

## **Somerset County Councillor's Report to Wells City Council November 2021**

I offered my apologies as I was unable to attend the WCC full Council meeting on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021. As usual, much of my time as your County Councillor has been focused on casework, particularly relating to Highways matters including parking, potholes, paving problems and vehicle access as a result of roadworks and road closures; inadequate housing, and an unsuccessful application to Historic England to list a 'Tea House' in Lovers' Walk, the skatepark and the Portway Annexe, amongst other issues.

### **Meetings attended since Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 (WCC full Council two months ago)**

- 24.09.2021 Somerset Waste Board
- 30.09.2021 SCC Place Scrutiny Emergency Call-In meeting
  
- 04.10.2021 SCC Scrutiny for Children & Families Committee meeting
- 12.10.2021 SCC Place Scrutiny meeting
- 14.10.2021 SCC Shadow Cabinet & Chief Executive's briefing
- 14.10.2021 SCC Economic & Community Infrastructure team briefing
- 15.10.2021 Meeting with the SCC Director of Children's Services
- 22.10.2021 SCC Constitution & Standards Committee workshop
- 26.10.2021 SCC Black Lives Matter training
- 27.10.2021 SCC Shadow Cabinet & Senior Leadership Team briefing
- 29.10.2021 SCC Somerset Covid 19 Engagement Board meeting
  
- 01.11.2021 SCC Local Government Re-Organisation in Somerset meeting
- 02.11.2021 SCC Place Scrutiny meeting
- 03.11.2021 SCC Scrutiny for Adults & Health Committee meeting
- 03.11.2021 Meeting with the SCC Director of Children's Services and senior officers re Education arrangements for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- 03.11.2021 SCC Social Media training
- 04.11.2021 SCC Member Safety Briefing from Avon & Somerset Police
- 05.11.2021 Local Government Review Joint Committee (first meeting)
- 08.11.2021 SCC Scrutiny for Children & Families Committee meeting
- 11.11.2021 SCC Shadow Cabinet & Chief Executive's briefing
- 11.11.2021 WCC Planning & Environment Committee meeting
- 11.11.2021 WCC Finance & Council matters meeting
- 12.11.2021 SCC Constitution & Standards Committee meeting
- 12.01.2021 SCC Joint Scrutiny briefing
- 17.11.2021 SCC Best Practice Scrutiny Member training
- 17.11.2021 SCC Economic & Community Infrastructure team briefing

1. The SCC Chief Executive has re-launched a newsletter for Councillors, including the following updates:

#### **Message from the SCC Chief Executive:**

*"As discussions and planning for Local Government Reform (LGR) continue, we are looking at the impact this will have on the current programmes of work – so what programme or projects will need to*

*be stopped, adapted, paused or rolled into or adopted by one to the LGR workstreams to fit the needs of a new council. There will obviously be some programmes that will be needed as part of our MTFP [Medium Term Financial Plan] work and the improvement programmes in Children's [Social Care] and Adults [Social Care].*

*However, it is important that we don't simply think of the move to a unitary council as a streamlining of current council services. It presents a real opportunity to transform how we deliver public services across the county. We won't simply be merging council websites, for example, we'll be looking at how we can transform digital engagement with Somerset residents and businesses. Following this logic, we will need to look at how we can use the move to unitary to explore how we can work with district colleagues to provide a different sort of service to residents and service users.*

*LGR [Local Government Re-organisation] and the impact of covid will continue to take a lot of our time, so we need to make sure we are applying resources wisely and that decisions made now will not need to be revisited next year.*

*On to the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan)... We are on target to balance the budget, but we need continue to be careful with our spending. The budget gap for 2022/23 is now £7.8m (down from £12.4m) so we still have work to do to make sure we're in a strong position when moving to the new authority, especially with the ongoing pressures on our adult and children's services. We are in the process of agreeing a 'set of rules' to govern our finance and HR [Human Resources] arrangements over the next 18 months, to make sure we can protect our staff and avoid unnecessary redundancies.*

*The Chancellor did offer more positive news in his Autumn Statement last week, but as ever we await the detail in the financial settlement, due in early December. What we do know is that we have the option to increase council tax by 1.99 per cent with the additionally 1 per cent precept for Adult Social Care.*

## **2. Other items:**

### **Somerset Local Government Re-Organisation Committee**

The first meeting of the Somerset LGR Joint Committee took place on Friday 5 November in the Council Chamber at Mendip District Council – the agenda and reports for the meeting can be downloaded from [LGR Joint Committee - agenda and reports](#).

Further details on the Committees functions and membership can be found at [LGR Joint Committee - Information](#), with further details available in the Committees [Terms of Reference](#).

The Committee also has a forward plan, which can be accessed here [LGR Joint Committee - Forward Plan](#).

Future meeting dates will be agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 5 November, proposed future meeting dates are:

- Friday 17 December 2021
- Friday 4 February 2022
- Friday 18 March 2022

All meetings will start at 2pm and will be held in a committee room at one of the partnership authorities.

## **Somerset's Integrated Care Board Chief Executive Designate confirmed**

Jonathan Higman is selected as the Chief Executive Designate of the future Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) following a robust recruitment process. Jonathan became Chief Executive of Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in November 2017 and held a number of Director level posts. From April 2022, Jonathan will oversee greater partnership working between the NHS, councils and voluntary sector partners, leading the way to improved health, care and wellbeing for everyone in Somerset. The appointment is part of the transformation of the Somerset Integrated Care System (ICS) to become a statutory body by April 2022.

## **Proud to Care**

We're asking people to help in asking people to help in whatever way they can to support care in their community. We urgently need to fill social care vacancies in the midst of a national staffing crisis. Please help us to spread the word, and if you know anyone who can help, ask them to visit [www.proudtocaresomerset.org.uk/jobs](http://www.proudtocaresomerset.org.uk/jobs) to find out more.

## **Flu vaccinations**

If you're over 50 (or will be) by the end of March 2022, or in any of the at-risk cohorts, you can get a free vaccination via the NHS at either a GP run clinic or at a pharmacy. Somerset County Council is also covering the cost of the flu vaccination, which is available at selected pharmacies, for our staff not covered by the NHS. Flu remains a serious disease, especially if caught with coronavirus and our NHS is already very stretched, and flu is one of the winter pressures we all need to minimise.

## **Volunteering**

A new Facebook page has been launched by the Central Volunteer Team to keep people informed about SCC's volunteer opportunities, key updates and good news stories. Please feel free to like the page and spread the word about it: [Volunteering at Somerset County Council | Facebook](#). More information here: [Volunteering team launches new Facebook page | Somerset County Council Newsroom \(somersetnewsroom.com\)](#).

## **Climate Change**

We've recently launched the new Climate Emergency webpage [Climate Emergency \(somerset.gov.uk\)](http://ClimateEmergency(somerset.gov.uk)), which will provide a hub for anyone wanting information about Somerset's work towards tackling climate change. The new website includes the latest environmental news for Somerset, information and tips for individuals and organisations on how they can reduce their carbon footprints, and details about the actions Somerset's Local Authorities are taking.

## **Domestic abuse and modern slavery learning modules**

New free online resources are now available for both professionals and the public to help spot the signs and reduce the risk of becoming a victim of domestic abuse and modern slavery. This new range of online learning modules will give professionals further confidence on how to respond and support victims, families and children. To access the professional suite of modules, visit: <https://practitioners.somersetsurvivors.co.uk/>. To access the learning modules for public, visit: <https://training.somersetsurvivors.co.uk/>.

## Traffic signals recovery programme

The programme will be moving to sites in Wells next year.

## Alcohol Awareness Week 15 – 20 November

The theme this year is alcohol and relationships. Alcohol can become a central part of our relationship with loved ones. This can stop us from taking action on our drinking habits, even when those habits are not making us happy. We are promoting the following articles, signposting to Somerset Drugs and Alcohol Service on social media and Taboola, please share:

- [8 top tips for healthier drinking and happier relationships | Somerset County Council Newsroom \(somersetnewsroom.com\)](#)
- [Sober after a twenty-year addiction | Somerset County Council Newsroom \(somersetnewsroom.com\)](#)
- [10 top tips to help reduce your alcohol consumption | Somerset County Council Newsroom \(somersetnewsroom.com\)](#)
- [Help is at hand if alcohol affects relationships | Somerset County Council Newsroom \(somersetnewsroom.com\)](#)

## Children's Services update:

- Somerset's first carbon neutral school. A new £7.3m 420-place primary school in Taunton is set to become Somerset's first net zero carbon school, and only the third 'passivhaus' school in the south west. Construction on the school is due to start in April 2022 with delivery planned for the start of the 2023/24 academic year. For more information, visit: [Somerset's first carbon neutral school](#)
- Somerset County Council has invested in 50 AV1 robots to support students who can't be in school – whether it's because they are sick or overcoming physical or mental health challenges. We are encouraging schools to use the robots and are working to raise awareness of them within parents and carers, so if they feel the robots would be of benefit to their child that they ask the school to use them. For more information, visit: [Children replaced by robots in hi-tech boost for learning](#)
- Supporting women and helping to reduce the number of children in care. Somerset County Council highlighted the work of its practice 'Pause Somerset' at an event at the [Nelson Trust Women's Centre](#) in Bridgwater. An initial scoping exercise demonstrated the need for Pause in Somerset, identifying 83 women who between them had 226 children removed and taken into care. For more information, visit: [Supporting women and helping to reduce the number of children in care](#)
- Survey launched to shape Somerset services and support for young Carers. There are an estimated 1,750 young carers in Somerset but the Council is only aware of, and providing support to, around 330. The surveys – aimed at young carers and anyone who knows them – are running until Sunday 21 November. For more information, visit [Survey launched to shape Somerset services and support for young carers](#)

## 3. Information Sheets

Information Sheets for County Councillors are published regularly. In the last month, the following have been made available:

Somerset's £3.6m of community Renewal Funding

Appointment of Homes2Inspire as our Strategic Partner to Deliver Children's Homes, High Needs Foster  
LGR Advisory Board  
Somerset Domestic Homicide Review Publication of Case 021  
COVID-19 in educational settings

Please let me know if you'd like further information.

