

**Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

**Issue 143 Weeks ending 05/03/2023**

**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. **SWT supporting Empty Homes Week**

[National Empty Homes Week](https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/) is running from February 27 to March 5 this year and is an opportunity for local authorities, housing providers and community organisations to let people know about their work.

National Empty Homes Week aims to raise awareness of the waste of long-term empty homes, campaign for changes to national policy, provide advice for those seeking to bring empty homes back into use, and develop ideas for bringing long-term empty homes back into use for those in housing need.

It gives the Council a chance to demonstrate its commitment to tackling empty properties, which are often an eyesore and adversely affect the neighbourhood.

The Council provides encouragement and support to owners of empty homes, but also has measures for appropriate enforcement action, when necessary. In addition, loans of up to £30,000 (subject to terms and conditions) can be applied for with ‘Lendology’ a Social Enterprise Lender, working in partnership with SWT to provide council funded empty property loans to homeowners.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-supporting-empty-homes-week/) 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.

* **Become a Councillor Event – Tuesday 7 March 2023,** at 6.00pm in the JMR and Live Webcast. For more information, please see Item 3 below.
* **Town/Parish Councillors and Clerks Training – Wednesday 8 March via Zoom at 6pm.** A free online session for those who wish to attend covering a variety of topics including confidentiality, standards, code of conduct, social media pitfalls amongst others. To book a place and be sent a link to the session please email monitoringofficer@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.
* **SWT Audit and Governance Committee – Monday 13 March 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=455&MId=3032) Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 9 March.
* **SWT Executive Committee – Wednesday 15 March 2023,** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 13 March.
* **Taunton Charter Trustees – Thursday 16 March 2023,** at 6.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Tuesday 14 March 2023.
* **The Exmoor Area Panel – Thursday 16 March 2023,** at 7.00pm at The Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross, TA24 7DU.

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. **#MakeAChange - Become a Councillor**

Local people are being encouraged to find out more about becoming a councillor for the new [Taunton Town Council](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/taunton-parish-council/) at an information event on **7 March**.

The new council – the first grassroots council for Taunton in almost 50 years - will be formed on 1 April, giving residents in the county town more say in what happens locally.

Elections for 20 councillors representing 14 wards on the new council will be held on 4 May 2023.

SWT is hosting the event from 6.00pm-7.30pm at [Deane House](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/contact-us/council-offices/deane-house/), Taunton, for anyone interested in becoming a councillor, regardless of experience.

It will focus on the practicalities of being a councillor and give an opportunity for the public to discover exactly what that entails.

Newly appointed Town Clerk Donna Ford will be at the event which will also be attended by key council officers. There will be the chance to ask questions about what the role of a councillor involves and how to stand for election.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/makeachange-become-a-councillor/) to read the full press release.

1. **New bolt-on prize announced for Somerset West Lottery**

The Somerset West Lottery is now running the latest bolt-on prize draw.

Anyone buying one or more tickets between now and Saturday, 25 March, could win a trip to Centre Parcs for a sporty break, a relaxing weekend in the forest, or some time away with the family – courtesy of external lottery management company [Gatherwell](https://gatherwell.co.uk/).

Players need not do anything differently – their normal weekly ticket(s) will automatically enter the new bolt-on prize draw.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/new-bolt-on-prize-announced-for-somerset-west-lottery-players/) to read the full press release.

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

**Put Somerset Food Waste Week on your menu**

Have you got a great home-hack for storing food? A killer recipe for leftovers?

Share them next week as part of the first Somerset Food Waste Week - seven days devoted to promoting the reduction of food waste and recycling anything that’s left.

**Cutting out food waste is one the best ways to reduce your carbon footprint and last year more than 46,000 tonnes of the stuff was collected from our kerbside – roughly half of it in rubbish bins.**

Analysis in 2018 showed that 26% of the contents (by weight) of the average Somerset refuse bin was wasted food – a third of that could have been eaten and another third was thrown away still in its packaging.

