



Nicola Clark – Unitary report December 2025

Merry Christmas, and all the best as we move into 2026

Wishing you all a joyful Christmas. It's been a busy year for our communities, and I just want to say a quick thank you to everyone who gives their time, energy, and care to keep our towns and villages thriving.

Over the past year I've met so many people who quietly keep our community moving, from those running local events to those looking out for neighbours. Their efforts genuinely make a difference, and they don't go unnoticed, so thank you, and I hope that you all have a wonderful festive break.

Consultation on Somerset Council's Electoral Boundaries Reopened

Somerset residents now have another opportunity to provide their input on new electoral boundaries for Somerset Council, as the Local Government Boundary Commission has reopened its consultation on draft recommendations. The consultation will run from now to January 14, 2026.

The decision to reopen the consultation follows the Commission's misunderstanding of Somerset Council's preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions, which was incorrectly interpreted as a formal request for a uniform pattern. This led to concerns that multi-councillor divisions may not receive adequate consideration, prompting the Commission to ensure a fair and transparent review process.

Cllr Bill Revans commented on the situation, stating, "While it is accepted that mistakes happen, all the submissions to the consultation included multi-member divisions. The chances of anyone being put off commenting by the LGBCE's misunderstanding are infinitesimal. The cost of a new consultation and the delay in publishing the final boundaries makes this a frustrating and strange decision."

Residents are encouraged to participate by sharing their views, including support for multi-member divisions, as the Commission aims to consider all perspectives. Final recommendations are expected to be published in March 2026, with new arrangements set to take effect in May 2027, pending parliamentary approval.

For further details on the boundaries proposals, visit the Commission's website at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>. Feedback can also be submitted via email at reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by post to the Review Officer (Somerset), LGBCE, 7th Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8YZ.

Postal Vote Renewal – What You Need to Know

If you have a postal vote is due to expire on 31 January 2026. If you want to continue voting by post after this date, you must renew it. This is because the Elections Act 2022 introduced new security requirements:

- ✓ You must now provide your National Insurance (NI) number
- ✓ Postal vote renewals are required every three years

You now have two options:

Option 1 — Do Nothing

If you take no action, your postal vote will automatically end at the end of January 2026. You will then need to vote in person at the polling station.

Option 2 — Reapply Online (Recommended)

If you want to keep your postal vote, you must reapply through the Government portal.

Before starting, make sure you have:

- 1 Your National Insurance number
- 2 A clear photo of your handwritten signature on plain white paper (black ink, well lit, in focus)

Apply here:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>

If you cannot provide your NI number

You must explain why and upload another form of ID (passport, photocard driving licence).

You can also find your NI number here:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-national-insurance-number>

If you cannot apply online (I feel like this will be the most important bit for Blackmoor Vale residents). If you know someone who this applies to, please feel free to give them my number and I can assist them.

You can visit a Somerset Council customer access point. Our closest ones are The Balsam Centre in Wincanton, or Wincanton Library. You can also visit other libraries across the Somerset area.

Bring:

- ✓ The completed paper form (included with your letter)
- ✓ Your handwritten signature
- ✓ Your NI number
- ✓ Your date of birth

A staff member can help you submit it.

Important notes:

Missing or incorrect information may delay your application.

No prepaid envelope is included because paper applications cost more to process.

If your postal vote expires, you can reapply at any time up to 5pm, 11 working days before an election.

Council's CCTV Team Key in Reporting Incidents to Police

Somerset Council's CCTV team has reported nearly 700 incidents to police in the last three months, playing a crucial role in community safety. On November 12, the team alerted police to a fire under a climbing frame in a children's play area in Bridgwater, allowing firefighters to prevent the incident from escalating.

In total, the CCTV team has recorded 690 incidents, processed 391 footage requests from police, and proactively detected 408 incidents during this period. Their prompt actions have led to the apprehension of offenders, including one case where an operator guided police to a handbag thief.