#### 4. Economic & Community Infrastructure briefing – October 2021

As promised, below is a copy of the monthly Report from the Economic & Community Infrastructure team at SCC. Any additions from me are in square brackets and are there only to improve accessibility. I have not edited the Report to make it relevant only to matters which concern Wells, as I thought it might assist the City's Councillors to know what work was ongoing and in scope for this single Directorate at SCC.

#### **Economy and Planning**

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**Ecology** - The Ecology team has been working to implement badger licences received from Natural England over recent week to legally enable repair works for SCC Highways and Schools before the end of November 2021. The team is also responsible for attending sites where required to provide ecological advice for various protected species; last month an emergency 'call-out' to a structures site in Wedmore resulted in the rescue of two juvenile grass snakes, which were successfully released into a suitably safe area away from construction works, to enable these to proceed as planned within the expected timeframe. The team is currently working with District Council partners on an improvement plan to address the backlog of planning applications. Measures include a new tracking system for casework and the introduction of regular 'surgery' sessions with planners to share learning, build relationships and improve service delivery.

**Development Management** - A large application for the reopening of Bartletts Quarry (part of the Coleman complex) which may have been headed for a Public Inquiry was given consent in line with officer recommendation at the most recent meeting of SCC's Regulation Committee. We are now waiting for the Judicial Review period to expire so that we can have confidence that a Public Inquiry is not required.

**Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) and Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)** – Both of these monitoring reports play an important evidence base to support SCC's review of the Somerset Minerals Plan and the Somerset Waste Core Strategy. Both have been prepared in conjunction with our appointed consultants BPP. The draft LAA is due to be submitted shortly to the South West Aggregate Working Party (AWP) and other regional AWP's for peer review. A 6-week consultation period shall then follow before preparation of the final LAA report for publication early in 2022. A draft report of the AMR is currently being reviewed by officers. "Refresher" training for members of SCC's Regulation Committee the LAA, AMR and the Aggregate Mineral Survey 2019 was provided following the committee's October 2021 meeting.

**Waste Planning Policy** - The planning policy team is working with officers from other Waste Planning Authorities across the region through the South West Waste Technical Advisory Body (TAB). The TAB is currently developing an updated topic paper on residual waste management, providing latest data

available on landfill and energy from waste capacity within the South West. The TAB is also working on a number of other initiatives, to consider how WPAs across the region can develop consistent approaches to Duty to Cooperate on waste planning matters and data reporting (construction, demolition and excavation waste arisings and production of recycled aggregate).

**Regulation of Hinkley Point** - The planning service attended the inaugural meeting arranged by the Environment Agency (EA) on the regulation of Hinkley Point. The EA propose to hold these meetings with stakeholders biannually following a format used for other sites of high public interest (meetings have been held at Sizewell and Bradwell since 2018). Site updates were jointly presented by EA and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) inspectors and gave an holistic overview of EA/ONR involvement with all three sites (A/B/C stations) and as such, the meeting format complements rather than duplicates the Hinkley Point Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) meetings which are facilitated by the operators of A and B stations (Magnox and EDF) only.

**Enforcement** - The enforcement team continues to investigate issues relating to breaches of planning and rights of way legislation and resolve cases of unauthorised occupations on SCC owned land and the public highway. This month's main event was work in conjunction with Property Services officers and a team of specialist High Court enforcement officers to recover possession of an SCC owned field in Glastonbury. Throughout the summer the field was occupied by around 50 trespassers; this was reduced by about half after SCC obtained a court order requiring the occupants to leave. Enforcement of the order was necessary when the remainder refused to leave. Recovery of the land was achieved in a carefully planned operation and the site secured to minimise risk of re-occupation. A substantial clean-up operation is required, including the removal of human and animal waste and dirty syringes.

## **Economic Development**

**SCC Economic Recovery Fund** - SCC's cabinet meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June approved the creation of a £6 million economic recovery fund to provide support for businesses and individuals affected by the economic implications of Covid 19 and to invest in longer term recovery measures. Significant progress is being made with the implementation of initial measures financed by the fund. Application rounds for the restart grants scheme (for anchor events and businesses, particularly linked to the visitor economy) and the rural renaissance grant scheme (to support rural services businesses) have now closed and applications received are now being processed. Officer non key decisions have been made to progress a package of support for businesses in the care sector, a financial support scheme for self employed people who have not benefitted from Government support measures and small grants to assist young people and residents of less advantaged communities secure employment.

**Community Renewal Fund (CRF)** – An announcement is expected in November 2021 with a potentially extended spending timeframe into summer 2022. SCC submitted Somerset's CRF bid to Government on 18<sup>th</sup> June for 18 schemes totalling £7.7 million.

**Somerset Skills for Growth Project** – SCC has secured European Social Funds for this scheme and we will be contracting with our first cohort of training providers over the next couple of weeks. This will enable delivery of the first element of training branded "Skill Up Springboard". The £4.156m programme is focused on upskilling those in employment across Somerset to support their career progression or movement into alternative employment. Skill Up Springboard will focus on delivering small taster courses to encourage and educate employees and employers about progression routes

while introducing learning into workplaces. The second element of the programme is aimed at upskilling SCC employees and will likely begin in the new year.

**Somerset Virtual Careers Fair** - 6,600 registered for this event which took place on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021. It included an employment hall, where businesses were able to advertise current vacancies to young people and other individuals seeking work. Further information will be available once the virtual platform closes on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**Bootcamps** Wave 2 Technical and Digital Skills Bootcamps are now in delivery until the end of March 2022 when the Wave 2 programme ends. The Skills Bootcamps are 12 to 16 week training programmes with training providers, colleges and/or employers. The various Skills Bootcamps cover a wide variety of in-demand skills and everyone who completes the training is matched with a guaranteed job interview. In Somerset there are currently 8 Digital Skills Bootcamps and 22 Technical Skills Bootcamps due to complete before March 2022. Discussions are underway with DfE for a Wave 3 which will potentially see the programme extended for a further 12 months (subject to application).

**Connecting Devon and Somerset** –The programme continues to extend the superfast broadband network in hard-to-reach areas where there is no commercial provider. Six 2020 contracts have been mobilised over the past 6 -9 months, securing resources to deliver the contracts. Work has commenced on detailed survey and design work and first design milestones have been received in some “Lots” and have passed assurance. Further “Lots” will be due to complete milestones in the next quarter. Some early milestones have not yet been achieved, in part due to competing commercial activity in areas where market suppliers had previously indicated they did not intend to build. For commercial and value for money reasons this means in some cases it will not be appropriate to continue with subsidised build and resources will be diverted to other unserved areas. Once design milestones are achieved suppliers will then move forward to begin build. Openreach identified the possibility of costs overruns in its designs for Dulverton and paused its activity. Following a deep dive review, Openreach established that the forecast cost overruns stemmed from it mistakenly including additional premises in its analysis. Openreach has apologised for this error which has resulted in a minimum 6-month delay to the contract being delivered.

**Enterprise Centres and Grow on Space** – Construction work for Bruton centre commenced in August 2020 and build completion is expected in November 2021. Work is continuing to secure full planning permission for the first stages of the Chard Enterprise Park (small office space and light industrial “grow on” space respectively). Confirmation has now been received from MHCLG about the award of £1.75 million of European Regional Development fund grant funding for this development. Preliminary investigations are continuing with SCC Property Services into the feasibility of repurposing existing SCC property assets in Glastonbury as an enterprise hub. Following the Government’s announcement about the Town Deal feasibility work is commencing to develop the full business case for the Glastonbury centre.

**Innovation Centres** – Following construction completion, fit out of the iAero Centre is continuing. Furnishing of the shared and back-office space will be completed by early November 2021, following which the centre will become operational. Work has started to recruit a Centre Manager for iAero, who will be responsible for delivering the centre’s vision, as well as overseeing the day-to-day operation and management of the centre. An official opening event for the centre will be planned for early 2021. Work is also continuing to progress Somerset Digital Innovation Centre scheme at the Firepool site in Taunton. SCC has successfully secured the final £1.7m of ERDF monies needed to deliver the project.

A construction contract has been signed with Wilmott Dixon, who will commence works on site in autumn 2021. A commencement of construction ceremony/photo opportunity is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> November, to include key personnel from SCC, SWT and the LEP.

**Somerset Education Business Partnership (EBP)** - A bid for future funding for the EBP has been submitted to the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency and we are awaiting the outcome.

