



REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK TO WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL TO THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL 2 OCTOBER 2023

1. Introduction

This report will update councillors on matters not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Council Work Plan

- The Community Warden has now started work and we have taken delivery of the van.
- The vacancy for a Town Councillor caused by the resignation of Wayne Battishill was advertised on the 29 September 2023. A request for an election from 10 electors from the East Ward must be received by Somerset Council by the 19 October 2023. If no, or an insufficient number, of electors request an election the Council will consider co-option of a member at its November Council meeting. If an election is requested Somerset Council will calculate the timetable for and arrange an election.
- Pete Joint, the Town Councils Community Connect Champion has begun to discuss with appropriate agencies how they could utilise the Kings Arms community space and deliver a community hub. On the principle of form following function we are deferring making a decision about what organisational structure should be put in place until we are clearer about which agencies will be using it for what purpose. Falcon Housing is hopeful that it will be able to hand over the ground floor early in the next financial year
- Pete has also held initial discussions with In The Mix which provides youth services in Wiveliscombe and other areas about extending their provision into Wellington. A further meeting is being arranged when we will also take them to the Kings Arms to enable them to consider how that might be utilised for their provision in the future.
- Some work has been undertaken by the owners of the Tonedale Mill site to improve security as required by the Section 125 Notice mentioned in my last report. The Heritage at Risk Team will be visiting the site in the next couple of weeks to review the work.
- The meeting with representatives of Historic England and Somerset Councils Heritage at Risk Team on the 5 September has resulted in an agreement that The Heritage at Risk Team will do a detailed mapping of the area identifying issues of concern which will mean that as and when funding becomes available we will be better placed to make applications.
- Following discussion with Somerset Skills and Learning mentioned in the last report it has confirmed that it will be able to deliver courses on Arts and Crafts, Cookery and Animal Care with Family Cookery and Art courses taking place over half term. We are supporting them in finding venues.
- Banking Hub – I have requested an update specifically asking if the project is on track to deliver a hub before the Lloyds Branch closes. At the time of writing I have not received a response.
- Discussions are ongoing with Abbeyfield. Residents have been advised that it expects to make a decision on the future of the homes by the end of November

3. Social Media

Our Social Media channels have picked up in September with our page reaching 13,015 profiles and our Instagram reaching 177. We are almost at 3000 Facebook followers (2,996 at the time of writing) and have gained 35 new page likes this month. This is a very good number according to Meta Insights and puts us above the 75th percentile compared to other businesses with a similar 28-day organic reach.

Our top five liked and reacted to posts are as follows:

1. Pop-Up Shop looking fresh with new sign and no window decals – 60 likes and reactions
2. Welcome to Community Warden and new van – 49 likes and reactions
3. Wellington Park Bridge to be removed and remade – 48 likes and reactions
4. Presenting awards to Scarecrow Competition winners – 47 likes and reactions
5. Appeal for people to report flooding following Sunday 17th storm – 24 likes and reactions

It should be noted that although it is only number 5 on the above list, the post about flooding is one of our most interacted ever with as it has a total of 261 comments.

We hope numbers increase throughout October as we promote the upcoming Christmas Lights Switch On.

4. Monthly Bank Reconciliation

Attached as an Appendix.

5. September Meetings/Events

Date	Time	Event	Location	Who Involved
4 October	10.30am	Town and Parish Clerk Briefing	Virtual	Town Clerk
5 October	All day	Somerset prepared Resilience Event	Wincanton Racecourse	Town Clerk
6 October	10.00am	Kings Arms project Group	Falcon Rural Housing	Cllrs A Govier and M Lithgow and Town Clerk
9 October	10.00am	Playground Inspection Training	Somerton	Community Warden
10 October	All day	Internal Audit Visit	Council Chamber	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk RFO
10 October	3.30pm	Finance and P and R Committees	URC Hall	Committee members
12 October	10.30am	Site Visit	Longforth Farm Allotment	Town Clerk, Assets and Events Officer Cllr J Lloyd
12 October	7.00pm	LCN Meeting	TBC	Cllr C Govier, Unitary Councillors, Town Clerk

16 October	11.30am	Longforth Road Toilet Block Project Meeting	Council Chamber	Officers and any interested councillor
17 October	1.30pm	Rockwell Green School Laying Flowers on War Graves	Rockwell Green Cemetery	Mayor/Town Clerk any other councillors who can attend
18 October	10.30am	Town and Parish Clerks Briefing	Virtual	Town Clerk

6. Holidays

Please note the following

- (i) The Town Clerk will be on holiday 23 – 27 October
- (ii) The Assets and Events Officer will be on holiday 19 – 27 October

Dave Farrow
Town Clerk
26 September 2023

MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE MEETING HELD AT UNTIED REFORMED CHURCH HALL ON TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 5.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Lithgow (Chair),
Councillors M Barr, M McGuffie and J Thorne
IN ATTENDANCE: David Farrow (Town Clerk)
One member of the press

229 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor J Lloyd.

230 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Lloyd and Govier have a standing personal interest declaration relating to MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant, being a former customer of the company.

Councillor Thorne has a standing personal interest declaration relating to MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant, being a personal friend of the company owner.

Councillor Thorne declared a personal interest in item 5(a) as his daughter is using the Popup Shop.

231 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

232 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2023.

233 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

a. TO NOTE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note and approve the bank reconciliation as presented.

b. TO NOTE AND APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR 10 AUGUST –5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note and approve the expenditure as presented.

c. TO NOTE AND APPROVE INCOME RECEIVED FOR 10 AUGUST –5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note and approve the income as presented.

d. TO NOTE AND APPROVE THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE AGAINST THE BUDGET AT 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED to note and approve the budget report as presented.

234 GRANTS

The summary of grants made to date was noted.

235 INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council the re-appointment of IAC as the Council's Internal Auditor for the next three years on the basis set out in the fee letter which had been circulated with the agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 5.35 pm.

.....
Councillor Mark Lithgow
Chairman



The Clerk
Wellington Town Council (Somerset West & Taunton)
28 Fore Street
Wellington
Somerset
TA21 8AQ

14-Aug-23

Quotation for Internal Audit Services

Many thanks for your request for a fee quotation for the provision of Internal Audit services to your Council.

Based on the size and activities of your Council our fee would be **£790.00** plus VAT per annum. We estimate a requirement for 2 audit days per year on site at the Council's offices which will include a visit carried out after the year-end to conclude the arrangements in respect of the Annual Return. Fees quoted include attendance at your premises and all out of pocket expenses. Should the Council decide to appoint us for a minimum period of 3 years we will offer a discount of 5% percent on the fee quoted above.

If additional work is identified or should there be a requirement for additional audit time, for example due to work associated with significant adverse audit findings or additional reporting requirements, then these would be charged pro rata based on a daily rate of £ 395.00 plus VAT per day, or £295.00 for a half-day, again inclusive of all costs. Whenever possible we will endeavour to advise the council if there is the potential for additional time and costs and obtain the Council's prior authorisation before undertaking additional work.

If the Council should find our quotation acceptable we will set out the full scope of our work and audit responsibilities in a formal Letter of Engagement that would be agreed prior to the commencement of work. We would also provide you with a schedule of the records that we will require to be made available at the time of our visit.

I hope that this quotation is sufficient for your purposes but should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Rose ACMA
Director

Pre-Qualification Statement

Company name:

IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd (IAC)

Company background and experience:

IAC have been providing internal audit services to town and parish councils for more than 5 years and now audit over 150 town and parish councils. The company is owned by the Audit Director Kevin Rose, a CIMA qualified accountant. Kevin has previously worked in both the public sector, as an Internal Auditor with Wiltshire County Council, and in the private sector where he has worked as a Finance Director as well as a member of various audit committees.

