

Walton-in-Gordano circular walk



Distance:
about 5.5 miles

Difficulty:
medium – mostly level but with a steep climb near the beginning. Not suitable for buggies or wheelchair users.

Duration:
about 2.5 - 3 hours

Maps:
OS Explorer 154

Refreshments:
None on route. Nearby pubs include the White Hart Inn in Weston-in-Gordano, the Ship Inn in Redcliff Bay and the Old Inn in Clevedon.



This month's walk is an invigorating stroll through the countryside north of Clevedon. A steep climb at the start sets you up for a route through open fields, and even a golf course, before returning along a pleasant coastal path.

From Bay Road follow the steps down onto the public footpath. Turn right and follow the path with the Bristol Channel on your left.

About half a mile later you will come to a junction with another footpath leading directly up the hill. Take this and at the top, after pausing to catch your breath, follow the path round to the left.

At the end you will come to a wooden stile and junction so take the right-hand route. Follow this track and go through another gate onto the road. Clevedon Golf Club is on your left and Walton Castle is also in sight.

At the road junction, turn left and veer uphill slightly. The public footpath continues through a kissing gate onto the golf course. A road also leads up to Walton Castle, which is now private property.

How to get there:

By car

Follow the B3124 from Clevedon or Portishead, following signs to Clevedon golf course. Opposite St. Mary's Church there are parking bays in Bay Road.

Grade II listed Walton Castle was built between 1615 and 1620 as a hunting lodge but was derelict by 1791. New owners began restoration in 1984 and the castle is now available for private holiday rental.

Follow the footpath through the golf course, avoiding flying balls on the way, and continue across the fairway as it enters West Wood through a kissing gate. Soon there is a bench to rest although the hum of traffic on the B3124 may interrupt the peace.

The path leads through another kissing gate to the graveyard of St Paul's

Things to remember:

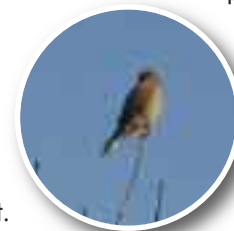
- Check weather conditions before you leave
- Wear suitable footwear – parts of the route can be very muddy in winter
- Keep dogs under close control



Church, into the village of Walton-in-Gordano.

Turn left at the road, past houses for about a quarter of a mile, until the footpath sign appears on the right, leading up into Walton Common.

This is managed by Avon Wildlife Trust and a board at the start gives information about what to look out for. The common is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Follow the path upwards until you come to an open area. Near the top of the hill the path forks, so take the right-hand route and continue across the open common. Trees were



first cleared for farming here about 2,500 years ago and humps in the landscape indicate an Iron Age settlement.

You will then come to Common Hill Wood and the path continues through the trees.

A T-junction marks the end of the path. Turn left, out of the woods, and walk up the driveway towards the house. Cross Walton Road and the public footpath continues straight ahead. This steep path crosses a field and leads back to the coastal path.

It is now a leisurely one and three-quarter mile walk back to Ladye Bay and your starting point, passing Walton signal station on the way.

Features to look out for:

- Ladye Point
- Walton Castle
- Views across Gordano Valley Nature Reserve
- Coastal path – part of Gordano Round recreational route

Call Weston-super-Mare Tourist Information Centre on 01934 888 800 for details of local walks.
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/tic



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (North Somerset Council, 100023397, 2008)

Improvements enhance Weston's seafront



Cranes and diggers became a familiar sight on Weston-super-Mare's beach last year during a £29m project to restore the seafront.



The three-stage project has already seen Marine Lake refurbished and sea defences installed below the sand to help protect thousands of homes and businesses from flooding.

By spring a new splash wall will be completed and by summer repairs to the sea wall will be finished, including improvements to Beach Lawns and the promenade.

The sea defences are now hidden below the sand but attractive stone seating has been installed for visitors to enjoy the view.

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/seafront

What's happened below the sand?

- Almost a mile of sheet piling has been used as part of the sea defences.
- Over 300 pre-cast concrete stepped blocks, weighing up to 20 tonnes each, were installed.
- Two 160 tonne giant "crawler" cranes moved everything around.
- Stone was recycled to use in the next phase of work.
- It took less than four months to install the 302 pre-cast concrete units at the base of the sea wall. Around 100 tonnes of stone sculptured seating has been incorporated into the design.
- The final pre-cast concrete stepped block was installed ahead of schedule last October.