### **Devon, Somerset, Plymouth, and Torbay Joint Trading Standards Service**

**Awards** - The joint service's Raising Awareness of Mental Health & Wellbeing in Our Rural Communities Project operated through the Trading Standards Farming Partnership (TSFP) won in October the Chartered Trading Standards Institute national award for Most Outstanding Trading Standards Project 2021. The TSFP brings together a diverse range of partners and in 2020/2021 focussed on highlighting and improving mental health and wellbeing as a headline project. A series of webinars have been conducted and mental health first aid training has been provided to officers carrying out animal health work. This means they are better equipped to recognise and deal with any mental welfare concerns of the farmers they come into contact with as part of their daily work.

**Enforcement** - A builder from Tiverton working across Devon and Somerset has been jailed as a result of enforcement action by the joint service. The individual pleaded guilty at Exeter Crown Court to fraudulent trading relating to taking up-front deposits for building work which was either never started or never finished. Customers would continue to make payments in desperation, hoping that he would complete the work. He regularly changed business names and used aliases to hide his identity and confuse customers. The service has a large ongoing investigation into the illegal importation, microchipping, breeding, advertisement and supply of dogs. The aim of the investigation is to disrupt this criminal activity and take appropriate enforcement action. The activities currently being investigated could give rise to possible offences under the Animal Health and Welfare and Consumer Protection legislation and under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. Entry warrants have been executed at several properties and investigations are continuing.

**Prevention and Business Support** - The Heart of the South West Growth Hub has worked with BBfA (Better Business for All) and the joint Trading Standards to assist in the production of business toolkits relating to Transition from the EU and Covid-19 compliance. They have also supported webinars on these topics and others including allergens in food. The safety at sports grounds work of the service was audited by the Safety at Sports Grounds Authority. The report was very positive, recognising the professionalism and approach of our staff and the support we had provided to venues as Covid restrictions rapidly and radically altered the operating procedures they could use.

## Highways and Transport

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### Strategic Planning and Commissioning

Cabinet approved the initial bus service improvement plan (BSIP), and terms of reference for a Bus Advisory Board and these were submitted to Government along with a circa £163m bid to DfT for bus improvement funds. Taunton Bus Station options study was progressed to inform the BSIP.

- SCC developed and issued a notice to the Market for provision of a bus electrification/ alternative fuels feasibility study.
- We commissioned an e-bike rental feasibility study.
- SCC commissioned development of a policy and service specification for dealing with on-street charging and management of residents EV cables.
- We finalised the broad Shape/scope of proposed future highways contracts to inform forthcoming decisions about a new procurement process.
- SCC implemented new terms of reference for a joint active travel group with the Districts.
- We continued finalising the business case for the A38 Major Road Network scheme from M5J22 to Bristol Airport.
- SCC received the draft report reviewing the carbon impact of our whole highways and transport programme.

### Highway Maintenance

#### Highway Lighting

Our Term Maintenance Contractor SSE will be rebranded in November following Aurelius buy out of SSE Lighting Services that took place in June. All vehicles and staff uniforms will be updated. All telephone and online reporting will remain the same. The Highway Lighting Team in conjunction with our Contractor will be informing the residents of Somerset via various media platforms.

#### Highway Inspections, Legal and Enforcement

- Planned highway inspections are currently on programme.
- 87.55% of Category 1 safety defects repaired on time in September 2021 (273 defects identified, 239 repaired on time, 34 repaired late).
- 9,867 carriageway potholes have been repaired from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021. This compares to 8,309 potholes for the same period last year.
- A major scheme to remove dead and diseased trees suffering from ash dieback has taken place on A37 Bristol Road, Gurney Slade Lane, on the Mendip Hills.

#### Structural Maintenance Programme

The rolling resurfacing programme continues with schemes completed in the past month and those planned for the current month listed below:

- The main Surface Dressing (SD) programme ran through August and into early September and is now concluded. Preparatory works have begun for next year's surface dressing main programme due to take place in summer 2022.
- The main micro-surfacing programme took place in September and is now concluded.
- A trial of the Roadmaster/Dragon Patcher high-velocity patching machine is currently ongoing in the Sedgemoor and Taunton areas, and is due to run through October, ending in the first week of November. This is a vehicle mounted machine that is able to repair a high volume of carriageway defects by spraying a heated thin-course bituminous material directly onto defects at high velocity to quickly achieve high compaction that provides a robust and efficient alternative to conventional patching.
- Furthermore, a retexturing treatment of carriageway surface courses took place in Somerset West and Taunton through September and October and is now concluded.

## **Resurfacing and Machine Laid Patching**

### **Works Completed during September and October**

- Trull Road, Taunton – evenings.
- A37 Dorchester Road – nights.
- Magdalene Street and Duke Street, Taunton – evenings.
- Marsh Lane, Huntworth – evenings.
- Bridge Street, Taunton – evenings – One week of preps (evenings) followed by two weeks of resurfacing.
- RS005840 A39 Carhampton - evenings – SRA scheme.
- A39 Bath Road (Holywell Road to Scotts Lane) – nights.

### **Works Planned for November**

- B3151 Meare Road, Yeovil - preparatory works through November, with resurfacing in first week of December.
- B3135 Roemead Road & A37, Binegar.
- A3088 Cartgate Link Road, Tintinhull.
- A359 Mudford Road & B3148 Sherborne Road, Marston Magna.
- B3090 Frome Road/Bath Street, Frome.

### **Winter and Emergency Service Area**

- Gritter route programming has been completed with route uploads to vehicle GPS systems in progress.
- All salt barns are now full with the exception of Dunball currently half full following barn repairs. Dunball Salt delivery expected 1<sup>st</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> November.
- The Emergency and Adverse Weather Plan has been circulated and the operational pre-season briefing was delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to service and contract personnel.
- The official start date of Highways Winter Service was 15<sup>th</sup> October and winter treatment decision posting commenced.

## **Routine and Environment Management**

Annual programmes of weed treatment and verge maintenance have drawn to a close. The annual hedge trimming works programme is now underway (October '21 – December '21).

- SCC and Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) planned gully emptying works programmes continue on course for in-year completion.
- SCC have submitted a number of bids to the SRA to enhance the current levels of service. Bids have focused on:
  - Gully emptying,
  - Drain jetting,
  - Silt trap emptying,
  - Trash Screen clearance and
  - A small number of site specific sites.
- SCC has secured funding from the SRA over a numbers of year for several large capital funded schemes (e.g. £250k at Carhampton). The focus is now very much on the successful delivery of those schemes for the SRA. For example, the Carhampton scheme has now been completed..

## **Bridges and Structures**

- The Structures Office continue to pursue a diverse array of activities in respect of renewal, maintenance and repair of the county's bridge and retaining wall stock.
- Significant activities are also being considered in respect of natural liabilities like the Cleeve Hill Cliff, near Watchet, where stability of the highway is of concern.
- Various contracts are at tender stage with designs for other schemes, large and small, being undertaken.
- The inspection of the bridge stock remains on going with commissions targeting specific structures and structure types.

## **Rights of Way**

- Mead Lane footbridge, West Lydford (design and build), plus installations of two large footbridges at Oake, are almost complete. This will reopen footpaths that have been closed for several years due to unsafe/ missing bridges.
- The Warden team continue to be under significant pressure with a record number of reports from the public and a current reduction staff resource. Recruitment is underway to bolster numbers.
- Volunteer recruitment continuing – over 100 recruited since April 2021.

## **Small Schemes Programme**

As at 25<sup>th</sup> October a total of 263 schemes have been completed since the SIS programme began, 10 are currently at construction, 33 are in the design/ feasibility phase with additional 2 now in the commissioning phase.

Of the 6 schemes that remain from the pre 2017/2018 applications all 3 remain in the design stage for quite specific reasons, but are progressing.

Of the 2017/2018 round of scheme requests. Two schemes are progressing through the briefing (commissioning) stage, 23 are in options report/ design phase, 10 schemes are issued for construction and 42 schemes are complete.

In addition 1 other minor scheme and 6 additional safety schemes are in the design phase, 2 Hinkley schemes are mobilising for construction with 3 Hinkley safety schemes have been recently completed.

Service delivery has been affected by COVID or supply shortages, but the team continue to work collaboratively with supply chains to deliver the programme.

### **Road Safety and Transport Data**

The Road Safety Delivery team have delivered face to face road safety advice to over 1900 people. This has included seven days of Stay Safe in primary schools, and Ghost Street in secondary schools. They have also been pleased to hold a 60+ workshop for older drivers, to help them drive safer for longer. Over the last month we have also delivered Bikeability to 297 children, and have been setting up some adult one to one cycle training to help support people with their safer active travel ambitions.

Our social media information campaigns have given us a cumulative reach of 5,803 on Facebook, and through Twitter there were 7,114 impressions.

The Transport Data Team have continued to monitor the traffic flows impacted by the Covid-19 situation, support schemes development and the impact of major schemes roadworks. They are embracing the use of new technology through the deployment of a radar which can be used to count cyclists at a wide variety of locations.

### **Major/ Medium Scheme Delivery**

**M5 Junction 25** The project is on programme and within budget, now fully open to the public.

**Toneway Corridor Phase 1 (Creech Castle Junction)** The first phase of the Toneway traffic management is now complete (hardening up the centre reserve). The A38 remains closed in both directions north of the junction, except for cyclists/pedestrians. Temporary works have started on the River Tone overflow channel, in preparation for the piling platform and the arrival of the piling rig.

