

**Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

**Issue 138 Weeks ending 29/01/2023**

**SWT Council’s priority strategic themes and outcomes**

Somerset West and Taunton Council’s four strategic themes are as follows:

* Our Environment and Economy
* A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
* Homes and Communities
* An Enterprising Council

[Click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/corporate-strategy/) to view SWT’s expected outcomes.

**Key Messages this week**

1. **Green Space transferred to Wellington Town Council**

SWT has purchased 62.5 acres of green space adjoining the Tonedale Mill complex and connecting Tonedale, Rockwell Green and Wellington.

The land, bought using Community Infrastructure Levy funds, has been transferred to Wellington Town Council on a 150-year lease along with Fox’s Field which was acquired by SWT in January 2021 following its designation as an Asset of Community Value.

It will allow the community greater access to green space in Wellington with opportunities for long term enhancements including ecological and wellbeing initiatives.

Wellington Town Council will manage the land and work with local community groups on future uses and the development of the green space into a community asset.

The Town Council has established an Advisory Board consisting of local interested community groups and one of its first tasks will be to hold a community consultation over the autumn which will inform the development of a long-term strategy and management plan for the land.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/green-space-transferred-to-wellington-town-council/) to read the full press release.

1. **Democracy and Governance**

**Committee Meetings**

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all SWT [Committee meetings](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/council-meetings/). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

* **SCC Constitution and Governance Committee – Monday 30 January 2023,** at 10:00am in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website.](http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=449&MId=1690) (This meeting will consider the new constitution for Somerset Council, committee structures and arrangements for Local Community Networks).
* **SWT Tenants Strategic Group – Monday 30 January 2023,** at 6.00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=435&MId=3161).
* **SCC LGR Implementation Board – Tuesday 31 January,** at 2.00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=454&MId=1697).
* **Taunton Shadow Town Council – Tuesday 31January 2023,** at 6:00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=470&MId=3168). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 27 January.
* **Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Panel – Wednesday 1 February,** at 10:00am in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website.](http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=355&MId=1572)
* **SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 1 February 2023**, at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website.](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=454&MId=3073) Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 30 January.
* **SWT Planning Committee – Thursday 2 February 2023,** at 1.00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=330&MId=3121). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Tuesday 31 January.
* **SWT Full Council – Tuesday 7 February 2023,** at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=3040&x=1). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 3 February.

Meetings in the JMR will be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences, please visit the SWT website by [clicking here](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Please see the dateslisted above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements. Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT [website](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/speaking-at-a-council-meeting/).

1. **SWT intervenes to safeguard historic water towers**

SWT has taken direct action to protect two Grade II\* listed water towers at Rockwell Green, near Wellington.

Work to secure the perimeter of the site and to safely remove overgrown vegetation that threatened the historic fabric of the towers commenced Monday, 16 January.

SWT undertook the work in default following inaction by the current owner to maintain the site. SWT has engaged with the owner since 2021 and was compelled to serve an amenity order under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in November last year.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-intervenes-to-safeguard-historic-water-towers/) to read the full press release.

1. **Notice of drainage works at Wellington Park**

SWT is now carrying out drainage works at [Wellington Park](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-in-wellington/wellington-park/).

The work will take approximately five days to complete and will involve relining sections of the foul drains between Wellington Park Lodge and the septic tank in Wellington Recreation Field.

The public toilets in the park will close intermittently during this time.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/notice-of-drainage-works-at-wellington-park/) to read the full press release.

1. **Street Trading Consultation**

Local authorities have the power to allow or ban ‘street trading’ in the areas they are responsible for. ‘Street trading’ is defined in law as ‘the selling or exposing or offering for sale of any article (including a living thing) in a street. A ‘street’ includes roads, footways, beaches and other areas which the public have access without having to pay.

Before the formation of SWT, both West Somerset District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council made decisions allow street trading, subject to the granting of consents. Each Council adopted a policy to describe the how the authority would determine applications for consents. These policies have continued to govern how street trading is treated in the two former Council areas.

