

[View this in your browser.](#)

Tourism News



Winter 2023

The South Somerset Tourism Team wishes you a very happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year and all the best for 2024.

I am sure you have heard the news regarding the current financial situation facing Somerset Council. In November, the Council's Executive declared a financial emergency with an in-year overspend for 2023/24 of £27m and a projected budget gap for 2024/25 of £100m. To close the gap and balance next year's budget the council are looking at a series of service reductions, efficiency savings, plus increases to fees, including Council Tax.

Outline proposed savings have been presented to the Executive committee for review, with final decisions due in February. Some of these will have an impact on the Tourism and Cultural Services and provision to Somerset residents and businesses.

Somerset Council is launching a public consultation on its budget, with results helping influence Councillors as they look to set a balanced budget in February 2024. The survey can be completed here - [Budget Consultation 2024/2025](#) or in Somerset libraries and council offices and is for everyone to contribute their views, including residents and business owners. The budget consultation closes on 22 January.

Somerset businesses are also invited to have their say at a series of events where they can meet and engage with councillors and staff, not only on the 2024/2025 budget but also on the future of business engagement and support prior to the transition of Local Enterprise Partnership functions into the Local Authority.

Four events are being held around the county during January. Places are limited so prompt booking is recommended, details from

[Somerset Council event tickets](#)

- 8 January: 9:00am - 10.30am Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR
- 9 January: 6:00pm - 8:00pm Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome, BA11 1EB
- 15 January: 6:00pm – 8:00pm Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE
- 16 January: 8.30am - 10.30am Yeovil Innovation Centre, Barracks Close, Copse Road, Yeovil, BA22 8RN

Tourism Team News

While we wait for the budget outcomes, it is business as usual at the South Somerset Visitor Information Centre. The centre had an incredible peak season, welcoming thousands of visitors, including overseas and UK coach groups. In addition to helping with tourist information, the gift shop products continue to be successful with sales increasing an average of 30% compared to last year. To date, nearly 20,000 visitors have visited the centre for advice or to buy local gifts or keepsakes.

If you are in the area - do pop in and have a look - the centre stocks a wide range of gifts, many with a Somerset theme which would make great Christmas present ideas. They are also stockists of the ever-popular South Somerset Heritage Collection Calendar.



The photographs and objects featured are available to view by appointment at South Somerset Heritage Collection.

WWW.VISITSOUTHSOMERSET.COM/SSHC

SSHC
South Somerset Heritage Collection



Somerset
Council

+

South Somerset Visitor Information Centre, Cartgate Picnic Site, A303/A3088, Stoke sub Hamdon TA14 6RA 01935 829333 (Open Monday to Saturday 9.00 to 13.00 and 13.30 to 16.00)

The [Visit South Somerset website](#) is still functioning with the Whats on pages being a popular resource. If you have planned events that interest Somerset holidaymakers or residents, please submit details using this [quick and simple form](#).



South Somerset winners at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism Awards

The Bristol Hotel was at capacity recently when 64 awards were presented to the best tourism and hospitality businesses from across Bristol, Bath and Somerset.

The awards covered everything from accommodation and attractions to food and drink and activities, with an ever-wider range of visitor experiences amongst the winners. There were also awards for new tourism business, sustainable tourism and accessible tourism categories.

Winners in most categories will now be considered for the South West Tourism Excellence Awards to be presented at Exeter University in March 2024 and possibly invited to represent Bristol Bath and Somerset in the 2024 national VisitEngland Awards.

Awards director, Nell Barrington says “Each year these awards get more and more competitive. They really do showcase the finest experiences visitors to the county can have and provide a truly inspirational bucket list. It was a privilege to be able to celebrate with such fantastic businesses.

Congratulations to them all.”

Special congratulations to the Crewkerne businesses, **Wytch Wood Camping**, for Silvers in the Camping and Caravanning Park of the Year and Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Awards. Two South Somerset hospitality businesses shone in the Pub of the Year category with a Gold for **The Cotley Inn** near Chard and Silver for **The Barrington Boar** near Ilminster. **Croftview** in Hinton St George also won Gold in the Self-Catering Accommodation of the Year. Massive congratulations to them and all the Somerset, Bristol and Bath businesses.