**A38 Major Road Network Scheme** The outline business case work is currently in accordance with revised submission deadline (autumn 21).

**Walton/Ashcott Large Local Major Scheme** Work is continuing on developing a Strategic Outline Business Case for autumn submission which sets out the strategic case for a bypass based on potential route options. Business case preparation this period focussed on the procurement strategy, consenting strategy, cost and programme.

**A38 Canon/ Cross-Rifles Junction Bridgwater** The project status continues to be 'red' whilst the ability of the scheme to accommodate traffic impacts from the district council proposals for Eastover/Salmon Parade/ East Quay is tested. The outcome of the levelling up fund bid is not yet known so we are unable to progress into CPO and consultation processes.

**A38 Dunball Junction** Balfour Beatty has issued a Feasibility Report for above project finding that the likely start date following the design phase will be autumn 2022 to complete in summer 2023. The

outcome of the levelling up fund bid is not yet known although SDC continue to underwrite costs to enable the scheme to progress.

**M5J26/ A38 Chelston Link Major Maintenance Scheme** Balfour Beatty has issued a Feasibility Report for above project finding that the likely start date following the design phase will be autumn 2022 to complete in summer 2023.

**Trenchard Way** The project status is 'red' because the legal agreements for the Network rail land required to deliver the scheme are currently outstanding. Redesign has been undertaken to accommodate LTN 01/20 cycling requirements and coordinate with the significantly revised Firepool development plans. A new planning consent is being submitted for the scheme aiming for 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Discussions are underway regarding the time-limited 'getting building fund' element of the funding.

### **Traffic Signals Recovery Programme**

- Rowbarton: Scheme due to complete mid-October.
- Westonzoyland Road: Now in contract with works to be undertaken in October and November.
- Elizabeth Way Chard: Complete.
- Schemes in Yeovil: Works information complete and tender process commencing.
- Schemes in Wells, Street and Shepton Mallet: Works information currently being reviewed.

### **Transporting Somerset**

Driver Shortages continue to affect most of our transport contractors providing buses, coaches and taxis. On school transport we have had to increase doubling up on some school contracts, which is resulting in some children arriving at school earlier than usual and others later. We have sent letters out to parents of children on the affected routes and we are continuing to text parents where last minute problems are occurring on a daily basis.

Our School Transport contractors are becoming increasingly concerned about covid infections at schools and we are seeing a rise in instances of drivers contracting the virus, which is adding further pressure to an already difficult situation in covering school transport. We have now agreed with School Heads and Public Health that a stronger text message can be sent to parents of children where the school is being rated as amber for covid infections to try to address the numbers of students wearing face coverings on school transport.

For individual transport the driver shortages continue to cause a significant extra workload for staff when booking short notice trips, due to lack of availability, especially around school start and finish times.

Health Transport continues to be challenging and we are currently in discussions with the NHS about providing even more support in relation to discharges and patient transfers where their contracted Patient Transport Provider (Eztec) continue to struggle with demand.

On Public Transport, Buses of Somerset continue to struggle with staff shortages and now First West of England are also having problems at their Bath Depot, which has resulted in them reducing frequency on the D2 Frome to Bath Service to hourly (from half hourly) although they have provided an extra bus

in the morning peak to deal with overloading on one journey. South West Coaches are also looking at reducing frequencies on some of their routes in the Yeovil area.

### **Parking Services**

As with previous months activity across the network and car parks remains high.

NSL are experiencing recruitment difficulties in some areas of the County due to competitive pay rates on offer. They are currently reviewing their pay structure and recruitment approach to identify what changes can be considered.

Feedback from Civil Enforcement Officer indicates the use of body worn cameras are appreciated both in terms of their safety and the ability to rebut any complaints about their behaviour. NSL are currently drafting the business and financial cases to introduce body worn cameras across all locations.

Requests for new permit schemes continue to be received, with new requests for areas of Street, Bridgwater and Wells being received recently.

Consultations for the Lynton Road area and Burnham On Sea and Kingston Road area of Taunton will be closed shortly. Analysis will be undertaken to identify the findings and recommended way forward.

Progress on the Parking Review continues with the draft consultation document ready to be distributed for approval.

## **Community Infrastructure Commissioning**

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### **Libraries**

The library service is expanding its pilot programme of activity to include a greater range of indoor and outdoor events:

#### **Beth Calverley Poetry Event**

We held a very successful poetry writing workshop in Frome library with local poet Beth Calverley. Ten students from Frome College attended and co-wrote poems and shared their creations at an open-mic session at the end. Students gained inspiration and confidence from taking part and the library was able to strengthen links with the local school.

#### **Health Walks**

Through our Reading Friends scheme we provided a programme of activity for people who weren't ready to return to libraries and indoor clubs after lockdown had ended. Working with Everyone Active and SASP across the county library staff have run a programme of relaxing and welcoming book clubs while walking, and been able to chat informally about all the things Somerset Libraries!

So far walks have taken place in Yeovil, Frome and Taunton with others planned across for Wellington, Crewkerne, Ilminster and Glastonbury. Numbers have grown steadily with the most recent Taunton walk seeing 30 members participate. We have had really positive feedback from the walkers, every group has enjoyed the book chat and have been keen to have us back even suggesting other groups they attend that we could join in with!

#### **Fun Palaces**

As part of a national celebration of communities, eight libraries took part in "Fun Palaces" weekend hosting a variety of community led events. From creating lanterns at Taunton, creating fabulous community driven art displays at Dulverton, to fantastic author talks and live music at Bridgwater there was lots to get involved in. More than 350 people took part across the weekend celebrating science and art at their local library.

#### **Tablet Lending**

Somerset Libraries has achieved national recognition for its tablet lending scheme, where customers in need of help with job searching, digital skills, or other employability advice and support can borrow a device from their local library. Olly Hellis, our Digital Development Officer, spoke about the scheme at a national conference of library heads of service and development leads, and is contributing to the development of a national toolkit to share best practice with library services across the country.

#### **Engagement work**

To support the library service in its pandemic recovery planning Somerset Libraries is seeking the views of those who live, work and study in Somerset whether library member or not. Feedback on existing services and on what customers would like to see in the future will help the library service develop services going forward. [www.somersetlibraries.co.uk/survey](http://www.somersetlibraries.co.uk/survey)

**Registration Services** No update this month

**Heritage Services** - Next update due November 2021

## **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

### **Quantock Hills**

Bill Jenman, our lottery funded Landscape Partnership Manager, has submitted an application on behalf of Friends of Quantock (FoQ) charity to the Planning Inspectorate. This is for common land consent to create a shallow ditch and bank along 347m of the East and South side of the Crowcombe to Stowey road over the hills to deter illegal parking. The land is owned by FoQ and the work will be delivered and funded by the Landscape Partnership. Concerns about the impacts of this unauthorised parking on this SSSI land has been growing for several years as vehicle numbers have risen significantly.

**Cothelstone Hill** – The ‘Levels Up’ funded project focussing on woodland resilience has commenced with one block of ash trees, showing signs of ash dieback, felled and extracted to be planted with a mixed range of native species. Another block of sycamore and beech will also be felled and replanted with a more diverse range of species. The project has also paid for the clearance of a block of scrub on the north of the site that will be planted to create a new area of woodland including fruit trees. In all, over 6,000 trees will be planted.

**Hedge laying** – Two training events will take place this autumn on the Quantocks run by leaders from the Somerset Hedge Group. We will also be organising the annual Quantock hedge laying competition, these events have been funded by donations from Friends of Quantock and the Landscape Partnership fund.

The NHS Recovery College which runs activities for people with mental health issues appreciated Quantock AONB guided walks last year to the extent that this year we are providing them with monthly walks led by the AONB team at a variety of locations on the Quantocks.

**Pied Flycatchers** – The results are in from this year’s surveys of the oak wooded combes around Holford in spring/summer, with good numbers of pied flycatchers (along with blue tits and great tits) using the nest boxes. Adults and young of the pied flycatchers were ringed. In Holford Combe three adult females previously ringed returned from to the same line of boxes from their winter territories in Guinea, West Africa. This data is fed through to the national data on these birds with the results issued later in the autumn.

### **Mendip Hills**

**Cheddar Vision Group** Through the work of the Vision Group a new tourist information centre is opening in the gorge. The information centre is housed in a Sedgemoor District council building that was previously occupied by the National Trust. Run by the Cheddar Community Partnership, staffed with volunteers, the centre opened on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Farming in Protected Landscapes** Defra have allowed the amounts we have per year for awarding as grants to farmers to be reprofiled. This means we can take into account the short amount of time in this first year and move money into the second and third year. As the scheme started in July, farmers and landowners are only just beginning to submit applications, many of which require supporting next financial year.

**Volunteer Rangers** Commemorative badges were awarded to all volunteer rangers recently in recognition of their support to the residents and visitors of the Mendip Hills during the lockdown and subsequent unlocking of people during 2020. The hills faced huge visitor pressures during these times and the volunteer rangers played a key role in welcoming them safely.

**Levels Up** Progress is being made across all of the 16 projects in this programme, funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, spread across the county, including supporting a tree nursery, enhancing woodlands in the face of Ash Dieback, installing fencing to improve grazing, creating a new wildflower meadow, and engaging farmers and the public in surveying and conservation techniques.

**Mendip Hills AONB Partnership** The next Partnership meeting will be on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Key agenda items will be looking at the current and future work to improve Cheddar Gorge and what to do with visitor monitoring data, alongside updates from the partners, including Somerset County Council.

