

Open Spaces

Feb 2024



Somerset
Council

Somerset Council Open Spaces & Play Areas

In Numbers:

- 95 parks and open spaces across 4 former district areas.
- 307 play areas.
- 10 Green Flag accredited parks.
- Maintenance budget of £5 million
- Salary budget £2.5 million

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Delivery:

- 3 in house teams operating from depots in Wellington, Bridgwater and Yeovil. Include grasscutters, gardeners, tree surgeons, play inspectors as well as supervisors.
- 1 outsourced service, delivered by IDVerde in former Mendip area.
- A number of Friends Group also maintain spaces on behalf of Council.

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What is an Open Space?

- No universal definition of open/green space, in respect of size, quality or description.
- Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground.

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Other Uses:

- Events – music concerts, plays, shows.
- Sporting Events: Park Run
- Other sports: skateparks
- Active travel routes
- Supporting nature recovery

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Categorisation:

- Recent recategorisation of our open spaces to help define how we use open spaces to support Ecological Emergency whilst ensuring access is always a priority.
- **Frequently Mown**
Grass will continue to be kept short to allow for recreational activities and easy public access to continue.
E.g. Vivary Park

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Categorisation:

- **Flowering Lawn**
Still be available for some recreational activities but would suit less frequently used areas of the open space.
- **Annually Cut Long Grass with Paths**
Infrequent use. Grass will be allowed to grow long and cut annually to increase the structural diversity of the vegetation.

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Categorisation:

- **Winter Shelter**

These areas will provide shelter for overwintering wildlife and for wildlife that need long, tussocky grass to complete their life cycle. They will remain as grass and not be allowed to turn to scrub.
- Also helps residents understand if we are letting the grass grow or are running behind in our schedule.

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Zoning:

- Have been working with other services to understand who else maintains in proximity to Open Spaces and Play Areas.
- Highways, Rights of Way, refuse collection.
- Future schedules will bring grounds maintenance teams together to complete all scheduled works in one visit, rather than being service specific.

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Advantages of Zoning:

- Less travel.
- Easier to schedule.
- Potentially less labour required.
- Less vehicles, equipment.
- Work completed in one visit.
- Better quality of work – everything done, nothing left for other team on another day.
- Better for customers.

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Devolution:

- Working agreements:
- Taunton Town Council – April 25/26
- Bridgwater Town Council – Spring 2024
- Wellington Town Council – April 25/26
- Conversations starting with other towns and parishes.

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Thematic Devolution:

- Play Areas
 - Bin Collection
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Time for Questions



Contact email