Kevin is supported by two experienced internal auditors (AAT qualified) and an office manager.

Primary Point of Contact

Kevin Rose will be the primary point of contact for the Council.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

IAC does not provide any other services to Wellington Town Council (Somerset West & Taunton) that may constitute a conflict of interest.

There are no known personal relationships between IAC and Wellington Town Council (Somerset West & Taunton) Council officers or councillors that may provide a conflict of interest.

Client References

Ludlow Town Council (Shropshire)

Thatcham Town Council (Berkshire)

Dartmouth Town Council (Devon)

Church Crookham Parish Council (Hampshire)

Northam Town Council (Devon)

Hazlemere Parish Council (Buckinghamshire)

Great Linford Parish Council (Milton Keynes)

Tring Town Council (Hertfordshire)

Further references may be provided upon request.

Audit methodology

The detailed requirements for the Internal Audit of Town and Parish councils are set out in 'The Practitioner's Guide' issued by JPAG.

1. Appointment

In accordance with the requirements of the Guide upon successful appointment the first stage is to put in place an Engagement Letter which sets out the basis of the appointment, the term of the appointment, and the fees and charges that will apply.

The form of this letter is standard for each client, with changes only being made to reflect the man day requirement and level of fees.

2. Audit Risk Assessment

In order that the audit work may be properly planned and resourced an initial Audit Risk Assessment is undertaken. This calculates a 'risk score' that may then be used to plan the audit work, typically over a three year period.

The Audit Risk Assessment is prepared by IAC for the Council, to assist it in determining what level of audit coverage is appropriate for the Council. It is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to ensure that it maintains an 'effective' level of internal audit. Where requested IAC may offer advice to the council to assist it in planning the level of audit coverage.

3. Planning

IAC will plan the audit work to be undertaken to ensure that work undertaken is sufficient to provide an adequate level of assurance on the area subject to review. This will include the preparation of necessary checklists, the selection of samples, the allocation of appropriately qualified resources, and the provision of adequate time to complete the work.

4. Reporting

The reports produced for the council should be both accurate and easy to understand. Where appropriate findings will be prioritised so that the council may clearly see those items which present a higher level of risk.

Where issues are identified that are of high potential impact, for example requiring a negative response to an item on the Annual Return, then a specific report may be written to the council setting out the matters identified and proposed remedial actions.

Minutes of a meeting of the Wellington Town Centre Committee held at the United Reformed Church Hall, Fore Street, Wellington TA21 8AG on Tuesday 19th September 2023 at 6.00pm

Present: Councillors: C. Govier (Chair), M. Barr, C. Booth, M. Lithgow, K Wheatley
Non-Councillors: S. Pringle-Kosikowsky

In Attendance: Annette Kirk – Assets & Events Officer
Councillor J. Thorne (non-member)
One member of the press

236 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor J Lloyd and non-councillors Z Old, M. Vincent. S. Davis.

237 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest.

238 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and sign the minutes of the Town Centre Committee meeting held on 11th July and the Extra-Ordinary Meeting on 23rd August 2023.

239 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were in attendance.

240 TOWN CENTRE ENGAGEMENT

The Committee discussed the idea of a digital notice board. The Committee asked that the Assets & Events Officer bring back to the next meeting quotations for a digital notice board with suitable locations. S Pringle-Kosikowsky said digital notice board would be an efficient way of getting notices/messages out to the public, as well as promoting Town Council events.

Other ideas would be brought to the Town Council Vision meeting.

241 POP UP SHOP

The Committee were provided with an update report prior to the meeting on the repairs and maintenance. The Deputy Clerk and Cllr K Wheatley to meet with the Landlords in October to further review the progress made. Councillor M Barr asked that by the next committee meeting confirmation would be given to what further work i.e., painting and carpeting would be carried out in January 2024.

RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to approve the Mayor having use of the Pop-Up Shop for two weeks in January for Mayor's Fund Raising. The Mayor to cover the cost of electric.

a. CHRISTMAS MARKET & LIGHTS SWITCH ON – 25th November 2023

RESOLVED to approve on block the quotations received from Fuse Performance Ltd £1160.00, Steve Hawker £650.00 and Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival Ltd £1100.00. Bay Media Lamp Post Banners - £1225.00. Pro Sound and Light Stage Hire £900.00. Carly Press £100.00.

b. TOWN COUNCIL 50TH ANNIVERSARY

To consider arrangements to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Town Council in April 2024:

RESOLVED to recommend to full council to approve the following arrangements to mark the 50th anniversary of the Town Council in April 2024:

- To convert 15 VHS tapes to digital files at £10.00 per tape. These tapes include a range of films of civic events recorded by the late former councillor Terry Milton. Councillor K. Wheatley said he would come back to the next Town Centre Committee meeting with a cost to put the tapes together to make a film, that could be shown at the film festival in 2024.
- To Hire of Pop-up Shop for week in April – to work alongside Wellington Museum who will display a range of items and papers from the past 50 years, as well as pieces relating to the Urban District Council. To create displays giving information on: “How to become a Councillor”. “What do Councillors Do”. To consider inviting former Councillors to occupy the shop and speak about their experiences on the Council.
- To hold a Civic Service in April 2024 at St. Johns Church – to invite Councillors who have served during the 50 years of the Town Council. The Councillors to be recognised during the event. Reception to be held in Church Hall after the service.

At this Juncture Councillor K. Wheatley and S. Pringle-Kosikowsky left the meeting

c. 300th ANNIVERSARY OF DANIEL DEFOE VISITING THE TOWN

In 1724 Daniel Defoe visited Wellington as part of his tour of Great Britain. Councillor Thorne was invited to speak. The Committee considered a number of suggestions, which included:

- A blue plaque which will serve as a historical marker to be installed in the town centre to commemorate the link between Wellington and Daniel Defoe.
- To ask if the Film Festival could show “Robinson Crusoe” film at the April 2024 festival.
- Engagement with the Schools – How will they mark 300th anniversary?

At this juncture Councillor M. Lithgow left the meeting. The Committee was now inquorate, therefore Agenda items 7c, 7d and 8 will be deferred to the next Town Centre Committee meeting to be held 14th November 2023.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm

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Councillor C Govier
Chair

MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE HELD AT UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HALL ON TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 4.00 PM

Present: Councillor M McGuffie (Chairman)
Councillors M Barr, C Booth and M Lithgow

In attendance: David Farrow (Town Clerk)
Amy Kemmish Project Manager Heritage at Risk, Somerset Council for agenda item 5
Steve Saunders, Footpath Liaison Officer for agenda item 7
Charles Biscoe for agenda item 11

243 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors K Canham, C Govier and K Wheatley

244 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

245 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023. It was noted that a request had been received to move the timing of the meetings to 6.00pm to allow better attendance of councillors. The Town Clerk agreed to review this.

246 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present.

247 HERITAGE UPDATE

Amy Kemmish, Project Manager - Heritage at Risk, Somerset Council presented her report had been circulated with the agenda and was noted. Councillors sought clarification in relation to action being taken at the Rockwell Green water towers and raised concerns about the presence of Japanese knotweed on the site. Ms Kemmish advised that they whilst they were aware of the issue it fell outside the Heritage notice that had been served but they were monitoring the situation.

At this point Ms Kemmish left the meeting.

248 SOMERSET COUNCIL TREE STRATEGY

Due to the change of date James Chapman, Somerset Council Tree Strategist was unable to attend the meeting. The Town Clerk reported that he had agreed with Mr Chapman that he would arrange a tour of the Green Corridor for him to be followed by a meeting to discuss how the Town Council Tree Strategy could complement the Somerset Council Strategy.