**Scientific Services** No update this month

## **Flood and Water Management**

The priority for the Flood and Water Management team continues to be our Section 19 investigations into the recent flooding events in Chard, North Petherton and Yeovil. We have been working with all risk management authorities and partners to ascertain the causes of flooding and the various roles and responsibilities in helping to resolve issues. We are also trying to visit these communities to talk to residents, but this process will take time. It is hoped to complete the Chard investigation within the next 3 months, although clearly work to address immediate issues is being undertaken.

Due to resourcing issues across the team, progress on project activity has been slow with the requirement for the team to concentrate on the delivery of statutory functions and dealing with a backlog of customer correspondence. Discussions are ongoing with contractor WSP to secure additional Planning and managerial support to create additional capacity within the team.

## **Somerset Rivers Authority**

### **River Sowy – King’s Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme**

Riverbank-raising has begun as part of Phase One of the River Sowy – the King’s Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme, which will benefit a large area of the Somerset Levels and Moors. Work has also begun on environmental improvements such as two-stage channels and embayments. Phase One works – which will also include the upgrading of several water level control structures on King’s Sedgemoor Drain – are due to be completed next year.

More details: [Enlarged rivers to safeguard Somerset Levels - Somerset Rivers Authority](#)

### **Drainage Improvements around A39 Carhampton Cross**

Work began on a £350,000 scheme to reduce flooding along and around the A39 at Carhampton Cross. Numerous drainage structures along the A39 have been improved, and the road resurfaced for Somerset County Council, by contractors Milestone.

Works on the adjoining B3191 Eastbury Road, and on Hill Lane, will continue into mid-November.

More details: Revised road closure plans as A39 Carhampton flood work progresses - Somerset Rivers Authority

### **Somerset Community Resilience Event**

The fourth annual Somerset Community Resilience event was held mostly online. Among the most popular sessions were 'How we can prepare for the challenges our changing climate may bring', with SRA Community Engagement officers Emma Giffard and Dawn James, and 'Property flood resilience', with national flood resilience expert Mary Donhau and the Environment Agency.

Videos of selected sessions can be seen at Videos and Resources 2021 Event – Somerset Prepared

### **Coming Up**

A documentary film commissioned by Somerset Rivers Authority from Somerset Film is due to have its premiere in Burrowbridge Coronation Hall on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November, followed by a showing on 4th December, *coronavirus situation permitting*. 'Down by the River' is about the ways that communities across Somerset have responded to local flood risks. Places featured include Croscombe, Ham, Martock, Moorland, and West Somerset.

More screenings in the New Year are being planned across Somerset. One aim is to boost Somerset's network of community flood groups.

Free tickets will be bookable at Get Involved — Somerset Film

**EU Funded Projects** No update this month

### **Climate Change Strategy**

#### **Carbon Literacy Training**

A further session of the extremely popular Carbon Literacy Training was run on 21<sup>st</sup> October. These courses, run by Rachel Coxcoon of Climate Guide have so far been attended by over 50 SCC Officers and provide the delegates with an overview of the issues and dangers of climate change, along with information on how the attendees, both individually and through their corporate roles, can play a part in addressing the issues. Further sessions, including Member-dedicated training will be delivered during the new year.

#### **Climate Emergency Community Fund**

37 of the 43 approved projects have now received funding totalling approximately £655k.

Four of the funded projects have now fully completed:

- Installation of solar panels, battery storage and LED lighting at West Buckland Village Hall.
- Installation of solar panels and battery storage at Eddington Village Hall.
- Installation of solar panels at Wiveliscombe Swimming Pool.
- Installation of solar panels & battery storage at Buckland Dinham Village Hall.

### **Young People Engagement**

The Climate Emergency Team recently helped organise, arrange and take part in a series of events with the Somerset Youth Parliament to raise awareness and discuss a number of climate related issues. The sessions were extremely well attended and focussed on a number of topic areas: Waste and the Natural Environment on 11<sup>th</sup> October and Transport and the Built Environment on 18<sup>th</sup> October. The young people in attendance heard from a number of subject matter experts on the respective topics, including from Rebecca Pow MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary at DEFRA. A future session to coincide with the events at COP 26 is currently under development.

## **Somerset Waste Partnership**

### **Recycle More [Somerset West & Taunton District Council area]**

- Phase 3 re-launch leaflet (incl. calendar) delivered (though some delays with Royal Mail).
- Phase 3 blue bags and communal bins delivery underway and due for completion by 30<sup>th</sup> October.
- Phase 3 SWT Customer Services fully briefed, provided with info to manage calls.
- Phase 3 seeing demand for containers peaking. SWP working with SWT to manage this.
- Phase 3 works continue at the Walford Cross which remains on schedule to open as planned.
- Phase 4 construction of the Williton Depot likely that this will be delayed until May 2022 due to supply chain issues and extended build time. After discussion, confirmed that end Feb launch for Phase 4 still on schedule. Final go/no-go decision to be essentially the 3<sup>rd</sup> December Board meeting.
- Phase 4 initial planning meeting held with SDC and project plan finalised.

### **Communications**

- two Recycle More Messenger stakeholders.
- extra parish/town council briefing sessions.
- two Talking Café events in Taunton.
- five engagement events (Taunton, Wellington, Wiveliscombe) approx. 1,000 engagements.

### **Collections**

- Services have stabilised, full deployment on almost all routes each day (aside from BAU sickness, mechanical breakdowns).
- Loads remain high and the service fragile. Missed collections remains above SLA (but similar to that of previous contractor) and trend is in the right direction.
- Missed collections returned for the following day and work through small number of quality issue hotspots.
- A number of vehicles were relocated from Taunton to Lufton depots at the start of October to rebalance resources given the particular staffing challenges we have experienced at Taunton. Whilst we still expect this to result in greater service resilience and better service quality, the service (particularly to the Chard/Ilminster area) has still not bedded in effectively and we are still seeing a higher level of service failure than we would expect. An update to local members/relevant stakeholders will be shared next week.
- Net gain in staff (more joining than leaving). Recruitment work continues, but more emphasis on morale and retention. SWP are in direct senior level contact with DVSA to seek to speed up testing (which remains the key barrier to completing the training of our loaders as drivers).

- Full Covid safety measures remain in place, as yet notable issues with staff levels as a result of the increasing infection rates in the county.

### **Decarbonising Operations**

- Capital funding has been secured from Mendip for the e-RCV [electric Refuse Collection Vehicle] and PV [photo voltaics] at Taunton and Evercreech. Contractual arrangements are being finalised, but we expect to publicise the e-RCV soon.
- We are seeking further details on possible trial of collections of flexible plastics in 2022.

### **Recycling Sites**

- Visitor numbers are slowly reducing from the summer peak, though remain high at weekends.
- In light of Covid rates, isolation barriers remain at HWRC offices so staff can distance themselves if required.
- Staff continue to assist visitors - significantly reducing visitor time on sites.
- Avonmouth Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) processed its highest volume of waste in September since opening in June 2020.
- Walpole Transfer Station is fully operational.
- Dimmer continues to handle waste at 50% capacity, handling waste destined for the Avonmouth ERF. Bulky waste is diverted to a nearby facility at the contractors expense.
- Repairs to the fire damaged part of Dimmer are expected to last for several more weeks.
- Walpole AD plant remains under specialist. Food waste is diverted elsewhere at no additional cost to SWP.

### **Customer Services**

- Garden Waste was successfully reintroduced. Agilisys contact centre were extended to cover the customer contact arising from the cover Recommencement communications.
- Service quality is steadily improving with focus on repeat missed collections and ensuring effective complaint resolution, however, SWP are still working closely with SUEZ as complaint resolution at SUEZ is still not where we expect it to be.
- The frequency of the customer service cell reduced fortnightly reflecting the improved stability of the waste collection services provided by Suez.
- Suez have provided additional management support to bolster the contract in respect to recruitment and improving service quality.

### **Communications**

- Finalising school eco-grant application process and documentation for mid-Nov launch.
- Preparing SWP content for December Your Somerset (Recycle More, Electric truck, schools grants, seasonal content).
- Engagement Secondary Schools Heads ahead re recycle.
- Seasonal Halloween PR and social media.
- SORTED! newsletter October edition issues.
- Developing volunteering policy for compost and food waste champions.
- Presence at two Youth Parliament events.
- SWP presence at two green/environment events (Shepton Beauchamp and Stoke St Gregory).

## Major Energy Programmes

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### Hinkley Point C (HPC)/ New Nuclear

#### HPC

The process to assess the Workforce uplift continues. During October the Joint Local Authorities responded to the EDF uplift Topic Papers, outlining areas for clarification and proposing mitigation. EDF will revise the papers and send to the Local Authorities at the end of October, or early November. The Joint Councils have updated their legal advisers of the stage the process has reached and the recommendation for joint QC advice on whether the changes represent a material change is being discussed with EDF.

The September 2021 workforce number complying with the DCO [Development Consent Order] definition of 'worker' was not available in time for this report, however we are aware that the number has gone up from the August total of 6220. The next workforce survey will be carried out in November 2021 and will be reported at the January Socio Economic Advisory Group meeting. This will give us more detailed information on the workforce including the ratio of home-based workers to non-homebased, where they reside, the gender split and nationalities.

