

# NORTH SOMERSET

SPRING 2021

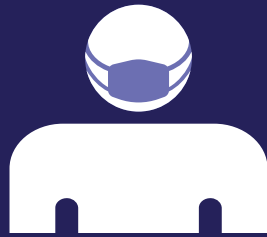
# LIFE



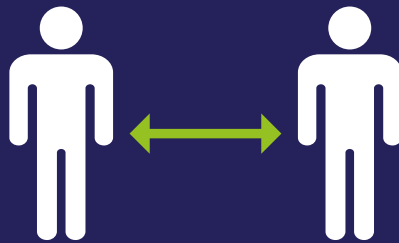
Hope for  
the future



**Wash hands**



**Cover face**



**Make space**

**Still the most important ways to protect yourself  
and your loved ones from Covid-19**

Even if you're vaccinated or tested

**Thank you**

for helping stop the spread of Covid-19 in North Somerset





# Dear reader...

As we head into spring, we may look back over a very challenging year for everyone. How our communities have coped with restrictions on our freedoms, the work to look after our most vulnerable has been truly amazing. We are so grateful to so many people, volunteers, partners and our council staff and contractors.

Our social care teams have adapted to new ways of working, roads have been maintained and gritted, library services are there for us, and waste and recycling continues to be collected.

We are pressing ahead with waste and recycling through the council's own company, NSEC, which takes over responsibility on Saturday 27 March (see page 4).

We have been doing work we have never done at this scale before – Covid testing, test and trace, supporting 190 adult social care and care homes with £10m of additional support, sourcing items such as 1.2m items of PPE and training and guidance.

We are very aware of the pressures on local businesses. We are providing advice and distributing cash support as quickly as we can – more than £55m by early February (see page 14). We have a dedicated business hotline **01934 888 114** and email **businessgrants@n-somerset.gov.uk**. Once the lockdown eases it's clear that many businesses will need ongoing help, and we are working to move projects forwards and doing our best to maximise the use of local firms.

Sadly, too many people have also had to cope with the loss of loved ones and to care for those taken ill as result of Covid-19. The pandemic has taken its toll on the mental wellbeing of us all but we are working up a plan for a return to normality, with a key part being how we continue to support the wonderful networks of volunteers in our communities that have grown during the crisis.

Doing all this has financial implications and, unlike central government, we must set a balanced budget. So we will be asking for a 1.99 per cent

increase in council tax, along with a 3 per cent social care premium, which the government has forced us to charge given that they have not funded those pressures (see page 16). To avoid more cuts to essential services and address our green agenda, we won't be providing a free collection of garden waste which now becomes an optional, chargeable service, as it is in every other council in the South West.

Thank you all. Please keep safe.

Clr Don Davies

## The Executive

Clr Don Davies (Independent)  
Leader of North Somerset Council  
Clr Mike Bell (Liberal Democrat)  
Deputy Leader  
Clr Mark Canniford (Liberal Democrat)  
Clr Ashley Cartman (Liberal Democrat)  
Clr Catherine Gibbons (Labour)  
Clr Bridget Petty (Green)  
Clr Mike Solomon (Independent)  
Clr James Tonkin (Independent)

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North Somerset Council does not endorse or recommend any commercial products or services advertising in *Life* magazine.

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.



# North Somerset Environment



## Recycling and waste services return to council ownership this month

**Recycling and waste services in North Somerset will soon be delivered by a new council-owned company called North Somerset Environment Company (NSEC).**

Last year, councillors agreed to end the current recycling and waste contract with Biffa by mutual agreement and instead establish the wholly council-owned company to run services.

From Saturday 27 March, recycling, garden waste and black bin collections, plus the three recycling centres in Weston-super-Mare, Backwell and Portishead, will all be operated by the newly established company.

The new arrangements deliver the best possible value for money for North Somerset council tax payers, support the council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030, and provide an opportunity for the council to make improvements to the service.

NSEC will prioritise and improve resident experience of the recycling and waste service. Biffa staff will transfer over to the new company and there will be no immediate changes to any collection days or routes.

An annual charge for garden waste collections, which the council originally planned to introduce in spring 2020 but delayed due to Covid, will be introduced from 1 April.

For more information about garden waste changes see page 18 or go to [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/recycling)



## Great Western Freeport could create almost 50,000 jobs

**The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is bidding to host a Great Western Freeport that could create up to 50,000 jobs in the region and 90,000 nationally.**

The Combined Authority has put together the bid – which was submitted to the Government in February – working with public and private sector partners, including large-scale businesses

across the aerospace and nuclear sector, the region's universities and colleges, innovation centres, local authorities and business networks.

A Great Western Freeport would be based around Bristol Port, the UK's most centrally located deep water port, with additional tax and customs sites at Avonmouth and Severnside, Junction 21 Enterprise Area and Gravity Smart Campus.

Economic modelling shows it could bring in an economic return of £3 billion each year to the regional economy.

It would bring regeneration and jobs and boost the region's reputation as a global leader in high-value design and innovation, building on strengths in aerospace, nuclear and food manufacturing.

For more information visit: [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/freeport](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/freeport)



# Plans to uncover hillfort move forward

**Plans to uncover Worlebury Camp Iron Age hillfort in Weston-super-Mare for the first time in 200 years have moved a step forward.**

The hillfort, which is a Scheduled Monument, has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register since 2016.

The hillfort is a nationally important heritage asset and, as owners of a Scheduled Monument, North Somerset Council has a duty to preserve it and make it fully

accessible for future generations to enjoy, while also managing the surrounding woodland responsibly.

In 2019 the council adopted a Conservation Management Plan to preserve the hillfort. The plan's main objectives are to address the damage to the archaeological features and to include new interpretation and signage to raise awareness and understanding of the monument.

The main damage to the hillfort is caused by vegetation and trees so the council applied to the Forestry Commission for a felling licence

to help manage this. The licence, which has now been approved by the commission, covers the hillfort site which is about 10 per cent of the whole of Weston Woods.

The council will now draw up more detailed plans that ensure the protection of the site whilst also recognising the views of residents and people with an interest in the site.

Once the plans are completed the council will apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant to help fund the project.



More information on the plans to safeguard the future of the hillfort are available on the council's website at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/hillfort](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/hillfort)



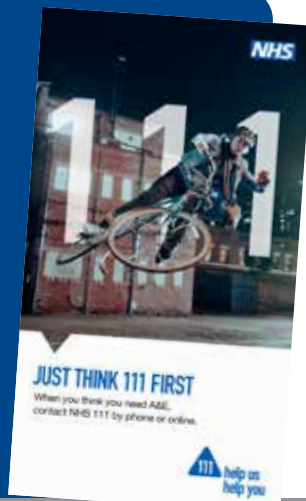
## Think **NHS 111** first for the right care

**If you have an urgent but non life-threatening medical need, make sure you use NHS 111 first rather than going straight to A&E.**

NHS 111 will help you right away and if you need urgent care, the NHS can book you in to be seen quickly and safely at an appropriate local service such as a minor injury unit or the out-of-hours GP. If you need an emergency ambulance, one can be dispatched immediately.

Clinicians, such as nurses, doctors, pharmacists and paramedics, play an increasingly important role in NHS 111. In many cases clinicians in the service can assess patients and provide the advice you need over the phone without having to visit a physical service

You should still dial **999** if you have a life-threatening illness or injury.





## New electric vehicle charging point installed

The first in a series of new electric vehicle (EV) charging points is now ready for use in Kewstoke.

The 22kW charger provides two charging bays conveniently located in Sand Road Car Park. This is good news for electric vehicle owners visiting the area as well as local residents and businesses.

A parking order will help ensure the smooth running of the charger, with owners asked to only occupy the charging bays while their car is charging (unless charging overnight).

The project, which plans to install 30 charging bays across North Somerset, will include both fast (7 and 22kW) and rapid chargers (50kW) as part of the West of England Local Authority owned Revive network.

Revive is free to join and will include use of North Somerset's flagship rapid charging hub due to open in the Spring in Portishead Marina.

To use the Revive network, users can sign up at [www.revivecharging.net](http://www.revivecharging.net)

The network of new EV charging points, along with the Portishead Marina rapid charging hub, underlines North Somerset Council's strong commitment to the Climate Emergency and to creating more sustainable travel options for residents and visitors.

The £7.1m investment from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) for the Go Ultra Low West project will deliver approximately 120 EV charging bays across the Revive network, including a rapid charging hub in each of the four council areas.

For independent one to one advice about switching to electric, book an appointment with the Travelwest EV expert. Visit [travelwest.info/electric-vehicles](http://travelwest.info/electric-vehicles)



## Are you fostering privately?

**Private foster carers are being reminded they need to inform North Somerset Council about their living arrangements.**

Private fostering is an informal arrangement when a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) stays with someone who is not a close relative for more than 28 continuous days.

A close relative is a step-parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, whether of full blood, half blood or marriage.

Examples of private fostering might include:

- a teenager living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- children sent to this country for education or health reasons by parents who live abroad.

Anyone who is privately fostering, or aware of a private fostering arrangement, can contact North Somerset Council on **01275 888 808** or [cyps.careconnect@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:cyps.careconnect@n-somerset.gov.uk)

## A lifeline during lockdown

**Hot meals continue to be delivered to vulnerable residents across North Somerset and have been a lifeline during lockdowns.**

Meals on wheels drivers carry out essential welfare checks on residents while delivering the meals.

The drivers, who wear PPE, can leave meals on doorsteps if needed, to keep self-isolating residents safe.

Find out more by calling **01275 882 155**, emailing [community.meals@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:community.meals@n-somerset.gov.uk) or visiting [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitymeals](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitymeals)

# The Russets Care Home



A safe, secure and caring environment

## The Russets is open for admissions

“ The St Monica Trust has been providing high quality care for older people for 100 years and despite the challenge of Covid-19, our care homes are the same safe, secure and engaging places to live that they always have been.

Our aim of providing the best experience of ageing has not changed. With our robust infection control procedures, financial stability and dedicated colleagues, you can be sure that we will be here for you or your loved-one no matter what the future brings. ”

David Williams, Chief Executive of St Monica Trust

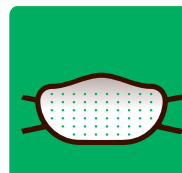
## The steps we're taking to keep our residents safe



Temperature testing for residents, colleagues and visitors



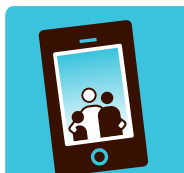
Touch point cleaning and robust infection control procedures



A good supply of PPE for all colleagues



Pre-bookable, socially distanced visiting available



Activities colleagues to keep you engaged and connected with loved-ones



Call **0117 919 4262** or go online for more information [www.stmonicastrust.org.uk/russets](http://www.stmonicastrust.org.uk/russets)

The Russets, specialist dementia care home in Sandford, North Somerset.  
Short-term respite care also available. Registered Charity 202151.

# Elections scheduled for May

At the time of *Life* going to print, elections were still expected to take place this spring.

On Thursday 6 May residents in North Somerset will go to the polls to have their say on who will be the new Police and Crime Commissioner for the Avon and Somerset Police area.

Two by-elections are also scheduled, for the North Somerset Council ward of Portishead East, and the parish council of Weston-in-Gordano.

These elections will take place at a time when Covid-19 continues to present risks to public health. Depending on the infection rate, measures taken to control the spread of the virus may change as we approach May.

This means the council cannot currently answer all the questions you may have about how the elections will be run. However, it is working closely with central government, the Electoral Commission, the wider electoral community and public health to help ensure you can stay safe when casting your vote in May.