249 FOOTPATH UPDATE

Steve Saunders presented his report that had been circulated with the agenda. Councillors thanked Steve and the volunteers for all the work that they did.

Councillor McGuffie noted that following the recent heavy rain the surface of the footpath from Crosslands to Thomas Fox Close was now severely damaged. Steve Saunders to report to the County Footpaths Team.

The Town Clerk reported that he hoped that a ramp would soon be installed on the footbridge between The Basins and Rockwell Green.

250 GREEN CORRIDOR ADVISORY BOARD

The notes of the Advisory Board Meeting held on 6 September 2023 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

(i) Tree Survey

The Committee **RESOLVED to** authorise officers to agree works identified in the Tree Survey as being required within 6 months to a value of £2,410 plus VAT from Chris Groves Associates subject (a) to officers being satisfied that identified trees are on Green Corridor Land or Crown Estate and (b) agreeing the detailed work required.

(ii) Fox's Field

The Committee considered a written representation from a member of the public regarding concerns about Fox's Field. It also considered a response from Transition Town Wellington. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair would respond in writing to the member of the public.

251 BASINS ALLOTMENTS ADVISORY BOARD

The notes of the first meeting of the Basins Allotments Advisory Board held on the 1 September 2023 had been circulated prior to the meeting and were noted.

252 GAY CLOSE PLAY AREA

A proposal from Councillor Booth for how the area could be improved was tabled at the meeting. He advised that he had been in discussion with the Somerset Council Open Spaces Team and was hopeful that agreement would soon be forthcoming for the Town Council to lease the play area land on a long term basis for a peppercorn rent. Until the lease arrangements were agreed no work could be carried out. Councillor Booth will meet with Town Council staff to begin to plan the work.

253 GRAND WESTERN GREENWAY

Charles Biscoe made a presentation to the Committee setting out a proposal to establish a greenway using the route of the Grand Western Canal. Copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Town Council that:

- (i)** It supports the principle of establishing a Greenway Route to Taunton utilising the route of the Grand Western Canal and
- (ii)** The Council demonstrates that support by setting aside a sum of money in future years budgets to support the development of the Greenway recognising the health and environmental benefits that it would bring to the Wellington community.

254 GENERAL UPDATES

(i) Tree Strategy

The Town Clerk reported that the Fruit Tree Offer agreed at the August Council meeting was being progressed and would be being advertised in the Wellington Weekly and Around Wellington that week. He also advised that he had had discussions with Somerset Council Open Spaces Team about tree planting on Somerset Council land in the town and that their view was that there weren't many spaces that would be suitable although they would be planting a number of trees in Wardleworth Way

(ii) Committee Work Plan

Committee Work Plans were being developed utilising Microsoft Office software and would be available by the next meeting.

(iii) Climate Change Strategy

Unfortunately, the Project Officer had been away from work for most of the time since the last meeting so no progress had been made on further developing an action plan to support the Strategy. The Town Clerk was looking at alternative ways of delivering this piece of work.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.00 pm

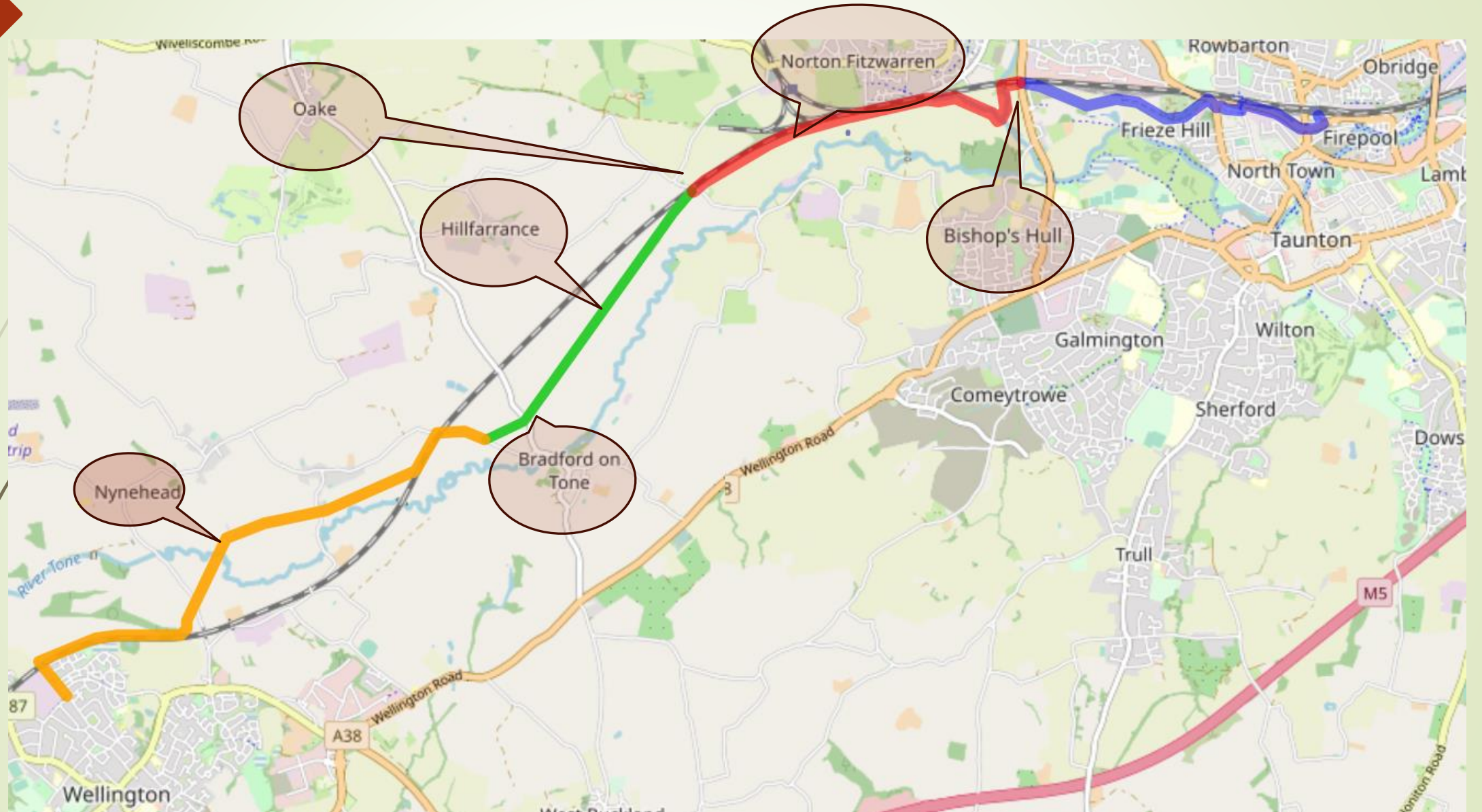
.....
Councillor M McGuffie
Chairman



Grand Western Greenway

The Path Ahead

Where?



