

Monthly Report from your Liberal Democrat Councillors

September has arrived and so has the rain. As the children go back to school and the young people head for university and college we wish them well. August was a busy month, we have been active in the villages looking at roads and ditches and doing our very best to get drains cleared. This is not always possible where budgets are constrained but we do try.

There is a lot of information in this report which we hope will be useful. Please share with your communities.

Please get in touch with any issues that we can help with.

Best wishes

Adam and Jo

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Major Somerset Road Upgrade Reopens Ahead of Schedule

Junction 26 and the A38 Chelston Link Road will reopen early on Sunday 7 September, well ahead of schedule. The 5.7 million-pound Somerset Council project to upgrade the 1974-built roads was funded entirely by government grants and benefited from innovative techniques and extended working efforts.

Instead of removing 7,300 tonnes of concrete from site, the materials were retained and recycled as sub-base for the new road. The project used eco-friendly rubblization to recycle concrete, saving carbon and reducing lorry movements. Full excavation was needed at the roundabout due to overhead bridges. The scheme also included faster installation methods and a new drainage system to prevent flooding and simplify maintenance.

Work was scheduled around upcoming motorway works and winter gritting access. During closures, essential maintenance by National Grid and Highways was carried out to minimize disruption.

All slip roads, the roundabout, and the link road will reopen overnight between Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 September. Work continues into September but will finish after reopening.

Frome Bypass AI Cameras Target Dangerous Driving to Improve Road Safety and Save Lives

AI cameras are being tested on the A361 Frome Bypass by Somerset Council and Avon and Somerset Police to reduce serious collisions, which have included 6 fatalities in five years. These cameras can identify unsafe driving behaviours like mobile phone use and careless driving. Initially, offenders will receive warning letters and educational materials. The initiative supports the [Fatal Five campaign](#), targeting speeding, distraction, seatbelt use, drink-driving, and careless driving. Recent safety improvements include road markings and signage upgrades, with longer-term plans to review the junction's safety. The goal is to curb dangerous driving habits and save lives on this busy route.

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Scrutiny Committee Discusses Proposed Community Hospital Bed Reductions

Somerset Council's adults and health scrutiny committee met recently in Bridgwater to discuss proposals for inpatient bed reductions at several Somerset community hospitals and to ask NHS Somerset questions about their plans. NHS leaders responded that no final decisions had been made and suggested that the changes might enable a wider range of services to be offered at the local level. Numerous members of the public voiced concerns about the lack of clarity so far with local communities on the changes.

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust is considering bed reductions at community hospitals in Bridgwater, Frome, West Mendip, Burnham-on-Sea, and Crewkerne, as part of the government's health plan to deliver more care at home.

Lead member for Adults Services, Councillor Sarah Wakefield, emphasised that the best interests of patients remain a priority. She highlighted the success of the My Life, My Future programme, which aims to help people stay healthier and recover at home for longer. She stressed that losing beds does not mean loved ones will be denied proper treatment.

Councillor Claire Sully, vice-chair of the scrutiny committee, expressed concerns over the plans, stating that staff with decades of service are uncertain about their job security and the future of the hospitals.

NHS Somerset is [hosting events over the summer and autumn as part of the 'Big Conversation,'](#) providing opportunities for the community to share their views on future healthcare services.

NHS Somerset is also inviting expressions of interest to join a Stakeholder Reference Group – a space for regular discussion, co-design and feedback on future care models in Somerset. If you're interested in joining a group, please email us at: somicb.engagement@nhs.net

Somerset Council Welcomes New College Merger to Support Local Youth

Somerset Council has warmly welcomed the formation of the University College Somerset (UCS) College Group. A merger of Bridgwater and Taunton College and Strode College. Council Leader Bill Revans said that the move is seen as a "powerful investment in Somerset's people, places, and future".

This collaboration aims to boost local aspirations, create more opportunities for young people, and strengthen the region's future workforce. More details are available on the [Council's website](#).

Somerset's Local Community Networks Celebrate a Year of Progress

Somerset's Local Community Networks (LCNs) marked a significant milestone with their second set of Annual General Meetings, highlighting a year of increased community collaboration and local action. Launched to bring partners together, LCNs encourages discussions on issues that matter most to residents, supporting initiatives in areas like highways, youth activities, community transport, and health.