SWT is proposing to replace the two existing policies with one policy for the Somerset West and Taunton area, which would remain in force until such time as Somerset Council adopts a policy of its own. It is not yet known when how soon that might be, so it is important that our area has a policy that is fit for purpose until then.

The Council is carrying out a consultation on the proposed policy which closes on the 7 March 2023. Please [click here](https://yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/licensing/street-trading-policy/?fbclid=IwAR19uZxdEdc6Ucv8NS8g0bXAy59sH8B6F6ykZYu3Ss4KH63xyPQJIhQAxD8) to find out more information.

1. **Reminder - Wellington Place Plan consultation has begun**

The public consultation on the Draft Place Plan for Wellington started on Monday 23 January 2023 giving residents and businesses a chance to have their say on how they think the town should look in the future.

Members of the public are now being invited to contribute to the statutory consultation which aims to identify possible areas for growth while allowing Wellington to retain its unique sense of place.

The consultation runs for four weeks from **23 January until 20 February** and can be found at [yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/](https://yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/). SWT is also holding drop-in sessions at the Pop-Up Shop in Wellington (31 Fore St, Wellington, TA21 8AG) on the following dates:

* Tuesday, 31 January, 3:00pm to 7:00pm,
* Wednesday, 8 February, 3:00pm to 7:00pm,
* Thursday, 16 February, 3:00pm to 7:00pm.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/wellington-place-plan-consultation-set-to-begin/) to read the full press release.

1. **Reminder - SWT to unveil spectacular Dragon Sculpture**

SWT will be unleashing the “Taunton Dragon” in Taunton High Street on Saturday 11 February 2023.

The spectacular 4-metre-high public art sculpture created by local chainsaw artist [Matthew Crabb](https://en-gb.facebook.com/matthewcrabbsculpturestudio/), will be unveiled by the Mayor of Taunton, Cllr Sue Lees, and the Chair of SWT, Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-to-unveil-spectacular-dragon-sculpture/) to read the full press release.

1. **Free “Meet the Experts” event for food and drink businesses**

SWT and Sedgemoor District Councils have teamed up to organise a series of events specifically designed for businesses in the food and drink sector.

The next event is “Meet the Experts food and drink workshops” at J25 Holiday Inn on **Thursday, 9 February 2023, between 10am and 1pm on a drop-in basis.**

Businesses will have the opportunity to attend expert and industry specialist workshops – Photography, Intellectual Property, Allergens Food Labelling and procurement – but these need to be booked in advance via the councils [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/meet-the-experts-event-1529759) page.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/free-meet-the-experts-event-for-food-and-drink-businesses/) to read the full press release.

1. **Town/Parish Councillors and Clerks Training**

Two free sessions remain for Town/Parish Councillors and Clerks who wish to attend training on:

* Standards Regime including Code of Conduct & Interests​
* Somerset Code of Conduct​
* Social Media and pitfalls to avoid​
* Recording of Council meetings
* Confidentiality
* Being a Councillor versus being an individual
* Disrespect versus freedom of speech
* Public perception and risk

These sessions will take place online and the dates are:-

* **Thursday 9 February at 6pm**
* **Wednesday 8 March at 6pm**

Please circulate this information to all your Parish Councillors. To book a place, and to be sent the link to the session please email monitoringofficer@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

1. **Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)**

**Somerset switches on to repair and reuse**

**Somerset’s Fixy project is successfully switching more people on to the idea of repair and reuse of electricals, a survey has found.**

**More than 90% of Fixy event attendees who completed the survey said they were ‘very’ or ‘quite’ likely’ to get something repaired for reuse.**

**More than 60% said they felt better informed about how and where to** get things fixed, and **more than half that they now think more about buying refurbished or second-hand items.**

**With the Fixy van visiting many more communities in the coming weeks, Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) wants everyone to make 2023 the year they love their stuff for longer.**

**Fixy is a granted-funded initiative run by SWP and Resource Futures encouraging people to consider repair and reuse, particularly when it comes to technology and electricals.**

**It supports and promotes Somerset’s fantastic network of volunteer-led repair groups, attending repair events to provide practical help with tools, spares and safety testing.**

**At other events it bangs the drum of repair and reuse, sharing information about the local opportunities and encouraging volunteers.**

**Fixy also runs ‘tech amnesties’ - collecting unwanted tech items at events and from businesses.**

**Thanks to project partner DonateIT, donated items are data wiped, refurbished** and passed on to school children, refugees, elderly and isolated people, helping address the digital divide. Items that cannot be fixed are recycled responsibly.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/somerset-switches-on-to-repair-and-reuse/) to read the full press release.