What's on

Inside	
The Playhouse Theatre	16-17
Winter Gardens	17
Events across the area	18

Star magician set to cast his spell over Weston

Master magician and entertainer Paul Daniels will cast a spell over North Somerset next month when he steps onto the stage in Weston-super-Mare.

The much-loved performer has entertained audiences for the past 30 years and he will be showing off his latest tricks at the Playhouse Theatre in March.



www.pauldaniels.co.uk

Life spoke to the star to find out what the Paul Daniels Show is all about...

Have you performed in Weston-super-Mare before?

I've been to Weston many times. I like it there; it's a lovely town with lots of nice little shops. It'll be nice to return to the Playhouse, too.

What can the audience expect to see?

It's like an old-style variety show. There will be singers, dancers, music and some magic. There's something for everyone.

You've been in show business for a long time now – how do you keep so enthusiastic?

I always wanted to be in show business, I love the variety of it.

When I was 11 I first read a book about entertaining and realised that's what I wanted to do. I've done TV, radio, panto, after-dinner speaking... My life is just full of variety.

You've performed in front of world leaders and royals – do you get nervous?

No, I never get nervous. One of the best performances I ever did was in Belgium to help raise funds for a cancer charity. The whole audience was made up of royal families from all over Europe and there were princesses with tears running down their faces from laughing so much. That was a very good show.

You write an online blog, don't you?

The blog has really taken off, especially when I was in panto at Christmas. I like people and people seem to like what I do. Sometimes I do get back-handed compliments – people say that they can't stand me on TV but think I'm very good live. So that's a compliment, isn't it?

So you're not planning on retiring any time soon?

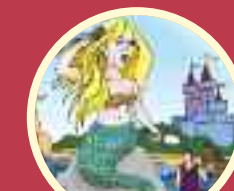
I have retired. I was tired yesterday, I was re-tired today...

Paul Daniels, described as one of the most accomplished and exciting magicians in the world, is appearing at the Playhouse Theatre, in Weston-super-Mare, on Sunday 8 March, from 7.30pm.

Tickets cost £14, £12 concessions, or £7.50 for children.

The winners of the Peter Pan competition in December's Life were Freya Shepherd, of Weston-super-Mare, Mr. B.J Richards, of Weston-super-Mare, and Christine Weller. Congratulations to you all.

AT THE PLAYHOUSE



The Little Mermaid



Youth Jazz Orchestra

www.theplayhouse.co.uk

Key

- Film Society
– free for members
- Friends of the Playhouse
– discounts for members
- Amateur/Community

Tue 10 – Wed 11

7.30pm (Tue), 5pm and 8pm (Wed)

Chinese State Circus

Prepare to be amazed as the sensational Chinese State Circus and martial arts warriors from the Shaolin Temple are joined for the first time by the Tai An Acrobatic Troupe to present a dazzling new show. Featuring an action packed array of acrobatics, gymnastics, pole-balancing, contortion, colourful traditional dancing and the deadly grace of martial arts, this spectacular family show is not to be missed!

"The most exhilarating circus it has ever been my privilege to see."

The Evening Standard

£22, £16, £10 • Concessions £3 off (Except bottom price)
Family Ticket £70, £50



February

Tue 3 6.30pm
Dance Their Socks Off!
£5 • Concessions £3

Wed 4 – Thur 5 7pm
Churchill Goes Global Rock
£7.50 • Children £5

Fri 6 7.30pm
Fairport Convention
£17.50

Sat 7 8pm
4 Poofs and a Piano
£15

Sun 8 5pm
Weston Youth Orchestra
£9 • Children (under12) £5

Tue 10 – Wed 11
7.30pm (Tue) 5pm and 8pm (Wed)
Chinese State Circus
£22, £16, £10
Concessions £3 off (Except bottom price)
Family Ticket £70, £50

Fri 13 7.30pm
Elkie Brooks
£20, £19

Sun 15 2.30pm and 6.30pm
Jayne Elizabeth Stage School present
Dreams
£11.50 • Concessions £9

Thur 19 – Sat 21
3pm (Thur)
11am and 3pm (Fri and Sat)
Bruce James Productions present
The Little Mermaid
£9 • Children £7.50 • Family Ticket £28
Groups 10+ £7

Tue 24 2.30pm and 7.30pm
Brideshead Revisited
The Film Cert 12A 133 mins
Evening: £4.50 • Concessions £4
Matinee: £3.50
Free entry to Film Society Members