# VOTE

Key registration deadlines for the May elections are:

- last day for the council to receive applications to register – Monday 19 April (midnight)
- last day to receive applications to vote by post, postal proxy or request to amend or cancel existing postal vote arrangements – Tuesday 20 April (5pm)
- last day for applications to vote by proxy (other postal proxy, see above) – Tuesday 27 April (5pm).

Find out more at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/voting](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/voting)

# Help provide a snapshot of modern society

**census**  
2021



## Households across North Somerset will soon be asked to take part in a survey which gives a snapshot of modern society.

Census 2021, carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), takes place on Sunday 21 March.

It's a once-in-a-decade event to give the most accurate estimate of all people and households in England and Wales.

Results will help plan and fund local services, such as schools, doctors' surgeries, emergency services and transport routes.

Charities use the information to help get funding and businesses use it to help decide where to set up.

The census has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

This is the first year it will be run predominantly online. Lisa Wareham, census engagement manager for North Somerset, said: "It's vital that residents complete the census because it's our chance to show how Covid has affected our lives and to help shape our future."

Households will receive a letter in early March with a unique access code. Paper copies available on request.

The census will include questions about your sex, age, work, health, education, household size and ethnicity.

For the first time there will also be a question about whether you have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for

those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Results will be available within 12 months but personal records will be kept for 100 years for future generations.



### What is the census?

The census is a once-in-a-decade survey that provides the most accurate estimate of all people and households in England and Wales.

It asks questions about you and your household to build a picture of society.

### Why should I take part?

The census helps the government understand what society needs now and will likely need in the future. It helps with planning and funding services in your area.

### What if I don't speak English?

Translation booklets are available to download from the website. If your language isn't there, call **0800 141 2021**.

### Can I get help?

Visit the help pages at [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk) or call **0800 141 2021**

### What happens if I don't complete it?

You could face prosecution, have a hefty fine (up to £1,000) and a criminal record.



# Give your views on the natural environment

Would you like to give your views on the future of North Somerset's natural environment?

The area's landscape – including green spaces, wildlife and waterways – is important to us all.

We depend on nature for food, materials, clean air and water, climate regulation, flood prevention, pollination and recreation.

However, the environment can be quite fragile and needs careful management to flourish.

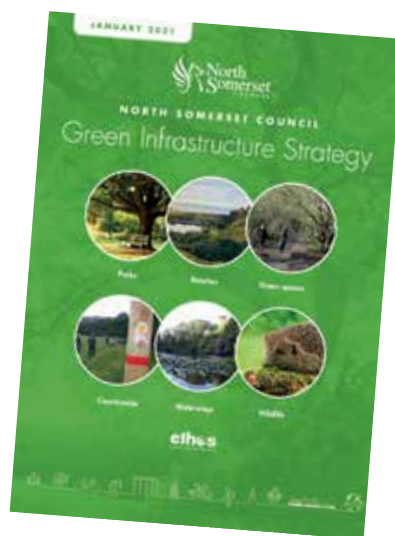
North Somerset Council has therefore developed a draft Green Infrastructure Strategy to outline how the natural environment in the area will be protected and enhanced over the coming decade.

Green infrastructure is about connecting places and habitats to make them the best they can be.

It includes green and aquatic spaces and other physical features on the land, coasts and marine areas, in both rural and urban settings.

The strategy covers the period up until 2030, the year North Somerset Council is aiming for the organisation and area to be carbon neutral.

Read more about the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy and have your say by visiting [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/greeninfrastructurestrategy](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/greeninfrastructurestrategy)



The consultation will be available until early April.

Read more about the climate emergency on **page 20** and the latest on Portbury Wharf nature reserve on **page 30**.

## Comment on consultations

All consultations run by North Somerset Council are listed at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult)

Sign up to receive email alerts when new consultations are opened.

## Go online to question councillors

Social media is providing another opportunity for people to ask questions directly to North Somerset's councillors.

Facebook Live chats take place every month with executive members of the council.

You can ask a question in advance by sending the council a private message through its Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/NorthSomersetCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/NorthSomersetCouncil) or on the day during the live event.

The recording is available on the council's YouTube channel, with subtitling, for you to watch later if you can't make the live event. Visit [www.youtube.com/user/NorthSomersetCouncil](https://www.youtube.com/user/NorthSomersetCouncil)

Council meetings are also live streamed virtually and saved on the YouTube channel. Written statements and petitions can still be submitted. Find out more at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/how-speak-council-meetings](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/how-speak-council-meetings)

# Vaccinating North

Coronavirus has been called the biggest health emergency since the Second World War but the vaccination rollout is giving hope for the future.

It's been a difficult 12 months as everyone has had to adapt to new ways of living and changing restrictions but it's essential that everyone continues to respect the current rules and works together to bring infection rates down.

The vaccination gives us hope, with the prospect of being able to do more of the things we love as this year unfolds.

So please continue to play your part and look forward to a brighter future. Thank you for everything you have done so far to keep yourself, your family and your community safe.

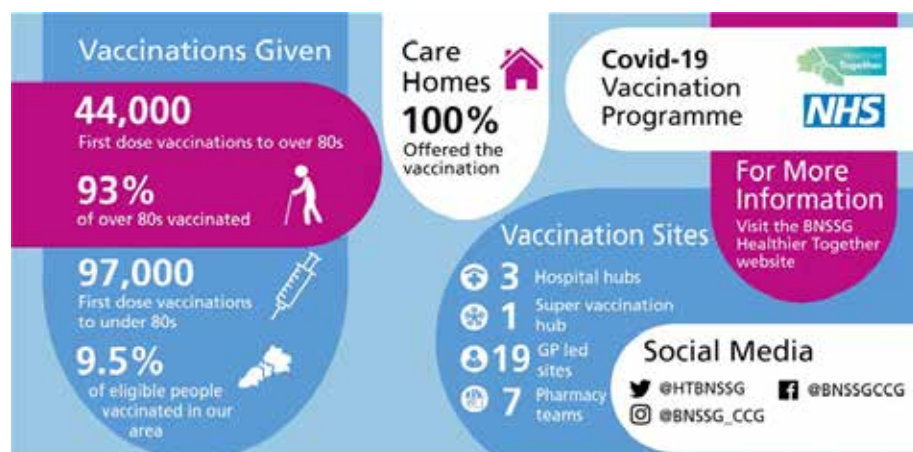
## Vaccination rollout continues

Vaccinations are being carried out across North Somerset for eligible people.

The NHS is inviting eligible people on a phased basis so it's important you wait for your letter, as you will not be able to book without one.

More and more places are becoming vaccination sites to make it as easy as possible for you to attend when you're invited. If you're having trouble getting to your local appointment and don't have friends or family to help, speak to your GP about community transport.

Getting your vaccination as quickly as possible is the best way to protect yourself from coronavirus.



Figures from the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire area up to the end of January.



## Rapid testing for people without symptoms

Community rapid tests are available for people to find out if they have coronavirus even if they don't have symptoms.

Research shows that one in three people with coronavirus do not have any symptoms but could still pass it on to others so rapid testing identifies these people so they can self-isolate and help stop the spread.

Critical workers and volunteers who work in the community are encouraged to get tested twice a week.

It's vital that those who test negative continue to follow the latest social distancing and hygiene rules.

Rapid testing is currently available at Hutton Moor Leisure Centre, in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset Hall in Portishead, and Scotch Horn Leisure Centre in Nailsea, from 8.30am to 5pm every day, with evening opening until 7.30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for anyone aged 16 and over.

For more information about locations and to book visit

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/rapidtesting](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/rapidtesting)



## Watch out for vaccination scams

Scammers are using the Covid-19 vaccine to target vulnerable people so be on your guard against fraudsters.

The NHS will never ask for a fee for the vaccine, it is completely free.

Beware of fake text messages claiming to be from the NHS asking for your bank details and fake social media messages offering to send you self-injection vaccines for a fee.

Report fraudsters by contacting Crimestoppers. Visit

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org) or call the Covid fraud hotline anonymously on **0800 587 5030**

## Get a Covid test if you have symptoms

Anyone with symptoms of Covid-19, no matter how mild, should self-isolate and book a test.

The symptoms are a new continuous cough, loss of or change in sense of taste or smell, or a high temperature.

Book online at [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or call **119**.

You can now arrive at a testing site in Weston-super-Mare on foot or by car for your appointment.

The site, at Locking Road car park, is open 8am to 8pm seven days a week and free parking is available while you do your test.

The mobile site at Castlewood, in Clevedon, and the centre at Bristol Airport also continue to operate.

Information about financial and practical support available for anyone who needs to self-isolate is available at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together)

## Local test and trace for North Somerset

A local test and trace system is now running in North Somerset to support the national NHS service.

North Somerset Council launched the new service in January to contact people who have had a positive Covid test, to help them keep themselves and the virus isolated.

Staff from the council's public health teams are making the calls and will offer advice about where to get financial and practical support while self-isolating, as well as identifying close contacts to pass back to the national service.

The local team complements NHS Test and Trace by picking up calls where the national team have been unable to get hold of cases within 24 hours.

National calls will come from **0300 013 5000** or **0300 123 7790** and local calls from **01934 313 777**.



# Helping communities return to normal

**Continuing to work with the dedicated network of volunteers across North Somerset will be key to returning to normal life when the pandemic is over.**

Life changed beyond recognition last March when the country went into lockdown to combat Covid-19 and North Somerset Council quickly joined forces with charities, town and parish councils, local businesses and volunteers to respond rapidly to changing needs.

A new coalition – North Somerset Together – was launched to link socially-isolated residents who had no

support from family and friends with organisations that could help them.

It also connected those who wanted to volunteer or donate with the right organisations, and signposted businesses to relevant information.

By the end of January, North Somerset Together had made more than 9,000 referrals to network partners since last March.

The council has committed to sustaining North Somerset Together as a means of working with communities in the long-term.

It is now the foundation for the council's future work with communities, town and parish councils and voluntary sector partners.



In the first nine months of coronavirus, North Somerset Together:

- became a network of 68 partner organisations
- dealt with more than 9,000 referrals for assistance
- worked with about 2,500 volunteers
- made more than 1,000 video calls.





## Dealing with Lockdown #3

**Within a week of the third lockdown being announced in early January, North Somerset Together partners confirmed that were ready to respond.**

This meant all towns and larger parishes in North Somerset had coverage of the support network, thanks to new and original volunteers stepping forward.

An enhanced centralised referral process was established to help prioritise referrals that came via the National Shielding Support Service (NSSS).

Anyone aged over 70 who registered with the NSSS and indicated they needed additional support were also referred to the council's wellness service for an assessment.

Where required, emergency food requests were dealt with through the council's community meals service while network support was put in place.

Organisations within the network are also supporting the vaccination

programme through GP surgeries, by providing patient transport services.

More specialised support continues to be available through partners such as Citizens' Advice North Somerset, Curo and Alliance Homes.

### Looking to the future

Community-led early intervention services will continue to be delivered in a post-Covid world.

North Somerset Council is working with other partners in the network

to establish how long-term needs can be met, such as loneliness and isolation, mental health and wellbeing, food poverty, digital exclusion and community transport.

To do this, the council is broadening the membership of North Somerset Together to include new communities and organisations.

This includes working with town and parish councils who want to develop their own local strategies, working with health colleagues on the development of an integrated health system for North Somerset, and improving the way that the council engages and empowers communities.

North Somerset Together can provide practical support to residents through a network of local volunteers.

There are links to local organisations that can help if you have financial challenges, as well as advice on mental and physical wellbeing.