You can check collection days for now and the rest of the year using the online My Collection Day feature [somersetwaste.gov.uk.](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/)

Download a calendar for printing or, better still, download it into the calendar on your device and get automatic reminders of your collection days.

Snow, ice and freezing temperatures can disrupt collections so please bear with SWP in the event of severe weather. Crews will return as soon as possible for any missed collections. If conditions are bad they may not be able to meet their usual ‘return in two days’ target.

For information on the repair cafés and Fixy reuse van, see: [somersetwaste.gov.uk/share-and-repair](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fsomersetwaste.gov.uk%2Fshare-and-repair%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2dCaq9h4OkMHVGCgw7xajk6aZHquyajj8mO5oF1wdxDVi_YOGL6Co5Z8w&h=AT1xKgFoQdEG0X026XnzWUhz5vk1OODvGWet1-kq0L-NOn6ZvmA2DMMkKZ7wdPjIgCBt9KTj9iIIFdyjR-Wn0rlzO-38TzwbauWTaI42fsO0yBEEpiYCXI7KbFttayWJFw&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT3zScXuyg6TPHK5hxzYzBRVNwGVK3mOTBgmErhTS0eQpnH68zXrEbuVMH4QAM9vru1uBkeHG3eC_7vB1cMEm-Rsvmy5kRzxFQ9mYCHzYVTHMwF1bJZA9rDQ4gK6Hk7oswYVCI2uYZHv4BWAkz24QJ5APkTsBBGy_lXBy4fi6GjstxeQJx1ksFwz-RTUGKAYlRUoDoOS_M8HNg).

**New Somerset Council**

**Latest news**

**Somerset unitary plan praised by Local Government Association**

An expert team from the Local Government Association (LGA) has commended work to create a new unitary council on 1 April this year. The new Somerset Council will replace Somerset County Council and the four district councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset).

The team, including leading figures from local government around the country, reviewed the unitary plan and concluded that ‘everything is in place to ensure that Somerset Council will be a safe and legally functioning body from day 1, assuming the current progress and leadership is maintained.’

The report recommends that the council team begin to focus more on achieving the ambitions of the new council after it is launched. The reviewers advised that it will take time to unlock all the benefits of having a single unitary council and that long-term plans, for the next five years and beyond, should be developed.

The Local Government Association Peer Review of Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset, is available [here.](https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Somerset-Pre-LGR-peer-challenge-final-report.pdf)

Please [click here](https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk/somerset-unitary-plan-praised-by-local-government-association/) to read the full press release.

**Business mentors needed to help Somerset thrive**

An ambitious mentoring programme is being launched to make the expertise of the county’s most knowledgeable business-people available to businesses across Somerset.

Twenty mentors are being recruited to join the programme in its initial stage, where they will receive free mentor training. Executive and senior management level business leaders, successful entrepreneurs or business consultants, who understand the challenges associated with running and growing a business and the value of impartial advice, are being encouraged to get in touch.

Potential mentors might offer sector experience or a specialism such as finance, marketing, HR or e-commerce; and above all, have a desire to make a difference.

The project has been funded by Somerset’s five councils (Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council) and a proportion of the Business Rates Retention Pilot programme. This allows councils in Somerset to retain a proportion of the business rates income locally to invest in developing the economy and improving the way local authority services are delivered. Those trained and funded under the Somerset Business Mentoring Programme will need to deliver 12 hours of mentoring support in Somerset to businesses, social enterprises and/or charities. They will also be identified on the SCC Business Mentoring website.