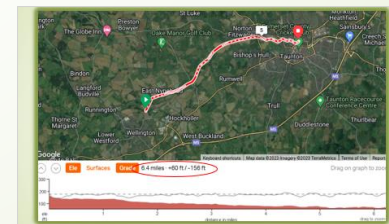


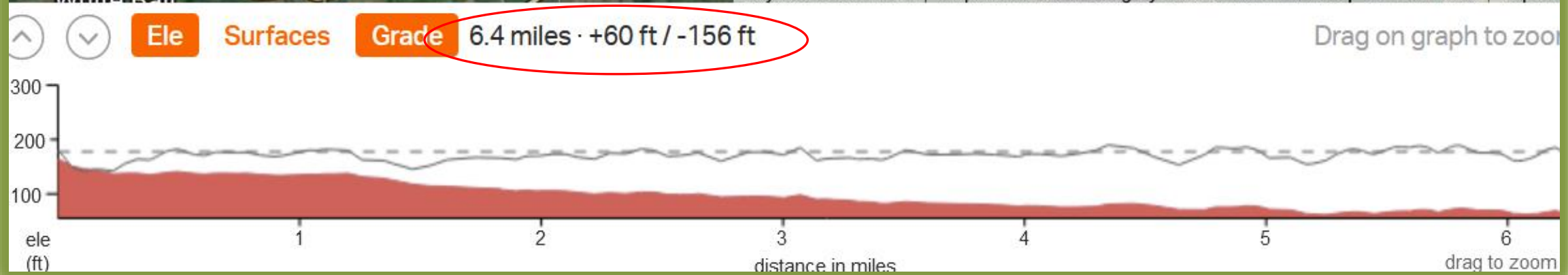
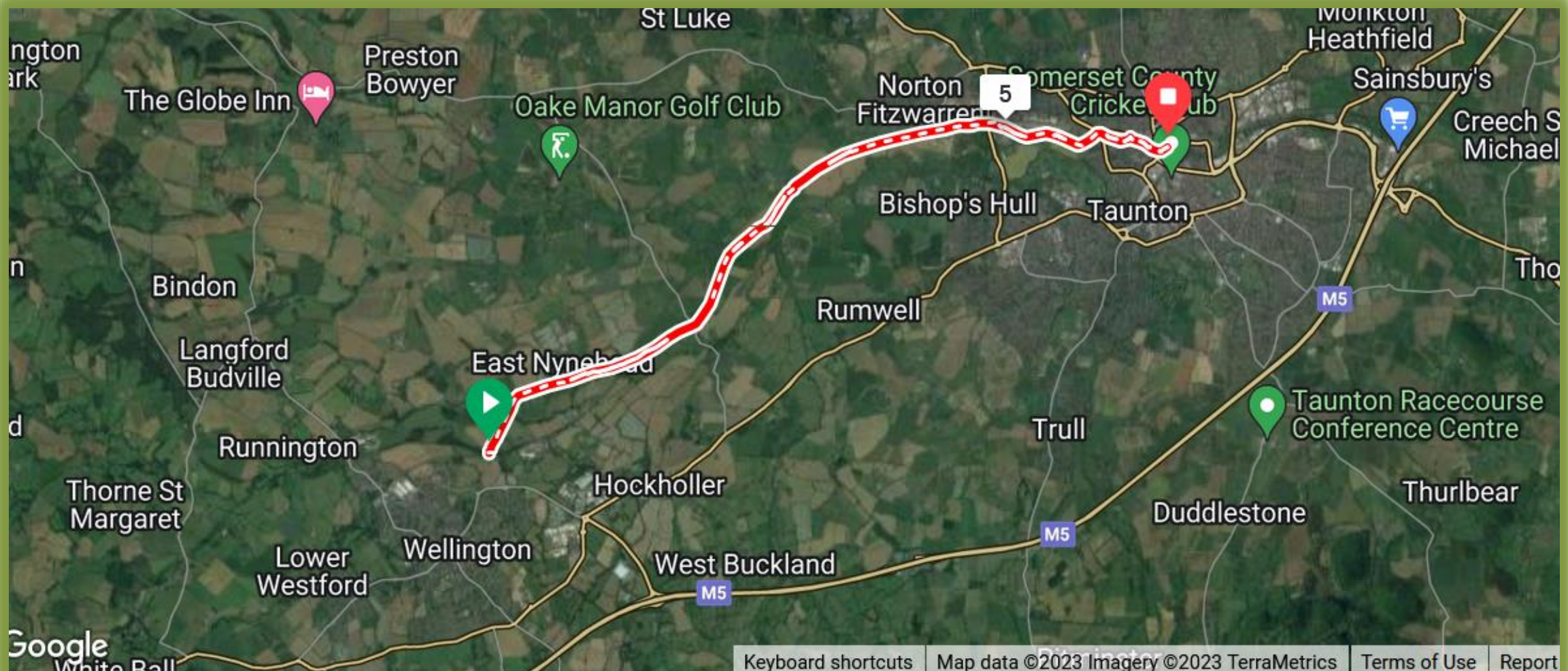
What?

- Traffic-free path up to 3.5m wide along the route of the canal
- All-weather surface above the flood plain.
- Accessible for walkers, cyclists, and wheelchairs etc
- Funded by multiple sources
 - Department for Transport / Active Travel England
 - Heritage Lottery Fund
 - Crowd Funding
 - Canal and River trust
 - Councils

Why?

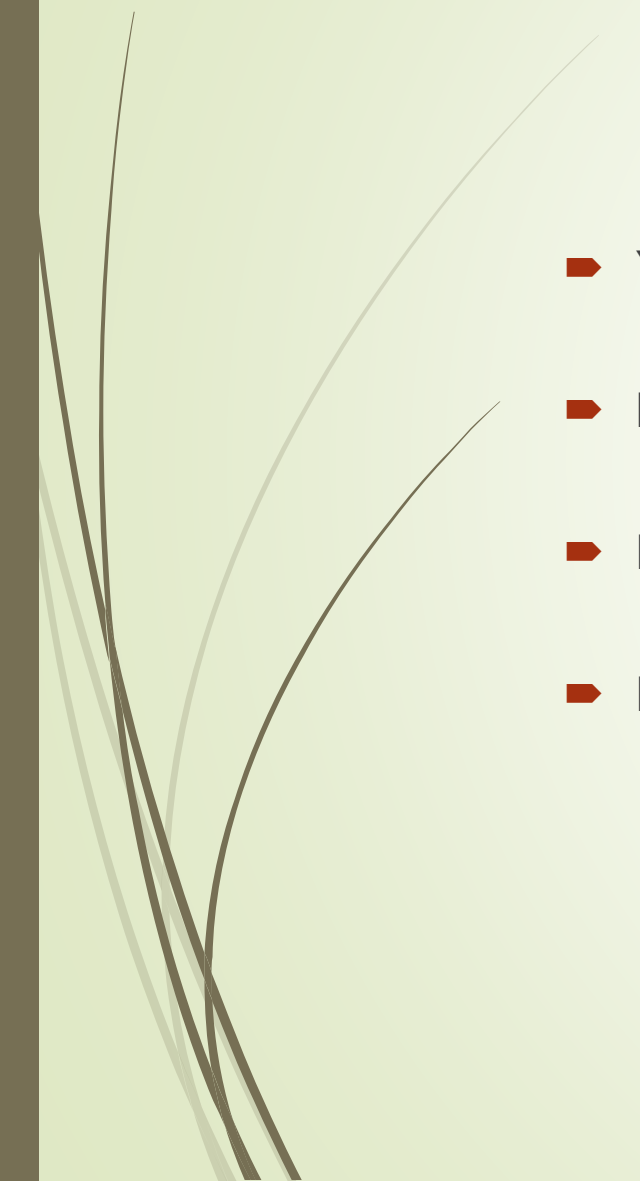
- Links town centre to town centre
- Traffic free
- Heritage and wildlife assets make it also ideal for recreational use,
- 6.4 miles where walkers and cyclists can exercise without traffic noise and fumes,
- Will link Taunton station and the new Wellington station for benefit of visitors
- Links communities
- Provide commercial benefits for new and existing businesses
- Flat and level route