The CCTV service, funded by city, town, and parish councils, has recently upgraded systems in Burnham-on-Sea and Street to high-definition cameras, with ongoing upgrades in Taunton, Wellington, and Shepton



Mallet.

Don't Miss Your Chance: Get Your Flu Vaccination

Somerset Council urges eligible residents to get their flu vaccination, as cases are already rising this season. Vaccination is crucial to prevent serious health complications, especially for those with underlying conditions.

Eligible groups include pregnant individuals, children aged 2-3, school-aged children, those aged 65 and over, and frontline health workers.

To learn more and book your appointment, visit the [NHS Flu Vaccine page](#) or contact your GP practice. Stay protected this flu season!

Council Approves Pupil Referral Unit Merger to Enhance Outcomes

At a recent meeting of Somerset Council's Executive, members approved a major reorganisation of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) aimed at improving the quality and consistency of alternative provision for children and young people in the county.

The council decided to consolidate the management of the four existing PRUs to streamline governance and standardise approaches, particularly addressing gaps in provision in Frome and West Somerset.

Tor School will expand to include the South Somerset Partnership School, while The Bridge School will incorporate sites from Taunton Deane Partnership College. A new Partnership Agreement will define the support and challenges needed for ongoing improvements.

All existing facilities will remain open, ensuring that current students continue at their respective sites without needing to change schools or facing longer journeys.

The decision focuses on improving management structures to create a fairer system where every child receives high-quality education support, regardless of location. The changes will take effect on April 1, 2026. For more information, visit [the Executive's Decision Report](#).

Somerset Council Invests in Improved Outcomes for Residents

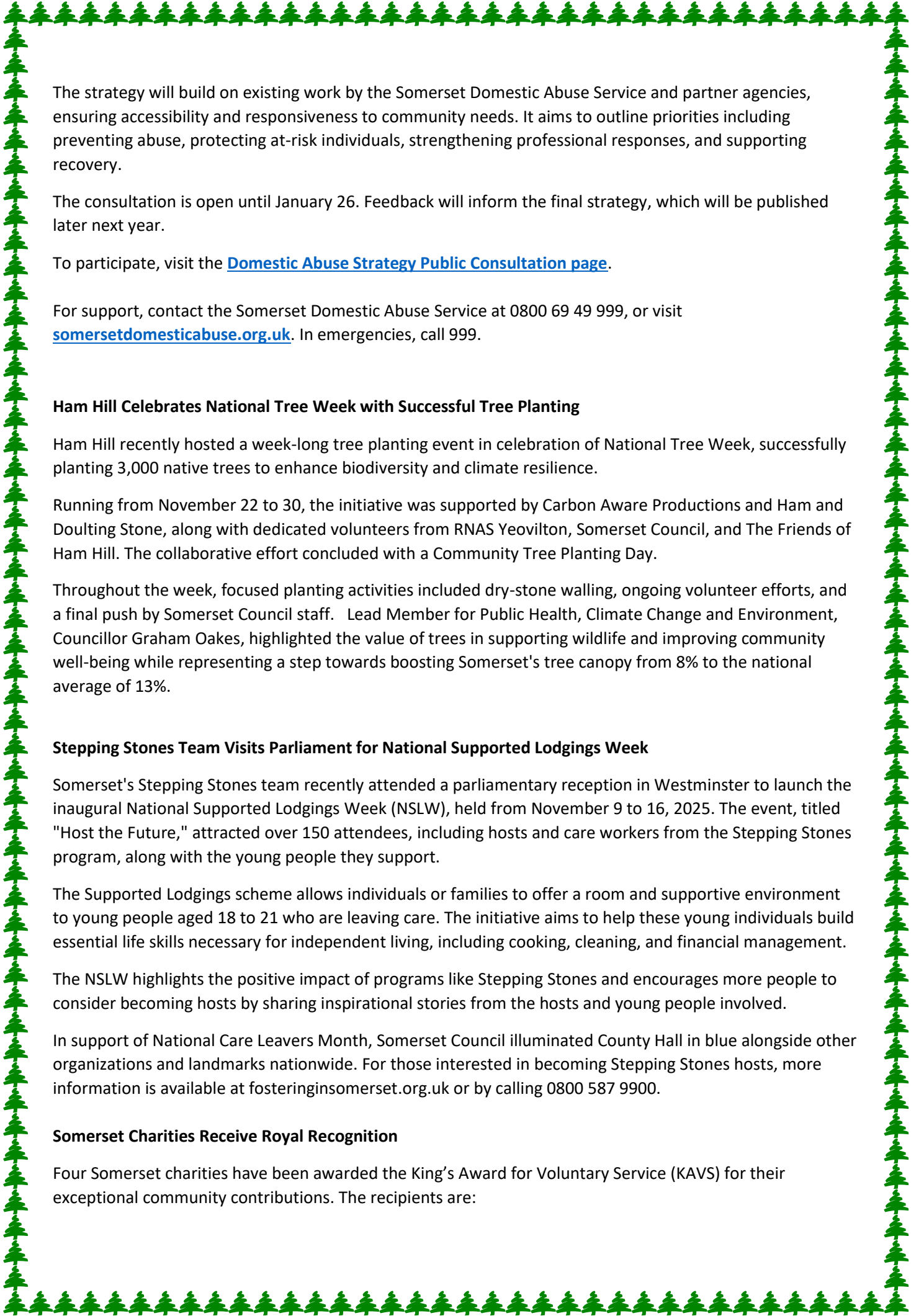
Somerset Council has approved new contracts for the Discharge to Assess (D2A) service, enhancing support for residents returning home from hospital. This service offers up to six weeks of tailored assistance, promoting independence and reducing long-term care needs.