Shakespeare 4 Kidz present
All tickets £9
School Groups: 1 teacher free per 10 children paid for

Thur 26 10.30am and 2pm
The Tempest

Fri 27 10am and 1.30pm
Romeo and Juliet – The Musical

Sat 28 7.30pm
National Youth Jazz Orchestra
£15 • Concessions £13.50
Groups 10+ £13.50

March

Sun 1 7.30pm
Moscow Ballet (La Classique) present
Giselle
£20, £18
Concessions £1 off • Children £10.50

Fri 13 7.30pm
Elkie Brooks

Elkie Brooks is one of the most successful and popular singers the UK has ever produced and is still proving to be one of the most powerful and versatile vocal talents of our generation. Featuring some of her classic hits, blues, jazz and perhaps a song or two from her forthcoming album, this electric evening is guaranteed to leave you begging for more.

"Still one of the great British voices."
The Guardian

www.elkiebrooks.com
£20, £19



Shakespeare 4 Kidz return to The Playhouse to present their exciting musical adaptation of two of Shakespeare's classic plays. Perfect for those studying Shakespeare at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

Thur 26 10.30am and 2pm

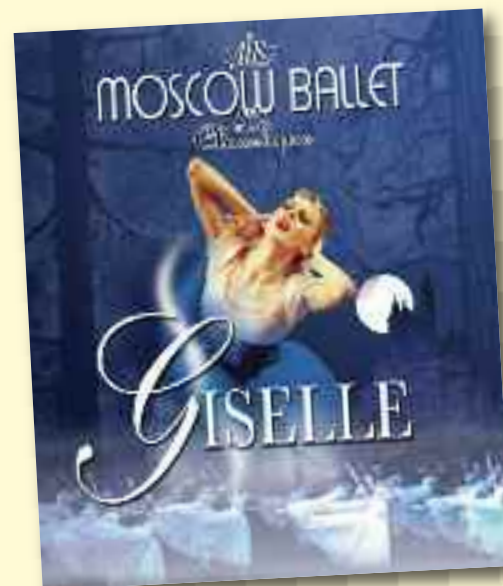
The Tempest

A storm! A shipwreck! An enchanted island! All under the spell of one man – Prospero, the former Duke of Milan. Shakespeare 4 Kidz – The Tempest is a mystical, magical, mysterious, musical romantic comedy of revenge, a father's love for his daughter and the misuse of power.

Fri 27 10am and 1.30pm
Romeo and Juliet – The Musical

Two families. One long standing feud. Two young people destined to fall in love...and die. Romeo and Juliet, the most famous love story in the world, is brilliantly and often hilariously brought to life in a vibrant, fun-filled rock 'n' rolling Shakespeare 4 Kidz production touring the UK prior to another international season.

£9
School Groups: 1 teacher free per 10 children paid for



Sun 1 March 7.30pm
Moscow Ballet (La Classique) present
Giselle

The world-renowned Moscow Ballet (La Classique) demonstrate their continued quality of dance and performance in this atmospheric production of the classic ballet Giselle. With its haunting musical score, Giselle is evocative, moving and powerful as it tells the story of the beautiful village maiden Giselle and her two suitors Prince Albrecht and Hilarion, continuously shifting scenes between the fantastic ethereal and rustic existential worlds.

£20, £18
Concessions £1 off • Children £10.50



Special Events

CSF Wrestling
Saturday 7 February
7.30pm (Doors open 7pm)
Six action-packed bouts of family entertainment
Adults £9 Concessions £7
www.csfwrestling.co.uk

Festival of Light Workshop
Saturday 7 February – Aura reading
Contact Dr Elizabeth Ann Diamond
01934 624 939

Evening Social Dance
Hosted by Sid Gateley
Sunday 8 February 8-11pm
Tickets £7

Weston-super-Mare Farmers Market
High Street, Weston-super-Mare
Saturday 14 February

Charity Social Dance
In aid of Weston Hospicecare
Friday 20 February 8-11.30pm
Presented by Mark and Tracy Helmore and Sue Burroughs
£6 (£5.50 in advance)
Contact Mark 01934 518 750 or Sue 01934 621 281

To book tickets for any of these events call the Box Office
01934 64 55 44

Cheques should be made payable to North Somerset Council. Bookings should be paid for within four working days.