Find information and support at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together) or call **01934 427 437**





# The road to economic

A region-wide economic recovery plan has been launched to help businesses and residents get the support and guidance they need.

Coronavirus continues to be a risk to people's jobs and livelihoods as well as their health but businesses can get the help they need to adapt, build resilience and prepare for the future.

Locally, a dedicated contact centre has been set up by North Somerset Council to guide business owners through the scores of government grants available.

Training and support is also available for those just starting out or needing to develop their employability skills.

## Free support for all businesses

### Is your business struggling because of the pandemic?

All businesses in North Somerset can access free support and advice to help them recover from the economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

North Somerset Enterprise Agency is offering a range of free, comprehensive courses, including help with business continuity, finance, developing an online presence and re-focusing activity.

This confidential and impartial advice comes from accredited advisers and is being delivered as part of the West of England Universal Business Support Programme, funded by North Somerset Council and the West of England Growth Hub.

Sessions can take place in-person, following social distancing guidelines, or virtually.

For start-ups and those needing support to grow, a three-day

Starting in Business course runs regularly online.

Specialist workshops are also available in sustainability, ethical finance, business resilience, digital, food and drink.

North Somerset Council has also launched targeted programmes of support for those businesses in sectors which have been hardest hit by Covid-19 restrictions, such as tourism and events.

If you are a business operating in retail, tourism or the creative industries, **contact [business@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:business@n-somerset.gov.uk)** for guidance.

For information about the support offered by North Somerset Enterprise Agency visit **[www.northsomersetenterpriseagency.co.uk](http://www.northsomersetenterpriseagency.co.uk)**.

**co.uk**, call **01934 418 118** or email **[info@nsea.biz](mailto:info@nsea.biz)**

A region-wide support guide has also been published for small and medium-sized businesses, through the West of England Growth Hub. Visit **[www.wearegrowth.co.uk](http://www.wearegrowth.co.uk)**





# recovery



## Don't miss out on grants

Grants are still available to support businesses through the pandemic so make sure you get the money you're entitled to.

Up until early February, North Somerset Council had given out more than £55m of government grants to more than 4,000 businesses but many eligible businesses had still not come forward.

The amount of grants available makes it tricky for people to navigate so a specialist team can help business owners identify which ones they are eligible for and how to claim.

The number and nature of the grants is complicated, depending on the nature of the business and its size.

Call **01934 888 114** or email [businessgrants@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:businessgrants@n-somerset.gov.uk)



## Helping job seekers improve their skills

**Two projects have launched in North Somerset for residents to gain skills and help them find work.**

Some areas of North Somerset have seen significant rises in unemployment since the pandemic started so the council has received funds from central government to launch these projects which will address the barriers to employment.

Tailored programmes of advice and support will help job seekers in North Somerset's most deprived communities.

Where possible, this will be delivered through libraries, as they are accessible, safe community spaces with free IT facilities and wi-fi.

Services provided by Opportunity North Somerset partners includes careers and education information and advice, youth wellbeing and employment support, a job brokerage service, an assessment

of digital barriers to work, support for people who want to start their own business, and general support to address homelessness, addiction and other issues.

At the same time, a programme of digital help and support is being put in place to increase the level of basic digital skills.

The pandemic has proved that the internet is a key utility for everyday life and knowing how to use it is an essential skill.

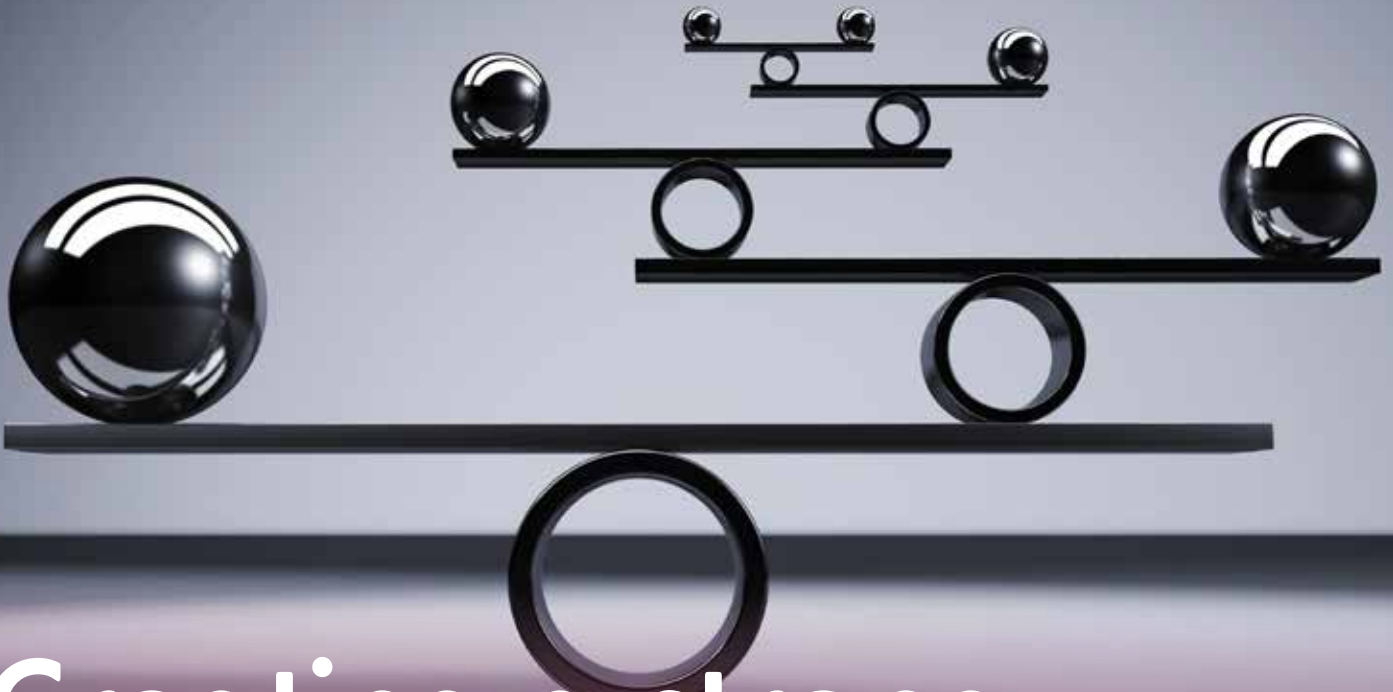


To target this, the Get Connected programme is open to low-income residents on Universal Credit or with few or no qualifications, particularly in areas where digital exclusion levels are high.

Eligible residents can borrow one of 120 laptops for up to 12 months.

They will be supported through the year and encouraged to sign up for courses which will improve their confidence, employment prospects and connectivity and reduce social isolation.

To find out more call Jane Goodison on **07990 805 512** or email [jane.goodison@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:jane.goodison@n-somerset.gov.uk)



# Creating a strong financial footing

A new budget has been approved for the financial year ahead which sets out how North Somerset Council will retain, protect and improve services for local people.

The past year has brought new challenges for everyone but this budget is a commitment to building an open, fairer and greener organisation on a sound financial footing.

Almost £200m is being invested in projects which will have a positive impact for local people, including community infrastructure, business, tourism and cultural recovery, the climate emergency, active travel, and improving outcomes for vulnerable adults and children.

Richard Penska, head of finance at North Somerset Council, said: "Like everywhere, the pandemic has changed things locally, bringing new social, health, environmental and economic challenges to address.

**"The budget protects the services that will help our communities to recover and thrive, while also investing in tangible projects that will bring quality to people's lives and make North Somerset a better place to live – both now and in the future."**

North Somerset remains a low-taxing council overall. At the time of *Life* going to print, a council tax rise of 1.99 per cent was expected.

On top of this, an additional 3 per cent has been added specifically for adult social care.

The demands on council services increase each year but the knock-on effects of Covid-19 has put even more pressure on the council's financial position.

Despite this, the council was expecting to end this current financial year in a broadly balanced position.

## Building and improving local facilities

The budget sets out proposals to develop projects which will help make North Somerset a more attractive place to live and visit.

These include:

- investing in the 'Great Lakes' – the Marine Lakes in Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare, and Portishead Lake Grounds
- continuing support to leisure centres to re-open and for residents to return to the gym
- supporting the continued regeneration of Weston's seafront, including securing the future of the SeaQuarium site, Birnbeck Pier for the RNLI and at the Tropicana in due course
- continuing to work with Parkwood Leisure to reopen the Playhouse Theatre
- investing in local transport infrastructure, including delivering the MetroWest scheme with the West of England partners and re-opening the railway line from Portishead and Pill into Bristol.
- Investing in schools, such as the Winterstoke Hundred Academy and Baytree expansion at Clevedon
- Further investment in Weston town centre, including a new transport hub at Alexandra Parade, public open space enhancements, and a new business plan for the Sovereign Centre, to stimulate the town's economic recovery.

## What council tax can I expect to pay?

This year's anticipated rise of 1.99 per cent, plus the 3 per cent levy for adult social care, means an average Band D household would pay £1,505.03 in 2021/22 for North Somerset's share of the council tax bill – about £28.94 a week.

The final bill also includes charges for Avon and Somerset Police Authority, Avon Fire and Rescue, and town and parish councils.

North Somerset Council has no control over the level of these charges.



### Council tax support

Council tax support can help if you have little or no income to pay your council tax. Find out if you're eligible for the means-tested support and how to apply at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)

### Manage your council tax bill online

View and download your latest council tax bill online at a time to suit you when you sign up for e-billing.

You can also access many other council services, such as reporting issues regarding streets, roads, parks and more, through MyAccount.

Visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount)





# Changes coming to ga

An annual charge is coming to garden waste collections in North Somerset from April.

The annual charge is £50 per bin (or three sacks) and each household can have up to two bins.

This has not been an easy decision to make but council finances are under great pressure and income from this chargeable service will make it self-financing.

This in turn will free-up resources to protect essential services, such as care and support in the community.

More than two-thirds of councils in England already charge for their garden waste collections, including all neighbouring areas.

The changes will also make a positive contribution to the council's carbon emissions target by encouraging home composting, which is the most sustainable way to dispose of garden waste.

## What next?

Letters have been sent to all registered properties to explain the changes and what to do next.

If you do not want to pay, you do not have to do anything. However, you will no longer receive a garden waste collection after Thursday 1 April.

If you do want to continue, you can get a 10 per cent early bird discount if you sign up by **Friday 16 April**.

Visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste) and follow the link.

You can make a one-off payment or pay by direct debit. Payment can be made online or by calling **01934 888 802**.

Households eligible for the council tax support scheme will also qualify for a subsidised garden waste collection service.

Initially, the day and frequency of collections will not change and you should continue to use your existing garden waste bin or sacks.

Properties which sign up to the new service will receive a permit to stick on the lid of the bin to identify it clearly.

Any unwanted garden waste bins will not be collected straight away but the council will let residents know how to do this later in the year.

For more information visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste)



**10** per cent discount  
when you sign up by  
**Friday 16 April**

# garden waste collections

## Could you compost?



If you choose not to sign up for the garden waste collections you'll need to decide whether composting is right for you, or if you'll take your garden waste to a recycling centre.

The council is looking at supporting new projects to encourage and enable more composting.

It hopes to set up more community composting sites, such as the one run by Winford Parish Council.

If you are involved in a local gardening, nature or community group, or allotment association, and would be interested in starting a community composting site, email [gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk)

### Composting at home

Home composting is the most environmentally friendly and cheapest way of dealing with garden waste.

Chris Davies, from Uphill, said: "We have composted for more years than I can remember.

