

Appendix 1: Annual report on delivery of Transport and Waste Services.



1.0 Introduction

1.1. The Executive Member for Transport and Waste Services, takes the lead on all the services that sit within the **Infrastructure and Transport directorate, and Waste Services**.

1.2. This includes a wide range of activity including agreeing new transport policies and programmes, securing funding, developing and implementing transport schemes, dealing with the transport and highways implications of new development, maintaining a safe road network and associated assets, managing traffic using the roads, promoting active travel and road safety, coordinating streetworks undertaken by third parties such as utilities, coordinating and managing events, managing on and off street parking, and waste collection and disposal.

2.0 Highways and Transport Policy and Strategic Planning

2.1. We are close to finalising a draft of the next Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Somerset. The LTP is a statutory document that sets out local policies and priorities. Our existing LTP was developed in 2010/11 and much has changed in the years since it was adopted. Whilst no guidance has been provided by the Department for Transport (DfT) there have been strong indications that an up-to-date plan will need to be in place before the end of the current parliament in order to guide future investment. The plan is expected to have a strong focus on decarbonisation and link closely with the emerging Local Plan, and will come before the Council in early 2025.

2.2. We have been working closely with partners on rail matters, including Peninsula Rail Strategy, supporting the work on opening Wellington Station, the work on linking Taunton to Bishops Lydeard with a regular rail service and contributing to both Severnside and South Wessex Community Rail Partnerships. Whilst it's disappointing that the incoming Government may not honour previous commitments to Wellington Station the team have been working closely with our MPs to seek to retain this investment.

2.3. At a regional level the team has been working with Peninsula Transport, the statutory sub-national transport body, alongside Devon County Council, Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council to develop a range of strategies and tools that promote the needs of transport in our region and support the member authorities. These include the recently adopted Peninsula Transport Strategy which will be used to signal our priorities to Government.

3.0 Development Management & Development Engineering

3.1. We continue to undertake our role as a statutory consultee in the planning process, reacting to a consistently high volume of planning applications despite the current planning constraints protecting the Somerset Levels and Moors from increased levels of phosphates.

3.2. We have provided highways and transport advice for a high volume of planning applications and our Estate Roads Team have been working with developers to progress technical approvals that enable us to adopt new roads as well as looking to move forward historic legacy schemes where roads are not quite ready for adoption. We have progressed a revised guidance document for developer Travel Plans which embraces our drive towards Active Travel and reducing the need to travel.

3.3. Progress has been made on several key sites within the County as follows:

- Monkton Heathfield Phase 2: A package of Active Travel measures has been agreed which will see an improvement in pedestrian and cycle movements through the proposed and existing development in Monkton Heathfield.
- Wellington (Longforth): Outline application secured, and Reserve Matters application submitted for the link road which will provide access to the station site. Plus working with the developer to make sure this site can come forward in a reasonable manner so it can be demonstrated that the station site is viable.
- Staplegrove: Package of Active Travel contributions have been agreed on Area West and will result in considerable improvements to pedestrian and cycle permeability in North Taunton. Whilst authority looking to drawn down HIF funding to deliver a section of the spine road so the school site can be brought forward.
- Gravity/Agratas: Compliance One application is being progressed, and we are working to secure a series a package of measures via the Travel Plan to support sustainable travel to the site for employees. Working to also secure the Village Enhancement scheme which will provide a cycle connection between Woolavington and Puriton.

3.4 Notable Achievements this year include:

- Implementation of the Decide and Provide Vision Led approach to Traffic Impact assessments which was recognised by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transport at their annual awards.
- Adoption of Place Making Principles, this has demonstrated working with colleagues in Planning and Urban Design to develop a key set of principles to act as a guidance for developers and allow the authority to deliver scheme which have a sense of place and Active Travel connectivity at the heart of them.
- Estate Roads Team have generated approximately £1.2 million in Supervision Fees this financial year.
- Secured the closure, via Public Inquiry, of Berkley Lane and Dark Lane to vehicular traffic to stop antisocial behaviour and fly tipping. Culmination of 3-4 years of work by the Highway Authority and other stakeholders working to bring this forward.

Development Engineering

3.5. Whilst housing market activity in the UK was considered to be 'weak' in 2023, the pressures from developers to conclude existing developments and release monies held as security has never been stronger. We are developing a resource plan to progress live, legacy and default agreements.

3.6. Notable achievements this year include:

- Currently administering 969 road adoption agreements pursuant to new and improved highway infrastructure assets which have been collectively valued at approximately £324 million. Of these agreements, over 143 relate to infrastructure that is currently under construction at a collective estimated value of over £52 million.
- Managing the delivery of the highway elements of major urban residential developments at Comeytrove and Staplegrove in Taunton, Brimsmore and Lufton in Yeovil, Cokerhurst Farm in Bridgwater, Key Site in Crewkerne and Keyford in Frome.
- During the 23/24 financial year, completed 642 technical and road safety audits of designs for new or improved highway infrastructure proposals within the county, an average of just over 12 per week
- Overseeing the delivery aspects of the main access roads serving the Gravity Smart Campus (Huntspill Energy Park) in Puriton, Bridgwater.
- Engagement on the delivery of highway infrastructure associated with Hinkley Point C focusing on adoption of the new highway assets.
- Continuing to support the Somerset Rivers Authority in the assessment of selected Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems installed within the County.
- Undertaking road safety audits for improvement schemes and safety assessments for walked routes to schools.

4.0 Active Travel & other small improvement & safety schemes

4.1. The team has been working hard to develop and deliver the existing and future pipeline of active travel activity. Three new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) have been completed for Chard, Burnham and Highbridge and Wellington. These, alongside the existing plans, set the ambition for improved infrastructure in Somerset. The resourcing of the team has required changes to working practices and the team has started working with the Local Community Networks to understand wide ranging views about active travel. The team works closely with Active Travel England who fund most of the work. The regular engagement and submissions of information have led to funding allocations for the development work.

4.2. Key projects delivered during the course of the year include the following:

Active Travel Schemes

- A38 Bristol Road, Bridgwater – using funding provided through the Levelling Up Fund, the footway between Dunball and Ascot Drive Express Park (a length of approximately 1.5km) was widened in 2023 to enable shared use by cyclists and pedestrians. The scheme connects to the cycle/ footway provision that was delivered in 2022 between Ascot Drive and Express Park and the 1.25km long cycle/ footway that was delivered in the same year between Express Park and Western Way along

the route of the River Parrett embankment. Works have also recently been completed to upgrade the footpath that runs along the embankment of the River Parrett in Bridgwater between Linham Road and Bridgwater Docks. Once the Dunball Roundabout scheme is complete, a connection for pedestrians and cyclists will be available between Puriton and Bridgwater.

- The A39 Dunster to Minehead cycle route was completed in June 2023 that involved improving the existing footway between West Somerset Community College and Dunster to a new cycle/ footway, over 1.5km in length. The scheme was very challenging to deliver given the volume and nature of traffic flows in the local area and the limited diversion routes that were possible. Plans are being developed to make the final connection to the underpass of the A39 at the Dunster junction.
- Chilcompton B3139 – completed in early 2024, approximately 250m of new/ improved footway was provided to enable pedestrian connection between Broadway and Lynch Hill.
- Marsh Lane to Huntworth Business Park. Utilising HPC S106 funding, the public footpath was upgraded to a shared cycle/ footway.
- Lyde Road, Yeovil (Phase 2) - a whole scheme for a pedestrian/ cycle route along Lyde Road is being delivered in stages as funding is identified. Phase 2 was delivered during 23/24.
- Chedzoy Lane Cycle Link – a new pedestrian and cycle link to existing infrastructure, bypassing the busy junction with the A39.
- Parsonage Road, Berrow – new zebra crossing installed using HPC funding.
- Strawberry Line – funding and officer time to support the Strawberry Line Society / Greenways and Cyclerroutes to deliver new links around Shepton Mallet including a new bridge over B3136.
- Upper High Street Crossing – upgraded crossing facility between Taunton town centre and Vivary Park making it easier and safer for walking and wheeling around the town. Funded by Active Travel England.

Safety Schemes

- Miners Arms – this was the first key scheme delivered using the Council's Framework for New Highway Assets with Octavius. The work at the intersection of the B3135 and B3134 involved realigning the junction to a staggered crossroads to address the collision hot spot that had experienced 37 known injury collisions including 11 serious. The project took place between April and October 2024 and included signing, lining, extensive drainage work and a new 40mph speed limit, as well as associated landscaping sympathetic to the Mendip Hills National Landscape setting, reusing stone recovered from the site to build hundreds of feet of dry-stone wall.
- Chillander Cross – signing, lining and surface treatment measures, 40mph reduced speed limit and vehicle activated signs.
- Library Corner, Bruton - pedestrian safety improvements and traffic calming/ management measures were delivered at this difficult junction. Works were coordinated with a planned resurfacing scheme.
- Mendip Inn A37 junction with Roemead – signing, lining and surface treatment measures.
- Wanstrow Phase 2 - traffic management and traffic calming scheme to promote greater compliance with the posted 30mph speed limit through the village as well as facilitating a safer pedestrian route

- Dancing Hill, North Petherton – traffic management scheme to reinforce existing highway asset, and harden up overrun areas of junction
- A38 Perry Elm Roundabout to Devon County Border - new 50mph and associated signing and lining as the first phase of road safety improvement scheme

Small Improvement Scheme Programme

- Work continues on delivery of the post -construction elements of this legacy programme.

