Councillor Reports November 2026

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Maria Vaughan and Tara Williams

PROW Report

to Parish Council for Abbas and Templecombe.

BACKGROUND

Landowners are obliged to keep the PROWs on their land accessible and unobstructed. The majority do so but there are a few who require 'reminding'. Not only is this important to allow access to the countryside but allowing vegetation to get overgrown also poses a risk to humans and dogs from *ticks* and *Lyme Disease*. Overgrown footpaths and unclear paths mean that people trample multiple routes across the fields/crops as there is no defined path to follow. The area

becomes very trampled as they do not always follow the same route across. There is also an increased risk to leverets and ground nesting birds, especially by dogs.
Abbas and Templecombe has **21** PROWs so the plan is to focus on clearing and maintaining these then start looking at where that footpath leads - Horsington, Yenston, Henstridge etc to keep it clear along its length. All are footpaths, apart from WN29/1, 3 & 11 which are bridleways. WN29/13, WN29/14, WN29/15 & WN29/23 are pavements within residential areas so do not require regular monitoring and maintenance.

The map shows all the footpaths and their reference numbers and these link to the report table. I am grading the footpaths to show those which are clear (green), becoming overgrown (orange) and very overgrown/requiring action (red).

STATUS for NOVEMBER;

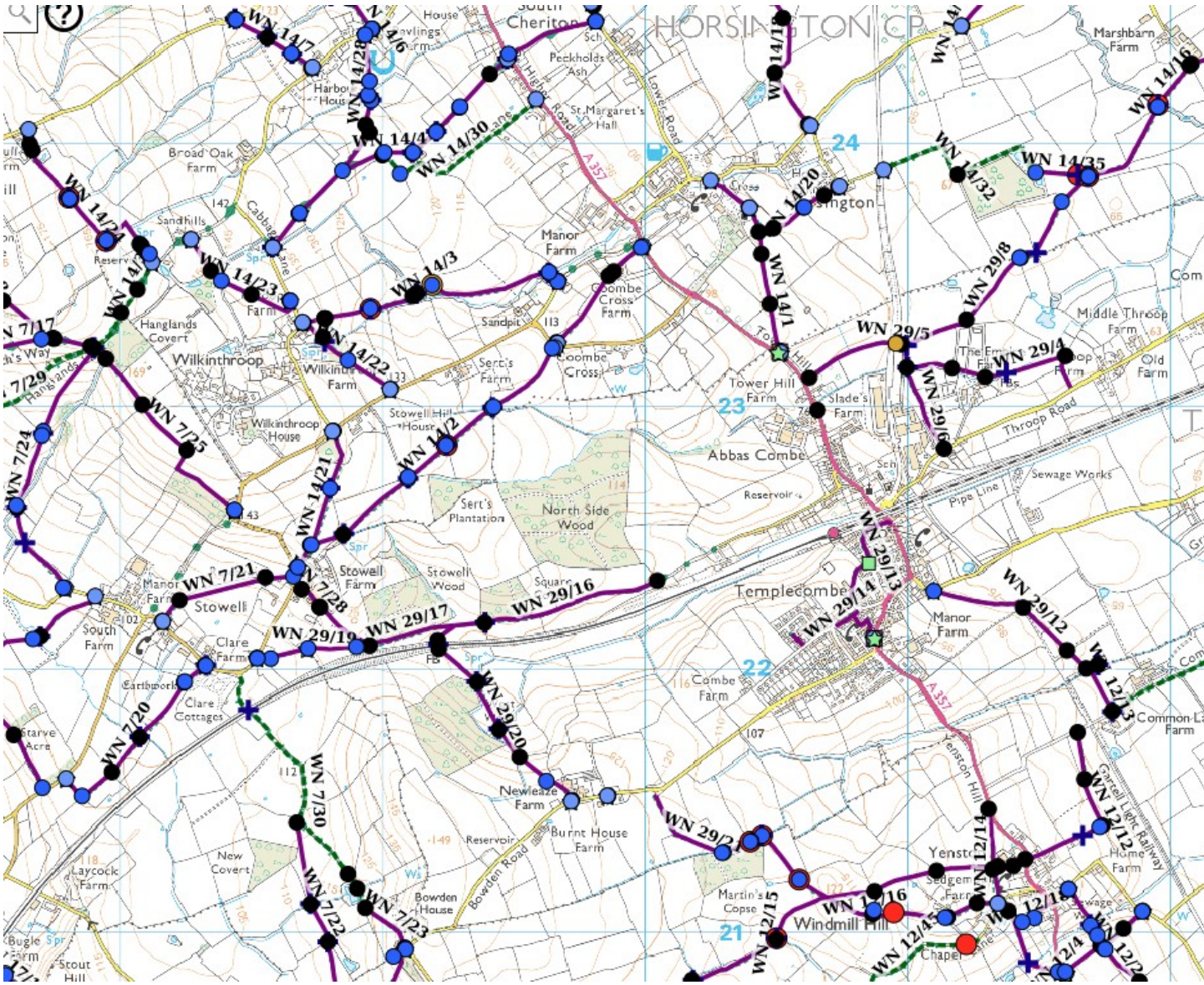
6 are YELLOW and do not require regular checking; tarmac paths within the village (WN29/13, WN29/14, WN29/15 & WN29/23) or farm hard track (WN29/17 & WN29/18)
2 are BLUE which means I need to check it - any updates on these will be given at the next meeting
11 are GREEN so they are passable and open
1 is AMBER meaning they are starting to become obstructed or have current (minor) issues
1 is RED so we will be concentrating on getting these ones cleared and accessible.