Business Support and Resources

Reminder about the Somerset Mentoring Programme

Could you benefit from fresh, experienced insight and a sounding board as you run and grow your business? Somerset Council is offering businesses over 1 year old, up to 6 hours of free mentoring over a 6-month period.

The mentors have been selected from executive and senior management level business leaders or successful entrepreneurs to help **businesses evolve, change and renew business functions**. Mentors can help businesses to strategise, challenge and inspire confidence.

The Somerset Mentoring Programme is funded by the Business Rates Retention Scheme. For more information, or to request a mentee application form, please contact the [Somerset Business Support team](#)

Free Digital Support for Devon and Somerset Businesses

Kickstart your digital transformation in 2024 with an exciting Digital Link programme, offering free digital support to help your business soar!

Small businesses in Devon, Somerset, Plymouth, and Torbay, can receive free-fully funded one-on-one digital support from Digital Business Advisers.

Digital marketing and social media strategies to SEO and customer journey optimization - all designed to help elevate your digital presence.

Find out more: [Digital Link - Heart of SW Growthhub](#)

Improve your 4G mobile coverage

The Connecting Devon and Somerset's scheme to improve indoor 4G mobile phone coverage in the region has been extended until March 2024. More than 1,200 homes and businesses across Somerset, Devon, Torbay and Plymouth have already benefited from the scheme.

The initiative offers vouchers worth up to £1,200 towards the cost of a mobile signal booster from a registered supplier. The value of the voucher is dependent on the type of technology most suitable for the premises and suppliers can advise on the three options of equipment available through the scheme – a 4G booster or two models of “signal repeaters” which repeat the outdoor signal indoors. Find out more: [Mobile Boost Voucher Scheme - a guide - Connecting Devon and Somerset](#)

VisitEngland and VisitBritain Resources

VisitEngland has launched its new 'Accessible and Inclusive Toolkit for Tourism Businesses' in England. The toolkit includes practical guidance on providing an inclusive welcome, designing accessible buildings, employing disabled people and creating quality accessibility information.

It includes case studies, top 20 tips and downloadable business-specific actionable checklists to plan and prioritise improvements, as well as more aspirational technical design guidance. The toolkit can be accessed [here](#).

If you missed it, the annual report was recently published on the findings from the **Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions in England** undertaken by VisitEngland. It provides a comprehensive England-wide analysis of trends plus visits data. The report can be accessed [here](#) or via the [Visit Britain travel](#)

[trade](#) pages along with other reports and helpful resources.

Visit Britain is looking for Press Stories for 2024, if you have news you think worthy of sharing, drop them an email at pressandpr@visitbritain.org Initially it is only the topline they are requesting and can be around the following.

- New accommodation and restaurant openings
- Big events, upcoming exhibitions, and anniversaries
- Travel trends
- New stories and products celebrating sustainability, inclusivity and diversity

South West - How's Business Survey

This very important survey provides a real-time indication of business levels in our region. Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey covering November 2023 and don't forget that submitting your stats entitles you access to the latest impact report. This is the survey link:

<https://survey.sogolytics.com/r/fQfZUQ> and the deadline is 31st December 2023.

Many thanks in advance for your assistance.

Funding opportunities

The Somerset Council website has links to funding opportunities with varying objectives, they can be checked out here [Funding and grants for business \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/funding-and-grants-for-business). It is worth regularly checking this page as new grants become available.



Spotlight on Digital Tech **Exeter**

Workshop - '2024, Your Digital Business Plan of Action!'

Free, fully funded event showcasing future digital trends & opportunities
With guest speakers, refreshments & networking

Exeter Science Park | Wed 24th January 2024 | 9am to 1pm | In partnership with Cosmic



Book now: <https://SpotlightOnDigitalTech-Exeter.eventbrite.co.uk>

Spotlight on Digital Tech Event

2024 – Your Digital Business Plan of Action!

24th January 9am – 1pm at Exeter Science Park

This FREE workshop is being led by Kate Doodson from Cosmic and will cover:

- 2024's Top Business Trends & Challenges 📊
- AI made simple for YOUR business 🤖
- Quick tips on Automation ⚙️
- Making data-driven decisions 📈
- The NEXT big thing in Digital Marketing 🌐

Bigwave Marketing will tell you all about 'Social Media Trends' and there will be other guest speakers including Lisa Lessware, Digital Business Adviser for

Digital Link and BIT Security. Plus, Q&A sessions.