Please mention NS Life when booking your tickets

To book tickets for any of these events, call the Box Office

01934 64 55 44

Cheques should be made payable to North Somerset Council. Bookings should be paid for within four working days.

Please mention NS Life when booking your tickets

Local events

February Events

Fridays 6, 13, 20, 27

Good Companions senior citizens club
9-11.30am. Somerset Hall, Portishead
01275 848 059

Monday 9 – Saturday 14

Nailsea Theatre Club present Alan Ayckbourn's Things We Do For Love
7.45pm. Nailsea Little Theatre
Union Street, Nailsea
£7.50. Advance tickets only.
Call 07772 981 037

Saturday 14

Abbots Leigh village market
10am-noon. Village Hall, Abbots Leigh
01275 372 387

Yatton village market 10am-noon

Wednesday 18 – Saturday 21

HMS Pinafore by Clevedon Gilbert and Sullivan Society Princes Hall, Clevedon
Tickets £8.50/7.50 - 01275 874 651

Saturday 21

Claverham village market 10am-noon
Bleadon village market 9am-12.30pm
Coronation Halls

Community Cafés

Creative ways to recycle

Friday 20 10am-1pm
The Wesley Centre, Portishead

Friday 27 10am-1pm
The Old School Rooms, Congresbury
01934 529 320

Information coffee mornings

Friday 6 9-11.30am
Worle Community Centre

Wednesday 11 10.30-11.30am
Corpus Christi church hall

Thursday 12 9-11.30am
Winscombe market

Wednesday 25 10.15-11.30am
Nightjar Pub, Mead Vale

Dance

Tuesdays 3, 10, 17, 24

Backwell Sequence Dance Club
8-10.15pm. Mayfair Quickstep and other oldies. WI Hall, Station Road, Backwell. 01275 462 366

Avon Amateur Dancers Club
7.30pm-10.30pm
Somerset Hall, Portishead
01275 848 059

Wednesdays 4, 11, 18, 25

Sequence Tea Dance 2-4pm
Somerset Hall, Portishead
01275 848 059

Thursdays 5, 12, 19, 26

Yatton Sequence Dance Club
2-4.30pm. Claverham Village Hall
01934 838 906

Music

Wednesday 18

Jazz at the Orange 8-11pm
Roy Pellett's Dixie 5
Prince of Orange Inn, Yatton
Advance tickets £7 or £8 on the door.
01934 832 193

Saturday 28

Fascinating Rhythm concert 7.30pm
A ladies barbershop group
St. Andrew's Church, Congresbury
Tickets £7 on the door or call
01934 838 843. All proceeds for
Weston Hospicecare.

Fitness

Fridays 6, 13, 20, 27

Tai Chi £2 per session
2-3pm Winscombe Community Centre
3.30-4.30pm Banwell Community Centre
Cheryl Mouniford – 07840 350 334

Saturdays 7, 14, 21, 28

Skater Hockey – Clevedon Cobras
10am-noon
Strode Leisure Centre, Clevedon
First session free to new members.
Please bring own skates. Minimum age
eight years. 01275 876 068.

March

Friday 6 (first Friday of every month)

Social dance – ballroom, sequence,
Latin American 8-11.30pm
Somerset Hall, Portishead
£4 inc refreshments. 01275 847 547