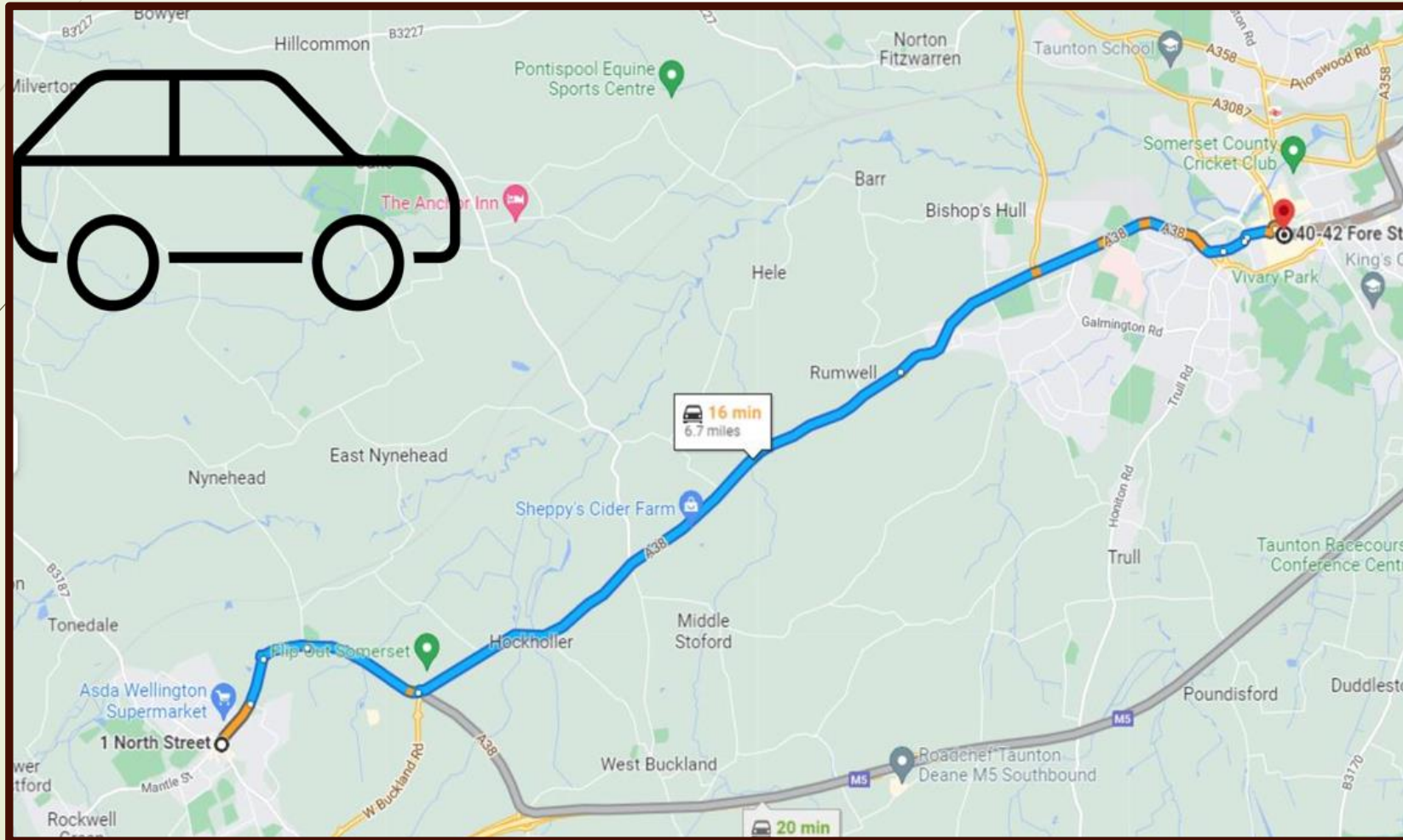




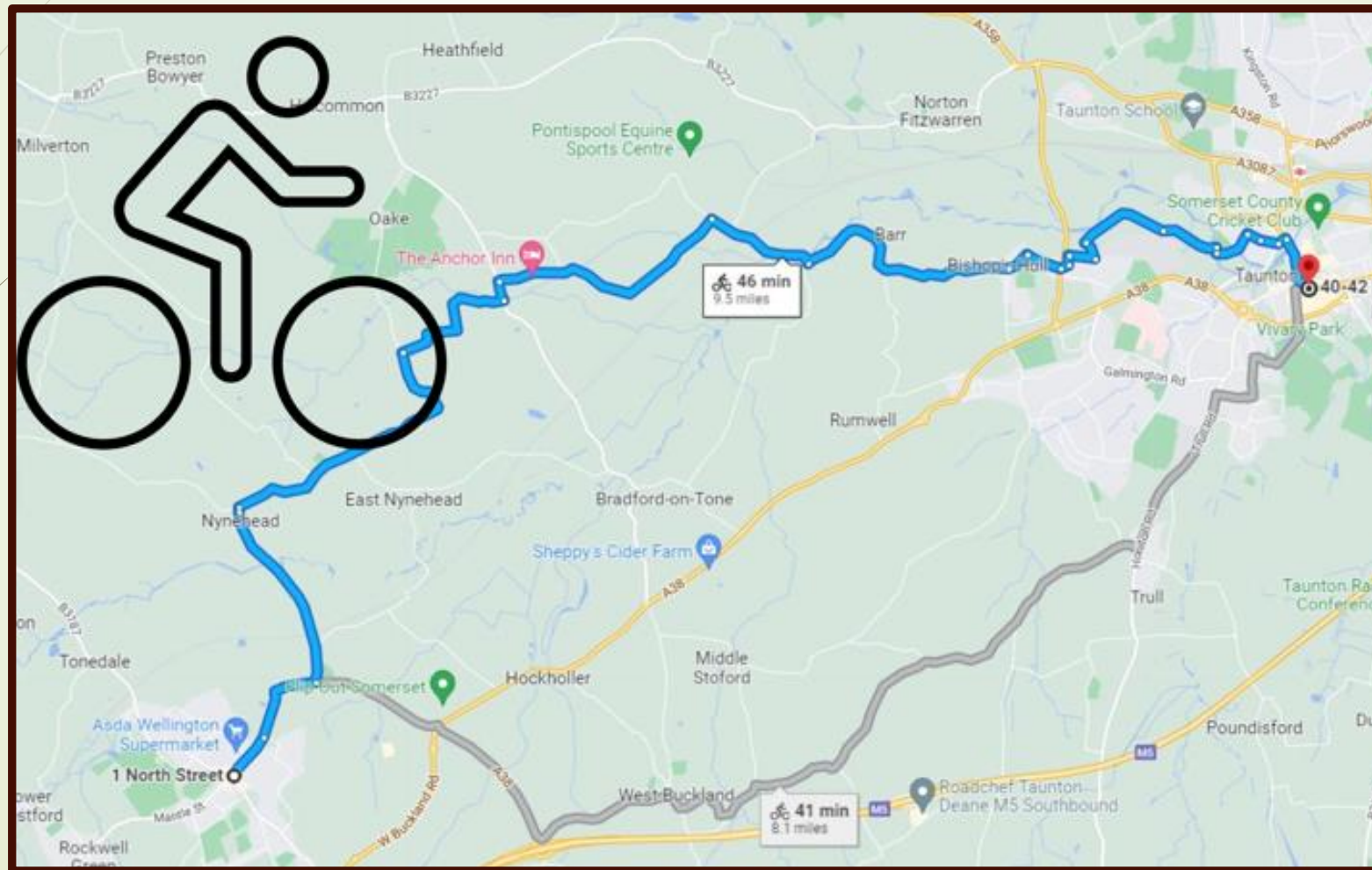
Key Benefits and Opportunities

- 
- You choose how to travel
 - Health, wellbeing and inclusivity
 - Reduce climate impact of travel
 - Return on investment

