



Minehead and Watchet Local Community Network

Annual Report 2025 - 26



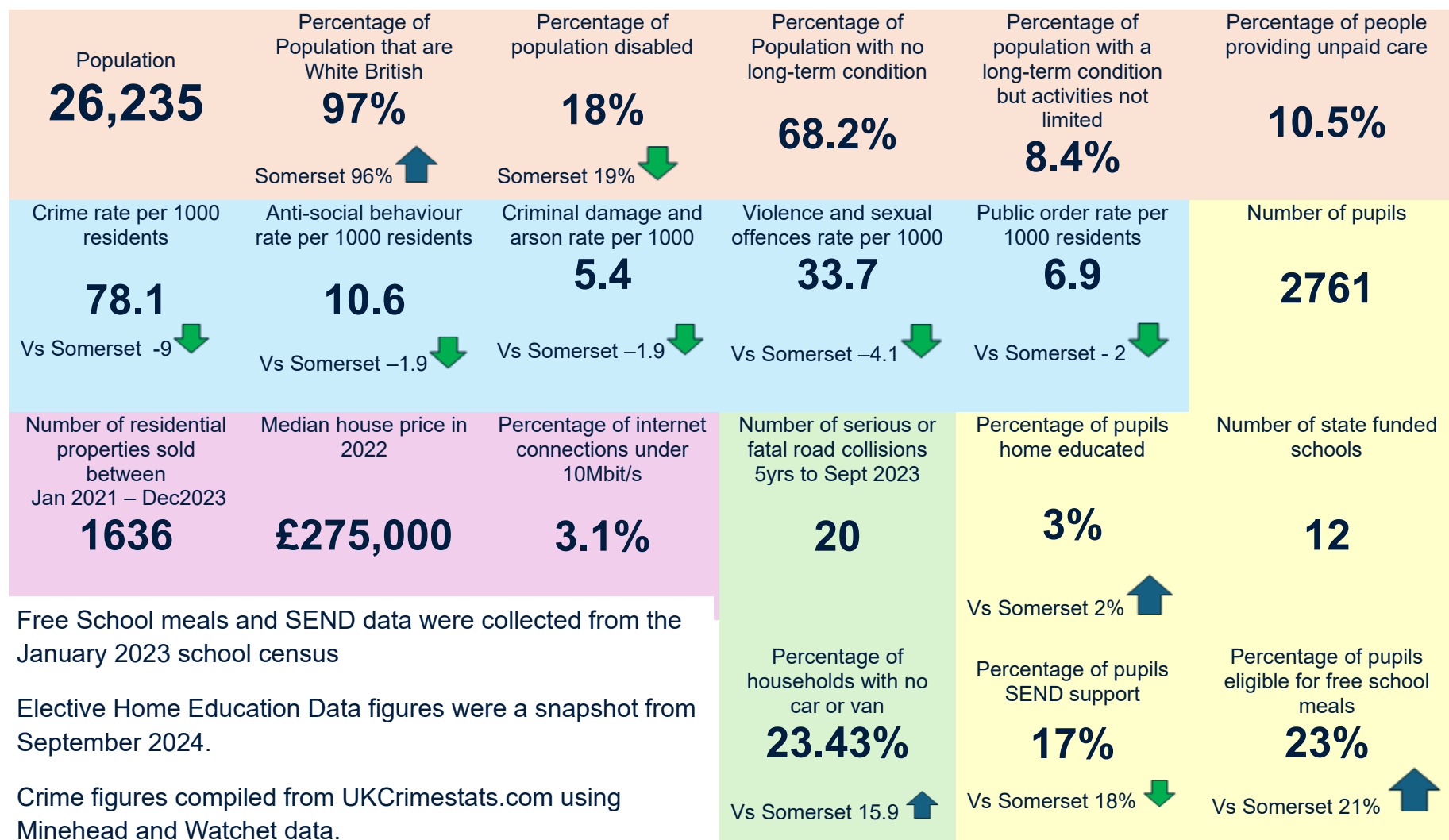
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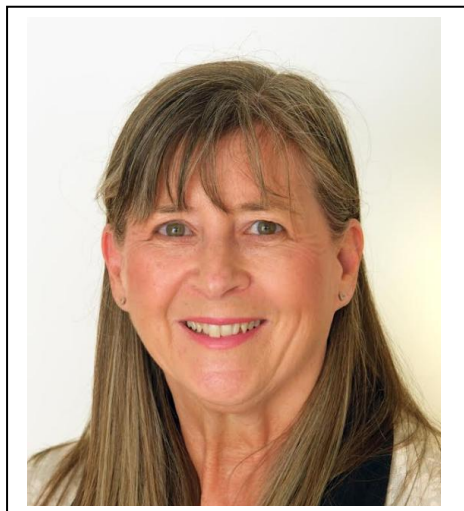
Minehead & Watchet Local Community Network



