

Monthly Report from your Liberal Democrat Somerset Councillor

Somerset Council Leader Reacts to DELAY in SEND Reform

Cllr Bill Revans, leader of Somerset Council, has voiced strong disappointment over delays to the Government's upcoming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform, now postponed to 2026. He highlighted the worsening crisis, with rising numbers of young people needing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), skyrocketing costs, and increasing wait times for families.

Cllr Revans emphasised the urgent need for comprehensive reform to prevent overspending and deteriorating services. He met with families protesting outside County Hall, supporting calls for urgent change. The council has already introduced local initiatives but stresses that national legislation reforms are crucial to address the growing crisis.

Key Section of Somerset Circle Completed

A new 1.3 km traffic-free path linking Ham Wood Viaduct to Thrupe Lane has opened, completing a vital part of the Somerset Circle walking and cycling route in Mendip. This scenic route offers safe, active travel from Shepton Mallet into the Mendip Hills, connecting communities and supporting sustainable transport. The project, achieved through the efforts of volunteers and local partnerships, was officially opened by Cllr Ros Wyke. When finished, the Somerset Circle will be a 76-mile traffic-free circuit linking Bristol, Bath, the Mendip Hills, and the Somerset Levels, promoting active lifestyles and reducing car travel. Somerset Liberal Dems has championed active travel and green transport initiatives to create a healthier, more sustainable county.

Six Somerset Heroes Honoured with British Empire Medals

Six local champions were awarded the British Empire Medal at a ceremony at The Newt in Somerset, for outstanding service to veterans, community, health, and support.

Recipients include:

- Paul Bunce (Yeovil): For dedicated services to veterans and the Royal British Legion, supporting fundraising and volunteer mentoring since 1977.
- Nola French (Evercreech): A lifelong community volunteer, supporting church activities, events, and outreach efforts, especially during COVID-19.
- Julia Knight (Taunton): For her exceptional work with the Somerset Lieutenancy and managing high-profile visits, including HM Queen Elizabeth's 2018 visit.
- Julie Matthews (Chard): Founder of a peer support group for mental health, inspiring others through her determination and compassion.
- Dr Harvey Sampson (Burnham-on-Sea): For 40 years of dedication to healthcare as a GP and leader, ensuring long-term sustainability of local medical services.

Lord-Lieutenant Mohammed Saddiq praised the awardees for their dedication. This recognition celebrates their invaluable contributions to Somerset communities.

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Update on Caravans and Land Use in and Around Glastonbury

We understand how this issue affects residents in Glastonbury and the surrounding villages. Somerset Council is actively working to address it, including recently removing 17 abandoned caravans from local sites and clearing up the verges.

The council is collaborating with Bristol City Council to learn from their experience in setting up 'Meanwhile Sites'. This is use of land that is designated for development, meanwhile it is used for off road living sites created at a much lesser cost than permanent traveller sites. Such sites do need planning permission and the first site is being progressed to Planning as part of the Enabling Project of the Glastonbury Town Deal.

Additionally, Lib Dem MP Sarah Dyke has written to the Secretary of State, calling for the national registration of caravans to prevent anonymous ownership and trading of caravans and to raise awareness of the problem in Glastonbury and nearby villages.

These efforts are part of Somerset Council's long-term approach to resolving a complex issue involving people living in vans and caravans in the Glastonbury area. As the Authority with responsibility for social care and housing, Somerset Council has a much greater responsibility and so must approach the issue of roadside living with considerable care. The issue is, of course, linked to cost of and reduced availability of housing in the area, although it is realised that there are many and varied reasons for people to live on the roadside.

Somerset Council In-house Landlord Annual Report 2024-25

Somerset Council's [2024/25 Housing Report](#) highlights significant progress, improved services, and strong tenant satisfaction. Key achievements include managing nearly £33m, completing 19,000 repairs—over 4,300 emergencies with 95% responded to within 24 hours—and maintaining 100% compliance on home safety measures. . The housing referenced in this report is the Council owned housing stock in West and North of the county.

The council invested in upgrading homes with new windows, kitchens, roofs, and bathrooms, and developed energy-efficient housing. Around 270 vacant homes were let, with rent collection hitting 99.8%, and support was provided for 200 anti-social behaviour cases. Overall tenant satisfaction reached 76%, with most measures exceeding national averages.

The council remains committed to delivering safe homes, excellent service, and ongoing engagement. [Visit the Housing Performance page for more details and previous reports.](#)

New Councillors Elected in Dunster and Glastonbury

Voters in Dunster and Glastonbury have elected new councillors following October by-elections for vacant seats on Somerset Council.