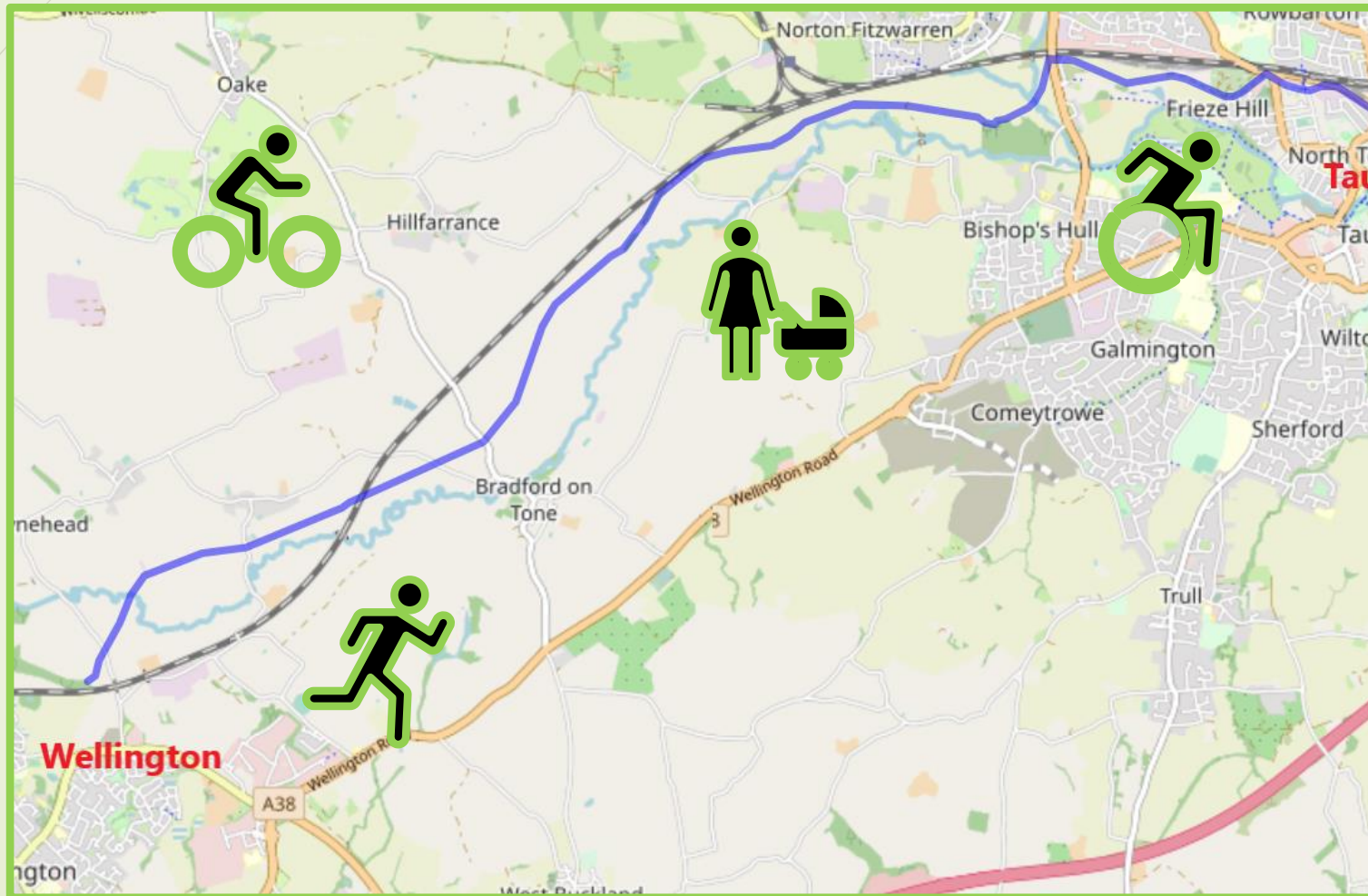
Travel choice



Travel choice



Travel choice





Health, wellbeing and inclusivity

(all ages and all abilities)



Early years cycling



- Establishes habits for life
- Developmental benefits
- Reduces exposure to air pollution seen in cars
- Emotional and psychological benefits in families

Working life cycling

- Economically attractive
- You will get fitter
- Environmentally attractive
- Mental health benefits
- It will save time
- Better sleep
- It will make you better at work
- You will live longer
- It's fun!



Later life cycling

- Helps to maintain fitness into later life
- Improvements in immune system and muscle strength
- Keep independence longer
- The 'anti-ageing' pill

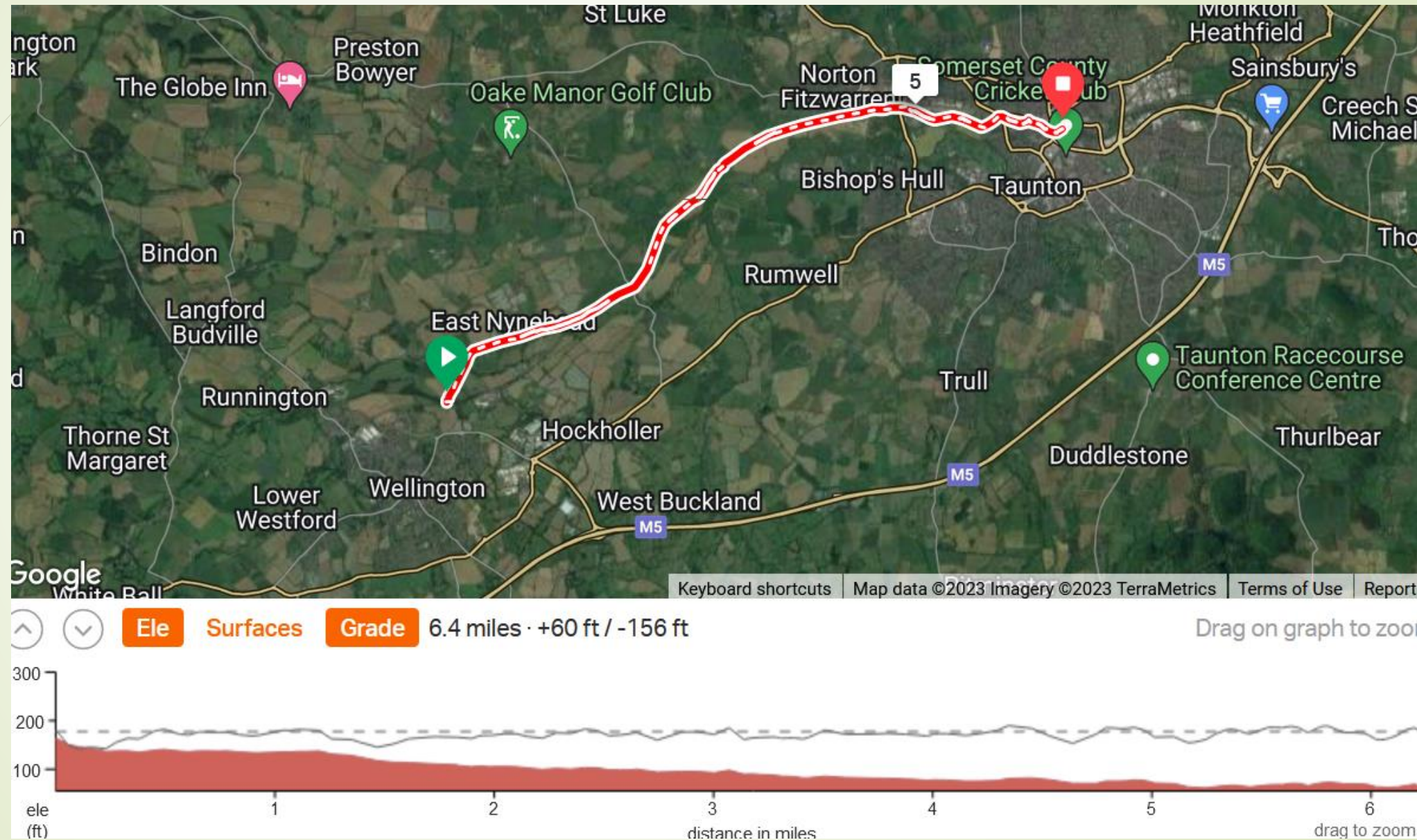


Accessibility

- Active travel benefits wheelchair and scooter users
- Scooter range of 15 to 25 miles gives access to the countryside
- Wellington to Taunton along the Greenway is 6.4 miles



Grand Western Greenway is FLAT!