Minehead & Watchet Data Profile



Chair and Vice Chair



Somerset Cllr Mandy Chilcott
Chair of the Minehead and Watchet LCN

Cllr Mandy Chilcott is a Somerset Councillor who represents the Minehead Division.

Mandy has been a local councillor for 20 years previously holding positions at Minehead Town Council and West Somerset District Council. Positions held have included Deputy Leader of West Somerset District Council and Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources at Somerset County Council.

Mandy has worked with numerous local voluntary sector organisations over the years and is currently chair the League of Friends of Minehead Hospital.



Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker
Vice Chair of the Minehead and Watchet LCN

Cllr Brenda Maitland Walker is Chair of Carhampton Parish Council and the West Somerset Flood Group. Brenda was formerly a Somerset County Councillor 2009 - 2013; and a West Somerset District Councillor 2015 - 2019.

This is Brenda's third year as Vice Chair of the LCN. She continues to chair the Highways and Traffic Working Group

Chair's Introduction

As we reach the end of its third year, the Minehead & Watchet Local Community Network (LCN) offers us a chance to look back on what we have achieved together over the past twelve months.

There are currently 18 LCNs across Somerset, each set up to be the 'Voice of the Community'. Our LCN does that by listening to what matters locally, engaging with our communities, and working to strengthen connections between Somerset Council, our towns and parishes, local businesses and partners with the aim of improving outcomes for everyone who lives, works and visits the area.

This has been a year of conversations and support

We held four main meetings this year, in October, January, April and July, each with a varied agenda and a range of guest speakers. These included:

- **David Northey**, Somerset Bus Partnership, on service reliability, overcrowding, missing direct routes and timetable gaps
- **Denise Holway**, HM Prison & Probation Services, on how Community Payback can help improve our area
- **Colin McDonald**, Exmoor Rural Housing Enabler
- **Hayley Bullock**, SASP – Coastal Leadership Partnership
- **James Divall**, Head of Climate & Natural Environment at Somerset Council, updating on coastal and flooding matters
- **John Buttivant & Andrew Leach** Environment Agency, on coastal issues

I would like to thank all of our speakers for their time as well as the police who have given updates at every main meeting, whenever possible arriving thirty minutes early for face-to-face conversations — a format that continues to work well.

Chair's Introduction (continued)

As a result of meetings throughout the year several themes remained and were carried through to 2026: highways, young people's mental health, coastal protection, accessing grant funding, and supporting our communities. Where an issue needed further focus and work, we formed working groups — you will find full details of all three later in this report.

What worked well

Our **Highways Working Group** has gone from strength to strength and is now attended by almost every town and parish in the area. Thank you to Brenda Maitland-Walker for chairing it so efficiently and helping to drive a number of issues forward - and of course for providing the cake!. Thanks must also go to the Highways officers whose continued attendance has improved communication and efficiency — the information they share is much valued by our Town and Parish Councils and has helped to reduce the number of queries and complaints about roadworks and other highways related matters.