Please [click here](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-and-economy/somerset-business-mentoring-programme/) to read the full press release.

**City, Town and Parish Council Working Group – You are welcome to attend!**

Did you know that the LCN Team hold fortnightly catchups exclusively for Clerks and Chairs from across Somerset?

Simply drop an email to LCN@somerset.gov.uk with your name and contact details, placing *‘C, T&PC Working Group’* in the subject title.

The team understand the timing won’t suit everyone all the time, so they will distribute the meeting minutes to you once you are signed-up.

**Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas**.

**Environment Agency**

**Somerset Flooding threat is no longer a major incident**

The Environment Agency and the local authorities in Somerset have removed the major incident status declared last week as flood risk in the county has reduced.

A major incident was declared on 17 January as a precautionary move to coordinate partners as the threat of flood increased. With enhanced pumping and recent dry weather, water levels have reduced on the Somerset Levels and Moors and it has been decided by Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum that the precaution is no longer needed.

Please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/somerset-flooding-threat-is-no-longer-a-major-incident?fbclid=IwAR2Au98aSfcD_vnixXapWtTodBquavn_KsvB6m-L_7FGZytkq_d5TbeCbVA) to read the full press release.

**Somerset County Council (SCC)**

**A361 reopens after clear-up operation as flood is reduced**

The A361 across the Somerset Levels has now reopened after a successful clear-up operation following recent flooding.

A significant stretch of the road had been flooded since last week with emergency road closure gates at Burrowbridge and East Lyng locked shut to keep people safe.

On Tuesday 24 January, the gates were reopened and traffic allowed through following safety inspections and work to remove debris and ice from the road surface. Temporary lights remain in place around a layby close to East Lyng where there is frozen mud.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/01/24/a361-reopens-after-clear-up-operation-as-flood-is-reduced/) to read the full press release.

**Cliff-top B3191 Cleeve Hill closed**

The B3191 Cleeve Hill, near Watchet, remains closed to all road users in the interests of public safety.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/01/12/cliff-top-b3191-cleeve-hill-closed/) to read the full press release.

**SCC Highways maintenance update**

A very busy couple of weeks for the gangs, ranging from flood works on the Somerset Levels to very low temperatures. Whilst there is still a lot of water seepage from fields and hedgerows, SCC gritters have been out salting the roads on the Primary Network up to 3 times per day. Thankfully the weather should be calmer this week and this will allow the gangs to catch up on safety works. The A361 from Taunton to Glastonbury is now fully open as the flooding subsided considerably last week.

SCC Safety Defects numbers are rising fast due to the freeze/thaw actions on the road causing potholes, therefore the planned work programmes may be pushed back slightly this week whilst the teams catch up.

Our Contractors gangs have successfully repaired 318 safety defects this week with 186 in Taunton Area and 132 in West Somerset which is a huge number!

If you spot any issues on the roads this week please don’t hesitate to report it to SCC on [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.somerset.gov.uk%2Froads-and-transport%2Freport-a-problem-on-the-road%2F&data=05%7C01%7CKBridgwater%40somerset.gov.uk%7Cd61da1cdb9a44cb9588d08da7c419bec%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637958918474690610%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZwOZVJjRrldn9GajUWJR5Po7rSJKXpEnNDks1voefYw%3D&reserved=0)or call **0300 123 2224.**

For information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/search?q=%40TravelSomerset&src=recent_search_click) on Twitter.