Issues resolved:

- As well as the slowing down of vegetation growth, significant clearance has taken place over a number of paths.

Current and next Actions:

- 11/09. TW has contacted Somerset PRoW (as a resident) regarding the regular issues with a particular landowner. Response received and copied to Parish Council.
- Parish Council to contact 2 landowners to remind them that they are obliged to keep public rights of way clear. Keep vegetation in check and do not plant crops over the footpath. Relates to; **WN29/04**, **WN29/06**, **WN29/08** and **WN29/19** (the actual issue is on WN7/27, the 2nd field)



Path Ref.	Location	Notes	Terrain	Potential issues	Current issue	F
WN29/5	Hiscocks Lane off Slades hill layby on Tower Hill towards Marshbarn Farm	Becomes 29/7	Starts as a farm vehicle track becoming grass and enclosed	Grass & nettle growth. Tree growth from sides		?
WN29/7	Continuation of 29/5 between the bridge and the first field	Becomes 29/8	Enclosed path	Overgrowth		?
WN29/8	Links with 14/35 and 14/16 (Horsington)	Was cleared but not sufficiently.	Grass track across fields. Issues arise at stile leading into vegetation	Vegetation growth	Enclosed path becoming obstructed by vegetation - Empire Farm	F
WN29/6	Off from 29/5 around the back of Thales	Ends on Throop Road	Narrow grass track	Grass & nettle growth	Overgrown; will soon close off	T

WN29/4	From 29/5 follows parallel to Throop Road, exiting at Throop Farm	Enclosed grass track with gates and FBs	Grass	Grass & nettle growth. First gate hard to open - latch in vegetation		
WN29/16	From end of Lily Lane towards Stowell Farm, becoming WN29/17		Edge of field - rutted	Growth of grass	Overgrown but can use field edge	
WN29/17	Continuation of WN29/16	Splits into 29/18 and 29/19	Distinct farm track leading to farm entrance/exit 7/28	None	None	
WN29/18	Continuation of WN29/17, becoming WN7/28					
WN29/19	Continuation of WN29/17, **becoming WN7/27**	Joins road near Glebe Farm, Stowell	Across arable field	No path left in 2025, planted & not reinstated again in 2026	FP planted over again & no path around the edge either.	
WN29/20	Turning off from 29/16	Over railway bridge towards Newleaze Farm	Across cow fields	Long grass	None. Grass is being grazed and is cut	
WN29/21	From 29/20 via Bowden Road	Runs around the edge of fields and then alongside Martin's Copse	Edge of arable fields		Fallen branch at chest/head height.	
Path Ref.	**Location**	**Notes**	**Terrain**	**Potential issues**	**Current issue**	
WN29/13 WN29/14 WN29/15 WN29/23	In residential areas		Tarmac pavement	Unlikely		
WN29/12	From Yew Tree. Joins 29/13 (Yenston)	Towards Common Lane Farm.	Across cow fields	Long grass and electric fences	None	
WN29/1	Bridleways	End of Throop Road at Vale Farm. Crosses railway to Abbey Ford Bridge	Path crosses field in long grass, not defined to gate crossing railway line	Overgrowth of grass	Clear. Grass has been cut; clear access to railway crossing	
WN29/3		Joins WN14/29 (Horsington?)	Path crosses field in long grass, not defined	Overgrowth of grass	Grass is currently long but may be cut soon	
WN29/2	From end of Throop Road	Crosses railway to Temple Lane/Gigg Lane	Round edge of field to boardwalk	Overgrowth of vegetation	None	

Path Ref.	Location	Notes	Terrain	Potential issues	Current issue	
WN29/10	From Temple Lane at Moormill Bridge	Towards Higher Nyland (**DORSET)**	Across grass field, no direction	Long grass	No crossing point at stream	
WN29/11	Bridleway joining 12/8 and then 12/43 Common Lane	Joins WN12/8 towards Common Lane	Edge of field to gate		None	?