Our **Transport and Active Travel Working Group** has continued to lobby for the re-routing of the B3191 at Cleeve Hill and supported the bid to reinstate that route with evidence gathered locally. The LCN has also acted as a useful conduit between our communities and the utility companies' works programmes.

Our **Coastal Protection and Environment Working Group** has been pressing officers for updates on the cliff works at Minehead and on flood alleviation schemes.

Real results

The LCN continued to lobby Somerset Council to re-open the B3191 and everybody has been hugely supportive of Somerset Councils submission to the Structures Fund to re-instate the B3191 at Cleeve Hill. As Chair, I wrote to strongly support the submission. This is a priority for communities right across the LCN area. Restoring this route would be transformative for many improving safety with the potential to re-energise the local economy of the whole area. We await the outcome of the submission and remain both hopeful and optimistic.

Chair's Introduction (continued)

The LCN also provided challenge to the traffic lights replacement works in Dunster, resulting in directional signage to businesses, improved vehicle flow and close monitoring to reduce delays. It has pushed forward the provision of QR codes at bus stops and still has an ambition to see real time reporting on Bus Shelters. Those attending have also had plenty of good news to celebrate and share, from enhanced youth worker projects to new community facilities, environmental initiatives and successful grant applications. It is always great to find the time to celebrate success.

The LCN has become embedded as a tried, tested and trusted way for both Somerset Council and a variety of organisations to communicate with communities across our whole area. This single point of engagement improves efficiency and allows information and messaging to be quickly and easily shared either face to face, via the periodic newsletter or by circulation to the extensive email contact list.

Thank you

This year's meetings have been well supported, and I want to thank everyone who gave up their time to come along to share their good news as well as their challenges. Your contributions have made a difference. Without you there would be no LCN. By working together we have strengthened our area and supported one another, and I believe this year has been a demonstration of real synergy and shared experiences — clear proof that we achieve far more together than we ever could alone.

In concluding, a particular word of thanks must go to our Link Officer, Sam Murrell, whose local knowledge, commitment and determination have once again been outstanding.

But there is always more to do. As we move into the year ahead, I hope that everyone that attends will continue to bring your experience and local knowledge to the table — it is that shared understanding, and our willingness to work together, that has the power to improve resilience and deliver genuine improvements for our special area of West Somerset.

Mandy Chilcott (Minehead Councillor)
Chair Minehead & Watchet Local Community Network

Agreed and Emerging Priorities

The Minehead and Watchet LCN identified a variety of evidence-based themes and priorities have been identified 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.

Young People

Mental health grants and increasing resilience following trauma.