Currently assisting about 3,000 people annually, the D2A service helps lower hospital bed occupancy and speeds up recovery at home. The new contracts ensure continuity of care after May 2026.

Full details can be found via the Executive's [Decision Report \(PDF\)](#).

Have Your Say on Somerset's Domestic Abuse Strategy

Somerset Council invites public feedback to shape a new three-year Domestic Abuse Strategy focused on prevention, protection, and recovery. The consultation seeks input from residents, organisations, and professionals on how to effectively support those affected by domestic abuse.



The strategy will build on existing work by the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service and partner agencies, ensuring accessibility and responsiveness to community needs. It aims to outline priorities including preventing abuse, protecting at-risk individuals, strengthening professional responses, and supporting recovery.

The consultation is open until January 26. Feedback will inform the final strategy, which will be published later next year.

To participate, visit the [Domestic Abuse Strategy Public Consultation page](#).

For support, contact the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service at 0800 69 49 999, or visit somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk. In emergencies, call 999.

Ham Hill Celebrates National Tree Week with Successful Tree Planting

Ham Hill recently hosted a week-long tree planting event in celebration of National Tree Week, successfully planting 3,000 native trees to enhance biodiversity and climate resilience.

Running from November 22 to 30, the initiative was supported by Carbon Aware Productions and Ham and Doultong Stone, along with dedicated volunteers from RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset Council, and The Friends of Ham Hill. The collaborative effort concluded with a Community Tree Planting Day.

Throughout the week, focused planting activities included dry-stone walling, ongoing volunteer efforts, and a final push by Somerset Council staff. Lead Member for Public Health, Climate Change and Environment, Councillor Graham Oakes, highlighted the value of trees in supporting wildlife and improving community well-being while representing a step towards boosting Somerset's tree canopy from 8% to the national average of 13%.

Stepping Stones Team Visits Parliament for National Supported Lodgings Week

Somerset's Stepping Stones team recently attended a parliamentary reception in Westminster to launch the inaugural National Supported Lodgings Week (NSLW), held from November 9 to 16, 2025. The event, titled "Host the Future," attracted over 150 attendees, including hosts and care workers from the Stepping Stones program, along with the young people they support.