Saturday 7

Kingston Seymour village market
10am-noon

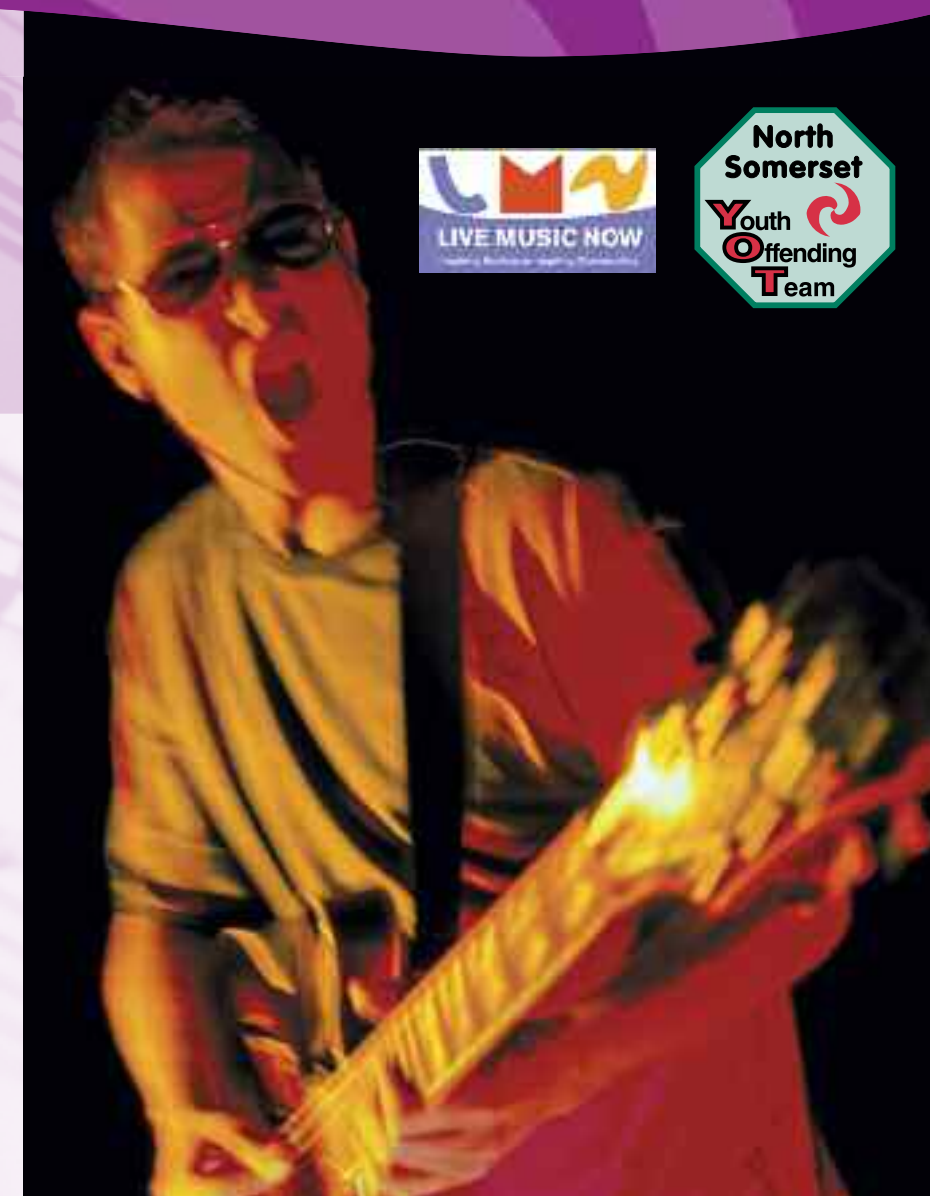
Young offenders hit the right notes

Young offenders from Weston-super-Mare have been given a unique opportunity to work with professional musicians and produce their own CD.

North Somerset's Youth Offending Team, in conjunction with Live Music Now, organised a series of workshops to engage young people in live music and music technology to encourage them to express themselves.

The 14 young people who took part had either offended or were considered to be at risk of offending. Many had poor school attendance, were engaged in anti-social behaviour, or were known to be misusing substances.

During the sessions, five professional musicians gave tuition and guidance so the young people could either perform songs or work on laptops to produce them if they didn't want to sing live.



Activity worker Tom Isom, from North Somerset Council's Youth Offending Team, said: "The project was a great success, with full attendance and participation by young people who have previously been notoriously difficult to engage."

"We were there to encourage them to participate and ensure they behaved responsibly, and after only three days they had learnt enough to give a live concert in front of family and friends."

"The experience of performing live is something that the young people, and members of the audience, will never forget."

One 15-year-old girl who took part said: "The best thing about the experience was learning the piano and meeting new people."

Songs written during the workshops have been recorded onto a 22-track CD as a permanent record of their achievements.



www.n-somerset.gov.uk/yot



History comes to life

History will come alive at North Somerset Museum this month when visitors can meet colourful characters from the past.

Tudors, Saxons, Vikings, and Romans will be taking over the museum in Weston-super-Mare during the popular History Week, from 16 to 20 February.

People will have the opportunity to see re-enactments, try clothes and armour on, and handle objects to discover how our ancestors lived.

The hands-on event is a fun way of getting in touch with history and learning about the past.

You could find out about the life of a Roman female gladiator, a Napoleonic soldier, or a Tudor explorer or maybe meet a Viking.

