

NORTH SOMERSET

Autumn/Winter 2024

LIFE





Dear Reader

North Somerset Council delivers a wide range of services every day. Some are obvious, like bins and buildings, while others such as meals on wheels or care for vulnerable children are less visible but just as important.

will need to cut some services and increase what you pay for them, in council tax and charges. Many of these decisions will be things that nobody will be happy about. Not residents, not council staff, not me.

These services are becoming more expensive each year due to growing demand and rising costs. The council's funding comes mainly from the residents of North Somerset and the government, which in turn relies on taxes from people and businesses.

In this edition of *Life*, we have tried to set out the challenges we face, what we are doing about it and how you can help. But we cannot avoid difficult and unpopular decisions, however much we might want to. Despite the tough choices we face, we remain committed to supporting those who need it most and trying to act in an open, honest and fair way.

With increasing costs and reducing government support, North Somerset councillors face tough decisions. I have to tell you things you won't want to hear. To balance the books, we

Cllr Mike Bell

The Executive

Cllr Mike Bell, Leader of North Somerset Council

Cllr Catherine Gibbons, Deputy Leader

Cllr Mark Canniford

Cllr James Clayton

Cllr Jenna Ho Marris

Cllr Mike Solomon

Cllr Annemieke Waite

Cllr Roger Whitfield

Cllr Hannah Young



time to care...

Fostering North Somerset



As a foster carer with North Somerset you benefit from:

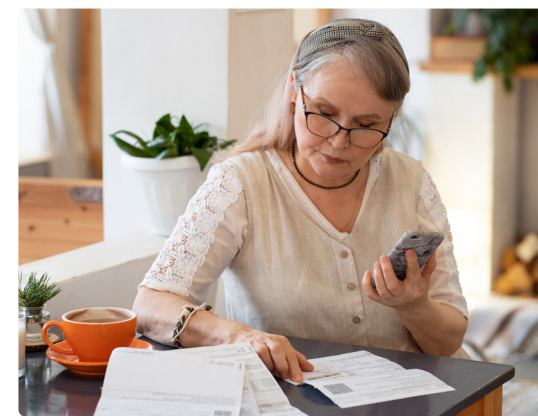
- relief from Council Tax payments
- a weekly allowance of up to £424.05 per child
- free ongoing training and support
- caring for local children
- the Mockingbird Family Model.



Fostering SOUTH WEST

Funded by UK Government

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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.



Step forward and make a difference

01275 888 999
fostering.n-somerset.gov.uk



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Sign up to *Life* online

Stay up-to-date with council news, events and features in-between printed editions of North Somerset *Life* magazine by signing up to the monthly email newsletter.

Subscribe online by visiting www.northsomersetlife.co.uk and click on the 'sign up to our email newsletter' tab to receive the regular round-up straight into your inbox.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in receiving this e-newsletter but aren't online, free internet access is available in all local libraries.

Posters are displayed in libraries to show what stories appear in each

month's edition and library staff are happy to show you how to log on to read them.

Pages from this website can also be printed out for free. Just ask at the counter for help.

Large print and audio versions of the magazine continue to be produced for anyone who needs them in those formats. The audio version is available through Woodspring Talking Newspapers and on Alexa.



Three-weekly bin collections to be introduced

Changes are coming to recycling and waste collections in North Somerset next year to help reduce waste, boost recycling rates and cut the costs of waste disposal.

Changes will be introduced in the spring and the money saved will be used to help to fund other vital local services.

Most households will switch from a fortnightly to a three-weekly collection of non-recyclable (black bin) rubbish.

Further plans to introduce collecting soft plastics (plastic bags and wrapping) for recycling are also being developed.

Weekly collections of food waste and recycling, and the optional chargeable garden waste service, remain unchanged.

An analysis of black bin waste showed that almost half (45 per cent) of it could have been recycled, and a lot of this was food waste.

Feedback from North Somerset Council's recent waste consultation also showed that residents would like more space for recycling and an easier way to sort items.

A new recycling container is being trialled at some properties, along with refreshed training for crews.

Waste minimisation officers can advise and offer support to anyone with concerns.

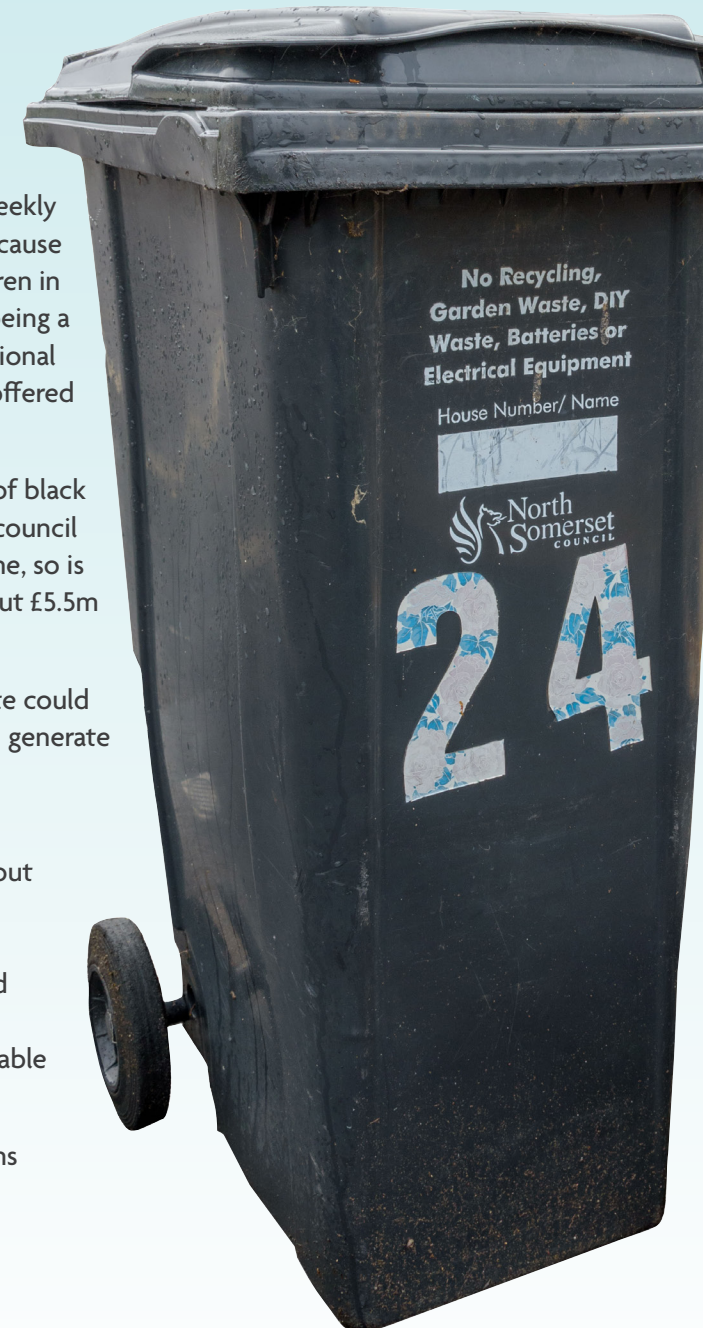
Additional support can also be requested by anyone who may struggle with a three-weekly black bin collection, because of medical needs, children in disposable nappies or being a larger household. Additional waste capacity can be offered if necessary.

Treating and disposing of black bin rubbish costs local council tax payers £138 per tonne, so is costing the council about £5.5m this year.

Almost half of this waste could be recycled instead and generate an income.

It's estimated the new collections will save about £1.1m a year thanks to reduced costs of black bin rubbish disposal and increased revenue from selling additional recyclable materials.

Three-weekly collections already happen in other areas, including Somerset, and are planned in many others across the region.



Contacting the council if you don't have internet access

Help is available over the phone if you, or someone you know, can't access council services online.

The most popular numbers are:

- council tax and benefits – 01934 888 144
- waste and recycling – 01934 888 802
- planning – 01934 888 802
- roads and pavements – 01934 888 802
- housing enquiries – 01934 426 330
- Care Connect (adult and children's social care) – 01934 888 801.

For anything else, call 01934 888 888. This is an automated service. Ask for the service you want and you'll be put through.

Lines are open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday (Care Connect line open 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday).

If you can go online to access council services, please do so. Going online makes it easier for you and also saves the council money, which can then be used to provide essential services to local residents.

It also leaves the telephone lines clearer for the most vulnerable residents.

Visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount



What to do with recycling and waste in severe weather

Severe winter weather could impact recycling and waste collections if crews are faced with icy conditions or snowy roads.

If collections are disrupted this winter:

General waste – put your black wheelie bin or bags out on your normal collection day. If not collected, leave it out and crews will be back as soon as possible.

Food caddy and recycling boxes – put out on your normal day. If not collected by 7pm, take them in and put them out again the following week on your normal day.

Garden waste – put out on your usual day. If not emptied, take it back in then put out again the following month on your scheduled day.

Collection dates change slightly over Christmas to allow for bank holidays.

Download your updated calendar from www.n-somerset.gov.uk/calendars

Other ways to help:

- put bins and containers out by 6.30am on your collection day
- please wash, squash and sort your recycling
- remove all packaging from inside large cardboard boxes and flatten the cardboard to the size of your recycling box
- extra general waste that doesn't fit in your black bin won't be collected and should be taken to a recycling centre or stored until your next collection
- help neighbours who may have difficulties.

