



Briefing for Members, Partners and Staff July 2023



Potential industrial action

As you'll be aware, we've been informed by our collections contractor, SUEZ UK, that members of the Unite union intend to start industrial action from Wednesday 12 July, striking on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for four weeks.

We expect this to cause widespread and significant disruption to refuse and recycling collections and it could affect the majority of residents in some way.

Contingency planning is underway to try and limit the impact. We will soon be able to provide advice on what residents should do with their waste and will endeavour to give daily updates throughout the period of strike disruption.

A dedicated page on our [website](#) and social media will be the best place to get the latest information and advice. This page will be available shortly.

Take on the challenge to go single-use plastic free this July

We're backing the movement to go single-use plastic free and encouraging residents to be part of the solution to plastic pollution. Last year households in Somerset recycled close to 6,500 tonnes of plastic – about 29 lorries each month.

While plastic recycling is great, choosing to refuse single-use plastic is even better.

Simple changes we can all make to go plastic free include:

- Opt for the plastic free, or no packaging alternatives. Loose fruit and vegetables are available in many supermarkets or pick items wrapped in paper rather than plastic.
- Use a reusable water bottle. Somerset has five, free-to-use tap water stations – [find your local one online](#).
- Switch from bottle to bar for your bathroom products. Somerset has many re-fill shops, support local businesses while picking up your plastic free alternatives.
- When plastic cannot be avoided, much of it can be recycled in the weekly kerbside collections throughout Somerset - use the Bright Blue Bag for plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays.

World Re-fill Day, top-up with tap water

Last month we celebrated World Refill Day, with the aim to encourage everyone to choose re-fill. Along with Wessex Water, Somerset Council provides free water bottle refill stations in five of the county's busiest high-streets.

Choosing to re-fill can saving you money and avoid thousands of single-use plastic bottles going to waste.

An estimated 7.7 billion plastic water bottles are used in the UK every year however Somerset's water refill stations have prevented the need for more than 70,000 single-use plastic bottles.

Last year Somerset recycled an estimated 120 million plastic bottles – recycling is good, but reducing and preventing waste is even better. To make this a little easier, free water bottle refill stations can be found in:

- **Taunton**
- **Minehead**
- **Wellington**
- **Bridgwater**
- **Yeovil**

Stamp out fire starters

Last month we told you about the rise in fires, due to flammable items being put out with refuse and recycling.

In May alone a whopping 731 gas canisters were found in residents recycling. Each one a potential fire starter.

As the weather heats up and the school holidays approach – with more people camping and barbequing, we want to remind residents how to safely dispose of flammable items.

Please dispose of your camping gas canister responsibly!

The team carefully look through recycling from the Bright Blue Bags. By removing these it's prevented hundreds of fires - but you can help too!

When you have finished with a gas canister please do not put it out with your recycling or refuse collection. This can be dangerous for you and the crews. Please take gas canisters to your local recycling site.

Barbeques can cause hazards and fires. Disposable barbeques should be left to cool before they are thrown away. After it has been left to cool for a few hours, pour some cold water on top to be sure.

To dispose of it safely, put extinguished coals and ash in your refuse; and foil trays in your recycling.

Choose to reuse

Recycling is great, but reducing and reusing is even better. By reducing the amount of waste we produce, we can cut the need to create new products. One way to reduce waste at home is to choose to repair rather than replace.

Somerset has a thriving network of repair groups, that just keeps growing. Repair groups are run by volunteers and aim to help members of the public love their stuff for longer. Volunteers in the groups are often able to fix household items such as radios or kettles or advise on what parts are needed to make them work again. Repairs are carried out for free, but donations are always welcome to contribute to the costs of running the group.

If you want to join the repair revolution, head to the [repair network webpage](#) for a list of when and where repair groups are running this summer.

Advanced notice, changes to collections for August Bank Holiday

Collections will be a day later during the week beginning Monday, 28 August. There won't be any collections on Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August.

- Collections will be one day later for the rest of the week. Including collections that would usually take place on Friday 1 September taking place on Saturday 2 September.
- All recycling centres will be open as usual on Bank Holiday Monday.

Head to our website to check your usual [collection day and download a calendar](#)

Do more online

Don't forget you can use the [My Waste Service](#) feature at to do all manner of tasks online.

Log missed collections, order free recycling containers, sign-up for a garden waste collection, request and pay for a bulky waste collection – it is quick, easy and available 24/7.