

BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW FOR SOMERSET

The deadline for phase 2 of consultation has been extended to 4 March 2025. The Somerset Council request to extend the deadline followed the Constitution and Governance Committees Meeting on 14 January where the committee resolved to:-

Reject the recommendations of the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for Stage 1 of Somerset Council's Phase 2 response.

The Committee Asked the Monitoring Officer to write to the LGBCE requesting an extension of the deadline for Somerset Council to submit a proposal for Stage 1 of Phase 2 due to the challenges in finalising a submission that strikes a good balance in meeting the three statutory criteria.

In the absence of a submission from Somerset Council by the original deadline of 20th January the Conservative Group at Somerset Council submitted the report prepared on behalf of the working group before the deadline. The submission included details of some areas that we felt needed further consideration.

More information can be found here: - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/elections/2025/consultation>

SOMERSET WASTE SERVICES ASSISTED WASTE COLLECTIONS

Somerset Waste Services offer assisted waste collections to over 13,500 homes.

This is where Crews collect containers from an agreed place outside a resident's home, empty the contents, and return the containers back to the agreed location.

This is a free service, offered to any resident who needs extra help with their recycling and rubbish removal on collection day.

More information can be found here:-

To ensure the councils records are up to date anyone that currently receives the service (prior to June 2024) will be receiving an email or letter in the near future to ask you to confirm that you still require the service.

ONLINE SESSIONS TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND COMPLEXITIES OF CARE PLANNING

Somerset Council is holding a series of free, online webinars to help individuals plan care and support needs for themselves or those they care for. These informative sessions aim to provide valuable insights and practical advice on navigating the complexities of care planning.

Topics covered will include understanding your care options, financial planning, and how to access local support services. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance from professionals in the field.

You can register for the free events from the following page:-

Tuesday 4 February, 6.30pm – 8pm, Financial Assessments for Care Funding

Wednesday 12 February, 6.30pm – 7.15pm, Navigating Direct Payments

Wednesday 12 February, 7.15pm – 8pm, Supporting the Armed Forces community in Somerset

Thursday 27 February, 6.30pm – 7.15pm, Personalised Community Support for Carers in Somerset

Thursday 27 February, 7.15pm – 8pm, Understanding how Adult Social Care works

DEFRA SCRAPS ENGLAND DEADLINE TO REGISTER THOUSANDS OF MILES OF RIGHTS OF WAY.

The deadline for registering historic rights of way is to be scrapped.

The last government set a deadline of 2031 for all rights of way in England to be added to an official map. The new government has now said it will repeal this new deadline when parliamentary time allows.

Once recorded as rights of way and added to the definitive map, paths are protected under the law for people to use. In an announcement timed to mark the traditional Boxing Day stroll by many people, the

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced it would remove the registration deadline.

GUIDANCE FOR REPORTING SAFETY ISSUES ON SOMERSETS ROADS

A quick and simple online reporting service is available 24/7. It's the best way to report any problems spotted on our county's roads – including snow and ice issues. This can be used to report non-urgent incidents both during hours and out of hours at the weekend

You can also report a hazard on the road using this online form, including items or obstructions such as rubbish, tyres or blown/displaced traffic cones.

How do I report an urgent incident that's a safety risk at the weekend, or outside normal working hours?

To report an urgent out-of-hours highways issue that's a risk to public safety, please call Somerset Lifeline 0300 123 2224.

There is a dedicated call centre resource to deal with out-of-hours highways matters. Operators will notify the highways duty officer if appropriate, and they will take any necessary action.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If the hazard is on the M5, A303 or A36 please contact National Highways 0300 123 5000.

Gritting/salt spreading – this is the link to the roads that are salted in Somerset.

Parishes interested in additional winter service provision should contact the Kier Community Engagement Manager direct. - Email: somerset@kier.co.uk

Council's financial position: Somerset Council's request to raise the Council Tax above the 4.9% cap has been approved by Government. This is the only such increase for any County authority and sits alongside only five other requests across the Country including the already bankrupt Birmingham City Council. The Council declared a financial emergency in November 2023 and was only able to set a balanced budget in February 2024 by agreeing to significant savings, job cuts and the sale of both commercial investments and surplus land and property (estimated by Officers at £50m). The council is already reliant on reducing its workforce to balance its budget for the 2025/26 financial year - with staff redundancies accounting for £34m out of a total of £47m in planned savings. But rising costs and demand for services, have left the council with a further expected budget gap of £66m. The increase over and above the Council Tax cap will go some way to filling the gap but it is likely the government will still have to agree to Somersets request to extend its capitalisation directive - which allows the council to use the proceeds from selling off land, property and other publicly-owned assets to fund day-to-day spending on public services.

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