. While there are similarities across the county, the distinctiveness demonstrated in each area of focus underscores the value of localised decision-making.

Highways & Traffic

Feed into discussions around major projects, and improved communication.

Emergency Planning and Community Resilience

Workshops to inform and share good practice and ideas

Housing Working Group

Continuing work to develop a housing report for the Exmoor LCN. Supporting the Rural Housing Enabler.

Tackling Food Poverty and health inequalities

Continuing to support the Moorland Foodbank and looking into causes of deprivation.

Accessing Grants

Raising awareness on grant opportunities such as the SALC Health and Wellbeing Fund

Together for West Somerset

Continuing to support those affected by the A396 Coach Tragedy

LCN Meetings 2025 – 2026



All the meetings have standing item updates which include:-

- Avon and Somerset Neighbourhood Beat Team;
- Exmoor National Park Authority;
- Highways Maintenance;
- Rural Housing; and
- Reviewing minutes and action points from previous meetings.

Held at the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe

AGM – Thursday 5 June 2025

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

West Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau

Consider the joint LCN Annual Report

Thursday 4 September 2025 - Winter Maintenance

Visit Exmoor Report

Emergency Planning – Community Resilience & Grants

A396 Coach Crash - Reflections

Thursday 6 November 2025

Bus Improvement Partnership

Moorland Foodbank – One Year On....