Transport & Active Travel

Improved services and input into decision making around key routes

Coastal Protection and inland Flooding

Working with partners to develop mitigations and improve communications

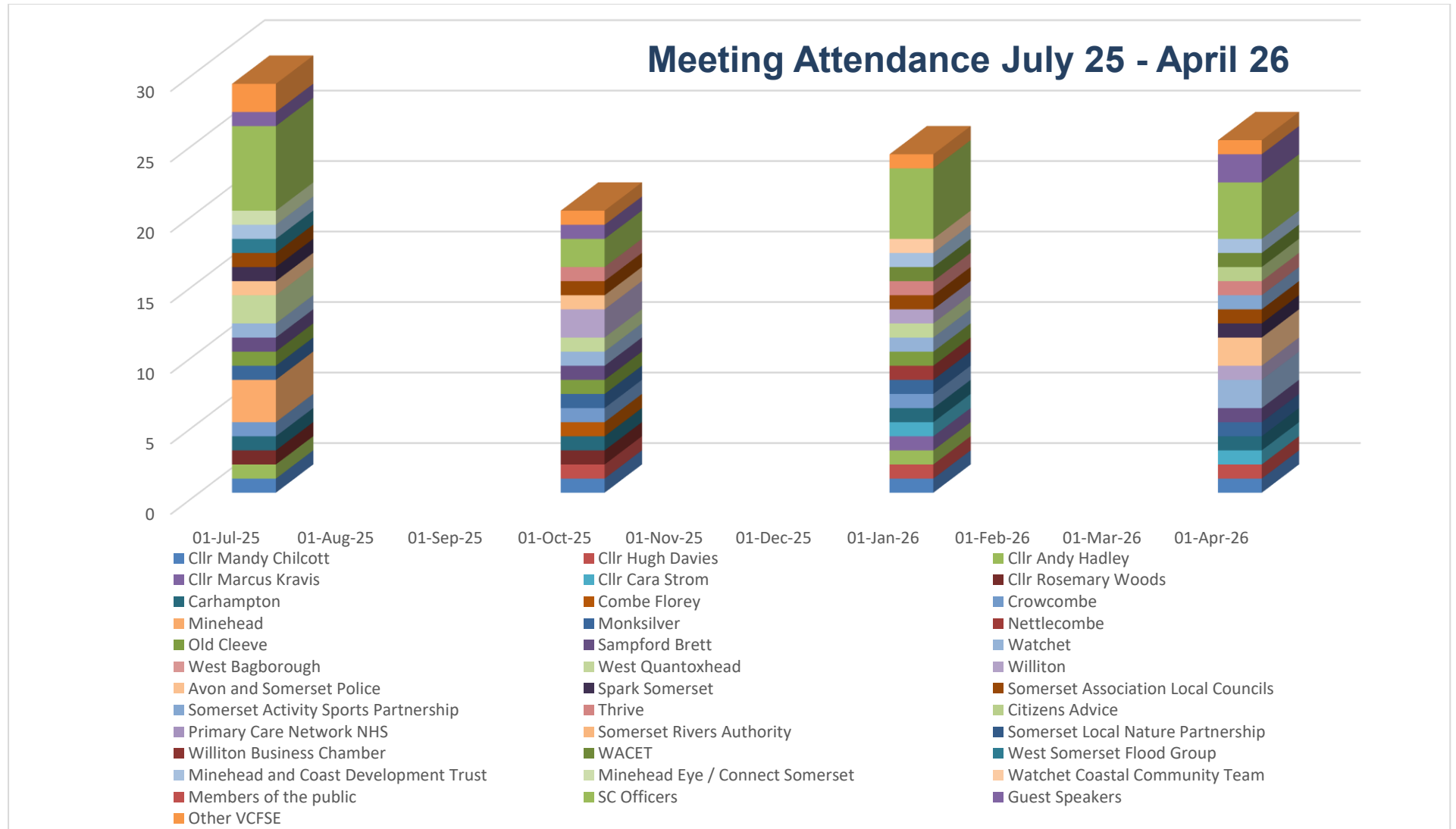
Accessing Grants

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

Attendance for Year 3



LCN Meetings and venues through the year....



All meetings include regular updates on topical items. This includes:-

- Avon and Somerset Police Update;
- Highways Working Group;
- Transport and Active Travel Working Group; and
- Sharing good news / calls to action

Main LCN Meetings 2025 – 26

Thursday 16 October 2025 – West Somerset House

Included presentations from:

- **Somerset Bus Partnership** – David Northey
- Minehead Town Council young people's health and wellbeing
- **SALC** Funding and Access to Grants.

Thursday 8 January 2026 – Online

- Bus service improvements and funding opportunities.
- Progress on the B3191/Cleeve Hill issue and future engagement with senior highways officers.
- Highway maintenance, drainage, vegetation clearance and parish priorities

Thursday 9 April 2026 – West Somerset House

Included presentations from:

- **Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP)** – Coastal Place Partnership and health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **West Somerset Food Cupboard** update and future plans.
- **Spark Somerset** support for community groups and volunteering.
- Citizens Advice West Somerset service challenges

Thursday 16 July 2026 – West Somerset House

Included presentations from:

- **James Divall** – Somerset Council, Head of Climate & Natural Environment
- **Denise Holway**, HM Prison and Probation Service