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An LCN-wide Annual Report summarises key achievements, including enhancing emergency response during recent floods and strengthening relationships with local councils and groups. As they enter their third year, LCNs aim to further empower communities to influence services and respond to local needs.

Somerset is continuing to review the LCN model and explore how it can evolve to better serve the community. For more information or to get involved, visit the [Council's Local Community Networks page](#) or email LCN@somerset.gov.uk.

Somerset Boosts Green Transport with £3.8 Million for Inclusive Electric Vehicle Charging Network

Somerset Council has secured nearly £3.8 million from the Government's LEVI Fund to expand local EV charging networks, with a focus on supporting rural and underserved communities. In Somerset, more than a quarter — around 27% — of properties lack off-street parking, making this funding a vital opportunity to help many more people switch from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric. The funding will support at least 1,606 low-power chargepoints, many using existing lamp column wiring to reduce disruption. The Council will soon ask residents for suggestions on chargepoint locations via its website. Importantly, at least 25% of chargepoints will be installed in lower-demand rural areas to ensure fair and equitable access across the county. The goal is to promote a greener, more inclusive Somerset by making electric vehicle use accessible to all.

Somerset Council Imposes Banning Orders on Rogue Landlords

Two landlords in Yeovil have received Banning Orders for repeated housing standard breaches and non-compliance with enforcement notices. The Orders, issued by the Property Tribunal in May 2025, ban Mr. and Mrs. Fuller from managing or renting properties from September 2025 for six and three years, respectively.

The Orders aim to protect tenants from substandard housing and demonstrate Somerset Council's strong stance against rogue landlords. The council continues to work closely with lawful landlords to ensure safe, healthy, and appropriate homes for residents.

Mendip System Upgrade: Improved Services will follow Temporary Disruption

Somerset Council is upgrading its system for Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit, a very significant change following the formation of the unitary Council. This will bring improvements including easier payments and account access, and the same system will be implemented for all of Somerset by the end of this calendar year. In the former Mendip area, there will be at least 3 weeks of some service disruption starting from late August, for which we apologise. During this time, online forms and customer service processing will be affected, though online and telephone payments as well as direct debits should continue as usual. Housing Benefit payments will continue, with confirmation being sent to recipients by post.

The other areas of Somerset (former Sedgemoor, former Somerset West & Taunton, and former South Somerset) will follow for implementation of the same new system in that order. Residents are advised to stay updated via [the Council's website](#) and, as always, be cautious of scams asking for bank details. Citizens Advice will also be kept updated on the expected disruption and progress towards full implementation.

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Could Your Business Land a Role in Film and TV Production?

Local businesses in Somerset are encouraged to register for film and TV opportunities through Somerset Council's Screen Somerset initiative. Last year, productions spent around £4.2m in Somerset, and the film office promotes using local services to benefit the community. Businesses can join the free [Filming in England Supplier Directory](#), which many productions use for planning shoots, to increase their chances of employment.

From accommodation and catering to security and costume hire, many services are needed on set. Using local companies benefits the environment, boosts the economy, and encourages repeat filming in the area.

Registering takes just minutes and is free. For more information, visit [Screen Somerset](#).

The initiative supports local businesses by connecting them with film productions and promoting Somerset as a film-friendly location.

Somerset Council Trains Thousands to Improve Road Safety in 2024

Somerset Council's Road Safety Team provided training and education to nearly 38,000 people across the county, aiming to make roads safer for everyone. The initiatives targeted a wide range of road users, including young children, teenagers, and older adults.

For young pupils, programs like Bikeability offered essential cycling skills for Year 5 and 6 students, helping them learn how to ride safely on the road. Workshops for children in Reception to Year 6 focused on pedestrian and passenger safety, while presentations for Year 8 and 9 students emphasised the dangers of distractions near roads. Older students in Years 10 and 11 received advice for safer journeys, and college students learned about the serious consequences of collisions through dedicated road safety talks.

The team also ran practical courses for motorcyclists in collaboration with police and hosted special sessions for older drivers, addressing how driving habits should adapt with age. Beyond classroom sessions, the council improved road safety by installing speed cameras, upgrading signage, and implementing traffic calming measures in areas with high accident rates.

This comprehensive approach ensures that road safety education reaches all age groups and helps encourage children and young people to start cycling early.

The ongoing work of the Somerset Road Safety Team has a significant positive impact on the community, making roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.

