

SOMERSET COUNCIL

JUNE 2024

Deadline approaches for postal vote applications

Somerset residents planning to cast their vote in the General Election on 4 July by post, have until 5pm on 19 June to submit their applications. The deadline for proxy vote applications is 26 June. You can apply for a postal vote if you're away on holiday or because your work schedule means you can't get to the polling station. You can also choose to vote by post simply because it would be more convenient for you.

A proxy is someone you trust who goes to your polling station and votes on your behalf. The proxy must be 18 or over and must be registered to vote and eligible to vote at parliamentary elections in the UK. You can apply for a proxy vote online at www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote or you can request a paper form to be posted or emailed to you. Completed applications, whether online or paper, must reach the Electoral Registration Officer by 5pm Wednesday 26 June.

You will be sent a postal vote ballot pack before the election. Voters applying to vote by post will also need to prove their identity. Full details and application forms are available on the [Government's website](#). Please contact Electoral Services on 0300 123 2224 at Somerset Council if you need a paper form.

Residents need to be aware that the way postal votes are received at Somerset Council offices has changed in line with national legislation.

New laws mean that when someone hands in a postal vote at a reception point or at a polling station, a Postal Vote Return form must now also be completed. This could be time-consuming.

So, voters are being encouraged to use Royal Mail and post their vote in good time for it to be counted.

Postal votes receive a speedy service from Royal Mail and are easily identified by the purple flashes marked on the envelopes. They are delivered up to 9.30pm on polling day which is why Royal Mail should be the preferred method of returning them. Voters can check their nearest post box and collection times via www.royalmail.com/services-near-you#.

Postal votes can still be handed in and the relevant forms completed during office hours only at these four locations in Somerset:

- Bridgwater House, Bridgwater
- Shape Office, Shepton Mallet
- West Somerset House, Williton
- Petters House, Petters Way, Yeovil

Voters need to know that any postal votes left at offices or put in office post boxes must be rejected.

Key dates:

- 18 June – deadline for voter registration
- 19 June – deadline for postal vote and postal proxy vote applications
- 26 June – deadline to apply for free Voter Authority Certificate
- 26 June – deadline for proxy vote submissions
- 4 July – polling day 7am-10pm
- 4-5 July – counting and declarations

Save time and sign-up for a garden waste recycling collection

As gardening season comes into full bloom, Somerset residents are being reminded that they can sign-up for a fortnightly home garden waste collection. The service run by Somerset Council has more than 60,000 subscribers and provides convenience for many green-fingered residents, saving time from traveling to a recycling site. Subscriptions can be started any time during the year and the quickest and easiest way to subscribe is online via: www.somerset.gov.uk/garden-waste-collections

Collections are made fortnightly year-round, apart from a short break during Christmas and New Year. Residents can either sign-up to a pre-paid 180-litre wheeled bin or 90-litre compostable paper sacks. The price of a wheeled bin subscription for 2024//25 is £68 for 25 collections and packs of ten garden waste sacks cost, £33.60. All garden waste stays in Somerset, going to one of several composting sites, including Dimmer and Walpole, where it is shredded, and turned into compost. The end-product is sold as [revive soil conditioner](#) through all recycling sites.

There is no need to wait until you receive a reminder, subscriptions can be renewed at any time (you'll still get a full year service). The simplest way to renew or start a subscription is online. However residents can also renew and subscribe by calling 0300 123 2224. Residents who already subscribe to the service will be sent an email reminder at least a month before their subscription ends. For example, a May mailing for those expiring in June. Residents are also able to [check when their subscription is due](#) online.

Garden waste can also be taken to any one of Somerset's [16 waste recycling sites](#).

Garden waste should not be put out for collection with rubbish. It is also not advised to burn garden waste, as this can cause pollution and local nuisance



Domestic abuse expected to spike during international football games

People facing domestic abuse are being strongly encouraged to seek support, especially during periods when incidents are anticipated to surge.

Research from the National Centre for Domestic Violence reveals that domestic abuse incidents increase by 26% when our national team plays, 38% if they lose, and 11% the day after, regardless of the outcome.