5.0 Bus Service Improvement Plan & Passenger Transport

5.1. We have recently prepared and submitted an updated Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Bus Connectivity Assessments. The team continues to deliver the schemes prioritised from our initial funding allocation. The fare cap in Taunton started at £1 and has been raised to £1.50 because of the level of success. Evening and additional services that are seeing varying levels of success but the Council continues to promote these to encourage patronage. The Digital Slinky service covering Somerton and Langport launched in May 2024 and patronage is growing steadily. The team are making progress on the capital scheme funded by BSIP. A consultation was held on the Taunton Hub receiving 331 responses with the majority of people in favour of the proposals, encouraging the council to expedite delivery and make good connections with the railway station. Further information about the design of the hub and bus priority measures around Taunton will be provided in the new year. We have recently been notified of a 25/26 funding award from Government and are developing proposals to utilise the additional funds which we hope will become an ongoing funding source.

5.2. We successfully rolled out a new contract with Stagecoach to operate the Park and Ride service in Taunton following a tendering process and have worked closely with bus operators to support the retention of several services that aren't able to operate commercially.

5.3. The Enhanced Partnership with bus operators continues to strengthen ties between the council and the bus operators and has benefited passengers through open discussion about the challenges faced. The Council supports the, independently chaired, Bus User and Stakeholder group that influences the Council's approach to improving public transport.

5.4. The Somerset Bus Partnership operates independently of the Council but we would like to thank the volunteers for all their hard work in supporting and promoting bus travel.

5.5. We support thousands of journeys each week from home to school, health and social care, managing a network of approximately 650 school transport routes across Somerset and have worked hard to reduce costs over the past year including a trailing new ways of tendering for for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport saving almost £250k.

5.6. We provide thousands of individual transport journeys for vulnerable Health & Social Care clients and have been working hard in the last twelve months to introduce a new software package which will improve efficiency and is due to go live early in 2025.

5.7. We have expanded our in-house bus fleet to 119 vehicles providing a significant amount of passenger transport services across the County with a dedicated team helping to provide capacity and control costs in the market.

6.0 Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.

6.1. New electric vehicles have been procured for our Housing workforce following the commitment to transition all fleet vehicles (cars and small vans) under 3.2 tonnes to electric. Charging infrastructure is being implemented, including increased the number of chargepoints at our larger depot locations.

6.2. We have been allocated £3.783m of Government LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure) funding for the installation of charging infrastructure across Somerset. We are currently waiting for final approval to enable us to procure a chargepoint operator. The scheme focuses on installing publicly accessible low powered chargepoints in areas where residents do not have access to off-street parking, and are therefore unable to install their own chargepoint.

6.3. We have unfortunately had to pause e-scooter trials which were operating in Taunton, Minehead and Yeovil as a result of the operator being unable to continue. We are keen to explore all options to continue services where possible and are currently in discussion with Government and operators. .

6.4. We submitted a successful bid to secure Zero Emission Bus (ZEBRA) grant funding for 25 electric vehicles and charging infrastructure in collaboration with First Bus South, securing £2.2 million grant from the DfT with an additional £12.5 million investment from the operator. The works to install the charging infrastructure at the Taunton Depot have started and the buses have been ordered. The first of the new fleet is expected to be in service in spring 2025.

7.0 Major schemes

7.1. Access to Firepool Development, Taunton: A new access and associated active travel and pedestrian facilities were completed in June 2023, linking Taunton's train station car park and Firepool development to the town's road network, cycle provision and bus services. The scheme was jointly funded by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Department for Transport, and Somerset Council and was successfully completed on-time and on budget working with contractor Milestone.

7.2. J23 Dunball Roundabout, Bridgwater: Construction of an improved Dunball roundabout commenced in mid-November to provide an upgraded roundabout with traffic lights at this key location for the town. The scheme is funded jointly by Government Levelling Up Funds, Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Bridgwater Town Deal and National Highways; and will take a year to complete. Extensive public engagement has been undertaken in advance of the works commencing, including coordination with a range of parties given the existence and extent of works already underway and planned affecting the highway in Bridgwater and the surrounding area.

7.3. M5 J26 & Chelston Link Road: Design work for a DfT funded project that will treat the failing circulatory and A38 Chelston Link carriageway is now complete. The concrete carriageway, installed in the 1970s, has reached the end of its design life and needs to be replaced. Improvements to the existing drainage infrastructure are also proposed. The team have worked closely with National Highways to agree a high-level delivery strategy, subject to approvals a window for construction has been identified from Spring 2025. Discussions are underway with the Council's preferred contractor to plan the works.

7.4. A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dual Carriageway Improvement: The Somerset team has been working closely and collaboratively with National Highways throughout this project to oversee construction where it interfaces with the local highway network and ensure the Council's interests in this process are protected. Both carriageways on the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester upgrade were opened on 4 November with residual work due to complete in early 2025.

7.5. A358 – Taunton to Southfields: This scheme has unfortunately now been cancelled following the Government's budget announcement on the 30 October 2024. The scheme was announced as part of the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS1) in 2014 following intensive lobbying from Somerset County Council other authorities in the region and business representatives; and was originally due to start construction by 2020. In November 2023, the previous Secretary of State instructed National Highways not to submit the Development Consent Order. This is of course disappointing news for Somerset. The A358 is a vital transport artery linking London and the South East to the South West, it is crucial in terms of growing the economy. We will now be working with National Highways and the Department of Transport and our partners Peninsula Transport to understand what is possible and seek to secure Government funding to ensure improvements can be made in particular to ease congestion and reduce pollution around the Henlade section of the A358.

7.6. DLUHC Innovation and Capacity Fund: Following a successful bid, Somerset Council was awarded a total of £450,000 to assist the Government with their ambition to speed up the consenting for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), using Somerset's extensive experience and unique position within the industry to identify ways to reform the NSIP process in line with wider ambitions for better, faster, and greener infrastructure delivery. We have submitted two well-received and influential reports to the Ministry (MHCLG) examining barriers and opportunities to incorporate active travel in this type of scheme; and considering a joint vision-led approach between applicant and local authority.

8.0 Traffic Signals Recovery Programme

8.1. The signals recovery programme is Somerset Council's county-wide package of work to refurbish signal equipment coming to the end of its working life. These works have been combined with structural and routine maintenance operations that were due to be carried out in the near future, thus delivering best value and reducing disruption to the network.

8.2. Sites refurbished in the 23/24 period include:

- West Hendford, Yeovil
- West Coker Road, Yeovil
- Larkhill Road / Stiby Road, Yeovil

- Stars Lane, Yeovil
- Sherbourne Rd/Middle St/Wyndham (decommissioning).
- Strawberry Way South, Wells
- Princess Anne Road, Frome
- Portway/Wookey Hole Road, Wells
- East Liberty, Wells
- Eastover / Monmouth Street, Bridgwater

8.3. Of special note are the works that were carried out on the A30 in the historic village of West Coker during the summer holidays in 2023. Working around the clock, the team successfully completed a total replacement of the aging traffic signals and fully resurfaced the entirety of the A30, throughout the village (7,000Sqm) within the school holiday period, completing a week early. With the help of the community, measures were identified and implemented to ensure access to and from local businesses and maintaining public transport links serving the West Coker community and surrounding villages.

8.4. Sites refurbished in the 24/25 period to date include:

- Charlton Crossroads, Shepton Mallet which was completed on budget and on time before the Bath and West Show
- Improvements to the Upper High Street Pedestrian Crossing by Vivary Park Gates which is an essential component of the Future High Street's Fund scheme in Taunton that facilitates active travel improvements to/ from the Town Centre. The scheme was delivered to budget and on time in readiness for the Taunton Flower Show. The scheme won an award from the Taunton Area Cycling Campaign.

8.5. Design work is currently underway for two high priority schemes at Street. The junctions, both on the A39 Westway require full equipment replacement and extensive resurfacing. Work is scheduled to be commence in 2025.

8.6. The signals recovery team also be assisting with delivering other elements of the Future High Street's Fund and the Bus Service Improvement Plan work in Taunton. A key component of BSIP includes replacing ageing traffic signals and upgrading crossings on Hurdle Way which will improve access for cyclists, pedestrians and buses. Work commenced in mid-November and will run into the New Year, with a pause for the Christmas period. The improvements to Hurdle Way are in line with Taunton's Garden Town Vision, aiming to improve transport links in the town, making it easier and more attractive to use public transport and/or walking and cycling.