**The awareness week starts on Monday, 6 March, when SWP will reveal the scale of Somerset’s carbon ‘foodprint’ to kick-off a week of sharing top tips and great advice for ways of wasting less.**

**Whether it’s buying better, understanding food labelling or making the most of your freezer, there are loads of simple ways to make a difference.**

**There will be a dedicated page of information and guidance on the** [SWP](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/) **website and plenty of posting on the @somersetwaste Facebook page.**

**On Wednesday, 8 March you can join SWP from 1.00-2.00pm for a live Facebook Q&A. They are joining the Community Council for Somerset Talking Café and will be there to answer all your food waste questions** <https://www.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/>

Throughout the week SWP will be encouraging Somerset to share its food waste reduction tips and leftover recipes through our Facebook page or by emailing recycle@somersetwaste.gov.uk

Anyone sharing an idea will be in with a chance of winning beeswax wraps to help with good home storage – made by the county’s own bees (with some help from the [Somerset Beekeepers Association](https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/)).

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 us in the event of severe weather. Crews will return as soon as possible for any missed collections. If conditions are bad we may not be able to meet our 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**

**Debate not Hate: Council supports bid to tackle abuse and intimidation against councillors**

Somerset’s new unitary council will take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors or officers and has pledged to uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate.

SCC’s last Full Council meeting took place on Wednesday 1 March and saw elected members from across all political parties voting to support a motion signing up the new Somerset Council -elected members and staff – to the Local Government Association’s Debate Not Hate campaign.

Please [click here](https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk/debate-not-hate-council-supports-bid-to-tackle-abuse-and-intimidation-against-councillors/) to read the full press release.

**New Constitution: Strategic with a local focus**

The new Constitution for Somerset Council, the legal cornerstone of the new unitary council, has been approved by Somerset County Council.  The ten-part document over 500 pages sets out the Council’s commitment to public participation in its meetings, makes sure that the council meets all its legal duties and supports decision-making and governance.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/23/new-constitution-strategic-with-a-local-focus/) to read the full press release.

**Have your say on new Somerset Council planning consultation process**

Somerset residents are being invited to have their say on the new Somerset Council’s approach to planning matters.

**The consultation will run until Thursday 16 March 2023**.

To view the current draft of the new Statement of Community Involvement and complete the survey, please visit [somerset.inconsult.uk/sci/consultationHome](https://somerset.inconsult.uk/sci/consultationHome).

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/02/have-your-say-on-how-new-somerset-council-will-consult-on-planning-and-development/) 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**.

**Somerset County Council (SCC)**

**Hazardous B3191 cliff road expected to remain closed indefinitely**

A clifftop road near Watchet is set to remain closed indefinitely for safety reasons on expert advice.

SCC initially closed the B3191 at Cleeve Hill on 12 January following the results of a geotechnical survey. Now more detailed inspections have revealed further movement is inevitable and it will be impossible to safely reopen the road without major intervention.

The team is exploring the possibility of applying for Government funding to save the road but it is thought this option is highly unlikely to materialise due to the huge expense involved and practical difficulties in saving the cliff.

The English Coast Path in this area has already been diverted – walkers are reminded for their safety to follow the signage – and the Council is currently exploring opportunities to create cycling and wheeling connections for residents in the area and visitors to access Watchet.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/24/hazardous-b3191-cliff-road-expected-to-remain-closed-indefinitely/) to read the full press release.

**Essential repairs and resurfacing on A39 at Selworthy**

Urgent drain and gully repairs are being undertaken on the A39 Selworthy Road between Headon Cross and Venniford Cross next month.

SCC’s Highways team will be carrying out the repairs and preparatory works under a road closure during daytime hours, **9.30am – 3pm between 6 March and 10 March**.

Outside of these hours temporary two-way traffic signals will be in place.

All HGV vehicles over 17 tonnes and/or over 9.5m in length will be held at holding areas and access will be granted through site between 1pm and 1.30pm.

Emergency vehicle access will be granted throughout the road closure period. Gate personnel will manage this.

Access via A39 to Wootton Courtney will be available. SCC would advise road users to not use this as a local diversion route.

A full road closure is also required for when resurfacing of the road gets underway during night-time hours, **6.00pm to 7.00am between 13 March and 16 March**. The road will be open outside these hours.

The section of the road to be resurfaced – between Headon Cross and Venniford Cross – is 450m long. Access to Wootton Courtney from Venniford Cross will not be available during the closure.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/27/essential-repairs-and-resurfacing-on-a39-at-selworthy/) to read the full press release.

**SCC Highways maintenance update**

A very busy few weeks have now passed for the gangs catching up on Safety Defects and thankfully the weather was calm this week allowing for high numbers of works to be completed. SCC Highways are watching the weather forecasts for the week ahead as there is a predicted cold snap and they are expecting to be conducting many winter actions.

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.

