



Somerset Liberal Democrats Chard South May 2023



Bus use on rise as operator is praised for making timely improvements

Figures show more people in Somerset are choosing to 'Bus It' following the introduction of lower fares and evening buses as part of Somerset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Since the introduction of a £1 fare for a single journey in Taunton, along with evening bus services on some routes, both funded by BSIP money, as well as a sustained 'Bus It' campaign by Somerset Council and the Somerset Bus Partnership, passenger numbers have increased by nearly 25 per cent on First Bus/Buses of Somerset services in Taunton area. Similarly, following the introduction of the £2 fare for a single journey in Somerset, funded by the Government's Help for Homes scheme, passenger numbers have increased by around 14 per cent across the county. The Government has also officially announced its intention to continue the £2 fare across the country until 30 June.



Somerset Council and the Somerset Bus Partnership launched the 'Bus It' campaign last summer to try and encourage more people to 'Bus It'. You can find out more about it here, along with the various initiatives: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/bus-it-you-know-it-makes-sense/>

Help make Somerset more accessible: your views needed



A year-long project to make Somerset more accessible for Disabled people was launched on 1 April 2023.

'Accessible Somerset' is an ambitious project which will ask Disabled people how their life could be improved in various areas. The project is seeking volunteers to share their views and is asking for individuals and organisations to get involved by contacting Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk. 'Accessible Somerset' will begin by working with local Disabled people and organisations to help map the areas of need across Somerset. This will help to identify the key areas of focus for the project.

To deliver this project, Somerset Council has teamed up with WECIL Ltd - a Disabled People's Organisation who offer a range of services which support independent living. WECIL have been working with both public and private sector organisations since 2016, supporting senior management teams, HR professionals and Equality Diversity and Inclusion officers to create accessible, inclusive environments.

If you would like to be involved in the project, please contact Kinny Chinangwa or Alison Browning at Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk.

Somerset primary school admission figures announced for 2023

Nearly 99% of Somerset's youngest children were offered a primary school place at one of their top three choices, Somerset Council's latest school admission figures show. Overall, 98.94% of the 5,182 applicants were offered a place at one of their top three choices, with 94.54% receiving their first choice. Of the 5,182 primary school applications received this year:



1st preferences met – 94.54 % (4,899 offers)

2nd preferences met – 3.88% (201 offers)

3rd preferences met – 0.52% (27 offers)

Last year 5,296 applications for primary school places were received. Of those, 98.62% of applicants received one of their top three preferences, with 93.4% receiving their first primary school preference.

How a small Somerset town grew its care and volunteer workforce and brought in a cool £1m in unclaimed benefits

A small Somerset town has brought in more than £1.4m in unclaimed benefits and seen its community care workforce expand from just 3 to 35 since its homegrown care scheme was established in 2018. Wiveliscombe - or 'Wivey' as it's known to locals - is a small town in Somerset which responded to the crisis in care by creating a 'connector' scheme signposting people who need help to self-employed carers.

These carers are known as 'Micro-providers', help local residents with a range of activities, from personal care such as help with staying clean, ensuring meals are provided and medication is taken, as well as providing company and conversation.

Wivey Cares is the brainchild of David Patterson, a retired social worker who founded the scheme as a way of providing a very local solution to the crisis in care.

Mr Patterson said: "Wivey is a rural town, and the conventional model of care at home just doesn't work here for this reason. We believed that there must be people who lived locally who could meet the need for care, which would support the work of government agencies, reducing the cost of services provided and helping people live independently in their homes for longer.

"As a result, we now have more than 35 carers who can access meaningful self-employment, live locally, and offer really personalised support. To date we have managed and helped more than 300 people fill in forms and claim their Attendance Allowance. This is financial support the government offers which can help people with extra costs if they have a disability where they need someone to help look after them. At any one time we believe we are supporting between 120 and 140 clients to stay in their own homes, keeping them close to friends and family.

"This has resulted in nearly £1.4m of previously unclaimed benefits being received by Wivey residents, creating jobs, and stimulating our local economy."

People who are interested in setting up their own local care scheme can contact communityenterprise@somerset.gov.uk for more information.