If collections are missed from a whole street, check the missed roads report on the council's website to see if the issue is already known. Visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/missedcollection



Follow the recycling team on social media for the latest updates:

- [nsrecyclingandwaste](https://www.facebook.com/nsrecyclingandwaste)
- [ns_recycling](https://twitter.com/ns_recycling)

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/recycling
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/calendars

Find out more about how to reduce, reuse and recycle waste at Christmas on page 26.

Be aware of food allergies this festive time

Christmas is fast approaching and enjoying meals out might make a great treat – but anyone with food allergies needs to remain aware.

A food allergy is when your body reacts to eating certain foods. It's often mild but can be very serious for some people.

Reactions can lead to symptoms such as dizziness, itchy skin, nausea and vomiting, lip and facial swelling, coughing, or difficulty breathing.

While the majority of people with food allergies are at very low risk of fatal reactions, a small number may be at significantly higher risk.

There may be no detectable safe level of allergen for these people

and very small traces could cause life-threatening anaphylactic reactions.

If you have an allergy, notify the establishment before ordering.

North Somerset Council works with businesses to ensure that they meet legal standards so that people with allergies can check ingredients in their food.



If you are worried about an allergy, see your GP and don't cut out foods from your diet before taking medical advice.

Avoiding a food can sometimes result in a more severe allergy to it.

Call **999** if you think someone is having a severe allergic reaction.

A food allergy is different to an intolerance, which usually occurs a few hours after eating and leads to symptoms such as diarrhoea, bloating and stomach pain.



Find out more at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/foodsafety

Time to apply for school places

Now is the time to start choosing a primary school if your child is due to start school next year.

If your child was born between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021, they will be starting reception year in September 2025.

Applications can be made until 11.59pm on **Wednesday 15 January**.

You can name up to three preferences and apply for schools both within and outside North Somerset.

Read the parent guides on the council's website to find out more about the process and using the online admissions system.

If you do not apply by the deadline, it is highly likely you will miss out on a place at your chosen school.

Apply online at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/admissions



£250 off a home energy efficiency survey



Knowing how to make your home more sustainable can be challenging, especially if it's old or listed. With a **home energy efficiency survey**, you can understand what improvements you can make to:

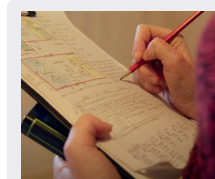
- **Cut your energy bills.**
- **Reduce your carbon footprint.**
- **Have a warmer, more comfortable home.**

Exclusive discounts for homes in North Somerset

You're eligible for a £250 discount if you:

- Live in North Somerset.
- Own your home.

Surveys must be booked and completed by 31 December 2024.



Choose from a range of options, depending on your budget – from a thermal imaging survey to a whole-house assessment. Whatever you opt for, expert surveyors will give you advice, tailored especially for you.

Select your survey at www.cse.org.uk/NS250



REDEEM YOUR £250 DISCOUNT TODAY

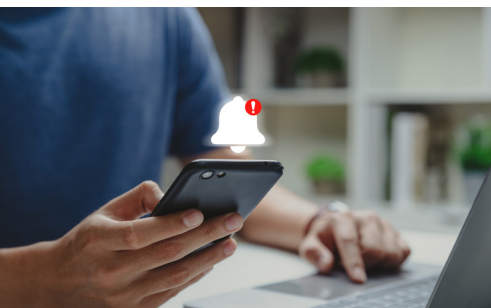


Centre for Sustainable Energy
 St James Parade, Bristol BS1 3LH
 Charity 298740 | Company 02219673

Get prepared for winter weather

Now is the time to make sure your home, family and car are prepared for winter.

Emergencies such as flooding, fires and power cuts can affect us all but there are simple and effective steps you can take to be more prepared.



Stay informed

Any emergency closures to council services will be listed at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/disruption

Get alerts for extreme weather from the Met Office at www.metoffice.gov.uk/weatherready

Talk to your children about emergencies and what to do if there is one, such as how and when to call **999**.

Have a household emergency plan and write down important numbers, such as calling **105** to report a power cut.

Sign up for flood alerts from the Environment Agency at www.gov.uk/flooding

For more information visit www.gov.uk/prepare



Are you a priority?

Energy suppliers and utility companies keep a register of more vulnerable customers so that they know who needs support if there's a loss of service.

The service is for people who are: of pensionable age, are disabled, chronically sick or have a long-term medical condition, have a hearing or visual impairment or additional

communications need, live with a child under five years old, or are in a vulnerable situation.

Each company compiles their own list so you'll need to register with each individually.

For more information visit www.ofgem.gov.uk/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register



Local venues needed for emergency shelters



Could a venue in your community be used as a shelter during an emergency?

North Somerset Council uses venues such as village and community halls, places of worship and sports centres for people to be evacuated to during an emergency incident.

More are now needed across the area to ensure maximum coverage.

Buildings need to be warm and dry with electricity and lighting, seating, kitchen facilities and toilets as a minimum.

For more information and to register a venue you manage, visit www.saferstrongerns.co.uk/information-advice

Could you help to clear snow?

Volunteer snow wardens are needed across North Somerset to help clear essential routes in local communities during severe weather.

You'll just need to complete a short online learning module and register your details to join the scheme.

You'll be issued with a snow shovel, hi-vis vest, gloves and an ID badge, and be introduced to any existing volunteers in your area.

Find out more at Voluntary Action North Somerset on info@vansmail.org.uk or call 01934 416 486



Get ready for winter

Quick jobs for the home include:

- ✓ service the boiler
- ✓ have chimneys/flues swept
- ✓ check any exposed pipes are insulated
- ✓ make sure everyone knows how to turn the mains water off
- ✓ ensure your home is energy efficient – there are many solutions and grants available
- ✓ ensure gutters are clear and drains flowing freely.

For your car:

- ✓ consider booking in for a free 'winter car check' at a garage
- ✓ check fluid levels
- ✓ check bulbs are in good working order
- ✓ check wipers are working effectively
- ✓ check tyres for tread and pressure.

If it snows, consider if your journey is essential – do not travel unless you need to.

If you do drive, stick to main roads if possible and carry a bag of essential items in case you get stuck.

Festive council opening hours

HOLIDAY HOURS

Council venues usually change their opening hours over the festive period so check online at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/festive before you head out.

The Town Hall reception, in Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, is only open to those who have booked an appointment in advance.

Going online remains the quickest and easiest way of accessing council services for many people. Visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect

If you have an enquiry about a council service, call 01934 888 888 first. This is an automated service so you'll need to ask for the service you want and you'll be put through.

Keeping warm and well at home

Plan ahead now to ensure your home is ready for colder weather and look out for more vulnerable friends, family and neighbours.

Staying warm can help prevent infections and other serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

If you're 65 or over, or in an at-risk group, it's particularly important to get medical help as soon as you feel unwell during winter.

Keep your home heated to at least 18°C and have enough food and medicines to see you through any bad weather spells.

Also make sure you have plenty of warm drinks and at least one hot meal a day.

Visit www.nhs.uk for more tips and information.

Support for vulnerable residents

Vulnerable people in North Somerset can access support and advice on energy saving, money, benefits and carrying out home repairs.

The Warmer Homes Advice and Money (WHAM) project is for people on low incomes or struggling to afford to heat their homes.

One recipient said: "I was at my wits' end and nothing would have been resolved."

"I had such a confusing and complicated issue, but I didn't feel alone and the service really helped me fight my corner."

Visit www.cse.org.uk or call 0117 934 1400.

Low-cost home improvement loans

If you're struggling to repair or maintain your home then a low-cost loan could help you get the work done.

North Somerset Council works in partnership with social enterprise Lendology CIC to provide affordable lending to people wanting to make home energy-saving measures or other improvements.

For more information visit www.lendology.org.uk, email loans@lendology.org.uk or call 01823 461 099.

Wellness support over the phone

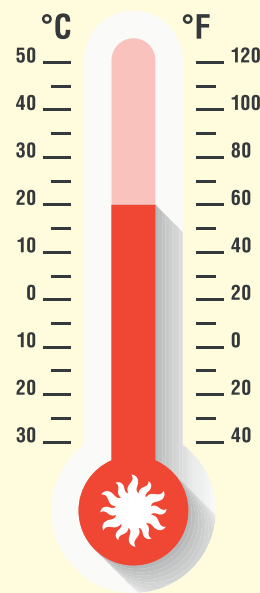
Would a friendly telephone call help you through the day?

North Somerset Council funds a wellbeing and social care telephone check-in service that's available free to local people.

The Wellness Service, run by Access Your Care, operates seven days a week.

It might suit someone who has recently returned home from hospital, is recently bereaved, is caring for someone else, or has minor physical or mental health conditions.

Referrals can be made at www.accessyourcare.co.uk/wellness or by calling 01275 874 861.



Get winter strong

Boost your immunity over winter by getting any vaccinations you're entitled to.

Flu and covid make a resurgence during winter months so vaccinations can help protect you from serious illness.

Getting protected from these respiratory infections means fewer people will experience complications and there is less demand on GP practices, pharmacies and hospitals during this busy time.