During October, the Section 106 6-monthly report on the project's education, skills and employment activity, was received. The information contained illustrates the range and depth of work being carried out to attract a local workforce to the project. Highlights include:

- membership of Young HPC growing to 1516.
- 8 young people gaining a Kickstart placement at HPC (SCC is their gateway organisation) 4 are with the MEH alliance, and the other 4 are with other delivery organisations.
- The project has gained a further 53 apprentices in the last six months, bringing the total that have worked on the project to 787 as at Sept 2021.
- In May 2021, the BYLOR Steelfix Assessment Platform was opened, and has assessed 155 candidates up to September. All new steelfixers who join BYLOR will be assessed using their platform (physical, not an online platform).
- 436 roles from 141 contract partners were advertised on the HPC Job Service.
- Nuclear engineering degree apprentices met PM Boris Johnson during October, linked with an event focussing on sustainable energy.

On site activity continues:

- dredging for the intake heads is nearly complete.
- The reactor pressure vessel support ring has arrived in the UK which will be stored at Avonmouth Dock until site is ready for it.
- Handling alignment frames have arrived from Glasgow to support the lift of the intake heads when they are placed on the seabed of the Bristol Channel. Each frame weighs 130 tonnes.
- The Hinkley Strategic Delivery Forum met at the end of September, with a new chair from BEIS, Chris Bowbrick. Key topics were HPC Legacy planning, energy National Policy consultation and DCO/NSIP process consultation.
- Both Transport Review Group and Socio-Economic Advisory group met during October. These are the principal project monitoring groups for the Joint Councils.

- The project's Main Site Forum also met during the reporting period.
- Unfortunately, the STEP Fusion 'Bridgwater Bay' application has not made it through to the next round of assessment. The application was to host a STEP Fusion plant on land at Hinkley Point A station. The UK Atomic Energy Agency have identified five possible sites, with the closest to us being the Severn Edge application made by Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. The next stage of assessment will conclude in spring 2022, enabling the UKAE to make a final recommendation to the Secretary of State at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy who will make a final decision on the successful site around the end of next year.

### **National Grid (Hinkley C Connection Project)**

- To date the National Grid project has created 463 submissions to the planning departments of the relevant Local Authorities, each with pre-application advice sought, therefore close to 1000 interactions.
- Work on Stage 11 (Shurton Sub Station, adjacent to HPC) is progressing well, with a traditional lattice pylon being built at present.
- Stage 10.1, the removal of the W Route, is nearly complete, which will mean an area free of pylons as the cabling is underground.
- As a result of the Government's 10-point plan, National Grid have re-organised to accommodate the need for 40 gigawatts (a gigawatt is 1000 megawatts, or 1 billion watts) of power to come from wind power by 2030. This will be achieved by wind farms on the East Coast of the UK, though currently there are no transmission networks on that coast. James Goode, who is the National Grid lead for HPC has increased his role and will now be Director of Nuclear for National Grid, working with any future connection projects – e.g. Sizewell.
- The planning consultancy firm that advise the Local Authorities on the HPC connection project are losing their long-standing planner that has worked on the project from the beginning, but his replacement will be well known to many, Phil Higginbottom, who used to be a Minerals and Waste Planner at Somerset County Council.

### **Civil Contingencies/Emergency Planning**

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#### **Incidents**

As at the date of this report, the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) has had 4 alerts during October 2021. These included Public Health School Covid call, Emergency Duty Team (EDT) telephone problem, surface water flooding in Chard and flooding at Home Farm Caravan Park, Forton, Ilminster due to burst river bank. Fire evacuated caravans with boats and South Somerset District Council booked a small no of residents into the Ilminster Travel Lodge overnight.

To date, the Somerset Local Authorities' CCU has had 22 incidents and alerts during the 2021/2022 financial year.

After more time available for emergency planning over the summer, incident response is again taking an increasing amount of staff capacity in the CCU.

#### **COVID**

- CCU staff continue to support the Covid-19 response. CCU is providing support to the re-started SCC Business Continuity Management Group which meets weekly. CCU maintains the action log and runs the weekly service business continuity snapshot survey.
- CCU continues to chair the re-started Local Resilience Forum Horizon Scanning and Business Continuity Group.
- The search continues for new locations for testing centres. A new testing site opens in Frome.

### **Pre-Winter Planning**

- CCU chaired a pre-winter meeting of the Somerset After Death Working Group. This occasional group brings together officers from all parts of the after death system to confirm that all parts of the systems are working well and to identify any capacity issues. Representatives include: the Coroner's Office, Registration Service, the hospital mortuaries, the District Crematoria and Cemetery representatives, local Medical Council and local funeral directors.
- CCU staff participated in a winter workshop and exercise organised by SCC Highways Team and provided a briefing about severe weather warnings.

### **Hinkley Point B Exercise Dorado**

- CCU delivered the Exercise DORADO Module 2 (Transition from Response to Recovery) multi-agency Workshop on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 with Hot Debrief held prior to close of event.
- CCU chaired/held Cold Debrief of above event with Ex DORADO multi-agency planning group on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 21 with comments/feedback informing production of post-exercise report process.

### **Somerset Prepared Virtual October Event**

- The Somerset Prepared Partnership put together all the arrangements and presentations for the Somerset Prepared Virtual Event held over three weeks in October. CCU staff took part in some of the sessions to answer questions or do a presentation. The event ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> October and has been successful with attendance at sessions by communities, other agencies and Parish Council reps. Some of the sessions have been recorded and are available to view on <http://www.somersetprepared.org.uk/somerset-prepared-event/> along with the previous year's sessions.

### **Multi-agency Working**

- CCU contributed to the planning for an Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum awayday. This brings together the 30+ organisations that work together in the Avon and Somerset area to plan, prepare and train for emergencies. The aim of the workshop was to assess and confirm the LRF's forward work programme and embed learning from the Covid response.
- CCU organised the quarterly meeting of the Resilience Board which brings together the five Somerset authorities to consider emergency preparedness. The October meeting agenda included a review of recent incidents and risks, a discussion on winter preparedness, an update on the training and exercise programme and the partners confirmed the forward emergency planning priorities for the next 3 to 6 months.

### **Business Continuity**

- The South West Audit Partnership have produced a report on the audit that they carried out of SCC business continuity management. The audit report concluded that “There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place.” Some areas were suggested for improvement and these are being implemented.

### **SEVAG/AAVAG Meeting**

- A meeting of Somerset Emergency Voluntary Agencies Group (SEVAG) and Avon Authorities Voluntary Agencies Group (AAVAG) was held on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Presentations were given on the work of the Red Cross and CRUSE.
- An E-learning package for Voluntary Agencies was rolled out so that their members can be familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

### **Other Work**

- CCU staff attended an Aircraft Crash Course RNAS Yeovilton
- Cold Weather Health Watch activated
- Operation London Bridge plan updated
- Updating of Places of Safety information
- Cyber resilience
- CCU Health and Safety Risk Assessments updated
- Multi-Agency Recovery Co-ordination Group.

### **Coming Up**

#### **Hinkley Point B Exercise Dorado**

- CCU to chair/hold Cold Debrief of all four Exercise DORADO events delivered with all events’ participants invited to attend on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 with all comments/feedback received further informing the Ex DORADO Series post-exercise report production.
- We will start production of the Ex DORADO Series post-exercise report, with intention to circulate Final Draft for comments/sign-off by end November 2021.

#### **Training for South Somerset District Council and Somerset West and Taunton District Council**

- On Call Duty Officer Training to be held for South Somerset District Council staff to familiarise them with their role and responsibilities during an emergency (postponed from October).
- Rest Centre Training for Somerset West and Taunton District Council staff to familiarise them with layout, rest centre kit and possible layout if requested to set up a Rest Centre during an emergency.

**Fuel planning** – Following the fuel shortage problems CCU will be refreshing the fuel section of Business Continuity Plans.

The Business Continuity Planning Working Group will implement recommendations from the business continuity audit.

## **Corporate Property Service**

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### **Property Strategy and Systems**

Property Management database is continuing with the contract having been awarded to the Technology Forge company, a leading supplier of asset management system solutions to local authorities. The contract award is a significant milestone for the Property teams at both councils; the new system will be a market-leading product purchased at a cost under the budget allocated, with ongoing revenue savings compared to the previous systems used.

Shortly, officers will begin a period of significant work to prepare for the transition to the replacement system, including for example, data cleansing and data/process mapping. The tender process and contract for the new system has been drawn up to be able to cater for the transition to a new Unitary council, and discussions are underway within the Asset Optimisation workstream of the LGR programme to clarify how the new system might support the transition to a new Unitary authority.

Work with Children's and Adults services to provide additional 'in county' capacity for specialist residential care is continuing, with one property successfully under offer and active property searches continuing. Estates are continuing to liaise with the service to identify suitable properties. A bid to the DfE Childrens Homes Capital Fund has been submitted by Children's Services with support from Property. If successful, this bid will increase the overall funding available for the programme.

### **Climate Emergency Strategy - Estate Decarbonisation and Energy Work**

The delivery of the 12 Heat de-carbonisation projects funded in part through £4.1m of grant funding secured in phase 1 of the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Programme is well underway. Three heating systems have now been fully de-carbonised, with a further two minor insulation projects expected to complete in October half term. Five further projects are being scoped for delivery through the Futures for Somerset strategic partnership over the winter months.