Thursday 15 January 2026

A39 Dunster Traffic Light Improvement Scheme

Winter Maintenance Updates

Thursday 5 March 2026

SALC – Health and Wellbeing Fund

Thrive – The role of the Village Agent

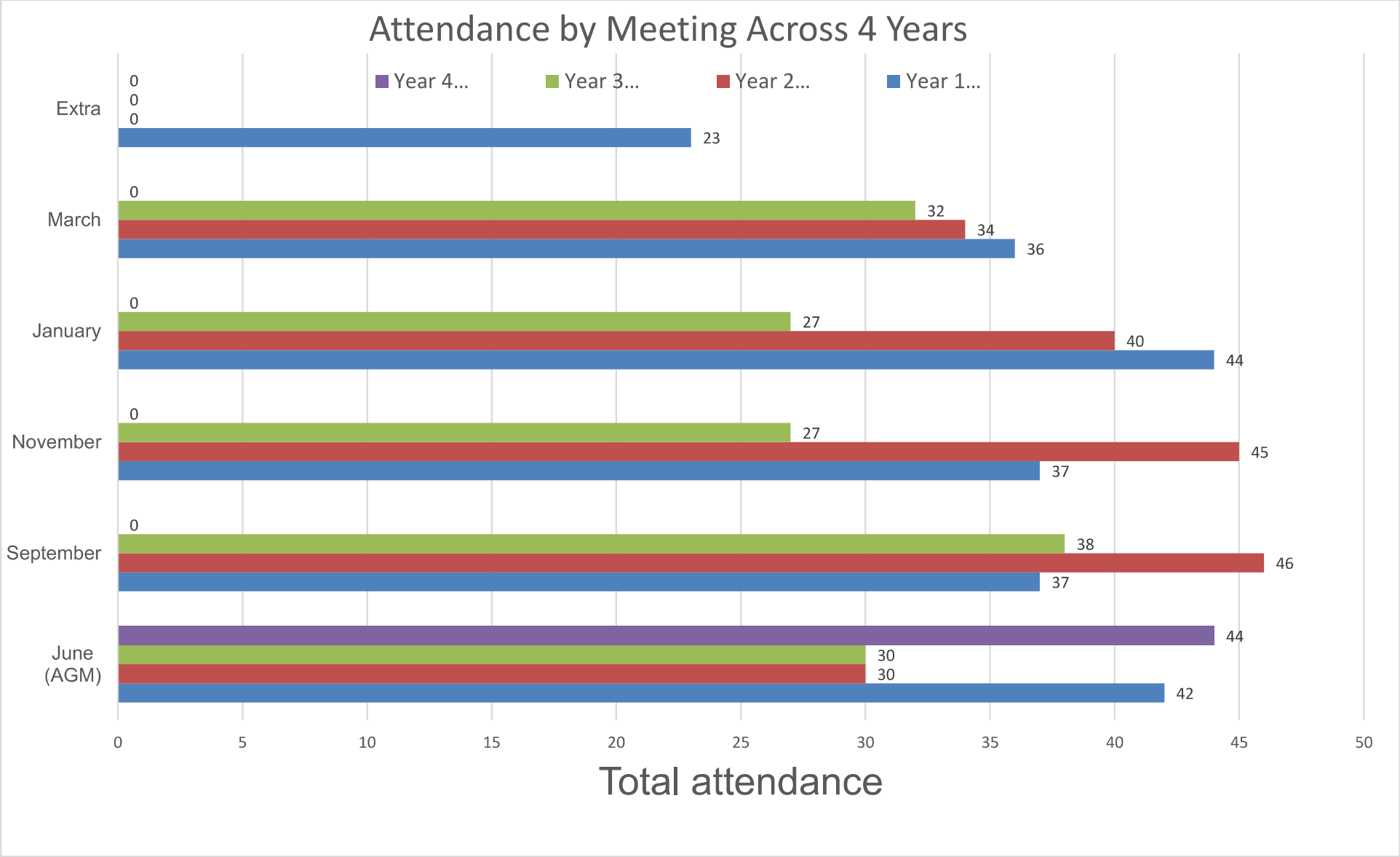
Public Space Protection Order

Thursday 11 June 2026 – Winter Maintenance

ENPA – Public Rights of Way

Exmoor Young Voices

Attendance at Meetings: Years 1 – 3 (2023 – 2026)



Highways and Traffic Working Group

The aim of this working group is to enhance communication and collaboration between Town and Parish Councils, local partners and the Highways and Traffic teams in Somerset Council.

Facilitated and convened by the Exmoor LCN team, the group meets regularly between main LCN meetings at Dulverton Sports Pavilion to identify and discuss local priorities related to highways issues.

Meetings are attended by relevant officers from the Highways and Traffic teams.

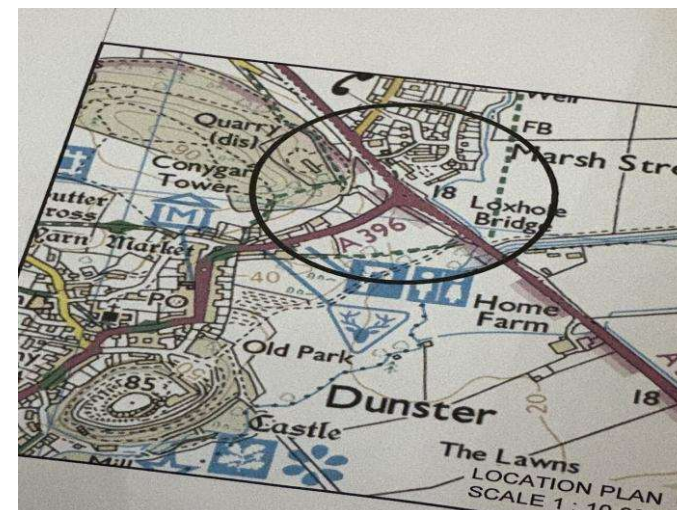
The Highways Working Group has supported communities in understanding Council processes and facilitating self-help efforts:

Highways and infrastructure planning.

Reporting defects via the Highways Defect Portal.

Cutcombe Hill A396 – Recovery and repairs.

Major refurbishment of the A39 Traffic Light Upgrade briefing sessions, in person and online. In collaboration with the LCN, Somerset Council's Major Projects Team invited residents to briefings and drop-in sessions about the upcoming scheme. These events aimed to gather public opinions from attendees, and a chance to engage directly with the engineers delivering the project.



Housing Working Group

The Housing Working Group has made steady progress over the past year in developing a coordinated, evidence-based response to rural housing challenges across the Exmoor LCN area. A key focus has been working towards the production of a Housing Report, which may be emblematic of other deeply rural areas within Somerset.

Significant effort has been directed towards improving the evidence base, including updating relevant housing lettings data for 193 lets between 1st August 2021 (the earliest available date due to IT platform changes) and 31st March 2026. This revealed a prevalence of bungalows (just under 2/3rds of all lettings) and 2-bedroom dwellings (just over half) together with a paucity of larger properties – only 3 lets were 4 bedroom.