Normal admission prices apply but all the activities are free. No booking is necessary – just turn up on the day. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Monday Day to day life of the Saxons
Tuesday Napoleonic Wars and Regency fashion
Wednesday Francis Drake and Tudor explorers
Thursday Vikings encamped in the courtyard
Friday Domestic and military life of the Romans

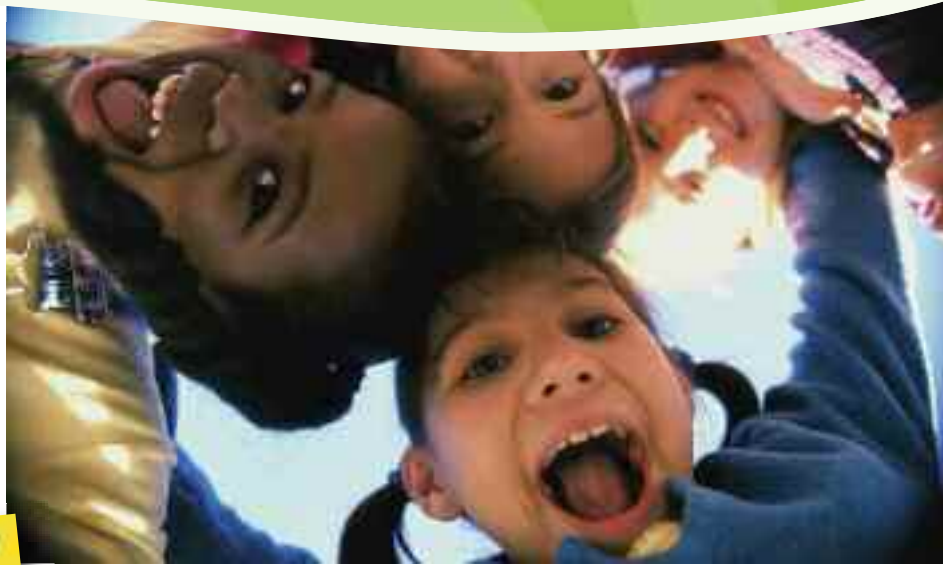
North Somerset Museum, in Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare, is open from Monday to Saturday, 10am-4.30pm.

01934 621 028
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/museum

Holiday fun in North Somerset

Schools holidays will be here again soon and there are plenty of activities lined up across the district to help keep boredom at bay.

The week-long holiday gives young people the chance to get away from their TVs and computer games to try something different, make new friends and learn a host of new skills.



And if they've got a Young Person's Key, there are even more opportunities to have more fun for their money.

At leisure centres, soccer fans will be put through their paces during football fun days at Swiss Valley Sports Centre in Clevedon, while archery and mini tennis days will be held at Gordano Sports Centre in Portishead.

Over at Churchill Sports Centre, the Tigers Club and Cool Catz holiday play schemes will be open all week.

Tigers Club is for four to eight year olds and



includes activities such as crafts, face painting and swimming. Eight to 12 year olds can enjoy swimming, pool inflatables and trampolining at the Cool Catz club. Both run from Monday to Friday, 8.30am-3.30pm (or 5.30pm).

Other activities on offer at Churchill include trampolining, karting, football and even professional swimming certificates. Both the RLSS national pool lifeguard qualification and ASA/UKCC Level 1 in teaching aquatics can be studied from 14 February. The six-day lifeguard course costs £200 and is available for over 16s, while the five-day teaching aquatics course costs £340 for over 18s. Call Di Wookey on 01934 427 222 for more information.

More fun for less money

Youngsters can unlock the door to a fun and active future with a special card offering discounts on a range of social and leisure activities.

The Young Person's Key gives heavily discounted prices for adventurous activities, from rock climbing and snowboarding to paintballing and climbing.

- Grab a snowboard or some skis for discounted activities at Avon Ski and Action Centre in Churchill.
- Feed baby alpacas or meet South African animals at Noah's Ark Zoo Farm in Wraxall and take a friend for free.
- Book a game at Skirmish Paintball in Portishead and get 200 paintballs free.
- Listen to your favourite band with 50 per cent off CD and DVD hire at your local library.
- Enjoy being pampered with 10 per cent off a Beauty Time party and receive free jewellery.
- Challenge your friends to a game at AMF Bowling in Weston-super-Mare with two games for the price of one.
- Learn the ropes at Undercover Rock in Bristol with money off a beginners' climbing course.