The current planned SCC Highways works programmed for the week commencing **30 January 2023** (subject to change due to weather) are as follows:

**30 January 2023**

* **Bircham Road, Minehead** 15 days Works to improve walking and cycling facilities from West Somerset Community College to Marsh Street including: carriageway narrowing, bus stop reconfiguration, the introduction of tactile crossings and drainage, construction of a new traffic island, relocation of street lighting columns, installation of new signage/lining along the entire length.
* **Bishops Lydeard Bypass** 10 days Removal of dangerous trees.
* **Trenchard Way, Taunton** 81 days Construction of new access road to development, footway and carriageway improvements and any other associated works.
* **Whiteball Road, Sampford Arundel** 10 days Drainage Works
* **Oake Road, Bradford on Tone** 5 daysOn behalf of SCC: Repairs to damaged masonry structure.
* **Chestnut Drive, Taunton** 3 daysSD Patching
* **Wickes Roundabout, Taunton** 2 days Jetting Works prior to resurfacing work later this year
* **Roadwater to White Horse Inn, Old Cleeve** 2 days Replacement of sign ‘B’.
* **Summerland Avenue, Minehead** 2 days Replacement of Street Lighting unit (PL7).
* **Mill Lane, Brushford** 1 day Jetting Works.
* **Dorchester Road, Taunton** 5 days Road crossings and excavation in footpaths to allow for new hv cable to be laid.

**31 January 2023**

* **Broad Lane, North Curry** 1 day Resurfacing.
* **Wiveliscombe Road, Preston Bowyer** 1 day Jetting Works.

**1** **February 2023**

* **Compass Hill, Taunton** 2 days Jetting Works.
* **South Molton Road, Wiveliscombe** 1 day Jetting Works.

**2 February 2023**

* **Silk Mills Lane, Staplegrove** 2 daysJetting works for resurfacing works

**Reporting a problem on the road**

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you’ve reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here  [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/)

The new development means that if you’re reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it’s safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You’ll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2021/12/13/reporting-a-problem-on-the-road-is-now-a-hole-lot-easier/) to read the full press release.

**Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**

**Evening bus services get underway**

Evening bus services on some key routes in Somerset begin running from next week, (Monday, 30 January 2023).

SCC is subsidising evening services from Monday to Saturday connecting Taunton with the towns of Minehead, Bridgwater, Wellington and Chard after 8pm and running to at least 10.30pm. Currently most of the services stop between 8-8.30pm.

The evening bus proposals are part of Somerset’s Government-funded Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which aims to increase bus patronage by introducing a number of important initiatives.

From 5 December a £1 fare became effective for any single bus journey in Taunton, and further measures are planned under the BSIP in the coming months.

Please [click here](https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/bus/bus-it-you-know-it-makes-sense/) to read the full press release.

**Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA)**

**Have your say on Exmoor’s Heritage**

What are your favourite places on Exmoor? Exmoor National Park are appealing to locals and visitors to share the sites they think deserve recognition.

Thousands of years of history have shaped Exmoor’s settlements and landscapes. Whether a little hamlet, a bridge across a moorland stream, a favourite standing stone or deserted sheep fold in a secret combe, a war memorial or even distinctive old gate posts at the end of a lane. What is important to you?

In 2020 Somerset and Exmoor were one of 22 areas across England to receive government funding to launch a local heritage campaign. The campaign encourages communities to nominate locally important buildings and sites for inclusion on a Local Heritage List (LHL).

Local Heritage Lists are one way in which local heritage – buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, historic parks and gardens or other designed landscapes – can be formally identified and their significance considered in local plans and planning applications, which might the building or site or its setting. Being on the Local Heritage List can also help to highlight historic importance to grant giving bodies.

Please [click here](https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Have-your-say-on-Exmoor-s-Heritage.html?soid=1102765974837&aid=ZHEp9lWZdds) to read the full press release.

**Quantock Hills (AONB)**

**Winter Newsletter – Issue 18 now available**

The latest Quantock Hill newsletter is now available to view [online](https://www.facebook.com/quantock.hills/photos/pcb.5552078311567626/5552078164900974).

Please [click here](https://www.quantockhills.com/) to visit the website and subscribe for future issues.

**Community Support – What help is out there?**

**Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

**Taunton Chamber of Commerce**

**Young Business Group Launches for 2023**

**Wednesday 1 February 6:30 – 8:30pm at CICCIC**

Do you work at a Taunton business, run your own local business or study in Taunton? Are you under 30? Then this relaxed launch event for a brand-new local business group for young people is for you!