Ahead of Sunday's match (16 June), the domestic abuse service is preparing for a potential rise in cases, often driven by emotional stress, alcohol consumption, and betting activities before and during the games.

There is no justification for domestic abuse. While watching football does not cause abuse, it can act as a trigger in relationships where abuse is already present.

The [Somerset Domestic Abuse Service](#), provided by Somerset Council, offers support and advice to anyone experiencing domestic abuse, with services tailored to meet individual needs.

Additionally, there is a program for those who recognise their behaviour as abusive and wish to change.

A spokesperson from Somerset Council said: "It's vital that we acknowledge the increased risk of domestic abuse during high-stress events like major football matches. Our community must come together to support those affected and ensure they have access to the help they need."

Domestic abuse includes any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between intimate partners or family members aged 16 or over, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Learn More

- [What is domestic abuse?](#)
- [10 Signs of an unhealthy relationship](#)
- [Busting the myths' about domestic abuse](#)

Statistics indicate that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. For individuals enduring domestic abuse, the tournament period can be filled with fear and anxiety, but support is available.

Community involvement

Encouraging community members to be vigilant and supportive can make a significant difference.

Friends, family, and neighbours should be aware of the signs of domestic abuse and know how to offer help or direct victims to professional services.

Creating a supportive and informed community can help reduce the incidents of domestic abuse and provide a safer environment for everyone.

Social media awareness

Raising awareness about the increased risk of domestic abuse during football matches on social media can help reach a wider audience. Sharing information, support resources, and encouraging people to speak out can empower victims to seek help and educate others about the issue.

By taking collective action and offering consistent support, we can work towards reducing domestic abuse and creating a safer, more supportive environment for everyone.

Further information on recognising the signs of domestic abuse can be found here: [Recognising when something is not right \(somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk\)](https://www.somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk)

The Somerset community is being urged by the Council to consider friends, relatives, and coworkers, stressing that it is everyone's business to report domestic abuse.

If you are experiencing any form of domestic abuse, worried about someone you know, or are concerned about the impact of your behaviour towards others, then help is available: [somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk](https://www.somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk) or by telephoning 0800 69 49 999 – between 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week.

In an emergency you should always dial 999. If you are worried that an abuser may overhear your call you can remain silent, tap the phone and dial 55 when prompted by the operator who will send help.

Get active....in the library

People who want a bit of support to get more active will be able to sign up for free weekly sessions in Taunton, Glastonbury and Bridgwater libraries from next month.

A huge variety of fun activities will be on offer over a ten-month programme, with 'taster sessions' which may include gentle stretching, Tai Chi, Yoga and some top tips on getting more active with confidence, so you can improve at your own pace with some useful and realistic targets. Each session will be designed to be practical, friendly and geared to the needs of people coming along.

There will be opportunities to try out some fun interactive technology such as virtual reality and simple video gaming and participants will even be able to borrow activity tracker watches for free, to help monitor progress.

- Taunton Library sessions will be every Wednesday from 2pm-3pm (starting 3 July)
- Glastonbury Library sessions will be every Friday from 3pm to 4pm (starting 5 July)
- Bridgwater Library sessions will be every Monday from 2pm to 3pm (starting 8 July)

The sessions are funded via Sport England and led by professional coaches from Nova Sports, experienced in supporting less active people who may not be keen on going to gyms or other more formal indoor or outdoor settings.

To book a place, visit [Free Low Impact Activity and Movement Sessions \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk) or simply go along to the library and speak to staff who will be happy to reserve your place – we will ask a few simple questions to help the coaches understand people's needs.

“Bus It” to Yeovilton and reach for the sky at popular attraction

Somerset Council is reminding people to make the most of a new bus service to the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton.

The Council is running a summer campaign encouraging people to make the most of cheap bus travel, enjoy the fantastic locations and activities the county has to offer and help safeguard routes at the same time.

