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Working together for equalities



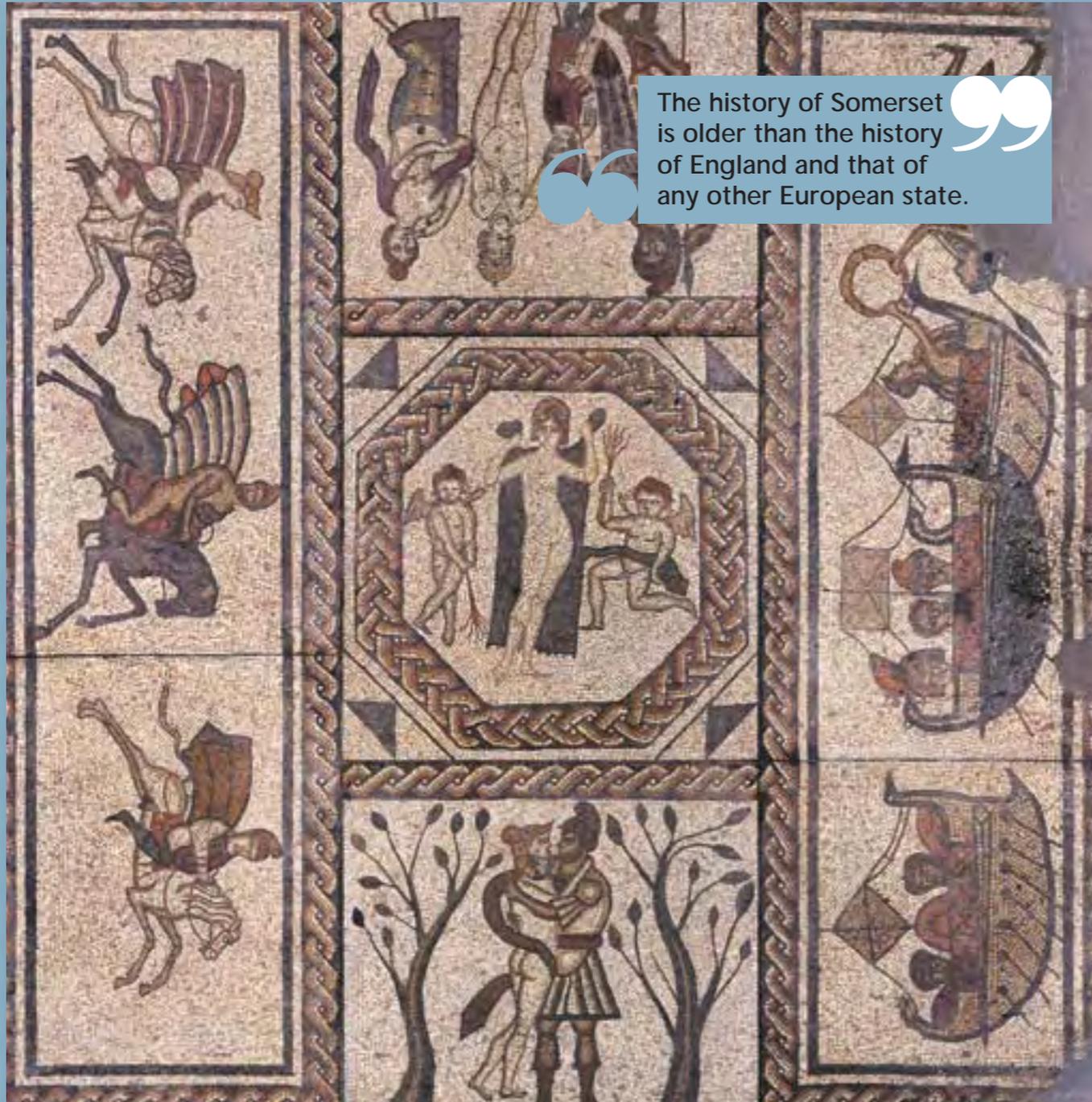
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“The history of Somerset is older than the history of England and that of any other European state.”



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Foreword

Somerset is very special. Local people have told us how much they value its history, landscape, market towns and villages. **This Strategy describes our vision for 2026 and the County our children will inherit. It sets out our aims for Somerset over the next 17 years and what we will do to achieve them. The fact that we start our journey in an economic downturn and face the uncertainties of climate change, will not affect our long term ambitions.**

All members of the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) have been involved in developing this Strategy and are committed to its delivery. You can find out more about the SSP later in this document (Chapter 7).

Our most important aspiration is to give everyone, of whatever age or background, the best opportunity possible to raise the quality of their life both economically and socially. We want to “narrow the gap” between different communities in Somerset in areas such as health, skills, education and general wellbeing, but at the same time seeking to keep those features such as our heritage and countryside that make Somerset such a unique place.

This Strategy has been shaped by the views of local people, local organisations and representatives from many public agencies. We will work with them all to deliver its vision, and to keep it up to date.



Lord Cameron of Dillington
Chairman, Somerset Strategic Partnership



Chapter 1: Purpose of the Strategy

This Sustainable Community Strategy sets out our long term vision for Somerset in 2026.

Our Vision brings together the views of local people and local organisations. It has six aims and you can find these in Chapters 3 and 4.

When we talk about the Strategy being sustainable, we mean many things including:

- Trying to meet the varied needs of people living and working in or visiting Somerset, as well as those of future residents and their children.
- Ensuring that economic prosperity is experienced by all within the community.
- Developing communities that work well together, whose members contribute to how the community responds to change. Ensuring everyone can take part in decisions that affect their lives.
- Improving people's health and mental wellbeing, reducing any inequalities.
- Reducing the impact we have on the world around us. Growth should not mean greater

dependence on carbon based fuels. Natural resources should be used with care; and waste minimised and recycled as much as possible.

- Encouraging homes to be energy efficient and affordable.
- Ensuring that we can reduce and/or adapt to the impact of climate change on the county in ways that are long lasting and do not damage the environment.
- Maintaining and improving the county's landscape and coastline and supporting its wild plants and animals.

Shaping the Strategy

The Somerset Strategic Partnership (see Chapter 7) produced this Strategy. It is based on the vision and priorities of the previous Community Strategy. Equality principles and meeting the needs of our diverse communities have influenced us in the way we have updated it. Strengthening communities to be more resilient to change and more self-sufficient is at the heart of what we have set out to do.

The Strategy will help us decide where and how we should work together for the benefit of Somerset. It guides us in deciding what actions to take and how best to use resources. We have listened to members of the public including young people; representatives from all levels of local government especially parish and town councils; local business people; local voluntary and community groups and public bodies such as NHS Somerset and the Hospital Trusts, the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, the Environment Agency and Somerset colleges.

Making it happen

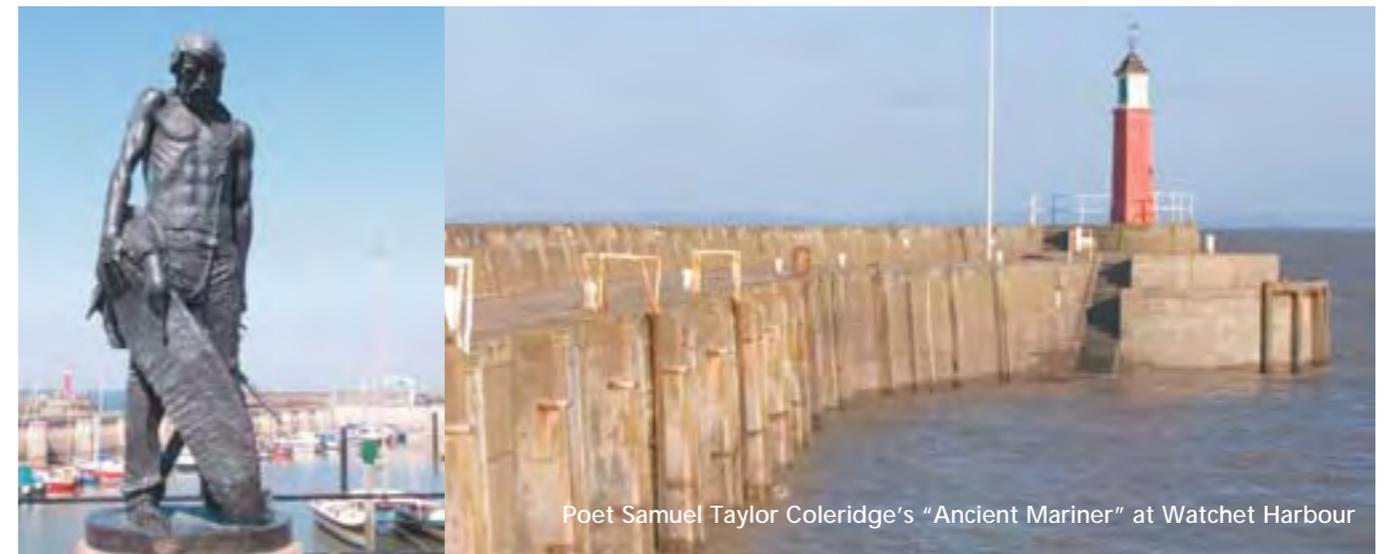
In Chapter 4 we identify the main challenges to achieving each of the aims and what we will do to make the aims happen. The challenges and actions are based on what service users have told us, published statistics and information from the organisations mentioned above. We have highlighted the things we will do first to meet the

most pressing needs. These have been agreed with the Government in the Somerset Local Area Agreement (see Chapter 5).