The Exmoor-wide Housing Survey will also be a major component of this work, providing valuable insight into local housing demand and support future planning and policy development. Fully analysed results will be ready during 2026/27.

Colin McDonald
Rural Housing Enabler (Exmoor)

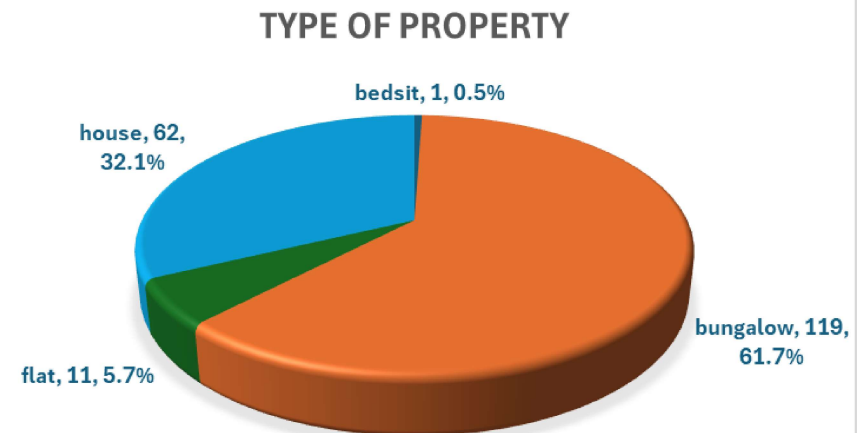
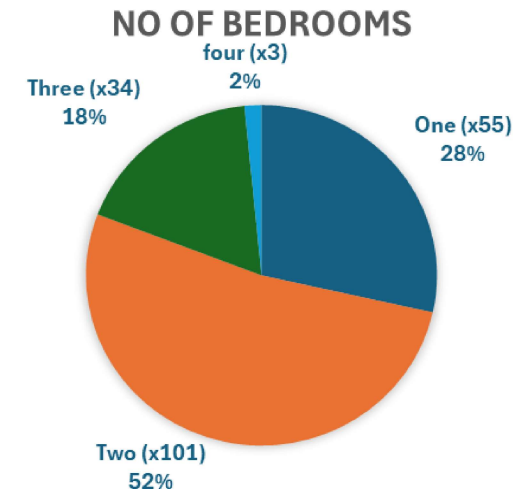


Housing Working Group

There was also some discussion of a particular property which had been problematic to let and the relationship between earnings and the income thresholds applied by both Homefinder policy and individual Housing Associations. The underlying systemic issue of note here being that Local Housing Allowances remain frozen whilst earnings have risen, with the National Living Wage consistently rising above inflation.

Wider discussion has also included the following points:

- Difficulties arise when those housed in rural areas struggle with unexpected isolation and lack of support.
- There is an inevitable tension between the need to fill vacancies quickly and the time needed to identify very local applicants. i.e. Commercial pressures on landlords can conflict with community sustainability.
- More targeted local criteria could help address rural allocation challenges but needs to avoid breaching certain legal requirements.



Emergency Planning Workshop

In the autumn, the Exmoor LCN including Somerset Councillors, the police, parish representatives and partners took part in an Emergency Planning Workshop focused on helping communities become more prepared for emergencies such as severe weather, flooding and power outages.

The session was practical and interactive, guiding participants through the key elements of a Community Emergency Plan. Attendees shared local experiences, discussed common risks, and explored realistic actions communities can take with the resources they already have.

A particular focus was placed on **power cuts**, with discussion around simple, low-tech solutions to help people stay warm, keep in touch and look after vulnerable residents when electricity is lost. Communities were encouraged to prioritise essential needs such as warmth, food and communication.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for parishes at different stages of preparedness to **learn from each other**, share draft plans and swap ideas. This helped build confidence and reinforced that emergency planning does not have to be complicated to be effective.

Overall, the workshop strengthened local links, increased understanding of community resilience, and gave attendees practical tools to take back to their communities.