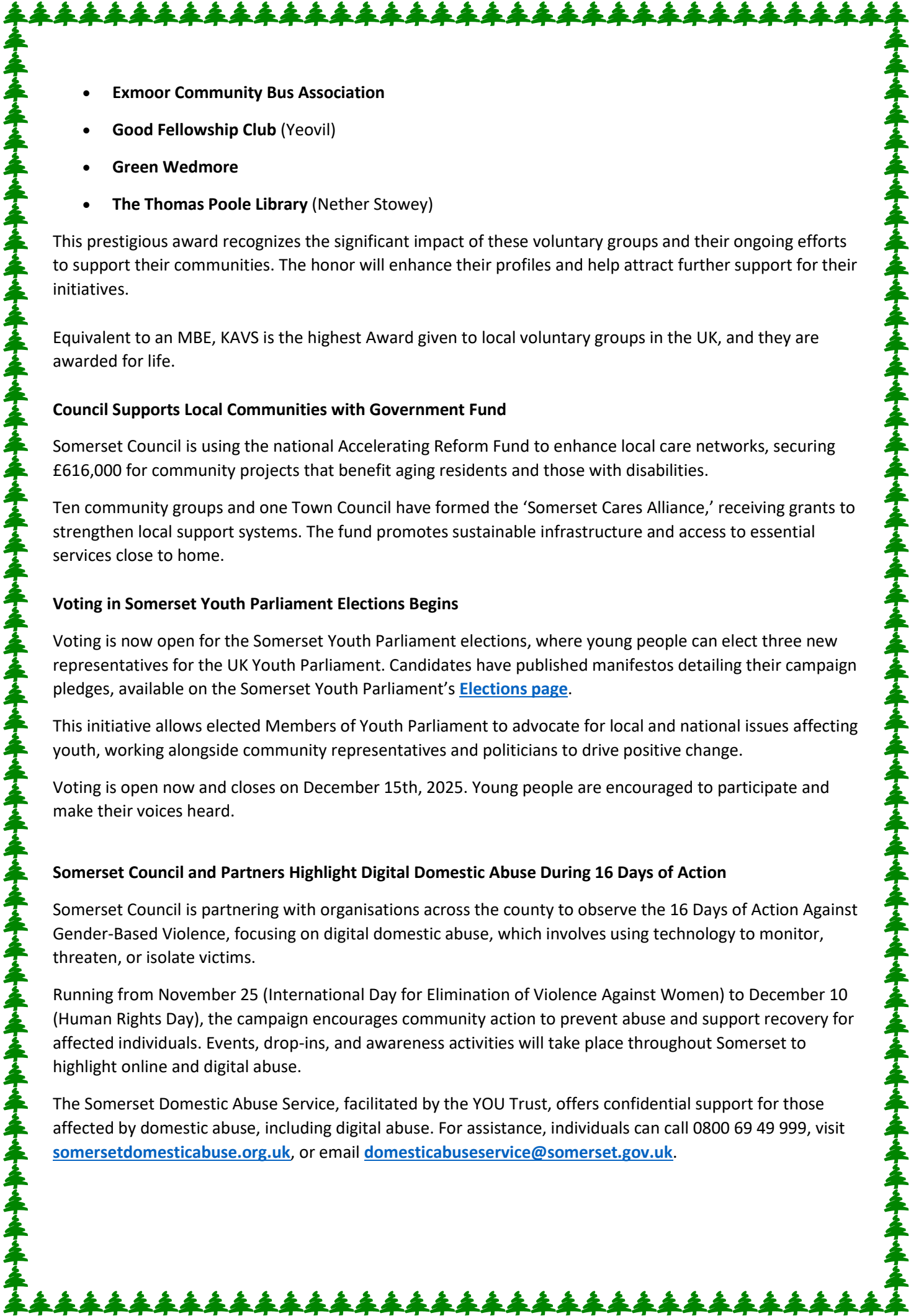
The Supported Lodgings scheme allows individuals or families to offer a room and supportive environment to young people aged 18 to 21 who are leaving care. The initiative aims to help these young individuals build essential life skills necessary for independent living, including cooking, cleaning, and financial management.

