

The Somerset Fund

Bringing passionate people together to change the world on their doorstep



Your impact report for 2022-23

Thank you

The last year has been incredibly tough for many of our neighbours, with the soaring cost-of-living having wide-reaching implications for our communities here in Somerset. It's proving harder for many people to make ends meet and to afford the essentials such as food, fuel and heating, which is affecting mental and physical health. Rising costs have also made it harder to afford to take part in social activities and to connect to others, increasing loneliness and isolation.

Once again, just as during the pandemic, we have seen an amazing response from local groups and charities rallying to support their communities; offering free and affordable ways for people to weather the cost-of-living crisis and to connect with others, reducing loneliness and improving emotional wellbeing. These small, local charities and groups represent the cornerstone of Somerset community life, providing an enduring sense of connection and care for people in these very difficult times.

Sadly, many local groups are feeling the impact of the economic squeeze, juggling the rise in running costs with the reality that the people they support have less money to donate or to contribute towards subsidised activities. **And this is where The Somerset Fund becomes crucial, helping vital small local groups to keep changing lives, at a time when they're needed more than ever.**

In 2023, we celebrate five years since we launched The Somerset Fund. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, since we launched the fund we have awarded an incredible £350,000 in grants to over 200 small local charities and community groups, supporting groups as diverse as community transport, sports and arts clubs, youth groups and projects supporting people with disabilities.

Many of the groups we support work at a very local level and are often volunteer-led. For these organisations, a small, flexible grant from The Somerset Fund makes a huge difference and really does go a long way.

Thank you for supporting The Somerset Fund over the last year. Together, we are helping to make Somerset a place where communities are better connected and supported, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Best wishes,



Justin Sargent
Chief Executive



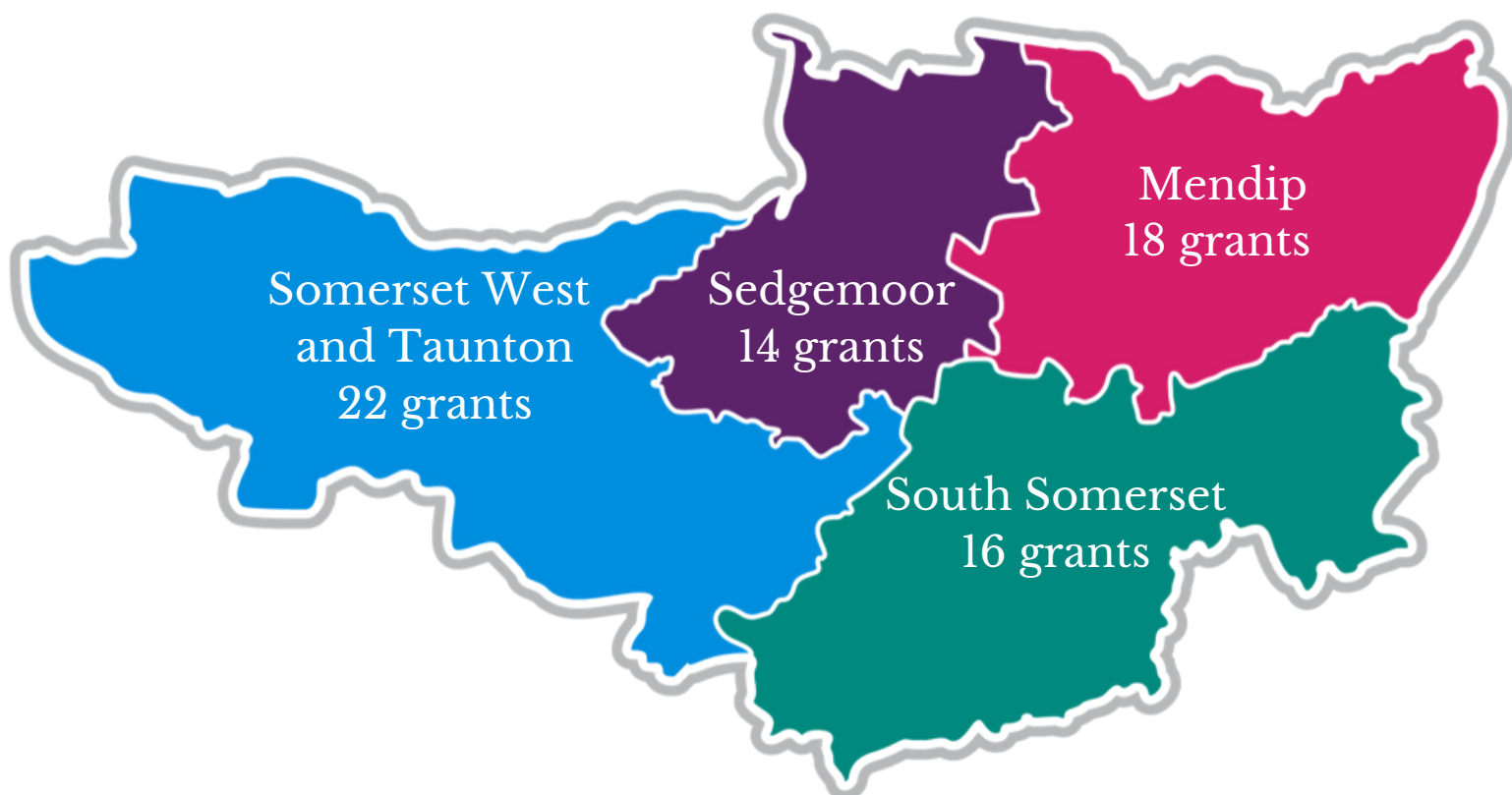
The difference your donations have made this year

