



The   
Somerset  
Fund

# THE SOMERSET FUND

## IMPACT REPORT 2023/24

Giving together to change the world  
on our doorstep

Somerset   
Community  
Foundation

Directing Funds  
Driving Change



Make the Sunshine CIC

# THANK YOU

We'd hoped to be telling a rather different story this year in terms of what life has been like for our local communities and the charities that serve them. But 4 years of uncertainty caused by the pandemic, followed by the cost-of-living crisis, has created significant and enduring challenges within our communities.

However, I hope you will agree that the local charities that we have supported through The Somerset Fund should inspire us and give us hope in the face of these adversities.

Too many of our neighbours are still struggling to afford to heat their homes, feed their families and look after their mental health and wellbeing. At the same time local groups tell us they continue to feel the impact of the economic squeeze, juggling increased running costs with falling income, while trying to meet the growing demand for their services.

And this is where the ongoing support of small, flexible grants through The Somerset Fund continues to play a crucial role, helping local groups when they're needed more than ever.

For these small local organisations, a grant from The Somerset Fund makes a huge difference and really does go a long way to supporting people facing the greatest challenges and hardship on our doorstep.

In this impact report, we're delighted to shine a light on more of the amazing local groups working to tackle the issues affecting communities across Somerset this year and who we've been able to support thanks to your generosity. Amazingly, since The Somerset Fund was established 6 years ago, we've awarded over 257 grants worth over £420,000 to small local groups working in areas such as mental health support, youth clubs, social clubs for older people and more.

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Looking to the year ahead, and while the challenges facing our communities remain stark, groups working at the heart of our communities offer hope for both the people they serve and for the wider community, bringing people together and providing a place to go locally for help or advice in times of need.

This report is a celebration of the change that is possible thanks to the power of communities to drive change and realise their dreams, as well as a chance to thank the incredible generosity of our supporters for helping to change the world on our doorstep for the better.

In this, the 6th year of The Somerset Fund, your generosity and support is more vital than ever to help local groups respond to the issues facing communities across our county.

We rely on the generosity and kindness of people to raise money for our work to help strengthen our communities. And so I thank you for choosing to support The Somerset Fund over the last year, bringing hope when it is needed most. Together, we're helping to make Somerset a place where our neighbours are better connected and supported, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin', written in a cursive style.

Justin Sargent  
Chief Executive



# THE DIFFERENCE YOUR DONATIONS HAVE MADE THIS YEAR

Thanks to your incredible generosity, in the last year we were able to award £75,180 in grants to 43 local groups and small grass roots charities right across the county. For many of the groups we support, a grant from The Somerset Fund made a huge difference, enabling them to keep going despite these uncertain times. On behalf of these small local groups and the people they help right across Somerset – thank you.

## 2023-24 AT A GLANCE\*



**£75,180** of grants made



Supporting **43** good causes



**34,021** local beneficiaries



**£1,748** average grant awarded

\*These financial results are subject to auditor and Trustee approval as at June 2024

# THE SOMERSET FUND IMPACT STORIES

## THE FOOD FOREST PROJECT

Tristan Faith, founder of The Food Forest Project, explains how a £2,500 grant from The Somerset Fund helped build a sustainable shelter to nurture love for local nature.



“We set up The Food Forest Project to address the dual issues of food poverty and biodiversity loss through local wild spaces where people could harvest their own food. But when the pandemic, and subsequent cost-of-living crisis hit, we knew we had to do more. We had to diversify what we did because the local need became so great. So, we’ve been busy setting up projects like our Food Bank Market Garden. It’s a space where staff and volunteers help grow free fresh produce for local food banks.

We’ve always been very, very grateful for the support that we get from The Somerset Fund – it’s invaluable. We were able to use the funds to build a shelter on our Worthington Woods site. Local Cubs and Beavers, as well as volunteers, use the space to learn more about the natural world. Worthington Woods is in a rural area, next to a social housing estate. It’s used by the community to grow free food, but also to teach children and other groups about the merits of biodiversity and producing food in harmony with nature.

The groups use the shelter as a welcome space where they can sit and discuss what they’re learning. It really diversifies the woods and makes them accessible to more people – whatever the weather. It opens up the site so people aren’t as exposed to the elements.

The groups that use it say they love the way they can get their hands in the soil. For instance, the other week, Guides were learning about how the soil works and they could see first-hand our wood chip and how we mulch the area. That kind of understanding is invaluable since we’re rapidly losing our soil fertility. With the shelter the young people have a space where they can get out in nature and it just kindles a sense of connection with their environment. That’s vital for the future.”