No PRoWs with number WN29/9 or WN29/22

Stephen Hood

October Community Lunch.

Diners enjoyed a baked potato filled with sausages or baked beans or cheese followed by desserts, tea and coffee.

Thanks again to the wonderful volunteers who helped prepare the sausages, cook the potatoes, make desserts, serve tea and coffee. Also to those who help to set up the Hall, serve the food, wash the pots and ensure that the Hall and kitchen are left clean and tidy.

Men who like to talk.

Six residents attended the group including one recently bereavement. His daughter had seen the notice and persuaded him to attend. He said that it was good to talk with other men about his current situation.

Christmas Day Lunch.

Posters have been prepared for the Village Christmas Day Lunch and will be placed around the village and on social media this week.

Sarah Webb

Planning Report

– Significant Updates Planning Report November 2026

Please be aware if you wish to view or comment on planning applications there have been a number of occasions when the Somerset Planning Portal does not appear to be available and a complaint has been made. The following message has now appeared:

PLEASE NOTE We are currently experiencing intermittent issues with the South webpage but are working on getting them resolved. If you encounter any issues, please contact planningsouth@somerset.gov.uk to enable our ICT Team to restore the service as a matter of priority. Thank you for your patience and apologies for any inconvenience caused.

New

None

Approved

None

Pending – Significant Update

Reserved Matters approval for the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale in respect of 140 no. dwellings in accordance with Conditions 1 and 2 of the Outline Planning Permission 22/03560/OUT
Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset
Ref. No: 25/02759/REM Received: Fri 14 Nov 2025 Validated: Mon 19 Jan 2026 Status: Awaiting decision
The Parish Council has made a submission objecting to the application in a number of areas.
The Parish Council has requested that this application be referred to Somerset Council's planning committee – This request has been further supported by Councillor Hayward Burt.
October 2026 A number of additional documents have been uploaded to reflect the revised site layout including individual plans at plot level
Consultee response Affordable Housing: 49 homes being proposed will be affordable housing units. The overall affordable housing provision meets the required 35% affordable housing within the S106 Planning Agreement and therefore the application is supported.
Consultee response from Landscape and Placemaking – No objections subject to conditions
Consultee The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has reviewed the submitted details for application and indicated concerns regarding the attenuation basin volume availability, runoff control features, confirmation of flood levels, Basin depths and comprehensive engineering details, management and maintenance details, and a management scheme within the CEMP.

Pending Relating to Bowden Road

Discharge of Condition No 15 (Natural England License) of planning application 22/03560/OUT Open for comment icon
Land OS 6975 Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ref. No: 26/02366/DOC1: Received: Tue 06 Oct 2026: Validated: Tue 06 Oct 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No. 37 (Utility Compounds) of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT Open for comment icon
Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ref. No: 26/02309/DOC1: Received: Tue 29 Sep 2026: Validated: Tue 29 Sep 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No.26 (Biodiversity Enhancement Plan) of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT
Land OS 6975 Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ref. No: 26/02240/DOC1: Received: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Validated: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No. 24 (Surface Water Drainage Plan) of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT Open for comment icon
Land OS 6975 Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ref. No: 26/02239/DOC1: Received: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Validated: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No. 19 (Timing of Works due to nesting birds) of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT
Land OS 6975 Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ref. No: 26/02238/DOC: Received: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Validated: Tue 22 Sep 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

26/02111/DOC1|Discharge of Conditions No's 11 (Surface Water Drainage Details) 20 (Highway Infrastructure Details) of planning permission 22/03560/OUT|Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset Received: Monday 7 Sept 2026

Discharge of Conditions No's 13 (CEMP) ,16 (CEMP Biodiversity) ,17 (LEMP) of planning application 22/03560/OUT Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset
Ref. No: 26/02112/DOC1 Received: Mon 07 Sep 2026 Validated: Mon 07 Sep 2026 Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No. 18 (Lighting Strategy for Biodiversity) of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT Open for comment icon
Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset
Ref. No: 26/02069/DOC1 Received: Wed 02 Sep 2026 Validated: Wed 02 Sep 2026 Status: Awaiting decision