In Dunster, Cara Strom (Liberal Democrat) secured the seat with 1,142 votes, with a 32.2% turnout. In Glastonbury, Ewan Cameron (Liberal Democrat) was elected with 882 votes, with a turnout of 33.5%.

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Third Year of Somerset's Winter Coat Exchange

Libraries across Somerset are now collecting donated coats again to help residents stay warm and reduce waste. Last year, 2,470 coats were donated, with most given to the charity RAFT, supporting displaced people locally and abroad.

Participating libraries include Burnham-on-Sea, Chard, Dulverton, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Langport, Minehead, Porlock, Shepton Mallet, Street, Taunton, Wellington, Williton, and Yeovil.

Donations are welcomed in good, clean condition—any size or age—and can be left with library staff. For more info, visit your local library, the [Somerset Libraries UK Facebook page](#), or email librariesmail@somerset.gov.uk.

Cost-of-Living Support for Somerset Residents This Winter

Somerset Council and community partners are offering support like food banks, mental health advice, council tax relief, housing payments, and heating assistance. Visit somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support to check eligibility and apply. If you lack internet access, call 0300 123 2224 and ask for 'cost of living crisis support'.

Supporting Somerset Residents to Stay Safe, Warm, and Well This Winter

As winter approaches and costs rise, Somerset organisations are teaming up to help residents stay safe and healthy. Public Health Somerset, NHS Somerset, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, Citizens Advice Somerset, and community partners will hold a free Winter Wellness Webinar on Wednesday, 5 November, from 12pm to 1pm.

To join, [register on the Microsoft Teams event page](#). The webinar is open to all supporting Somerset communities.

Somerset Council's Winter Service Ready for Ice and Snow

Somerset Council, in partnership with Kier Transportation Ltd, is fully prepared for winter with a fleet of 23 gritters ready to treat roads when temperatures drop. Gritting involves spreading salt on key routes to prevent ice formation and ensure safer travel during cold weather.

Last winter saw teams make 1,679 visits covering over 117,000 miles, using more than 6,000 tonnes of salt, often during day and night shifts. The council's preparation included summer depot work, weather monitoring, and coordinated snowplough efforts with farmers.

The council prioritizes critical routes, and community support is encouraged—roadside grit bins can be refilled on request, and residents can join the snow warden scheme. This winter, two new gritters will be added to the fleet, with a creative competition inviting school children to name them.

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Stay updated with gritting plans via @TravelSomerset on X (Twitter) and Facebook. Drivers are reminded to drive cautiously, especially in wintery conditions, and to avoid overtaking gritters during salting operations. For tips on winter driving, visit [the Council's Road Safety webpage](#).

Council Invests in Data and AI to Improve Services and create jobs

Somerset Council has approved a £1.56 million investment in data and AI technologies to enhance services and reduce costs. The funds will expand the AI and Data Team with 15 new roles, creating local jobs and improving data integration across the council. A key focus is developing a unified view of residents to identify support needs early and prevent crises. This initiative supports the broader Inspiring Innovation transformation, building on previous projects like Transform Family View. Better data use could help detect risks in areas such as homelessness, potentially preventing up to 256 families from losing their homes annually.

Somerset Council Still Committed to a Viable Community Success as Saxonvale Site Goes Back to Open Market

Somerset Council will relaunch the sale of the 12-acre Saxonvale site after Mayday Saxonvale Development Ltd. failed to secure funding. The Council voted to explore open market options, removing the exclusivity agreement with Mayday, but remains open to discussions. Leader Cllr Bill Revans emphasized the Council's responsibility to deliver financial certainty, stating:

"It's important to stress that Somerset Council has done everything reasonably possible to support the deal with Mayday. In the absence of a fully funded offer, we must now explore other options."

The Council aims to find a proposal that ensures financial security and benefits Frome and the wider community.

Taunton Flood Alleviation Scheme Progresses

The £6 million flood protection project in Taunton is moving forward, thanks to partnership work between Somerset Council and the Environment Agency. The scheme will enhance flood defences along parts of the River Tone in North Town, safeguarding hundreds of homes, key roads—including Bridge Street, Staplegrove Road, and Station Road—and important buildings like North Town Primary School, the police station, swimming pool, and sheltered housing.

The plan includes building a reinforced concrete and brick flood wall on the river's left bank, with work scheduled to start in 2026. Funding comes from Defra, the Somerset Rivers Authority, and Homes England.