If you need medical help but it's not an emergency, call the free NHS helpline 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk

Flu and covid

Flu is a viral infection which can be passed through air particles when people talk, cough or sneeze.

Symptoms include a high temperature of 38°C or above, tiredness, headaches, general pains and a dry, chesty cough.

It can make anyone ill for several days but can lead to serious illness, hospitalisation and even death in more vulnerable people.

The flu vaccine is free to everyone aged over 65, pregnant women,

children aged two to three and those in school, people living in care homes, social care and frontline health workers, and anybody in a clinical risk group.

Adults who aren't eligible for a free flu jab can get one for about £20 at pharmacies and supermarkets.

Free covid boosters are also available this winter for people aged over 65, residents in care homes, anybody in a clinical risk group, and social care and frontline health workers.

RSV

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is a major cause of respiratory illness and particularly dangerous for infants and older people.

The virus can lead to pneumonia and infant bronchiolitis, which requires hospitalisation and intensive care in severe cases.

Women who are 28 or more weeks pregnant are strongly encouraged to speak to their maternity service or GP surgery to ensure their baby is protected.

Those aged 75 to 79 are being encouraged to have their vaccine when invited.

Whooping cough

Whooping cough cases have risen this year.

Infection may lead to complications resulting in hospitalisation and even death, and babies who are too young to be vaccinated are at greatest risk.

Vaccination during pregnancy boosts your antibodies, which are then passed onto your baby.

If you've reached 20 weeks of pregnancy and not been offered the whooping cough vaccine, ask your midwife or GP practice.

Help to ease cost of living pressures **this Christmas**

Christmas can be an expensive time of year so if you're concerned about financial costs, please reach out for help.

Continued cost of living pressures mean many of us are still feeling the pinch. If you are, it's important to speak up and get the support you need.

Talk Money Week in early November is an annual campaign to help start conversations about money in workplaces, with friends and family, schools and wider communities.

Talking about money remains a taboo despite the on-going spotlight on household finances.

People find it difficult to open up and don't access the help available to them to find the way forward.

Latest research shows that more than half of UK adults do not feel confident in making decisions about financial products and services.

This year's Talk Money Week focussed on doing one thing to improve your financial wellbeing – and to make some noise about it and encourage others.

This could be as simple as talking to your child about pocket money or checking what benefits you may be entitled to.

For tips and advice, visit www.maps.org.uk/talk-money-week

Basic money management skills can also be found on the Learn My Way website, which offers free digital skills training to help you stay safe and connected.

Subjects include shopping online, customer rights, mobile banking, budgeting and more.

Sign up and find out more at www.learnmyway.com



Top Christmas money saving tips

There are ways to save money at Christmas while also having less impact on the planet.

Here are some top tips:

- **set a budget** and stick to it
- **try making presents** – personalised, homemade gifts often create the best memories
- **buy second hand** – either online or charity shops
- **if buying new, then bargain hunt** – keep an eye out for sales, use apps such as Google Shopping, PriceRunner, PriceSpy and Kelkoo to get the best deals, use discount codes and get cashback
- **spread the cost if you can**, or ask friends and family to stick to a fixed budget
- **cut down food costs** – make a menu plan and stick to it, or ask guests to bring food to help share costs

Support local North Somerset small businesses. Small Business Saturday is on **Saturday 7 December** so look out for offers.

Are you entitled to pension credit?

An estimated £4m of pension credit is unclaimed in North Somerset.

Pension credit is a weekly benefit to boost your income and is based on how much money you have coming in.

If you've reached state pension age, you might be able to apply for it.

However, it's estimated that about a third of people who are eligible don't claim because they're not aware they can.

Pension credit is separate to your pension and made up of two parts: guarantee credit and savings credit.

Some people are eligible to both parts, while others are eligible for one.



To be eligible, you must be:

- above state pension age, and
- have an income of less than £218.15 a week or less than £332.95 as a joint weekly income with your partner. Your savings will also be taken into account.

To check eligibility, visit www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility

Citizens Advice North Somerset can also carry out a benefit check. Book an appointment at www.nscab.org.uk/get-advice or drop into the advice shop in The Sovereign, Weston-super-Mare.



Help with food costs

Community organisations and charities across North Somerset can offer help if you don't have enough money to buy food.

Find information about community fridges, food clubs, whether you're eligible for free school meals and more at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/foodsupport

Vouchers are needed to access a food bank. Get one from your doctor, health visitor, social worker, family support worker or Citizens Advice North Somerset.

Find out more at www.betterhealthns.co.uk/eat-well

Welcoming places to stay warm

Community living rooms will re-open across North Somerset this winter.

For the past two winters, these community spaces have been set up in buildings, libraries, places of worship and sports centres.

They are welcoming places where people can meet others, access information about support, enjoy a hot drink and stay warm.

Find a map of locations and more information at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/communitylivingrooms



Need short-term financial help?

Short-term financial support to help pay for gas or electricity, food, clothing, travel and more is still available.

The welfare provision scheme provides short-term financial help in a crisis.

The amount you receive will depend on circumstances and you can apply twice in any 12-month period.

Apply online at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wps

Find cost of living support at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/col



Progress on Weston's multi-million pound regeneration

Birnbeck Pier design, courtesy of Studio Four Architects



Inset images courtesy of Haverstock Architects

Weston-super-Mare's multi-million pound regeneration is moving forward with work progressing well on projects across the town.

Birnbeck Pier

Work has started on the first stage of emergency repairs and restoration of this important site.

The approved plans, submitted on the council's behalf by architect practice Haverstock, include restoring landside buildings, creating visitor facilities and a café, stabilising buildings and providing infrastructure.

In September, the RNLI's appointed architects Studio Four also submitted planning applications for the repair and restoration of the Grade II* Listed pier.

In October, the RNLI submitted additional planning applications for a new lifeboat station on the island.

See proposals and detailed drawings at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planning using application numbers 24/P/1907/FUL and 24/P/1908/LBC, 24/P/2010/FUL and 24/P/2011/LBC.

The restoration is wholly funded by external grants obtained by the council. Funders include the RNLI, UK government, National Heritage Memorial Fund, The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.

Local people also continue their support, including Birnbeck Regeneration Trust and the Friends of the Old Pier Society.

Find out more at the information hub next to the pier or www.n-somerset.gov.uk/birnbeckpierproject

Marine Lake



The latest phase of work at Marine Lake took place in September with surveys and enabling work on the lower walkway.

Plans for the new year include improving walkways, steps and ramps and increasing the number of public toilets.

See full proposals when the planning application is submitted.

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/marinelake

Town centre

Four vacant shops on Weston's High Street are getting a makeover to appeal to new businesses and create more jobs in the town.

Full refurbishment will include shopfronts, full repairs and improvements of all floors, and energy efficient systems.

Completion is expected at the end of this year at numbers 57 (previously Fone Zone), 67 and 69 (previously Fone Fixers and a vacant unit) and 73 (previously Weston Artspace).

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/westontowncentre

The Tropicana

More than 250 people attended two drop-in events in September to discover more about proposals for this iconic seafront venue.

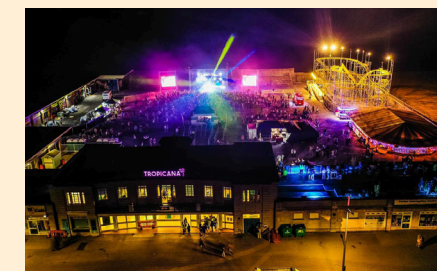
These include enhancing existing facilities and boosting capacity to more than 5,000 people.

See final proposals when the planning application is submitted.

North Somerset Council has run consultations and engagement exercises about the vision of the town centre over the last 10 years.

Feedback from these has led to current proposals for the Tropicana – for it to become a nationally significant venue for culture, arts and entertainment.

This major refurbishment is currently scheduled to finish by December 2025 and an experienced operator is now being sought to run it for at least 20 years.



www.n-somerset.gov.uk/tropicana

Weston-super-Mare's investment is thanks to North Somerset Council's successful bid of £20m from the UK government, matched with £3m of council funding.

This programme, previously called the Levelling Up Fund, is now referred to locally as Improving Weston.

The money must be used for the specific project it's been granted and not for other council services.

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/improvingweston

Grove Park



Improvement work is under way at well-loved Grove Park.

North Somerset Council plans to demolish the 1960s toilet block, managed by Weston-super-Mare Town Council, later this year and relocate it back into the park in the spring, subject to planning permission.

The toilets have been closed since December last year because of vandalism.

See proposals for the new toilet block and other improvements to the entrance when the planning application is submitted.

Wayfinding signs around the town will also be improved

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/grovepark

Successful start to school year in award-winning new building



Pupils at an award-winning, eco-friendly school in Weston-super-Mare made a welcome return in September ready for their first full year in the new building.

The Winterstoke Hundred Academy expansion, in Locking Parklands, opened in January and pupils marked the start of the new school year with a special celebration event.

Pupils led tours for invited guests around the facilities and joined a tree planting ceremony to signify growth for the future and the fruits of investment in education.

The striking three-storey building was designed to achieve Net Zero Carbon in operation and a BREEAM 'excellent' rating for energy efficiency.