Contractors’ gangs have successfully repaired 289 safety defects this week with 245 in the Taunton Area and 44 in West Somerset which is another record week.

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 **6 March 2023** (subject to change due to weather) are as follows:

**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.

**“Bus It” bonus as £2 single bus fare in Somerset is extended to the summer**

Bus users in Somerset can now travel on most routes in the county and beyond for just £2 until July.

The major fare cut is part of a national initiative funded by the Government aimed at boosting bus use while helping passengers to save money. It was introduced in January and was originally due to end on 31 March.

Now thanks to further funding it will continue for an extra three months, until 30 June. It’s welcome news for people in Somerset as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite, fuelled in part by high petrol and diesel prices.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/03/02/bus-it-bonus-as-2-single-bus-fare-in-somerset-is-extended-to-the-summer/) to read the full press release.

**SCC wants your feedback on transport in rural communities**

SCC is joining forces with About Community Engagement (ACE), to see how engagement on transport in rural areas can be improved.

The aim is to make it easier for rural communities to talk the Council about transport and reach solutions that work for everyone.

The Council is also in the early stages of writing a new Local Transport Plan (LTP), which will set out the strategy for improving and maintaining the transport network across the County.

SCC and ACE are also attending the **Watchet Street Fair on** **Sunday 5 March (10am to 4pm)**, which is a fantastic opportunity to have your say on rural engagement and transport.

They have also worked with community leaders in Exmoor to organise a drop-in coffee morning at **Dulverton Town Hall on Saturday 4 March (9 to 11am).**

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/24/council-wants-your-feedback-on-transport-in-rural-communities/) to read the full press release.

**SCC Education**

**Have your say in the School Term dates and holidays consultation**

Somerset’s residents have been invited to have their say on proposed school holiday, term and staff training dates for Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools for the next two years.

SCC has published two separate consultations: one for the [**2024/25** academic year](https://somerset.inconsult.uk/Termdates2425/consultationHome) and one for the [**2025/26** academic year](https://somerset.inconsult.uk/Termdates2526/consultationHome). Both consultations are open to the general public, but are particularly relevant to all school staff, parents and caregivers with responsibility for school age children. Academies and other school types set their own dates but may choose to align their dates with neighbouring schools.

**The consultation runs until the 17 March with results being published in April.**

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/21/have-your-say-in-the-school-term-dates-and-holidays-consultation/) to read the full press release.

**Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA)**

**Partnership Project to deliver iNaturalist training**

Minehead and Coast Development Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, The National Trust and Exmoor National Park are working together to deliver two fun, educational nature-based events in March.

* **Saturday 4 March,** the team will be running a training session at the Beach Hotel in Minehead to show people how to use the iNaturalist app to record wildlife and submit records to national and local databases. This will lead into a larger event on:
* **Saturday 25 March** called a BioBlitz which will look to survey the beach during the day to record all wildlife found at different tide levels. As part of the event, the partnership will be running free arts and crafts workshops for kids, a free beach sketching workshop for adults, seashore safaris run by rangers from Exmoor National Park as well as free guided nature-based walks. The aim of the event is to get the local community engaged with their natural environment and to inspire them to protect and learn more about the environment in Minehead and West Somerset.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwildlife.org/events/2023-03-04-inaturalist-training) to book your place at the training event.

**Public Bridleway DU/4/5 (PART) Exford**

**Confirmation of Public Footpath Diversion Order 2023 (Hantons)**

The above order has been confirmed unopposed. A copy of the order can be viewed on the [website.](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/460338/Signed-and-sealed-Order-Confirmation-DU4-5-24-02-23.pdf)

**Quantock Hills (AONB)**

**Car Park Closure**

From **Monday 6 March** for 5 days, Withyman’s Pool car park on Quantock Common will be closed to allow essential repair work to be undertaken.

The car park surface is slumping due to the recent wet and cold weather making it difficult for vehicles to use.

**Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)**

**Keeping warm safely**

The rising cost of living impacts everyone. If you're thinking about ways to save money, take a moment to think about fire safety - it'll save you money in the long run, and maybe even your life.

Please [click here](https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/safety/home/stay-warm-safely-winter?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Orlo&utm_content=%23SaveSafely) to read the latest safety advice.

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

**Voluntary and Community Sector Suppor****t**

**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.

**Citizens Advice Somerset**

**Recruiting for Independent Chair**

Citizens Advice Somerset has existed as a successful partnership between the local Citizens Advice charities in Somerset and four of them, Mendip. Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton, are now working together to create a single Citizens Advice Charity later this year.