Upcoming Fostering Information Sessions in Somerset

Somerset Council is hosting a series of informal fostering information sessions throughout September. These relaxed events offer the chance to learn about fostering, hear from experienced carers, and ask questions about support, allowances, and the application process. Sessions are open to anyone aged 21 or over with a spare room and no prior experience is necessary. The events will

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take place in Somerton, Burnham-on-Sea, and Wells. To book a place and find more details, visit fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or call 0800 587 9900.

Yeovil Library Opens Room Honouring Public Health Leader

Yeovil Library has named a new wellbeing room after Louise Finnis, a dedicated Public Health leader who promoted the value of libraries for mental health. The Finnis Room supports community wellbeing activities and hosts services like NHS Health Checks and the Employment Hub, providing a private space at the heart of the community. The opening ceremony was attended by Louise's family and Council officers, celebrating her legacy of improving mental health and community support in Somerset.

Somerset Lifeline Completes Digital Upgrade Ahead of Schedule

Somerset Lifeline has successfully completed its digital upgrade ahead of the 2025 national deadline for switching to digital-only phone lines. Over the past 13 months, more than 6,000 analogue units were replaced with digital devices, connecting users directly to a 24/7 monitoring centre. The upgrade includes tailored solutions for residents in remote areas, all at no cost to customers.

The project ensures continued safety and support for vulnerable residents across Somerset before winter. For more information, visit somersetlifeline.co.uk. Equipment can also be viewed at [Somerset Independent Living Centres \(SILCs\)](#).

Somerset Urges Food Waste Recycling to Save £1 Million

Somerset Council is encouraging residents to recycle their food waste more effectively, highlighting that doing so could save around £1 million and reduce environmental costs. Currently, 16,000 tonnes of food waste, including packaging, is thrown away each year, much of which could be recycled.

Recycling food waste is a much cheaper and greener way to dispose of it, as it avoids the costly fees associated with sending waste to Energy from Waste, the process used to recover energy from general waste.

Although 7 out of 10 households already recycle food, small actions like recycling food scraps can significantly impact.

Residents that need a new or replacement kitchen caddy or food waste bin can do via the Council's [replacement bins and recycling containers](#) page.

Grants Available for Waste Reduction and Reuse Projects in Somerset

Community groups in Somerset can apply for grants of £5,000 to £10,000 to support innovative waste reduction and reuse initiatives. The second year of the Waste Not Somerset Fund is now open, funded by Somerset Council and SUEZ Recycling.

More information and application details are available via the [Waste Not Somerset Fund page](#).

Somerset Funds Upgraded Facilities to Secure Bridgwater Carnival's Future

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Somerset Council has appointed Rigg Construction to upgrade the facilities at Bristol Road, supporting the future of the renowned Bridgwater Carnival. The project involves creating five modern, well-lit workshops for local Carnival Clubs, improving access and infrastructure on almost 3 hectares of land.

The £4.9 million scheme, funded by the Town Deal, Somerset Community Foundation, and Arts Council England, aims to preserve this historic event, boost local talent, and support the economy. Work begins soon, with careful planning to avoid disrupting the annual carnival parade.

Most Food Businesses Pass Allergen Checks, but Some Require Urgent Inspection

Recent spot checks show that 79% of low-rated food businesses in Devon and Somerset meet allergen safety standards, but some still face urgent inspections. Officers from Heart of the South West Trading Standards tested 75 independent food outlets, including cafes, bakeries, and restaurants.

Most businesses (59) passed, but 16 were found to contain allergens, primarily traces of milk. Due to legal requirements, food businesses must provide allergen information, handle allergens properly, and train staff.

Thirteen businesses that failed received immediate inspections for poor food management, with 15 more scheduled for follow-up. Trading Standards encourages all food outlets to review their allergen protocols to ensure customer safety.

For more information, visit the [HotSW TS Allergens page](#). Businesses can also seek advice via email at tradingstandards@devon.gov.uk.

Somerset VRP to Launch 140 Pop-Up Youth Hubs to Improve Safety

Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) will deliver 140-160 pop-up youth hubs across the county between July 2025 and March 2026. These community-led hubs aim to support young people, reduce violence, and provide access to trusted adults in town centres.

Building on previous successful pilots in Taunton and Bridgwater, the hubs will operate in key locations such as Taunton, Bridgwater, Chard, and Glastonbury. They will serve as accessible spaces for engagement, advice, and community conversations on safety issues like knife crime, anti-social behaviour, and exploitation.

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](#)

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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