



## Charities launch the 'Get Outside in Somerset' project

*The new initiative is helping people gain confidence to get back outdoors and to move more*

The Get Outside in Somerset project is a joint initiative from Somerset Activity and Sport Partnership (SASP), The Community Council for Somerset (CCS), Spark Somerset, and Somerset Wildlife Trust, funded by Somerset County Council Public Health.

Being outside brings huge benefits for our physical and mental health, but for a large majority of people, the Covid-19 pandemic has created many barriers to getting outside. It has seen an unprecedented disruption to people's lives and has had an impact on people's engagement in physical activity. In fact, [Sport England's Active Lives Survey](#) data for Somerset shows that 23% of the county are inactive, doing less than 30 minutes of activity a week.

The **Get Outside in Somerset** project is empowering and supporting people across Somerset to get outside and move in more ways that suit them. This could be anything from a short walk or a spot of gardening, to taking part in water sports on a local river or going for a run.

The project is bringing together organisations from across the county to offer the people of Somerset the advice and tools they need to build their confidence and get outside, to spend time with family, have fun with friends, and enjoy the wonderful landscapes that Somerset has to offer.

A new [website](#) provides a platform for tips, advice and guidance on how to keep or get active outdoors. Covering a wide variety of activities, events and challenges, as well as information on a wide range of topics across health and wellbeing, the website will be regularly updated with new activities to inspire the Somerset community. From yoga in the park, fishing, and geocaching, to cycling, climbing, and forest bathing, there is something for everyone.

Sarah Coombs, Strategic Lead for Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership, comments, "We know that time spent moving outside can help boost your mood, sharpen your focus, reduce stress, and improve sleep. From spending time with family and having fun with friends, to enjoying the fresh air and scenery, we want to help people find simple and fun ways to get outside in Somerset. After the year we have had, we hope to use this project as a vehicle to inspire people across the region to escape the stresses of modern life and reconnect with friends and family in the outdoors."

Annouska Evans is currently on maternity leave after having her first baby and loves to spend time outside walking. She lives in Taunton with her husband, daughter, and their dog. She said, "You don't have to go far, we love going to Longrun Meadow and the River Tone which are accessible from Taunton town centre. We have a large dog who enjoys lots of exercise, and we love to spend time as a family walking him. Even spending an hour outdoors will do you good. It needn't take up lots of your time!"

Roger Ballantine is an ex-teacher of Design Technology and an avid birdwatcher. He is married with two sons and four grandchildren, all in Somerset. He said, "I first started birdwatching when I was young and took our dog for walks around the fields of Taunton. Seeing all the birds but not knowing

what they were, made me want to find out! The sights and sounds of our countryside are so diverse, and throughout the pandemic many more people have been out and about and got to know their area a little better. Hopefully they will have seen the wildflowers emerging, the arrival of Swallows, and heard the birds singing. That alone is enough to give our mental health a boost and open our eyes to how lucky we are.”

Laura Briggs is a runner and mum of two. She lives in Somerton and like many parents, juggles work with family life. She is one of the first Running Mayor’s in the UK, representing Somerset, and wants to encourage people of all abilities to get out and try running for themselves. Laura gives some advice for people who want to try running for the first time, “Don’t compare yourself to anyone else. If you have the desire to get out and try running, then do it for you. Don’t beat yourself up if you walk either – I always walk up hills. Make it enjoyable and take photos! Give yourself an achievable goal such as running to the end of the road, or running for three minutes, walking for two and never underestimate your achievement. There’s no such thing as a bad runner, if you got outside and moved – you did it!”

For more information on the **Get Outside in Somerset** project and to get involved, please visit [www.GetOutsideInSomerset.co.uk](http://www.GetOutsideInSomerset.co.uk)