Discharge of Condition No 10 (a) Tree and Hedge Protection of Planning Application 22/03560/OUT Open for comment icon
Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset
Ref. No: 26/02068/DOC1 Received: Wed 02 Sep 2026 Validated: Wed 02 Sep 2026 Status: Awaiting decision

Erection of Oak framed Garage with first floor home office and storage Open for comment icon
Hope Farm Combe Hill Templecombe Somerset BA8 0LL
Ref. No: 26/01875/HOU: Received: Tue 11 Aug 2026: Validated: Thu 20 Aug 2026: Status: Awaiting decision

Erection of porch Open for comment icon
37 West Street Templecombe Somerset BA8 0LG
Ref. No: 26/01738/HOU: Received: Mon 27 Jul 2026: Validated: Mon 27 Jul 2026:Status: Awaiting decision

S73A Application to vary Condition 01 (approved plans) for minor amendments relating to planning permission 21/00046/REM; Reserved matters application of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale, following outline approval (18/02739/OUT) for residential development comprising up to 70 dwellings and associated open space, landscaping works and area for school expansion, together with new access and drainage infrastructure Open for comment icon
Land at Slades Hill Templecombe Somerset BA8 0HE
Ref. No: 26/00427/S73A Received: Mon 23 Feb 2026 Validated: Mon 16 Mar 2026 Status: Awaiting decision

S73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act') – 'Determination of applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached'

• Installation of wooden fencing around attenuation pond;
• Amendment to LEAP location;
• Removal of attenuation pond vehicle access;
• Removal of block paving for tarmac;
• Removal of permeable paving and swales; and
• Relocation of bird and bat boxes.

Remediation Works 4.7. Following discussions with Officers, the Applicant has agreed to undertake the following remediation works to the scheme. It is not envisaged these works would warrant the need of a planning condition. • Officers have noted that the surface which the LEAP has been built upon, as well as the POS near Blackmore Vale Close, contains rubble and stones which may pose a risk to its users. The Applicant has agreed to clear any rubble before the use of the LEAP. • The Applicant has contacted all residents in relation to their green travel voucher and that the missing signage and community board will be managed by Trace Design who are the Travel Plan coordinator for this scheme3. • The Applicant will ensure that all EV charging sockets are installed, in line with the approved plans. • The Applicant has been made aware through discussions with Officers that planting and maintenance has not been in accordance with the previously approved documents. The Applicant is in discussions with the appointment Landscape Contractor to investigate these works and align them with approved documents. 1 Armstrong v Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities & Anor [2023] EWHC 176 2 Finney v Welsh Ministers & Ors [2019] EWCA Civ 1868 3 This is chiefly a s.106 planning obligation matter, not pertinent to the approved drawings February 2026 | LB | P26-0396 10 • The pedestrian link to Church Hill is to be expedited.

No further update

24/01732/REM Reserved Matters application for the approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of 49 dwellings following outline approval 19/01604/OUT; Outline application with all matters reserved save for access for residential development for up to 49 dwellings including landscaping, drainage and new vehicle access from West Street .

Update
17 June 2026 Affordable Housing Consultee Response:
In total the site will secure 29 social rent units and 20 shared ownership units.' Therefore the affordable housing provision does not meet the minimum 35% affordable housing required within the S106 Legal Agreement. As the legal agreement requires 80% of the 35% affordable housing obligation to be social rent tenure, the mix proposed for the S106 tied units is also not currently acceptable.

21/02436/FUL Demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of 18 detached bungalows with associated parking and access. Knights Templar Court Nursing Home Throop Road Templecombe Somerset BA8 0HR.
No further update:
20 May 2024 Appeal decided and allowed subject to conditions.

Railways

Amended timetables introduced in August continue between Yeovil Junction and Exeter reflecting the requirement for speed restrictions following prolonged extreme hot, dry weather that has affected track across the route. Following record-breaking temperatures and prolonged low rainfall, in recent months the clay embankments supporting the railway between Salisbury and Exeter are drying out, affecting the stability of the track and trains continue to run at reduced speeds between Tisbury in Wiltshire and Honiton in Devon, a 60-mile stretch of largely single-track railway which is particularly vulnerable to drought-like conditions. With only six passing loops where trains can pass each other on the single-track, fewer services can run while these speed restrictions are in place. The temporary timetable limits further disruption and delays while providing a safe and reliable service.