# THE SOMERSET FUND IMPACT STORIES

## PORLOCK INFORMATION CENTRE

Porlock Information Centre Manager Deborah Stanyon shares how The Somerset Fund supported Porlock Vale CIC with a grant for £2,500 to support the local community year-round.



“I’ve lived and worked here for 24 years – and when I suffered a really serious injury the local community helped scoop me back up. My family are wonderful, but they couldn’t look after me 24/7. I literally couldn’t do anything as I recovered and so people set up a rota where they were doing my shopping, changing my bed and just really supporting me.

That’s the kind of community spirit that helps make our Information Centre different from others. Obviously, we’re here to promote Porlock as a tourist destination. But we also make sure the local community is at the heart of everything we do. And during winter, when there are fewer tourists, 95% of our work is helping meet their needs.

Much of our role is about connecting people. We provide a space for everyone. Porlock has the oldest population in the UK and a lot of people are quite vulnerable and isolated. While we have lots of useful information on our website – like local bus timetables – I’m conscious that not everyone has the internet or email. So we organise a lot of events. For instance, we hold coffee mornings, have a Christmas afternoon quiz, concerts, open gardens, Porlock Weir Sea Festival and a Star Baker event where people can make cakes and decorate them. They’re all an opportunity for people to come together and feel a bit less isolated.

We keep a database of people who want to volunteer in the community, and we also have volunteers for our Porlock Lift Service who can offer local transport for vulnerable people. It’s wonderful. In 2023 we organised 141 trips for our vulnerable and isolated community.

The money we received from The Somerset Fund has been incredibly helpful in supporting us to keep the Information Centre open during winter. We’re working hard to make it sustainable and these pockets of funding help us meet the needs of the local community. We’d open even more hours if we could!”

# THE SOMERSET FUND IMPACT STORIES

## SOMERTON TOWN YOUTH F.C.

Justin Davies, Committee Chair at Somerton Town Youth Football Club, explains how The Somerset Fund helped support more children's football goals.



“Our club has been around since 2001, but the last year has been a bit of a rollercoaster! We offer community-spirited football experiences for local children and young people, aged 4-16. During Covid and the cost-of-living crisis we kept our fees low, but last year, rising costs meant we were very nearly bankrupt.

We cover a very wide local area. There are children from isolated, and socially and economically-deprived communities. We operate a ‘minimum fees policy’ so as many children as possible can participate. In fact, we charge one of the lowest annual fees in the country, which we are very proud of.

That means we have to make up the shortfall by fundraising. Without additional funding, we’d have to nearly double our fees. It’s been vital to us, and without it, expanding or developing would be prohibitively expensive, providing fewer opportunities for children to play and enjoy football.

We spent £1,400 of our grant on mandatory training and match-day footballs and £600 to provide volunteer training. It’s helped us launch our first girls’ team and also our Weetabix Wildcats initiative (football training for girls aged between 5 and 11). We were expecting around 10 girls to come along and over 30 girls signed up!

The grant helped us start a volunteer bursary scheme for 5 referees. We’re very keen to get qualified young referees at every game, as it allows the referee to grow and gain experience. It also frees up the coach to focus on developing the players. There’s massive demand for referees at the moment. We’ve managed to achieve our first female referee too, which helps meet our aim to increase female players, coaches and referees.

The grant has been extremely important to us – it’s helped us to grow. Last year we supported around 150 children, this year we are supporting 266 children. Without the funding we just wouldn’t have been able to expand like this.”

