

Monthly Report Hayward Blackmoor Vale August 2026

Good News from the Post Office – and a big thank you to everyone involved getting this service back in Henstridge

Notice from Royal Mail, Service Re-Opening, Henstridge Post Office, Henstridge Village Shop, 1 The Cross, Henstridge, Templecombe, BA8 0QY

We are delighted to let you know that Post Office services were restored to Henstridge Post Office on

Monday 27 July 2026. The branch closed on Friday 07 November 2025 due to the resignation of the

postmaster. The service will be operating from the same premises offering the same Post Office services.

Changes to Rail services from Templecombe – notice below

Temporary Timetable Changes on the West of England Line from Monday 10 August

“We are writing to inform you that South Western Railway (SWR) and Network Rail Wessex will introduce a temporary revised timetable on the West of England line between London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids from Monday 10 August until further notice.

Following record-breaking temperatures and prolonged low rainfall, clay embankments supporting the railway between Salisbury and Exeter are drying out, affecting the stability of the track. To keep customers safe, trains will run at reduced speeds between Tisbury in Wiltshire to Honiton in Devon, a 60-mile stretch of largely single-track railway which is particularly vulnerable to drought-like conditions.

With only six passing loops where trains can pass each other on the single-track, fewer services can run while these speed restrictions are in place. The temporary timetable limits further disruption and delays while providing a safe and reliable service for customers.

Service levels from Monday 10 August until further notice:

- Services between London Waterloo and Salisbury will continue to run every 30 minutes
- One train per hour will run between London Waterloo and Yeovil Junction
- Every other hour, the London Waterloo service will extend to run to and from Exeter St Davids

- Most journeys from London Waterloo to Yeovil Junction will take three minutes longer than usual, with journeys from Yeovil Junction to London Waterloo taking 13 minutes longer than usual
- Most journeys from London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids will take up to 24 minutes longer than usual, with journeys from Exeter St Davids to London Waterloo taking 27 minutes longer than usual

www.southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey

Consultation on Local Plan Extended

Under the original timetable the consultation was due to have closed on Friday 24 July – but will now close on 9 August. This will enable people extra time to formulate their responses.

The Local Plan is relevant to everyone, guiding where and how change happens across towns, villages and the countryside over the next 20 years.

The Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20) is a legal requirement under the new plan making system for England (from March 2026) and launched on 19 June.

Have your say on polling places

The council is inviting residents entitled to vote to have their say on polling districts and places – broadly where they go to vote.

The consultation opened on (23 July) and voters have until 3 September to take part via the Council's consultation page.

The consultation is open to every elector – people entitled to vote - in the administrative area of Somerset Council

The review aims to make sure voters have reasonable and practical facilities for voting and that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to all electors and meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Those making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be considered for use as a polling station.

Free bus travel for kids is just the ticket

Children and young people in Somerset have got a ticket to ride thanks to free bus travel for all 5-to-15-year-olds across England next month.

Somerset Council is working with a range of local bus operators to make sure the Government Kids Go Free scheme is available for all young people.

The list of bus operators taking part, and the routes, can be found on the Bus It webpage.

Somerset Council appoints new Chief Financial Officer

The Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Lizzie Watkin as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and statutory Section 151 Officer following approval by Full Council.

Lizzie joins Somerset Council from Wiltshire Council, where she served as Corporate Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer. In that role she was responsible for a broad portfolio of services, including finance, procurement, digital, asset management and transformation.

Lizzie also has strong links to Somerset, having previously worked for Somerset County Council as Strategic Finance Manager and Deputy Section 151 Officer. She has also held finance leadership roles at Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council.

The Chief Financial Officer plays a critical statutory and strategic role in supporting that work by ensuring the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and providing professional financial leadership across the organisation.

So What does the Government Best Value Notice from the Government Mean for Somerset Council

What is a Best Value Notice? All local authorities have a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way their functions are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

A Best Value Improvement Notice is a formal notice issued by Government where Ministers require additional assurance that a council is taking the necessary action to meet that duty. It sets out Government concerns and provides a framework through which improvement can be monitored and supported.

In practical terms, it means Government wants evidence that: The Council is improving, governance arrangements are effective, financial management is robust, services are delivering value for money, The organisation is moving towards long-term sustainability.