9.0 Highway Maintenance

Live Labs 2

9.1. Somerset is part of the Government's £30m 'Live Labs2' programme for decarbonising local road maintenance and construction. We are working closely with Hampshire and Cornwall Councils on a £5.1m programme tackling embedded carbon in local road maintenance activity. We are 18 months into the programme and have undertaken a range

of preparatory activity and analysis with a view to starting demonstrator projects on the ground in Somerset later this year.

New highway contracts procurement, demobilisation and mobilisation

9.2. The procurement of several new contracts was completed in April 2024 and the contracts commenced as follows:

- Surfacing Contract with Heidelberg Materials UK Ltd for up to 8 years.
- Surface Treatments Contract with Kiely Bros Ltd for up to 8 years.
- Highway Maintenance term service contract for up to 12 years with Kier Transportation Ltd.
- Highway Lighting, Illuminated & Electrical Assets contract for up to 12 years with VolkerHighways.(From June 2024)

9.3. The demobilisation of the former highways contract with Milestone Infrastructure was a significant undertaking spanning a one-year period. The task involved up to fourteen separate workstreams ranging in activities including, fleet, IT systems, personnel, and so on. It was critical to ensure service continuity, particularly for emergency works, safety defects repairs and winter service. Under strong project management support, the demobilisation of the contract, which had seen little variance over 28 years, was completed successfully. On the opposite side, it was necessary to mobilise the new highways contracts which was also completed successfully and without interruption to critical services. The new contracts enable a more direct relationship with the contractors compared to previous arrangements which is already working well in terms of service delivery discussions and increased levels of innovation.

9.4. We are currently finalising the specification for a framework contract for routine tree maintenance, including Ash dieback removal, aiming to have the successful contractors in place for the start of the 25/26 financial year.

9.5. We are currently in the process of drafting a replacement for our bridges and structures framework contract for major maintenance works which we are expecting to be tendered in early 2025.

Overview of maintenance programmes delivered

9.6. Our Structural Maintenance Programme encompasses a comprehensive approach to maintaining and enhancing the county's 6,740 km of highways, including carriageway surfacing and surface treatments, earthworks, drainage, and footways schemes. The programme prioritises a preventative approach, that is based on asset management principles to use a range of interventions and treatment options applied at the right time to keep the asset in good repair for the long term whilst delivering value for money. Most of the funding for the maintenance of Somerset's roads is issued as an annual capital grant from Government and we have utilised additional funding provided last year from a reallocation of funds from cancelled elements of the HS2 scheme called 'network north' funding to provide additional works within our current programme.

9.7. Until March 2024 the principal contractor for this programme was solely Milestone Infrastructure, and implementing our new suite of contracts has seen a significant change in how we deliver these services.

9.8. Re-surfacing Programme: This comprises resurfacing of worn-out road surfaces, addressing potholes through carriageway renewal, and ensuring safe travel for road users. Surfacing is an end of asset life treatment and acts to replace and renew carriageway where it is not possible to restore condition by other means.

- Resurfacing Projects: Several significant resurfacing projects have been successfully completed. Such as the A38 Bristol Road in Bridgwater, the C182 Hinkley Point C route, and the Trull/Honiton Road in Taunton.
- 24 schemes have been completed so far within the current financial year, with 17,000 tonnes of new asphalt laid across the county. Which equates to 27km of new surfacing. 32 resurfacing schemes are planned in total for the remainder of the Financial Year.
- To meet Somerset Council's objectives for the reduction of carbon emissions, the Structural Maintenance Programme is increasingly using lower carbon approaches. This has included lower temperature asphalts for surfacing schemes, recycling of existing carriageway into new surfacing, and exploring materials innovation, such as the use of bio-synthetic binders to replace conventional bituminous binders from fossil fuels.

9.9. Surface Treatments Programme: This focuses on preventive maintenance to extend the life of road surfaces, including activities such as surface dressing, micro-surfacing, and other treatments designed to protect and rejuvenate existing road surfaces.

- Surface Dressing is a thin course application of chippings and binder that are used to seal and protect road surfaces, preventing water ingress and subsequent damage. This is a key element of our preventative maintenance strategy to seal deteriorating carriageways, restore serviceability and extend the life of the asset, and therefore delay the need for more expensive surfacing works.
- Surface dressing is weather dependent and must be laid across the summer months to be effective. Our programme ran for 6 weeks through August into September. 216 different sites were surface dressed, and over 1 million square metres of surface dressing were applied, which is the largest programme we have delivered over the last seven years. 88% of the treatment was in rural areas.
- A third of the programme used a KielyLock treatment where a further application of binder is added after the initial surface dressing for added longevity and aesthetic appearance of the carriageway. We unfortunately experienced some delays in applying the full treatment and restoring lining to the roads due to weather and logistical issues and will aim to address those issues in future programmes.
- Micro-asphalt surfacing: This is an alternative thin application of asphalt, typically used on low traffic carriageway, such as estate roads, providing a cost-effective solution to enhance and restore road texture and skid resistance.

9.10. Earthworks and Drainage Programme: Effective drainage is vital for maintaining the structural integrity and safety of the road network and we have ongoing drainage installation, repair, and maintenance programmes. Our earthworks programme addresses issues related to embankments, cuttings and minor retaining walls.

9.11. Footways Programme: The footways programme aims to enhance pedestrian infrastructure, ensuring safe and accessible pathways for all users. This includes the construction, resurfacing, and maintenance of footways throughout the county.

9.12. Bridges and Structures: Several important schemes have been recently delivered including:

- B3224 Embankment failure - Reconstruction of the B3224 near Exford – Works included construction of a sheet piled retaining wall to support the public highway.
- North Town Taunton - Refurbishment off North Town Taunton Bridge over the River Tone – Works included steel, concrete repairs along with complete repainting of parapets and steelwork beneath structure.
- Wood Street, Milverton embankment failure - Construction of a reinforced embankment to support collapsed carriageway and localised drainage repairs/improvements and resurfacing works

9.13. Routine and environmental activities: Routine and Environmental Maintenance includes planned programmes for Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment, Grass Cutting, Gully Emptying and Hedge Trimming. Works programmes have been established to align with statutory responsibilities and/or defined policy standards, and is managed by the area highways teams with works delivered through our maintenance contractor, Kier. Reactive works are commissioned by the area teams in response to asset condition and customer/public service requests, including Siding/Ploughing, Ditching, Drain Jetting/CCTV surveys, Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment and Hedge Trimming. Kier also works with the area highways teams to deliver external, third party funded, works programmes. In this current financial year, the Somerset Rivers Authority will be funding a £400k programme of Enhanced Gully Emptying and Drain Jetting across the county.

9.14. Tree maintenance and ash die back: Major schemes for the pollarding of lapsed and dangerous roadside willow tree were carried out at A361 East Lyng to Burrowbridge; Honeymead Lane, Baltonsborough; Godney and Upper Godney. Tree works have also been carried out on the A30 near West Coker and A371 Ansford Hill, Castle Cary, and numerous emergency works have been carried out in response to immediate safety issues. A Highway Tree Risk Strategy has been prepared in draft and will be approved in 2025 when the new tree services and ash dieback contract is in place.

Safety Defect Repairs

9.15. Safety inspections of the highway continue to identify defects that are likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to the users of the network. All identified defects are repaired by Kier within the timescales defined within our published Highways Safety Inspection Manual. Since 1st April 2024:

- Over 18,000 highway Enquiries have been responded to by Highway Superintendents.
- Almost 20,000 safety defects have been identified on the network.
- Almost 15,000 potholes have been identified and 14,000 have been repaired.

9.16. During the Spring there was a substantial number of carriageway potholes to be repaired (circa 3,000 a month) following extreme weather and the Contractor struggled to repair all defects within prescribed timescales. Additional resources and repair techniques were utilised to get on top of the repair backlog which enabled the pothole numbers to be reduced to manageable levels by the end of the Summer.

Winter and Emergency Service

9.17. The Highways Winter and Emergency Service has been actively dealing with various winter and emergency issues. A pilot project was initiated to handle out-of-hours contacts, which is now managed by the Somerset Council Lifeline team. Previously, these calls were routed through the Police call centre. The initial results of the pilot are promising, with calls being answered in under 2 minutes. A total of 1194 out-of-hours incidents have been recorded since April. The highest impact incidents were reported in the following months:

- October 2023 (Storm Ciaran)
- December 2023 (Storm Gerrit)
- January 2023 (Storm Henk)
- November 2024 (Storm Bert)
- December 2024 (Storm Darrah)

9.18. We have now started out annual winter treatments and 1233 routes have been treated so far to ensure safe and efficient travel during winter conditions. To enhance the service, 4 new gritters have been purchased and working with schools we have named our two newest vehicles 'Spready Mercury' and 'Gritty Gritty Bang Bang' .