Thanks were extended to Timberscombe Parish Council for hosting the event and to Somerset Council Emergency Resilience staff for attending and supporting the workshop.



Stronger Together



Exmoor Response to the A396 Tragedy

The Exmoor community demonstrated remarkable resilience and compassion following the tragic A396 coach incident in July 2025. Local residents, volunteers, emergency services, schools, community organisations and Somerset Council worked together to support those affected and assist with the recovery effort. Somerset Council's education, civil contingencies and highways teams coordinated closely with emergency services, while specialist support was provided to pupils, families and school communities impacted by the incident.

At a local level, the response highlighted the strength of Exmoor's community networks. During discussions at the September 2025 meeting, representatives from Cutcombe described how the village hall was opened immediately as a rest centre, with volunteers, teachers and emergency services working side by side to provide practical support. The experience reinforced the importance of community emergency planning and led to further work through the Exmoor LCN to strengthen local resilience and preparedness across Exmoor parishes.

This collective response reflected the strong community spirit that continues to be a defining feature of Exmoor, with partners and residents coming together during an exceptionally difficult time to support those affected and help communities recover.

SALC Health and Wellbeing Funding

SALC Health and Wellbeing funding in 2025–2026 supported a small number of targeted projects across the Exmoor LCN, primarily focused on community resilience and service access.

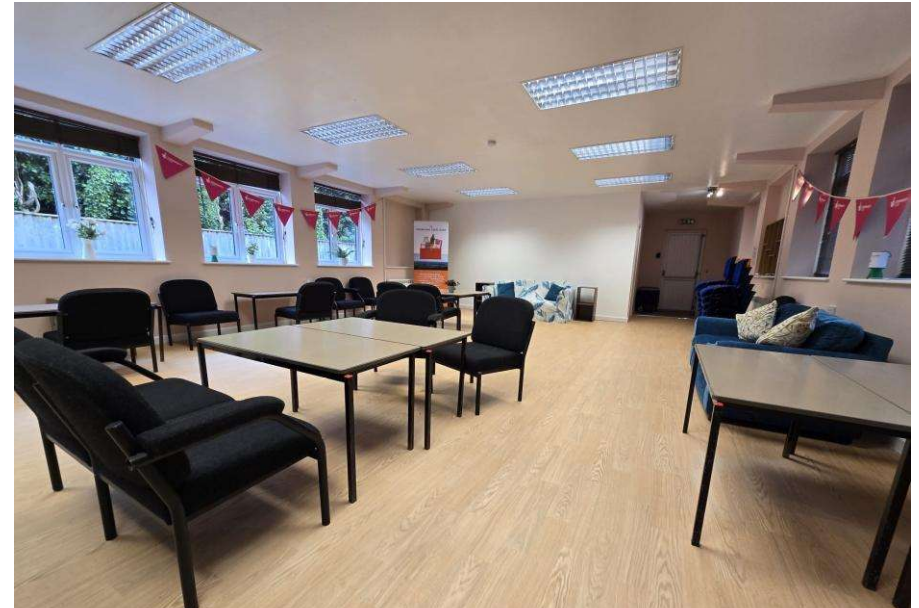
The **Moorland Foodbank** secured funding via Dulverton Town Council to employ a part-time Food Resilience Coordinator, enabling the transition to a more sustainable, structured model and supporting its relocation to the Riverside Centre, increasing capacity and community access. Dulverton Town Council acted as the accountable body, facilitating delivery and providing wider practical support.

Porlock Parish Council successfully secured SALC funding to progress a community hub project in the north of the LCN area, aimed at improving local access to services and strengthening community infrastructure.

Exmoor Young Voices received a contribution towards their Family Fun Day via Exford Parish Council.

For the latest news on Somerset Association of Local Council (SALC) Funding please visit

[Community Health & Wellbeing - The Somerset Association of Local Councils \(SALC\)](#)



Testimonials and Endorsements

The LCN provides an invaluable platform for understanding community flood resilience needs and for supporting parish and town councils to strengthen their resilience through training, grant applications, and tailored advice. The Link Officer role is central to enabling effective engagement and communication, ensuring that local priorities are addressed.