Highways and Traffic Management

Minehead and Watchet LCN – Ongoing Work

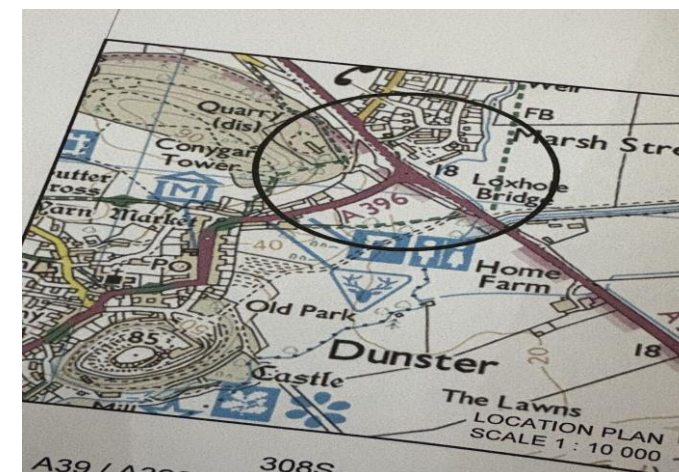
The aim of this working group is to enhance communication and collaboration between Town and Parish Councils, local partners and the Highways and Traffic teams in Somerset Council. More recently this has also brought major employers to the discussion including Butlins Resort, Minehead and the Hinkley Point Transport Provider.

The group meets regularly at West Somerset House to identify and discuss local priorities related to highways issues. Meetings are attended by relevant officers from the Highways and Traffic teams.

The **Minehead and Watchet LCN** lobbied the Council for the requirement for a working group to investigate the re-routing of the B3191 road, and the wider economic impact of the closure. More recently the working group has been working with partners to mitigate the impact of utilities works where long-term road closures are required.

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

- Attending Public Meetings and Drop-In sessions when major highways infrastructure changes are being communicated.
- Major refurbishment of the A39 Traffic Light Upgrade briefing sessions, in person and online. In collaboration with the LCN, these events aimed to gather public opinions from attendees and a chance to engage directly with the engineers delivering the project.



Public Transport and Active Travel

The Minehead & Watchet Transport and Active Travel Working Group has strengthened collaboration between Somerset Council, transport operators, town and parish councils, businesses and community representatives to address transport challenges across the LCN area.

During the year, the group championed improvements to public transport, raising concerns regarding bus reliability and capacity, supporting the introduction of electric buses on key routes, and monitoring enhancements to passenger infrastructure.

A significant achievement was the successful implementation of a request stop at Musgrove Park Hospital, improving access to healthcare for residents travelling from West Somerset. The group has also promoted community transport solutions and provided a coordinated local voice to inform transport planning and service improvement.

Looking Ahead

In 2026/27, the Working Group will focus on improving public transport reliability, strengthening community transport provision, supporting investment in transport infrastructure, and enhancing connectivity to key services, employment and education. The group will continue to champion accessible, sustainable and inclusive travel solutions that meet the needs of rural communities.



Flood and Coastal Resilience

Flood and coastal resilience was a key area of focus for the Minehead and Watchet Local Community Network during 2025–26. The LCN worked with the Environment Agency, Somerset Council, the Somerset Rivers Authority, town and parish councils, and community organisations to improve understanding of local flood and coastal risks and strengthen community resilience.