"You save money on buying bags of compost as well as knowing you are doing your bit to save the planet."

Compost bins can be bought from the council for a discounted price of £10 this year, including access to a free e-learning course.

The range of composting products will also be expanded.

Online Zoom talks with an expert in composting will also take place

over the coming weeks to help get you started and answer some common questions.

The Zoom sessions will take place from 1-2pm on Wednesday 24 March and 7.30-8.30pm on Thursday 1 April.

Spaces on each session are limited. If demand is high more dates will be added.

Book a place by emailing [gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk)

 Read about the new council-owned company – North Somerset Environment Company – taking over recycling and waste services in March. See [page 4](#)

## Collecting recycling and waste in the pandemic

Recycling and waste collections have continued in North Somerset throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Crews have faced new challenges:

- collecting an extra 80 tonnes of recycling per week on average, compared to 2019.  
Can you reduce and reuse as much as possible in 2021?

- navigating big collection vehicles around more parked cars as more people stayed and worked at home.  
Avoid parking on corners and opposite junctions to help avoid missed collections. If a recycling vehicle can't get through, neither can an emergency vehicle
- keeping crews safe  
Help crews by washing your hands before and after moving

your bins and boxes. Make sure items such as tissues and PPE are bagged and placed in your waste bin. Put used tissues and disposable cleaning cloths securely within disposable rubbish bags. Place into another bag, tie securely and keep separate from other waste for at least 72 hours before putting in your external bin.

# Working together to cut carbon emissions

**Tackling climate change is at a critical point as world leaders head to the UK later this year re-affirm their commitments in halting a global emergency.**

Scientists say that countries have only a limited time to act if the world is to stave off the worst effects of climate change.

The good news is that many of the world's largest economies are on-board, such as Joe Biden moving to reinstate the US to the Paris climate agreement just hours after becoming president, and China's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2060.

Locally, North Somerset Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and later that year published its first action plan towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and to support residents to lead greener lives.

Being greener is also one of the council's over-riding corporate aims so climate change is now a deciding factor in all policy and strategy decisions going forward.

This also means the council needs to take a leadership role across the area to encourage, support and enable others to reduce their own carbon emissions.

## Progress on becoming a carbon-neutral council

Carbon emissions are regularly reviewed by North Somerset Council as it works to become a carbon neutral organisation and area by 2030.

Area-wide emissions can only be reported annually when national data becomes available but some council emission figures can be reported more regularly.

The latest report compares emissions for April to September 2019 to the same period in 2020.

Results shows a dramatic reduction of 29 per cent – more than 1,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> – between the two years, mainly due to different ways of working because of coronavirus and factors such as the on-going switch to LED street lighting.



## Make or break

**World leaders are coming to the UK later this year in a 'make or break' moment to tackle climate change.**

Glasgow is hosting the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November, a follow-up to the Paris summit of 2015.

Under the Paris Agreement, governments agreed to avoid the worst impacts of climate change by trying to limit global temperature increases to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.

However, scientists say that the world is currently on track to hit 3°C of warming by the end of the century.





## Make a change

Small changes can make a big difference to our carbon emissions, such as what we eat, the products we buy, how we power our homes and the way we travel.

Read North Somerset Council's climate emergency strategy, plus how to make greener choices in your daily life, at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/climatechange)

 [NatureandClimateNorthSomerset](https://www.facebook.com/NatureandClimateNorthSomerset)

## Be a climate hero

Use a simple tool to calculate your own carbon footprint at [www.pawprint.eco](http://www.pawprint.eco)



Businesses now face many challenges as a result of Covid-19 but the council's new economic plan sets out commitments to build a green, digital, people-centred recovery.

There is also an opportunity to promote tourism in the area as a low-carbon alternative to travelling abroad, as well as low carbon investment such as retrofitting buildings and community renewable energy.

## Green Business Grants up for grabs

Grants of up to £15,000 are available to small and medium-sized businesses in North Somerset to help them go greener.



This would be catastrophic, leading to extreme heatwaves, wildfires, floods and droughts, losing the ability to grow food and crops, coral reefs being destroyed, global sea levels rising and tens of millions of people displaced.

[www.ukcop26.org](http://www.ukcop26.org)

Potential projects could help businesses save money on their energy bills and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The grants can help fund between 40 and 80 per cent of eligible costs, depending on the project chosen and the size and location of the business.

A free carbon survey and report is also available to help businesses decide on which project they would like to fund.

Green Business Grants are funded through the West of England Combined Authority's West of England Recovery Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

They are available until Friday 25 June. Visit [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/business/green-business-grants](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/business/green-business-grants)

## Becoming Carbon Literate

A training programme in Carbon Literacy has been established at North Somerset Council for officers and councillors.

The training aims to create an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of different

activities, and to help people be motivated to reduce emissions.

As a result, North Somerset Council was awarded a bronze award from the Carbon Literacy Trust, named the first Carbon Literate Organisation in the South West, and the first English Carbon Literate local authority outside Greater Manchester, where the scheme originated.



# Today is the day

**There's never been a more important time to stop smoking than now.**

Smoking kills over 100,000 UK residents every year and this was before the pandemic. If you smoke, now is the time to quit so that you can stay healthy and out of hospital.

Covid-19 can cause life threatening damage to the lungs, heart and compromises the body's immune system.

Smoking also damages the heart, lungs and immune system placing you at greater risk of developing severe disease from Covid-19.

If you smoke, you are more likely to develop long-term health conditions such as diabetes, emphysema as well as many types of cancer, heart attacks and strokes increasing the likelihood of hospitalisation.

Smokefree North Somerset can offer you the support you need to successfully stop smoking.

It offers a 12-week programme of expert behavioural support with a trained, friendly advisor and stop smoking aids which are free for those who don't pay for prescriptions, or at a greatly reduced cost for those who do pay.

## Stopping smoking allows your body to repair itself.

After eight hours oxygen levels return to normal; after two days, your lungs start clearing out smoking debris; after three days breathing becomes easier; and within weeks, your heart attack risk begins to drop.

Exposure to second-hand smoke also increases the risk of complications from respiratory infections, especially in children.

It also increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes and cancer.

During this time, when people are spending most of their time at home, it's important to protect others from tobacco smoke.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all support is currently delivered via telephone or video chat.

Call **01275 546 744**, text **HELP** to **0780 000 1316** or visit [www.smokefreenorthsomerset.co.uk](http://www.smokefreenorthsomerset.co.uk)

For more information on covid-19 and smoking visit [www.todayistheday.co.uk](http://www.todayistheday.co.uk)





# The changing face of events

**North Somerset has always had a lively and diverse events calendar with many long-standing and much-loved annual events.**

But the Covid-19 pandemic means it's been an incredibly tough year for the events industry, one which is largely supported by freelancers and very often volunteers.

Damage to the supply chain, rising costs of implementing Covid-19 measures on-site and current uncertainty means it is still a huge challenge.

The events industry was forced to adapt last year and a small number of Covid-safe events took place under government guidelines at the time.

As *Life* went to print, the spring/summer events calendar was still uncertain but, with the ever-increasing number of vaccinations taking place, work was being done behind-the-scenes to prepare for a time when some form of outdoor events can return, restrictions permitting.

Some organisers have also risen to the challenge by hosting events online, with ever more innovative ways of working and presenting their events virtually.

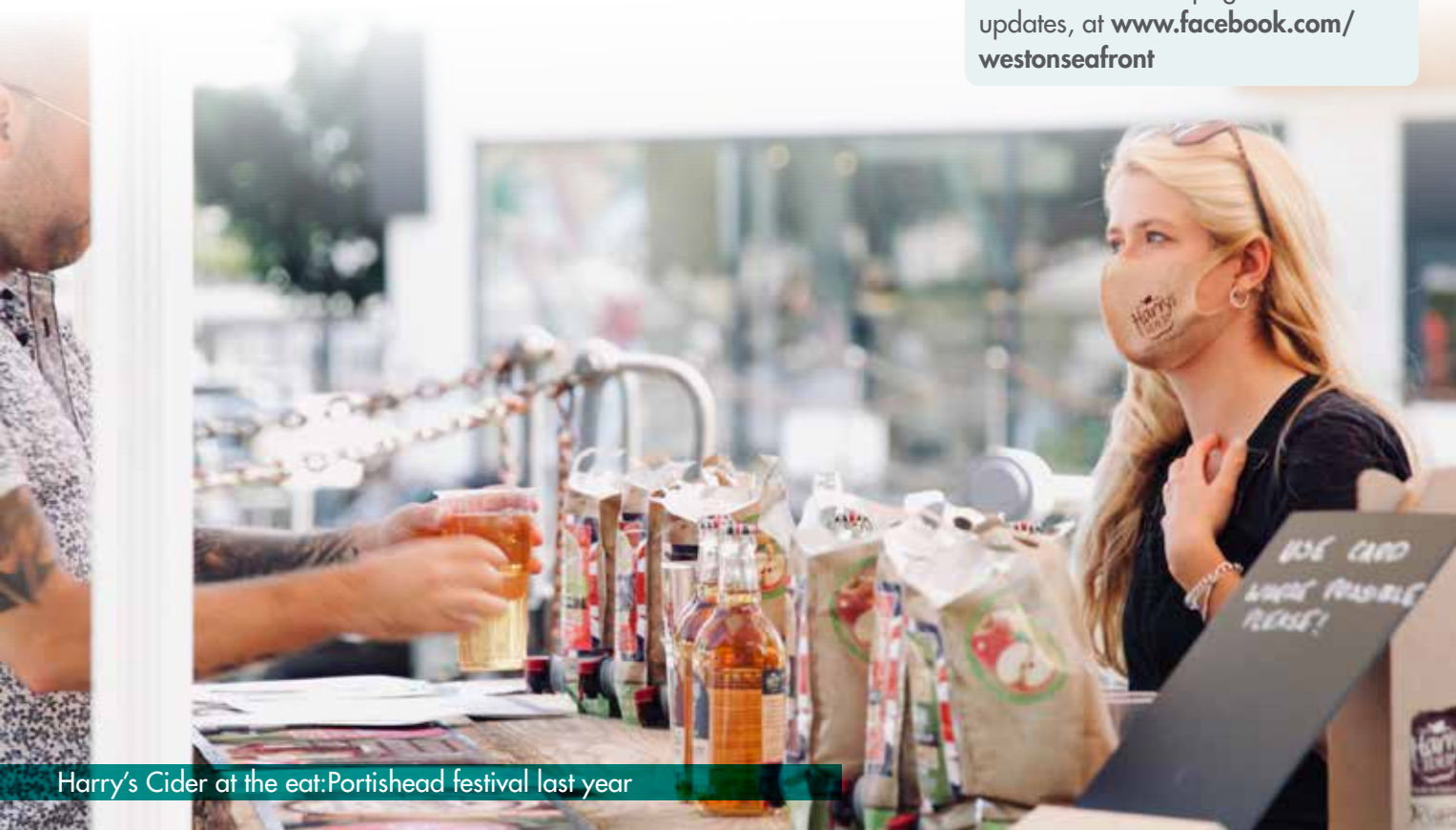
**Go online to find up-to-date listings of any virtual or in-person event:**

Performance art organisation Theatre Orchard hosts digital experiences to fill the soul. Visit [www.theatreorchard.org.uk](http://www.theatreorchard.org.uk) or find them on social media at [www.facebook.com/TheTheatreOrchard](https://www.facebook.com/TheTheatreOrchard)

Cultural organisation Culture Weston organises its own events and promotes other agencies. Visit [www.cultureweston.org.uk](http://www.cultureweston.org.uk) or [www.facebook.com/cultureweston](https://www.facebook.com/cultureweston)

Find out about events taking place at the Tropicana this year [www.tropicanaweston.co.uk](http://www.tropicanaweston.co.uk)

Follow North Somerset Council's seafront Facebook page for updates, at [www.facebook.com/westonseafont](https://www.facebook.com/westonseafont)



Harry's Cider at the eat:Portishead festival last year





# A wander in Weston Woods

Take a woodland wonder and a trip back in time at Weston Woods.