National and regional priorities and plans affect the county. These include improving the local economy, providing more homes, encouraging healthier lifestyles and reducing the carbon released into the air.

Working together

Our Vision for Somerset and what we are setting out to do is underpinned by the information in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment produced by NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council. The Strategy's ambitions will also be delivered through our strategies and plans such as the Community Cohesion Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan, the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy, the Local Transport Plan and the Somerset Housing Strategy, amongst others. More about these plans can be found on the Somerset Strategic Partnership website: www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk.



Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" at Watchet Harbour



Chapter 2: Somerset – The Place

Somerset is a special place, with a history that is older than that of England itself. Its landscapes are diverse and beautiful and include the rich farmlands in the south of the county, the Levels and moors of central Somerset, the Mendip Hills in the north and the Blackdowns, Quantocks and Exmoor further south and west.

The importance of many of these landscapes is recognised by special designations and conserving the county’s rich natural environment is a key concern for Somerset people.

The heritage of the county is rightly recognised as outstanding. It includes the major Iron Age sites at Ham Hill and South Cadbury (reputedly King Arthur’s Camelot), great houses such as Montacute and Dunster, church towers which are among the masterpieces of medieval art and over 11,500 listed buildings. Little wonder that Somerset is such a popular place for living and working and that it inspires such strong loyalties in so many people.

Somerset has ancient roots. Anglo-Saxon settlers gave it a name well over a thousand years ago and Alfred the Great, from a base at Athelney, defended his kingdom from invading armies in the late 9th century. Since that time the county has often played its part in national history, not least when Somerset’s people with characteristic independence of spirit, defied King James during the Monmouth Rebellion and suffered the terrible consequences.

Somerset’s market towns and villages share the county’s long history and are, as always, proudly individual. The county is made up of this patchwork of distinctive communities, which has fostered a strong sense of local leadership and resilience to meet challenges ahead.

Somerset’s long history continues to shape the county today as it faces the challenges of the 21st century and seeks new opportunities. It is now home to 528,800 people, 31% of whom live in market towns and larger villages. Many are from long-established Somerset families. Others have retired here or are among the small but increasing

number from European Union countries, Bangladesh, China, India and Africa.

The population grows significantly at holiday times and every year visitors stay 11 million nights in Somerset. In a county so long dependent on farming, there are other activities, such as tourism that are now more important to the local economy than agriculture, horticulture and forestry. There are also thousands of small businesses as well as

major players such as AgustaWestland, Clarks International, IBM and Aggregate Industries UK. As at so many times in its history, Somerset is at a turning-point of change and faces complex social, economic and environmental challenges. Cherishing our inheritance from the past and looking to the future, this strategy sets out a framework for meeting those challenges and for creating a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable Somerset for this generation and the next.



“The county covers 3,452 square kilometres or 1,333 square miles.”



Chapter 3: Our Vision for Somerset - Imagine Somerset in 2026

‘Our overall vision is of a dynamic, successful modern economy that supports, respects and develops Somerset’s distinctive communities and unique environment.’

The county for us represents a balanced, sustainable heritage – a legacy that makes Somerset a landscape for the future.

Local people want to preserve what they like best about Somerset:

- Its heritage, landscape and rich wildlife.
- The many different communities and groups that come together to make one county.
- The strong sense of leadership in those communities and in the many special interest groups.
- The desire to support one another through voluntary work and through contributions as active members of their community.

Somerset sits at the gateway to the South West, astride the main road and rail links. It is also in an enviable position at the centre of the larger South West Region. This **regional perspective** is recognised by the significant role that Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater play in the Regional Spatial Strategy as urban centres and a focus for cultural life in the South West.

Across Somerset there are communities and individuals who do not have the same quality of life, job prospects or life expectancy as others might. People living in rural communities can find it more difficult to gain the services they need. Endeavouring to **‘Narrow the gap’** has emerged as really important in the Strategy.

A forum of young people summed up their views on Somerset as a place to live in the words ‘Hard to go local, easy to go far’. The young people said that this rang true for the issues they discussed such as transport, their knowledge and ability to get to events, food and the environmental impact of the distance it travelled.

Wider consultation has shown that these views resonated with other people as well. The opposite of this is **‘Easy to be local, no need to go far’** which neatly brings together much of

what is common across all our aims for Somerset in so far as offering choice and ease of access and opportunity to all.



“The main towns are Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater. The rest of the population live in the market towns or rural areas.”

Imagine Somerset in 2026:

Aim 1: Making a positive contribution



People of all ages and walks of life are valued. They support others in their local communities and provide leadership on important issues. Communities are forward looking and determine what happens in their area. Organisations work well together in partnership and everyone is proud to live in Somerset and to promote its benefits to others.

Aim 2: Living sustainably



Everyone is aware of the impact of climate change on the county and of the importance of reducing and managing its effects. They use less energy and are proud of our local production. People walk and cycle more and take public and community transport whenever they can. Homes are of good quality, affordable and sustainable. Residents can reach jobs, shops, schools and medical care easily as new communities are planned in a way that reduces the need to travel. Transport, roads and new technology links are effective. Communities work well together, are forward looking and known for their self-reliance. Somerset's countryside is treasured and valued for what it adds to the quality of people's lives.

Aim 3: Ensuring economic wellbeing



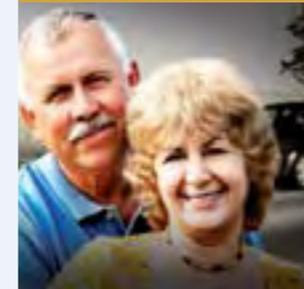
Somerset is a place with high value and secure jobs and people are confident that their children have good career prospects. Working people are well skilled and wish to improve what they can offer. Somerset has a national reputation for quality and innovation based on our excellence in a wide range of sectors. New enterprises that will benefit the local environment are encouraged and people choose to buy locally provided food, goods and services. New building development is well planned and makes the most of economic opportunity.

Aim 4: Enjoying and achieving



Somerset is a great place to live and to raise children. Everyone feels able to develop and improve their skills and life opportunities, free from poverty and discrimination. People have high aims for themselves and their families. They have confidence in the high quality of all learning opportunities available and can enjoy a broad and stimulating range of cultural activities that enhance their quality of life. People have choice and control over their lives, whatever their age, situation and background; and independent living is promoted and supported.

Aim 5: Staying safe



People of all ages feel safe in their homes and on the streets and roads of Somerset. There are strong and positive relationships between people of all ages and from different backgrounds. People take great care when driving and there are few road accidents. The number of crimes and offences committed in Somerset is low. Vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds feel secure and action is taken to protect them when it is needed.

Aim 6: Being healthy



People are healthy and everyone has the information and support to be able to make the best choices about their lifestyles. There is little difference between an individual's health and life expectancy from one community to another. There is a range of health services to meet differing needs, including those who find it difficult to connect with services. People requiring care or support have good information and help that is responsive to their needs and gives them greater choice, convenience and ownership.

Our “Big Ideas”

To help achieve our six aims over the longer term, there are some ambitious projects that will be embarked upon to make a real difference:



A ‘Green County’

- Creating innovative local solutions to environmental issues, with businesses at the forefront of this work. Meeting future energy needs locally, conserving our water supplies, reducing waste and carbon dioxide levels and improving transport arrangements to reduce car use.
- Conserving the county’s natural assets whilst making best use of them to meet our local needs: such as wind, water and solar power for energy, land for food production and our landscape as a ‘natural gym’ and a destination for tourists.
- Encouraging local communities to become more self-sufficient, sourcing food locally, using waste and other renewable resources to generate energy and fuel for local use. Linking into the ‘Transition Towns Initiative’.



