

# Monthly Report from your Liberal Democrat Somerset Councillors,

October 2025

We are now well into Carnival season in Somerset. As the nights draw in excitement is building in our towns and villages. Community groups are busy preparing for one of Somerset's most spectacular traditions, carnival.

We have been busy with a lot of casework from across the ward and are working hard to respond to all your emails and phone calls. If you feel we've missed your message or haven't replied, please do get back in touch — we don't want to overlook any of your correspondence.

Best wishes

**Adam and Jo**

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## **Council leader condemns attacks on faith buildings and pledges unity, safety, for all Somerset communities.**

Somerset Council Leader Bill Revans has strongly condemned recent attacks on faith buildings in Somerset, emphasising that hate has no place in the county. During a Full Council meeting in Bridgwater, he pledged to promote unity and safety across all communities.

Cllr Revans stated, "Hate has no home in Somerset and criminal acts like these aimed to intimidate others must not be tolerated. We must stand together to oppose the small minority who seek to intimidate or divide us."

The council is collaborating with police and community groups to identify rising tensions, enhance understanding, and challenge misinformation to ensure the safety in our communities.

## **Somerset Council commits to increasing social housing to support and strengthen local communities.**

Somerset Council will use an underspend of £3.3m in its Housing Revenue Account to buy additional council housing. This aims to provide short-term emergency accommodation and help reduce long waiting lists for social housing. Around 15 properties are expected to be purchased, with locations chosen based on demand. The move supports both immediate needs and longer-term housing sustainability, ensuring better quality and control compared to temporary placements like B&Bs.

## **Lib Dem council motion calls for urgent housing reform and new build powers in Somerset**

Liberal Democrat councillors have proposed a Council motion urging the government to grant councils stronger powers and long-term funding to build more affordable homes. The motion, at the recent Full Council, highlights decades of underinvestment, declining social housing, and the need for practical measures to accelerate the development of greener, affordable homes for families. Despite over 2,600 new homes built in the past year in Somerset, councillors warn that demand far

exceeds supply and call on the government for urgent action to prevent more families from facing homelessness.

**Somerset Council has launched a bold 20-year plan to boost the county's economy, focusing on fair, green growth and low-carbon industries.**

The Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045 aims to make Somerset a leader in energy, aerospace, manufacturing, and digital sectors. Key goals include increasing skills and productivity, lifting 10,000 people out of economic inactivity, transforming deprived communities, and achieving net-zero emissions. The strategy builds on £4 billion investment in the Gravity Enterprise Zone and the £5.3 billion spending from Hinkley Point C, with plans to develop tidal energy and enhance innovation.

Somerset has an economy of around £14.1 billion and can already count strengths such as:

- £4 billion of investment in Gravity Enterprise Zone;
- £5.3 billion of local spending from construction of Hinkley Point C nuclear power station that will provide clean energy to 6 million homes;
- 80% of working age residents economically active; and
- Good connectivity with the M5 and A303, rail links and proximity to Exeter and Bristol airports.

The Strategy seeks to build on this foundation and to go much further, with goals, by 2045, to:

- Significantly increase higher-level skills, earnings and productivity
- Lift 10,000 people out of economic inactivity
- Transform deprived communities
- Support achievement of carbon neutrality and net zero targets.

Read our [Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045](#)

**Somerset Chosen to Lead Innovative Drones Project**

Somerset Council has received £191,370 from Innovate UK to develop Project RESCUE, which aims to use drones for environmental monitoring and disaster response. The project will explore how drones can access hard-to-reach areas, provide real-time data, and support emergency services during crises like flooding. Working with local experts Land & Minerals Consulting and Limosaero, the council will develop a business case for drone deployment in emergencies. This initiative positions Somerset as a leader in innovative aviation technology, supporting community safety, environmental resilience, and regional economic growth.

**Somerset Council appoints strategic partner to protect and improve public services**

Somerset Council has appointed Newton Consulting as a strategic partner to help deliver the Inspiring Innovation transformation programme, aimed at improving services and achieving savings. This partnership approach ensures control, value for money, and staff development, supporting the council's focus on modernising and strengthening public services in challenging financial times. Further details are available on the [Somerset Council website](#).