T﻿his is a FREE event, including your first drink at the bar, but everyone is asked to book a ticket so the organisers have an understanding of numbers. The event is open to all and you don't need to have any association with Taunton Chamber.

Please [click here](https://mailchi.mp/7b0d68776af5/young-business-group) to register your place.

**Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)**

**How to save energy in your community building**

If you run, lease or own a community building like a scout hut, village hall, community association building, or even a local church, you’re probably thinking about the rising cost of energy bills and how this is going to impact how your building is used.

At the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), we’re already hearing of communities forced to make [difficult decisions to close buildings or limit activities](https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/sep/07/community-groups-will-close-without-energy-bill-help-liz-truss-warned) because they can’t afford energy bills. These community hubs are important places where local people come together to socialise, learn, access key services, stay warm and access affordable food.

We’re facing a tough winter across the UK with the rising cost of living and spiralling cost of energy. And [even with new financial support from central government](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers), this isn’t enough to keep some community buildings warm.

Please [click here](https://www.cse.org.uk/news/view/2717) to read the full press release.

**Somerset Community Foundation**

**Intergenerational workshops create understanding and compassion thanks to funding from HPC Community Fund**

Hundreds of young people in education and older people in residential care across Somerset West and Taunton and Sedgemoor have taken part in inclusion and equity workshops delivered by the charity State of Trust. The workshops were funded by a grant for almost £50,000 from the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund, which is managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF).

State of Trust is a small local charity based in Taunton. It builds social cohesion using the arts as a tool to bring communities together and develop relationships through the common language of music and dance.

Following the delivery of the workshops, State of Trust left continuity plans for further sessions for the schools to carry on, cementing the legacy of this work and helping students to see events and people from different perspectives without fear or prejudice.

The HPC Community Fund’s Open Grants Programme is for larger applications for community funding, typically over £10,000. It is an ongoing programme with decisions on Expressions of Interest made quarterly. **The next deadline is Wednesday 29 March**. Visit [www.hpcfunds.co.uk](http://www.hpcfunds.co.uk/) for more details. If you would like to discuss your project or idea please contact Amelia Thompson, Senior Programmes Manager: amelia.thompson@somersetcf.org.uk or call: 01749 344949

Please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/3029-2) to read the full press release.

**Surviving Winter appeal reaches £1 million milestone for local pensioners**

SCF is pleased to announce that their 2022/23 Surviving Winter appeal has raised an incredible £150,000 so far, thanks to the generosity of local donors – which pushes total donations to over £1,000,000 since Surviving Winter was first launched in 2010.

The annual appeal encourages pensioners to donate some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment, if they don’t need it themselves. These donations provide funding and support to older people across Somerset who are struggling to heat their homes – or living in fuel poverty.

The SCF team and their charity partners have been busy distributing Surviving Winter grants of up to £500 across the county and have already supported over 300 people in need since November, helping to keep them warm, safe and well.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/surviving-winter-appeal-reaches-1000000-milestone-for-local-pensioners) to read the full press release.

**Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP)**

**Happy Healthy Holidays Winter 2022**

Kids and teens eligible for free school meals were able to access a range of holiday clubs and camps across Somerset over the winter holidays, thanks to the Happy Healthy Holidays programme.

The programme is delivered by SASP with funding from SCC and offers school-aged children and teenagers eligible for free school meals the opportunity to attend free activities during the school holidays, which include healthy food and education about healthy eating.

In the cost-of-living crisis, Happy Healthy Holidays is providing vital support to low-income families by offering a warm space for children and teenagers to make friends, be physically active and eat a nutritious hot meal for free.

The next Happy Healthy Holidays provision will run over the Easter holidays. More information will be added closer to the time on the [Happy Healthy Holidays website](https://www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays).

**Rural Services Network (RSN)**

**Rural cost of living survey**

The Rural Services Network (RSN) in partnership with the Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group has launched a Rural Cost of Living Household Survey. They’ve had 3,000 responses so far but would like more and are hoping our communities can help. The survey will run until the 31 March 2023.