The morning will include light refreshments & breakfast pastries and the opportunity to connect and network with other like-minded business owners. Spaces are limited, book here: [Spotlight on Digital Tech Event - Exeter](#)

If you didn't make this event but would like help and guidance on how to navigate the digital world, the Growth Hub has free Digital Guides or you can book a one-on-one session with the Digital Business Advisers. More information here [Heart of SW Growthhub](#)

2024 West Country Tourism Conference

6th - 7th February 2024 9.30am - 13.30 pm - Westpoint Arena, Exeter

The West Country Tourism Conference always has an interesting and varied selection of speakers, to help navigate the changing landscape and trends and the 2024 one looks set to inspire again.

Tuesday's talks will cover topics around Tourism Priorities, Excellence, Accessibility and Sustainability while Wednesday will focus more on Marketing, Social. PR and AI.

The Conference will start at 09.30 each day and conclude with a pasty or pie lunch at 13.30. Operating at the same time and venue is The Source Trade Show <https://thesourcetradeshow.co.uk/>, which makes it a very interesting and useful day out.

More information regarding the conference speakers and how to book tickets can be found [here](#).



Oh yes it is!

Wouldn't be Christmas without a Pantomime, it might be in a different venue than in previous years but still the same award-winning team. Feedback and reviews for Cinderella have been amazing – grab tickets quickly before they sell out! More details here <https://www.westlandsyeovil.co.uk/whats-on/all-shows/cinderella/9071/>

In the News...