## Walk information

**Distance:** about 1 mile from the car park at end of Worlebury Hill Road to the hillfort.

**Difficulty:** a flat route. Watch your footing on the hillfort. Can get muddy so wellies recommended.

**Be Covid aware:** the woods are popular with walkers and dog owners. Be mindful of up-to-date lockdown restrictions and abide by the latest guidance, including that on hygiene and physical distancing.

Weston Woods was grassland until the 1820s when landowner John Hugh Smyth Pigott planted trees to create a private game reserve.

Once the trees began to mature he opened the woodland for public use, creating drives and walks to take in the views.

During the First World War about 80 per cent of the trees were felled for military use.

Since then, the wood has naturally re-vegetated.

Weston Woods covers about 130 hectares and the south-eastern section, called Ashcombe Wood, is classed as ancient semi-natural woodland.

This area is best visited in Spring when the ground is covered in wildflowers.

There are many paths to take through the woods. Those heading south lead back down to the hillside streets, such as Bristol Road Lower, while going north leads towards Kewstoke Road and Sand Bay.

A wooden play area provides fun for younger children, while older ones can visit the purpose-built BMX track.

At a junction in the paths is the water tower, built in 1925 to supply houses in Worlebury.

On the wall nearby is a blue plaque marking when General Dwight Eisenhower visited Weston Woods for one night in 1944 en-route to the D-Day landings.

Troops camped in Weston Woods between the Toll Road and the water tower, hidden from enemy planes by the tree cover.

The blue plaque was installed last year by Weston-super-Mare Town Council.





CAPTAIN D. K. HOWLER  
Commander, Flotop  
... with  
... troops  
... for D-Day  
1944  
MAJOR J. W. ...



To the west of the water tower you might see the Picwinnard cairn, a mound of stones.

The stones were built up in previous centuries by fisherman from Birnbeck Island, who would throw a stone on the pile for good luck.

From the water tower there are two paths to take, both leading to Worlebury Camp Hillfort (the left-hand path is less muddy).

This Iron Age hillfort dominates the western end of Weston Woods and was designated as a scheduled monument in 1915, a nationally important archaeological site due to its rare coastal location, size and considerable defences.

Hillforts are defended settlements – mostly found on hilltops – that are surrounded by circuits of banks and ditches.

It may have been home to about 200 people in the Iron Age. Many hillforts would have been places of refuge, though, and not always lived in year-round.

In the Iron Age most people would have lived in small settlements and farmsteads throughout the landscape and farmed the fertile higher ground.

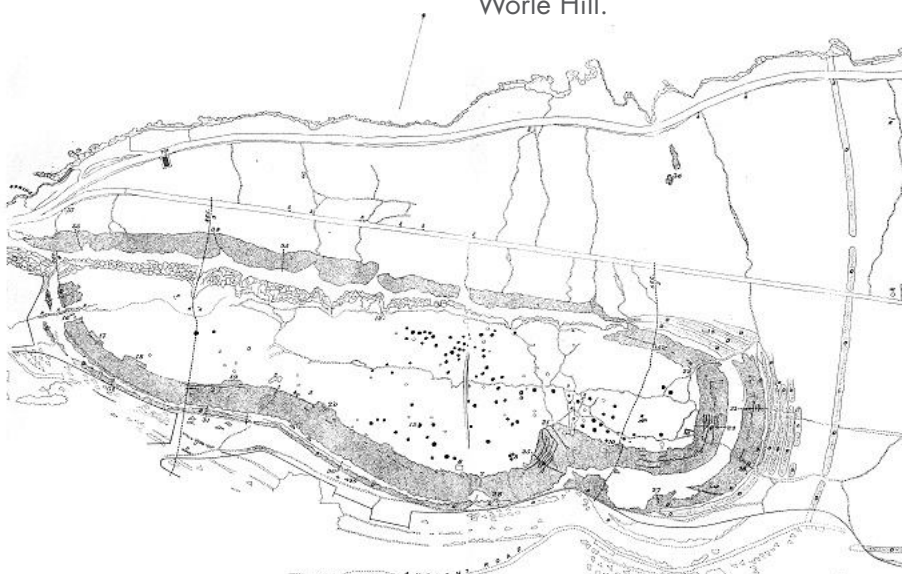
Remnants of the prehistoric field system, known as Celtic fields, are still visible today to the east on Worle Hill.

Worlebury Camp covers about 10 hectares and has a set of seven banks and ditches on the eastern ramparts.

The banks appear as rubble now but in the Iron Age they would have been dry-stone walls, also called ramparts, up to 20 foot high.

These are most impressive at the eastern end, with a single rampart still visible along the southern slope.

The holes in the ground within the hillfort are stone-cut grain storage pits. Ninety-three were excavated in the 19th century with discoveries of charred grain, weapons and animal bones.



A detailed plan of the hillfort from the 1886 survey, taken from the book *Worlebury: An Ancient Stronghold in the County of Somerset* by CW Dymond (1886).





# Putting sustainability at the heart of major projects

**A number of major infrastructure projects are planned for North Somerset over the coming years and sustainability is at the heart of each one.**

In February 2019 North Somerset Council declared a climate emergency and it aims to become a carbon neutral council and area by 2030.

This includes taking big steps towards a more energy-efficient built environment and the use of more renewable energies.

*Life* takes a look at what this means for two upcoming projects...

## Protecting the bats of Banwell

Over winter, ecological surveys were carried out in the area of the proposed Banwell bypass.

These surveys are vital to help understand and reduce the environmental impacts of the bypass' design.

One survey focussed on local bat populations and how they move around the area.

Banwell sits in some of the North Somerset and Mendip Bat Specialist Conservation Area, which is one of the region's European sites of international importance for wildlife.

It provides a habitat for two bat species – the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats – and includes hibernation roosts such as Banwell Bone Caves.

These caves provide a cool and consistent temperature for the bats to slow their metabolic rate and sleep through winter rather than look for food.

The landscape around Banwell offers a rich foraging habitat that helps feed and maintain the bat population throughout the rest of the year.

Protection of local wildlife is a key priority for the Banwell bypass project.



The surveys give a clear understanding of how many bats are in the area, how they use the environment, and how the council can ensure steps are taken to protect their populations in the bypass' design.

Other studies include wintering bird surveys, archaeological surveys, ground investigations and watercourse surveys to improve understanding of potential flood risks.

The council is due to appoint a contractor to draw up designs for the bypass this spring and results from these surveys will help ensure the project meets ambitious environmental standards.



## Green future for school expansion

### **Environmentally friendly building materials and renewable energy sources will be key priorities of design for a new school site in North Somerset.**

Winterstoke Hundred Academy, in Locking Parklands, Weston-super-Mare, welcomed its first pupils in September and the planned expansion will provide 900 additional places when complete.

Contractor Kier was chosen to design the expansion, in part, because of its record of building to top environmental standards.

Kier is also certified by the Carbon Trust Standard for best practice in carbon management.

The new school building is a major investment so it's important to look to the future and reflect that in the building design.

More environmentally friendly materials and techniques will be included in design and renewable sources will make the building more energy efficient.

In addition to its green credentials, the Winterstoke Hundred Academy scheme will also offer a range of learning and job opportunities for local people.

Plans include a new pavilion for a Winterstoke Hundred Sustainability Academy, which will showcase modern methods of construction and provide employment and training support for a range of trades, technical and professional roles in sustainable construction.

It is hoped these roles will be available to local young people looking to start a career in construction, as well as other residents wanting to try something new.

Consultation on the school expansion designs will start in the spring.



Further wildlife surveys will then take place later in the year so that badgers, otters, birds and more can be properly protected as the project moves forward.

The bypass designs will be put to consultation later in the year and work is expected to be completed in 2024.

Once finished, the bypass will help to reduce local environmental impacts, such as traffic congestion in Banwell village, and support the development of future homes subject to the new Local Plan.

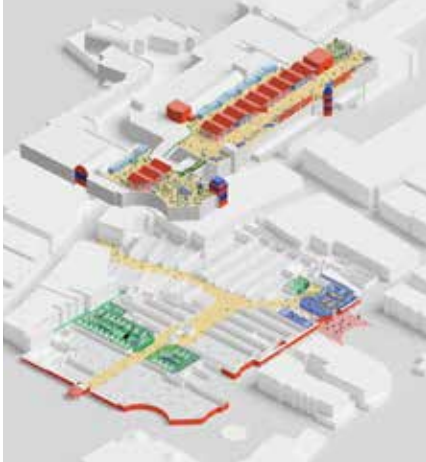
The scheme is funded by the government's housing agency Homes England, after North Somerset Council successfully bid for £97.1m.

The money will also fund a range of other infrastructure improvements, such as the expansion of Winterstoke Hundred Academy in Locking Parklands.



# New vision for Weston's s

A conceptual design of the new-look building



A radical new vision for Weston's Sovereign Shopping Centre is being created to bring a new lease of life to the town centre building.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, changing lifestyles and increased online shopping habits have had an irreversible effect on town centres across the country.

North Somerset Council is responding to this by creating a business plan to re-purpose the building and secure its future.

This means using the space for different purposes, such as:

- co-working areas for creatives and other desk-based users
- using outdoor space, including the building's roof, for events
- re-purposing unused space for independent retail businesses to trade.

A consultation will also take place about changing the Sovereign Centre's name to one which appeals to residents, visitors and businesses.

The business plan is being created to deliver the ambitions of the newly adopted Weston

Placemaking Strategy and to promote community-led growth.

Subject to approval, a commissioning plan for the appointment of consultants and contractors to undertake the work will be put out to tender shortly. The first phase of the vision will be funded by the £1.7m Getting Building Fund awarded to the council last year from the West of England Combined Authority.

Any subsequent phases will be funded by a £65,000 grant from the Department for Transport Access Grant.



Walker and Ling shop front before, and how it will look after

## Heritage initiative breathes new life into shop fronts

**Shops fronts in Weston-super-Mare are set to be transformed back to their former glory.**

Independent department store Walker and Ling, based in the High Street, is the first shop to take advantage of the new Heritage Action Zone Shop Front Enhancement Scheme.

# hopping centre

## Works starts on town centre facelift

**Work has now started to improve sustainable transport links in Weston-super-Mare's town centre.**

The facelift will see more cycling routes provided, better walking routes, and make the bus network easier to navigate.

The project includes:

- enhanced cycling and pedestrian links
- scattered town centre bus stops brought into one location on Regent Street
- increasing the number of trees in the town centre

- alterations to the road layout of Alexandra Parade and Walliscote Road to reduce the volume of traffic
- simpler access for pedestrians
- reducing the impact of lorries in the daytime by introducing loading access to a new pedestrian zone on Regent Street. Loading times and dedicated loading bays on the outskirts of the pedestrian zone will be available at all times of the day.

Due to government restrictions following the coronavirus pandemic, additional safety measures have been brought in.

This has resulted in changes to the original plans for Station Road.

The scheme will now be between Walliscote Road junction and Graham Road, with the dual carriageway unchanged.

There was extensive consultation in the run-up to this project and plans were changed following feedback from the local community.