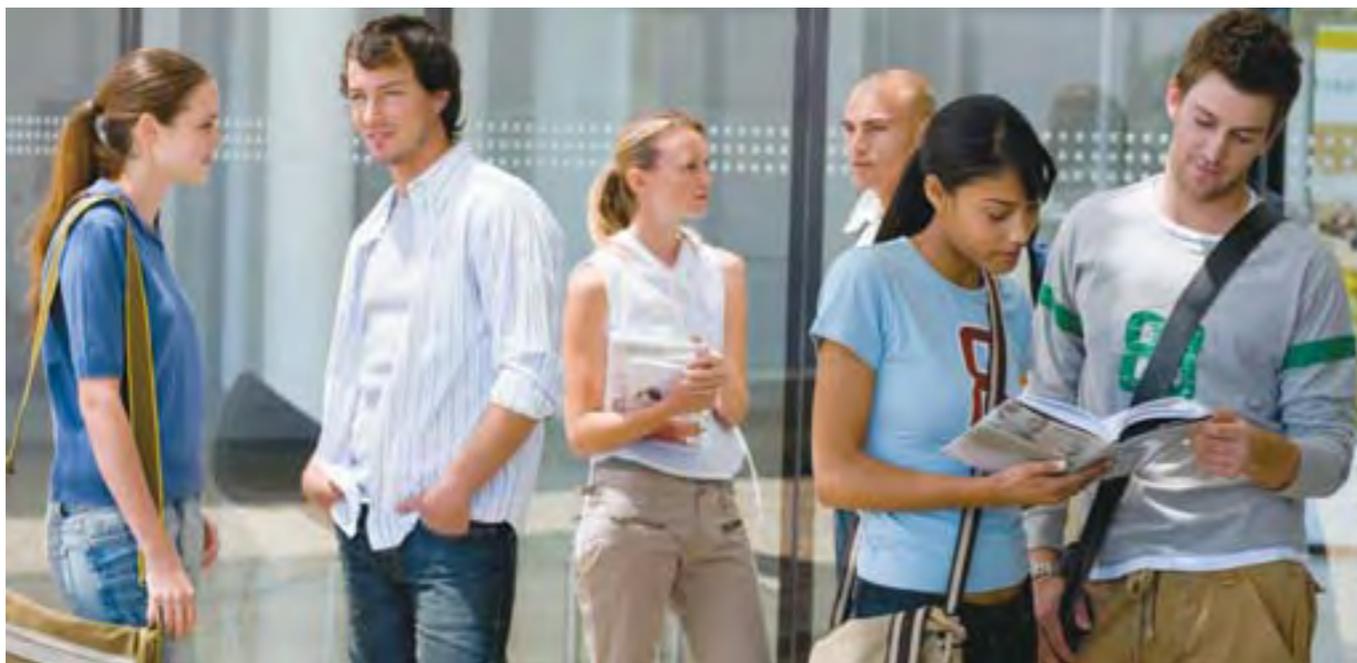
Enabling existing communities to flourish and building new and prosperous ones

- Joining up the plans for the predicted housing need and jobs. Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater have been identified in regional plans as the areas where the growth will be centred.
- Making Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater the ‘engine room’ for the county’s continuing economic prosperity. Working with market towns and rural areas to spread this prosperity and increase their sustainability.
- Ensuring that schools, roads, local shops and medical centres are in place. Also seeing growth as the opportunity to improve existing services and infrastructure to benefit everyone.
- New communities are as sustainable as possible and designed to minimise the need for travel.



Somerset as the heart of culture for the South West

- Somerset’s rich heritage and cultural life will help new communities become established and vibrant.
- Our economy, education, social care and health and wellbeing can all be improved through a better understanding of our local culture and the opportunities it provides.
- Somerset is the location of choice for creative industries and a centre of excellence in cultural activity.



Providing University Centres for Somerset

- Raising and meeting people's aspirations for themselves and their children, through encouraging the desire for better skills within the county, its schools and colleges.
- Providing a beacon for higher level learning and research across the county.
- Focussing on those things that are important to Somerset's economy, for example food and drink, tourism, the creative industries (media and new technologies), advanced engineering and environmental technology industries.
- Providing the choice for young people to be able stay in Somerset and those from elsewhere to make Somerset a place of study and their home.



Transforming communications

- Supporting, encouraging and promoting a wider range of transport options so that more people are able to use their cars less.
- Building on broadband connections to make best use of modern technologies as they become available.
- Making information easily available to everyone, allowing them to take control and make decisions about all aspects of their lives.



Encouraging better lifestyles

- Keeping skills within the community, seeing older people as a resource.
- Helping individuals manage their own health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging people to use the 'natural gym' of Somerset to foster improved health and sense of wellbeing.



Working well together

- Showing Somerset to be a good place to do business with an attractive environment, good schools, effective health services and access to major communication routes.
- Working across sector and organisational boundaries to achieve things that we cannot do on our own and to manage the changes we see on the horizon.
- Encouraging volunteering with its social and training benefits and widening the range of opportunities on offer.

Actions linked to these projects have the



symbol next to them.





Chapter 4: Our Aims Making a Positive Contribution

People of all ages and walks of life are valued. They support others in their local communities and provide leadership on important issues. Communities are forward looking and determine what happens in their area. Organisations work well together in partnership and everyone is proud to live in Somerset and to promote its benefits to others.

Challenge 1: Strengthen the leadership given by councils and partners through closer working together and engage local people and communities in decision making

Current measures of success:

- Increase the percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in the area in which they live.
- Increase the involvement of people in public activities in the local area.
- Increase the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

Key facts

- There are 331 parish and town councils in Somerset, 67 have worked with local people to produce a plan for their area.
- 270 residents have been elected to represent local people on the County and District Councils. Many more are parish and town councillors.
- Both the County and District Councils involve local people in decisions that affect them, but recognise that they could do more.

- Residents say that Somerset is a place where people from different backgrounds generally get on well together.

What we will do

- 1.1 Show strong and effective local leadership through working together and aligning our delivery plans.
- 1.2 Improve the way organisations work together and communicate with local people, helping individuals and groups to be included and to feel a valued part of their communities.
- 1.3 Involve individuals and communities more closely in shaping and taking decisions which affect them.

What will we do first?

- We will consult people on issues that affect them.
- We will help people wherever they live get on well together, irrespective of their age, gender or their background.



Volunteers improving one of Somerset's Rights of Way

Challenge 2: Widen and strengthen the involvement of local people in their communities

Current measures of success

- Increase the number of people who regularly work as volunteers.
- Increase the percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood.

Key facts

- Somerset benefits from a vast number of voluntary and community groups, which undertake a wide variety of work in local communities. Over 1,300 such organisations were formally identified in 2006. The number today is significantly greater.
- Over 12% of all adults in Somerset do more than two hours voluntary work each week.
- 31% of young people are already volunteers.
- National information suggests that 60% of young people would get involved if they felt their contribution was valued and led to things changing in their local area.
- There is also an increasing opportunity for people who have newly arrived in the county, particularly from the new and existing European Union countries, to volunteer and become involved in their local communities.

What we will do:

- 2.1 Improve the amount of individual and community volunteering in the county by promoting and offering a wider range of opportunities and experiences.
- 2.2 Encourage and promote participation in community life so that people come together to agree what is important to them locally and plan together for their area.



What will we do first?

- We will support community and voluntary groups so that they are able to fulfil their aspirations and local people's expectations of them.
- We will encourage community and voluntary groups to identify and realise the widest range of funding opportunities available to them.
- We will enable volunteers to benefit from staff development opportunities available through the 'Train to Gain' initiative and encourage apprenticeships within the third sector.



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SOMERSET IN 2026



As a result of climate change, the weather in Somerset is likely to change. The combination of higher rainfall and more and heavier storms will mean that coastal and low lying areas will be more liable to flooding.

Somerset Levels



Living Sustainably

Everyone is aware of the impact of climate change on the county and of the importance of reducing and managing its effects. They use less energy and are proud of our local production. People walk and cycle more and take public and community transport whenever they can. Homes are of good quality, affordable and sustainable. Residents can reach jobs, shops, schools and medical care easily as new communities are planned in a way that reduces the need to travel. Transport, roads and new technology links are effective. Communities work well together, are forward looking and known for their self-reliance. Somerset's countryside is treasured and valued for what it adds to the quality of people's lives.

Challenge 3: Prepare for and respond to the impact on Somerset of climate change

Current measures of success

- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions achieved by local authorities' operations.
- Reduce the amount of carbon dioxide produced per person in Somerset.



- Improve adaptation to climate change.
- Reduce the amount of waste per household that is not reused, recycled or composted.

Key facts

- In 2006, 4,110 kilotonnes of end user carbon dioxide emissions were released in Somerset – an increase of 1% on the previous year.
- Hinkley Point B Nuclear Power Station currently supplies electricity to the equivalent of one million homes. Within the lifetime of this strategy its replacement is likely to be commissioned and possibly a further station added to meet national demand.

SOMERSET RECYCLING RATE (%) COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE 2007-08



Source: WasteDataFlow

- Proposals in the Severn Estuary Tidal Power Project, to provide about 5% of the country's energy needs, will have an environmental, economic and social impact on the county.
- More than 50% of the waste produced in Somerset is recycled, reused or composted. The cost and effect on the landscape of burying what cannot be recycled is getting higher each year.



What we will do

- 3.1 Plan together to adapt services to meet the effects of climate change and, wherever possible, to lessen its impact.
- 3.2 Work together to ensure that future energy requirements are met, by managing our existing resources better and making use of renewable sources including waste.
- 3.3 Encourage less waste and promote its reuse, composting and recycling.