Independent[research](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/publications/rural-cost-of-living.pdf) commissioned by the RSN in summer last year shows rural areas are suffering more acutely from the cost of living crisis compared to urban areas.

To lend more weight to the argument for more funding for rural areas the RSN is calling on as many rural residents as possible to complete a Rural Cost of Living Household Survey.

The purpose of the survey is to understand more about rural household budgets at, what is, a very difficult time for many.

Research has shown that those living in rural areas face extra costs and the RSN now want to explore the impacts for households.

Please [click here](https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/suffering-from-the-rural-cost-of-living-make-your-thoughts-known-in-household-survey) to read the full press release, and participate in the survey.

**Spark**

**The Warm Welcome Somerset Map is now live!**

As many of you will know, Spark Somerset has been working with community partners to develop a network and online map of Warm Welcome spaces for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Spark are delighted to announce that the Warm Welcome map is now live and you can view it at [http://warmwelcomesomerset.org.uk?mc\_cid=1293684b4e&mc\_eid=UNIQID](http://warmwelcomesomerset.org.uk/?mc_cid=1293684b4e&mc_eid=UNIQID).

You can use the map to locate a Warm Welcome space, find out when it's open and what facilities are on offer. Please share it far and wide so that even more people can find the warmth, company and support they need this winter, and beyond.

If you would like to add your group or venue to the map, please visit <https://sparksomerset.org.uk/warm-welcome?mc_cid=1293684b4e&mc_eid=UNIQID> where you will find the registration form and a whole host of information to help you set up, run or fund your Warm Welcome space. Spark are continuously updating this page so please return regularly to see what's new!

Finally, Spark would like to say like to say a big thank you to everyone who has signed up to offer a Warm Welcome so far - over 70 spaces and counting!

**Community Buildings - Become a warm space this winter!**

If your facility or group would like to host a warm space for anyone who will struggle to keep their heating on this Winter. Please [click here](https://ccslovesomerset.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Warm-Spaces-Funding-Directory-1.pdf) to view the new Warm Spaces funding list.

**Health and Welfare**

**SCC Public Health**

**Make sure you get your winter vaccinations**

With winter upon us, Somerset residents are being reminded to protect their health and the health of people around them by getting their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Covid and flu vaccinations are safe and effective ways to prevent serious illness.

If you're 50 and over, a frontline health or social care worker, pregnant, have a long-term health condition, or are a paid or unpaid carer, you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, and you can likely get the COVID-19 seasonal booster. Children aged 2-15 years old are also eligible for free flu vaccination, which is delivered through either their GP for pre-school and school for school age children – parents need to sign a consent form.

**Vaccinations**

**COVID-19**

If you are eligible, you can book your seasonal COVID-19 vaccine using the [online booking service](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/) by calling 119 or finding a [local vaccination walk-in site](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site?fbclid=IwAR07orCoa6T-JY6pEaPwFZqxiz3LV3qAJ1by_63c3nzAynPwRAhc30-ijg8).

If you have not yet had your earlier doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, it’s not too late to come forward and you can get these at any time.

Getting both vaccines is important because more people are likely to get the flu this winter, and you're more likely to be seriously ill if you get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

A number of clinics across Somerset are also open for walk-ins. More details can be found at [COVID-19 and Flu vaccinations in Somerset - NHS Somerset](https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/covid-and-flu-vaccines/).

[The vaccination page](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-vaccinations/) now provides more overall strategic vision of how the vaccination programme has been implemented and provides an indication of the effective level of immunity provided to our community by boosters and third doses.

The current version of the dashboard can be accessed at any time[here](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/).

**Influenza**

In Somerset, we are seeing an increase in hospitalisations from flu, and lots are younger than you might think. Many people do not realise that they’re at risk of catching flu and being affected by complications such as pneumonia, so it really is important to get your jab to protect yourself and those around you.

The pressure from flu on our NHS continues to grow with the latest figures showing that cases in hospital are now more than seven times higher than last month.

You can help the NHS this winter by getting your flu vaccine. It is effective in stopping you getting seriously ill from the flu and means the NHS can stay focussed on helping people with other illnesses. If you get the flu vaccine, it can stop you from getting ill from flu meaning that you can keep doing the things you enjoy like going out and seeing friends.

