

Somerset Council Report

Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council 2nd April 2025

1 Somerset News

1.1 -51 tonnes of plastic bags and wrapping out of the bin thanks to Somerset residents

More than 50 tonnes of plastic bags and wrapping has so far been recycled in Somerset Council's trial collections.

Somerset is one of ten councils taking part in the national, Government-backed FlexCollect trial and the latest figures show that 51 tonnes have been collected in the trial area in and around Frome. That equates to preventing around 217,000 15-litre bags full of plastic bags and wrapping from being binned since May 2023, and instead being turned into new products and packaging.

Around 26,000 residents in the east of the county are involved in the trial. The plastic packaging is collected for recycling with residents' weekly kerbside collections. Residents are asked to fill bags with packaging including, crisps packets, bread bags and plastic netting.

As part of the Government's new Simpler Recycling law, collection of plastic bags and wrapping will be expanded across the county and all households in the UK will need to be offered the service by April 2027.

Recycled plastic bags and wrapping can be used to make a range of new plastic products such as, plastic packaging, 'bags for life', boxes, bins, and agricultural and construction materials. The trial was part of a larger £3m Flexible Plastic Fund 'FlexCollect' project, which involved ten local authorities across England, and aimed to inform government and industry on how plastic bags and wrapping should be added to existing household collection services.

Residents who are not part of the trial can take their plastic bags and wrapping to local recycling points, often found in supermarkets. [Recycle Now's search function](#) can be used to find locations.

For more information and news about Somerset Council's Waste Services visit the [Bins, Recycling and Waste](#) section of the website and follow @somersetwaste on Facebook and X.

1.2 - Protect our skylarks: Somerset Council urges careful steps at Ham Hill

Somerset Council is urging visitors to Ham Hill to tread carefully and keep pets on leads when exploring the popular plateau fields at the south end of the site, to protect endangered and vulnerable ground-nesting skylarks. As we enter the nesting season, we kindly ask all visitors to help us safeguard these precious birds and the diverse wildlife that calls Ham Hill Country Park home.

[Skylarks](#) are known for their enchanting songs and distinctive flight patterns. However, their nests (made on the ground amongst the dense grasses) make them particularly susceptible to disturbances. Human activity, including walking and recreational activities, can inadvertently damage nests, disturb chicks, and disrupt breeding. Skylark populations have UK Red List status due to significant declines over the past few decades. Since the mid-1970s, their numbers have fallen by approximately 55%. Despite a small recent upturn, the latest UK population trend still shows a decline of 11% from 1995 to 2022. Currently, there are around 1.6 million habitats occupied by skylarks in the UK.

The Ham Hill Rangers recorded over 12 breeding pairs last year, which remains steady compared to previous years. However, the habitat offers opportunities for this population to expand if they have undisturbed nest sites.

Visitors to the site can do their bit to help ensure the safety of the breeding skylarks by being mindful and carrying out these simple steps.

- Please pay attention to signs and barriers indicating sensitive areas.
- Stick to designated paths and avoid the protected areas.
- Please keep dogs on leads and keep them on the designated paths, away from potential nesting sites.
- Keep noise levels down to avoid startling wildlife.

While visiting, take a moment to stop and look up to witness the skylark's aerial displays and melodious song as they hover above their territory. By following these guidelines, you can enjoy the beauty of Ham Hill and contribute to the protection of its precious wildlife.

1.3 - Council unveils major package of bus service improvement measures

Somerset Council is introducing wide-ranging support and improvements to bus services across the county following confirmation of a new £6 million tranche of Government funding for 2025/26.

Initiatives under Somerset's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) will incorporate improved services for Yeovil and Bridgwater including evening journeys, continued evening services for Taunton and on-going support for vital bus routes across Somerset including in Frome, Dulverton and Wiveliscombe.

In line with bus priority measures at traffic signals in Taunton, similar schemes are to be rolled out in Yeovil and Bridgwater. These will help buses avoid delays and should help ensure timetabled stops are more reliable.

Taunton's Park and Ride fare will remain £1 for a single journey as part of the package.

With the end of the £1.50 fare trial in Taunton on 31st March, bus users are encouraged to check operators websites for up-to-date fares. The government's £3 national fare initiatives continues until 31st December 2025.

Key Local 2025/26 Somerset Council Bus Service Improvement Measures:

Yeovil:

- Extending the 376 service from Bristol to Street to Yeovil – to include evenings and Sundays.
- Sunday service for 51 Yeovil Town; Service CR6 (Bridport to Yeovil) extra later return journey. A review of the town centre network, repurposing service 11 to remove some duplication and provide a service to areas of Yeovil currently not served.
- Continued Council support for: Services 1, 54, 58, 68 and 81 which provide links from Yeovil to Shepton Mallet, Taunton, Wincanton, Yeovil rail stations and South Petherton.
- Bus Priority Signal Improvements

As well as the ongoing work on Taunton's Transport hub on the site of the former bus station, and a pilot rural transport hub in Langport, there will be feasibility studies for transport hubs in Yeovil and Bridgwater.

There will also be initiatives aimed at improving passenger information across the county.

2- Local Issues

2.1 - Roadside trees at East Stoke – Included in the next contract out for tender now. Still awaiting details of this tender!

2.2 - Traffic and Road Safety Meeting

A walk round has been arranged with SC staff to look at issues at 1000- 27/1/2025. Postponed. This meeting took place on 25/2/25 and was well attended. SC officers from Traffic Management and Highways discussed matters brought forward, (Clerk has received a confirmation response from Traffic Management), and the how the road repair reporting system, inspection and work orders works. It was recommended that all defects to be directly reported using the [“report a problem on the road”](#) on the Somerset Council preferably including photographs as that can help with assessing more urgently should it be a notable safety issue. It may be that the council would consider a task and finish group for some of the proposals discussed as a way to bring about the changes that could make Stoke safer, as they would need community support.

2.3 - Overhanging vegetation and surface green creep

The removal of slip road foliage and surface green creep has proved difficult due to there being no existing agreement on responsibilities between Somerset Council(SC) and National Highways (NH) on the stretch of the A303 between Ilchester and S. Petherton. Sadly, we have now passed 1st March which is the no cut back period due to nesting birds. Given the growing safety issues this may possibly be considered outside of that timetable. Neither can either party close the road as neither has that authorisation. This will be discussed with continued urgency between SC and NH and legal depts. Will keep the council updated with any positive progress or outcomes.

As you are aware, this slip is not the only one along this stretch of the A303 that is in need of specific guarantees and agreements.

2.4 - A356 Crewkerne Road Signage

The large sign on the A356 southbound Crewkerne road, prior to West Street is in need of a clean which would be beyond safe for volunteers to undertake and has lost reflection due to moss making it satisfactorily legible at night, this has been highlighted and was added to the teams cleaning schedule.

2.5 - Bonnies Lane – Length to be jetted in 2025-26

Regards

John and Emily