The NSLW highlights the positive impact of programs like Stepping Stones and encourages more people to consider becoming hosts by sharing inspirational stories from the hosts and young people involved.

In support of National Care Leavers Month, Somerset Council illuminated County Hall in blue alongside other organizations and landmarks nationwide. For those interested in becoming Stepping Stones hosts, more information is available at fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or by calling 0800 587 9900.

Somerset Charities Receive Royal Recognition

Four Somerset charities have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) for their exceptional community contributions. The recipients are:

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- **Exmoor Community Bus Association**
 - **Good Fellowship Club** (Yeovil)
 - **Green Wedmore**
 - **The Thomas Poole Library** (Nether Stowey)

This prestigious award recognizes the significant impact of these voluntary groups and their ongoing efforts to support their communities. The honor will enhance their profiles and help attract further support for their initiatives.

Equivalent to an MBE, KAVS is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life.

Council Supports Local Communities with Government Fund

Somerset Council is using the national Accelerating Reform Fund to enhance local care networks, securing £616,000 for community projects that benefit aging residents and those with disabilities.

Ten community groups and one Town Council have formed the 'Somerset Cares Alliance,' receiving grants to strengthen local support systems. The fund promotes sustainable infrastructure and access to essential services close to home.

Voting in Somerset Youth Parliament Elections Begins

Voting is now open for the Somerset Youth Parliament elections, where young people can elect three new representatives for the UK Youth Parliament. Candidates have published manifestos detailing their campaign pledges, available on the Somerset Youth Parliament's [Elections page](#).

This initiative allows elected Members of Youth Parliament to advocate for local and national issues affecting youth, working alongside community representatives and politicians to drive positive change.

Voting is open now and closes on December 15th, 2025. Young people are encouraged to participate and make their voices heard.

Somerset Council and Partners Highlight Digital Domestic Abuse During 16 Days of Action

Somerset Council is partnering with organisations across the county to observe the 16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence, focusing on digital domestic abuse, which involves using technology to monitor, threaten, or isolate victims.

Running from November 25 (International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day), the campaign encourages community action to prevent abuse and support recovery for affected individuals. Events, drop-ins, and awareness activities will take place throughout Somerset to highlight online and digital abuse.

The Somerset Domestic Abuse Service, facilitated by the YOU Trust, offers confidential support for those affected by domestic abuse, including digital abuse. For assistance, individuals can call 0800 69 49 999, visit somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk, or email domesticabuseservice@somerset.gov.uk.

New Digital Slinky Transport Service Tops 10,000 Journeys

Somerset Council's on-demand transport service, Digital Slinky, has reached a significant milestone by completing its 10,000th journey within just 18 months of operation. The service covers Somerton, Langport, and surrounding villages, providing a flexible transportation option funded by the Government's Bus Service Improvement Grant (BSIP).

Launched in May 2024 as a trial, Digital Slinky is designed to be easily accessible for residents, who can book rides online or through a mobile app available on Google Play and the App Store. The service uses existing bus stops and landmarks as pick-up points, enabling users to reach local shops, work, appointments, and social events.

New digital services have recently been rolled out to other areas including Bridgwater, Burnham, Taunton, and Wellington, further enhancing demand-responsive transport options in the county. With the ability to arrange pick-ups directly from home for individuals facing mobility challenges, the service can be booked up to an hour before travel or up to two weeks in advance.

Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

Visit - Report a Problem on the Road: - *A list of all reporting pages to do with roads, pavements, lighting:*

[Report a problem on the road](#)

Potholes and road damage - *Somerset Council repair potholes and other road defects, and maintain our roads, for the safe access of all road users:*

[Potholes, road damage and edge loss](#)

Report a problem with a street light - *We maintain and repair street lights to national standards to provide safe access to all road users:*

[Report a problem with a street light](#)

Roads, travel and parking, road signs, markings and lighting - *Includes information about non-illuminated bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate or a new road sign:*

[Road signs, bollards and road markings](#)

Speed limits - *Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures:*

[Speed limits](#)

Traffic lights - *We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the County:*

[Traffic lights](#)

Street and roadworks - *We maintain the roads and pavements that are managed at public expense in Somerset:*

[Street and roadworks problems](#)

Traffic - updates and roadworks follow:

[Travel Somerset on X](#) and [Travel Somerset on Facebook](#).

All ongoing roadworks - *available on the Somerset Council website interactive map*



[Roadworks and travel information](#)

Somerset Waste - *collection days, replacement bins or recycling bags and missed collection reporting:*

[Bins, recycling and waste](#)

Travel and Tourist Information

[Travel Somerset - Art, Culture, Events, History & More](#)

Sign-up for the latest climate news from across Somerset:

[Climate newsletter sign-up](#)

Open Somerset Council Consultations - *which anyone can complete and take part in shaping the future of Somerset*

[Somerset Council - Citizen Space - Consultations](#)

SOMERSET COUNCIL TELEPHONE NO - 0300 123 2224

Cllr Nicola Clark

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nicola.clark@somerset.gov.uk

My available Cllr hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday - all day

Thursday, Saturday - not available on phone.

Please text/WhatsApp or email on these days.

Hayward December 2025 Report

Cost of Living Support for Somerset Families, Please find below and attached to my email various support available.

- #Help4All Universal early help offer (attached to email) and linked here: [#Help4All](#)
- Household Support Fund flyer (attached to email)
- Household Support Fund webpage - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/cost-of-living-support-for-somerset-residents/>
- Community Hub directory - <https://connectsomerset.org.uk/my-community/community-hubs/community-hubs-directory/>
- Warm Welcome directory - <https://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/find-warm-welcome/>
- Thrive Village Agent map - <https://thrivesomerset.org.uk/help-advice/>

Somerset Local Government Boundaries

As you know from my earlier reports, we were expecting the final report on Somerset local government boundaries to be produced next week, in a bizarre, and I would say v rare event they have re-opened consultation, please see below from the commission.

The reopened consultation will run from 25 November 2025 to 14 January 2026. The consultation is being reopened because the Commission initially, and incorrectly, understood Somerset Council's preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions as a formal request for a uniform pattern of single-member divisions under the legislation guiding its review process. No such formal request had been made by the Council.

This may have led some people to believe that multi-councillor divisions would not be given due consideration, as a formal request for single-member divisions carries greater weight in the Commission's considerations than a general preference.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the Commission is reopening the consultation so that all views, including any supporting multi-member divisions, can be taken into account. Any submissions previously made will still be considered and do not need to be re-submitted.

Once all responses have been reviewed, the Commission aims to publish final recommendations in March 2026. Subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will take effect at Somerset Council's elections in May 2027.

Full details of the proposals are available on the Commission's website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset

People can also give their views by e-mail at reviews@lgbce.org.uk, and by post: Review Officer (Somerset), LGBCE, 7th Floor , Bunhill Row , London. EC1Y 8YZ



Royal Recognition for County Charities

Four Somerset charities have won the coveted King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS).

Equivalent to an MBE for individuals, KAVS is the highest award given to voluntary groups in the UK, celebrating outstanding work done by charities. They are awarded annually.

This year's Somerset recipients are: Exmoor Community Bus Association, Good Fellowship Club, based in the Yeovil area, Green Wedmore and The Thomas Poole Library, based in Nether Stowey

Council's CCTV team plays a key role in capturing and reporting incidents to police

Somerset Council's CCTV team have reported nearly 700 incidents across the county to police in the last three months.

In the last three months, Somerset Council's CCTV team has reported 690 incidents across the county to police, and there have been nearly 400 footage requests from police to assist investigations.