[If you're eligible for a free flu vaccine](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI1MjEiLCIxbWRhbWxvZnRhbjRnb2d3ODRrZ2s0azhzOHdzd3c0YyIsIjE2MDciLCJhZTM5MDUxYTRjYzUiLGZhbHNlXQ), you can book an appointment at your GP surgery or a pharmacy that offers it on the NHS. You may also get an invitation to get the vaccine, but you do not have to wait for this before booking an appointment.

Everyone who is eligible for the free flu vaccine will be able to get it. If you have an appointment for a Covid-19 booster vaccine at a GP surgery or pharmacy, you may also be offered a flu vaccine at the same time.

Do not delay booking your flu vaccine appointment so that you can get both vaccines together. Only some people will be offered both vaccines at the same time.

Please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-who-should-have-it-this-winter-and-why) for more information about the Flu vaccination.

**Living safely with respiratory infections including COVID-19**

The [Government has published important advice](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io/?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI2NjM2IiwidHRzeGVycTFtamtrY29nMGtvOGcwZ2trODRvZ2t3YzAiLCIxNDE5IiwiMTA5MGQ5NzhlMTg5IixmYWxzZV0) for people with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test result and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, such as flu and protect those at highest risk.

Things you can choose to do are:

* Get vaccinated.
* Wear a face covering or a face mask.
* Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
* Stay at home if you have [symptoms](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI1MjEiLCIxbWRhbWxvZnRhbjRnb2d3ODRrZ2s0azhzOHdzd3c0YyIsIjE0MTciLCI3MDMyNWYxYzNmODEiLGZhbHNlXQ)
* Cover your coughs and sneezes
* Practise good hygiene:

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#what-to-do-if-you-have-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19-and-have-not-taken-a-covid-19-test) to read the guidance on what to do if you have symptoms but have not taken a test.

**Need to seek help?**

If you, or someone you know are feeling like things are too much, please know that you / they don’t have to be alone. Here are some numbers of organisations that can help:

* Samaritans - 116 123
* CALM - 0800 58 58 58
* ChildLine - 0800 1111
* Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
* Mindline Somerset – 01823 276892
* Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

**Crime / Safeguarding**

**Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

**Celebrating Neighbourhood Policing Week**

This week, ASP are celebrating the work of dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Teams, as part of national Neighbourhood Policing Week.

The week of action started on Monday 23 January and runs until Sunday 29 January and aims to highlight the vital work that neighbourhood officers, PCSOs and volunteers do to keep people safe.

Please [click here](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2023/01/celebrating-neighbourhood-policings-vital-role-in-keeping-communities-safe/) to read the full press release.

**Operation Tonic – 346 drink and drug arrests made**

ASP arrested 346 drivers for driving under the influence of drink and / or drugs during The National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC’s) Winter 2022 Drink and Drug Driving Operation. The operation ran between 21 November and 31 December.

Of these arrests, 278 were made in the month of December – a 13 per cent increase on the 246 arrests made in the equivalent period in 2021. This came despite police warnings and reminders that there is no safe way to drive under the influence of drink or drugs.

Drink driving accounted for 216 offences and drug driving for 130 offences, the latter seeing a dramatic increase on previous years’ figures of 39 (2021), 45 (2020) and 31 (2019).

The operation also resulted in many other road related offences being detected and dealt with, including speeding, no insurance, seatbelts, vehicle condition, possession of drugs, disqualified drivers, and a wanted person.

Please [click here](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2023/01/346-drink-and-drug-drive-arrests-in-winter-operation/) to read the full press release.

**For Neighbourhood Policing Updates…**

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

* [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspmineheadwestsomerset)
* [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspwellington)
* [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/ASPTaunton)
* [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspsedgemoor)
* [Rural Affairs Unit – Avon and Somerset Police.](https://www.facebook.com/aspruralaffairsunit)

**Finally**

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the Government.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter @swtcouncil.