Over the past year, the Link Officer has played a key role in organising emergency plan writing support, welcoming the **Somerset Prepared Community Resilience** Roadshow, and fostering connections with the Climate Adaptation Plan delivery partners and the Green Action Group.

These efforts will help embed resilience initiatives more deeply within the area, and work towards creating stronger, better-prepared communities in the area.

Bel Deering (Somerset Rivers Authority)

I just wanted to say that being part of LCN Highways meetings has been so beneficial for **Kier** to engage into as contractor on highways.

It has enabled us to help deliver into communities (such as helping a foodbank and providing a school with reused carpet for their classrooms), has allowed us to know more about what is happening in our local communities within our remit and most of all has allowed us to assist parish and Somerset Councillors with any issues they may have with our work on highways.

Lorraine Warren (Kier)

Spark Somerset is pleased to be working alongside the **Exmoor LCN**, supporting the Voluntary, Community, Faith-based and Social Enterprise organisations within the area for the benefit of the residents of the local community.

Ali Sanderson (formerly Spark)

Looking forward – the year ahead

The Exmoor LCN entered 2026/27 with an established meeting pattern, active working groups and a broadening local agenda. The next stage is likely to involve consolidating these strengths while awaiting the outcome of the Somerset Council Community Engagement Review. This includes:

- Continuing to build the membership of the LCN around topics that matter to our communities.
- Developing more mechanisms to share good practice, ideas and work on common themes across LCN boundaries.
- Working with services across Somerset Council to increase and plan for engagement opportunities to inform policy and decision making.
- Providing more opportunities to learn about Somerset Council's services and ways of working.
- Engaging with our community stakeholders in LCN area to inform service development and practice.
- Improving the communication about the LCN, the conversations and work going on in each area and further developing the LCN area of our website; and
- Having more conversations with residents, partners and LCN stakeholders about the things that matter to them; building locally led and delivered action plans to address opportunities and issues

Looking Ahead

In 2026–27, the Exmoor LCN will continue to build on this year's progress. We will aim to deepen our engagement with communities, strengthen our working groups, and focus on delivering tangible outcomes. We look forward to working together to make Exmoor and its surrounding parishes even better places to live, work, and thrive.

The Exmoor LCN has made progress in addressing community issues and fostering collaboration among local organisations. However, challenges related to engagement and funding remain. Moving forward, the LCN will continue to focus on improving participation and securing resources to support its initiatives

LCN Link Officer



Sam Murrell, LCN Link Officer
Exmoor, Minehead & Watchet
Sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk

Top 5 Achievements – Exmoor LCN

- 1. Strengthened Community Engagement**
Secured inclusive representation across towns, parishes and key agencies, fostering collaboration and trust. Raised awareness on grants such as SALC's Health and Wellbeing Fund.
- 2. Strategic Working Groups**
We continued the Highways and Traffic Working group, working alongside highways officers to address concerns around winter maintenance and ongoing challenges with rural road closures. Facilitated the Housing Working Group in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority.
- 3. Electricity Power Outage Emergency Planning**
At the request of parishes facilitated an emergency planning workshop, hosted by Timberscombe Parish Council.
- 4. Coordinated Crisis Response**
Supported community recovery efforts following the A396 coach crash, working with local schools, Children Services, Connect Somerset, and Somerset Community Foundation.
- 5. Delivered Transparent Governance**
Produced the Annual Report, Newsletters, and managed AGM processes, setting clear priorities for the year ahead.

Membership & Participation

Town and Parish Councils

Brompton Ralph
Brompton Regis
Brushford
Clatworthy
Cutcombe
Dulverton
Exford
Exmoor
Exton
Huish Champflower
Luccombe
Luxborough
Minehead Without
Oare
Porlock
Selworthy
Skilgate
Timberscombe
Treborough
Upton
Winsford
Withypool and Hawkridge
Wootton Courtenay

Stakeholders

Avon and Somerset Police
Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor Young Voices
Exmoor Hill Farming Network

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

Spark Somerset

Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

Thrive (Village Agents)

Citizens Advice

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

Visit Exmoor
Exmoor Benefice

Electoral Divisions

Dulverton and Exmoor ED

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

ExmoorLCN@somerset.gov.uk

Sam.murrell@somerset.gov.uk