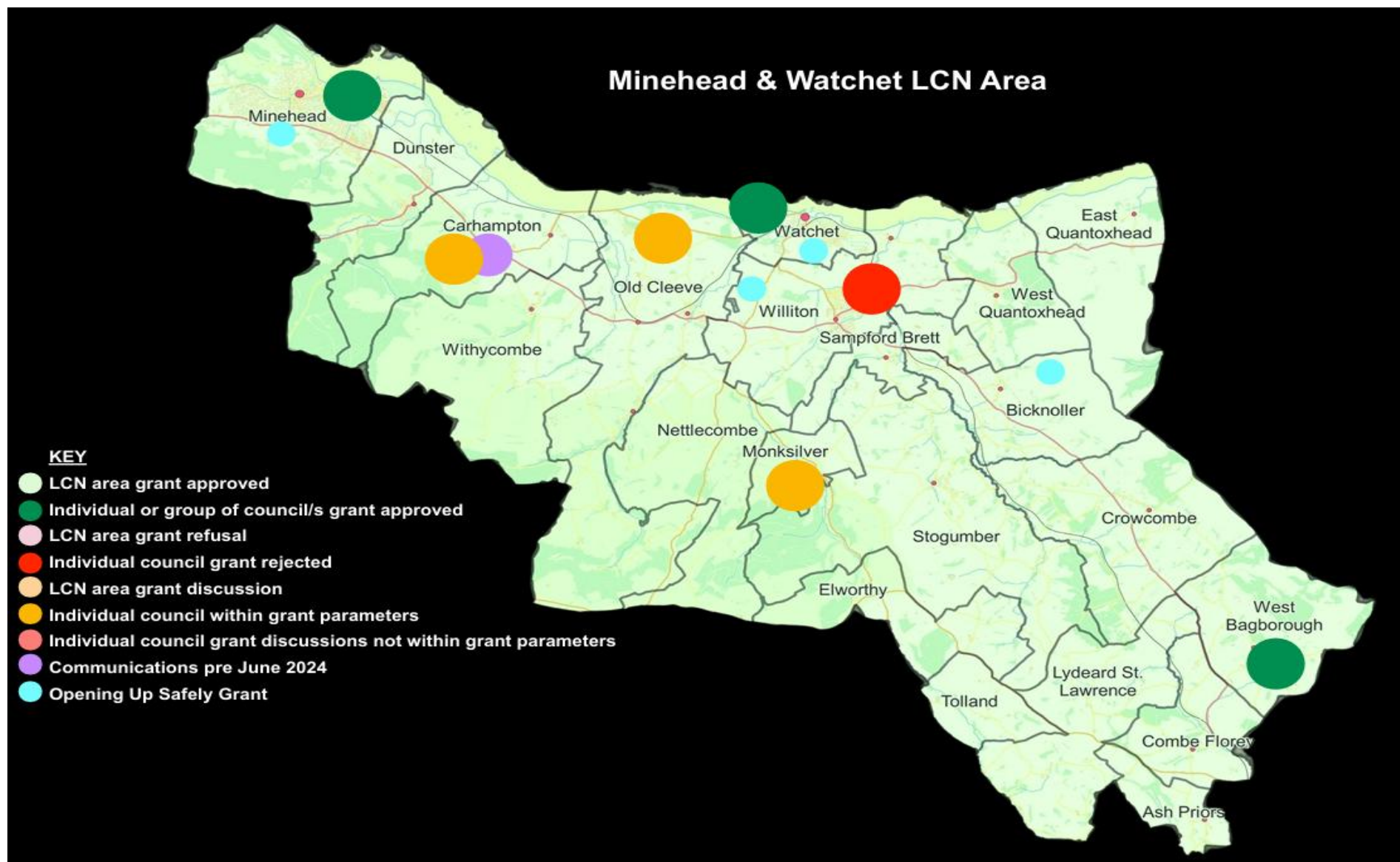
The LCN provided a forum for engagement on the Environment Agency's coastal defence works at Minehead seafront, including proposals to install approximately 4,500 tonnes of rock armour and extend coastal protection by around 100 metres to help safeguard homes, key transport links and local infrastructure from erosion and flooding.

The LCN also supported the West Somerset Flood Group, helping to strengthen communication between partners, share local flood risk information and promote community emergency planning. These activities improved collaboration between organisations responsible for flood and coastal management and helped ensure that local knowledge and community concerns informed future resilience planning across the area.

Looking Ahead: In 2026–27, priorities will include supporting community emergency planning, improve the sharing of local flood risk information and ensuring that local knowledge helps shape future flood and coastal resilience activity across West Somerset.