It includes features which keep classrooms cool in summer and warm in winter, as well as solar panels generating energy for the school and the national grid.

Year 11 pupil Grace said: "The new building is bigger, brighter and a great space to learn."

"It's also quiet, which makes it easier to concentrate – it's the perfect environment to be in and I'm very proud to be here."

Earlier this year the building won at the Michelmores Property Awards and was shortlisted in 2024's Construction News and Constructing Excellence Awards.

These prestigious awards celebrate innovation and design in the construction industry and demonstrate what North Somerset Council can deliver with the right funding.



The 'eco school' sets a new standard for sustainability in construction in both North Somerset and the wider region.

Principal Matt Randle said: "It is a privilege to be working in our new purpose-built school buildings."

"The bright, open and vibrant design provides for excellent eco credentials alongside fantastic specialist spaces and classrooms."



"Our school is designed to grow with increasing demand from our local community as we aim to deliver a responsive curriculum that meets the needs of students and employers."

"We're excited to see the way our school is becoming a real hub for people in Weston-super-Mare."

The project was delivered by North Somerset Council, working in partnership with project contractors Kier and the Cabot Learning Federation.

It was government-funded through the Homes England's Housing Infrastructure Fund, with an aim of supporting future growth and creating opportunities for people living and working in our area.

Find out more about the Housing Infrastructure Fund at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/hif

Old railway track donated to heritage line

Sections of old track from the disused Portishead rail line are now having a new lease of life transporting vintage locomotives.

Volunteers from Avon Valley Railway took up the tracks in August and they are now being reused so that vintage locomotives can continue to depart from Bitton station along the old Midland line between Bristol and Bath.

Volunteer-run Avon Valley Railway began in the 1970s and is a reminder of the area's important heritage, when railways were vital in shaping modern Britain, creating growth and opportunity by connecting communities.

The old tracks aren't suitable for modern trains and so they had to be cleared before eventual construction of a re-opened Portishead to Bristol line could begin.

Reopening the line, with stops at Portishead and Pill, would see 50,000 residents connected back into the rail network.

This would be a regular and sustainable transport link that would help boost regional growth.

At the time of *Life* going to print, the reopening of the Portishead to Bristol rail line is subject to a government review.

North Somerset Council remains committed to the scheme and everything it can offer local communities.

The Portishead rail project is part of the wider MetroWest scheme.

For more information visit www.travelwest.info/metrowest





Protecting North Somerset against climate change

Record-breaking storms and devastating flooding have hit North Somerset over the last few winters, as climate change has led to more frequent extreme weather events.

Locally, the current and expected impacts of climate change include wetter and warmer winters, with more flooding and a rise in sea levels.

Changing how we do things now will increase our resilience to these effects in the future.

A new climate change adaptation strategy for North Somerset Council brings together expert knowledge on ways we can all adjust our lifestyles and practices, to build resilience in our communities and do everything we can to protect our area.

There are many actions we can all take to minimise the impacts of extreme weather events caused by climate change, such as flooding, extreme cold, and water shortage.

Here are some top tips:

Flooding

- ensure rainwater can be directed off your roof through well-maintained gutters and down spouts
- if you have a garden, plant resilient native plants with deep roots which can soak up water runoff
- potted plants can help absorb rainfall if you have a paved outdoor space
- ensure your roof is in good repair to protect your home from heavy rainwater, and check for loose tiles at least once a year, especially after extreme weather events
- help stop sewers overflowing by installing water butts at the base of down spouts to store rainwater for non-drinking purposes.



Extreme cold

- install pipe insulation to prevent your pipes from freezing
- use hot water bottles or electric blankets to keep you warm, but never both at the same time
- protect potted plants from frost by bringing them inside
- keep your home at a constant temperature of around 18°C
- reduce drafts in your home to stop heat escaping.

Water shortages

- install water butts at the base of down spouts to store rainwater for non-drinking purposes
- contact your water provider to get a free water meter installed, to encourage efficient water use
- take shorter showers and consider installing a low-flow showerhead
- let your lawn grow – longer grass allows roots to grow deeper and keep more soil moisture
- make sure you have a full load of washing when using your washing machine, and opt for an eco-setting, cooler temperature or faster cycle.

Find out more about the council's new climate adaptation strategy and get more tips on building resilience to extreme weather events caused by climate change at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/climateadaptation



Enjoy a planet and wallet-friendly Christmas

Have an enjoyable, more meaningful Christmas which also has less impact on the environment and saves you money.

Here in North Somerset, carbon emissions as a result of our consumption of goods and services are far higher than those created by our transport and energy use.

Buying local, buying less and opting for special experiences rather than 'stuff' are all easy ways to reduce your carbon footprint at Christmas and lower costs.

Look out for ideas and top tips for a more sustainable Christmas on the council's social media channels over the coming weeks.

- NorthSomersetCouncil
- NorthSomersetC





Get set for Christmas cheer

Christmas is around the corner, so it's a great time to get out and about and enjoy all the festive-themed events taking place across North Somerset.

Local producers will be selling their goods at markets across the area, so supporting these businesses will help the local economy too.

Many events are free to attend so it's a great opportunity to meet up with friends and family.

This is a small selection of what's taking place so check local noticeboards and social media.

Also check with organisers nearer the time to confirm details.



See sparkling Christmas lights switch on



Towns across North Somerset will soon be adding some festival sparkle to their High Streets when the Christmas lights are turned on.

Enjoy the festivities in:

Clevedon – join a procession from Clevedon Pier to Marine Lake for the annual Light up the Lake festivities, from 4.30pm on **Saturday 7 December**

Nailsea – the festive fun begins on **Friday 22 November** when the Christmas tree light-up ceremony takes place on the Village Green

Portishead – see Portishead's lights come on, on **Monday 25 November**. Visit the High Street from 6.15pm for a host of entertainment, with the lights turned on at 6.45pm. Santa will be arriving via VWs covered in thousands of Christmas lights, with the fire and coastguard emergency services.

Weston-super-Mare – a spectacular eight-metre high Nordika Christmas tree will light up Weston's town centre this year. The tree is an eco-friendly pre-lit alternative to a real tree. Switch-on celebrations start at 5pm on **Saturday 23 November** in the Italian Gardens. The Sovereign is having a separate switch-on event from 4.30pm on **Thursday 5 December**, with live music, entertainment and Santa's grotto. Shops will stay open until 8pm, with late-night shopping continuing every Thursday in December.

Festive markets

Find unique Christmas gifts and help support local businesses by visiting markets throughout the area.

Here's a small selection of what's taking place. Look out for local publicity to find one in your area:

Mendip Christmas Fair – Saturday 16 (10am-5pm) and Sunday 17 (10am-4pm) November, Aldwick Estate, Redhill

EatShopLove Christmas Market – 6.30pm-10pm, Friday 22 November, Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare

eat:Weston – Saturday 23 November, Winter Gardens and Italian Gardens

Clevedon Flower Show Christmas Market – 10am-4pm, Saturday 30 November, Community Centre, Princes Road



to support North Somerset businesses

Shopping locally is good for the people who live and work in North Somerset as well as the environment.

It ensures money circulates in the local economy, helps employment and cuts transport emissions.

Small Business Saturday, on **7 December**, is a national campaign aimed to highlight the benefits of shopping locally.

Many of these small businesses host events and discounts, so look out for details nearer the time.



eat:Nailsea – 10am-4pm, Saturday 7 December, High Street and Crown Glass Shopping Centre

A Posset Christmas Market – 2pm-6pm, Sunday 8 December, Portishead High Street



For the most up-to-date listings, go online:

- www.discoverclevedon.co.uk
- www.nailseatown.com/whats-on
- www.visitportishead.net
- www.visit-westonsupermare.com

Or catch up with the latest events on social media:

- @westonseafont
- @superwestonmare
- @superculturewsm
- @discovclevedon
- @visitportishead



Stretch your legs along Little River



New footbridges and gates have been installed along a popular footpath in Yatton to make it easier to stretch your legs and enjoy the scenery there.

Walk information

Distance: about 2.5 miles

Difficulty: easy – flat terrain with no inclines or declines. Can get very muddy in wet weather so wear suitable footwear. Cattle graze in some of the fields.

Estimated time: about 1.5 hours

Map: OS Explorer 154

How to get there

The walk starts from the footpath/cycleway next to Chestnut Park play area, off the B3133 in Yatton's North End.

Park on-street at the Chestnut Park housing estate (Moorhen Road or Stonechat Mews). Be considerate of other road users and residents.

This easy out-and-back route follows the path of Little River to the south west of Yatton's North End.

Follow the walk and cycle path from the children's play area, alongside the housing development.

At the last house on the corner, ignore the paved path to the left and instead go straight ahead to the metal kissing gate in front of you, (among the bushes).

Follow the rocky path into the field and then keep to the right edge of the field.

You'll now be walking south alongside Little River.

Continue ahead through the fields and over the newly-installed footbridges. The river will remain on your right-hand side. Watch out for any cattle grazing.

On this side of the river, 10 footbridges have been replaced using funding from National Grid.



As you continue on, you'll pass a factory on your left in the background and further ahead you'll go through metal gates to pass underneath a new T-pylon.