The project is funded by a £6.8m grant from the Department for Transport Local Growth Fund and Historic England for highways, public realm and transport improvements.



For more information on the scheme, email [weston.regenerationteam@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:weston.regenerationteam@n-somerset.gov.uk)



Work began last month on restoring the frontage of the 117-year-old store by reinstating the original mosaic that was destroyed by a bomb in World War Two.

Owner Sam Walker said: "This project represents the beginning of a rebirth for independent business in Weston town centre.

"We are so proud of our long history on the high street and it is fantastic to have such support from the council and Historic England."

The grant scheme, run in conjunction with Historic England, is available for the renovation

of shop fronts for independent commercial properties within the Heritage Action Zone in Weston-super-Mare.

Additional grants towards shopfront enhancements will be available at a later date.

For more information and to see if your business is eligible for a grant, visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/heritageactionzone](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/heritageactionzone)





# Protecting a wetland habitat



Nature reserve warden Iain Macfarlane with a great crested newt

## Wildlife and habitats are being protected at a popular nature reserve in North Somerset while construction work gets under way on the site.

Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve, in Portishead, is a wetland habitat home to a variety of protected species including water voles, great crested newts and barn owls.

There is also a huge range of wildfowl and the site is particularly important as a haven for overwintering bird species.

It has been managed by North Somerset Council, working with its contractors Glendale, since 2015.

Since last April, the council has been working closely with National Grid as part of its Hinkley Connection Project, installing 57km of high-voltage network cables to connect six million homes and businesses to low carbon energy.

This will feature the first T-pylons on National Grid's network. To make way for this new line, there have been changes to Western Power Distribution's local network.

Cables have now been put underground through the reserve, meaning two lines of existing pylons running into Portishead substation can now be removed, starting in the autumn.

North Somerset Council, with reserve warden Iain Macfarlane, has been monitoring all construction activity, including stringent measures to protect wildlife and habitat.

Iain said: "It's vital that the important work to upgrade the power lines is done in a sensitive manner to protect the species found here and, if possible, actually enhance the habitat for the reserve's wildlife.

"The positive working relationship between myself, North Somerset Council, National Grid and their contractors and ecologists, is ensuring that disruption to visitors and wildlife is kept to a minimum, and the sensitive environment here is protected for generations to come."



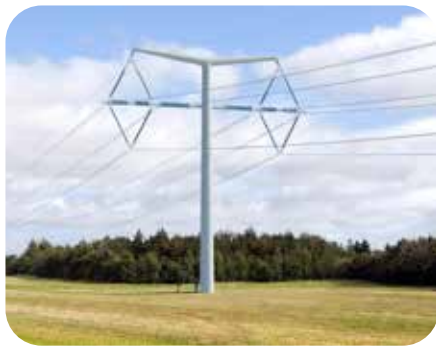
## Protecting local wildlife and habitats

National Grid can only work in the reserve during certain months to avoid disturbing wintering birds and other wildlife.

Therefore, the main construction period is April to September, although North Somerset Council may permit activity such as vegetation removal and other minor works outside these dates.

### Ecological work carried out by National Grid so far includes:

- installing four new barn owl boxes
- protecting mature oak trees by diverting the original haul road route
- saving and moving more than 300 great crested newts, more than 340 toads, 600 smooth newts, and five palmate newts (only recorded once before in the reserve)
- installing specialised fencing and clearing vegetation to prevent protected species from entering construction areas
- creating new habitats and connections for water voles.



National Grid has also improved the seasonal path and removed diseased elm trees at the request of the council.

Iain added: "We have worked closely with National Grid and its contractors through every stage of the works so far and will continue to do so as the project progresses."



## What next?

A variety of construction activity will take place in the reserve between April and September this year to prepare for T-pylons.

T-pylons, which are a new design for electricity pylons, have a single pole and T-shaped arms which hold the wires in a diamond shape.

Each pylon is about 35 metres high, about a third shorter than traditional 400,000 volt steel lattice pylons, and they have a smaller footprint and use less land.

### National Grid will be:

- extending the existing temporary haul road east towards Wharf Lane and into the port
- putting a section of electricity cable underground, east of Portishead substation
- building a new pylon east of Portishead substation to connect the new underground cable and overhead line

- preparing work areas for the construction of T-pylons.

Work to start removing one of the electricity lines running into the substation will begin after August.

Next year, four existing pylons east of the substation will be removed, and then piling, foundations and construction of five T-pylons between Portbury Hundred and the port (two of these within the reserve).

In early 2023 National Grid will return to clear vegetation ahead of installing cables between the T-pylons.

The land will then be fully reinstated in 2024.

## Visiting the reserve

**Access to the reserve during the work is being maintained but some footpaths will need to be closed for a short time to keep everyone safe.**

In April and June, Wharf Lane will be subject to temporary closures, and then construction traffic crossing, until work is completed.

For details see the information boards or visit [www.hinkleyconnection.co.uk](http://www.hinkleyconnection.co.uk)



**For information about construction along the route and to register for updates visit [www.hinkleyconnection.co.uk](http://www.hinkleyconnection.co.uk)**

If you have any concerns or questions call National Grid's 24-hour line: **0800 377 7347**





# Find joy in the journey



**Spring is on its way and warmer weather means more opportunities to get outside and be more active.**

Lockdown restrictions at the start of this year meant we were spending more time indoors but now the changing season is the perfect time to be outdoors with your family.

It's important for children to lead active lives and being physically active for an hour every day encourages better health, stronger bones and higher levels of self-esteem.

Active travel – such as walking, cycling or scooting – is a great way to build this physical activity into a busy day.

Plan an outing and find cycling routes in your local area at [www.betterbybike.info/cycleplanner](http://www.betterbybike.info/cycleplanner)

North Somerset Council works with schools and workplaces to enable more walking and cycling journeys, and is currently working with the West of England Combined Authority to help people find Joy in the Journey.

As coronavirus restrictions are lifted and schools start to re-open, could you consider using sustainable travel and find more joy in the journey?



## Could you walk to school all year round?

Walking to school has many physical and social benefits, from improving energy levels to enhancing our mood.

If you need to drive, parking somewhere away from the school and walking the rest of the way could bring big benefits.

Exposing children to exhaust fumes from multiple cars outside schools can exacerbate asthma and has been linked to other health problems.

Schools across North Somerset have set up these 'park and stride' sites and this also means more children can join WOW, the year-round walk to school challenge from the charity Living Streets.

Pupils who record their active journeys to school at least once a week for a term will earn them themed badges.

## Helping more pupils cycle

Cycle activities will be delivered to pupils in North Somerset to help them become more confident on their bikes.

North Somerset Council is working with walking and cycling charity Sustrans to run the Bike It programme, supporting young people to travel actively and safely to school by bike.

Sessions will run at participating schools when they re-open for pupils to improve cycle skills through curriculum-linked sessions.



For more information about how you can encourage active travel at schools please visit [www.travelwest.info/schools](http://www.travelwest.info/schools)





# Bikes for businesses, local groups and you

**Offers and events from free bike hire to prize-winning challenges are taking place across North Somerset to encourage active and sustainable travel in the workplace.**

## Prizes for pedal power

Got a bike? Want to win prizes for logging your real-world rides? Capture your pedal power with Love To Ride North Somerset. Register for free, and log rides to be in with a great chance of winning prizes, such as panniers, waterproofs and electric bikes. Visit [www.lovetoride.net/northsomerset](http://www.lovetoride.net/northsomerset)

## Improve your community

If you'd like to walk or cycle more, or you work with a community group that could benefit from free cycle training, free loan bikes, free e-bike trials, visits from cycle mechanics, ride leader training, bus taster tickets and more, then the council would love to hear from you.

## Free bike travel for jobseekers

Jobseekers can borrow a bike for free and access free cycle confidence training thanks to Wheels to Work. The scheme also provides free bus tickets or £125 towards a refurbished bike and accessories to get you ready to cycle. Contact the council or talk to your Jobcentre work coach.

## Hire an electric bike for free

Sales of e-bikes are soaring as people want to cut both travel costs and carbon emissions. In North Somerset, a free e-bike and cargo e-bike hire scheme means you can test one before you buy. Businesses which have already taken advantage include Barley Wood Kitchen Garden in Wrington and Hot on Gas in Clevedon.

## Become an active travel champion

Could you promote sustainable travel at your workplace? Active travel champions have access to free resources and support such as maps, personal travel planning sessions, free loan bikes, cycle training (waiting lists may apply) and goodie bags to help spread the word. Visit [www.travelwest.info/for-businesses](http://www.travelwest.info/for-businesses) for current details.

## Get an active travel plan for your workplace

If your business wants to reduce emissions and increase active travel, ask the council about free access to the Modeshift for Business platform. It will support your journey towards national accreditation for your workplace travel plan.

**FIND JOY IN THE JOURNEY**



For more information about any of these workplace schemes email [sustainable.travel@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sustainable.travel@n-somerset.gov.uk) or call Kerry on 01275 884 605.



# Being at home shouldn't mean being at risk

## Domestic abuse cases have risen during the coronavirus pandemic as people have spent more time at home.

Abusers used the pandemic as a tool to increase control while those experiencing it found it harder to reach out to loved ones and support services.

There is never an excuse for domestic abuse, no matter what the circumstances are.

Support continues to be available in North Somerset to all women, men and children who are experiencing domestic abuse, delivered locally through Next Link.

These local services remain open and are there to support anyone who needs it.



Anna\* had been separated from her ex-partner and father of her child for a number of years but still experienced harassment and verbal abuse from him.

His aggressive behaviour intensified during lockdown but Anna felt she couldn't do anything because she didn't want to stop his contact with his child.

She was referred to Next Link through her financial advisor and it became apparent she was struggling with her mental health.

Anna didn't trust her GP so hadn't asked for any support but, after working with Next Link, was able to re-engage with her GP and got referred to other mental health services.

Her child had been out of school because of the trauma but Next Link liaised with the school and offered other support so they could return.

Anna had to rely on her ex-partner for getting essential items and he used this as a means to control and threaten her.

Instead, Next Link helped Anna access a grant so she could buy a car and increase her independence.

Next Link continues to support her with housing options.

Ruby\* contacted Next Link in June last year.

She was living with her partner but it was difficult for her to speak on the phone because he was furloughed so she texted Next Link instead.

Ruby was on maternity leave with a toddler and newborn so was unsure what she wanted at first but knew she didn't want this life.

She was experiencing emotional and psychological abuse, which she'd recently told her GP about.

Next Link helped her recognise the abusive behaviours during one-to-one sessions and advised her on the options available.

Ruby said: "I knew I had to leave but was scared to walk out the door."

She needed lots of emotional support and confidence building but, with support from Next Link, she finally left safely three months after her first contact.

\* Names have been changed

## What is domestic abuse?

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background.

Domestic abuse is not always physical violence. It can also include:

- coercive control and 'gaslighting'
- economic abuse
- online abuse
- threats and intimidation
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse

## What to look out for

If you believe that you or someone else could be a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs that you can look out for.

These include:

- being withdrawn, or being isolated from family and friends
- having bruises, burns or bite marks
- having finances controlled, or not being given enough to buy food or pay bills
- not being allowed to leave the house, or stopped from going to college or work
- having your internet or social media use monitored,

or

someone else reading your texts, emails or letters

- being repeatedly belittled, put down or told you are worthless
- being pressured into sex
- being told that abuse is your fault, or that you're overreacting.



## Codeword scheme launched

Pharmacies have introduced a codeword scheme to provide a safe space for those at risk or suffering from domestic abuse.



If you see a poster displaying Ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) it means they're ready to help.