## **Have your say on Sunday parking charges proposal, public urged to take part.**

A public consultation on introducing Sunday charges in Somerset Council car parks has begun and runs until 20 October. Currently, charging varies across the county's 200+ car parks, with some charging on Sundays and others not. The proposal aims to create consistency across Somerset and ensure the parking service remains fully self-funded. Public and business input is invited. Final decisions will be made after further consultation and are expected in December, with any changes implemented in 2026. [To get involved click here.](#)

## **AI tool helps social workers save time on admin**

Somerset Council is expanding the use of 'Magic Notes', an AI tool that converts meeting recordings into detailed reports, following a successful pilot. The pilot with social workers showed significant time savings—up to 11 hours weekly—and faster assessment and report writing, reducing admin time by nearly half. Staff praised the tool for improving accessibility and allowing them to focus more on client contact.

## **Digital Slinky Transport Service Now Available Across More of Somerset**

A new digital, on-demand transport service is now live in Taunton, Wellington, Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, and surrounding areas. Funded by the Government's BSIP, the service can be booked online or via an app from September 15, with extended hours trialled Monday to Friday. It offers a flexible alternative for shopping, work, and social outings, connecting to local landmarks and services. Home pick-ups are available for those with mobility issues. Book up to an hour in advance or two weeks ahead. Learn more on the Council's [Slinky Services page](#).

## **Encouraging Volunteer Groups to Pursue Prestigious Recognition**

Charities and volunteer groups in Somerset are encouraged to apply for the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), the highest national recognition for voluntary groups. The application period is open until December 1st. The award celebrates outstanding volunteer efforts benefiting local communities across a wide range of causes, from health and social care to arts and the environment. In the last round, 11 groups from Somerset were nominated, highlighting the county's vibrant and often unseen volunteer sector. Applications can be made through a simple process detailed on the [KAV website](#). The award helps raise awareness and provides valuable recognition for groups making a difference in Somerset.

## **Somerset Increases Local Recycling**

Somerset Council reports a rise in recycling processed within the county, with 99% of plastics recycled in the UK and a 57% reduction in landfill waste. These results reflect a commitment to local sustainability and transparency. The figures coincide with Recycling Week 2025, emphasising the importance of recycling everyday items like shampoo bottles, foil, and toothpaste tubes, which are now being diverted from waste to proper reprocessing. Explore the full report via the Council's [Recycling tracker page](#).

### **Ham Hill and Chard Reservoir Win Green Flag Awards**

Somerset's Ham Hill and Chard Reservoir have received prestigious Green Flag Awards, recognizing their excellent management and community value. Ham Hill has achieved it for the 20th consecutive year and earned the Green Heritage Site Accreditation for its historic features. The awards highlight the dedication of staff and volunteers in maintaining these vital green spaces, supporting community well-being and wildlife.

### **Have Your Say on Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Somerset Council has launched a public consultation for its draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The plan aims to protect and restore wildlife and habitats across the county, guiding long-term environmental action. Residents, landowners, and businesses are encouraged to share ideas on priorities and actions to support nature recovery. The consultation runs until October 31st. Feedback will help shape the final strategy, which aims to reverse habitat decline and enhance ecosystems. Details and how to participate are available on [the Council's consultation page](#).

### **Council Supports Businesses to Go Green**

Somerset Council is offering £170,000 in grants to help small and medium businesses reduce energy use and carbon emissions. Grants range from £2,000 to £15,000, with match-funding required. The scheme, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Local Growth Fund, includes practical advice such as energy audits and sustainability plans through the Go Green scheme. For details on the scheme and how to apply please contact: [greenbusinesssupport@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:greenbusinesssupport@somerset.gov.uk).

### **Have Your Say on the Future of Yeovil Town Centre**

Somerset Council is inviting residents and businesses to contribute to the Yeovil Town Centre Masterplan. The consultation runs until November 2nd, offering opportunities to share ideas on development, housing, green spaces, transport, and safety. Public input will help shape the town's regeneration plans, focusing on key sites and improving community amenities. Details are available on the [Council's Yeovil Masterplan page](#) and at Yeovil Library.

### **Somerset Council Extends Buyback Option for Huish Park by Two Years**

Somerset Council has approved extending the buyback period for Huish Park, home of Yeovil Town Football Club, from May 2026 to May 2028. This extension aims to support future investment in the club, which is vital to the local economy and community. The council owns the freehold and leases it to the club. The decision helps safeguard public investment while supporting the club's future development without giving the council ownership or decision-making in the club itself.