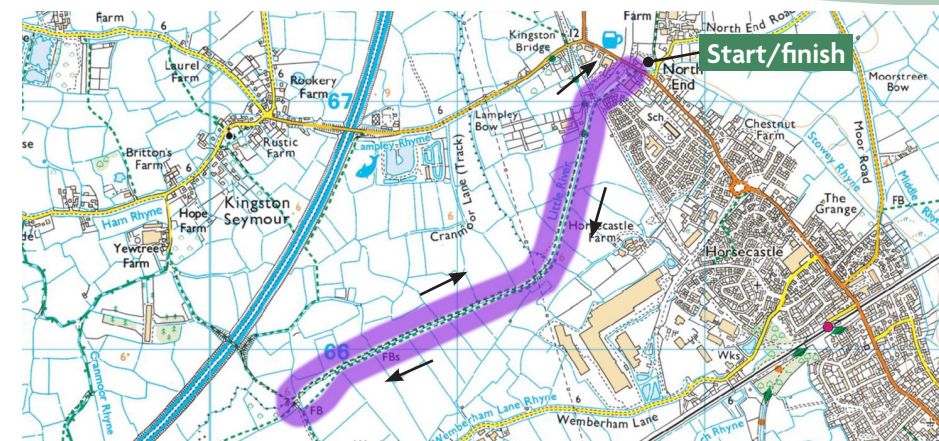
Continue through more fields, gates and footbridges.

The final field in this route has a wider metal bridge, next to the derelict Wemberham Cottage.

Turn right after crossing the bridge to go around the cottage. You'll see the M5 ahead of you in the distance.

At Wemberham Cottage you could follow the path through the orchard, which will take you towards Wick St Lawrence.

Or, if you continue right at the cottage, you will head towards Kingston Seymour.



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Before and after

Accessibility and safety have been improved along the well-used footpath next to Little River in Yatton thanks to the wider footbridges installed last year.

North Somerset Council replaced 20 footbridges and 40 gates along both sides of the river thanks to funding from the National Grid.



For this straight out-and-back route, turn right all around the cottage and through the gates to continue the path on the opposite side of the river.

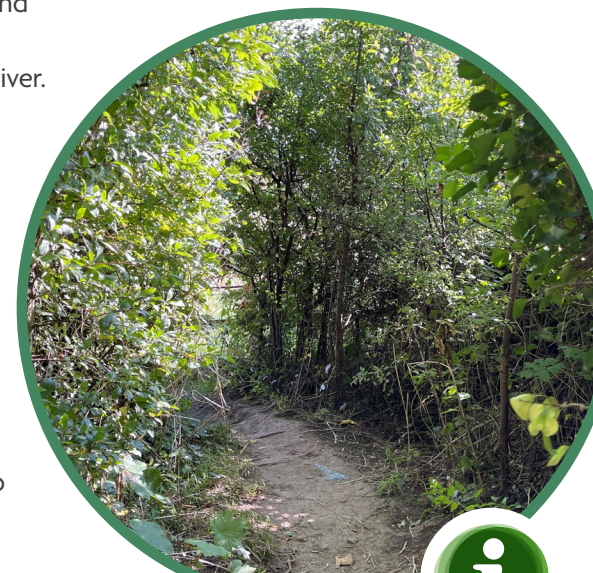
You will now be walking through fields with the river still on your right-hand side, heading back towards Yatton.

You'll pass a further nine bridges on this side that have also been repaired/fitted.

After the bridge near the stables, take the footpath immediately to the right, through the trees.

This leads you back into the field next the housing estate, where you first started.

Retrace your steps to return to the paved path and your start.



For a definitive map showing all public rights of way in North Somerset visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/publicrightsofway



Businesses making strides in sustainability



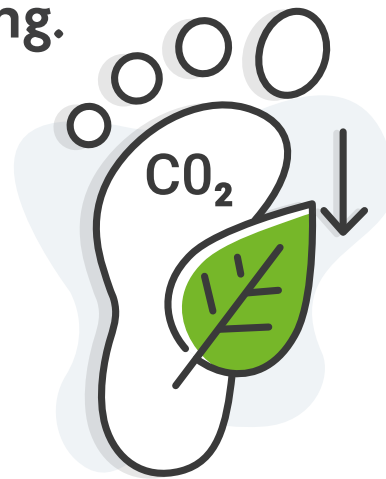
Businesses and community groups across North Somerset are reducing their carbon footprints thanks to new funding.

The government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Net Zero Business Grants launched in April last year to help local businesses, charities and community groups become more sustainable.

So far, six organisations have received funding for capital improvements and another 10 are soon to benefit.

In addition, a further 29 carbon saving surveys have been carried out to identify opportunities where an organisation could reduce its carbon footprint.

This survey evaluates current energy use, pinpoints where most carbon emissions are coming from, recommends improvements, estimates potential savings, and creates an action plan.



A roadmap is then created for the organisation to reduce its environmental impact and often save money.

Life takes a look at where the UKSPF Net Zero Business Grants funding has been put to good use...

Backwell Tennis Club

New LED floodlights are helping non-profit making and volunteer-led Backwell Tennis Club save money as energy prices have soared.

Club development officer John Tate said: "When electricity costs surged during the first winter of the energy crisis, it took a significant toll – about £10,000 of our annual surplus was absorbed.

"With five floodlit courts heavily used during the dark winter nights, we knew we needed to take action to secure a more financially stable future."

The club's old lights had a total load of 46kW but the new LED lights are just 14.1kW, an energy saving of 69.3 per cent.



Bradley's Juices

Rising energy prices put significant pressure on Bradley's Juices, based near Hewish, but solar panels are helping to make the small business more sustainable.

Owner Miles Bradley said:

"Installing a 22,000-watt solar PV system has not only helped us cut electricity costs but also allowed us to transition to clean energy."

Over a six-week winter period alone, the company saved 1.53 tons of carbon (tCO₂e)*. This summer it saved 13.36 tons of carbon (tCO₂e)*, 5.36 tons of coal and generated 13MWh.

Miles aims to make the business net zero by 2025 and is on track to meet it.

There are also plans to transition to electric vehicles and the company is shifting to canned drinks, which are infinitely recyclable, require less energy to produce and will represent a 65 per cent cost saving.

Mendip Activity Centre

New solar panels are helping to save money for Mendip Activity Centre as well as improve its carbon footprint.

Managing director David Eddins said:

"From January to August this year the solar panels produced 7.64MWh, which in theory has saved us about £2,300 so far."

The centre, in Churchill, has also had new windows, doors and insulation.

Staff say the building feels less draughty, warmer and more welcoming.



Strawberry Line Café

A new induction hob is helping to reduce costs at the not-for-profit Strawberry Line Café and Cycle Project, based at Yatton train station.

The café and cycle project provides community facilities as well as meaningful paid employment and vocational opportunities for young people with learning disabilities.

Co-ordinator Sally Wilcock said: "We have no gas, so our building and its contents are powered using electricity.

"The success of the new induction hob has encouraged us to explore other recommendations made in the carbon-saving survey.

"We want to keep reducing costs and creating a better, more environmentally-friendly working environment."

*tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent

Go greener this Christmas

Christmas is the busiest time of year for recycling and waste collections, so reducing and reusing is even better and could help you save money.

During last year's festive fortnight, 519 tonnes of extra recycling was collected in North Somerset.

The busiest day was Saturday 30 December when crews collected 79 per cent more recycling than usual.

Cardboard recycling starts increasing from Black Friday in November and continues until the January sales.

A well-sorted box helps speed up collections and gives crews a better chance to get around all households and provide a reliable service.

Here are some ways to help reduce the pressure, which will be kind to your wallet as well as the planet:

- shop local where possible
- give alternative gifts such as vouchers, subscriptions, annual memberships, homemade treats or days out
- flatten and cut cardboard so it fits in your recycling box
- remove all polystyrene packaging and as much sticky tape as possible
- put extra recycling out over a few collections rather than in one go (extra recycling can also be taken to your nearest recycling centre).

For crew safety, put all glass in your recycling box and make sure it's visible.



Reduce festive food waste and save money

More food waste is produced at Christmas than at any other time of year.

Food plays a big part in the festivities but it's important to make the most of what we buy, especially with continued cost of living pressures.

Reducing food waste can help save you money. Here are some top tips:

- use up food in your freezer in the run-up to Christmas so you have plenty of space to store leftovers
- plan what you'll be eating over the festive period and account for days where you'll be eating leftovers, going away or eating out
- reduce the amount of food you buy by checking your cupboards, fridge and freezer. Write a shopping list and stick to it so you only buy what you need
- store food in the right place so it lasts longer. Keep an eye on date labels and have an 'eat me first' shelf
- make the most of leftovers, creating a vegetable curry or ham pie. Find recipe ideas at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com
- recycle what you can't eat, including turkey bones, solid fat, fruit and veg peelings and plate scrapings. Bag or wrap your food waste by reusing a plastic bag.



No wrapping paper in recycling boxes

No wrapping paper can be put in recycling boxes so choose sustainable alternatives instead.

Wrapping paper should go in your black bin as it's difficult to recycle, because it is often mixed with unrecyclable items such as foil, glitter, ribbon, and tape.

Why not try brown paper, which can be recycled in your paper and cardboard box if the tape is removed?

