



Somerset Liberal Democrats
Chard South
October 2026

Fairer, more consistent parking across Somerset



Somerset Council's Executive will consider revised proposals for parking charges across the county's 120 council-run chargeable car parks at its meeting on 7 October. The Council inherited a patchwork of different rates from the councils that merged in 2023, and the system has not been reviewed since.

The proposals have been shaped by listening to residents, businesses and local councillors. Following the issues raised at scrutiny and by communities, the approach has been revised so that increases are phased where current charges are especially low, giving towns time to adjust. There will be no decisions on the 42 currently free car parks, on-street parking, permits or concessions without first engaging with communities, local councillors, businesses and other stakeholders.

Making it fair: if approved, existing charges, frozen since August 2025, would rise by 10% from January 2027, with a new county-wide tier-based system from autumn 2027. Town-centre residents' parking schemes would be extended to seven days before any seven-day off-street charging is introduced, and a new framework would let city, town and parish councils support local parking objectives.

Investing in our car parks: up to £350,000 from the Parking Reserve to replace outdated payment machines, up to £150,000 to redesign bays at Taunton's Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park for larger vehicles, including electric vehicles, and a six-month trial of seven-day operation at Taunton Park and Ride.

Cllr Liz Leyshon, Lead Member for Finance, Procurement and Performance, said: "As a new unitary council, we inherited a patchwork system for parking charges which is fundamentally unfair. We have a duty to address this, and these proposals are about creating a clearer and more consistent system, while recognising that every town and community is different. We have listened to the issues raised at scrutiny and by the community and have revised the approach so that increases are phased where current charges are especially low."

£50 million flood resilience programme agreed, with first funding reaching communities before winter



On Wednesday 23 September, the Council's Executive approved how the £50 million allocated to Somerset by Defra in June will be allocated. The programme covers 15 projects, including extra river desilting, more gully clearance, improved pumping, better maintenance, new infrastructure, and an expansion of the My Community flood planning and prevention programme.

More than £650,000 will reach communities before winter: an extra £100,000 for Somerset Prepared small grants for emergency equipment such as radios, aerials, tools and PPE, plus first aid training; £50,000 for the Council's emergency response teams, for communications kits and power packs to check on stranded households and run Community Information Points, building on lessons from Storm Chandra in January; and an extra £500,000 for more frequent gully clearing in flood-prone areas.

Through My Community, the Council is working with parish clerks and flood wardens in affected villages and towns to identify local solutions, with initial work beginning by spring 2027. A new Programme Advisory Group of partners, Executive members and stakeholders will oversee delivery.

October is **Somerset Flood Awareness Month**, led by the Somerset Rivers Authority, with displays and drop-ins at libraries and half-term workshops..

Somerset Lord-Lieutenant Cadets appointed



4 of the county's best military cadets have been appointed as Lord-Lieutenant cadets in Somerset. The award goes to those cadets who have excelled in the role and shown remarkable leadership. In their new role they will assist **Mohammed Saddiq**, the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, at official engagements throughout the year, serving as ambassadors for the cadet forces. Mr Saddiq said, These are all extraordinary young people, deserving of this honour and I am really looking forward to working with them. They have been given this award because of their exemplary commitment. It's a real pleasure to recognise their achievements.

The newly appointed Lord-Lieutenant cadets are: Cadet Flight Sergeant Ewan Glossop (17) from Bath, Cadet Sergeant Thomas Greaves (16) from Castle Cary, Cadet Sergeant James Hargreaves (17) from Tiverton, Cadet Lance Corporal Simon Simukaitis (15) from Yeovil

M5 closures from 5 October for Agratas power connection



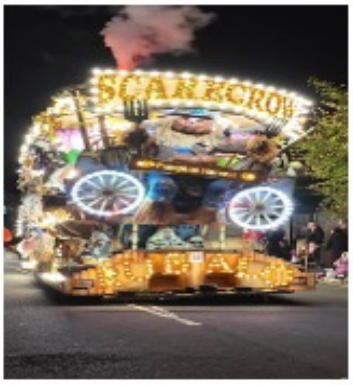
A vital cable link that will power Somerset's flagship new battery manufacturing facility near Bridgwater is being installed this autumn.

The Agratas facility, which is set to create thousands of jobs and generate £700 million in economic value for the region each year, is re-industrialising a 308-acre brownfield site in the heart of Somerset.

The multi-billion pound battery manufacturing facility is the centrepiece of the Gravity Enterprise Zone and construction of the 525-metre-long Building One is well underway. Now project leaders need to install a vital high-powered electricity connection linking the Gravity site with the national power grid.

The cables need to cross the M5 between junctions 23 (Dunball) and 24 (Huntworth), and motorists are being advised of a short period of roadworks taking place in October. Agratas has listened to advice from local partners and the work has been carefully timed to avoid the school half-term break and the Guy Fawkes carnival season.

Somerset Council Builds Top Team to Seize the Opportunities Ahead



Chard Carnival week started with the lighting of the beacon which was well attended and everyone that came enjoyed a hot chocolate whilst watching the Carnival Royalty light the beacon. Spot the wrong un and a fantastic shop window competition which took place all week. The fun fair was also in the town.

The main events took place on Saturday with the carnival team starting at 6am putting cones and traffic management signs out. The Children's Carnival set off at 12 and had some great entries which were enjoyed by a large crowd down through the town.

An estimated 15,000 spectators lined the streets of the town for the evening parade, with more than 80 entries taking part, the evening procession brought a spectacular display of illuminated carts, colourful costumes, music and entertainment to the town.

The event ran smoothly, thanks to months of preparation by the Carnival Committee and the dedication of the many volunteers, marshals, collectors and supporting organisations including Chard Town Council who helped make the evening possible.

Cllr Jason Baker Chairman would particularly like to thank all involved in Chard Carnival and their commitment to the event. Thanks also goes to the many local businesses and sponsors whose contributions help keep this much-loved community tradition alive.

We saw some amazing entries in the carnival with colourful costumes and amazing carts, Most importantly, I would like to thank everyone who took part and the thousands of spectators who came out to support the procession.

Chard Carnival remains one of the town's biggest community events, bringing people together and continuing a proud local tradition that showcases our town in a positive way

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 Liberal Democrats 10am to 12pm

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