Just ask for 'Annie' and a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space, a telephone for you to make a call, and ask if you need support from the police or other domestic abuse support services. For more information visit [www.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

If you are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. If you are unable to speak, respond by coughing or tapping the handset.

If calling 999 from a mobile, press 55 to transfer to the police. Pressing 55 only works on mobiles and does not allow the police to track your location.

If you are worried for yourself or someone else, call Next Link on **0800 4700 280** (available 24/7) or access the live chat facility at [www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk/northsomerset](http://www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk/northsomerset)

For a round-up of all support services in North Somerset and discussion forums visit [www.saferstrongerns.co.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.saferstrongerns.co.uk/domesticabuse)







# Work continues to reduce rough sleeper numbers

**More than 130 people in North Somerset have been helped off the streets and into safe accommodation since the coronavirus pandemic began.**

When the first lockdown began last March, the government introduced an 'Everyone In' initiative, a rapid response to accommodate people who were sleeping rough and those living in unsafe conditions who were at risk of sleeping rough.

North Somerset Council has continued this approach ever since and, as a result, by the end of January 134 people had been moved off the streets or prevented from sleeping rough. Of these, 51 successfully moved into permanent, long-term accommodation.

The council continues to work closely with outreach services and local charities and is confident that all those who were sleeping rough or at risk of having to have been identified and offered support.

Unfortunately, some do consistently refuse offers of help but the support will still be there for them if they change their mind.

Frequent checks are made to encourage them to take up the assistance available.

Dave\* was sleeping in his car last winter but is now settled in a house.

He said: **"I want personally to thank you for your compassion, care and the way you reach your hands out. You give everybody a fair act of kindness.**

**"Unfortunately, not everybody takes that reaching hand but if somebody does, it can change their life.**

"Thank you for your company on that long journey from down below."

Successful funding bids by North Somerset Council have allowed services to be commissioned, such as the YMCA outreach team.

The YMCA team identifies people who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping and then refers them to the council, which carries out a housing needs assessment.



Temporary accommodation might be provided, which helps give a sense of safety and self-worth.

The council works quickly to move people with low needs into private rented accommodation, supported housing or help them reconnect with families if they have been estranged.

People with higher needs are referred into supported housing and helped to access services with specialist staff.

Rough sleepers are given priority for vacancies in supported housing, and the council's HomeChoice lettings register has a priority band for rough sleepers.

\* Name has been changed

## Future support

In December North Somerset Council was granted nearly £144,000 through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme. This money was for a new supported social housing scheme, providing three people with emergency accommodation.

The council is also in talks with a local housing association to provide accommodation based on the housing first model, one principle being that everyone has the right to a home.

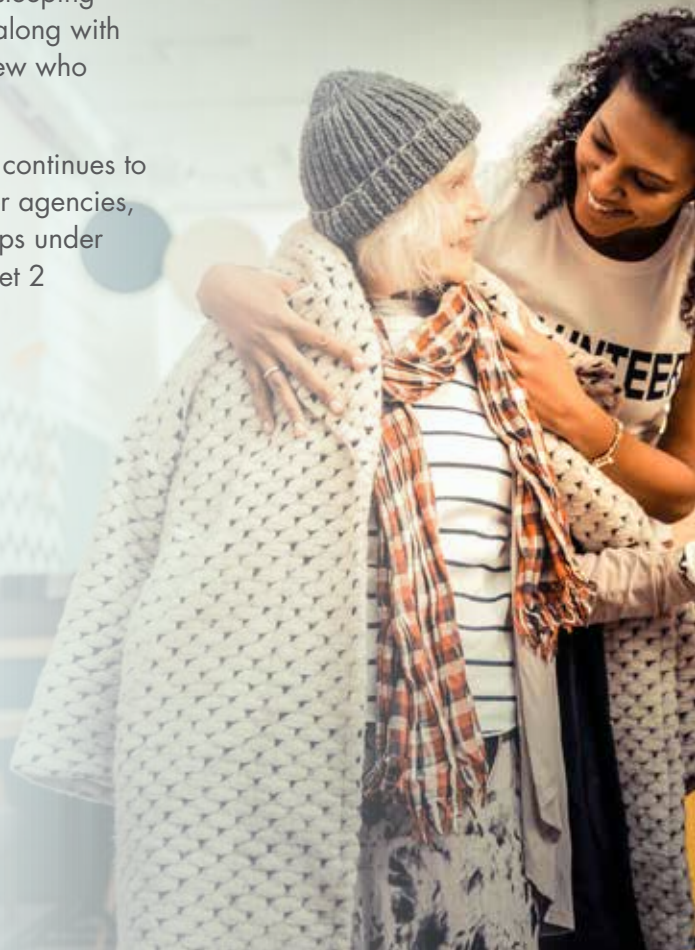
This housing would provide accommodation along with intensive support for people who face multiple disadvantages and have never successfully moved away from rough sleeping.

Preventing future rough sleeping also remains a priority, along with continued work with a few who remain on the streets.

North Somerset Council continues to work closely with partner agencies, faith and voluntary groups under the umbrella group, Street 2 Settled.

Emma Simmonds, from the council's homeless prevention team, said:

**“Breaking the cycle of high-risk behaviour is key to our holistic support as we are aware the issue for many is not just around housing or lack of accommodation.”**



## How you can help...



Are you concerned about someone rough sleeping? Contact StreetLink, the national rough sleeping helpline which alerts local services.

Call 0300 500 0914 or visit [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)

Are you a landlord who would be willing to rent a property to one of the many people needing a home? Contact the council's lettings team on 01934 426 483 or email [lettingsteam@n-somerset.org.uk](mailto:lettingsteam@n-somerset.org.uk)





# Learn new skills this spring



Develop your skills and confidence for work or volunteering and improve your wellbeing through a variety of short courses on offer in North Somerset.

Spring is a time for new beginnings and this could be the perfect opportunity to learn something new.

North Somerset Council's community learning team offers a variety of short courses for adults aged 19 and over to help them get back into learning and explore new opportunities.

Courses are currently held remotely but will take place face-to-face in local venues once coronavirus restrictions allow.

They are designed to give a positive and supportive re-introduction to learning and priority is given to those on certain benefits or with few or no qualifications.

Last year, 75 per cent of people who took a community learning course said it had improved their confidence enough for them to move onto jobs, volunteering, join a club or enroll on another course.

Here's a small selection of courses currently on offer...

## Introduction to British Sign Language

Communicate better with friends, family or customers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Introduction to British Sign Language course is currently held on Zoom.

Tom\* took the course and said: "I wasn't sure how this would work online, and with people I didn't know, but the tutor made it very easy.

"I'm used to face-to-face training so I didn't expect it to be as helpful as it was. Very informative and good to learn about deaf culture too."



## Business Skills (basic and intermediate)

Gain a host of basic IT business skills to help you in your job search.

Learn to use Office 365, Word, Excel and PowerPoint as well as online security and social media awareness.

Samantha\* said: "I was scared at first but ended up wanting to learn more, desperate for more knowledge. I feel great, I am truly grateful for the opportunity."

\* Names have been changed



## Creative Writing Online

Stories help the world go round and lockdown may have helped get those creative juices flowing.

Joanne is still writing now after taking the online creative writing course. She said: "The tutor feedback was brilliant and advice really encouraging.

"I was so grateful for this online course, it kept me going. It definitely mentally stimulated me and encouraged me for the future."



## Face-to-face courses on their way

Face-to-face courses will resume as soon as lockdown restrictions allow. Here are some to look forward to...



### Go into the wild to get your mojo back

Relax your mind and exercise your body on a woodland adventure in North Somerset.

Adults who feel they need to get their motivation back can take advantage of a free five-week course at Gobin Combe Adventure Centre.

Take part in multiple activities, from building campfires

and cooking to archery and orienteering.

Amy\* took this course and said: "I loved it – trying new things, being outdoors, feeling useful. I loved the diversity of the group."

Find out more or book a space by emailing [goblincombeadventure@gmail.com](mailto:goblincombeadventure@gmail.com)



### Develop your artistic talent

Enjoy and develop your creative skills using paint, paper and positive energy by exploring a wealth of art making techniques.

Pauline said: "It was such a lively and enjoyable course with a wonderfully patient teacher.

"I was sad when it ended, it made me want to do another one."

Find out about all the courses on offer by visiting [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitylearningcourses](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitylearningcourses)

For more details about individual courses and to book, email

[community.learning@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:community.learning@n-somerset.gov.uk), or call or text Julie Evans on 07795 390 667.

Participants working remotely will need access to the internet with a PC, laptop or tablet.

For the latest updates visit [www.facebook.com/nsccommunitylearning](https://www.facebook.com/nsccommunitylearning)



# New orders to tackle more anti-social behaviour



New orders to tackle anti-social behaviour and make public spaces in North Somerset more welcoming are being introduced across the area.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were first introduced by North Somerset Council in 2017 to deter individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in public places.

The orders allowed the council and police to deal with low level anti-social behaviour by giving officers the right to issue on-the-spot fines.

They covered issues such as street drinking and irresponsible dog ownership.

The original orders were reviewed and renewed last year, which resulted in some additional requirements being made.

These new orders were bought in following residents' concerns about irresponsible dog ownership and community safety. They went to consultation in December and more than 500 responses were received.

The new and amended orders were due to be approved just after *Life* went to print.

North Somerset Council's environmental health service manager Dee Mawn said: "The powers are used to target specific nuisance behaviours.

"They are not applied in a blanket way against specific groups or behaviour that is not in itself anti-social.

"Normal everyday behaviour that is not having a detrimental effect on the community's quality of life will not be targeted."

There will be a bedding-in period to allow people to get used to the changes.

## Area-wide orders

Existing PSPOs apply to public land in North Somerset.

The orders require the person responsible to:

- ✓ remove dog faeces
- ✓ produce a bag to pick up dog faeces when asked to do so
- ✓ put a dog on a lead when required to do so
- ✓ not litter
- ✓ not urinate or defecate anywhere other than a public toilet
- ✓ not trade on public property without permission
- ✓ stop consuming alcohol or drugs when asked to do so
- ✓ surrender alcohol or drugs when asked to do so.

In addition to these, also require you to:

- ✓ stop playing music or instruments when asked to do so
- ✓ not use or drive a vehicle in a manner likely to cause alarm harassment distress or a public nuisance
- ✓ not park inconsiderately which obstructs waste and recycling lorries and emergency vehicles (warnings will be issued on a trial basis before an order is fully introduced).



# Dog control

New dog control orders are being introduced in the following areas:

- Portbury Ponds, Portbury Nature Reserve – no dogs allowed in the ecological ponds
- Court Hay Playing Field, Easton-in-Gordano – no dogs allowed.

There are currently no proposed changes to the beach in Weston-super-Mare, so it remains closed to dogs between Royal Sands and the Grand Pier from 1 May to 30 September.

However, further consultation will take place about the beach in Weston.

Read more at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/dogcontrol](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/dogcontrol)

Consultation will also take place about dog control orders in the following areas:

- Broadcroft play area, Claverham – no dogs allowed
- Hutton Moor playing fields – all dogs on leads
- Worle recreation ground – all dogs on leads.



# Children's play areas

Within enclosed children's play areas, officers can take action against someone for:

- allowing a dog in the children's play area
- smoking in a children's play area.

This PSPO has now been extended to include skate parks, and two new restrictions have been added:

- consuming alcohol in the play area or skate park
- lighting a fire or barbeque in the play area or skate park.



# Abbots Pool

Popular nature reserve Abbots Pool, in Abbots Leigh, was closed last year because of environmental damage and anti-social behaviour.