This week Buses of Somerset confirmed that it has made improvements to the 54 Yeovil to Taunton bus timetable to include a trial service of four return journeys per day Monday to Saturday which call at the Royal Navy base and museum in Yeovilton. The extra services are off-peak and give people the chance to leave their car at home and visit one of the county’s top attractions. The trial service will run until September.

Somerset is blessed with fantastic countryside, historic sites, towns and beaches – as well as fabulous dog walks. And fares are still just £2 for any single journey.

Over the coming weeks the Summer Bus It campaign will highlight great places, days out and activities in our county you can get to by bus.

In addition to the new 54 services, Buses of Somerset has also changed the 28, 28a and X28 timetable to ensure additional journeys at busy times between Taunton and Norton Fitzwarren/Cotford St Luke.

The operator has also revised its 2 and 4 Taunton services to add extra capacity.

James Eustace, Commercial Director, Buses of Somerset, said:

“Following feedback from the local community, we’re pleased to be trialling a route to Yeovilton’s Fleet Air Arm Museum, to support both those working on the base as well as visitors to the museum. We hope people get out on the bus and enjoy a great day out.”

1.000 fire-starting gas canisters found in Somerset's recycling

As camping season gets underway, Somerset Council and its kerbside collections contractor, SUEZ, are reminding residents of the danger of putting gas canisters in their recycling.

This year alone, more than 1,000 potential fires from gas canisters have been avoided, thanks to the vigilant crews at the material recovery facilities in Taunton and Evercreech.

Due to the increasing number of canisters being put out with recycling, crews have had no choice other than to manually check recycling ahead of the automated sorting process to avoid sparking dangerous blazes.

The small canisters, mainly used for camping gas stoves, are often mistakenly put in the kerbside recycling 'Bright Blue Bag'. The bag can be used to recycle empty aerosol bottles (for example, hair spray or deodorant), but should never be used to dispose of gas canisters.

- Aerosols contain a smaller amount of ignitable gas and the bottles are under less pressure. This means they are less likely to ignite if crushed.
- Gas canisters are almost all gas which is stored at a high pressure. This makes the bottles more likely to explode if crushed.

Gas canisters must be taken to a local household recycling site. Always check with team on-site for the correct area to put these.

And it is not just gas canisters that can pose a risk for collection crews, other items including batteries and barbeques are potential fire starters.

Over the past year, ten fires have started at SUEZ's material recovery facilities or within trucks. The fires have broken out when hazardous materials including large and household batteries as well as gas canisters have mistakenly gone through the baling process. Fortunately, quick responding crews have prevented injury or serious damage occurring.

Disposable barbeques put into rubbish bins without being fully soaked and extinguished can retain heat, smoulder and start a fire in trucks and when tipped back at the depot.

Fires cause damage and put lives at risk, as the weather warms up Somerset Council and SUEZ are calling on residents to please do the right thing with these potentially dangerous items.

What should you do?

- Small household batteries can be recycled in weekly kerbside collections, but must be presented in a clear, tied plastic bag and clearly placed on the top of the recycling box. Batteries must not be left loose in recycling boxes, put in the Bright Blue Bag or in the rubbish bin.
- Large batteries, such as car batteries, cannot be recycled at the kerbside and should be taken to a recycling site.
- Small household batteries and electricals can also be taken to recycling sites, always check with team on-site for the correct area to put these.

- Small gas canisters – like those used in camping stoves are not recyclable in kerbside collections and must not be put in the rubbish bin. They must be taken to a local household recycling site. Always check with team on-site for the correct area to put these.
- Disposable barbecues should be fully immersed in water and left to cool completely before putting into the rubbish bin.

For more information visit [Somerset Council's safety pages](#).

The warmer summer months can bring an increase in fires on trucks and sorting facilities, every fire poses a risk to staff and the environment. Although items are disposed of with good intentions, it is important to follow the council's guidelines on how to dispose of items safely.

Somerset's waste and recycling collection crews make more than 380,000 collections a week. For more information about what happens to the recycling they collect, [check the Somerset Recycling Tracker](#) on the [Somerset Council website](#)

Somerset Council and Lendology CIC highly commended for Best Partnership Award

Somerset Council and Lendology CIC are pleased to announce that their partnership has received a commendation at the national Empty Homes Conference 2024, which recognises their collaborative efforts in addressing long-term empty homes across Somerset.