# Grants made in 2023-24

- Arts Taunton - £2,500: Youth board to plan, deliver and evaluate the Taunton Youth Culture and Arts Festival
- Ashcott Football Club - £1,950: Training and equipment
- Ashwick & Oakhill Village Hall & Recreational Ground Committee - £1,500: Purchase of two free-standing football goals for children
- Burnham & Highbridge Sea Cadet Unit - £1,500: Core costs
- Burnham Boat Owners Sea Angling Association - £1,500: Purchase a winch with light to fit on the new tractor
- Burnham Heritage Centre - £1,000: Reprint a popular informative leaflet
- Cheddar Arts Quarter C.I.C (otherwise known as The Arts Quarter) - £1,500: Sustaining a creative community hub
- East Huntspill Cricket Club - £2,000: Safety netting
- Fabula Arts - £700: Provide a series of drama sessions for children and young people in rural Somerset
- Friends of St. Leonard's (FOSL) - £2,500: Refurbishment of church hall to provide a warm and comfortable space
- Frome Community Education CIC - £750: Twice weekly IT drop in sessions in Frome
- Frome Festival - £2,500: Running costs for Frome Festival 2024
- Good Company Bruton CIC - £1,780 - Community Christmas event for 50 older people, vulnerable families and refugees living in and around Bruton
- Grand Western Greenway Association - £1,000: Costs to attend community events to promote cycling and walking in the Wellington/Taunton area
- Green Ilminster - £2,500: Core costs for community environmental umbrella group
- Hinton St George Active Living Group - £1,140: Hire of the village hall for 52 weeks
- Lopen PCC - £2,500: Renovation of community building including replacement of thatched roof
- Make the Sunshine CIC - £2,310: Bringing communities in Somerset together through creative workshops and performances
- Merriott Tithe Barn Committee - £1,450: Building renovation work
- Merriott Village Hall - £1,500: Installation of loft and cavity wall insulation
- Minehead and Exmoor Music Festival - £2,000: Festival running costs
- North Curry Sport - £2,500: Replacement tractor for volunteers to use for maintaining the community sports ground
- Oake and District Village Hall and Recreation Ground - £1,500: Repair and resurface the car park within the grounds of Oake Village Hall
- OSR Projects Art & Culture CIC - £2,000: Community places on a ceramics course in West Coker - Connecting Through Clay
- Parish Council of Aller - £1,650: Improve an existing public footpath providing year-round access to Langport and the Parrett Trail
- Pitminster & Angersleigh Playing Field Association - £2,500: ROOTED: a forest school for adults on Blagdon Green
- Polonia&Friends - £2,438: Summer camp activities and transport costs
- Porlock Vale CIC - £2,500: Visitor Centre/Community Hub running costs and coffee mornings
- Shapwick Parish Council - £2,500: Purchase of a large communal shed for use by the allotment society



## Grants made in 2023-24 (cont.)

- Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Project CIC - £800: Commissioning two artists to run a one day community workshop that culminates in a community art installation at the annual Snowdrop Festival
- Somerton Scout Group - £1,500: Landscaping to enable scouts and local community to take part in outdoor activities
- Somerton Town Youth Football Club - £2,000: Reach more children and young adults with increased sporting and football opportunities
- Spaxton Cricket Club - £1,000: Electronic scoreboard
- St Peter's Community Centre - £1,000: Westfield Community Pantry
- Stoke sub Hamdon Sports and Recreation Trust - £2,500: To replace an unusable skatepark with a new one for local young people to take ownership of
- Street Parochial Church Council - £300: 2 activity days for older people in Street
- Taunton and District Womens' Walking Football Club - £1,848: Tracksuits, sports bags and pitch fees
- The Chard Area Youth Committee - £2,500: Running costs for a community building
- The Food Forest Project - £2,500: A shelter at Wedmore Community Food Forest for community groups' use
- The Old Stores Studio - £1,000: Monthly, low-cost craft sessions open to the whole of Evercreech community on a drop-in basis
- The Somerscience Trust - £2,500: Running costs for Somerscience Festival 2024 taking place in Bruton and Castle Cary
- Tintinhull Community Hall - £864: Core costs for a lunch club for older people in South Somerset
- Wells City Band - £1,200: The purchase of instruments for new members.



Pictured top row, L - R: Westfield Community Centre, Yeovil; Old Stores Studio, Evercreech.

Pictured bottom row, L - R: Minehead and Exmoor Music Festival; Polania&Friends.

# 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.

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

- Benefact Group
- Curry Rivel Tennis Tournament
- David Salisbury Joinery
- Finger on the Pulse Research
- Host Somerset
- James and Jackie Lambert
- Linmardon Trust
- Mr and Mrs Virgin
- North Curry Committee Coffee Shop
- Pioneer Law
- RK Bell
- Roberts Group
- Somerset Council
- The Bristol & West Endowment Fund
- Wells Cathedral – with proceeds from services incl. The Readers' Service
- Wessex Water – with proceeds from their GetWaterFit Campaign
- 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 rely on the generosity of people across this wonderful county of ours to raise money for our work so that every penny can go towards strengthening our communities.

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 this flexible and increasingly popular local fund.

## Contact us:

Let's make Somerset better together - whether you're a business or individual, find out more about The Somerset Fund. Get in touch with our friendly team. Please contact:

Fiona Foster - Senior Philanthropy Manager, Somerset Community Foundation

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