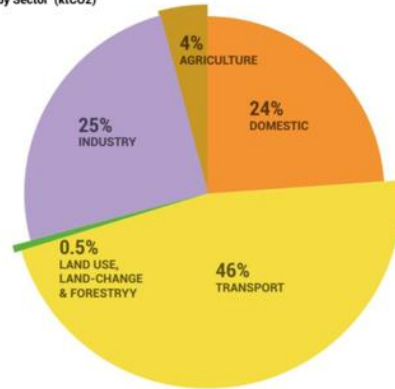




Sustainability and CO2 reduction

Somerset Carbon Emission Reduction Strategy

2018 Carbon Emissions (%) in Somerset by Sector (ktCO2)



Source: UK local authority & regional CO₂ emissions national statistics 2005-2018



Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset
Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy



- Reduce transport emissions by 58% by 2030
- Requires 20% reduction in car journeys
- Reduce short car trips (<2Km) by 40%
- Reduce longer journeys (>2Km) by 30%
- Assumes rapid transition to electric vehicles
- Significant reductions by switching 1 or 2 commutes from car to cycling
- Leisure and shopping make up 50% of car journeys

Value for money



- ▶ Active travel schemes return £5.60 for every £1 invested (Department for Transport)
- ▶ By comparison, dualling the A303 has a returns £1.51 - £2.10 for every £1 spent
- ▶ 90% of cost benefits of Active Travel schemes come from health improvements

Wellington Town Council (Somerset)

Notice of conclusion of audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2023

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

	Notes
1. The audit of accounts for Wellington Town Council (Somerset) for the year ended 31 March 2023 has been completed and the accounts have been published.	This notice and Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the AGAR must be published by 30 September. This must include publication on the smaller authority's website. The smaller authority must decide how long to publish the Notice for; the AGAR and external auditor report must be publicly available for 5 years.
2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of Wellington Town Council (Somerset) on application to:	
(a) David Farrow - Town Clerk & RFO 28 Fore Street, Wellington, TA21 8AQ _____ _____ _____	(a) Insert the name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the AGAR
(b) Mon - Fri 9am - 2pm _____ _____ _____	(b) Insert the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised
3. Copies will be provided to any person on payment of £1 (c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.	(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs
Announcement made by: (d) David Farrow - Town Clerk & RFO _____	(d) Insert the name and position of person placing the notice
Date of announcement: (e) 13/09/2023 _____	(e) Insert the date of placing of the notice

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Wellington Town Council – SO0284**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

We note that Section 1, Box 9 in respect of trust funds has been left blank, the smaller authority has confirmed that it does not act as sole managing trustee for trust funds, and thus the response should have been 'N/A'. The smaller authority should ensure the AGAR is fully completed in future.

The smaller authority has not provided one of the year end bank statements to support the bank reconciliation to Section 2, Box 8. The Cambridge Building Society only sends a statement once a year and so we have been unable to verify the year end balance on that account. Bank statements were requested as part of our intermediate review procedures.

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

11/09/2023

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING 4 OCTOBER 2023

WELLINGTON FLOODING 17 SEPTEMBER 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to summarise the events of the 17 September 2023 to inform discussion about how the Town Council should respond and prepare for future severe weather events.

2. Background

- 2.1 On the 17 September 2023 the town experienced severe rainstorms throughout the day which resulted in a number of flooding incidents across the town ranging from roads being impassable to properties being flooded and residents having to move out.

- 2.2 We have been advised by local meteorologist Simon Ratsey, who has been collecting rainfall data in the town since 1962, that over the weekend of the 16/17 September 102mm of rain (almost 4 inches) fell over a period of less than 36 hours. About 20mm (3/4 inch) fell in the morning of Saturday 16th, followed by a lull, but with another 30+mm (just over an inch) falling during the evening and night. The rain that fell on Sunday 17th added another 50+mm (almost 2 inches), of which some 40mm (1.5 inches) fell in the space of about 2 hours during the afternoon. The last time that amount of rain fell over a weekend was in 1969 and in the last 60 years there have only been eight occasions when rainfall has exceeded 70mm.

- 2.3 On Monday 18 September the Town Council asked via social media for people to report flooding incidents so that they could be mapped. The resulting map is attached as an appendix to this report and has been shared with Somerset Council Flooding Team and the Environment Agency. You can also access the map via this link
<https://shared.xmap.cloud/?map=f640f985-a0e3-48a1-90ef-300c9959fe6b>

- 2.4 From a social housing perspective we know that some tenants had to be rehoused from Bovet Street and Oaken Ground although at the time of writing numbers haven't been confirmed. A number of houses were flooded in the town including Ditchford Cottages at Hilly Head.

- 2.5 I have been advised by the Somerset Flooding Team that Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 states that

'On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a lead local flood authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate—

(a) which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and

(b) whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

*Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must—
(a) publish the results of its investigation, and
(b) notify any relevant risk management authorities.*

In Somerset the threshold for instigating a review is that ten residential properties have experienced internal flooding.

- 2.6 The review process itself will involve a public consultation exercise led by Somerset Council and the Town Council will be asked to help arrange the event and be asked to contribute to discussions.
- 2.7 Coincidentally Somerset Council working in partnership with the Somerset Rivers Authority has recently commissioned a Wellington Waterways Feasibility Study (WWFS) with a view to develop 'an imaginative and ambitious plan that sets out exactly how the waterways function today and principally, how the waterways in Wellington can contribute to the Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan' objectives. The review will 'look for opportunities to reduce flood risk whilst maximising the potential of the catchment, also seeking recommendations for practical actions to be taken to improve infrastructure, implement Nature Based Solutions and provide any other enhancements to the area.' The Town Clerk has been invited to join the Steering Group for the review.
- 2.8 I have also raised concerns with Somerset Council regarding the lack of support offered to the Town Council in managing this situation and the lack of information shared with us about what agencies were operating in the town doing what during the period immediately after the flooding.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee will be considering a draft Emergency Plan for the town at its October meeting which will include what actions can be taken if a similar event occurs.
- 3.2 On the assumption that there will be a S19 review as set out in para 2.5 above the Council needs to consider what issues it would like to feed into the process. The following are questions I have already asked the Flooding Team the following questions – I am sure councillors will think of others:
- Drainage – what are the arrangements for ensuring that drains are cleared/cleaned both at surface level but also in the drains to ensure water can flow in to and through them.
 - What is the best way of managing water flow through The Basins area – who is responsible for this including opening and closing sluices (the sluices remaining closed is being cited as a reason for flooding of cottages at Hilly Head, Rockwell Green)?
 - Planning – what are the requirements placed on developers to mitigate against flooding? Are they sufficiently robust and who ensures they are put in place to an appropriate standard?
 - Who is responsible for ensuring that flood mitigation arrangements (e.g. attenuation ponds) on new developments are maintained appropriately given

that land management on new estates sits with management companies formed by the developers? We have had many contacts from homeowners on new developments raising concerns about management companies not being responsive to issues being raised with them.