We will be moving into the construction phase for the remaining two largest, most complex projects in Taunton imminently now that the contracts have been signed. Many of these schemes are being impacted by a national shortage of component supplies in the construction industry, although we are still making good progress and schemes remain within agreed budgets. To mitigate impacts on building users, we have worked with suppliers to reschedule some site works dates to ensure we close buildings only for the minimum amount of time.

Work to carry out detailed energy audits on the council's core property estate and externally-funded work to undertake heat decarbonisation studies at 14 further sites is now complete. SCC has accepted a grant of £360k to develop Heat Decarbonisation Plans for 73 maintained schools, which will add to this growing body of detailed planning. Results from all of this work will feed into the development of a detailed, strategic approach to fulfilling the de-carbonisation pledges set out in SCC's Climate

Emergency Strategy, including developing the detailed plans necessary for future external funding bids. We have also submitted a bid for phase 3 of the government's Public Sector de-carbonisation grant programme, and expect to hear the results of this bid in the New Year.

### **Asset Disposals and Commercial Property**

The Canals and Rivers Trust will be handing back Bridgwater Docks to SCC on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October. All moorings arrangements have been brought to an end and negotiations are underway to address terminal dilapidations. Discussions with Bridgwater Town Council over the longer-term future ownership of the dock basin continue following the award of Town Deal funding, which provisionally includes funding for improving the docks for Bridgwater.

The recent Key Decision to dispose of a parcel of land near the village of Ash in South Somerset was discussed at the Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place after the decision was called in. The committee supported the recommendations in the original decision report, however this process highlighted some areas for improvement in Corporate Property's Decision report writing and communication, which will be addressed going forward.

A number of other disposal transactions and reviews are underway to generate capital receipts and / or reduce the council's exposure to liabilities and risk as a result of historic estate holdings. It is expected that New Stowey Farm, near Nether Stowey, will be sold in the near future with planning permission for several new houses. Additionally, the sale of the Portway Centre in Wells is progressing, along with early development of opportunity at the Packsaddle and Cherry Grove sites in Frome.

### **Major Projects**

The Taunton Digital Innovation Centre project has moved into the construction phase following the agreement of funding and commercial terms with the construction contractor.

Additionally, the expansion of a Early Years setting known as Fledglings in Cotford St Luke has recently been handed over to the setting for use, with very good feedback received from the school. This has delivered an additional 12 Early Years places in the village.

Many projects are being impacted by materials and labour shortages, particularly projects involving replacement of windows.

### **Facilities Management and Property Maintenance**

The new hybrid way of working commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> September. A considerable amount of effort went into preparing the buildings, induction information and making meeting rooms and collaboration space available. Building occupancy remains low but will be kept under review.

An interim Service Manager - Property Maintenance Operations has been engaged, in a difficult market for recruitment in this area. This has temporarily filled an important vacancy in the Corporate Property team; the post leads on managing the compliance of the corporate estate.

The Schools Condition Programme is continuing, with 57 projects at 48 schools completed over the summer holidays, representing more than £700,000 in investment in schools infrastructure.

END



## 5. Somerset Covid 19 dashboard

### Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard -

18/11/2021

#### Detected cases



#### Latest 7 day rate per 100k

08-Nov to 14-Nov

453.7

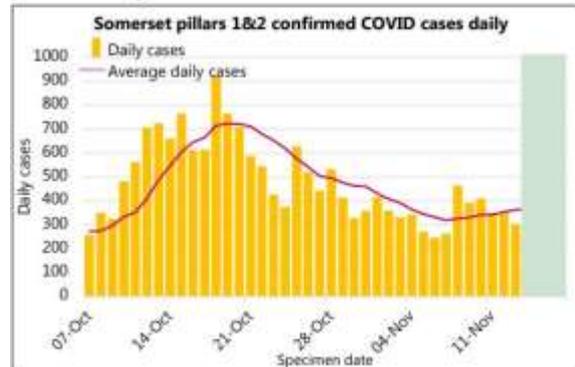
#### Outbreaks and Clusters



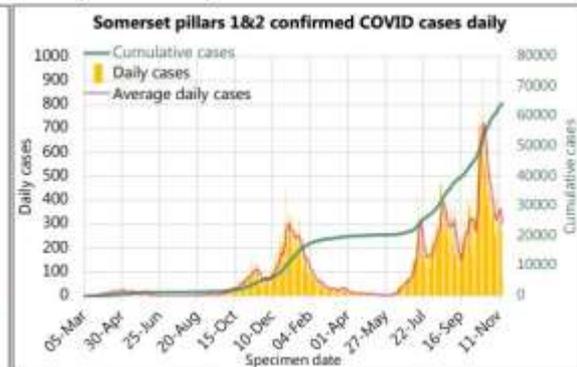
This represents the number of outbreaks and clusters currently being managed. Outbreaks are any situation with two or more cases, where at least two cases are known to be related to each other. Clusters are any incidents being managed at the same setting with two or more cases but where there is no established link between any of the cases.



#### Most recent days of cases



#### Overall profile of the epidemic in Somerset

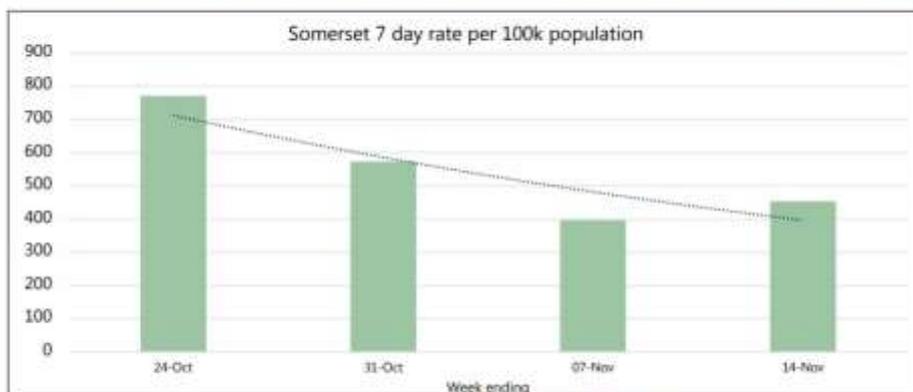


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### Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Cases

#### Weekly cases (excludes most recent three days with incompletely reported results)

District	18-Oct to 24-Oct	7 day rate per 100k	25-Oct to 31-Oct	7 day rate per 100k	01-Nov to 07-Nov	7 day rate per 100k	08-Nov to 14-Nov	7 day rate per 100k
Mendip	1101	952.5	743	642.8	555	480.2	543	469.8
Sedgemoor	864	701.4	637	517.1	446	362.1	599	486.3
Som W & Taun.	1195	770.4	805	519.0	448	288.8	537	346.2
Sth Somerset	1171	695.6	1038	616.6	782	464.5	872	518.0
<b>Somerset</b>	<b>4331</b>	<b>770.3</b>	<b>3223</b>	<b>573.3</b>	<b>2231</b>	<b>396.8</b>	<b>2551</b>	<b>453.7</b>



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## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Cases Map



## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Wider Context

Latest R number range for the South West

**0.7 to 1.0**

Last updated on Friday 12 Nov 2021

Produced by:

UK Government Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)

What is R?

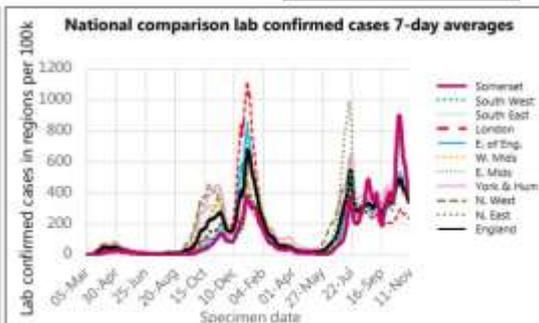
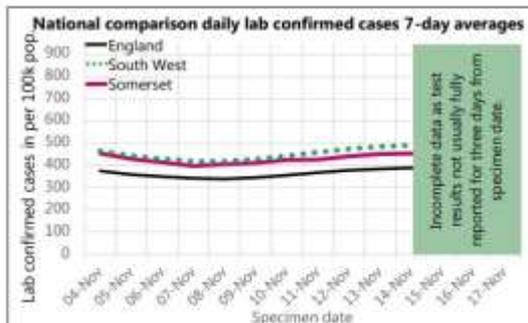
The reproduction number (R) is the average number of secondary infections produced by 1 infected person.

An R number of 1 means that on average every person who is infected will infect 1 other person, meaning the total number of new infections is stable.