What will we do first?

- We will start to plan together to start to reduce the potential impact of climate change on the county.
- We will help people and businesses adapt the way they live and work to respond to climate change.



“76% of the county is classed as rural.”

Challenge 4: Increase people's quality of life through the use of Somerset's environment, nature and heritage

Current measures of success

- Improve the health of the natural environment in Somerset.

Key facts

- Somerset has very varied and rich wildlife. Many rare plants, butterflies and insects have been recorded in Somerset.
- Many species of plant and animal life will struggle to survive with the predicted changing temperatures and increased rainfall.
- There are many areas of outstanding natural beauty, national nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest on our doorstep to enjoy.
- We have coastal and landscape sites that awe and inspire: Cheddar Gorge, Exmoor's autumn colours, the views across the Severn from Brean and the Quantocks, as well as the views across the Levels from Glastonbury Tor.
- The county has several long distance footpaths – sections of the South West Coastal Path, Coleridge Way and Two Moors Path and the whole of the Parrett Way are within the county.

What we will do

- 4.1 Improve and maintain the quality of our natural landscape and heritage. We will ensure that we use these sustainably.
- 4.2 Manage the precarious balance between the needs of economic and housing growth and the impact it has on the quality of our natural environment and heritage.

What will we do first?

- We will preserve and foster the county's rich wildlife.



Challenge 5: Make Somerset a more affordable place for people to live

Current measures of success

- Increase the net additional homes provided.
- Increase the number of affordable homes delivered.
- Increase the supply of ready to develop housing sites.
- Reduce the percentage of non-decent social homes.
- Reduce the percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with low energy efficiency rating.

Key facts

- There are long term plans to build about 62,000 more homes in Somerset. This will provide houses to buy and to rent.
- In July 2008 the average house price was around seven times that of average earnings.
- In Somerset over 70% of adults own their own home and nearly 30% rent.
- Only 15% of adults with a learning disability have a secure long term tenancy or own their own home.
- 6.3% of Somerset's households, mostly in rural communities, are unable to heat their homes adequately.

What we will do

- 5.1 Increase the availability of and access to affordable and sustainable housing and accommodation.



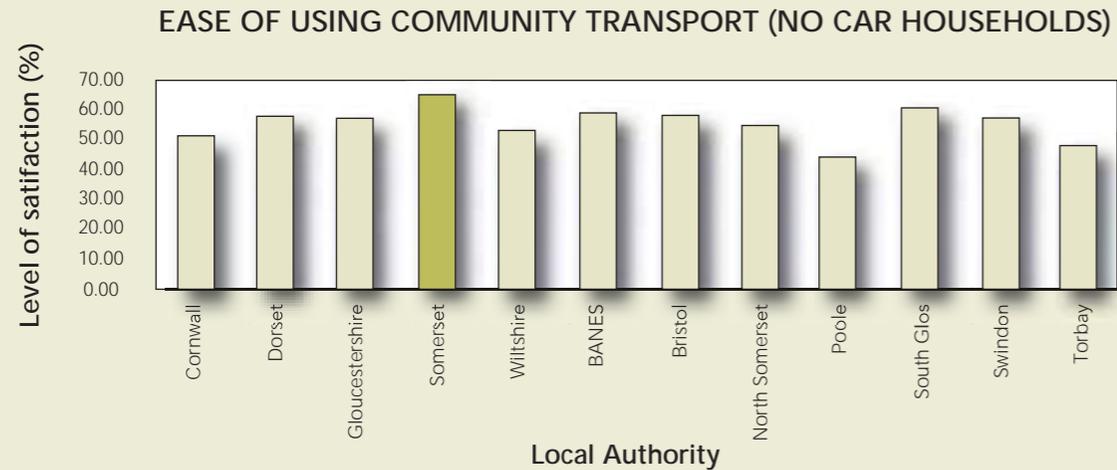
What will we do first?

- We will plan for there to be sufficient homes to meet predicted need.
- We will encourage homes to be offered for sale or rent at prices local people can afford.
- We will help people on income based benefits to live in more energy efficient homes.

Challenge 6: Encourage communities to be more self-sufficient and united

Current measures of success

- Improve the ease of reaching services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Increase the number of local bus passenger journeys originating in the local authority area.
- Increase the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local areas.



Source: National Highways & Transport Network Survey 2008

Key facts

- People living in over 85% of the communities in Somerset can make use of demand responsive schemes such as Dial-a-ride, Slinky or Nippy buses.
- The County Ticket travel pass scheme for post 16 year old students has allowed greater access to learning and transport freedom. Over 3,500 have been issued.
- Over eight million passengers travel by public transport each year.
- The internet allows people greater flexibility as they can increasingly access services from home. Somerset is the country's most connected county, more people (47% overall) have signed up to telephone based broadband than anywhere else.
- More than 100 organisations took part and an estimated 2500 – 3000 people attended the “One Somerset” event of whom more than 85% found it to be successful in providing information across the six equalities strands.



What we will do

- 6.1 Where possible provide services as close as possible to those who need them and provide access to services in ways which reduce the need to travel. Strengthen the links between rural towns and villages through improved access to public transport.
- 6.2 Create the conditions which will allow and encourage communities to become more self-sufficient and united.

What will we do first?

- We will encourage services, training and community learning opportunities to be conveniently located.
- We will plan wherever possible for people to be able to walk or cycle to good local facilities that have highway and transport connections.



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Local farmers' market



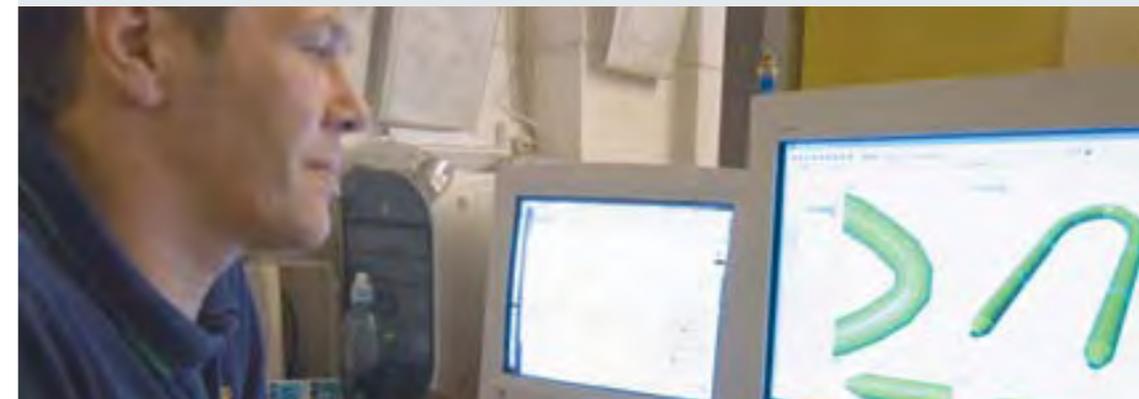
Ensuring Economic Wellbeing

Somerset is a place with high value and secure jobs and people are confident that their children have good career prospects. Working people are well skilled and wish to improve what they can offer. Somerset has a national reputation for quality and innovation, based on our excellence in a wide range of sectors. New enterprises that will benefit the local environment are encouraged and people choose to buy locally provided food, goods and services. New building development is well planned and makes the most of economic opportunity.

Challenge 7: Broaden and strengthen the local economy

Current measures of success

- Increase the overall employment rate.
- Increase the average earning of employees in the area.
- Increase the new business registration rate.



Key facts

- Manufacturing in Somerset is in decline. Growth areas are the creative industries (e.g. media and IT), tourism, food and drink industries, environmental technologies, aerospace and advanced engineering.
- Tourism plays an important part in the local economy. Each year there are 11 million overnight visits to the county and nine million day trips.
- Rates of business investment from outside the county are lower than elsewhere and slightly fewer new companies are created than nationally. The 'Into Somerset' company has been established to encourage business investment in the county.
- A significant number of people work in the public sector: health, local government and government agencies such as the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office.
- The voluntary and community sector employs more than 4,000 people and also attracts a large amount of funding into the county.
- Around 5,400 workers from the newer European Union countries applied successfully to work in Somerset between 2004 and 2007.