Highways devolution and working with Local Community Networks

9.19. Eighteen Local Community Networks (LCNs) are now in place to promote active community decision making, scrutiny, ensure local influence over council and wider public service activity, and to inspire more responsibility for local place-shaping. Many of the LCNs have now established Highways and Traffic Working Groups which have strengthened relationships and improved communications around highway and traffic levels of service, works prioritisation, and budgets.

9.20. We have also set up some initiatives to enable enhanced local delivery via Parish Councils:

- The provision of a Highway Steward
- Local self-delivery through local suppliers commissioned by a Parish, or by Parish collaboration, or through a volunteer network (which includes highway safety awareness training package where volunteers from the community can get online training to do some low-risk activities on the highway)
- The Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot (from September 2024) enabling City, Town, and Parish Councils to purchase highway maintenance services direct from the Councils' contractor Kier Transportation. Kier is currently preparing 41 estimates for Parishes and is due to deliver works shortly for the first set of agreed works. The Pilot continues until the end of August 2025 but will be reviewed prior to decide on the sustainability of the scheme.

Efficiency and innovation

9.21. Our new contract with Kier is already enabling several Innovations & Efficiencies including:

- Jetting & CCTV Reports. We have digitalised the process for the provision of drain jetting and CCTV reports/surveys.

- Digitalisation of Grass Cutting and Weed Treatment Works Programmes. Kier will digitalise the Grass Cutting service in 2025 to provide 'live' works programme delivery information.
- Public interactive Webpage (Gully Emptying Schedules). The public will have self-service access to information on gully cleansing operations such as next date of planned clean etc in 2025.
- QucikSTATS is a Kier digital mapping application which pulls together real-time asset information from multiple sources and presents it on a map, providing a comprehensive export of all the requested utility services located within the highway in a specified area. An initial trial is proving to be a 'game changer' with public utility information now available within minutes, rather than up to four weeks previously; reducing the need for dedicated business support staff.

10.0 Rights of Way

10.1. Over 3600 path network issues have been reported so far in 2024 (excluding the Exmoor National Park area), with almost 3000 being resolved or closed already by the maintenance team. Reporting levels are still higher than they were pre-CoVID pandemic. Over 530km of paths have been cut as part of the routine vegetation clearance contracts, with many more paths cut back by volunteers and parish councils. A number of long-term closed paths continue to be reopened. Climate change continues to provide for challenging impacts on paths.

10.2. We have completed installations of significant footbridges (steel beams) in Mudgley, Trull, and Wiveliscombe (Ilminster and Yeovilton works to be done imminently), with preparation taking place on many more installation projects.

10.3. Our partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority saw the installation of a new bridleway bridge over the River Barle at Great Bradley. Previously it was only a ford and inaccessible for most of the year to walkers and cyclists. Combined with a path diversion order the bridge now provides for a permanent route for the Two Moors Way promoted trail, which previously was reliant on a permissive path that had deteriorated significantly due to flood damage.

10.4. Guidance has been published to aid and encourage Parish Councils in undertaking rights of way maintenance under their own statutory powers.

10.5. Over 700 planning application consultations on rights of way issues have been responded to this year, with many of them necessitating conditions and/ or the securing of highway works or contributions via legal agreements, and we have engaged with several major infrastructure projects on rights of way matters including Hinkley Point C, National Grid Connection, Gravity/Agratas Gigafactory, A303 dualling and the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier. Discussions are also emerging with regard to Bristol Port Company's habitat compensation scheme.

10.6. The Definitive Map team, amongst other work, have dealt with the following so far in 2024:

- Responded to 10 non-determination appeals
- Determined 5 applications to modify the Definitive Map

- Made 11 orders to modify the Definitive Map
- Responded to 8 appeals against refusal to make an order
- Made 17 diversion orders
- Processed 46 temporary closure orders and over 30 order extensions
- Defended 3 orders at public inquiry

10.7. Applications to modify the Definitive Map continue to be submitted with 18 received in 2024, with the backlog of applications increasing slightly to 382. Applications that are subject to a direction from the Secretary of State are being prioritised alongside cases based on user evidence, as per the revised Statement of Priorities that was adopted earlier in the year.

10.8. For diversions there are 22 applications currently being worked on with priority given to rail level crossing and development related diversion, with a further 29 awaiting assessment.

10.9. Volunteer activity continues to complement the work of the team with the number of hours contributed expected to be in excess of 22,000 across 6 different volunteer schemes.

10.10. External funding for the King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail continues to help with management and improvement of the premier route in Somerset.

11.0 Road Safety, Traffic Control & Traffic Data

Road Safety

11.1. Tragically 27 people died on roads in Somerset in 2023, the highest for ten years, and we determinedly work in partnership seeking to reduce that toll and understand the circumstances behind the collisions to inform any interventions which may help to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents in the future.

11.2. We are developing a new road safety strategy which will to inform our road safety delivery and work. This will be supported by plans recently set up by the Police and Crime Commissioner for a road safety forum to look at how road safety delivery can be developed through a greater focus and effort and combined planning across the force area.

11.3. We provided face to face road safety education to over 36,000 people across all areas of Somerset, with initiatives including:

- Primary School 'Stay Safe' talk provided to almost 14,000 reception to Year 6 children, introducing how to stay safe on and around our roads.
- Attendance at many events including the Bath and West Show, Armed Forces Day, Dunster and Mid Somerset Shows along with a number of other smaller events engaging with just over 11,200 people.
- Training over 100 motorcyclists through our 'Raise Your Ride' advanced training course which is an observed ride with tips and advice on how to ride safely.
- 'Learn to Live' presentations to all Somerset colleges engaged 4,563 pupils.
- Mature driver talks attended by almost 1,500 people gave vital updates and advice to enable them to drive safer for longer.

- Delivery of 'Bikeability' cycling training to over 2,800 Year 5 & 6 pupils. This has been one of our busiest years and included a transition to a digital platform, with all course information online for parents to view and manage.
- 'Operation Tonic', developed jointly with Public Health and Avon and Somerset Police to raise awareness about the risks of drink and drug driving, aiming to make our roads safer in the festive period and ensure people are signposted to additional support where appropriate from the Drug and Alcohol Service.

Traffic Data

11.4. We provide high quality data to assess collision patterns and behaviours to inform interventions and campaigns such as our 'Fatal Five' road safety programme to help road users to understand the behaviours they should avoid, reducing the likelihood of being involved in a serious road collision.

11.5. We have a data and evidence led road safety engineering programme, which continues to assess routes and clusters to identify priorities for future investment, and develop schemes to reduce the likelihood of collisions occurring. We have introduced Local Community Network (LCN) dashboards to help communities understand road safety issues in their area, and are making plans for access to a wide range of public sector road safety related datasets to further improve understanding of how deaths and injuries on our roads can be reduced. The LCN Transport Data Programme also helps communities understand the wider data around traffic and travel.

11.6. Working in partnership with the Police we are continuing to develop plans to use targeted AI technology to help focus enforcement resources in areas where the majority of fatal and serious collisions occur.

Traffic Control

11.7. We manage and maintain and 300 traffic signal sites which enable people to travel safely, and also manage vehicle activated signs to give appropriate traffic and safety messaging. We also support events by managing the impact on traffic signal sites ensure signal operations reflect event traffic flows.

11.8. We have secured additional Government funding to begin removing redundant landline technology from Traffic Signals to help us manage their operation more efficiently. We have also introduced enhanced technology within our Urban Traffic control system which enable us to better monitor and manage faults on the network.

12.0 Traffic Management

12.1. We work closely with the emergency services and event organisers on traffic management plans for both planned events and unplanned incidents to ensure that the highway network is managed effectively. It is our aim to minimise disruption on the network and we have seen significant benefits, particularly for larger events such as Glastonbury Festival and Carnivals, as well much collaborative working with Town and Parish Councils and Members and contractors.

12.2. This year to date we have processed almost 4000 Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders for highway works and events, up 11% from the previous year, and 61 Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders for parking restrictions and speed limits etc. up 33% from the previous year.

12.3. We dealt with over 12000 traffic engineering enquiries in 2024 and the demand on the service continues to grow.

13.0 Commercialisation and social value

13.1 We are actively exploring opportunities for commercialisation while maximising social value within our own contracts and those of our partner organisations. Currently, we are engaging with external media partners to explore opportunities for outdoor digital advertising and large-format digital advertising, including space on the new screen recently installed as part of the Yeovil Refresh Project.

13.2. Additionally, we are developing a social value 'prospectus' in collaboration with internal stakeholders. This prospectus aims to provide businesses that supply the Council, the NHS, or operate in Somerset with the necessary information to make informed decisions about delivering social value in alignment with Council priorities.