- Services between London Waterloo and Salisbury will continue to run every 30 minutes
- One train per hour will run between London Waterloo and Yeovil Junction
- Every other hour, the London Waterloo service will extend to run to and from Exeter St Davids
- Most journeys from London Waterloo to Yeovil Junction will take three minutes longer than usual, with journeys from Yeovil Junction to London Waterloo taking 13 minutes longer than usual
- Most journeys from London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids will take up to 24 minutes longer than usual, with journeys from Exeter St Davids to London Waterloo taking 27 minutes

Scheduled engineering works are available at https://www.southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey/planned-improvements/planned-engineering-works

Bus Back Better

Bus fare cap on any single journey £3 until the end of this year
Currently, fares on any single journey have been capped at £3. It was announced on 22 July that rather than prices jumping next spring single journey fairs will now drop to £2 from January 2027. The government will extend this bus fare cap until the end of 2027
The current fare cap remains in place at just £3 for any single journey across Somerset and England and it applies to the majority of routes in Somerset. Journeys under 3 miles cost £2.40.
The initiative applies to cross-county services, which means for example you can travel from Street to Bristol or Yeovil to Bridport for just £3.
The 13 operators involved in the scheme in Somerset are:

- ATWEST
- Bakers Dolphin
- Community Transport (South West) Ltd
- FromeBus
- Libra Travel
- Mendip Community Transport
- Somerset Council
- Dartline
- Faresaver Buses
- First South West (Buses of Somerset)
- First West of England
- Hatch Green Coaches
- South West Coaches

Tap On Tap Off:

- Using contactless, you automatically get the best fare, with daily and weekly caps ensuring you never pay more than the zone limit.

Fare Zones: Simplified into Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater, and Network zones for easier understanding.

Traveling with Children

- There are no limits to the number of children under 5 who travel free with a fare paying adult throughout the year
- Child Fares: Half the adult single fare.

How to Check Fares:

- Use the First Bus app or website to plan journeys and see specific prices.
- Check the Think Travel website for general updates and participating operators.
- The current Timetable for the 58 route from Wincanton to Yeovil via Templecombe can be found at: https://www.firstbus.co.uk/somerset/plan-journey/timetables.

Concessionary bus passes

The National Concessionary Travel Scheme pass is a national bus pass. Each travel concession authority holds responsibility for administrating the scheme in their own area. Passes are available for Somerset residents of pensionable age or who are eligible because of a disability

The bus pass is free, but there may be a charge to replace a valid pass if it is lost, stolen, or damaged.

Eligibility information

The eligibility for an Older Persons Bus Pass is set by the Department for Work and Pensions. Individuals qualify, regardless of gender, for their senior bus pass on the same date as they qualify for their State pension. (Currently on their 66th Birthday). Starting in April 2026 individuals born on or after 6 April 1960 will see their entitlement date gradually increases towards needing to be 67 years old.

Eligibility – disability

You must be a Somerset resident and have a disability or be unable to drive for medical reasons to be eligible for a concessionary bus pass. You can apply if you:

- Are blind or partially sighted
- Are profoundly or severely deaf in both ears
- Are unable to speak
- Have severe difficulty walking
- Do not have arms or have long-term loss of the use of both arms
- Have a severe learning disability diagnosed in early life
- Have applied for a licence to drive under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, but your application was turned down because of section 92 of the Act which covers medical fitness rules (not because of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol)

Apply online for a Concessionary Bus Pass Apply for a concessionary bus pass

Using your bus pass

The pass must be presented to the on-bus electronic card machine. The rules of the scheme make your pass valid from 9.30am to 11pm Monday to Friday, and any time on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

There is a 50% fare for concessionary bus pass holders on all Slinky Services in Somerset. You may also be able to use your bus pass on certain types of journeys provided by Community Transport.

You can only use your pass for journeys that start or finish in England.

You cannot use your pass for journeys on:

- Berry’s Superfast services
- National Express services
- Rail services

- Stagecoach Falcon service
- London uses the Oyster Card System, so English National Concessionary Travel Passes issued outside London may not read on the Oyster Card machines. For free travel in London you must show the driver the pass instead of presenting it to the card machine.

Your pass is valid until the date printed on it.

Allan Kerry

November 2026 Highways and Recreation Ground Report

1. Highways

a. New Software has been made available for the SID - it seems more sophisticated and modern. We have been using SPY mode since early August outside the White cottages. The analysis shows the following:

Speed mph
% vehicles
Vehicle Numbers
10-20
15.51
7482
20-30
57.71
27846
30-40
23.50
11340
40-60
3.22
1555
>60
0.06
28

The SID is now displaying messages and we should see a difference next month.

b. We have been informed that the Highways LCN will now be led by another different officer in the future. Unfortunately we have a learning curve to survive again. The Highways Officers who attend the meetings are able to help with Repairs and Traffic Control (lines and lights). They are not a route to get the more strategic input of improving the A357/Bowden road as a result of the planning decisions - our District Councillors are also powerless to help.