Many people visited the pool last summer but anti-social activities got considerably worse in the hot weather and were potentially dangerous and a risk to public health.

As a result, a new PSPO now means swimming, bathing, wading or jumping into the pool is prohibited.

This includes using boats, dinghy's, canoes, sailboards or inflatables in or on the water.

The impact of this PSPO will be closely monitored to see if further consultation is necessary.

# Public buildings

Officers can take action against someone who behaves in a manner which causes annoyance or a nuisance in a number of council buildings, including leisure centres, recycling centres and venues such as the Tropicana.

The fine for breaching a PSPO is £75, reduced to £50 if paid within 10 days.



Find out more about PSPOs at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/pspo](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/pspo)



# Caring for the carers

Do you look after someone who wouldn't be able to manage without your help?

There are more than 22,000 unpaid carers in North Somerset but most don't label themselves as such.

Instead, they are the family members or friends doing what they can to help someone who's struggling.

However, it's very common for people with caring responsibilities to overlook their own needs.

Support is available across North Somerset if this sounds like you.

## Plan for a crisis

Are you concerned about what would happen to the person you look after if you were unavailable?

Contingency plans can be put in place through the Carers Emergency Response Scheme to ensure support continues in a crisis.

The scheme is run by Carelink, the council's 24-hour response service.

To sign up, call Carelink on **01275 888 801** or email [carelink@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:carelink@n-somerset.gov.uk)

# Looking after someone with dementia

## Practical advice for all ages

**Practical and financial advice, as well as emotional support, is available for carers of all ages.**

Alliance Homes runs the Carers Support Alliance, a tailored scheme offering both individual support and monthly programmes for people to meet other carers.

A book club, coffee morning, Facebook support group, art club and more are all currently running virtually.

Employment help is also available because research shows that without support, one-in-six carers either end up reducing their hours at work or stop altogether to care for a loved one.

This might include help with CV writing and interview skills, or advice about volunteering.

During the pandemic many carers have also had help accessing online courses.

Free resources are available to local businesses, funded by North Somerset Council and Alliance Homes.

More than 50 local companies have signed up to Employers for Carers, giving access to advice and support for unpaid carers in their workforce.

Find out more about the support on offer by emailing [carersupport@alliancehomes.org.uk](mailto:carersupport@alliancehomes.org.uk), calling **03000 120 120** or visiting [www.alliancehomes.org.uk](http://www.alliancehomes.org.uk)

**Support workers from the Alzheimer's Society are ready to help people affected by dementia and their carers.**

Post-diagnosis support gives people better access to health services, their community, housing and more, as well as providing crucial emotional support.

Tailored plans are currently made virtually or over the telephone, providing a lifeline for people during the pandemic.

Popular classes such as Singing for the Brain, carers groups, memory cafés and activity groups are all now done on Zoom.

Call the Dementia Connect support line on **0333 150 3456** or visit [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

## Caring can be lonely

**Loneliness and isolation are felt by eight out of 10 carers but a support service for the over-50s can help combat this.**

North Somerset Community Connect can advise about activities taking place in the local area, how to get more involved in your local community, and ways of using your skills and experiences to help others.

Call Community Connect on **01275 888 803** or **01934 888 803** (available 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday), or email [communityconnect@curogroup.co.uk](mailto:communityconnect@curogroup.co.uk)

GPs can also help so don't be afraid to describe how you feel. Your doctor may refer you to someone within the practice or to Community Connect.

## Call the council for advice

**A dedicated telephone line is available to call if you have any questions about adult social care and health.**

Care Connect advisers can help you:

- access support to continue living at home
- get a care and support assessment for the person you look after
- get a respite break from caring duties
- source equipment and home adaptations
- get an assessment of your own needs as a carer.

Carers assessments are currently done over the phone to assess the impact that providing care has on your own life.

It's an opportunity to think about what might support you might need and how the council can help you access it.

Find out more by calling **01275 888 801** or email [care.connect@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:care.connect@n-somerset.gov.uk)

# Simple saving solutions

## The pandemic has brought serious financial challenges for many people.

With most people spending more time at home, there has never been a better time to have a fresh look at your income and outgoings.

Getting your finances in order might seem daunting but it could dramatically increase the amount of money you have left over each month.

Here are some ideas to get you started...

## Shopping

- Plan your weekly meal menu before shopping to minimise waste
- Use money-off vouchers and discounts, through store loyalty cards or smartphone voucher apps.
- Look out for multi-buy offers such as three for £10
- Try haggling over big-ticket items, such as car dealers or travel agents
- Consider buying second-hand items such as clothing on ebay or through social media
- Buy supermarket own brands
- Avoid shopping in convenience stores which are often more expensive
- Cut down on meat or try cheaper cuts. Avoid diced meat packs which are usually more expensive
- Avoid expensive ready meals. Cooking your own is cheaper and healthier

- Buy in bulk when it is cheaper. Always check the price per kg/unit in order to make sure you get the best deal
- Visit [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com) for left-over recipe ideas.

## Money

- Go through your finances and draw up an income and expenditure chart. Look for any unnecessary spending
- Sign up to e-billing on the council's website to view and download your latest council tax bill, view your billing history and receive information by email.  
[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount)
- People on a low income or claiming benefits can get support to help pay council tax. Visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/counciltax)
- Go over your paperwork and make a note of all the financial anniversaries, such as home insurance renewal or the car's MOT. Shop around for better deals using price comparison websites
- Have a sort out and make money by selling unwanted items on ebay or on social media platforms
- Transfer your debt – if you're making large interest payments, it might make financial sense to transfer it all onto a credit card with a 0 per cent balance-transfer deal. Visit [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com) for the latest deals.

- Check you're on the right tax code at [www.gov.uk/tax-codes](http://www.gov.uk/tax-codes)
- Claim all the tax reliefs you're entitled to. Visit [www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators](http://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators) or contact North Somerset Citizen Advice Bureau on [www.nscab.org.uk](http://www.nscab.org.uk) or **03444 111 444**
- Review all your direct debits and cancel any that are unnecessary
- Get a better mobile phone deal – look at your monthly averages to make sure your call, text, and data bundles are suitable. If your contract has finished consider a sim only deal.

## Around the home

- Turn down the heating – reducing room temperatures by just 1°C could cut heating bills by 10 per cent
- Consider installing a smart meter to track your energy use
- If you are working at home consider using a small electrical heater to heat the room you are in rather than heating the whole home
- Install insulation – find out if you're eligible for a grant or discount for loft or cavity wall insulation.
- Have a free, online home-energy check on the Energy Saving Trust website, [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)
- Genuine energy debt could be cleared through a grant. Contact Talking Money on [www.talkingmoney.org.uk](http://www.talkingmoney.org.uk) or **0117 954 3990**



- Low cost loans of up to £5,000 are available for first-time buyers in North Somerset to help with moving costs, such as removals or legal fees. Visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/firsttimebuyers](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/firsttimebuyers)

## Leisure

- When restrictions allow swap private sports centre membership to a public leisure centre run on behalf of North Somerset Council. [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/leisurecentres](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/leisurecentres)
- Consider a free form of exercise such as running, walking or cycling
- Adults in Weston-super-Mare can get free health advice through the Health Trainers service. Email [health.trainers@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:health.trainers@n-somerset.gov.uk)
- Instead of buying books, why not join the library? Choose from more than 2.5 million items and borrow and reserve for free. [www.librarieswest.org.uk](http://www.librarieswest.org.uk)
- Free eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines are also available from [www.librarieswest.org.uk](http://www.librarieswest.org.uk)
- Would you like a new hobby? Try researching your family history using the Ancestry database or research local history resources in your local library.
- When restrictions allow, eat out off-peak or join a dining club for discounts in restaurants
- Try cycling or walking short distances instead of using the car. For cycle routes and ideas visit [www.betterbybike.info](http://www.betterbybike.info)



# Get the right permission for your garden revamp

**Warmer weather means more time in our gardens and if you're thinking of revamping your fences or walls then make sure you get the right permission first.**

There is a common misunderstanding that you only need planning permission to change your fences, gates and walls if you live in a conservation area or for a listed building.

However, depending on the height of the structure, you need to apply for permission wherever you live.

Unfortunately, North Somerset Council has received increased reports of planning breaches where fences have been put up without planning permission.

To stay within the rules, you need to apply for planning permission for any fence, gate or wall which is:

- more than one metre in height when next to a highway with traffic
- more than two metres in height anywhere else on the property.



Extra controls are also in place in conservation areas to preserve the special architectural and historic character.

If you live in a conservation area you need to apply for planning permission when you are:

- demolishing any gate, wall or fence more than one metre in height next to a highway, public footpath, bridleway, waterways or area of open space
- demolishing any gate, wall or fence more than two metres in height anywhere else
- installing any gate, wall or fence as stated above.

Certain boundary treatments can be inappropriate if they harm the character of a historic conservation areas so other options might be more beneficial and help improve the look of your street.



## Why not plant a hedge along your boundary?

A 'living' fence (permanent hedge) does not require planning permission and is great for maintaining the character of an area and being more ecological-friendly within the urban space.



Hedges are also less expensive, they absorb carbon as they grow, provide privacy and can also provide food and shelter for local wildlife.

Native species such as hawthorn, hazel, beech, yew and holly are just some of the varieties you could choose.



Find out more about planning in North Somerset by visiting

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planning-building-control](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planning-building-control)

See where the conservations areas are in North Somerset by visiting

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/heritagemap](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/heritagemap)





# North Somerset Life

North Somerset *Life* is published by North Somerset Council and delivered to 100,000 households.

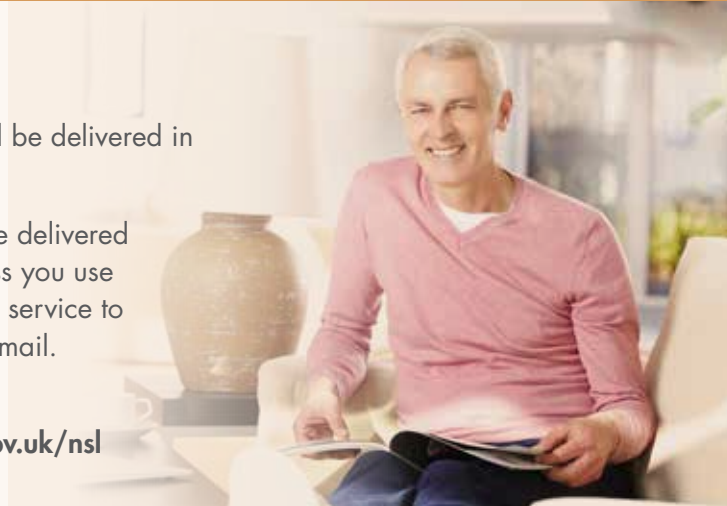
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For waste and recycling, road issues, planning and building control: <b>01934 888 802</b> (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)	For council tax and benefits: <b>01934 888 144</b> (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
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## Tide times



**Check tide times online at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/tidetimes](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/tidetimes)**

Tide predictions are computed by the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory and adjusted for Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and British Summer Time (BST) differences.

- For Clevedon – add 10 minutes.
- For Portishead – add 18 minutes.



Walks in the area are available to view and download at **www.n-somerset.gov.uk/walks**

30150 0221



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[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/bookrapidtest](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/bookrapidtest)

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for helping stop the spread of  
Covid-19 in North Somerset

**Remember**, if you develop Covid symptoms you must cancel your rapid test, self-isolate, and book a symptomatic test at [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)



Wash hands



Cover face



Make space