In one case one of the operators successfully guided police to an offender who had stolen a woman's handbag.

The service is funded by city, town and parish councils across Somerset.

Community projects which help people find care and support networks close to their home are being supported by a new initiative.

Somerset Council is investing in local projects using funding from the national Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF). This is a £42.6 million initiative by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) which aims to improve the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of adult social care.

After successfully winning a bid for £616,000 of funding from the ARF last year, the council is working with Somerset Community Foundation to invest in neighbourhood plans to make areas great places to grow older or live with disabilities.

In the latest round of funding, ten community groups and one Town Council were awarded grants. All the successful applicants have subsequently joined together to form a new collective called 'Somerset Cares Alliance'.

'Wincanton Cares' is one such organisation. Founded in 2022 as a response to the closure of a local care home, 'Wincanton Cares' has successfully established a network of community hubs, a bimonthly newsletter and support groups for paid and unpaid carers

Planning Training

All Somerset Councillors are currently being invited to planning training. As additional context on planning, we were sent this from the BBC Panorama programme an interesting insight into the challenges currently facing councils:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002l5kh/panorama-the-race-to-build-15-million-homes>

South West Railway Update

‘Hotshot’ thermal imaging cameras to help prevent delays on South Western Railway / December 2025 Timetable

“One of our trains has been fitted with thermal imaging cameras, as part of an innovative year-long trial of the technology. The images captured will provide engineers with real time alerts of potential issues such as overheating or faulty connections, improving safety and efficiency, reducing maintenance costs, and helping to better manage resources during incidents.”

The December 2025 timetable will be coming into place (on Sunday 14th December). There are no significant changes to train times being made on the 14th December (although timings may shift slightly), however a small number of services may use different types of train from the 14th onward.

They have notified customers in a few different ways:

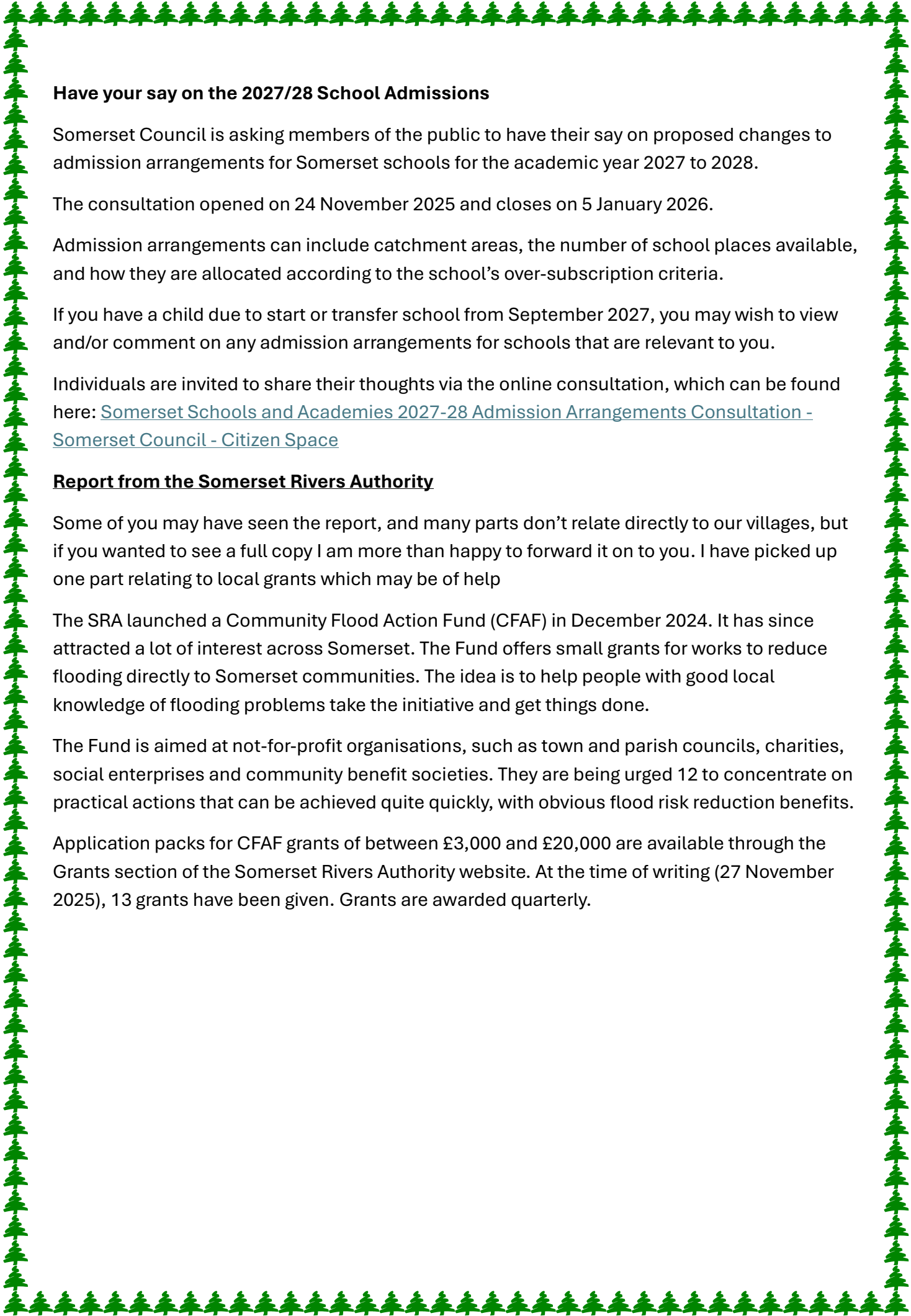
- Updated PDF timetables are now available on our website [Train Timetable | South Western Railway](#)
- An alert has been added to our journey planner [Live Train Times & Travel Information | South Western Railway](#)
- Announcements will be played at stations and on trains between now and the 14th December
- Posts will go out through SWR social media accounts