Changes are coming to recycling and waste collection services in 2025 to help people in North Somerset waste less and recycle more.

See the news story on page 5.

Find out what to do with recycling and waste in severe weather on page 6.

Recycling real trees

Put your real Christmas tree to good use after the holidays and help raise money for charity.

In January this year, donations of real trees raised £31,237.50 for both St Peter's Hospice in Long Ashton and Weston-super-Mare Rotary Club, in aid of Weston Hospicecare.

More than 1,500 trees were also donated to Noah's Ark Zoo Farm in Wraxall for wildlife enrichment and chipping for land regeneration.

If you have a garden waste service, North Somerset Council can also collect your tree (up to two metres high and minus the pot and decorations).

Put it out next to your garden waste bin on your first garden waste collection in January.

Trees can also be taken to the three recycling centres in North Somerset, at Weston-super-Mare, Backwell and Portishead.

Keep your eye on social media and the North Somerset *Life* e-newsletter for announcements of any charity schemes running this year.

Visit www.northsomersetlife.co.uk and click on the 'sign up to our email newsletter' button.

- f NSrecyclingandwaste
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Council budget pressures escalating

Urgent work is under way to try and balance the books at North Somerset Council for this financial year and future ones.

This year – 2024/25 – the cost of providing social care and other key services is likely to be £23.5m more than the council’s income can cover.

The number of vulnerable children and adults needing social care support is increasing, alongside an increase in the complexity and cost of their need.

This in turn means more demand for social care services, housing and home to school transport.

At the same time, funding from central government to help pay for services has reduced under 15 years of austerity measures.

Ten years ago, the council received 25 per cent of its income from government grants but this year it’s only 12 per cent.

North Somerset also has the second lowest council tax rate in the south west, which means the council has less income through council tax than other local authorities.

The council has a legal obligation to balance its budget, and failure to do so means the government would step in and reduce the council’s services to the bare essentials.

This process is known as a Section 114 notice and would have a significant impact on local communities.

Nearly £12m savings were identified by September but radical measures are still needed to find the other £11.6m by the end of March.

The council will always try to prioritise services for the most vulnerable but everyone should be prepared for non-essential services to be reduced or withdrawn.

Keep updated by signing up the *Life* e-newsletter at www.northsomersetlife.co.uk, or follow the council on Facebook or X.

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Statement of accounts

Every year North Somerset Council publishes its statement of accounts to give local people information about the council’s income and expenditure.

This round-up looks at the previous financial year, from April 2023 to March 2024.

As a public authority, the council is responsible for ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and it is used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The statement of accounts is a complex financial document so here in *Life* is a summary from the council’s draft audited accounts, which remain subject to an audit at the time of *Life* going to print.

A full version of the statement of accounts will be available at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/accounts



Income received into North Somerset Council comes from central government grants, council tax and business rates.

This money is then used to cover the cost of providing services.

In 2023/24 this added up to...



Income and outgoings

Income
(where the money comes from)

Service-related government grants	£230.1m
Council tax	£138.7m
Fees and charges	£62.8m
Business rates	£47.5m
General government grants	£5.4m
Total	£484.5m

Outgoings
(what the money is spent on)

Adult social care	£138.9m
Place (recycling and waste, parks, etc)	£104.7m
Schools	£64.9m
Children’s services	£51.1m
Other corporate services	£45.8m
Housing benefits	£41.1m
Public health	£16m
Non-service	£15.9m
Financing and investments	£4.3m
Transfers to general and earmarked reserves	£1.8m
Total	£484.5m

Capital investment

Capital investments continued to be a prominent feature of North Somerset Council's finances during 2023/24.



During the year, more than £64m was spent on improving existing assets and delivering new facilities.

There was continued investment in schools and infrastructure, such as the Baytree Specialist School expansion in Clevedon and Winterstoke Hundred Academy expansion in Locking Parklands, Weston-super-Mare, as well as continued work on the Banwell bypass and existing road network.



Capital spending in 2023/24

What the money is spent on:

Schools	£20.1m
Transport/infrastructure	£19.1m
Road maintenance and streets lighting	£9.4m
Other capital investment	£6.5m
Housing	£5.7m
Community and open spaces	£3.6m
Total	£64.4m

Where the money comes from:

Government grants and contributions	£52.1m
Borrowing	£9.2m
Sales of assets (capital receipts)	£1.8m
Reserves and balances (revenue)	£1.3m
Total	£64.4m

Balance sheet at year-end

The balance sheet shows the council's financial position on 31 March 2024, at the end of the financial year.

It's a snapshot of the assets the council owns, the liabilities it owes, and the reserves it has available to fund future expenditure.

Despite pressures on council finances, it maintained prudent levels of reserves at the year-end.

The council's net assets:

Property, plant and equipment	£395.2m
Current assets	£263.3m
Investment property	£44.9m
Other long-term assets	£12.8m
Other long-term liabilities	-£23.4m
Pension liabilities	-£76.5m
Long-term borrowing	-£127.8m
Current liabilities	-£200.3m
Net assets	£288.2m

Which are financed by:

Earmarked reserves	£91.1m
Other usable reserves	£24.3m
General fund balance	£10.5m
Unusable reserves	£162.3m
Total reserves	£288.2m

Looking ahead



Many councils across the country face the same financial pressures as North Somerset.

In addition to the £23m shortfall for 2024/25, the council's budget gap for the next three years has also increased to £30m.

The Local Government Association, which lobbies central government for more funding, estimates that councils across the country face a funding gap of more than £6bn over the next two years.

Could you help petition government?

An online petition is launching to call on the government to provide a 'fair deal' to the people of North Somerset.

North Somerset Council loses out on £50m per year compared to neighbouring authorities as funding for local government is based on outdated measures.

Local residents are invited to sign the petition and say how unfair it

is that the council is considering stopping or reducing key services because of the way local government is funded.

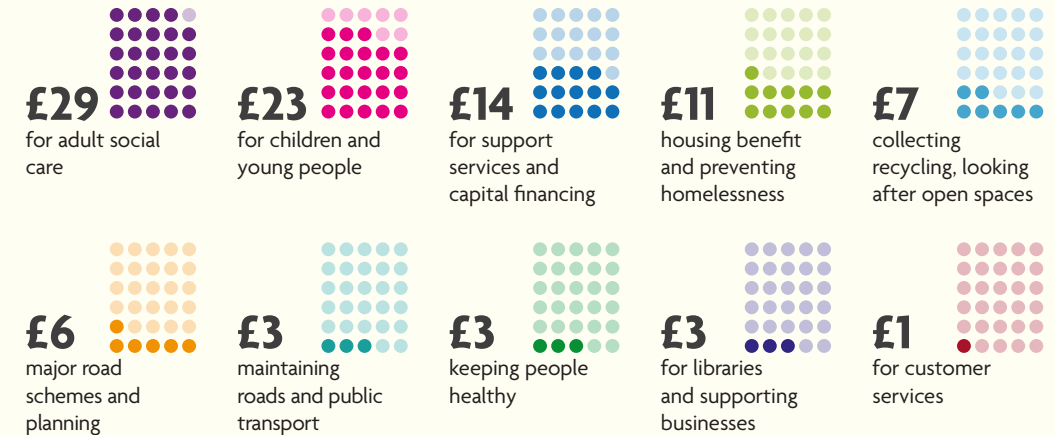
This petition will then be delivered to central government.

Follow North Somerset Council on social media for updates or visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fairdeal

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Where does the money go?

For every £100 the council receives, most of the money goes on supporting the area's most vulnerable adults and children.



Exploring devolution

A potential devolution deal is being considered by North Somerset Council for it to work more closely with the West of England Combined Authority.

The council wants to promote further growth and reduce inequality for local residents but needs new sources of funding and more local control to do this.

If approved by the government and combined authority, this devolution would give North Somerset more control over areas such as transport, housing and jobs.

It would also help reduce inequality, boost economic growth and create new opportunities, including giving the council greater access to larger funding pots.

For more regular updates, sign up to the *Life* e-newsletter at www.northsomersetlife.co.uk

A full version of the council's draft statement of accounts for 2023/24 will be available at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/accounts

Paper copies of the annual accounts are available by writing to Melanie Watts, Head of Finance, North Somerset Council, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ.

For more information, call the finance team on 01934 634 618.

Providing hundreds of services every day

Hundreds of services are delivered by North Somerset Council every day for people across our area.

Bins and potholes might be the most visible and recognised but many more services are carried out by officers, day-in, day-out.

These officers patrol our beaches, inspect restaurants to make sure they're safe to eat in, deliver meals on wheels, build new schools, protect communities in the event of emergencies, support refugees to build new lives, and much more.

Unfortunately, the money from council tax, business rates, central government and general income is not enough to enable the council to achieve all the things that people have said are important for North Somerset.

The council does bid for extra funding where it can but if it's received, there are strict rules about how, where and when the money is spent.

The funding is not allowed to be used for anything else, so can't be transferred over to pay for other services.