13.3. Roundabout advertising continues to be successful with many more sites sold and almost all sponsors from 2023/24 renewed for 2024/25. Surplus revenue is being used to increase maintenance visits on occupied roundabouts and a number which serve as a 'gateway' to a town or village. In addition, some of our roundabouts could soon be used to feature messaging about Council schemes and campaigns such as Transporting Somerset Volunteer Drivers and Road Safety Fatal Five.

14.0 Parking

14.1. Somerset Council is now responsible for on and off-street parking and operates around 200 car parks. The Council restructure is enabling us to improve the parking team structure which has been operating on limited capacity following Local Government Reorganisation and has been unable to take forward initiatives that we would have liked to progress over the last 18 months or so. Additional staff capacity will enable us to improve the service to the residents and users of Somerset.

14.2. The opportunity to provide a new contract to our Enforcement Contractor has been taken. By continuing the relationship there has been no downturn in performance and we have been able to avoid a potential increase in cost of £750,000 over a three year period. We issue around 5000 to 6000 penalty charge notices a month across on-street & off-street parking and bus gate contraventions.

14.3. Limited activity has been possible in respect of new resident permit areas but the proposed new structure once approved will enable the Council to take a more pro-active stance and support Members when dealing with parking related matters.

15.0 Streetworks

15.1. Street works co-ordination remains a huge challenge and increases in telecommunication, gas works, and water leakage have presented coordination challenges over the last year and we have over 40 different statutory undertakers who have undertaken works in Somerset.

15.2. Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Crewkerne have particularly been busy areas this year with major utility, development and Council led schemes sometimes overlapping, however all have worked together to reduce the impact as far as reasonable possible.

15.3. Approximately 27,393 sets of work have been undertaken with permits in the last year compared to 37,036 for the previous year. We have had 5,112 sets of works facilitated by temporary signals and 7,989 sets of works under road closures, compared to 6,908 works under temporary signals and 6,779 under road closures for the previous year.

15.4. The reduction in works captured the transition period for our Highway Contracts and so there was a drop in reactive works. This also includes a drop in short duration fibre works. The number of major schemes which involve more in-depth coordination are considerable higher and are of a higher impact, which is reflected by the number of road closures.

15.5. 1,202 Fixed Penalty notices have been issued for incorrectly permitted works over the last year and in the last 12 months we have also successfully prosecuted Statutory Undertakers for various offences under the Street works legislation as follows with other cases under review:

- Truespeed: 5 offences relating to failing to comply with statutory safety measures. Total fine £28,000.00, costs of £4,277.73 plus a victim surcharge of £2,000
- BTOR: 1 offence relating to failing to comply with statutory safety measures; carrying out works when directed not to and without authorisation. Total fine £12,000.00, costs of 3,158.04 plus a victim surcharge of £2,000
- St Modwen Homes: 1 offence to failing to reinstate a temporary reinstatement and failing to reinstate. Total fine £28,000.00, costs of £3,866.50 plus a victim surcharge of £190.00

16.0 Fleet Purchasing, Management and Maintenance

16.1. Since vesting day the newly created Fleet team have been prioritising Operator Licence compliance.

- The OCRS (Operator Compliance Risk Score) score is Green Zero.
- We have also achieved a 100% HGV MOT pass rate.
- The Lufton depots MOT station has a Green rating with the DVSA. Having the onsite MOT station at Lufton dramatically reduces vehicle downtime for services, external MOT's have a waiting time of 2 to 3 weeks for a booking.
- 278 MOT's were undertaken for the council in the last year.

16.2. A range of operational priorities have been completed following the transition to a unitary authority which involved bringing fleet operations together from the previous councils:

- Our internal driving assessor has completed 279 driver assessments in 2023 and is on track to complete the same number for 2024.
- New Fleet Procedures have been written and rolled out to assist with compliance and ensure all service areas are working to one set of guidelines.
- A new Driver Handbook with supporting information and documents will be rolled out through December 2024 and January 2025. This will assist with maintaining compliance and set clear guidelines
- A new digital driving licence check system (Licence Bureau – Continuum) was introduced in April 2023 to help manage the council's driver licencing, we now have 1,479 driver licence details with more being added to daily. Managing drivers' licences is a legal requirement, without a system like this it would be unmanageable.
- A new telematics system has been procured and will be installed in all vehicles to help identify underutilised vehicles so these can be removed from the fleet or swapped out, and will provide data to inform our transition to an EV fleet.
- We now have an EV Fleet of 39. Varying from cars to transit vans.
- The former SCC vehicle maintenance contract has ended and an additional 220 vehicles were brought back in to our in-house maintenance workshops whilst we considered longer term arrangements. We are in the process of transferring some maintenance to provider, SFS, from March 2025. Our Lufton workshop will remain providing an in-house solution for the next 3 years until a decision on the best route for maintenance has been agreed.

16.3. The formation of the new Council has created a significant opportunity to improve the efficiency of fleet utilisation across the various service areas to make sure that the combined fleet resource is shared and that we are not retaining little-used or surplus vehicles. A fleet review project has commenced with a specific focus on delivering efficiency savings over the next 18 months., and we will be developing a long-term replacement strategy.

17.0 Professional Services Contract

17.1. We have mobilised a new contract for the provision of professional consultancy services for planning, design, engineering and place services with the engineering consultancy WSP. This is now available for us to quickly and efficiently access specialist advice, expertise and additional capacity to undertake a wide range of professional services for our place based activity such as planning, transport planning, business cases, surveys, design and costing advice.

18.0. Waste Services

Total Waste Arisings

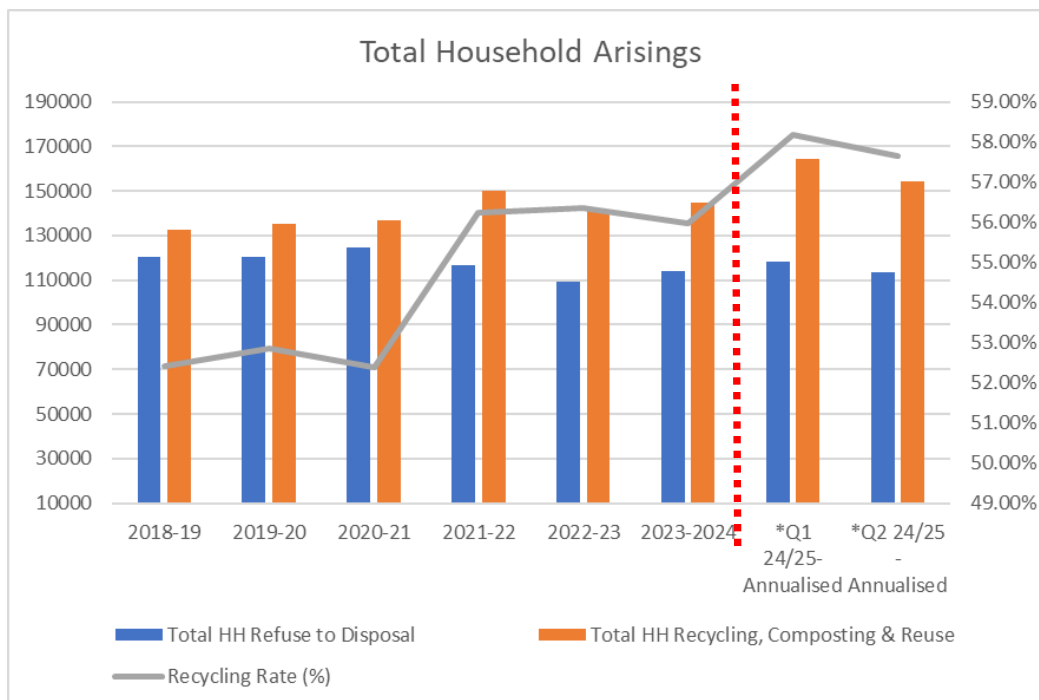
18.1. Total waste arisings for the financial year 2023/24 amounted to 258,600 tonnes, marking a 3.4% increase (8,500 tonnes) from 2022/23. This rise is primarily due to an increase in garden waste and residual waste received at recycling centres. The authority's recycling rate has remained steady at 56% since the full implementation of three-weekly refuse collections in 2021/22.

18.2. Despite the overall increase in waste handled, total waste arisings are still approximately 2,500 tonnes lower than levels prior to the introduction of the three-weekly residual waste collection. This initiative has boosted recycling rates from 52% in 2019/20 (pre-Recycle More) to 56% in 2023/24 across all waste streams managed by the Authority. The positive trend continued into the first two quarters of 2024/25, with recycling rates reaching an impressive 58%, indicating a sustained move towards more sustainable waste practices among Somerset residents.

18.3. Total household refuse for disposal in 2023/24 was 114,000 tonnes, a reduction of about 8,000 tonnes per year compared to the 2018-2021 average. Of this reduction, approximately 3,500 tonnes were diverted to dry recycling and reuse, and a further 4,500 tonnes to food waste recycling since the introduction of Recycle More.