I have supplied some housing numbers to Henstridge at Robin’s request as they are keen to broaden their issues with the A357 with Stalbridge and ourselves - apparently they are attempting to get an assessment of the cumulative impact of all of the proposed developments along the A357 from Stalbridge to the A371.

2. Recreation Ground

a. The repairs and financial terms have been agreed and hopefully work will start at the end of November. The remedial work will be guaranteed for 12 months as per their standard terms. We have reminded them that the weather may be a factor in the repair work if it rains heavily or low temperatures are present.
Question:- Do we wish to postpone the work to the Springtime when the weather is better? This HAS not been discussed with RBW.
b. Fundraising is well underway for the Outdoor Gym although worryingly we are not seeing very many contributions from the public despite it being a well supported option in the Community Review. What else can we do in terms of reaching people - social media posts disappear behind lots of other ads and posters on Voice which has 1900 followers and if I am correct our own Social Media site is followed by a small number of people - I think around 50.

Tara Williams

Knights Meadow

Slades Hill / Knights Meadow Update – NOVEMBER 2026

Development Status: The site has been fully occupied since September 2025.

Section 73 Planning Application: There was a change in the planning officer responsible so the application was put on hold during that time. The new officer has since visited the site. The Highway Authority has confirmed that it has no objections to the proposals. The application is expected to be considered by the Planning Committee although no date confirmed. (details for the letter sent by TILIA to Sarah Dyke MP on 29th July). No further update received for this report.

3m Offset. The Section 73 Application does not include any mention for the variation of the 3m wildlife corridor/offset between the development and houses in Blackmore Vale Close and The Hamlet. This was notified clearly to TILIA before the houses in that part were constructed so they did have a chance to rectify this error before it could have any impact. The offset is only 1.8m in places so not allowing sufficient space for emergency access equipment. There is no mention in the Section 73 Application for this variation and TILIA have been contacted regarding this issue, along with the lack of maintenance to this area over the summer which resulted in vegetation encroaching into private gardens and the potential of a fire risk. There is also no plan regarding who will have emergency access. TILIA has not yet responded with a satisfactory explanation. Further action is required.

An Estates Completion update has been sent recently to residents from TILIA.

- Works to public spaces on site by Tony Benger Landscaping.
- LEAP; works ongoing. A RoSPA inspection will take place before this area is (finally) opened
- I contacted TILIA and sent a copy of the lighting schedule as there are areas on the development which are very dark at night. These areas should be lit according to the plan. I have

been advised that the Technical Team are reviewing the document but there has not been any response from TILIA and I resent the query 29/10 as we are in darkness again.

- TILIA were mentioned by name in a BBC news article (4th September) regarding poor build quality. This was on a development in Somerset but not Knights Meadow. I have recently responded to the BBC regarding the state of the public open spaces on Knights Meadow.

- A number of issues have been resolved from the schedule sent out for August and September but some issues still unresolved, which I will take up with TILIA;

  - The verge from sports field towards the substation has been topsoil and seeded…this is now weeds so requires further maintenance

  - Tree pits have been prepared for the winter planting program…are these as per the agreed plan?

  - One side of the tactile crossing at the end of the entrance road, opposite the pond has been replaced…the other side should have been replaced in September

  - Shrub planting around the substation and northern boundary - when is this due?

  - Planting adjacent to plots 57 & 58 - one side (the orchard) is just grass and the other side is weeds

  - Repairs to identified areas of the main road on 4th September - what was done?

Next steps;

- LEAP; turfing; target completion by the end of October 2026 - has not happened. Following completion of the turfing, safety matting will be installed and the final safety inspections, sign-off and certification completed. The play area will only be made available for use once the necessary checks and approvals have been completed.

- Tree and Shrub Planting; the first delivery of trees is expected from mid-November. The landscaping contractor will prioritise planting the trees first, followed by the whips (young trees). The planting programme may continue into December and January 2027, depending on delivery dates and weather conditions. Container-grown shrubs can be planted later in the season, so the priority will be to establish the trees and whips first. The planting around the play area will follow the same sequence.

- Sports Pitch; will be the final area to be completed. The groundworks team anticipates screening the topsoil early next year, after which the pitch can be seeded in spring. Completing the preparation early next year and seeding in spring should provide more favourable conditions for the grass to establish successfully.