Find out more about council services at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services



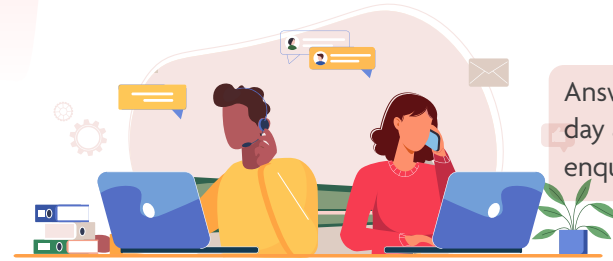
Looking after 237 children in care, and 267 care leavers aged between 18 and 24.



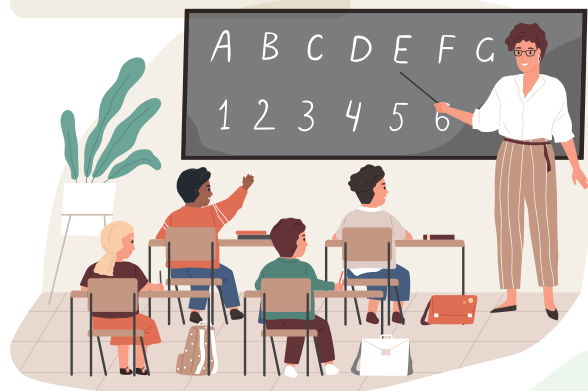
Answering more than 800 calls a day and dealing with residents' enquiries in the contact centre.



Collecting waste and recycling from 102,000 households each week.



Dealing with about 7,500 children's school applications each year.



Maintaining 21,763 street lights, 122 traffic lights (including junctions and crossings) and 145kms of underground electrical cable.



Working with commercial bus operators to revise bus networks based on passenger usage and community needs – with about 7.25m bus journeys made in North Somerset in the past 12 months.



Helping to keep streets safe with 362 CCTV cameras across North Somerset, combined with patrols by community safety officers.



Residential and nursing placements 1,037 (this includes long and short term placements) Community Services 1511



Looking after about 860kms of public rights of way, consisting of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways.



Making our roads safer

Initiatives are being introduced in communities across North Somerset to help make our roads safer for everyone.

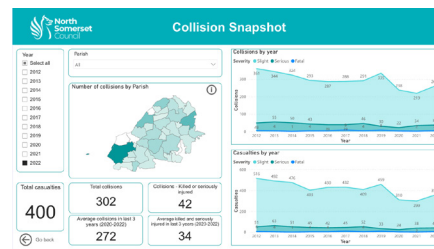
On average, someone is seriously injured on North Somerset's roads each week.

Latest figures from 2022 show 400 people were injured and five were killed in our area.

While this is a reduction of nearly 20 per cent on pre-covid levels, numbers are starting to rise again.

Information about traffic collisions is recorded by Avon and Somerset Police and North Somerset Council collates this data.

It is now available to view using the new online road safety dashboard.



Ten years of data is available, down to individual parish level, including the type of collision, number of vehicles involved, and details about weather conditions and speed limits.

In 2022 there were 12 per cent less collisions compared with the previous 10-year average.

However, figures for some types of incidents are now rising again after the historical low figures during the covid pandemic when less people were on the roads.

Jon Gall, active travel manager at North Somerset Council, said: "The dashboard helps provide insight into collision patterns and is giving a generalised picture that overall road safety is improving."

"While this is welcome, there are still many avoidable injuries happening on our roads."

This data is being used to prioritise highway improvement schemes where engineering measures may reduce the number of collisions occurring.

Visit the dashboard at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/collisions

The Fatal 5

Although North Somerset Council works hard to ensure roads are safe, most accidents are attributed to driver behaviour.

In North Somerset in 2022, the five most significant behaviours that led to death and life changing injuries on our roads were:

1. **careless and inconsiderate driving** – contributed to at least 64 per cent of collisions
2. **speeding** – contributed to 18 per cent of collisions
3. **drink or drugs** – contributed to nine per cent of collisions
4. **not wearing a seatbelt**
5. **using a phone.**

North Somerset Council works in partnership with other councils in the Avon and Somerset Police area – Bristol, Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset – to reduce the number of casualties.

Find out more at www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news

Benefits of a 20mph limit

Evidence shows that 20mph speed limits can help reduce casualties and the severity of people's injuries, as well as encourage more cycling and walking.

In Wales, feedback from the first six months of the 20mph speed-limit rollout shows a 29 per cent reduction in casualties.

Here in North Somerset, 20mph speed limits are being introduced on appropriate roads.

These are concentrated around urban hubs and other amenities, such as schools, shops and playgrounds.

Pill, Wrington, Uphill, Hutton and parts of Backwell and Weston-super-Mare have had 20mph speed limits introduced.

More are planned for Kenn and Yatton, with others to follow.

Visit www.roadsafetygb.org.uk



Weston's 20mph liveable neighbourhood

Creating healthier, safer and quieter places to live is the aim of liveable neighbourhood schemes.

These areas are people-centred and designed to be safe, healthy, inclusive, attractive and more 'liveable'.

The central Weston scheme, around Baker Street, Milton Road and Stafford Road, is the first of its kind in North Somerset and was introduced last year after North Somerset Council received funding from Active Travel England.

Traffic is reduced through the area while roads are kept open for residential access.

Innovative 'rain gardens', small sections of greenery designed in the pavement, help with drainage and reduce flood risk.

Christ Church Primary School community, in Baker Street, has committed to maintaining some of these gardens, along with local residents.

Kerrina New, of Sacred Space Yoga on Swiss Road, said: "We used to have a lot of people whizzing through and now there is much less traffic."

"People are parking more respectfully and, on the whole, it's a much quieter environment."

"Overall, I think it's been a huge success – it's made it a much nicer place and much safer."

Data shows that this scheme and the 20mph limit has reduced traffic speeds by 40 per cent on average on some sections of road in this area.

More road safety schemes are now being considered in Weston-super-Mare, including the A370.

These include alterations to road markings and a review of speed limits.

Other projects include improvements to traffic signals in Failand and a review of the speed limit along Queens Road, Nailsea, as well as improvements to pedestrian crossings.

Unique projects helping older people



Caring for a loved one can be incredibly rewarding but often exhausting and relentless so new projects in North Somerset aim to make life a little easier.

North Somerset Council recognises the important work that carers do, and that they are at the very heart of social care in our community.

Putting someone else first can sometimes lead to increased stress and burnout.

Last year the government set out its priorities for innovation in adult social care, which included identifying, recognising and supporting unpaid carers.

As a result, North Somerset Council is working with Bristol and South Gloucestershire councils to develop projects to support unpaid carers locally.

People needed for respite care pilot project

Unpaid carers and their loved ones are being invited to get involved in a new respite care pilot project in North Somerset.

Respite care usually needs to be planned well in advance, which makes it difficult for carers to have breaks at short notice.

However, this pilot project is much more flexible and allows carers to have short breaks of up to two hours at a time with much less notice.

This would be useful if the carer needs to make an appointment, just do some shopping, or has other commitments such as childcare.

A small number of carers and their loved ones are now being invited to sign up.

The project will be provided at home and make use of technology to deliver some of the breaks.

There's no cost to take part.

Find out more about the respite pilot project, as well as all carers services available in North Somerset, by emailing TEChub@n-somerset.gov.uk



Empowering people to use technology

More people in North Somerset are getting the confidence to buy and use technology to improve their quality of life thanks to a new service.

North Somerset Council is working with Curo Community Connect and the West of England Rural Network (WERN) to support people to access, use and understand technology to help their physical and mental wellbeing.

This could include help with setting up new phones or laptops, creating online accounts, accessing online GP services, downloading audio books, setting up voice-controlled lights or heating, medication reminders or more.

Technology can help maintain someone's independence; reduce, delay, or prevent the need for long-term care services; and provide informal carers with the knowledge to use technology effectively in their caring roles.

The Tech Ready services provide buying advice as well as demonstrations on how to use equipment, so people feel confident using it.

Referrals can be made through Community Connect or, if you live in a more rural area of North Somerset, through your WERN village agent.



Find out more at www.curo-group.co.uk/support-services or www.wern.org.uk/north-somerset-village-agents, call 01934 888 803 or email communityconnect@curo-group.co.uk



Sharing homes and bringing generations together

A unique solution to soaring housing costs and dwindling social connections is under way in North Somerset.

Homesharing brings together two people with different needs – older people who need a little help and people looking for low-cost accommodation.

Locally this matching is organised by Homeshare West.

The householder provides a bedroom and shared facilities free of charge to the sharer, who will carry out agreed household tasks when they get home from work and sleep in the home overnight.

This arrangement might be suitable for people who feel lonely, have disabilities, or want to help younger adults.

It brings security, independence and the potential for a lasting friendship.

Sharers are mature, responsible people who want to make a difference in their communities while developing their careers.

It might be viewed as an opportunity to contribute their time, skills, and energy to help the householder.

Sharers are carefully vetted by Homeshare West.

All arrangements are fully supported by experienced Homeshare co-ordinators and costs are minimal.

Find out more at www.homesharewest.org, call 0117 369 3045/0787 350 7908 or email info@homesharewest.org



Maximising independence at home

Innovative gadgets and devices are helping people to remain independent in their own homes for longer.

North Somerset Council wants to maximise independence and wellbeing for local people and help them lead fulfilling lives.

One way of doing this is utilising technology around the home, and the Equipment and Demonstration Centre (EDC) is the perfect place to see this in action.