The partnership has transformed empty buildings into homes through an innovative loan scheme, in which owners of empty buildings have spread the cost of repairs.

Empty homes are unsightly and can attract vandalism in communities. Bringing empty homes back into use also creates more housing.

Emma Lower, CEO of Lendology CIC, stated:

We are honoured to be recognised for our partnership with Somerset Council.

Empty homes represent a valuable resource, and our collaborative efforts aim to overcome financial barriers and provide responsible housing solutions.

For further information, contact Lendology at communications@lendology.org.uk or visit [Lendology | Local Council Home Loans | Your Community Lender](#).

South West advocacy group runners up for national SEND award in first year

The Children and Young People Self Advocacy (CYPSA) project – a forum for young people aged 10-25 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) – have received second place in the National SEND Best Practice Conference 2024.

Representatives from CYPSA attended the awards, which took place in London earlier this year. The group, which has just come to the end of its first year in operation, was praised for the work it does to improve the lives of young people in Somerset and the South West, including advocating for change to improve health outcomes for young people.

Josh Lancaster, a member of CYPSA, said:

It was an absolute honour and privilege to be able to go and represent the children and young people of the South West with SEND. To be nominated for such an award in the first place when there were such worthy shortlisted candidates was a real honour, let alone to be selected as the runners up.

It was a privilege to be there on the day as the winners picked up their awards and it was truly fantastic to hear about some of the work that is going on up and down the country to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families.”

The Youth Service SEND and Multi Schools Council’s ‘Voices of the East’ project was awarded first place.

For more information about CYPSA, please contact CYPSA@somerset.gov.uk

request a printed copy by emailing consultations@somerset.gov.uk with your details.

Initiative leads the way for cleaner and healthier school run

The School Streets trials aim to reduce issues with parking and congestion around the school and encourage more sustainable travel such as walking, cycling or even scooting. This means there will be temporary road closures during school pick up and drop off outside selected schools.

The project is kicked off with Otterhampton Primary school in Combswich, Bridgwater on 3 June. School Streets will be repeated across a following four schools which are yet to be confirmed.

This temporary road closure will operate on School Lane between 8.25am and 8.55am, and 2.55pm and 3.25pm Monday to Friday during term time. The traffic regulation order (TRO) is a legal requirement preventing motor vehicle access but has some exceptions including but not limited to blue badge holders, emergency and public services.

There are two volunteer stewards to carry out the road closure with support of local PCSOs.

Avon and Somerset Police will also be encouraging active travel and will be offering bike marking to help prevent bike theft on 4 June from 2pm until 4pm. You can find out more about bike marking on the [National Bike Database website](#).

School streets trial encourages families and children to use active and sustainable modes of transport which will hopefully create healthy lifestyles for their future and the future of our planet.

This trial will run for eighteen months, and, if successful it will become permanent. During the trial there will be a six-month consultation period for residents to give their thoughts and feedback. [Have your say](#) on the trial during the first six months from 3 June 2024 to 3 December 2024.

Somerset Council is working in collaboration with Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) and Sustrans on the School Streets project.

Joe Bigwood, Head of behaviour Change and Engagement, Sustrans, England South said:

“School Streets provide benefits for families travelling to school, local residents and the wider community. They help to tackle congestion, poor air quality and road safety concerns, building confidence in families to travel actively to school. School Streets are a powerful way of showing what’s possible when cars are removed outside a school. We are delighted to be working in partnership with SASP, helping to create a safer, greener environment for Otterhampton Primary and are excited to see how School Lane is transformed into a walking, wheeling and cycling safe haven for all to enjoy.”

Claire Luce, Executive Head Teacher OPS said:

“I am so excited that Otterhampton Primary School is the first school in Somerset to get involved in the School Streets initiative. We are looking forward to working with our parents and the local community to make School Lane safer for our children.”