This is, in part to mirror the creation in April 2023 of a single Local Authority to serve Somerset, but also to better meet the needs of Somerset’s 560,000 residents by offering a consistent service and also to be better placed to win contracts from other parts of the public service and from other relevant charities.

Shine Charity Recruitment is delighted to be supporting the recruitment of an independent Chair to lead the Shadow Board towards achieving the merger within this financial year before being formally appointed as Chair of the new Charity.

Please [click here](https://shinecharityrecruitment.co.uk/independent-chair-somerset/) to read the full press release.

**Somerset Community Foundation**

**Bradford on Tone Village Shop**

The Bradford-on-Tone village shop is run for the community by volunteers from within the community, on a not-for-profit basis. They stock quality products from local suppliers, including everyday groceries, frozen foods, dairy goods and household essentials.

A member of the committee, Viv Adams, explained how a £2,500 grant from The Somerset Fund meant they were able to invest in a new display freezer, buy new signage and display cases, and give the whole shop a makeover.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/20th-anniversary-somerset-stories-bradford-on-tone-village-shop?fbclid=IwAR3_E5Oo0bi2WTVVjkqBC2GzsG7RrSf3ZCPVegY5gSu62sgO8K3X65X1U_c) to read the full press release.

**Talking Café Live (CCS)**

**Wednesdays at 1.00pm**

Coming up on March's live streamed Talking Cafes with the CCS Village Agents; bringing useful local information and services to you in the comfort of your own home

* **8 March - Food Waste Week** with [Somerset Waste Partnership](https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXGy8XXN5XG1bQFnfc-W0DE__hIz9eD7E8Yj5QVgbQLyWOwij8J2jFqdfc9NU6Q8fiJ6jeodLWv-6oYeDayAJDnyK5A3RTzX3YgAsHTQdtm_bsfaH4NQmkAsKDBAHppg_LKXbXj9g4LM51tWTacAtjsof_jePbGyrI0SE5wKSaxqXI_dilFeKOLCEDNG_WtNG4&__tn__=kK-R) - tips on reducing and recycling your food waste

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* **15 March** - [Medequip Community Equipment Service](https://www.facebook.com/MedequipUK?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXGy8XXN5XG1bQFnfc-W0DE__hIz9eD7E8Yj5QVgbQLyWOwij8J2jFqdfc9NU6Q8fiJ6jeodLWv-6oYeDayAJDnyK5A3RTzX3YgAsHTQdtm_bsfaH4NQmkAsKDBAHppg_LKXbXj9g4LM51tWTacAtjsof_jePbGyrI0SE5wKSaxqXI_dilFeKOLCEDNG_WtNG4&__tn__=-%5dK-R) NHS suppliers of accessible equipment for independent living in Somerset
* **22 March** - [In Charley's Memory](https://www.facebook.com/ICMCharity?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXGy8XXN5XG1bQFnfc-W0DE__hIz9eD7E8Yj5QVgbQLyWOwij8J2jFqdfc9NU6Q8fiJ6jeodLWv-6oYeDayAJDnyK5A3RTzX3YgAsHTQdtm_bsfaH4NQmkAsKDBAHppg_LKXbXj9g4LM51tWTacAtjsof_jePbGyrI0SE5wKSaxqXI_dilFeKOLCEDNG_WtNG4&__tn__=-%5dK-R) Counselling services for young people
* **29 March** - Volunteering - A Full Circle Story

How a man was helped by volunteers in his childhood, the impact it had, and how he now helps others.

Watch live on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube LIVE! Take part and ask questions in the comments.

**Somerset Independent Living Centres (SILCs)**

**Try out amazing equipment and technology to make daily living easier**

Talking microwaves to help the visually impaired and specially designed lightweight kettles for the elderly are among the fascinating and practical items on display at Somerset’s Independent Living Centres (SILCs).

The SILCs are filled with useful technology and equipment designed to make daily living at home easier for anyone who may need support living independently, such as older people, or people of any age with disabilities, sensory impairments or health conditions.

There are two such centres in Somerset, one in [Wellington](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9vmB4lkQv8) and the other in [Shepton Mallet](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-M6NkIH1CI). Members of the public can book a free appointment to visit the centre, and meet the Occupational Therapy led team at the centre. The team offer impartial information and advice and do live demonstrations of showcasing the range of equipment on offer – most of which can help people in the bathroom, kitchen, or generally moving around the house.