Design work will continue in the coming months, with construction planned for 2026/27.

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Somerset Launches Homelessness Charter to Unite Community Effort

Somerset Council has introduced a Homelessness Charter to encourage residents, businesses, and services to work together to tackle homelessness. Launched on 23 October with community and lived experience speakers, the charter is based on four principles: improving data, ending rough sleeping, increasing access to suitable accommodation, and enhancing prevention efforts. Councillor Sarah Wakefield emphasized the importance of collective action, urging everyone to sign the charter or join action groups. Claire Tough, Chair of the Homelessness Reduction Board, highlighted the community's shared goal to prevent homelessness through dignity, respect, and support. Find out more and get involved via [the Council's Homelessness Reduction Board page](#).

Supporting Domestic Abuse Victims and Improving Assistance in Somerset

Somerset Council has launched a comprehensive Domestic Abuse Toolkit for Solicitors, providing free guidance and training to help legal professionals support clients affected by domestic abuse. The toolkit includes advice on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, safe consultation practices, client confidentiality, and available local support services, empowering solicitors to make a meaningful difference.

In addition, Somerset Domestic Abuse Service has extended its online support hours to 4pm, making confidential help more accessible. The service offers free support via somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk, with a helpline open 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. In emergencies, dial 999 or use the Silent Solution system.

Together, these initiatives aim to create a safer, more supportive environment for those experiencing domestic abuse. For help or more information, visit the website, call 0800 69 49 999, or email domesticabuseservice@somerset.gov.uk.

Major Air Quality Improvements in Somerset

Thanks to a joint effort by Somerset Council and the Government, air pollution levels have significantly decreased in East Reach, Henlade, and Yeovil town centre. These areas, previously designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), have had their status officially revoked following successful pollution reductions.

Monitoring over the past 20 years and the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan, along with national initiatives to reduce older, polluting vehicles, have contributed to these positive results. Nitrous oxide emissions from vehicle traffic now meet acceptable levels, improving health, especially for vulnerable residents.

The AQMA status has been revoked immediately for East Reach and Henlade. In Yeovil, it will be revoked in 2026 if pollution remains below thresholds.

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Come for a Cuppa with a Carer: Fostering Events in Somerset this November

Somerset Council invites anyone interested in fostering to join relaxing 'Cuppa with a Carer' events this month. These informal sessions offer the chance to chat with experienced foster carers, share stories, and get answers about the fostering process, support, and options.

Events are scheduled in Bridgwater, Taunton and Shepton Mallet Offices

Fostering opportunities range from short-term care to long-term placements, with no experience needed—just a spare room and a desire to make a difference. For more details, visit fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or call 0800 587 9900.

Unstoppable' Youth Group Launches New Website

Somerset's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) youth group, the Unstoppables, has launched a new website to give members a platform to share their experiences and connect. The site provides information about the group, meeting times, how to join, and links to useful resources. It also offers a space for young people with SEND, aged 13 to 25, to discuss their concerns, successes, aspirations, and influence local services. The launch aims to raise awareness and encourage more young people in Somerset to get involved. Visit somerset-unstoppables.org.uk to explore the site.

Somerset's Community Heroes Honoured by Chair of Somerset Council

Somerset Council celebrated outstanding community contributions at its annual Chair's Awards, recognizing individuals and groups who make a real difference. Over 130 people attended, with many nominated by local councils for their dedication.

Highlights include Michaela Edmunds, who manages the inclusive Crispin Community Centre; Carla Searle, for inspiring community engagement; Brympton Golden Oldies, supporting pensioners; Chrissie Payne, for helping vulnerable residents; and Brenda Prentice, for campaigning on access and culture.

Baltonsborough Parish Council nominated Phil Bradshaw, who moved to the village in November 2022 and quickly became Parish Footpath Liaison Officer. Phil mapped all 48 local footpaths, assessed repair needs, and liaised with landowners, Somerset Rights of Way, and volunteer groups like The Mendip Ramblers. His efforts have transformed local footpaths with new gates, styles, and bridges—all at his own expense, even providing doughnuts for volunteers.

Chair Mike Best praised all awardees for their invaluable service to communities. For more stories, visit the [full article](#).

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Bridgwater Library Temporarily Closed for Urgent Roof Repairs

Somerset Council has closed Bridgwater Library due to interior ceiling damage caused by roof issues. Repairs are underway, but the library will remain shut until further notice for safety reasons. Alternative libraries are available at North Petherton, Taunton, and Burnham-On-Sea. The Council is also exploring temporary service options within Bridgwater, including activities and events during half term.