Hayward Burt

Access for Somerset Residents to Dorset Recycling

I have again asked the Cabinet Member responsible for any progress on talks with Dorset on this issue but have received no answer.

Update - West of England Line Temporary Timetable

From SW Railway

“We are writing to provide a further update on the temporary revised timetable operating on the West of England line between London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids.

Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD). While temperatures have become cooler in recent weeks, the route continues to be affected by the impact of this summer's exceptionally hot and dry weather.

The summer was the UK's hottest on record and parts of the route remain in drought conditions. As a result, the clay embankments that support the railway between Salisbury and Exeter remain significantly drier than normal and are currently much drier than they were at the same point last year, when a temporary timetable was also in operation.

Based on current forecasts and ground conditions, it is likely to take some time before we are able to safely restore the full timetable. We continue to closely monitor soil moisture levels and track condition across the route.

While we appreciate that the reduced frequency of services and longer journey times are frustrating for customers, the revised timetable is providing a more reliable service.

To further support reliability, we are continuing a significant programme of tamping work across the route to maintain track quality and help reduce delays and disruption for customers.

Fleet Improvements. We are also pleased to report continued progress on improving fleet availability across the West of England route.

The first two trains to enter the refurbishment programme have now returned to service. These trains have received an initial package of improvements, including: • Refurbished seating, Upgraded tables, New carpets and vinyl flooring, Internal and external repainting

The units will return for a further phase of enhancements, including the installation of USB-C power points at every seat.

What Happens Next?

We will continue to closely monitor soil moisture levels, weather conditions and railway performance. We remain committed to restoring the full timetable as soon as it is safe and operationally possible to do so.

Car Parking Charges to Increase

Somerset Council's Executive has approved increases in car parking charges across the county.

From January all parking fees in paid-for Somerset Council car parks will increase by 10 per cent. A new tiered charging system, applicable seven days a week, and agreed in March by the Council's Executive Committee, will come into effect from autumn 2027.

The new system follows a review of all council car parks and discussion at the Council's Climate, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee last month.

Key recommendations include:

- Approval of up to £350,000 from the Parking Reserve to replace payment machines across Somerset.
- Proposals to extend town-centre residents' parking schemes and on-street restrictions from 6 to 7 days, to be in place before any 7-day off-street charging is introduced.
- A framework enabling city, town and parish councils to support local parking objectives if they wish to do so.

No decisions will be taken at this stage on introducing charges at car parks which are currently free.

The Council would first engage with communities, local councillors, businesses and other stakeholders on free car parks, on-street parking, permits, concessions and future payment arrangements.

Any proposals requiring changes to parking orders or traffic regulation orders would also go through the relevant statutory process, including consultation and consideration of objections.

Somerset awarded millions to reduce rough sleeping in county

Somerset Council has secured £5.87 million in Government funding to help people sleeping rough move off the streets and into safe, settled accommodation.

The funding has been awarded through the Government's new Rough Sleeping Programme, a multi-million national initiative from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government which is running for three years from 2026/27.

The programme's aim is to give everyone sleeping rough a route off the streets while creating longer-term homes and support for people who face the greatest barriers in society to leave rough sleeping behind for good. Using this funding, Local Authorities must offer accommodation to all people sleeping rough by Christmas.

Do Something Amazing For Someone Amazing

Somerset's Lord-Lieutenant Mohammed Saddiq is launching a campaign to get more people from the county nominated for national honours.

He is writing to every town and parish council and community organisation across the historic county of Somerset, with the message "Do something amazing for someone amazing."

And he wants every member of the public to think about the people they know who deserve recognition. Anyone can nominate and anyone can be nominated.

More details about how to make an Honours nomination can be found on the Lord Lieutenant's website: https://somersetlieutenancy.com or email honours@somerset.gov.uk

Chancellor confirms support for devolution in Wessex

The Budget statement included confirmation of the government's support for devolution for Wessex (which would include Somerset Council). This is a significant vote of confidence in our region and recognition that decisions affecting local people are best made closer to their communities.

It can mean greater local control over decisions affecting transport, housing, skills, regeneration and economic growth, enabling new, significant funding and investment to be directed towards the priorities that matter most to our communities.

There are many questions about what today's devolution announcement means for the Wessex region. We await further detail from Government and will share information and updates as it is made available.

Government approves Somerset's SEND Reform Plan

The Department for Education has approved Somerset Council's SEND Reform Plan.