- Get active at Mendip Outdoor Pursuits with 15 per cent off selected activities.
- Dance the night away with 50p off entrance to Friday night discos at Barcode youth café in Weston-super-Mare.
- Have a free cycle safety check at Bicycle Chain in Weston-super-Mare.
- Skate along to Bristol Ice Rink and get 50 per cent off.
- Visit the oldest purpose-built cinema in the world – the Curzon in Clevedon – and bring a friend for free.
- Get free membership at any North Somerset Council-run youth club, along with 10 per cent off the admission fee and any activity.

Enjoy unlimited opportunities for sport

A national programme to get teenagers to do more than five hours of PE and sport a week is going from strength to strength.

Sports Unlimited is a three-year programme aimed at getting 900,000 more 11 to 19 year olds choosing a



Two of the latest activities on offer are squash at Hutton Moor Leisure Centre in Weston-super-Mare, and canoeing at Marine Lake in Clevedon. Squash runs on Thursdays 5, 12, 26 February and 5, 12 March, from 4.30-5.30pm, costing £2 per session. Call Hutton Moor to book.

Canoeing takes place on Sundays 8, 15, 22 February and 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 March, from 9.30-11am. It costs £16 for eight weeks (payable in advance). Contact Mike Perrott on 01275 856 127 or email mike.perrott@ukonline.co.uk.



vast range of sports, including ones that Team GB excelled in at last year's Olympics.

Here in North Somerset a variety of classes is available, including fencing, climbing, archery and in-line skate hockey.

Young people can't have all the fun...

Over 60s will soon get to swim for free for two years at council-run leisure centres thanks to a government grant.

North Somerset Council has been allocated £72,614 to provide free swimming for senior citizens for two years from this April.

The money is expected to cover the cost of the scheme but if take-up exceeds expectations, operators running the leisure centres will pay the difference.

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees, executive member whose portfolio includes leisure, said: "We are delighted to have reached agreement with our operators to provide this free programme at no cost to local taxpayers, and look forward to launching it in the spring."

Swiss Valley Sports Centre:
01275 877 182

Gordano Sports Centre:
01275 843 942

Churchill Sports Centre:
01934 852 303

Hutton Moor Leisure Centre:
01275 810 995

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/leisure

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/ypk

www.go4life.org



Right ways into work

Unemployment rates for disabled people remain stubbornly high but a tailored scheme here in North Somerset is trying to tackle the problem.

The Workright scheme aims to help disabled people out of unemployment by finding suitable work to make best use of their abilities.

It is proving a great success at North Somerset Council so *Life* caught up with someone who has benefited...

World of opportunity opens up

Ruth Kiazim's confidence has grown enormously since she started working part-time at The Campus library, in Weston-super-Mare, in September 2007.

She spends Monday and Tuesday mornings doing a variety of jobs, including filing books and DVDs, cleaning, preparing tea and coffee, and general office duties.

Ruth said: "I used to be a cleaner in the residential house I lived in. It was not much of a life. I never went into the outside world. Now I'm getting out and it's given me confidence."

Ruth, originally from London, has lived in Weston-super-Mare for the past 10 years. She has impaired hearing in both ears and mild learning difficulties.

Ruth said: "I am quite happy now. Working here has given me more opportunities and everyone is nice.



"A long time ago I wouldn't want anyone to help me and I always wanted to do things on my own but I couldn't.

"Now people help me and I'm happy with the support. I want people to show me how to do things, not do it all for me. I do as much as I can."

Ruth also volunteers at an RSPCA charity shop and has signed up to be a Travel Buddy to help other disabled people learn to use public transport.

She added: "I want to let people know it is okay for them to receive help."

Mencap Pathway employment service: 0117 9655 623
Working Links: 01934 529 810



What is the Workright scheme?

Workright is a tailored approach to recruitment that breaks down barriers to permanent paid employment for disabled people.

The council works with Mencap, who are experts in supporting people with learning disabilities, and Working Links, a national company supporting people on benefits back into work, to deliver the scheme and ensure a smooth transition into work.

Jane Prior, lead service manager at Mencap, said: "We are delighted to have been part of this project and regularly use North Somerset Council as an example of best practice.

"There has been a huge investment time-wise with this project and it is very rewarding to see people with learning disabilities as the customer face of the council."

Oliver Green, partnership and provision manager at Working Links, said: "The council, like us, are forward thinking and fully committed to the continued development of this flexible and tailored route into sustainable employment."

