

Somerset Council Report

Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council 6th May 2026

1 Somerset Matters

1.1- Verge Maintenance Programmes – 2026

We have now commenced our verge maintenance programme.

Taunton Deane & Mendip area started Tuesday 28th April.

South & West area will start Tuesday 5th May.

Sedgemoor area will start Friday 8th May.

All Dual Carriageways County wide will commence Monday 11th May.

1.2 - Somerset Council is creating a new Somerset Connectivity and Integrated Transport Strategy (SCITS).

Building on the work already done for Local Transport Plan 4, SCITS is about making it easier for people to get around by making different types of transport work better together. It will look at how people travel day-to-day, how they could mix different ways of getting around (like walking, buses, cycling, or trains), and what infrastructure and services they need for access.

Instead of planning transport projects in isolation, SCITS will help the Council plan improvements that link up across entire corridors and areas. The development of SCITS follows the publication of the Government's Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport. SCITS will closely align with the strategy and focus on how people experience Somerset's transport system overall, rather than looking at each type of transport separately.

Overall, SCITS will help Somerset Council set clear transport priorities, secure funding, and create a strong pipeline of future transport projects to improve connectivity across our most important transport corridors.

- *The consultation is an opportunity to shape transport policy and delivery over the next 20 years*
- *Your response will represent the wants and needs of the residents and businesses in your LCN area, therefore it must seek to be as inclusive as possible*
- *It should not be personal or single issue led, there is space for suggestions and ideas but we need to capture all the issues*
- *This is an opportunity to shape what the Council will do before any decisions or plans have been agreed*
- *This engagement questionnaire is part of the collection of data and evidence, we will be using it alongside traffic data, planning, health and economic information and projections as well as engaging with mode, accessibility, network and safety specialists.*
- *Once the Strategy is prepared, we will be consulting with the general public, that may directly reference the thoughts and/or ideas contained within your responses.*

Here is the link: [Connectivity Plan Consultation - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)

The consultation is open until Friday 22nd May 2026.

Please email the Transport Policy Team with any questions or queries: transportpolicy@somerset.gov.uk

1.3 -Improving response times for children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

What is an EHCP?

EHCPs support a young person with special educational needs (SEN) if their educational setting feels they don't have the resources best required to support them. EHCPs identify a child's particular needs and sets out what additional support should be put in place to meet those needs. The Plan can stay in place until the young person reaches the age of 25.

In the past year, the average waiting time for EHCP assessments and finalisations at Somerset Council was 32 weeks. The statutory timeframe is 20 weeks. Some of this wait is due to high volumes. There was a 40% increase in cases accepted for assessment in 24/25 compared to the year before.

Families and young people have told us they'd like a quicker, more consistent EHCP process. Our frontline staff want to reduce the paperwork and spend more time helping children and families.

AI is becoming more accepted and integrated into all our lives. Somerset Council has a duty to explore such AI opportunities.

One of these AI tools is called the EHCP 'Digital Assistant'. It has undergone extensive testing using data from both current and new EHCPs to ensure its effectiveness in processing and organising information.

We are now deploying this tool to our staff to assist them with drafting real Education, Health and Care Plans, helping to improve the consistency and efficiency of the EHCP process. It will be a phased rollout with only a limited number of officers using the tool to begin and, use of the tool is not mandatory so not all families will have their plans drafted using this tool.

Information regarding our use of the Digital Assistant will be included in standard communications that are sent to residents as part of the current EHC Assessment process.

Further details, plus a short, animated film, is hosted on our SEND Local Offer website pages.

Education, Health and Care plans

Using AI to speed up task processing and formatting documents is just one of many solutions we are currently exploring including:

- Paying for external agencies to undertake assessments. While this is high cost, it does increase capacity in the immediate term.
- Bringing in new policies and multi-agency working to enable support to be put in place without an EHCP, particularly where children are not attending school.
- Updating our approach to make us more competitive in the recruitment market.
- Working supportively with staff to find any opportunities for overtime working or more efficient deployment of hours.
- Standing down activities that add value to education but are less urgent.
- Exploring ways to use data and technology to give parents easier access to information about where they are in the queue and how their application is progressing.

For more information

If you'd like to speak with a Councillor colleague about the EHCP Digital Assistant project, please contact:

Cllr Heather Shearer, Lead Member for Children, Families and

Education heather.shearer@somerset.gov.uk

Cllr Theo Butt Philip, Lead Member for Transformation, Human Resources and Localities theo.buttphilip@somerset.gov.uk

Your senior officer contact is Jo O'Callaghan, Strategic Manager – Head of Education jo.ocallaghan@somerset.gov.uk

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. Ongoing monitoring. Recent report suggests no current action.

2.2 - Traffic and Road Safety

Request to update lines and ‘SLOW’ at the end of West Street to improve visual notification of junction. This has been agreed no known date for it to be done at this time. New sign design to be implemented.

2.3 - Bonnies Lane – Length to be jettied in 2025-26 Date awaited – will request and update once monthly inspector meeting has happened later in Jan. Job allocated but jetting delayed due to flooding , likely 2026-27. Now 5/3/26. See 2.6 below

2-4 - Brocks Mount - maintenance schedule is also to be updated on should one be available (as above).

2.5 - Bins – An ongoing situation which Gilly keeps us updated with until all is complete. All done now?

2.6 – Stoke drainage Survey– Report shared with Highways for comment and action. Highways awaiting a meeting with PC

Regards Emily and John

Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

Visit Report a problem on the road: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/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:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/potholes-and-road-damage/>

For traffic updates and roadworks follow @travelsomerset on X and Facebook.

Live travel information

<https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/>

Report a problem with a street light

We maintain and repair street lights to national standards to provide safe access to all road users:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/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 and how to apply for a new road sign Speed limits: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/road-signs-bollards-and-road-markings/>

Speed limits

Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/speed-limits/>

Traffic lights

We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the county

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/traffic-lights/>

Street and roadworks

We maintain the roads and pavements that are managed at public expense in Somerset

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/street-and-roadworks/>

Sign-up for the latest climate news:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>.