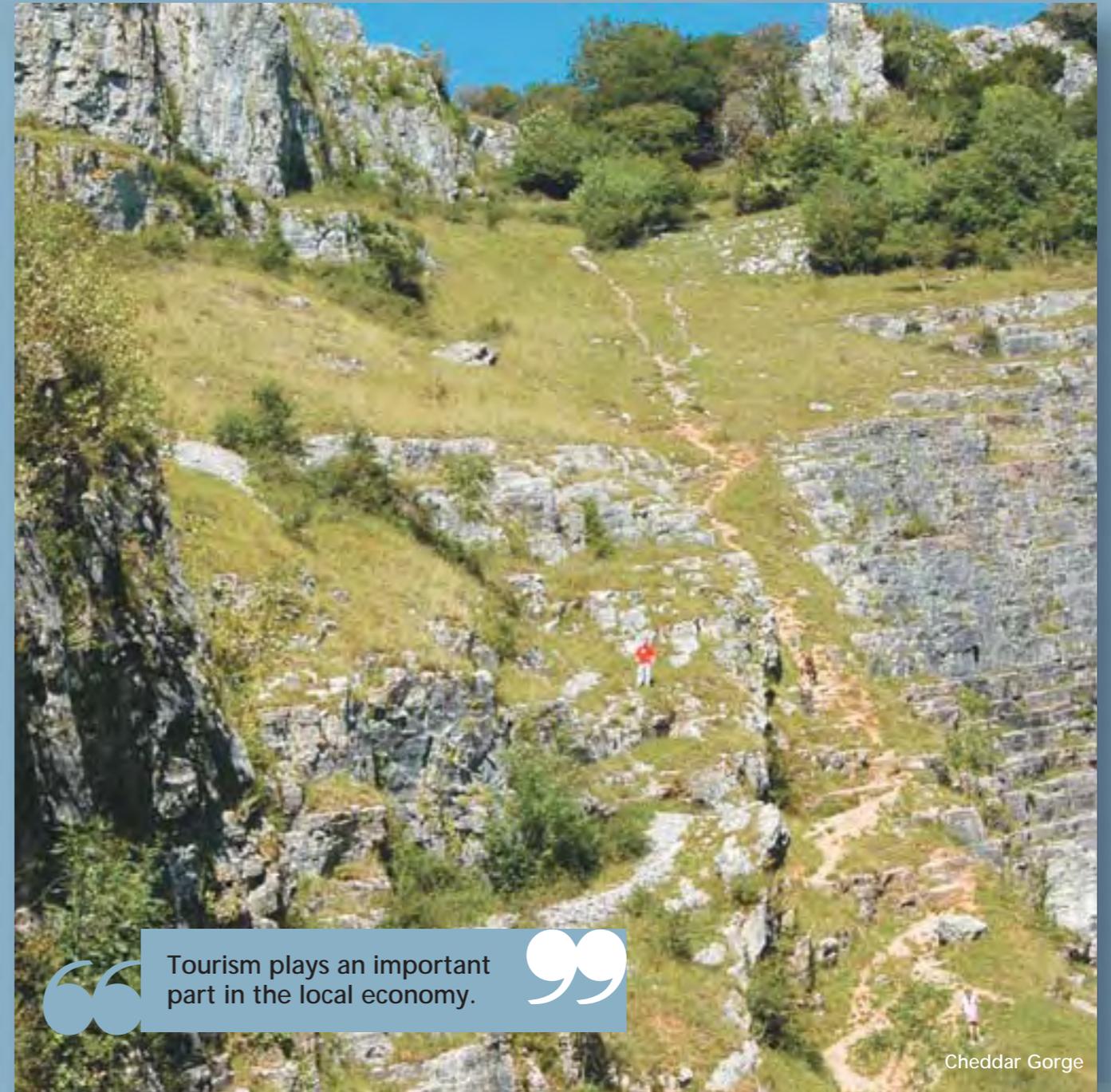
PERCENTAGE OF ENTIRE WORKFORCE EMPLOYED IN THREE KEY SECTORS



Source: NOMIS annual business inquiry 2007

What we will do

- 7.1 Attract business into Somerset from outside the county to deliver higher value added jobs.
- 7.2 Increase growth in creative industries and in jobs that require higher skills and professional knowledge.
- 7.3 Enable small businesses to achieve their full potential.



“Tourism plays an important part in the local economy.”

Cheddar Gorge

What will we do first?

- We will work together to assist the Somerset economy during the economic downturn.
- We will encourage businesses to be successful and to be competitive nationally and internationally.



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Challenge 8: Plan for new sustainable communities to be built in Somerset

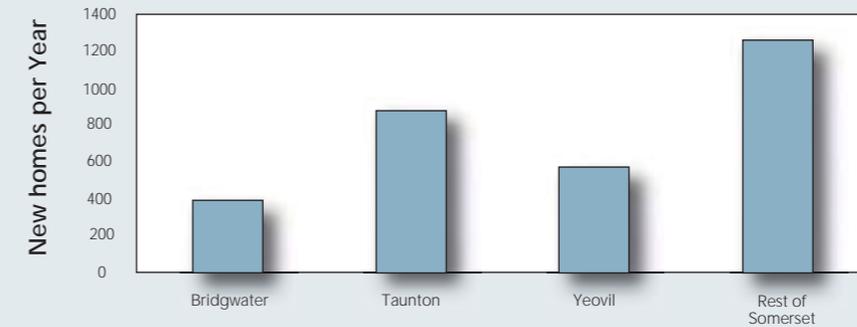
Current measures of success

- Increase the net additional homes provided.
- Increase the number of affordable homes provided.
- Ensure a steady supply of ready to develop housing sites.
- Increase the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation.

Key facts

- The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West sets out where 62,000 plus new homes will be built.
- 70% of new homes are for people already living in the local area. The rest are for people moving into the area.
- The majority of these homes will be built at Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater as this will make best use of the new schools, roads, employment sites and other facilities, but some of the market towns will also benefit.
- Project Taunton and the Yeovil Vision are key projects to rejuvenate the towns' central areas. Bridgwater Challenge is a vision for the town and its surrounding area.
- Major regeneration schemes across the county include Firepool (Taunton) and Moorlands (Glastonbury). West Somerset is part of the Northern Peninsula regional rural regeneration priority area.

NEW HOMES IN SOMERSET 2006-2026



Figures as set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. For greater sustainability, well over half of development will be allocated to Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil. The remainder will be allocated by District Councils to other towns and centres that have a good range of employment and services.



What we will do

- 8.1 Deliver a strong joined up approach for managing and balancing predicted growth in Somerset. Maximise opportunities for prosperity in Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater to spread into adjoining towns and rural areas, increasing their vitality.
- 8.2 Deliver the aspiration of 'building communities not just buildings'.

What will we do first?

- We will plan for there to be sufficient homes to meet predicted need.
- We will encourage homes to be offered for sale or rent at prices local people can afford.



“86% of businesses in Somerset employ ten or less members of staff.”

Challenge 9: Invest in the Somerset workforce

Current measures of success

- Increase the number of working age population qualified to at least level 2 or higher and those qualified to level 4 or higher.
- Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- Increase the number of young people completing the full apprenticeship framework.
- Increase numbers of care leavers in education, employment or training.

Key facts

- Somerset has high levels of employment, the percentage of working age people in employment was 4% higher than the national average between April 2007 and March 2008.
- Fewer young people in Somerset go on to full-time further education than in the rest of the South West. Sedgemoor and West Somerset being the most affected areas.
- Just over 4% of 16-19 year olds were not in education, employment or training between November 2007 and January 2008, which is much lower than the national average of over 7%.
- In Somerset, 2% of working age people claim incapacity benefit. Between 5% and 17% of people with a learning disability are in some form of work compared with 7% of disabled people and 74% of all adults of working age.

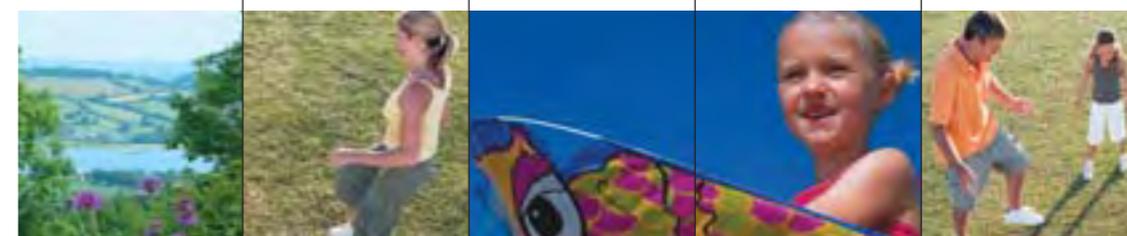


What we will do

- 9.1 Increase job opportunities for young people.
- 9.2 Support into work those who are likely to be unable to find it.
- 9.3 Achieve a better skilled, better paid workforce.

What will we do first?

- We will encourage services, training and community learning opportunities to be conveniently located.
- We will try to reduce the number of people who are unnecessarily excluded from paid employment.
- We will assist working people in Somerset to be more highly skilled, qualified and rewarded.



Enjoying and Achieving

Somerset is a great place to live and to raise children. Everyone feels able to develop and improve their skills and life opportunities, free from poverty and discrimination. People have high aims for themselves and their families. They have confidence in the high quality of all learning opportunities available and can enjoy a broad and stimulating range of cultural activities that enhance their quality of life. People have choice and control over their lives, whatever their age, situation and background; and independent living is promoted and supported.

