

## Update on the Boundary Commission Review for Somerset.

**The deadline for stage 1 of phase 2 of the consultation was extended by the Boundary Commission (at the request of Somerset Council) to 4 March 2025. Somerset Council's submission was agreed at the Constitution and Governance Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March for submission by the deadline on the following day.**

**This is the link to the submission papers –**

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=7579>

Supplement 1 - Appendix A has the details of the proposed structure of electoral divisions. The overall electorate of Somerset, based on the projected 2030 figures is 467,274; the target figure for 96 divisions per member was 4,867, and the Council has endeavoured largely to stay within 10% of that figure.

More information about the review can be found here: - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>

### Timeline Moving Forward

3 June 2025 - 11 August 2025	Public consultation on the proposals
2 December 2025	Publication of the recommendations
TBC	Ask Parliament to approve our recommendations
2027	New arrangements apply to local elections

### Somerset Recycling sites Now Operating on Spring/Summer Hours.

All 16 of Somerset Council's recycling sites have reverted to their spring/summer opening schedule on 1 April. Sites will be open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm at the weekend.

Opening days vary across sites midweek, however all sites are open on a Saturday and Sunday.

Residents wishing to take their waste to the recycling site can check online at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/find-your-nearest-recycling-centre/> for opening days.

Materials accepted at recycling sites will vary, residents can check ahead before they visit as there are queue cameras at Bridgwater (Saltlands) and Highbridge, - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/recycling-site-queue-cams/>

**Somerset Council Lib Dem Administration is One of Only 6 English Councils to have been given permission for an increase above the 4.99% Council Tax Cap – Approving a 7.5% Council Tax increase In addition to needing government support to close this years remaining gap of £43m.**

The £43m budget gap will be bridged using a Capitalisation Direction which is a form of one-off assistance (that was also requested last year) offered by Government which allows the Council to continue to sell off assets or borrow money in order to use the proceeds to fund this years budget gap for day-to-day running costs.

The Council also applied to the Government for financial support and whilst it asked for permission for a 22.84% increase in Council Tax, **it has been allowed to increase Council Tax by 7.5%.** This sees a band D property paying an additional £129 a year. For many homes in Somerset this will be in addition to very large increases in some Town and Parish elements of the Council Tax including an annual increase of £111.73 (Band D) in Bridgwater making it one of the most expensive in the country.

### **Somerset Council's new and increased car parking charges spark outrage and despair.**

The Liberal Democrat run Somerset Council have announced their intention to introduce a new parking policy that will see residents across the county pay more for parking. At the Executive Meeting on 3 March it resolved to

- EXPAND Sunday charges covering the whole county.
- NEW on-street parking charges – e.g. parking bays/Blue Anchor

### **Following considerable challenge from Councillors it was decided to not proceed with NEW overnight charges.**

So what happens next - these proposals have been supported by the Councils Executive and they are all now subject to a formal consultation process.

Once resources have been secured the draft parking orders will be prepared – it is anticipated that this will happen in May with bespoke notices being produced for each location with specific changes being identified. This will provide more of the detail.

The public 6 week statutory consultation will then follow, possibly commencing in mid to late May. This will be followed by a review of the responses to determine whether they can proceed as planned or whether changes, including mitigations are needed. The decision will then be made as to whether to proceed or not. The final decision will then be made by the Executive possibly during August or September – dates yet to be confirmed.

### **Somerset Council is undertaking a formal review into the local government and electoral arrangements for Langport and Huish Episcopi.**

The Community Governance Review (CGR) has been triggered following a valid petition from people living in both existing local council areas, calling for the current local councils to be dissolved in favour of a single parish, in the interests of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The review will start by consulting key stakeholders including the MP for Glastonbury, the elected members for the Curry Rivel and Langport divisions at Somerset Council, Huish Episcopi Parish



Council and Langport Town Council. Issues that will be considered as part of the review include the number of new councillors for the new parish council and whether it should be divided into wards.