Thanks to your generosity, in the last year we were able to award 70 grants to local groups right across the county. For many of the groups we support, your donations have been what has enabled them to keep going in these tough times. On behalf of these small local groups and the people they help right across Somerset – thank you.

2022-23 at a glance*



Where your donations were spent



*These financial results are subject to auditor and Trustee approval as at May 2023

Mendip

The Somerset Fund stories - West Pennard Gardening Club



West Pennard Gardening Club brings the community of West Pennard and neighbouring villages together once a month. Members enjoy guest speakers in the village hall, alongside two coach trips, and a meal at the local pub each Christmas.

We spoke to treasurer and committee member Iris Goodby, who told us how a £500 grant from The Somerset Fund helped the committee members breathe new life into the club and helped fund a long awaited coach trip, following the fallow years of Covid.

“We’ve always been a very active village, with a few different clubs meeting regularly in the village hall; mostly older, retired people, with a few younger people taking part in things here and there. But since Covid people stopped going out - and they got into the habit of not going out. Since the pandemic two other village clubs have folded.

The Gardening Club had a bit of a reset and we now have a new Chair and committee. It’s changed the dynamic of the club. Younger people from the village now come along, and it’s really breathed new life into the club.

We meet once a month and have guest speakers who bring along exhibits, with a plant sale and refreshments. We recently had a guest speaker from The Newt, he was just fabulous. We had over 70 people come along to that, which helped us a lot, financially. We go on two coach trips a year and get together for a meal in a local pub at Christmas. We’ve been to some lovely places, usually gardens and National Trust places for a wander and a cream tea. We keep it relatively local.

Mendip

The Somerset Fund stories - West Pennard Gardening Club (cont.)

"We've been to Hestercombe near Taunton, and our Somerset Fund grant has meant we're able to visit Bowood House just over the border in Wiltshire this year. The grant has been fantastic, it's enabled us to go out together again. We just wouldn't be able to do these coach trips without your funding, these days; the cost of the coach is hundreds of pounds – it's almost doubled since the cost-of-living crisis. We used to ask members to contribute, and we'd be able to cover the cost between us. But we just can't expect people to find that sort of money anymore. Once you've paid for a bit of lunch, and the entry fee...we don't want it to be something that's not within people's means. The idea has always been to put on an affordable day trip for people.

We want to bring people together. There's a much broader mix of ages, and people come from neighbouring villages and parishes as well, now. It's about companionship, but we all have one thing in common; we all love plants and gardening.

Since our new Chair, we've doubled the membership. We took the opportunity to take a fresh look at the format, and it's blossomed. I can't imagine the club will ever close. We've got a really strong committee that will keep it going, now and in the future. We're evolving and moving with the times. We listen to the villagers and ask them what they want.

There was a woman who was recently widowed, and had become quite lonely and isolated before she joined the club. She met lots of people from the village she hadn't known before and now she has a very active social circle. We found out a bit later that she used to run a nursery and has a huge amount of knowledge around plants!