The decision unlocks significant investment to strengthen support and improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across the county.

The funding contribution is approximately £95 million and will support clearing the balance which otherwise would have to be funded by the Council.

More than 50 additional specialists will work locally with early years settings, schools, and colleges to help children and young people aged 0 to 25 receive the right support as early as possible.

The expanded teams will provide expertise in areas including social, emotional, and mental health; autism and communication; cognition and learning; sensory processing and regulation; educational psychology; speech and language therapy; neurodiversity; and occupational therapy.

Planning – National Scheme of Delegation and Gateway

I have put extra detail here, and have talked about this at previous Parish meetings, this central Government changes will severely restrict local input.

• The National Scheme of Delegation comes into force on 31 October 2026.

• Most applications will continue to be determined by officers.

• Schedule 1 applications must be determined by officers.

• Schedule 2 applications are normally determined by officers but may enter the Gateway Process where the officer recommendation is contrary to comments from a Parish/Town/City council or Ward Member raising material planning considerations.

• National guidance establishes a presumption in favour of officer delegation, with referral to committee being the exception.

• The Planning Committee should normally determine applications only where the statutory referral criteria are met.

Application Categories

Key Terms

• Gateway Process: The process used to determine whether certain Schedule 2 applications should be decided by officers or referred to the Planning Committee.

• Nominated Member: Usually the Chair of the Planning Committee. The Chair works with the Nominated Officer to decide whether a Schedule 2 application should be referred to committee. Where necessary, the Vice-Chair or another authorised substitute will undertake the role.

• Nominated Officer: The senior planning officer responsible for deciding, with the Nominated Member, whether a Schedule 2 application should be referred to committee. In Somerset this role is undertaken by Service Managers, Area Managers and Team Leaders acting under delegated authority from the Chief Planning Officer/Head of Planning.

The Gateway Process

1. A Schedule 2 application enters the Gateway Process where the officer recommendation is contrary to written comments from a Parish/Town/City Council and/or the Ward Member and those comments raise material planning considerations.

2. The Nominated Member receives the officer report at least five working days before the Gateway meeting.

3. Ward Members are notified and may submit comments to the Nominated Member within three working days.

4. The Nominated Officer and Nominated Member meet to consider and confirm whether the statutory referral criteria are met and whether the application should be determined by officers or referred to the Planning Committee.

5. The application is either determined under delegated powers or referred to the Planning Committee.

Key Principle: The National Scheme of Delegation establishes a presumption in favour of officer delegation. Referral to Planning Committee should be the exception and normally only where the statutory referral criteria are met.

Statutory Referral Tests

An application should normally only be referred to Planning Committee where it raises:

A significant economic, social or environmental issue for the local area.

A significant planning matter having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations.

Schedule 1 Applications

Householder applications

• Minor commercial development

• Minor residential development:

o 1-9 dwellings on sites under 0.5ha

o Development of flats and development incidental to flats

• Prior approvals (GPDO)

• Discharge of conditions

• Non-material amendments (s96A)

• Permission in Principle

• Lawful development certificates

• Biodiversity Gain Plans

• Reserved matters (except for “large development”: 500+ dwellings/50,000sqm non residential floorspace)

• s73 (modify/remove conditions) applications where the parent permission is Schedule 1

• Schedule 1-related s106 modifications/discharges

Exceptions

An application otherwise in Schedule 1 moves into Schedule 2 if:

• It is retrospective under s73A, or It is linked to a Schedule 2 listed building consent application.

Schedule 2 Applications Potential Gateway

All applications that are not:

• Householder

• Minor commercial

• Minor residential E.g. major residential, major commercial, renewable energy schemes

And the following types of applications:

• Retrospective applications (s73A)

• s73 applications where the parent permission was Schedule 2

• Listed Building consent

• Listed Building condition Variation/Discharge

• Advertisement Consent

• Tree Preservation Order Consent

• Reserved Matters applications for:

o 500 or more dwellings, or

o 50,000m² or more of non-residential floorspace

• Schedule 2 related s106 modifications/discharges

Ed Crowther

Web and Social media.

Nothing to report.

Social Club

The Monthly Committee Meeting has been delayed for operational reasons.

The Chairman, Clerk and myself Attended the AGM on the 18th October,

Happy to report the club finishes the year in a strong financial position, Largely due to the selfless work of the unpaid volunteers,

And I feel the should be commended,

The Cash in the bank is earmarked for improvements to the toilets.

It was agreed to put up membership fee to £15 pa with pro rata payments for part years

some new members were elected to the committee to replace retiring members.