For details about supported work opportunities with the council and other employers please contact Working Links and Mencap.

Carers provide short breaks for parents

Parents with disabled children are getting much-needed breaks thanks to a dedicated group of people who provide valuable short-term care.

Family link carers give parents the chance to enjoy a night off by providing child-care on a regular basis, for a few hours to overnight or weekend breaks.

Carers across North Somerset look after children who have a learning disability, minor physical disability, or both. This could include sight, hearing or speech impairments.

Veronica and Martin Evans, from Weston-super-Mare, have been family link carers for the past six years.

Veronica said:

"You get as much out of it as the children do. Any little triumph they have, every step forward, is great."

Carers can look after a child until they reach 18 and so far the couple have looked after five boys and two girls, with no plans to stop any time soon.

Veronica said: "We had been looking after Martin's mum, who was going blind, and afterwards it felt there was a big empty space in the house. I saw an advert in the paper and it went from there."

Martin said: "It's very rewarding and it's never as scary as you first think. Once you get the children's trust and get to know their likes and dislikes, it's great."



Carers Martin and Veronica Evans

"When children come to us, they get 100 per cent attention. They come here for fun and they are the number one priority when they arrive."

The pair take advantage of free bus passes and reduced entry for attractions to go out and about with the children.

Veronica said: "You only have a short time with them and it goes so quickly. We do different things from their usual family activities, so it's another learning curve."

No special qualifications are needed, although patience and understanding will help. Training is provided by the Family Link Scheme at North Somerset Council and carers can contact them at any time for advice.

Veronica added: "You are absolutely terrified when you first start and have lots of questions. You ask yourself if you'll be able to cope but you pick it up so quickly. The reward is seeing the children come out of themselves, develop new skills and become more independent."

Anyone who wants to become a carer must first pass an assessment and have references checked. Links are then made with a young person and their family and informal meetings are held to work out how often visits will take place.



**Family Link
Recruitment and Assessment Team
Disabled Children, Weston Court,
Oldmixon Crescent,
Weston-super-Mare BS24 9AU
01934 427 682
FamilyLinkScheme
@n-somerset.gov.uk**

Tackling peak oil prices and creating community spirit

When crude oil reached a record high of \$147 a barrel last July, people around the world had a glimpse of a future without the black stuff.

Since then prices have tumbled with the fall-out from the credit crunch and global recession but the realities of peak oil and irreversible climate change aren't going away.

North Somerset villages – including Long Ashton, Wrington and Winscombe – are tackling this with locals growing their own vegetables, rearing chickens and boosting community spirit.

Transition Long Ashton was set up last June and the group meets monthly to swap tips, watch topical films, and discuss ways of making small steps together to reduce their reliance on oil.

Spokesperson Bill Roberts said: "The transition movement is a response to climate change and the end of cheap oil. Demand is outstripping supply and we cannot carry on as we have been. It's not just a practical issue;

it's about imagining how things could be, in a positive sense. Fossil fuels are limited resources but human ingenuity and co-operation are not, and we can use them to develop local solutions.

"Most skills we have learned in the last 20 years revolve around pressing electronic buttons but we need to relearn older skills, beginning with growing food.

"Reducing our carbon footprint generally means increasing interaction with other people, by boosting local business and food production. It's amazing how the village has come together."

Subgroups have formed within the main transition group depending on people's interests, such as food or energy. On Tuesday 10 February a Grow It group will launch to support people growing their own food.

Residents have also set up a weekly café in the village hall, where links have been made with local organic bakers and farmers, as well as



organising tree planting in the recreation ground.

Long Ashton-based company Solarsense has also installed 30 solar systems in village homes.

Resident Bill Barritt had panels and photo voltaic cells installed on his roof last April to heat his water and produce electricity.

He received a £2,500 grant from the Government to help foot the £9,500 bill and said: "It's an enormous benefit, especially the hot water. We turned the boiler off last April and didn't switch it on again until the beginning of October. Our gas bill for the summer months was 65p."

Bill now sells his electricity back to Scottish and Southern Energy for 20p per kW/hour. He anticipates he will recover the initial outlay in ten years.

Bill, who also has a well-stocked vegetable garden, said: "I just think that any conscientious citizen should be doing something to reduce their carbon emissions."



www.transitionlongashton.co.uk
www.wringtonsomerset.org.uk/organisations/transitionvillage.html
www.transitionwinscombe.org
www.solarsense-uk.com