SALC – Health and Wellbeing Projects



Stronger Together



Stronger Together Project – Reconnecting Children, Families and Community

The Stronger Together project was a heartfelt and community-led response to the tragic accident that not only affected pupils and families at Minehead Middle School but shook our entire community. In the aftermath of such a deeply emotional event, the need for long-term support became clear, not just for the children directly involved, but for the wider school and their families.

This project delivered a programme of wellbeing activities exclusively outside of school hours, including weekends and school holidays. It was designed to give children the space and freedom to:

Reconnect with their childhood through joyful experiences in music, arts, sports and creative play. Build resilience, confidence and emotional strength in a safe, nurturing and familiar environment. Engage with a wide range of local organisations, from theatres and sports clubs to wellbeing practitioners and community groups and created meaningful community connections across the town.

What made this project truly special was its ability to bring people together. It was not just about helping children recover—but helping families reconnect, and about strengthening the bonds between schools, service providers, and the wider community. Minehead came together in support of its young people, and created a network of care, compassion, and opportunity.

The activities were delivered in partnership with Minehead Middle School, local youth services and community organisations, ensuring they were inclusive, accessible, and tailored to the needs of those most affected. By working collaboratively, the organisations not only supported children's wellbeing, but also rebuilt trust, unity and hope across our community.

This project carried forward the spirit of generosity and togetherness that was shown over the summer of 2025, when volunteers and local groups stepped up to offer activities and support. Stronger Together built on that momentum and created lasting change and a foundation for future wellbeing initiatives.

Ben Parker (Clerk) Minehead Town Council

Access to Funding – SALC Health and Wellbeing

Young People's Health and Wellbeing Project

A partnership between Minehead Town Council (MTC), the Primary Care Network (PCN) and Minehead Eye

Enhanced Youth Worker Project – Early Support.

Through this partnership, a full-time Young People's Health Coach has been established. A unique role that blends youth work, health coaching and mental health support into one accessible, community-based service.

This project was already active in the area and has reached children who would otherwise have struggled to access support. Young people are now being supported in safe, familiar spaces, through youth clubs, referrals from youth workers and even through school-based support. These are children who might have slipped through the cracks but are now being given the tools to build resilience, confidence and emotional wellbeing.

In West Somerset, GPs and health professionals are seeing a high level of intervention required for young people's mental health. The pressure on services is growing and many young people are waiting far too long to access the help they need. This project is about early-stage intervention, supporting young people before issues escalate and helping them thrive in their communities.

Thanks to SALC's Community Health & Wellbeing Grant and additional secured funding, this project is guaranteed to run until April 2027. However, to ensure its long-term sustainability and to expand its reach, the partners are encouraging community members, neighbouring parishes and local organisations to consider supporting it further—whether through funding, partnership, or advocacy.



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)

The **Minehead & Watchet LCN** helped us to connect with other local groups working on projects in our community, which meant we have avoided duplicating work and made new connections with community groups and the public sector.

Zara Aitken (Minehead Coastal Development Trust)

Both of the Young People projects are brilliant examples of what local councils can achieve when we work together with our communities. They reflect our commitment to supporting young people, promoting wellbeing, and building a stronger, more connected West Somerset.

Ben Parker, Clerk (Minehead Town Council)

“...achieving more than might have been achieved by working alone.”

Spark Somerset is pleased to be working alongside the **Minehead and Watchet 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 (Spark)

As an attendee at the main meetings, and some of the sub-groups, of the **Minehead and Watchet LCN**, I have found them extremely helpful in getting Town and Parish Councils together to discuss and agree on local issues.

Before LCNs were created, it seemed that there were no discussions, and each Council would be isolated, and alone. This means the LCN has achieved something that is extremely useful, and has Councils discussing things together, achieving more than might have been achieved by working alone.