### **Lib Dem MP Calls for Action on Unsafe Caravans in Somerset**

Sarah Dyke, the Liberal Democrat MP for Glastonbury and Somerton, has written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, urging for a national caravan licensing and registration system. This move aims to address the growing problem of unsafe and unregulated caravans in and around Glastonbury, which has the highest concentration of caravan dwellers in the country outside Bristol.

Sarah has worked closely with local councillors to understand the extent of the issue. She highlights that many caravans are in poor condition, sold unlawfully, and abandoned when uninhabitable. She said, "Glastonbury has long been a place of pilgrimage and is a popular destination for the traveller community. Some van dwellers are from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background and it is also home to those who live in vans as a life choice. But there are people who are forced into living in vans as they cannot afford to pay rent or are vulnerable and in need of support."

She noted that 12 years ago, Somerset County Council (under previous administration) sold off all permanent sites, and there are currently no transition sites. Somerset Council (the Unitary Council) is seeking to rectify this and build new permanent pitches and improve welfare facilities. Sarah believes a national licensing system would help protect vulnerable residents and reduce community tensions, and she has called for a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss further action.

### **Making a difference in our community: How We're Working to Prevent Suicide in Somerset**

At Somerset Council we are dedicated to preventing suicide and supporting mental health through open conversations and community action. Here's a closer look at one of our key initiatives: The Orange Button Scheme and how it is working from the perspective of those volunteers involved. Recently, Somerset Council conducted a survey among Orange Button Holders to evaluate the impact of this scheme.

#### *What is the Orange Button Scheme?*

The Orange Button is a visible symbol—a badge—that signifies the wearer has received training and is a safe person to approach about suicide. Its purpose is to create a supportive environment by making conversations about mental health and suicide more natural in everyday settings—be it at work, in schools, or within the wider community.

#### *Why do we need this?*

The urgency of mental health support has never been greater. Suicide rates in England and Wales are at their highest since 1999, with reports of self-harm quadrupling since 2000. Somerset, unfortunately, has higher-than-average suicide rates, highlighting the necessity for proactive community-based initiatives like the Orange Button Scheme.

#### *How is it working so far?*

Many Orange Button holders reported that wearing the orange badge encouraged small but powerful actions. They influenced friends and colleagues to undertake training, initiated awareness chats without any crisis happening at the time, and created a culture of openness.

From colleges and schools to NHS services, community teams, and charities, stories from badge holders showcase the scheme's reach across everyday settings—not just paid specialists. These stories include:

- Creating safety plans with students and apprentices
- Arranging same-day support through Crisis Safe Space or Mindline
- Talking someone down from a bridge, an action that potentially saved a life

- Training builds confidence

Building on the success so far, our focus now is on expanding awareness, addressing practical barriers, and reaching more diverse groups. We believe that by working together and continuing these conversations, we can make Somerset a safer, more supportive place for everyone.

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## Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

**Visit - Report a Problem on the Road:** - A list of all reporting pages to do with roads, pavements, lighting:

[Report a problem on the road](#)

**Potholes and road damage** - Somerset Council repair potholes and other road defects, and maintain our roads, for the safe access of all road users:

[Potholes, road damage and edge loss](#)

**Report a problem with a street light** - We maintain and repair street lights to national standards to provide safe access to all road users:

[Report a problem with a street light](#)

**Roads, travel and parking, road signs, markings and lighting** - Includes information about non-illuminated bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate or a new road sign:

[Road signs, bollards and road markings](#)

**Speed limits** - Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures:

[Speed limits](#)

**Traffic lights** - We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the County:

[Traffic lights](#)

**Street and roadworks** - We maintain the roads and pavements that are managed at public expense in Somerset:

[Street and roadworks problems](#)

**Traffic - updates and roadworks follow:**

[Travel Somerset on X](#) and [Travel Somerset on Facebook](#).

**All ongoing roadworks** - available on the Somerset Council website interactive map

[Roadworks and travel information](#)

**Somerset Waste** - collection days, replacement bins or recycling bags and missed collection reporting:

[Bins, recycling and waste](#)

**Travel and Tourist Information**

[Travel Somerset - Art, Culture, Events, History & More](#)

**Sign-up for the latest climate news from across Somerset:**

[Climate newsletter sign-up](#)

**Open Somerset Council Consultations** - which anyone can complete and take part in shaping the future of Somerset

[Somerset Council - Citizen Space - Consultations](#)

**SOMERSET COUNCIL TELEPHONE NO - 0300 123 2224**