- The notice reflects Government concerns regarding financial resilience, the pace of transformation and pressures in key service areas including Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND.

This is a serious step and represents the highest level of Government concern short of formal intervention.

Why has Government issued the notice?

According to the draft notice, Government concerns include:

- Somerset's continued fragile financial position, the need to accelerate transformation activity, weaknesses in financial resilience and financial management, continued reliance on Exceptional Financial Support, low reserves, The need to address external audit recommendations.
- Demand and performance pressures in key services including Children's Services, Adult Social Care and SEND.

What has Somerset Council already done?

The Council has already taken a range of actions to strengthen governance, improve performance and address financial challenges, including:

- Responded publicly to the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services, acknowledging areas requiring improvement while setting out actions already underway.
- Approved £5.3 million of investment to strengthen SEND services, reduce delays and improve statutory compliance.
- Similarly, since the Care Quality Commission conducted its assessment of adult social care in September 2025 the Council has made progress across the areas the regulatory body identified

Your voice matters: consultation opens on Council Tax Reduction changes

Somerset residents are encouraged to have their say on potential changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for working age adults on low incomes.

CTR is a discount offered for Council Tax payers on low incomes. Any proposed changes would only apply to working age adults. Support for pensioners would remain unchanged.

The Council is now consulting on a range of proposals for the 2027/28 scheme. As the overall cost of the scheme cannot increase, some proposals would reduce support in certain areas to help fund changes aimed at providing greater support to those most in need.

The consultation opened on 7 July and will run until 28 September 2026. Feedback received will be considered before councillors make any decisions later this year. Any approved changes would come into effect from 1 April 2027.

Residents can find full details of the proposals and take part in the consultation by visiting the Council's consultation webpage: [Council Tax Reduction consultation](#).

Paper copies of the consultation will also be available in libraries, and letters will be sent to all residents who currently receive CTR support.

£50m of Funding from Defra to Somerset for Flood resilience

Following the announcement of £50m of funding from Defra to Somerset for flood resilience, the council has been working with partners to scope a programme of works across the county, as quickly as possible.

A draft programme will be heard by Executive on 23 September. The programme is likely to include a wide range of works led by partner organisations to improve conveyance and pumping capability across the Levels and Moors. It will also focus on flood 'hot spots' across the county.

A Programme Advisory Group (PAG) has been established to review progress and ensure the programme represents the interests of all parties and key stakeholders are kept informed. The PAG is made up of partner organisations, Executive members and key stakeholders (see key points below).

- The Programme Advisory Board will be looking at a wide range of over 30 potential programmes and projects across Somerset ranging from major infrastructure projects to grassroots level initiatives.
- A major element will be the My Community Programme. My Community is a new Somerset Council-led initiative to understand and reduce flood risk at a local community level. Under this programme, we will work with local communities at parish council/local community network level to identify and assess local assets and develop and deliver solutions to issues.
- This could include a range of things, such as clearing ditches and gullies, repairing, replacing and installing new assets, putting measures in place to slow the flow and so on. Depending on the individual needs of the community, it could also include support through enhanced flood warning, procurement of property level protection, community resilience facilities and so on.
- The programme is expected to deliver benefits for autumn/winter 2027 onwards. The Programme Advisory Group will help Somerset develop and deliver the programme of works. Somerset Council Executive will make the final decisions on the programme.
- We will communicate progress on developing the My Community programme regularly to communities through the LCN newsletter. If residents, parish members, or local members have any queries in the meantime, or would like to register an interest on behalf of their community they should contact floodresilience@somerset.gov.uk

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Marketplace, which will be held on Thursday 17 September 2026 at Somerset County Cricket Club, The Cooper Associates County Ground, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1JT.

“The event is open to members of the public, patients, carers, partner organisations and colleagues, and we welcome everyone with an interest in local health and care services. The theme for this year’s event is ‘The NHS 10-Year Health Plan’, which sets out a vision for improving health outcomes and transforming the way healthcare is delivered over the coming decade.

If you wish to submit a question beforehand, please complete and return the attached Public Questions Form to companysecretary@somersetft.nhs.uk by 5.00 pm on Monday 31 August 2026. We will also be happy to take questions from the audience during the AGM. “