On 30 April 2025, together with Somerset Councillor Nick O'Donnell, Parish Councillor Anne Simpson, and members of the Speed Watch Team, I met with Alan Bailey the Project Manager for Wales & West Utilities (WWU).

Work in phases

During the two-hour meeting, Alan explained in great detail why, due to the width of the carriageway, it's necessary to close Kingston Road in phases, in order to replace the gas main to Kingston St Mary village. Alan explained that this decision was for safety reasons and that for the same reason their contractors were only allowed to work so many hours a week, which precluded evening and weekend working.

Alan advised that WWU will be contacting residents of individual properties, where necessary, to arrange replacement of their metal gas pipe for a more durable plastic version. If this affects you, you will receive a letter from WWU addressed to 'The Occupier'. Please do not ignore these letters, thinking they're junk mail, as they will explain the procedure to be followed. WWU will also visit individual properties in advance, in order to make this process as convenient as possible for the occupier.

Traffic diversions and road closures

Alan told us that WWU are obliged to propose a traffic diversion route to Somerset Council's Highways Department, which matches the same classification of road as Kingston Road, and that this route is via Buncombe Hill, Cothelstone and Bishops Lydeard to join the A358 into Taunton. He highlighted that WWU are not responsible for any of the alternative routes being used to avoid the road closure. Responsibility for the wider road network rests with Somerset Highways, therefore complaints regarding the condition and safety of these country lanes should be directed towards them.

It was apparent before the closure came into effect, that these alternative routes would be used, even though they're unsuitable and unsafe for the volume and type of vehicles they would attract. Therefore, it's very disappointing that Somerset Highways have, so far, made no attempt to improve the safety or to try to alleviate the inconvenience to road users that will continue until September 2025 and possibly beyond.

The Parish Council will continue to make representations to try and improve the situation. In order to make the relevant people aware of your concerns regarding the closure of Kingston Road, please don't hesitate to contact:

Somerset Highways
www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road
Somerset Councillors
Nick O'Donnell, nick.odonnell@somerset.gov.uk
Derek Perry, derek.perry@somerset.gov.uk
MP Taunton and Wellington
Gideon Amos MP, officeofgideonamos@parliament.uk

Kingston St Mary, 1 May 2025
Paul Townsend, Chair Kingston St Mary Parish Council
paul.townsend@ksmpc.org.uk