This grant has saved the club in a way; we're so grateful. It's meant we can go out again together for the first time in years."



The Somerset Fund stories - Wedmore Tuesday Club



Wedmore Tuesday Club is a social club that's been supporting older residents in and around the village of Wedmore for over 40 years.

We spoke to Sue Worrall, the club secretary and volunteer, who told us more about how a £1,500 grant from The Somerset Fund helps them to continue running their beloved Tuesday Club, which means so much more to its members than simply a regular hot meal.

“Essentially we're a lunch club, and have been an entity in some way, shape or form since the late 1970s. We currently have 25 members and 15 volunteers, and we meet up at Wedmore Village Hall every Tuesday from around 10am to 2.30pm.

We have tea, coffee and biscuits, before serving up a hot lunch, which is usually a roast, followed by homemade pudding and a piece of cake to take home - all for £6.00. We have drivers who drive some of our members in each week if they need transport. For a few it may be their only social activity and one of the only homecooked hot meals in the week. We also do their shopping for them while they're here at the club. But it's the companionship they come here for, that's the main thing.

We try and be there for people so they're not lonely. If we see people are really struggling and we have concerns, we'll reach out to their families. We have a role to keep the community strong and connected.

Sedgemoor

The Somerset Fund stories - Wedmore Tuesday Club (cont.)

"Groups and local charities such as Secret World Wildlife Rescue come and give presentations, we go on day trips to the seaside, or the garden centre for lunch, and at Christmas we go on a shopping trip.

All the food we serve at the club is fresh and comes from the village; the butchers, the grocer and the fishmonger. It's a very supportive village. And we have legacies left by members, which means so much to us – and shows how much the club meant to them, too.

Our grant from The Somerset Fund went towards the hire of the hall. It's brilliant that we can apply for support for core costs. The hall costs £50 a week. We are constantly fundraising all through the year so we can keep on top of expenses. Keeping the club running is really important, and when you're always having to think about raising money on top of everything else we do – well, it's challenging as you get older. And the main difficulty for us is finding volunteers.

Some of our members have early onset dementia and they can't get out anymore – they're well into their 80s, a lot of them. In fact, one had her 95th birthday this week – and she walked into the club, with the help of a good neighbour. And we always give our members a card and present on their birthday.

I honestly can't imagine what life would be like for some of our members if Tuesday Club wasn't there for them. Our members love it so much – it's the highlight of the week for so many people."



Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - North Taunton Partnership



North Taunton Partnership is the charity that runs Priorswood Community Centre, supporting some of the most vulnerable in the local community. They hold daily advice surgeries, social, fitness, and educational groups, coffee mornings and youth activities.

We spoke to the Manager, Lesley Councill, who told us more about what they do, and how a £2,000 grant from The Somerset Fund contributed towards school holiday youth activities, providing fun, friendship and support for low-income families in the area.

“At the centre, we’re here for all residents of North Taunton, young and old alike; we’re totally inclusive. We’re here Monday to Friday for drop-ins, where people can come and have a cup of tea and a chat. The local police, housing benefit and Citizens Advice, they’re all here – there’s no appointment needed. People can just come along and get advice.

We have all sorts of social and educational groups, and activities: Lunch Club, Tai Chi, Menopause Support, Bereavement Support, Knit and Natter, Digital Support...the list goes on!

Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - North Taunton Partnership (cont.)

"Most of the people we see here are experiencing loneliness and isolation. They come to see a friendly face. We're a one stop shop for people who might need support and advice; we do a lot of signposting. We're seeing lots of people in financial need at the moment.

Our grant from The Somerset Fund supported our Pride in Priorswood Summer Youth Activities last year. Our summer holidays activities started 15 years ago, when we noticed there were young families that had nothing to do in the summer months. So we brought a few footballs along to the park, and it's just grown organically over the years into what we have now.

We're serving the most deprived community in Somerset West and Taunton, and many families are unable to go on family days out or longer summer holidays. Our summer activities event is open access, held at Lyngford Park. It's on for 5 weeks over the summer holidays and we have themed weeks, such as crafts, sports, activities, music and more. There are also lots of outside stalls offering advice and guidance, such as NHS, dental care, talking therapies, health and wellbeing, RSPCA, Wildlife Trust, the resilience drugs bus. It brings the community together and no one has to pay.