Challenge 10: Raise achievement and fulfil aspirations

Current measures of success

- Increase achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2.
- Increase achievement of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent including Maths and English.
- Increase achievement of at least 78 points across Early Years Foundation Stage with at least six in each of the scales in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy.

Key facts

- Over 20,000 people take advantage of opportunities for people of all ages to develop employment and personal skills in the county.
- 2007/08 Academic Year has seen marked improvements within the Early Years Foundation Stage and performance is in line with the national average at Key Stage 2 in both English and Maths.

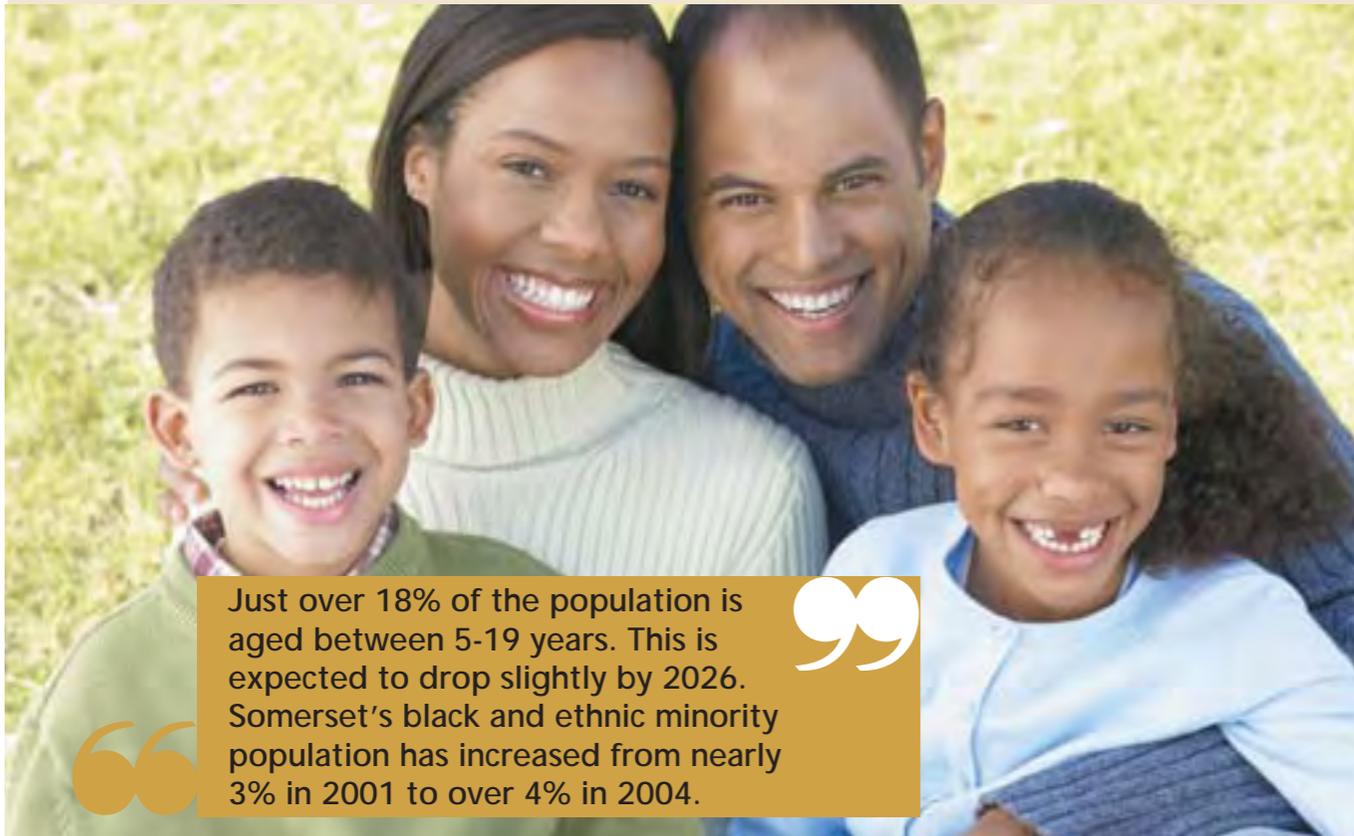
- It is noticeable that Somerset girls consistently perform better than boys across all key subjects.
- At the end of March 2008, 33 Children's Centres were designated, providing integrated health and family support for children aged 0-5 and their families.

What we will do

10.1 Support all members of the community to achieve, enjoy and invest in their own futures and in the future of their communities.

What will we do first?

- We will work with schools to meet Government standards for attainment and to raise standards across all key stages.
- We will encourage parents and carers to become more actively involved in their children's learning.



Just over 18% of the population is aged between 5-19 years. This is expected to drop slightly by 2026. Somerset's black and ethnic minority population has increased from nearly 3% in 2001 to over 4% in 2004.



Somerset has a rich cultural life and is home to the largest greenfield music and performing arts festival in the world.



Glastonbury Festival, Pilton

Challenge 11: Tackle disengagement from learning

Current measures of success

- Reduce secondary school persistent absence rate.
- Reduce the number of 16 - 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- Reduce the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System.
- Reduce the rate of permanent exclusions from school.

Key facts

- The attendance of all pupils at school has been steadily improving.
- The number of pupils excluded from school, for a fixed time or permanently, rose between the 2004/05 – 2006/07 academic years. However the number is now going down.
- Somerset County Council 'looks after' about 370 children at any one time. 75% of the children are with foster parents, whilst the majority of the remaining children live in one of nine residential units.
- In 2008, 15% of the children were in three or more placements in a year. The aim is to reduce these moves as much as possible because of the effect on the child.

What we will do

- 11.1 Support those who have disengaged or who are at risk of disengaging from learning.
- 11.2 Encourage young people to be involved in positive activities.

What will we do first?

- We will work to reduce the number of young people who have committed offences.
- We will encourage disengaged young people to join entry to employment and apprenticeship schemes.



Challenge 12: Promote lifelong learning and cultural opportunities

Current measures of success

- Increase the number of visits to public libraries, museums and galleries.
- Increase the number of people of all ages participating in the arts.
- Increase the number of people engaging in personal community development learning, who achieve a Level 1 qualification in literacy and / or achieve an entry Level 3 qualification in numeracy.

DISTRIBUTION BY LEVEL OF
ADULT LEARNERS (19+)
2007/08



Key facts

- Somerset has a high number of archaeological and heritage sites and a vibrant cultural life. These offer enormous potential for all aspects of leisure and learning. They also play a large part in the local economy through tourism.
- Over 20,000 people undertake courses each year, attending classes held across the county in schools, colleges and community learning centres.
- There are 34 libraries, one in every centre of population of 3,500 or more. 125,000 people, 25% of Somerset's population, use them and the mobile libraries regularly.
- District Councils provide leisure centres, and sports facilities that are used by a range of sporting clubs and groups, local families and individuals.
- The County Council runs 17 dual-use Leisure Centres and 20 adult learning / training centres across Somerset.



What we will do

12.1 Provide opportunities and facilities for people to participate in and enjoy all that the county has to offer in terms of its historic and cultural heritage, lifelong learning, sport and the environment.

What will we do first?

- We will support opportunities for leisure time learning and carrying out activities in the local community.
- We will redesign and build the Museum of Somerset.



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Challenge 13: Promote independent living

Current measures of success

- Increase the range of services available for disabled children.
- Increase the number of carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, advice or information.
- Increase the number of people over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently.
- Increase the percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.
- Reduce the Special Educational Needs gap – increasing the number of those achieving five A* to C GCSEs including English and Maths.

Key facts

- Most men can now expect to live into their late 70s, whilst women should reach their early 80s. However the chance of this being a healthy old age is not as great.
- There are 1,174 children and young people who have Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 99% of children with SEN have entered reception mainstream school since September 2007.
- We estimate about 55,000 people provide care for members of their families or others in Somerset.



What we will do

13.1 Personalise services in ways that enable Somerset residents to exercise greater choice and control, living independently for longer.

What will we do first?

- We will improve services for children with disabilities.
- We will ensure that people can get good affordable health and social care support.



Staying Safe

People of all ages feel safe in their homes and on the streets and roads of Somerset.

There are strong and positive relationships between people of all ages and from different backgrounds. People take great care when driving and there are few road accidents. The number of crimes and offences committed in Somerset is low. Vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds feel secure and action is taken to protect them when it is needed.

Challenge 14: Community Safety

Current measures of success

- Reduce the number of serious acquisitive crimes.
- Increase the perception of understanding of local concerns about antisocial behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police.
- Reduce the re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders.
- Increase the number of young offenders engaged in suitable education, employment or training.
- Reduce the number of alcohol-harm related incidents.
- Increase the number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment.
- Reduce the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17.