The centres are also a valuable resource for people who are supporting and caring for others, whether that is families and carers, professional care providers, GPs, health workers, or organisations within the voluntary community and social enterprise sector who support people in their own home.

The SILC service is free for people to attend. To book an appointment call 0300 123 2224 or email adults@somerset.gov.uk.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2023/02/23/try-out-amazing-equipment-and-technology-to-make-daily-living-easier-at-somerset-independent-living-centres/) to read the full press release.

**Lendology**

**Council-funded loans help homeowners towards net zero**

With the current climate emergency, homeowners may be wondering what they can do to support a reduction in carbon emissions. The rising costs of energy also means many are wondering how to cut their utility bills.

Many homes in the UK struggle to retain heat because of their age and poor energy efficiency, as well as how they are heated. Whether looking to invest in renewable technologies such as solar or heat pumps, or to install energy-saving measures, homeowners may be eligible for an energy efficiency loan to help fund the upfront cost.

Working in partnership with Social Enterprise lender, [Lendology](https://www.lendology.org.uk/), SWT provides accessible finance in the form of low interest loans to homeowners wishing to increase their energy efficiency.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/council-funded-loans-help-homeowners-towards-net-zero/) to read the full press release.

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

**Booking now open for Happy Healthy Holidays Easter 2023**

Happy Healthy Holidays is returning once again for the Easter holidays, offering egg-citing activities for kids and teens eligible for free school meals, as well as tickets for family days out at a range of attractions across Somerset.

Happy Healthy Holidays is delivered by SASP with funding from SCC and offers 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.

Activities this Easter will include arts and crafts, cooking, climbing, mountain biking and much more.

Please [click here](https://www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays) to read the full press release.

**Spark**

**Roadshow events mark launch of new Somerset Dementia Service**

To mark its launch, the Somerset Dementia Wellbeing Service are holding a series of roadshow events to showcase what support is available to people living with dementia and the local organisations and services that can help.

Attendees can also try the Virtual Dementia Tour Simulator which can help them understand what it feels like to live with the condition and how to better support those affected.

The events are drop in and will take place at a variety of locations including:-

* **Thursday 9 March – Wellington Rugby Club**
* **Monday 20 March - Flook House, Belvedere Road, Taunton**
* **Friday 14 April – Minehead Methodist Hall, The Avenue, Minehead**
* **Thursday 20 April – Victoria Community Centre, Bridgwater**

Please [click here](https://sparksomerset.org.uk/somerset-dementia-service-launch-events?mc_cid=08bd27207f&mc_eid=4aa6243a6d) to visit the website and find out more.

**Community Food Forum**

**Tuesday 14 March, online from 7.00pm-8.30pm**

A free forum for anyone in Somerset involved with initiatives that use food, growing and gardening to support positive change.

The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the importance of food provision and growing projects in local communities and it’s vital that we keep talking to each other.

Spark Somerset and Somerset Community Food will jointly host this free forum.

Whether you are involved with a local allotment, community fridge or foodbank, therapeutic garden, cooking class or any other initiative which uses food, growing and gardening to support positive change, please come and join for the chance to network and share peer support, learning and best practice.

Please [click here](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-food-forum-tickets-541052351147) to reserve your space.

**West Somerset Food Cupboard (WSFC)**

**Part time Job Opportunity – Operations Assistant**

The WSFC is currently looking for someone who can support the Food Cupboard Manager and Charity’s Trustees in providing emergency food and developing projects like the Local Pantry.

**The closing date for applications is Tuesday 7 March 2023.** Please [click here](https://www.wsfoodcupboard.org.uk/jobs/) to find out more information.

**Health and Welfare**

**NHS Somerset**

**What matters most to you? Help shape the health and care strategy and plans for Somerset**

In Somerset, the way we deliver health and care is changing. Public services are coming together, to plan and buy health and care services.

SCC and the NHS in your area, want you to have access to the best possible health and care now and into the future, but they need your help to make this happen. Your feedback will be used to help shape the new Integrated Care Strategy and Five Year Forward Plan.

Please [click here](https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/what-matters-most-to-you/?fbclid=IwAR3kzOgo70jeFYngZX79oGbHjNGHGtI0E9KvggUIAA82dgShnF9VGDNxSIQ) to find out more and take the survey. The survey closes on **Sunday 5 March 2023.**

**Public Health Catch Up Video with Clinton Rogers**

In this week's [Public Health catch up video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nAVx-ldRlQ), Clinton looks at what the new Integrated Care System means for Somerset and how you can help decide what the future of healthcare looks like in Somerset.