Quite often parents and carers tell us it's a lifeline to them. Parents make connections, and the children make friends from different schools. We see lots of new friendships and people building and strengthening their connections in the community.

Funding - such as the grant we received from The Somerset Fund - helps to ensure we're able to run this hugely popular summer activities programme every year. It's hugely important and without funding we wouldn't be able to do what we do."



Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - Brompton Regis Village Shop



When the original Brompton Regis shop and post office closed in 2008, the residents came together to set up their community-owned shop, first in the skittle alley of the village pub, before moving it to its current location at the village hall.

We spoke to Chair of the Brompton Regis Village Shop Management Committee, Christine Cherry, who told us how a £1,325 grant from The Somerset Fund allowed them to grow what they offer to this very remote rural community.

“Brompton Regis is a small community. The nearest town is 4 miles away, but there isn’t a bus route so it’s really quite a remote part of Exmoor. When the village post office closed, as part of a mass closure in 2008, the local community rallied together to set up the village shop, raising money through grant funding and selling shares. We employ a wonderful shop manager, and she’s supported by a team of amazing volunteers.

A large number of the population here are elderly and many no longer drive, so the shop is a lifeline to them, and in more ways than one. For some customers when they pop into the shop, we may be the only people they see that day. They really do rely on us for their everyday needs; we also have a prescription delivery twice a week, and we also act as a foodbank collection point and parish magazine distributors.

Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - Brompton Regis Village Shop (cont.)

"We know our regular customers and they're creatures of habit. So, if someone comes in every morning for a daily paper and we haven't seen them by lunchtime, we'll give them a call or pop round to check they're ok. We'll happily go the extra mile. We offer a bespoke service to many of our customers, taking orders over the phone or by email. And we'll deliver to their door or arrange out of hours collection, especially for them.

Our grant from The Somerset Fund will mainly go towards covering the costs of creating a warm and welcoming retail and meeting space, especially during the cold and wet winter months. We've brought our outside tables and chairs inside so we can continue to offer people a space to meet and have a hot drink and a chat. And we're buying a microwave so we can heat up pasties, soup and other snacks. We're hoping the opportunity to pop in and grab a hot pasty will appeal to our local farmers, too - especially during the busy lambing season - they work such long hours, they just don't have time to stop.

Our biggest challenge is attracting new customers, but we're always looking at expanding our offer to the community. We give a gift voucher to anyone who moves into the village to encourage them to come and see what we have to offer.

We're just a mile from Wimbleball Lake which attracts a lot of visitors and holidaymakers in the summer. To make the most of that additional trade we're going to trial opening two nights a week, on a Thursday and Friday, so when they arrive for the weekend, we'll be open and have the basics ready for them to buy.

We aren't here to make huge profits and we keep our prices very competitive. So when a freezer goes or the bills increase – both of which happened last year – we rely on grants to help us through. Being able to access funding for core costs gives us that boost when we really need it. A village needs a shop and a pub; they are the heart of a village community. My biggest fear would be for the shop to close; we've already seen a jump in our six-month electricity usage from £350 to £1,200 due to increased cost-of-living.

The Somerset Fund grant has helped keep a vital community facility alive. I just hope that when I'm elderly the shop will still be there for me. Thank you – you're keeping a lifeline to the community going."

South Somerset

The Somerset Fund stories - Somerset African Caribbean Network



Somerset African Caribbean Network (SACN) helps, supports people and collaborates with organisations across the county, delivering events and activities that provide communities with learning opportunities about the African Caribbean history and contribution to Britain.

We spoke to Susann Savidge from the network who told us how grants totalling £2,621 from The Somerset Fund helped SACN provide an opportunity for African Caribbean people in a rural environment to connect with each other and the wider community, sharing stories and creating opportunities for people to learn and be heard.

“We support the African Caribbean community in Somerset. The majority of the funding we’ve received from The Somerset Fund is for our core costs, enabling us to reach out to residents in Somerset who may be experiencing isolation. We’re developing resources that offer insight into the African Caribbean experience, including a website to help us connect with more people, share stories and present ourselves professionally online.

We’re planning to deliver a programme of events and activities that instil pride in our heritage, culture and legacy that are accessible, educational, cross cultural, cross generational and improves community cohesion - and we need funding to bring that alive.