18.4. The positive trends have persisted into the first two quarters of the current financial year, with recycling rates exceeding 58% during this period.

Figure 1 – Total Household Arisings



18.5. Somerset Council is keen to ensure that as much waste through our services remains within the United Kingdom, this is to ensure full accountability and that our waste is treated to the highest environmental standards. Through our contracted services only 4.2% of waste left the UK and only 1% of plastic waste was shipped overseas.

18.6. Figure 2 below shows an infographic detailing the quantities and types of materials the authority handled. It is noteworthy that during Autumn of 2024 the authority continues to minimise its use of landfill having achieved zero landfill in September/October 2024

Figure 2 Recycling Tracker

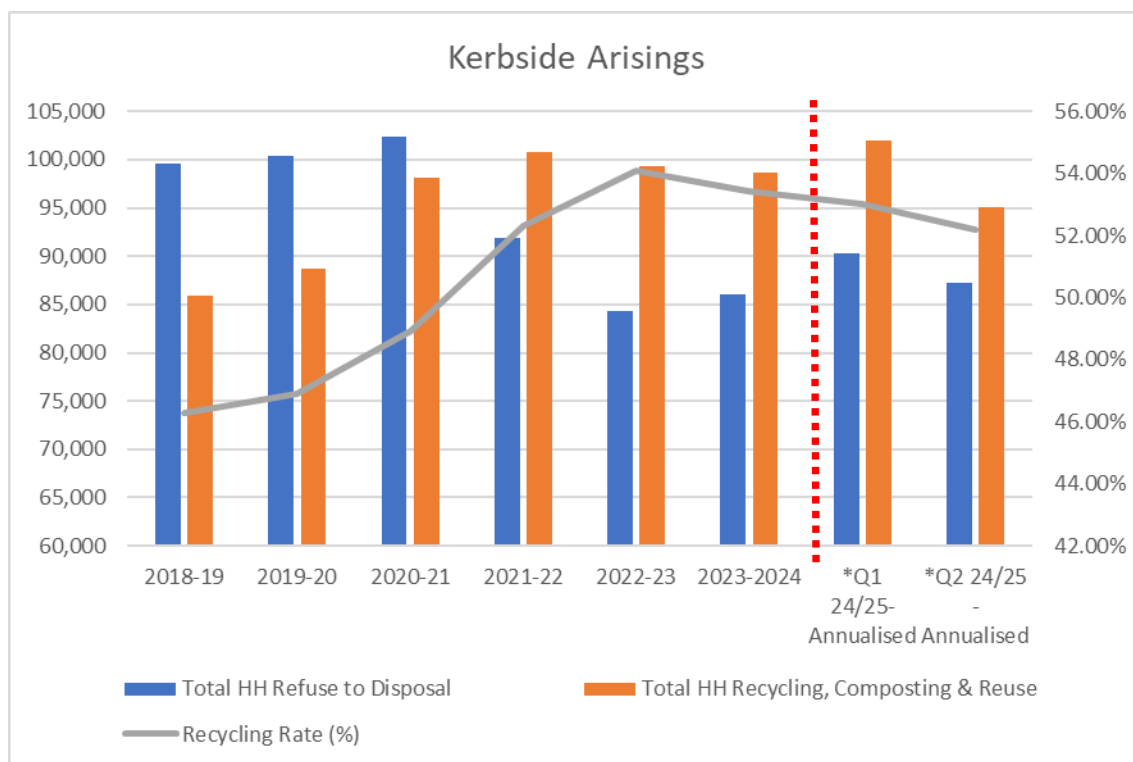


Kerbside Waste Arisings

18.7. The kerbside collection service continues to perform well with recycling rates on the service at above 54% and with Q1 and Q2 23/24 above 55%. The introduction of Recycle More continues to influence and encourage Residents to engage with the service in a positive manner. Refuse and recycling tonnages continue to show a sustained positive step change since the introduction of Recycle More underlining the schemes contribution and lasting legacy. A very significant change in waste arisings from the kerbside has been noted with far less refuse being presented for disposal on the kerbside service since Recycle More has been implemented (15,000 tonnes reduction from 2019).

18.8. During Q1 23/24 a slight adverse position on refuse tonnage was noted, the rise is attributed to an unusual amount of bank holidays and reliability issues on the waste collection services. Q2 indicates a return to anticipated levels.

Figure 3 – Total Kerbside Collected Arisings



Participation/Composition Analysis

18.9. Participation and composition analysis was undertaken on the kerbside services this year revealing encouraging shifts in resident behaviour compared to the previous study undertaken in 2018.

18.10. Household participation in the kerbside recycling service has increased from 85% to 91% over the past five years. During the same time the number of households presenting food waste for collection has increased by 10% to 72%

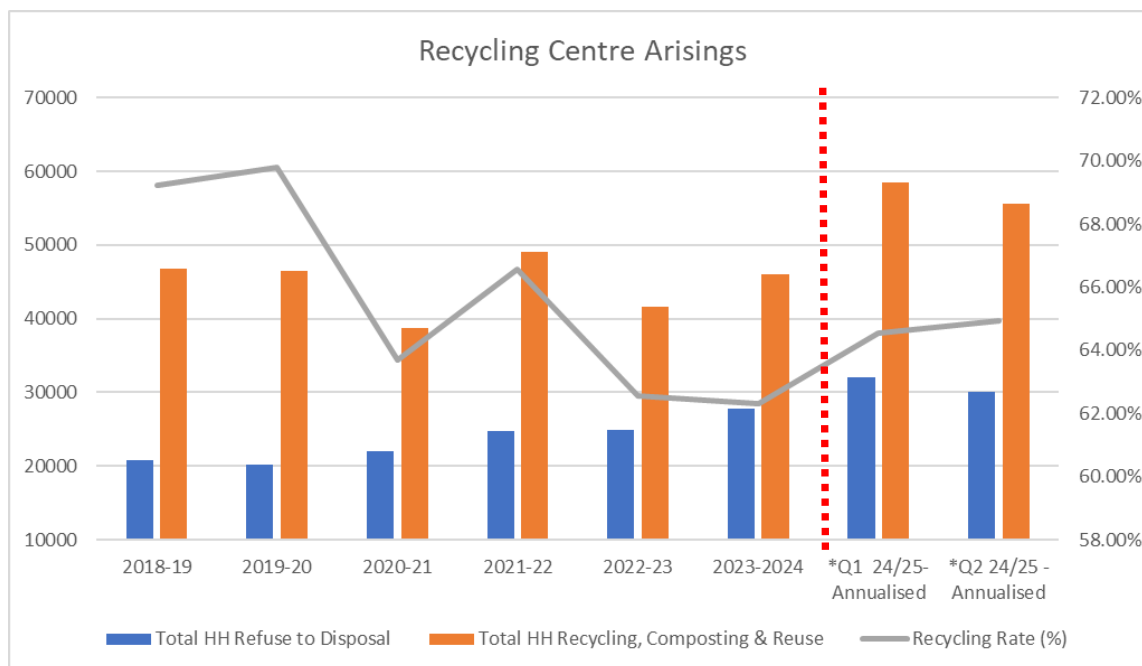
18.11. Delving further into the composition of discarded items, whilst the analysis showed a very positive reduction in the amount of recyclable items in the rubbish bin dropping by 10% (from 51% to 41% in five years) the study disclosed a significant finding, notably that half of the recyclables being discarded constitute food waste. Furthermore, it was revealed that over 60% of the discarded food waste is packaged. This underpins the need and requirement for further resident engagement and behaviour change to discourage this behaviour. Aside from Garden Waste and Pet Bedding (7%), each category of recyclable material comprises a relatively small proportion of the total discarded material.

Recycling Centre Arisings

18.12. The data from Recycling Centres reveals a nuanced picture, shifts in tonnage patterns are closely linked to changes in resident behaviour, a trend influenced by COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the reduction of refuse frequency through Recycle More it has emerged that Recycling Centres are potentially acting as overflow outlets from the Kerbside Service, witnessing a rise in overall tonnages.

18.13. During the first quarter of 23/24 Recycling Centres experienced an unexpectedly high levels of residual waste, attributed to the abundance of bank holidays during that period. Nevertheless, recycling rates from the service area have achieved 65% in Q1 and Q2 24/25, down from a peak of 69% during 2018 to 2020.

Figure 4 Recycling Centre Arisings



Collection Contract – Summary

18.14. Contractual negotiations with Suez have been a major concern this year. Suez informed the Authority of a significant long-term loss-making position over the contract term, so severe that they considered renouncing the contract. Consequently, the Authority reviewed Suez’s financial position and compared it against alternative service delivery methods, concluding that re-negotiation was the most cost-effective solution. This has created significant in-year pressure on the Service and required re-profiling of contract spending over the contract period. Additionally, the Performance Mechanism was amended to provide greater incentives for Suez to improve service quality.