Region

R

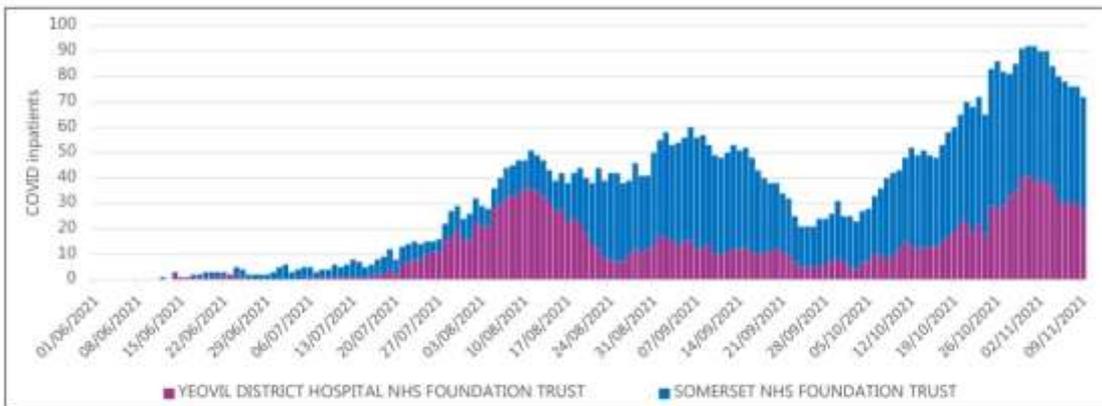
UK	No longer produced
England	0.8 to 1.0
East of England	0.8 to 1.0
London	0.8 to 1.0
Midlands	0.8 to 1.0
NE and Yorks	0.8 to 1.0
North West	0.8 to 1.0
South East	0.8 to 1.0
South West	0.7 to 1.0



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## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Hospital Activity

All COVID patients in Somerset Hospitals



## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Deaths

COVID deaths week ending

05/11/2021

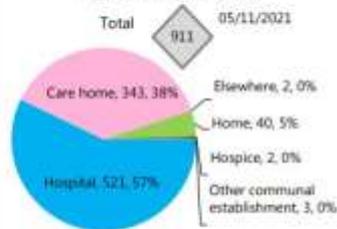
All COVID

Hospital 10

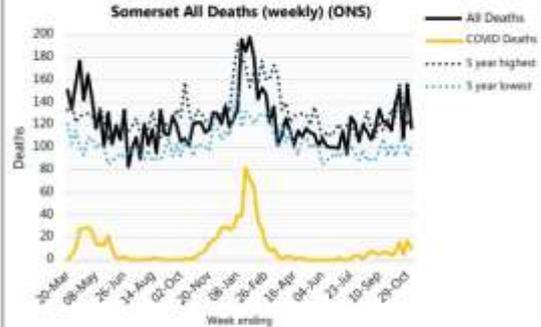
Care Home 0

Other 0

All COVID Deaths since the start of the pandemic in Somerset by Place of Death (ONS)



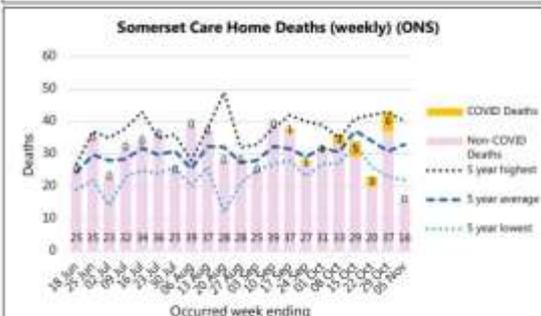
Somerset All Deaths (weekly) (ONS)



Somerset All Deaths (weekly) (ONS)

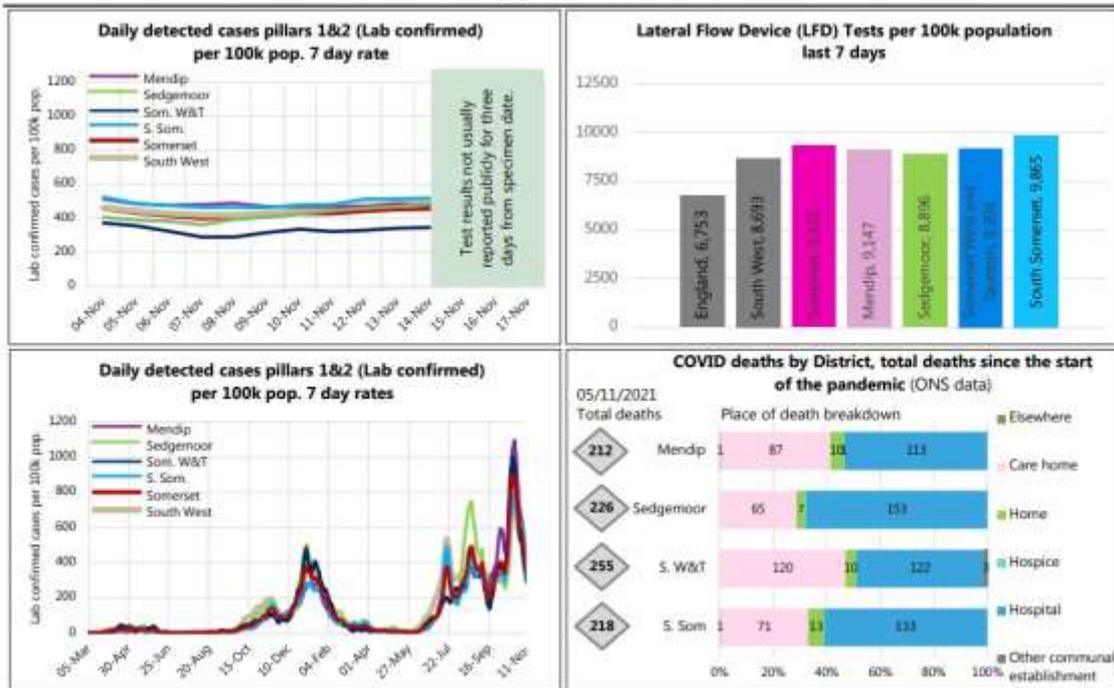


Somerset Care Home Deaths (weekly) (ONS)



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## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - District focus



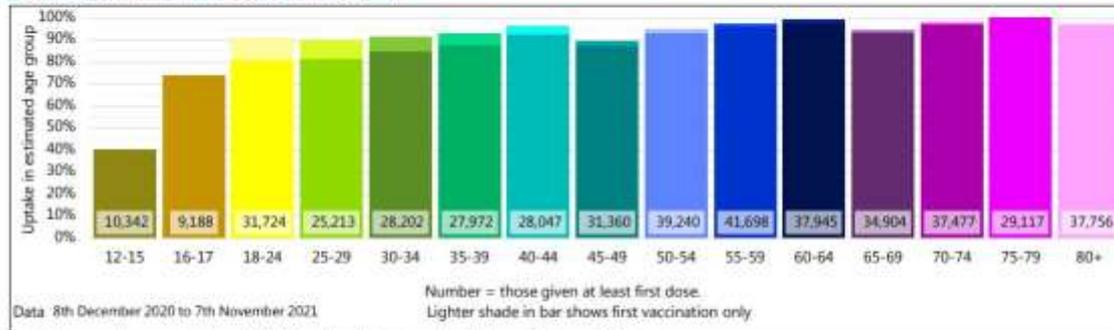
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## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - COVID Vaccinations

This page will be further developed once there is more routinely available data published nationally.

This vaccination data is NHS data, reported here with the agreement of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group. Specific queries regarding vaccination need to be directed towards the NHS. For more information on the local COVID-19 Vaccination Programme please see

[Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)



Percentage of 18+ population vaccinated at least once = 95.2%

Percentage of 18+ population vaccinated twice = 91.8%

Data for 12-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds is currently only being provided for the first dose.

## Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard - Data

Data type	Next updated	How published	Link for more information
Lab confirmed cases: Pillars 1 & 2	18/11/2021	Published daily – 5pm with data to day before. By specimen date.	<a href="https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/">https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/</a>
Data by MSDA for the map	18/11/2021	Published daily. By specimen date.	None. Not publicly distributed. Data based on PHE reported cases. To note, this may differ slightly from data on the coronavirus.data.gov.uk website due to additional data cleaning by PHE.
R-value from SAGE group	19/11/2021	Published weekly on Friday.	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-number-in-the-uk">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-number-in-the-uk</a>
Pillar 2 testing	23/11/2021	Published daily	<a href="https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/">https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/</a>
Death counts (ONS) County and district level	23/11/2021	Published weekly on Tuesday with data to the Friday 11 days before.	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/deathregistrationsandoccurrencebylocalauthorityandhealthboard">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/deathregistrationsandoccurrencebylocalauthorityandhealthboard</a>
Vaccination data	18/11/2021	Published weekly on Thursday with data to Sunday before.	<a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/</a>
Hospital Activity	18/11/2021	Published weekly on Thursday with data to Tuesday before.	<a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/</a>

As of 2nd June 2020, numbers of lab-confirmed positive cases now include those identified by testing in all settings (pillars 1 and 2).

In January 2021, we changed the presentation of deaths data to be shown compared to the average and five year high and low deaths by date of occurrence rather than date of reporting. Deaths by date of reporting fluctuates more, especially when affected by bank holidays. Reporting by date of death does mean the latest week's figures are usually slightly incomplete when first reported due to delays in registrations of some deaths whereas the comparison years are more complete. For week 53 we have taken an average of 52 and week 1 comparison years.

Dashboard available at: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/>

Testing, vaccinations and boosters do not remove the need for Space - Face - Hands - Ventilation. Even if people have been vaccinated, they still need to get tested if they have any symptoms of Covid-19.

Those with symptoms and needing a test should ring 119 or go online [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) Whether they have had one or both vaccinations, they may still be able to pass the virus to others.

If you've any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by text on 07714 599669, on 01934 440639 or by email on [tessa.in.touch@gmail.com](mailto:tessa.in.touch@gmail.com)

**Tessa Munt**  
**Somerset County Councillor for Wells**  
**18.11.2021**