South Somerset

The Somerset Fund stories - Somerset African Caribbean Network

"We're 17 members and growing. We're looking to increase that number by reaching out as effectively as we can. We set up before the death of George Floyd in America and the BLM protests that created a focus on race equality. After a period of absence, institutions and the general public became interested. With Covid restrictions behind us we can work towards increasing in-person events and encourage more engagement. We've worked hard to initiate and facilitate our projects to address the lack of resources, knowledge and improve staff confidence i.e: working closely with Somerset libraries to help raise awareness around race in the wider community.

We would like to include more people in what we do and for that to happen we need to improve how we reach out to people. It's a rural community and Somerset is a very white dominated county. We want to make sure we're reaching both people who've recently moved here and also long-standing residents. Support needs are multiple and we're about sharing information relating to our community.

And 2023 sees the 75th anniversary of the HMT Empire Windrush arriving in Britain on 22 June 1948, so we need to make sure this is acknowledged to honour the elder members of the Windrush community.

The history of people with African Caribbean heritage goes unrecognised due to small numbers, and the messaging was of no need to bring African Caribbean people to the table or add to the conversation – so I set out to address that. It's about educating people as to why we're here and the part we have played historically i.e. the NHS, and the war. There's a lot of work to be done. Our aim is to promote inclusivity and representation.

And thanks to our grant from Somerset Community Foundation, more people will learn about our culture and gain a better understanding of the legacy and contribution we've made."



Grants made in 2022-23

Mendip

- **Croscombe Parish Council - £800:** Towards a new play area in a rural community
- **Frome Community Bike Project - £2,500:** Solar panels to increase project's resilience
- **Frome Community Productions CIC - £806:** Frome FM Community Radio Station
- **Glastonbury (Wyrral Park) Bowls - £1,500:** Maintaining the club's green and clubhouse
- **Glastonbury Cricket Club - £1,000:** Maintenance of a community sports club
- **Litton Village Hall - £820:** To create a digital and physical social history of the village hall to celebrate 50 year anniversary
- **Mendip Disabled Association - £1,000:** Swimming sessions for people with disabilities
- **More Lands Collective - £2,500:** New Traveller community association in Glastonbury
- **SHARE: Frome - £1,500:** Advice and resources to reduce waste and save money
- **Shepton Mallet Baptist Church - £1,400:** Hearing loop to improve accessibility
- **Somerset Multicultural Association - £700:** Events to celebrate diversity and inclusion
- **St Benedict's Church, Glastonbury - £2,150:** Community lunches for local people
- **Stoke St Michael War Memorial Hall – £1,500:** Running costs of popular community building
- **Street Bowling Club - £1,000:** To help purchase a specialist lawnmower
- **The Equivalent Project - £2,500:** Equine-assisted therapy for women survivors of abuse
- **Wells City Band - £1,000:** Re-establishing a community brass band, post pandemic
- **West Pennard Gardening Club - £500:** Coach trips for gardening club members
- **Westbury-sub-Mendip Community Shop/Post Office - £2,500:** Improvements to community garden

Sedgemoor

- **Ashcott Football Club - £1,000:** Maintenance costs of local football club
- **Axbridge Pageant Festival - £1,850:** Running costs of historical pageant
- **Badgworth Schoolroom Management Committee - £1,500:** Community noticeboard in village
- **Bridgwater United Community Sports Trust - £1,500:** Costs of community outreach work
- **Cheddar Hockey Club - £2,200:** Purchasing kit to bridge the gap between junior and senior teams
- **Girlguiding Cheddar - £1,500:** Fire safety door for girl guiding hut
- **In Charley's Memory - £2,025:** Continuing Professional Development of counsellors
- **Monday Club - £1,500:** A club for people with learning disabilities in Burnham-on-Sea

Grants made in 2022-23 (cont.)

Sedgemoor (cont.)