Craig Palmer, Mayor – (Minehead Town Council)

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)

"I really enjoyed the Minehead and Watchet LCN meeting: Very community focused and its obvious how much the attendees care and are working hard to make a difference and improve lives" ★

Michelle Brooks (LCN Link Officer)

Looking Forward - The Year Ahead 2026-27

The coming year will be one of **continued local delivery and strategic transition**. The LCN will build on successful partnership work while preparing for Somerset Council's move towards more preventative, joined-up and place-based community working.

Strategic direction: [Future Somerset](#)

The Future Somerset draft proposes a longer-term direction based on:

- prevention and earlier intervention;
- neighbourhood and place-based working;
- stronger coordination between Council services, health partners, local councils and the voluntary sector;
- better use of local data, community knowledge and lived experience; and
- greater community involvement in shaping services and solutions.

What this means locally

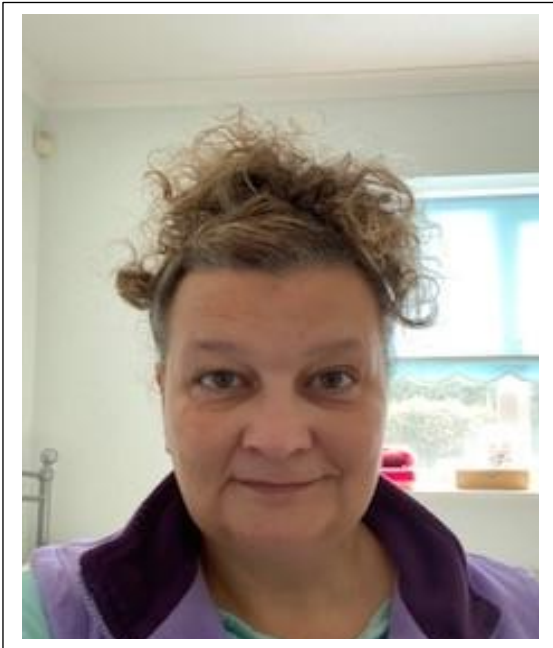
The direction is towards the **evolution of community working**, retaining successful local relationships and working groups while developing a more flexible neighbourhood approach.

During 2026–27, the LCN should:

- continue delivering its established work programme;
- develop a clearer “Community Picture” for Minehead and Watchet;
- strengthen links with the Primary Care Network, voluntary sector and neighbouring LCNs; and
- turn engagement into visible actions and outcomes;

Formal changes to LCN governance, geography or staffing have not yet been agreed and would require the appropriate Council decision-making and consultation processes.

LCN Link Officer



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

Top 5 Achievements – Minehead & Watchet 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. Established Strategic Working Groups**
Launched the Transport and Active Travel group, with a focus on bus reliability. We continued the Highways and Traffic Working group, working alongside highways officers to address concerns around winter maintenance and ongoing challenges with the B3191 road closure.
- 3. Building Resilience around Flooding**
Built on initial discussions around inland and coastal flooding. Working with communities to identify areas where the 50million grant funding could best be utilised. This work will develop in the coming year.
- 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

Ash Priors
Bicknoller
Carhampton
Combe Florey
Crowcombe
Dunster
East Quantoxhead
Elworthy
Lydeard St Lawrence
Minehead
Monksilver
Nettlecombe
Old Cleeve
Sampford Brett
Stogumber
Tolland
Watchet
West Bagborough
West Quantoxhead
Williton
Withycombe

Stakeholders

Avon and Somerset Police
NHS
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue (DSFRS)
Education
Spark Somerset
Somerset Association Local Councils (SALC)
Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)
Thrive (Formerly CCS)
Citizens Advice West Somerset
Somerset Rivers Authority
WACET
West Somerset Flood Group
Minehead Coast Development Trust (MCDT)
Williton Business Chamber
Quantock National Landscape
Minehead Eye
At West
Watchet Coastal Community Team
Minehead People Place Partnership

Electoral Divisions

Dunster
Lydeard
Minehead
Watchet & Stogursey

For more information on any of the activities detailed in this report, please contact mineheadandwatchetlcn@somerset.gov.uk