Key facts

- Somerset is a safe place to live and compares very favourably with other areas in the South West – it has the 6th lowest crime rate out of the South West authorities.
- Burglaries from people's homes had fallen considerably between 2002 and 2006 but the numbers are rising slightly again. There was a 62% reduction between 2002/03 and 2006/07 but 8.5% increase 2006/07 and year to date.
- Thefts from motor vehicles are increasing in parts of Somerset.
- Alcohol and its consumption in clubs and pubs is a major contributor to crime and anti-social behaviour levels.

What we will do

14.1 Address perception of crime. Promote the reality that Somerset is a safe place to live.

What will we do first?

- We will reduce the levels of drug-related crime, particularly by those who have offended previously.
- We will tackle the reasons for anti-social behaviour and reduce its occurrence.



“Somerset is a safe place to live.”



Challenge 15: Mutual respect and understanding

Current measures of success

- Increase the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.
- Increase the perception that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration.

Key facts

- Older people are still the main target of household distraction burglaries but they are generally less likely to be the victims of other crime than any other age group.
- Almost half of those aged over 75 are too afraid to leave their homes after dark because they believe they will be verbally abused or mugged.
- Racist offences remain low in Somerset and are not targeted to any particular members of the black and ethnic minority communities. In 2007, schools reported 102 incidents of racism.
- There is not enough data to support the verbal feedback from gay, lesbian and disabled people that they are victims of hate crime.

What we will do

- 15.1 Promote mutual respect and understanding between all members of the community.
15.2 Address the generation gap and increase opportunities for inter-generational activities.

What will we do first?

- We will help people wherever they live to get on well together, irrespective of their age, gender or background.



Challenge 16: Road safety

Current measures of success

- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents.

Key facts

- 301 people were seriously injured or killed on Somerset's roads in 2007.
- Children and young people (aged up to 24) represented 36% of those killed and injured on Somerset roads in 2005.
- The risk of serious and fatal road traffic collisions increases on the extensive network of Somerset's rural single carriageway 'A' roads.
- The Somerset Road Safety Partnership brings together all the main organisations who deal with road accidents and casualties: Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Somerset.

What we will do

- 16.1 Work to make Somerset's roads safer, promote safer road use and reduce road accidents.

What will we do first?

- We will work to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Somerset's roads.

Challenge 17: Domestic abuse

Current measures of success

- Reduce the repeat incidents of domestic violence.

Key facts

- Reports of domestic abuse are increasing due to greater confidence amongst victims that they will be listened to. However, people are still not reporting all incidents.
- Men are affected as well as women and abuse occurs between same sex couples.
- It has been estimated nationally that nearly half a million older people are being abused at any one time in the UK. They can be at risk from financial, emotional, sexual and physical abuse.

- A voluntary programme for men who abuse has been developed which aims to help them change their behaviour.
- Sexual offences and domestic abuse can be linked to alcohol consumption.

What we will do

17.1 Reduce levels of domestic abuse across all at risk groups.

What will we do first?

- We will reduce the number of people convicted of domestic abuse who re-offend.



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Wells Cathedral and Vicarage Close



Being Healthy

People are healthy and everyone has the information and support to be able to make the best choices about their lifestyles. There is little difference between an individual's health and life expectancy from one community to another. There is a range of health services to meet differing needs, including those who find it difficult to connect with services. People requiring care or support have good information and help that is responsive to their needs and gives them greater choice, convenience and ownership.

Challenge 18: Reduce health inequalities

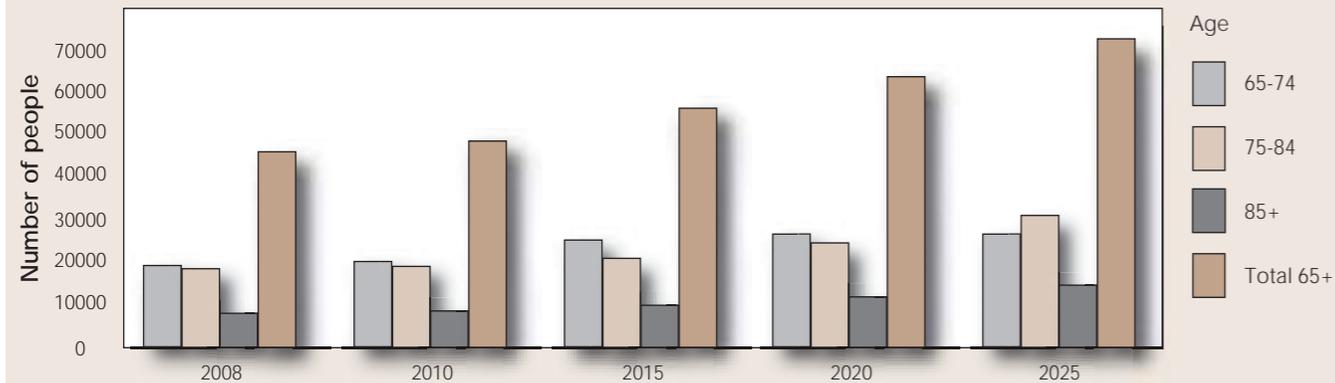
Current measures of success

- Increase healthy life expectancy at age 65.
- Reduce the under 18 conception rate.
- Increase people's overall health and wellbeing.
- Reduce the mortality rates from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75.



Key facts

- More residents enjoy good health compared with other parts of the UK but where people live and their income level has an impact on their life expectancy and health.
- With increased age there is increased likelihood of disability, long term illness or chronic disease.
- The under 18 conception rate in Somerset at 33 per 1,000 people is lower than the national average of 40.6 per 1,000 for the calendar year 2006, although there are some parts of Somerset which have significantly higher rates.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN SOMERSET WITH A LONG TERM, LIMITING ILLNESS (BY AGE GROUP)

Source: POPPI (Projecting Older People Population Information) System

What we will do

- 18.1 Increase support to those people with less control over their lives to live a healthier lifestyle.
- 18.2 Focus on the prevention and early detection of cardiovascular disease, particularly in areas of high health and social need.

What will we do first?

- We will encourage and support older people to help them enjoy good health and wellbeing in later life.
- We will reduce the frequency of hip fractures in people over the age of 75.
- We will further develop the early detection of cardiovascular disease.

Challenge 19: Tackle high risk health issues**Current measures of success**

- Reduce obesity among primary school age children in Year 6.
- Increase the number of people who have given up smoking for 52 weeks.
- Increase the number of children and adults regularly participating in physical activity.
- Increase the effectiveness of the children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS).
- Reduce the rate of hospital admissions per 100,000 for alcohol related harm.

Key facts

- In Somerset 35% of adults are overweight and 14% are obese.
- In 2006/07 9% of children in Reception Classes were obese and 15% of Year 6.
- Cigarette smoking is a key preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, lung disease and some cancers. It kills 900 people a year in Somerset.
- Sexually transmitted infections are continuing to rise in line with the rest of the UK, with specific concern for Chlamydia, particularly amongst young people. An estimated 10 – 13% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are infected with Chlamydia.
- In Somerset, 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 to 15, are estimated to have a diagnosable mental health disorder that would benefit from specialist mental health services.
- Approximately 12,000 people in Somerset aged 16 - 64 years could be dependent alcohol users. An estimated 15% of adults are regularly binge drinking.

What we will do

- 19.1 Increase the preventative and treatment opportunities to reduce obesity and overweight.
- 19.2 Support people to stop smoking, particularly pregnant women and manual workers.
- 19.3 Provide opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and services to support the prevention of alcohol misuse.
- 19.4 Reduce teenage pregnancy and improve the sexual health of people in Somerset.
- 19.5 Improve the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

What will we do first?

- We will encourage adults, children and families to take part in physical activity and sport.
- We will support people to develop the knowledge and skills to eat in a healthy and balanced way to reduce obesity.
- We will reduce the number of young women who become pregnant in their teens.
- We will inform people about issues to do with sexual health and support those who seek help.
- We will develop a community based CAMHS service that can respond flexibly to the needs of children, young people and their families.



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Chapter 5: What we will do first - the Somerset Local Area Agreement

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is the key delivery plan for the Strategy. It sets out the Government's and partners' priorities for Somerset and what we will tackle first.

We will measure our success using 32 indicators selected from a national list prepared by the Government. We have also selected 18 supporting or local indicators which cover areas we consider to be of local importance.

The Government has added 10 statutory education indicators to the list as well.

Further information about the LAA is available in 'The Somerset Local Area Agreement 2008 – 2011', a companion document to the strategy. This and other information is available on the SSP website:
www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk.





Chapter 6: Local Priorities

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for each district will have a sustainable community strategy for their area. These strategies have clear links to this Somerset-wide strategy and there is a strong correlation between their goals and aims and the over-arching Vision and aims expressed in this document.

Each of the LSPs has also set out what is distinctive in each of their areas and highlighted their top issues or priorities. Links to their websites are available from the SSP website:
www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk

Mendip District

- Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and the Cathedral City of Wells are the main towns in Mendip.
- The district includes part of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a small section of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Mendip also contains large sections of the Somerset Levels. It contains designated sites of environmental importance.