The centre, located within the Motex Centre on Winterstoke Road in Weston-super-Mare, celebrated its 10th birthday earlier this year.

It's a hub where people can get information and advice on a variety of equipment, home adaptations and services to help with daily life.

Equipment displayed in the centre includes bathing and showering devices, kitchen gadgets to help with eating and drinking, mobility aids and recliner chairs.

Visitors can try out the latest stairlifts and even go in a through-floor lift.

A newly updated bedroom area includes specialised beds and equipment, as well as an example of voice-activation technology.

One customer, Judith, has bought a walker with a seat, a toilet frame and shower chair this year.

Judith said: "The staff are incredibly helpful, knowledgeable, practical, and compassionate with an abundance of empathy."

"You leave knowing you have bought the right solution for your needs. It helps me to retain my independence and manage day to day."

Another customer, Pat, said: "I was recommended trusted contractors for a wet room and the installation has been excellent."

"I was also signposted to a profiling bed and purchased a riser recliner chair."

"If it hadn't been for the adviser I wouldn't have got these. Her knowledge was excellent and she was able to explain the pros and cons."

Hayley Verrico, North Somerset Council's director of adult social services and housing solutions said: "The EDC creates a space where we can work in partnership with people to help them access the information, guidance, and support they need to lead fulfilling lives."



The Equipment and Demonstration Centre is open every Tuesday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

Walk-in visitors are welcome subject to staff availability, although booking is recommended. Call 01275 888 804 or email EDC@n-somerset.gov.uk

Free parking is available on site.



Supporting SEND families

Schools across North Somerset now have more dedicated resources to help neurodivergent children and young people get the support they need.

North Somerset Council has been continuing to work hard over the past year to improve the experience of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

Over the past year, the council has:

- added three new resource bases into primary schools – dedicated spaces in mainstream schools where enhanced support for pupils with special educational needs is provided
- launched 13 nurture groups, helping schools support children and young people with emerging social, emotional and mental health needs. These groups have improved school attendance, relationships between children, and engagement with learning

- the Educational Psychology service now works with 98 per cent of schools across North Somerset, supporting children and young people's learning and wellbeing
- specialist Baytree School has expanded with a second site in Clevedon, and Lime Hills Academy's new site in Churchill is in development.

Additionally, North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together (NSPCWT) provides support to parent carers of children and young people with SEND.

It signposts families to relevant organisations, hosts regular coffee mornings, organises training sessions and large events, provides wellbeing opportunities and more.

In October, NSPCWT organised the largest event in North Somerset for SEND families, with face-to-face support, hands-on activities and drop-in clinics taking place during the day in Weston-super-Mare.

Chief executive Kenton Mee said: "During a time when demand for resources is high and funding structures are struggling, we're committed to providing essential support and signposting that is free to access for the community."

"Through our efforts, we aim to make everyday life better for parent carers and help every child and young person with an additional need or disability reach their full potential."

NSPCWT is currently working with the NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care System in projects to improve support for neurodivergent children and young people.



Find information about SEND in North Somerset at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sendhub

Find out more about NSPCWT at www.nspcwt.org



Help create tree canopies in urban areas

Trees are vital for the health of the planet as well as our own wellbeing, and more are needed in urban areas across North Somerset.

Recent figures from the Tree Equity Score UK show that many areas of Weston-super-Mare and central areas of Portishead, Nailsea and Clevedon have less than 10 per cent tree canopy cover, compared with more than 25 per cent cover in less urban areas.

The Royal Horticultural Society also estimated that one-in-three residential front gardens now have no plants at all.

To help tackle this, North Somerset Council has received funding from

Trees for Climate and the Local Authority Tree Fund to increase the number of trees in urban areas.

This will include replacing lost street trees, planting new ones and creating three Tiny Forests, in partnership with the charity Earthwatch.

However, the areas most in need of plant cover often have very narrow pavements and roads, making it difficult to plant street trees in the traditional way.

Instead, trees and shrubs could be planted in front gardens.

North Somerset Council is asking all residents across the area to join forces with their neighbours to create garden canopies – which would benefit wildlife, as well as community wellbeing.

Gemma Madigan Webb, a DEFRA funded tree planting officer at North Somerset Council, said:

“The sight of trees, the way they change throughout each day and across seasons, provide a real connection to nature. They never fail to calm my senses, even on the most hectic days. Everyone should have access to trees, regardless of postcode.”

From this...



Andre Place / Shutterstock.com

...to this?



Why plant more trees?



Trees are a critical tool in reducing the impacts of climate change, through removing carbon from the atmosphere, resisting storm force gales, absorbing rain excesses and providing shade in extreme heat.

They also create critical habitats for wild creatures. In urban areas, 85 per cent of nectar for insects comes from gardens.

Inspire your community

Planting up your front garden can inspire your neighbours to do the same, kick-starting a tree canopy chain reaction along your street.

For help to begin, free community tree growing packs are available from The Woodland Trust.

Visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees

To celebrate **National Tree Week**, Chew Valley Trees is offering a 10 per cent discount to North Somerset residents on trees bought in November 2024.

Quote **NOVEMBER10** to claim your discount.

For more information visit www.chewvalleytrees.co.uk

What to plant

Native and near-native species are great to plant, or research your favourite wildlife species and pick plants best suited for them.

You could create your own food forest garden, with fruit trees underplanted with a mix of different edible plants.

If you live near a main road, research the best plants for improving air quality and reducing noise.

Any plant cover will increase the numbers of invertebrates, provide wildlife habitat and simply make us feel happier.

Support and planting ideas are available from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Visit www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved



Make your tree count

A new interactive map will be launching this winter for local people to plot any new trees they plant.

If you plant a tree, please add it to the map to watch the North Somerset garden canopy grow.

Visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/publictrees

North Somerset Council can connect you to community growing initiatives.

For tree planting, email treeplanting@n-somerset.gov.uk

For gardening, email parksranger@n-somerset.gov.uk



North Somerset Life

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

For advertising and sponsorship opportunities contact tim.brown@n-somerset.gov.uk

For editorial contact editor@n-somerset.gov.uk or 01275 884 139

Your copy should be delivered with your post unless you use Royal Mail's opt-out service to block unaddressed mail.

View back issues at www.northsomersetlife.co.uk



Communities coming together to tackle weeds

Communities in North Somerset are coming together to clear their local area of weeds in a bid to reduce the use of weedkiller.

North Somerset Council has a legal duty to effectively reduce trip hazards and improve access on pathways, maintain leisure and sports areas and control invasive species of plants.

A range of approaches are used to do this, including the limited use of weedkillers.

However, these are now being phased out as the council works towards creating a greener North Somerset.

Weedkillers haven't been used near children's play areas since 2018 and are now used minimally in parks and open spaces where there is now a greater focus on biodiversity.

A weed inquiry day was held earlier this year for councillors, officers, community and volunteer groups to discuss ideas.

Now the council's contractor Glendale is trialling viable alternatives which benefit both the environment and local residents.

In Nailsea, volunteers from Nailsea Town Council, Nailsea in Bloom, Better Nailsea and Nailsea Climate Action Group, have worked together to manually clear weeds in the High Street area.

North Somerset Council is now working with local town and parish councils and volunteer groups across



Volunteers clearing the weeds from Nailsea High Street in July

the area to have more community-led weeding which is less reliant on spraying.

This will need to be done systematically or where there is a known desire within a community to carry out this work.

This might not be suitable in more rural areas.

North Somerset Council will remove collected weeds and other materials and, where necessary, clean areas or bring them up to the required standard before the community takes on the work.

Find out more about community weed killing and how to get involved by emailing recycling&waste@n-somerset.gov.uk



Get the latest news straight into your inbox



Stay up-to-date with council news, events and services by signing up to the North Somerset *Life* email newsletter.



Subscribe online and stay informed at www.northsomersetlife.co.uk

Tide times

Check tide times online at 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.

Contacts

Call us

If you would like help to access additional information about any of the subjects covered in this magazine, call the contact centre on **01934 888 888** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). This is an automated service so you'll need to ask for the service you are looking for.

Direct numbers for other popular services:

- | | |
|--|---|
| For waste and recycling, road issues, planning and building control:
01934 888 802
(Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) | For council tax and benefits:
01934 888 144
(Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) |
| | For social services:
01275 888 801
(Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm) |

Do it online – report it, request it or pay for it at:

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect

Or go straight to these popular web pages by adding these shortcuts: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/myaccount / [planning](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planning) / [schooladmissions](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/schooladmissions) / [wastecollections](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wastecollections) / [termdates](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/termdates)



Walks in the area are available to view and download at www.northsomersetlife.co.uk

Festive recycling and waste collections

Recycling and waste collection days change slightly over the festive period to allow for bank holidays.

If your normal collection day would be:	Your revised collection day will be:
Monday 23 December	No change
Tuesday 24 December	No change
Wednesday 25 December	Friday 27 December
Thursday 26 December	Saturday 28 December
Friday 27 December	Sunday 29 December
Monday 30 December	No change
Tuesday 31 December	No change
Wednesday 1 January	Thursday 2 January
Thursday 2 January	Friday 3 January
Friday 3 January	Saturday 4 January

Check your calendars online at
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/calendars



WORKING TOGETHER