Somerset's Integrated Care System wants to hear from you. As one of the 580,000 people living in Somerset you really can help drive this forward. What do you think we need to do as a community, as a county, to make sure everyone can live well? How do we make sure we create thriving communities, break down inequalities and make sure everyone has access to high quality public services when they need them?

**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 vaccination.

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**

The Autumn Booster and general Booster programme ended on Sunday 12 February. A Spring Booster will be announced with more details in due course.

[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**

**Action Fraud**

**Protect yourself from phishing emails**

Phishing is a cybercrime in which scammers try to lure sensitive information or data from you, by disguising themselves as a trustworthy source. Phishers use multiple platforms, which include text messages, emails and phone calls. The goal no matter what method is used is to obtain your personal information to access bank accounts, credit cards or perpetuate further fraud such as identity theft.

Some phishing emails or texts might look unprofessional to you, using poor grammar or asking you to click on links with odd-looking URLs. But phishers don’t have to be sophisticated. These cybercriminals work in volume, and only need to trick a small number of victims to consider their work a success.

* Be aware and pro-active: When responding to emails or phone calls, never give your login or personal details. If you receive an email from a company that claims to be legitimate but is requesting these details, or a contact number tell them you will call them back. Use a contact number for the organisation that you have sourced reputably. Speak to them directly to confirm that the message is genuine.
* Use your spam filter: If you detect a phishing email, mark the message as spam and delete it. This ensures that the message cannot reach your inbox in future.
* Know your source: Never respond to a message from an unknown source. Take care not to click any embedded links. Phishing emails are sent to a vast number of randomly generated addresses. However, clicking embedded links can provide verification of your active e-mail address. Once this occurs it may facilitate the targeting of further malicious emails. Even “unsubscribe” links can be malicious. Ensure that the e-mail is from a trusted source, and you are, in fact, subscribed to the service.
* Remember that the email address that appears in the ‘from’ field of an email is not a guarantee that the email came from the person or organisation that it claims to have originated from.
* Fraudsters are unlikely to know your real name, so the email may address you in vague terms, for example ‘Dear Valued Customer'.
* Phishing emails will contain odd ‘spe11ings’ or ‘cApitALs in the ‘subject’ box and contain spelling or grammatical errors in the email – this is an attempt to get around spam filters and into your inbox.

Suspicious emails can be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk.

**Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

**Man jailed for nine years for non-recent indecent assault**

A 60-year-old man has been jailed for nine years for sexually assaulting two teenage boys approximately 25 years ago.

Philip Rendle, of Ashburton in Devon, was sentenced today (Friday 3 March) at Taunton Crown Court having previously been convicted of three counts of indecent assault against two boys.

The offences took place during a camping trip in Somerset in the late 1990s / early 2000s.

In statements, both victims told how they struggled to tell anyone what happened for a long time as they felt embarrassed and ashamed.

Please [click here](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2023/03/man-jailed-for-nine-years-for-non-recent-indecent-assault/) to read the full press release.

**National Crackdown on Mobile Phone use whilst driving**

Yesterday, on the scene of a Road Traffic Collision on the M5, Bristol officers issued tickets to eight drivers who thought it was okay to use their phone while driving past.

One driver, already on nine points is likely to be disqualified now as taking a photo of the collision was more important than continuing their journey safely. In addition, 17 drivers will be receiving a summons to court through the post for using the hard shoulder to avoid the traffic jam. The hard shoulder is there only in an event of an emergency.

Since the beginning of 2021, there have been more than 4,500 fatal or injury collisions on Avon and Somerset roads. A quarter of these had distraction, mobile phone use or driver failed to look properly listed as a contributing factor.

Drivers who use a mobile phone, whether handheld or hands free, are at four times greater risk of crashing. We class this as one of the ‘fatal five’ behaviours that we’re dedicated to tackling all year round.

From 27February to 12 March, ASP officers will be carrying out high profile intelligence and data led enforcement across the region to reassure the public and help to influence driver decisions around using a mobile behind the wheel. The RAC 2020 Report on Motoring states that a third of Britain’s 40 million drivers feel mobile phone use is one of their top concerns.

Please [click here](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2023/02/were-joining-nationwide-crackdown-on-people-who-use-mobile-phones-while-driving/) 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.