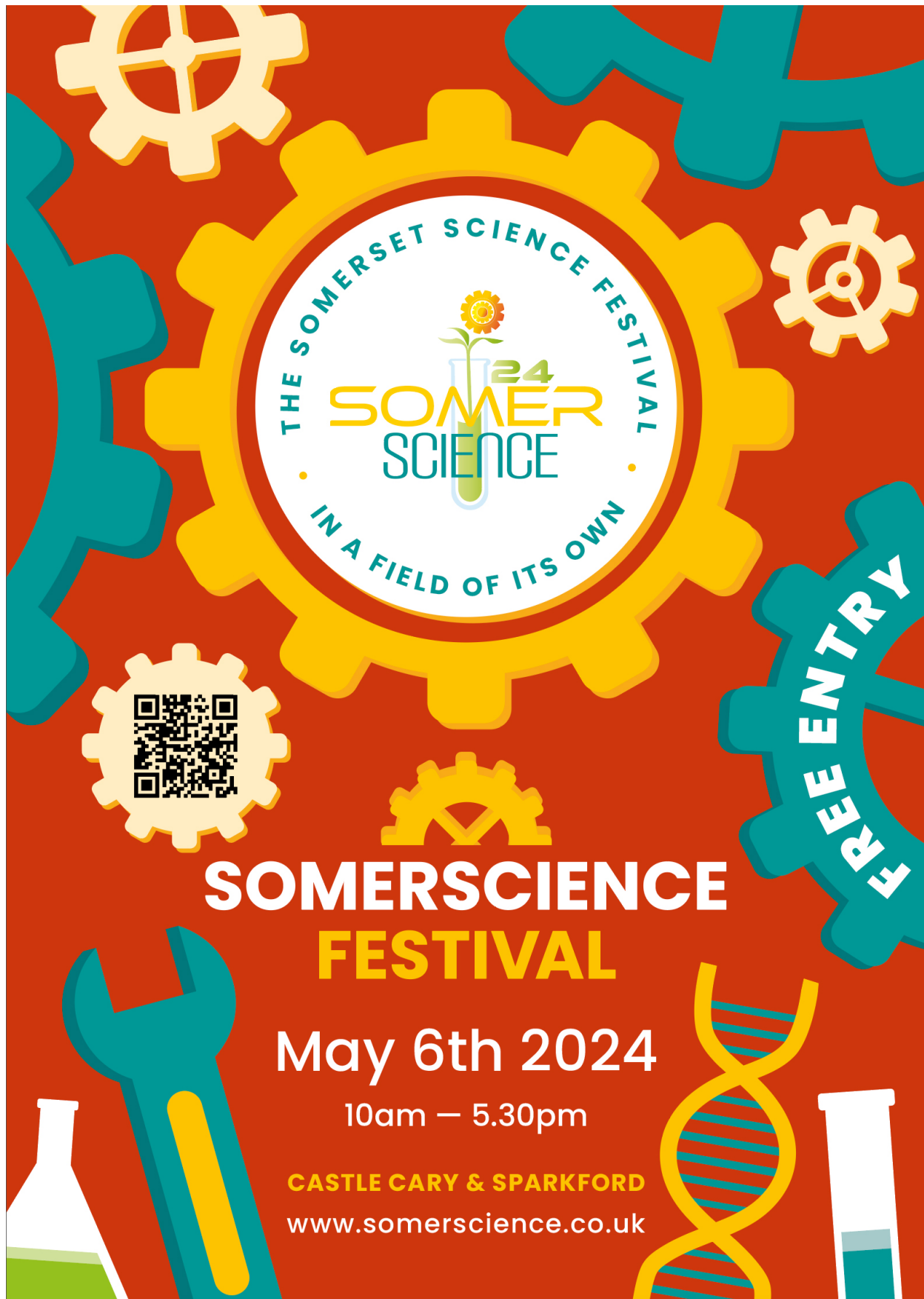
Two new exhibitions open in 2023

The NMRN were thrilled to launch the next stage of the Fairey Barracuda rebuild project with the opening of the Arthur Kimberley Viewing Gallery at the [Fleet Air Arm Museum](#). This is now an amazing opportunity to learn more about the incredible story of the Barracuda and Fleet Air Arm Museum's 50-year journey to rebuild the aircraft.

While at the [Haynes Motor Museum](#), a major new exhibition tells the story of British motorcycling from its origins to the modern day. 'Life on Two Wheels:

The British Motorcycling Story' provides a fascinating new perspective on the social history of the motorbike and the impact bikes have on society, technology, and the economy.

Focus on ... Somerscience 2024



Following the success of the 2023 Somerscience Festival, there are plans for an even bigger and better event in 2024!

The preliminary programme has been announced, with the festival taking place on **Bank Holiday Monday 6th May 2024**, 10 am to 5:30 pm, and will be another day jammed-packed with FREE STEM-based activities for all ages. The interactive Science Fair for 2024 will be even BIGGER and will be taking place at the inspiring [Haynes Motor Museum](#). For a full list of the activities already confirmed go to [‘What’s On’](#) or have a look at a copy of the [preliminary programme](#).

The Somerscience Trust is a charitable incorporated organisation set up to advance the education of the public in Somerset in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to promote public engagement in all aspects of STEM developments. Primarily this will be achieved through the community-led Somerscience festival, and complementary events, which showcase the research and development in STEM taking place in the area from both the academic and industrial communities.

Please drop me an email if you think your business is extra special and want to feature in this section!

Helpful Links for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

- [Visit South Somerset Trade page](#)
- [Visit Somerset](#)
- [Visit England / Visit Britain Travel Trade page](#)
- [Somerset Council Business and Economy Support](#)
- [South West Tourism Alliance](#)
- [Heart of the South West Growth Hub](#)

Anything to contribute?

The tourism newsletter is generally distributed quarterly (March/ Spring, June/Summer, September/ Autumn and December/ Winter) with additional editions if important and relevant information to share. It is emailed to South

Somerset-based businesses on the tourism database and appears on the trade pages of www.visitsouthsomerset.com

We love to hear and share your news and success stories, please email items to VisitSS@Somerset.gov.uk. The deadlines for contributions are...

- Mid February for the Spring Edition
- Mid May for the Summer Edition
- Mid August for the Autumn Edition
- Mid November for the Winter Edition

Unsubscribing and your privacy

If at any time you wish to unsubscribe to the newsletter and have your details removed from the database, please email VisitSS@Somerset.gov.uk or click the button below.

Very occasionally we feel it is appropriate and beneficial to forward emails and newsletters from our partners, please let me know if you would rather not receive this information.

To find out how Somerset Council uses and keeps your information secure, please visit the [Somerset Council Privacy Notice](#).



Tourism Team - South

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage subscription](#) | [Privacy notice](#) | [Contact us](#)