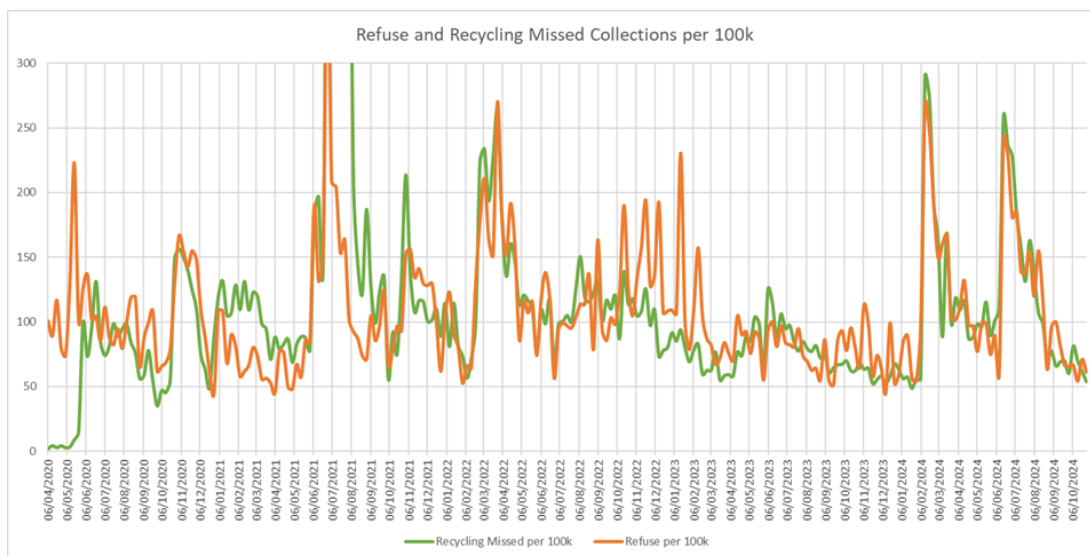
18.15. To further mitigate Suez’s losses, the Service agreed to a county-wide re-routing of refuse and recycling routes in two phases, during March and July. This large-scale re-routing involved direct communication with 260,000 Somerset households and adjustments to waste collection days. As expected with any major service adjustment, service quality initially declined as crews familiarized themselves with new routes, but missed collection rates quickly returned to expected levels. The re-routing aimed to improve carbon emissions, enhance service quality, and allow Suez to optimize operations, achieving fleet and overtime reductions. During the communication exercise, households received a fully refreshed service guide at the contractor's cost.

18.16. Suez has achieved sustainability by focusing on a stable staffing platform. Their efforts have led to a consistent decrease in agency headcount, improved management of sickness and absence levels, and a strategic approach to minimizing staff turnover. Major

transition activities related to contract mobilization and service changes from previous years have also concluded.

18.17. As a direct result of these initiatives, the occurrence of missed collections and customer complaints has significantly and sustainably improved immediately after both re-routing phases, avoiding the historic variability previously seen. While the contract target of 45 missed collections per 100,000 has not been uniformly met, there has been a tangible improvement in service reliability, providing a stable foundation to enhance service delivery standards in the future.

Figure 5 – Missed Collections per 100,000 Residual and Recycling



18.18. Since April 2023, a successful trial of flexible plastics recycling has been conducted in the Frome area, involving 3,500 properties. The scheme has been well-utilized, with 65% of residents regularly participating. Due to the trial's success, the Flexible Plastics Fund has agreed to extend the fully funded trial to an additional 23,000 properties, that began in October 2024

Recycling Centres and Waste Treatment

18.19. Several Key changes have affected the operation of the Recycling Centres this year, including the collection of material containing POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants). To achieve compliance with the new legislative requirements, separate disposal points at the recycling centres have had to be implemented. This has led to a reduction in haulage efficiency due to the lower volume of the material and reduction in Biffa's ability to segment the fraction into its recyclable contents. In the new year, the Controlled Waste Regulations have changed, preventing the Authorities ability to charge for Non-Household Waste (Plasterboard, Asbestos and Hardcore) at Recycling Centres. As Somerset Council historically exercised this option, this change has been received as an additional financial pressure to the Authority.

18.20 On a positive note, recent upgrades to the Recycling Centres' CCTV system have expanded webcam coverage. This enhancement enables customers to better identify busier times. Additionally, the ANPR system has undergone an overhaul, resulting in more

reliable user data. This improvement strengthens our ability to identify and address site abuse, track visitor numbers accurately, and gain deeper insights into customer behaviour. Some Recycling Centres are also having engineering work undertaken to reduce the requirement to close the sites when waste compaction activity is being undertaken. The objective of this is to ensure that queueing times are reduced to a minimum and to increase customer satisfaction. Also, a trial is also taking place at Highbridge and Taunton Recycling Centre to recycle UPVC.

18.21. Engineering Amendments have been made to Walpole Anaerobic Digestion plant, with the aim to achieving PAS110 accreditation to increase the options for the onward use of this material.

Service Satisfaction

18.22. We have been working with INCPEN and other councils on a national project that measures public confidence in recycling. Annually, a national survey is conducted to track attitudes of the public on their collection services, and how confident they are that materials are actually recycled. In 2022 and 2024, we opted to conduct a Somerset specific survey as well which gives us some valuable customer satisfaction data and information on where we may be able to improve in the future.

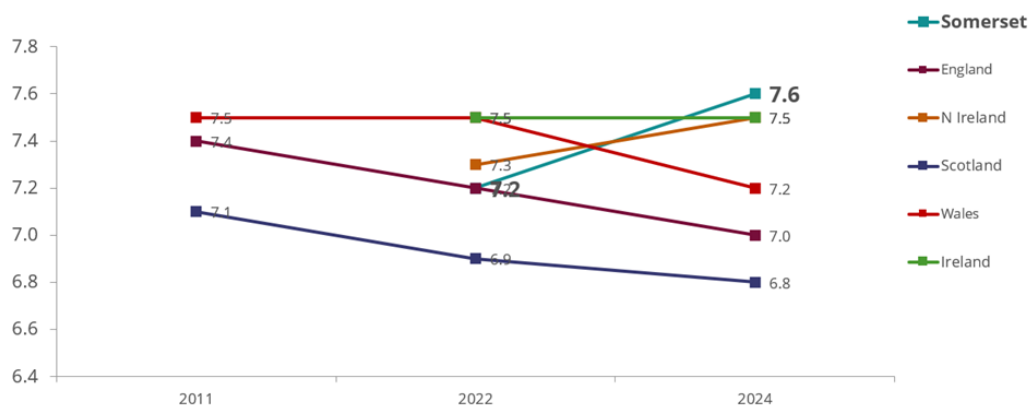
18.23. In the 2024 survey, we are pleased to note an increase in satisfaction compared to 2022, and proud that overall satisfaction in Somerset is higher than any of the UK nations overall. We provide a clear, transparent and published Recycling Tracker (Figure 2) alongside frequent publications through the Sorted e-zine and through our established and respected social media channels that reflect our ethos, that is woven into the contracts that we hold, which enables customers to be confident in how we treat their waste.

Figure 6 Public Confidence in Recycling (Somerset)

Overall service rating: Somerset, UK nations and Ireland



Q. On a scale of 0-10 (where 0 = extremely poor, 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate the quality of your recycling service?



Base: 4,884 adults in UK, 153 adults in Somerset & 951 adults in Ireland who give a score on their service (excluding 'Don't Know' responses). September 2024

18.24. The INCPEN survey measures customer satisfaction with our kerbside collection service. We are pleased to report an increase in overall satisfaction levels since the last

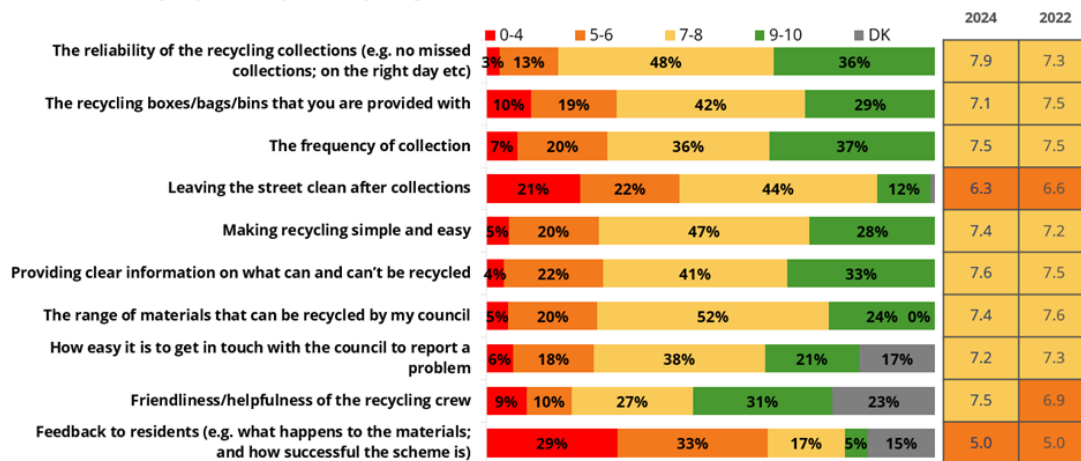
survey in 2022. The feedback indicates that residents have a highly positive view of the service we provide. However, the survey also highlighted areas for improvement, and we are committed to addressing these to further enhance our service.