Final recommendations are due to be considered by Somerset Council this autumn, with implementation of the decision to be effective from April 2027. Anyone wishing to make written representations on the review should do so via email at [cgr@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:cgr@somerset.gov.uk).

### **FREE Drop in Events for Somersets Unpaid Carers.**

Unpaid carers in Somerset were invited to join Somerset Council, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and Community Council for Somerset (CCS) for a series of drop-in sessions throughout 2025.

The first of the series took place on Monday 31 March at Minehead Eye in Minehead. Anyone who is looking after someone else in an unpaid capacity is welcome to come along to these free events, even if they are receiving Carers Allowance.

Future dates will be announced - events will include a series of free seminars on a range of topics which cover areas frequently asked about by unpaid carers, including Lasting Power of Attorney, Direct Payments, Finances, and Guardianship. Adult Social Care staff will be present to help guide unpaid carers through questions they might have. Other organisations will also be there to give free information and advice, including:

- **Alzheimer's Society,**
- **Healthwatch,**
- **Medequip,**
- **Age UK Somerset,**
- **Citizen's Advice and more.**

**Somerset Council is introducing support and improvements to bus services across the county following confirmation of a new £6 million tranche of Government funding for 2025/26.**

Initiatives under Somerset's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) will incorporate improved services for Yeovil and Bridgwater including evening journeys, continued evening services for Taunton and on-going support for vital bus routes across Somerset including in Frome, Dulverton and Wiveliscombe.

In line with bus priority measures at traffic signals in Taunton, similar schemes are to be rolled out in Yeovil and Bridgwater. These will help buses avoid delays and should help ensure timetabled stops are more reliable.

Taunton's Park and Ride fare will remain £1 for a single journey as part of the package.

With the end of the £1.50 fare trial in Taunton on 31 March, bus users are encouraged to check operators websites for up-to-date fares. The government's £3 national fare initiatives continues until 31 Dec 2025.

More about local bus improvement measures across Somerset can be found using this link:-

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-unveils-major-package-of-bus-service-improvement-measures/>



**Somerset County has published major new plans for safe cycling and walking routes in the county's towns to help create greener, healthier and more active streets.**

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Wellington, Chard, Burnham and Highbridge have been published.

The Council has already created and published plans for Yeovil, Taunton, Bridgwater and Frome.

The **LCWIPs** are focused, 10-year plans for developing a cycle and walking network within each local area. The aim is to secure funding over the next decade for significant new safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians across all Somerset's towns.

You can access and comment on the area plans via the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans page - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans/>

These are evolving plans which will continue to develop over time, with the views and suggestions from the public central to the process.

Having a plan in place is key to unlocking Government funding to build the infrastructure and enable people in Somerset to choose to walk or cycle to work, school, the shops or for other short trips for the benefit of people's health and the environment.

Expanding the active travel network is an essential part of Somerset Council's strategy for developing sustainable transport. The Council has worked closely with Local Community Networks, cycling charities and local cycling groups to develop the plans.

## Somerset Tree Planting Register

Somerset Council published a 10 year Tree Strategy in June 2023 to enhance and protect Somerset trees and woodland across the county.

Amongst its ambitious aims, the strategy sets out a plan for planting 240 hectares of new trees and woodlands each year across the county until 2033.

From Somerset's famous apple orchards to Exmoor's mighty oaks, the aim is to increase the county's tree coverage from its current 8% to the national average of 13% and more if possible.

We know there are many groups, farmers, residents, organisations and businesses that are involved in planting trees and hedgerows, so it's important that we record and celebrate their efforts.

By mapping your tree planting, it will help us to know if the county is on target to meet its important planting goals.

Why your views matter - We are building a map of new tree planting across Somerset. We would like to hear about tree planting activities you are involved with, to allow us to measure the increase of Somerset's tree coverage and recognise the collective efforts of the people of Somerset. **Closes 31 Jan 2033**