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The LEVI programme is a national initiative funded by the UK Government to support the rollout of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, especially in communities where residents lack off-street parking and cannot install private chargepoints.

Somerset Council has been awarded £3.78 million in capital funding to deliver this programme locally.

What This Means for Somerset • A minimum of 1,606 low-powered public EV charging sockets will be installed at onstreet and car park locations. • The rollout will ensure rural communities are not left behind, with 75% of installations in higher demand locations and 25% in lower demand locations.



Have your say on the 2027/28 School Admissions

Somerset Council is asking members of the public to have their say on proposed changes to admission arrangements for Somerset schools for the academic year 2027 to 2028.

The consultation opened on 24 November 2025 and closes on 5 January 2026.

Admission arrangements can include catchment areas, the number of school places available, and how they are allocated according to the school's over-subscription criteria.

If you have a child due to start or transfer school from September 2027, you may wish to view and/or comment on any admission arrangements for schools that are relevant to you.

Individuals are invited to share their thoughts via the online consultation, which can be found here: [Somerset Schools and Academies 2027-28 Admission Arrangements Consultation - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)

Report from the Somerset Rivers Authority

Some of you may have seen the report, and many parts don't relate directly to our villages, but if you wanted to see a full copy I am more than happy to forward it on to you. I have picked up one part relating to local grants which may be of help

The SRA launched a Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) in December 2024. It has since attracted a lot of interest across Somerset. The Fund offers small grants for works to reduce flooding directly to Somerset communities. The idea is to help people with good local knowledge of flooding problems take the initiative and get things done.

The Fund is aimed at not-for-profit organisations, such as town and parish councils, charities, social enterprises and community benefit societies. They are being urged to concentrate on practical actions that can be achieved quite quickly, with obvious flood risk reduction benefits.

Application packs for CFAF grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 are available through the Grants section of the Somerset Rivers Authority website. At the time of writing (27 November 2025), 13 grants have been given. Grants are awarded quarterly.