All loans will be automatically renewed, and access to e-books and e-audiobooks is available at librarieswest.org.uk. For updates, contact 0300 123 2224 or brwlib@somerset.gov.uk. The Council aims to reopen the library as soon as possible.

Young Writers Shine in Somerset's Food Waste Story Competition

Children across Somerset showcased their creativity and environmental awareness in the inaugural Food Waste Story Writing Competition, organized by Somerset Council and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK. In partnership with author Ben Pulletz and his eco-character Luna the Globetrotter, the competition inspired young minds to think about food waste recycling and its benefits.

The winners are:

- **Candice** from Taunton with '*The Food Waste Story*'
- **Freya** from Street with '*A Rubbish Day!*'

They will receive book vouchers and a copy of Ben Pulletz's *Luna Explores Somerset*. Runner-up prizes went to Harry and Olivia (Burnham-on-Sea), Veet (Wellington), Evlyn (Frome), and Sonny (Minehead).

Children created stories featuring characters like Benny the Bread and Carrie the Carrot, promoting recycling with imagination and humour. The judges praised all entries for their originality and environmental message.

To read the winning stories, visit somerset.gov.uk/foodcampaign.

Call for Volunteers to Help Maintain Ilminster-Chard Shared Path

Community members are invited to join the 'Friends of the Path' group to help preserve the Ilminster-Chard Cycleway, part of the National Cycle Network. Inspired by the successful Friends of The Strawberry Line, volunteers will assist with maintenance, funding, and events.

The path, opened in 2008, is vital for walkers, cyclists, and runners as a safe route avoiding the busy A358. To get involved, contact Matt Day at 07714 648913 or mattdaysomerset@gmail.com.

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Somerset Unites to Support Loved Ones and Employees in Quitting Smoking

This autumn, Somerset residents are encouraged to show support for friends, family, and colleagues on their journey to become smoke-free. The 'What's Your Why?' Pledge by Smokefree Somerset aims to encourage conversations and community encouragement, helping those thinking about quitting to feel less alone. Residents can pledge at local events or online and access free, expert support to quit smoking. Leanne, a Somerset mum who successfully quit, shared how the pledge inspired her to quit and live healthier.

Alongside community efforts, Somerset Council and local businesses are launching a year-long scheme to help employees quit smoking, offering free therapies and support to promote healthier workplaces. With research showing smoking costs the UK economy billions, these initiatives aim to create a healthier, more supportive Somerset.

Find out more and make your pledge at smokefreesomerset.org.uk.

Garden Waste Collection Changes for Somerset Subscribers

From 24 November, around 53,000 Somerset garden waste subscribers will have changes to their collection day due to increased subscriptions and route capacity limits. Some residents will see a change in collection week, day, or a one-off interim collection on Saturday, 22 November. Notices will be sent via email or post, and online calendars will be updated. Residents are encouraged to check their new collection [schedules online](#).

Reduce Pumpkin Waste This Halloween in Somerset

Somerset Council warns that Halloween last year generated 146 tonnes of extra food waste, a 19% rise. To help cut waste, residents are encouraged to make the most of their pumpkins by eating the flesh, seeds, and guts. Instead of discarding pumpkins, try making pumpkin cake, soup, or roasting seeds. Any scraps not usable can be recycled, composted, or frozen. For ideas, [visit Love Food Hate Waste's Make the most of your pumpkin page](#).

Consultation on Charitable Collection Licensing Policy

Somerset Council is seeking public input on a new policy to simplify and standardize charitable collection licensing across the county. The proposed policy aims to reduce bureaucracy, cut administration costs, and promote responsible fundraising. Key changes include allowing permits only for registered charities, permitting street collections any day, and removing the requirement to publish collection proceeds in local newspapers. The Council invites residents, charities, and stakeholders to review and comment on the draft policy from November 1, 2025, to January 23, 2026. For more information, [visit the Council's consultation page from 1 November](#).

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Have Your Say: Shaping Somerset's Children's and Families Services

Somerset Council has launched a public consultation to gather views on improving children's and family support services. The goal is to help families stay together and ensure children grow up in safe, loving environments.

The feedback will help develop the Families First Partnership, a national initiative aimed at better collaboration between social care, police, health, and education to protect and support children.

To participate, visit the [Children and Families Social Care consultation page](#). Paper copies are available at libraries and council offices. The survey closes on 27 November, with a review of all responses afterward.

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](#)

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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