- Sedgemoor Community Partnership - £2,000: Community Food Pantry in Highbridge
- St Mary's Bridgwater - £1,500: Toddler group salary costs
- St Mary's Bridgwater - £2,500: Creating more space in a community kitchen
- The Axbridge and District Museum Trust - £1,000: Volunteer expenses for Heritage Museum
- The Marketeers Carnival Club - £1,500: Materials for carnival floats in Bridgwater
- Wedmore Tuesday Club -£1,500: Lunch club for older people living in rural isolation

Somerset West and Taunton

- A Greener Langford Budville - £2,290: Plans to develop a woodland to improve biodiversity
- aKa Dance Theatre Company - £2,500: To take performance art to rural communities
- Bicknoller Village Hall - £2,500: Modern catering equipment for new community kitchen
- Brompton Regis Village Shop Ltd - £1,325: Offering a warm, welcoming community space
- Churchstanton Public Open Space Management Group - £2000: Access for all to local woodland
- Climate Action Taunton - £2,000: Inspire local people to take action in response to climate emergency
- Friendship Circle Langford Budville and Runnington - £500: Events and speakers for group
- Healthy Babies UK - £1,765: Post-natal support for mothers
- Huish Champflower Village Hall - £1,000: Kitchen installation in newly refurbished village hall
- Minehead Bowling Club - £2,500: Train volunteers to work with children and buy new kit
- Minehead Museum - £1,020: Insurance and conservation materials for local museum
- Moorvale Creative CIC - £1,500: Venue hire and tutors for community music group
- North Taunton Partnership - £2,000: School holiday activities for low-income families
- Nynhead Jubilee Playing Field Committee - £1,500: Exercise equipment for playing field

Grants made in 2022-23 (cont.)

Somerset West and Taunton (cont.)

- [Porlock FC - £1,500](#): Running costs of a rural football club
- [Positive AIMs - £1,920](#): Support group for adults with learning disabilities and/or dementia
- [Somerset Youth Theatre CIC - £2,000](#): Community youth theatre costs
- [St Luke's Church, Langley Marsh - £497](#): New chairs for community building
- [St Peter and St Paul's Church, Bishops Hull - £2,500](#): New community kitchen
- [Taunton Pride - £2,500](#): Bringing Somerset's LGBTQIA+ community together as part of Taunton Pride
- [Wiveliscombe Community Centre - £2,250](#): Keyless entry system for community centre
- [Withycombe Parish Council - £2,500](#): Children's playground in isolated rural community

South Somerset

- [Ashill Village Hall Community Centre – £2,500](#): Replace a roof and install solar panels
- [Chard Community Hub – £2,000](#): Establishing Community Pantry to combat food poverty
- [Love Yeovil - £2,500](#): Running a community cohesion event
- [Martock Carers Group - £ 240](#): Venue hire for local carers support group
- [Merriott Tithe Barn Committee - £ 2,500](#): Essential repairs to historic community building
- [Middleroom Wood CIC - £2,000](#): To create a new open-air heritage centre in the Blackdowns
- [Movies at Bayford - £1,350](#): Equipment for a movie club in a rural community
- [OSR Projects Art & Culture CIC - £1,000](#): Ceramic workshops in West Coker
- [Petherton Arts Trust - £ 1,604](#): Improve financial sustainability of rural arts centre
- [Shepton Beauchamp Cowleaze Meadow Project - £1,000](#): Electric lawnmower for community
- [Somerset African Caribbean Network - £ 2,500](#): Develop resources and engage residents
- [Somerset African Caribbean Network - £121](#): Raising awareness of the Windrush Generation

Grants made in 2022-23 (cont.)

South Somerset (cont..)

- **South Somerset Community Accessible Transport - £2,500:** Maintaining fleet of vehicles
- **The Meeting House Arts Centre – £1,500:** Running costs of community arts centre in Ilminster
- **Wincanton Town Festival - £2,500:** Towards artists, music and art installations of the town festival
- **Yeovil Amateur Pantomime Society - £1,500:** Subsidising the cost for participation in pantomime



Pictured top row, L - R: Frome Community Bike Project, Taunton Pride;

Pictured bottom row, L - R: Sedgemoor Community Partnership, Chard Food Pantry, Wiveliscombe Community Centre, In Charley's Memory.

Our wonderful supporters

We're particularly grateful to Somerset Council who partner with us and provide 50% matched funding for every donation received for The Somerset Fund.



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Council**

This generous gift means our supporters make an even bigger impact in our communities.

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- Somerset Council
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- The Bristol & West Endowment Fund
- The Rotary Club of Shepton Mallet
- Willie Gething

We're also hugely grateful to our other individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Thank you for changing lives in Somerset.

We hope you will consider continuing your support of The Somerset Fund.

You can also help us to make an even bigger difference by spreading the word and encouraging others to support our work.

Contact us:

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**The
Somerset
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