



Somerset Liberal Democrats Chard South October 2025

Making a difference in our community: How We're Working to Prevent Suicide in Somerset

At Somerset Council we are dedicated to preventing suicide and supporting mental health through open conversations and community action. Here's a closer look at one of our key initiatives: The Orange Button Scheme and how it is working from the perspective of those volunteers involved. Recently, Somerset Council conducted a survey among Orange Button Holders to evaluate the impact of this scheme.

What is the Orange Button Scheme? The Orange Button is a visible symbol—a badge—that signifies the wearer has received training and is a safe person to approach about suicide. Its purpose is to create a supportive environment by making conversations about mental health and suicide more natural in everyday settings—be it at work, in schools, or within the wider community. *Why do we need this?* The urgency of mental health support has never been greater. Suicide rates in England and Wales are at their highest since 1999, with reports of self-harm quadrupling since 2000. Somerset, unfortunately, has higher-than-average suicide rates, highlighting the necessity for proactive community-based initiatives like the Orange Button Scheme.

How is it working so far? Many Orange Button holders reported that wearing the orange badge encouraged small but powerful actions. They influenced friends and colleagues to undertake training, initiated awareness chats without any crisis happening at the time, and created a culture of openness.



Encouraging Volunteer Groups to Pursue Prestigious

Encouraging Volunteer Groups to Pursue Prestigious Recognition

Charities and volunteer groups in Somerset are encouraged to apply for the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), the highest national recognition for voluntary groups. The application period is open until December 1st. The award celebrates outstanding volunteer efforts benefiting local communities across a wide range of causes, from health and social care to arts and the environment. In the last round, 11 groups from Somerset were nominated, highlighting the county's vibrant and often unseen volunteer sector. Applications can be made through a simple process detailed on the [KAV website](#). The award helps raise awareness and provides valuable recognition for groups making a difference in Somerset.



Somerset Council commits to increasing social housing to support and strengthen local communities.

Somerset Council will use an underspend of £3.3m in its Housing Revenue Account to buy additional council housing. This aims to provide short-term emergency accommodation and help reduce long waiting lists for social housing. Around 15 properties are expected to be purchased, with locations chosen based on demand. The move supports both immediate needs and longer-term housing sustainability, ensuring better quality and control compared to temporary placements like B&Bs.



Somerset Council has launched a bold 20-year plan to boost the county's economy, focusing on fair, green growth and low-carbon industries.

The Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045 aims to make Somerset a leader in energy, aerospace, manufacturing, and digital sectors. Key goals include increasing skills and productivity, lifting 10,000 people out of economic inactivity, transforming deprived communities, and achieving net-zero emissions. The strategy builds on £4 billion investment in the Gravity Enterprise Zone and the £5.3 billion spending from Hinkley Point C, with plans to develop tidal energy and enhance innovation.



Somerset has an economy of around £14.1 billion and can already count strengths such as: £4 billion of investment in Gravity Enterprise Zone; £5.3 billion of local spending from construction of Hinkley Point C nuclear power station that will provide clean energy to 6 million homes; 80% of working age residents economically active; and Good connectivity with the M5 and A303, rail links and proximity to Exeter and Bristol airports. The Strategy seeks to build on this foundation and to go much further, with goals, by 2045, to: Significantly increase higher-level skills, earnings and productivity; Lift 10,000 people out of economic inactivity; Transform deprived communities; support achievement of carbon neutrality and net zero targets. Read our [Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045](#)

Ham Hill and Chard Reservoir Win Green Flag Awards

Somerset's Ham Hill and Chard Reservoir have received prestigious Green Flag Awards, recognizing their excellent management and community value. Ham Hill has achieved it for the 20th consecutive year and earned the Green Heritage Site Accreditation for its historic features. The awards highlight the dedication of staff and volunteers in maintaining these vital green spaces, supporting community well-being and wildlife.



Keeping in Contact

**COME AND TALK WITH US
AT A LIB DEM SURGERY**

FIRST SATURDAY IN THE MONTH

With your Town and Unitary Councillors

AT THE GUILDHALL, CHARD



10am to 12pm

You can meet with me to discuss any concerns or for help dropping into our monthly surgery or I can arrange an appointment on a day and time that suits you feel free to give me a call on 07736 310805 or email

Jason.baker@somerset.gov.uk