Figure 7 Recycling Scorecard

Recycling scorecard ratings: Somerset



Q. And using the same scale (0 = extremely poor, 5 = average and 10 = excellent), how would you rate each of the following aspects of your recycling service?



Base: Adults in Somerset who give a score on their service (2024 = 153; 2022 = 150)

Waste Legislation Update

18.25. There are several significant national policy changes in waste management on the horizon. These include:

- Extended Producer Responsibility in 2025
- Simpler Recycling in 2026
- Deposit Return Scheme in 2027
- Extension of the Emissions Trading Scheme to energy from waste in 2028

18.26. These policies will have major financial and operational impacts on the council. To prepare, extensive work has been done through initiatives like Recycle More and the FlexCollect Pilots. Key upcoming actions include rolling out food waste collection to all flats by March 2026 and implementing soft plastic collections by March 2027.

18.27. The waste team is actively engaging with Defra, WRAP, and other waste organizations to contribute to policy development and understand potential risks. They have responded to national consultations on Simpler Recycling and the Emissions Trading Scheme, and have provided data to Defra and its contractors as needed.

18.28. Additionally, the service has formed a discussion forum with other authorities offering a three weekly refuse collection about the potential shift to fortnightly refuse collections under the Simpler Recycling system, pending confirmation from Defra.

SWE:EP Fund

18.29. The SW:EEP fund (Somerset Waste: Enhanced Environmental Performance) is a financial resource originating from the income generated by the sale of recyclable materials. Both Suez and the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) contribute a portion of their share of the recycle income to create this fund. The primary objective of the SW:EEP fund is to support behavioural change initiatives within Somerset, aiming to increase the reuse and recycling of waste and achieve better environmental outcomes.

18.30 Decisions on how to use the SW:EEP fund are made jointly by Somerset Council and Suez at biannual Joint Management Board meetings. The fund is subject to change based on fluctuations in material values, but as of early 2024, it contained approximately £215,000, with an average annual contribution of around £100,000. The fund has been used for various activities, including supporting the roll-out of the Recycle More program, increasing food waste capture, developing Community Action Groups, and implementing interventions in areas with low recycling performance

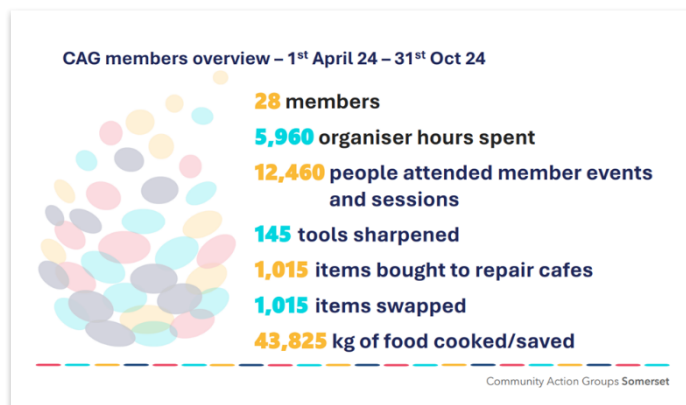
18.31. A brief outline of the activities supported this year by the fund are outlined below:

Waste Not Somerset Grant Fund

- Purpose: Support local community projects that prevent or reduce waste.
- Beneficiaries: Best Before Food Store (Wellington), Prodigal Bikes (Chard), Victoria Park Community Centre (Bridgwater).
- Outcome: Ongoing projects with results expected next year.

Community Action Groups (CAG) Somerset

- Mission: Help local groups achieve sustainability goals, focusing on waste reduction, reuse, repair, sharing, surplus food, and composting.
- Funding: Supported by SWEEP.
- Activities:
 - Support and Resources: Training, mentoring, operational support.
 - Community Engagement: Events like repair cafes, community fridges, pantry schemes.
 - Funding and Grants: Access to grants and fundraising support.
 - Impact Measurement: Help groups measure and demonstrate their impact.
 - Progress: Exceeded expectations in its second year with positive feedback.



Food Pantry Project

- Objective: Reduce food waste at home.
- Initiatives: Distributed leaflets with tips, free fridge thermometers, and caddy liners during national food waste awareness month.

Metal Matters Campaign

- Goal: Increase recycling of metal packaging (cans, foil, aerosols).
- Method: Digital campaign with radio ads and bus signage, funded 70% by Alupro.

- Timeline: Planned for February/March 2025.

SWE:EP Fund

18.32. Community engagement is a collaborative process where we work with and through groups of people bound together in Somerset by their interest, in recycling, reducing waste and avoiding our impact to the environment and climate. Our approach involves a range of interactions, from simple information sharing to supporting community activities. We aim to build relationships and trust over time, ensuring that our engagement efforts are ongoing and cumulative¹



18.33. Schools Against Waste (SAW), delivered by Carymoor Environmental Trust for Somerset Council, has reached 4,644 children with waste-themed assemblies, visited 38 schools, and delivered 89 workshops to 2,256 children. They have also developed an electricals reuse, repair, and recycling workshop starting in 2025 and delivered food recycling talks to 180 children at Field to Food learning day. Since February 2018, SAW has reached over 60,000 children through 408 school visits. Teacher feedback is highly positive, with over 95% rating visits as Excellent or Very Good, and 100% recommending the workshops.

18.34. The Fixy Project, launched in May 2022, has engaged over 6,500 people and received 5,000 donated items (over 5 tonnes). In September 2024, they piloted small electricals collection at flats. The project diverts smart tech items for reuse via Donate IT and is funded by Material Focus, with bridge funding from Somerset Council and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK.

18.35. Somerset's Repair Network webpage now includes a map of repair groups. The council supported the launch of Minehead Repair Café.

18.36. The Local Engagement Project aimed at increasing food waste recycling in Priorswood, Taunton included leaflet distribution, local events, door-knocking, and monitoring participation. It engaged 249 people at events, 28 during door-knocking, and 58 post-campaign. The project resolved container issues and collected 42 pledges to recycle food waste. Further phases are planned for Bridgwater and Yeovil in 2025.



18.37. Other community engagement activities included attending community groups and events to promote recycling and waste reduction. Over the last year, there were 15 Waste Services talks and events reaching 432 people. The council supported Fixy at various events and partnered with SUEZ for the Local Engagement Programme. They also supported Libraries' Coat Swap initiative.

Customer Experience

18.38. The service handles over 210,000 public requests annually through the My Waste Services system. It's crucial for the council to manage these requests efficiently to minimize failure demand and reduce the need for human intervention. We collaborate with the Somerset Council Web Team, Communications, and Customer Services to promote these channels, achieving over 80% of transactions online and ensuring all transactions are available digitally.

18.39. Our focus on continuous improvement and responsiveness to feedback has led to several enhancements. Improvements in address management have reduced delays in service access by closing the gap between customer occupancy and system visibility. We also introduced a feature for customers to check the expiry dates of their garden waste subscriptions, aiming to streamline processes and minimize failure demand.

18.40. Regarding payments, Waste services currently use three web forms with payment functionality, generating over £3 million annually. With Somerset Council changing its payment system supplier, all service areas must adopt the new infrastructure by December 4, 2024. Waste services process around 70,000 payments per year, making this transition a significant and technically challenging task. The redesign and integration of forms began in September, with testing and sign-off completed in October and November. Waste services will be the only area offering fully compliant payments over the phone and online.

18.41. In response to the introduction of the controlled waste regulations of 2023, we redesigned our online functionality for accepting construction and demolition waste, including asbestos, plasterboard, and hardcore. This change, effective January 1, allows residents to dispose of these materials for free up to a set allowance, with charges applying beyond that. The redesign was completed on time.

18.42. Somerset Council is part of a national trial for kerbside collection of plastic bags and wrappings, initially covering 3,000 properties and now expanded to 23,000. Clear blue bags are provided to residents, and the reordering process has been digitalized. The new functionality was successfully implemented for the trial's start in October 2024.

18.43. Waste services were the first to work with the contact centre/digital team to review online offerings, promoting a 'Digital First' approach. A comprehensive review of web forms was completed by April 2024, with enhancements delivered by June 2024. This effort, combined with aggressive promotion, increased online transactions from 74% to 84%.

18.44. Additional minor initiatives include tailored video training for Councillors on the Missed Collection form, a reusable option for bulky waste, and a clinical review to reduce the frequency of on-demand collections by increasing box size.