3.3 It is suggested that the Policy and Resources Committee coordinates the Councils response to any enquiry undertaken by Somerset Council.

Dave Farrow
Town Clerk
September 2023

Appendix 1 – Map of Flood Reports

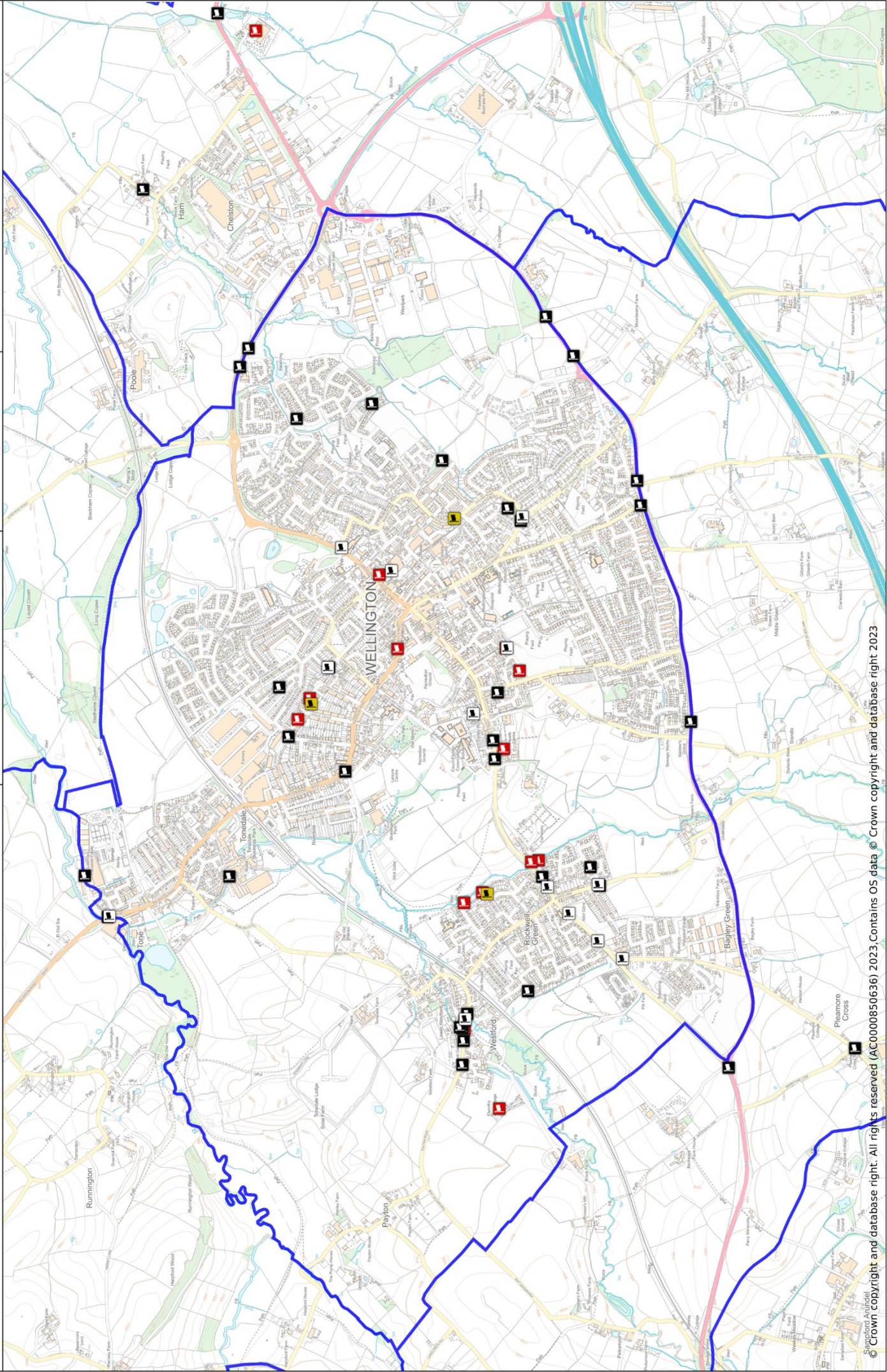
Key:

Red Flag – Interior Property Damage

Yellow Flag – Exterior Property Damage

White Flag – Drainage Issue

Black Flag – Water on Road



TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 2023

National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Civility and Respect Pledge

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to ask the Council to consider signing up to the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on the 15 August 2023 the Policy and Resources Committee considered whether or not to recommend to the Town Council that it signs up to the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge. The report and supporting papers are attached as appendices.
- 2.2 A proposal that signing up should be recommended was defeated. The point was made at the September Council meeting that an issue such as this should be a matter for the whole Council to consider and the suggestion was made that it be brought back to the October Council meeting for consideration.
- 2.3 In hindsight what should have happened at the August Policy and Resources meeting was that once the proposal to recommend signing up had been defeated a new resolution should have been made recommending to the Town Council that it does not sign up to the Pledge. That would have then enabled consideration of the proposal by the Full Council.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The Council is asked to consider whether it wishes to sign up to the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge acknowledging that a proposal to do so was not supported by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Dave farrow
Town Clerk
October 2023

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

15 AUGUST 2023

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC) CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to seek the Committee's views on whether it would recommend to the Full Council that it signs up to the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge.

2 Background

- 2.1 The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW) consider that throughout the local council sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils.
- 2.2 They believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.
- 2.3 As part of a Civility and Respect Project they have introduced The Civility and Respect Pledge because, as they say, there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for and it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.
- 2.4 By signing the Pledge, the Council is agreeing that it will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles, and that it: agrees the following:

Statement	Tick to agree	Comment
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, Clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.		
Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff		There is a suite of eLearning programmes that sit alongside the pledge as set out in the appendix. These would form the basis of the training programme
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors		The Council approves the Code of Conduct at its Annual Meeting
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.		The Council has a suite of employment and other policies in place with the exception of a Dignity at Work Policy and Councillor-Officer

		Protocol. . Draft policies are on the agenda of this meeting for consideration
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.		If need professional help is available from the Somerset Association of Local Clerks
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens.		
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme		
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.		

2.5 To date 1316 councils have signed up to the Pledge.

3. Consideration

3.1 The Committee is asked to consider recommending to the Full Council that it signs up to the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge.

Dave Farrow
Town Clerk

August 2023

Appendix

Training Available to Councillors and Staff to support the Civility and Respect Pledge

Standards in Public Life

This bespoke e-learning module has been developed by county associations in the South West region. It is primarily designed to support those elected or co-opted and/or working in local councils, to understand the principles of conduct expected of all councillors.

Information is based upon a national model code of conduct produced by The Local Government Association. Still, it recognises that councillors must abide by their own council's code of conduct and provides some generic support for those wishing to understand better the behaviours expected of all councillors.

Respectful and positive social media for councils and councillors

In this introductory e-learning module, we'll consider the opportunities and risks associated with social media from a civility and respect perspective. We will explore a range of proactive and pre-emptive strategies councils, and councillors can implement to set themselves up for success. We'll explore what to do if things go wrong and how to manage a range of scenarios from trolling to harassment, and practice what steps you can take.

Leadership in challenging situations for councils and councillors

In this introductory e-learning module, we will consider different leadership styles in the context of your role at the council, exploring which styles we personally 'default' to and which can work effectively for different situations. We will also discover how to build, support and get the most from an effective and motivated team.

Personal resilience for councils and councillors

In this introductory e-learning module, we develop a better understanding of where our behaviour comes from. We'll consider what resilience means for us in the context of our roles within the council. There will be opportunities to explore role-focused scenarios and consider how we might respond to them. We'll also explore strategies to deal with and manage various situations.