- Glastonbury Tor, Wells Cathedral and the Wookey Hole Caves are popular tourism sites. Clarks Village in Street is an important retail outlet. Lastly the internationally renowned Glastonbury Festival and the annual Royal Bath and West Show are held in the district, whilst carnivals are also a popular attraction.

Key issues:

- Ensuring affordable decent housing.
- Investing in children and young people.
- Regenerating the Mendip economy.
- Strengthening the voluntary and community sector.
- Tackling climate change locally.



Sedgemoor District

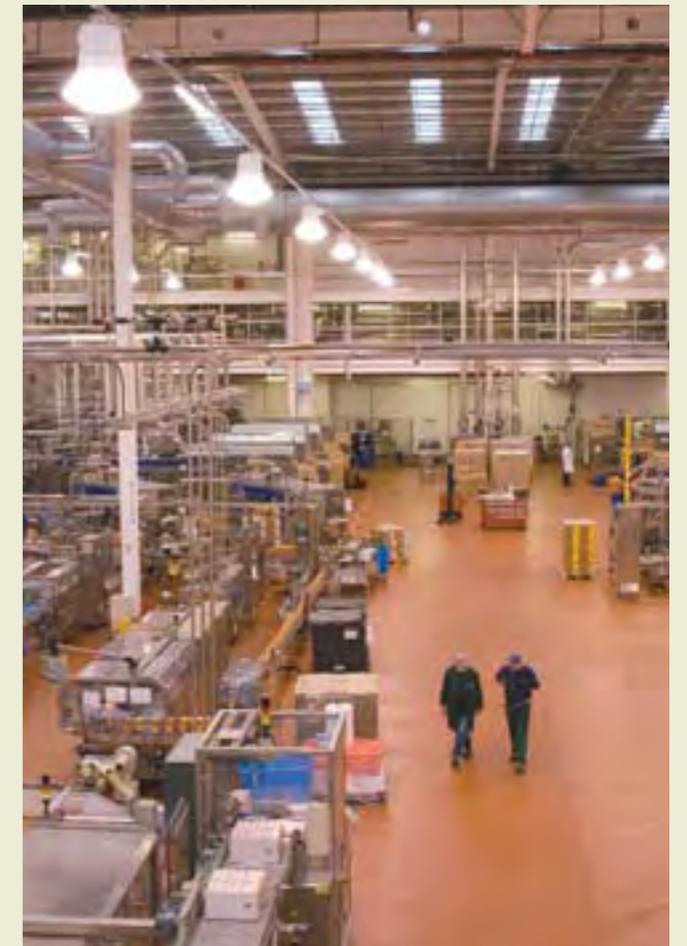
- The district is centred on the town of Bridgwater, which is identified as a 'significant settlement' in the region with planned employment and housing growth.
- The area has the unique wetlands forming the Somerset Levels. Cutting across the Levels and flowing out beyond Bridgwater is the historic and picturesque River Parrett and its tributaries. It has sites and wildlife that are nationally and internationally recognised.
- The area is famous for its carnivals held in late autumn. Its coast from Burnham on Sea to Brean is a tourist attraction. Tourism being important to the local economy.
- The district is a base for manufacturing and logistics, being a good location within the South West for distribution.
- Because of its low level, up to a third of the area is subject to periodic flooding that might increase with time.

Key issues:

- Making Bridgwater part of the 'engine room' for economic prosperity.
- Tackling the impact of climate change and barriers to regeneration.
- Restructuring the economy, attracting new businesses and jobs as the heart of a new enterprise area. This will include more industries that require higher skills and professional knowledge.
- Improving life in the local deprived neighbourhoods.
- Supporting economic development – particularly skills and attainment, through

providing University Centres for Somerset and the Building Schools for the Future project. Managing new investment in Sedgemoor from outside the area.

- Ensuring communities can take advantage of new jobs and training and can benefit from outside investment.
- Ensuring affordable new housing and decent existing housing.
- Services for the elderly in response to the ageing population.



South Somerset District

- South Somerset is the largest district in England, forming much of the eastern side of the county with nearly a third of the county's population - over 156,000 people in an area of over 370 square miles.
- A third live in Yeovil, a sub-regional centre serving the district and much of West Dorset. A third live in ten other attractive market towns with the rest living in rural areas. There are 121 parishes served by 102 parish and town councils.



- The district has a fascinating environmental, industrial and cultural heritage with over 80 conservation areas and parts of two AONBs.
- Despite high employment levels, wages and educational qualifications are lower than national averages; several wards in Yeovil and Chard are in the 20% most deprived areas of the country.
- The district's economy is based on high technology firms with RNAS Yeovilton and AgustaWestland being key employers. Food processing, tourism and hospitality businesses are also key sectors.
- Demand for homes has led to income ratio in South Somerset of 11.7 compared to 10.7 for England (2008). By 2029 it is predicted that over 90% of the increase in the district's population will be through people aged 60 years and over.

Key issues:

- Reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of everyone, reducing health inequalities in some areas and groups especially older people.
- Channelling growth to provide good quality affordable accommodation to meet need.
- Increasing prosperity through improving skills and job opportunities for a thriving low carbon economy.
- Improving access to low carbon transport and services.

Taunton Deane Borough

- Taunton and Wellington are the main towns.
- The landscape varies from the low pastures of the western edge of the Levels to the higher ground of the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills (both AONBs) with the River Tone snaking its way between them.

Key issues:

- Reducing rural isolation.
- Addressing low wage and low skill levels.
- Creating a shift in travel behaviour to limit the rate of growth of congestion.
- Building confidence in safer communities, reducing anti-social behaviour and creating a safer night time economy.
- Promoting and enabling healthy lifestyles.
- Addressing the shortage of affordable housing and reducing the number of non-decent homes.
- Tackling the impact of climate change.
- Improving the provision of leisure, arts and cultural opportunities.



West Somerset

- Two thirds of the area is covered by the Exmoor National Park with Dunkery Beacon, the highest point in Somerset, at its centre. The Quantocks AONB sits within the Eastern boundary of the district.
- There are many ancient and historic sites including Watchet, Kilve, Dunster Castle and the famous West Somerset Steam Railway running from Bishops Lydeard to Minehead. The district is famous for its connections with Samuel Taylor Coleridge who lived in Watchet and who is commemorated by the Coleridge Way.
- 30% of all employment in West Somerset is in tourism with Butlins in Minehead and many holiday caravan sites lining the Severn estuary coast to the north.
- Over 30% of the population is over 65 but life expectancy is high.

Key issues:

- Ensuring adequate affordable housing.
- Having regular and fast public transport to other major towns in the area for students, working people and major cultural events.
- Encouraging economic development that supports employment with decent pay and training.
- Reducing vandalism, bullying and other crime. Dealing with the fear of crime.
- Conserving the environment.





Chapter 7: Who will make it happen?

The Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) is committed to this vision and its delivery. We wish to achieve a better, more equal and 'greener' Somerset, one that meets the aspirations of local people. We are proud to put our names to the actions listed in this document.

We will regularly check on progress against the measures of success and hold each other to account for underperformance and for the quality of the information provided.

More details of our plans will be included in our Business Plan each year. Each year an Annual Report will publish our main achievements over the previous year and will include details of progress against every measure. If we make any changes to the Strategy or to our measures we will include them in the Annual Report. Copies will be available in all libraries, from all the partner organisations and on the website.

Our regular on line Newsletters will keep you in touch with the most important facts.

All documents will be on the SSP website: www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk.

Who are we?

There are over 20 organisations represented in the Partnership from across the public, business and community and voluntary sectors. See the website for more information.

The SSP Forum

All SSP members attend the Forum meetings which are held twice a year. They provide direction and accountability to the work of the Partnership.

The SSP Joint Board

This Board brings together elected and non elected leaders of accountable bodies to provide strategic direction, leadership and democratic accountability; to champion and provide commitment to change and improvement; and to promote a culture of partnership working.

The SSP Joint Implementation Team

This Team is made up of Senior Responsible Officers / Somerset Theme Leaders from key

delivery organisations and partnerships. They co-ordinate high level planning and delivery across themes, commission work to deliver agreed strategies and plans and manage progress. They have a clear focus on themes and outcomes and are driven by a collective will to collaborate and innovate to drive improvement.

The Sub-Groups:

- Economic Leaders Group
- Environment Leaders Group
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership
- Safer Communities Group
- Stronger Communities Group
- Somerset Children and Young People's Partnership

These groups have representatives from the organisations which deliver services within the specific areas of interest. Members are responsible for delivering the Strategy's aims and actions and for monitoring performance against the measures of success.

Cross-cutting Reference Groups

- Community Cohesion Forum
- Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset
- Cultural Forum
- Somerset Strategic Planning Conference

These groups support all the Sub-Groups and the aims, leading on issues of bringing people closer together, all aspects of culture and longer term planning for Somerset.



Culbone Church, Porlock Weir – said to be the smallest parish church in England