

# Somerset West and Taunton

## **Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

### **Issue 98 Week ending 20/03/2022**

#### **SWT Council's priority strategic themes and outcomes**

Somerset West and Taunton Council's four strategic themes are as follows:

- Our Environment and Economy
- A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
- Homes and Communities
- An Enterprising Council

[Click here](#) to view SWT's expected outcomes.

## **Key Messages this week**

### **1. Government confirms new 'unitary' Somerset Council**

Following consideration by both Houses of Parliament, the Secretary of State has made the Somerset Structural Changes Order 2022 which paves the way for the new Somerset Council to be established on 1 April 2023.

The Order comes into force on 16 March 2022 and gives approval to the local elections on 5 May for 110 councillors to the County Council and to the elections for city, town and parish councils across Somerset.

It also hands responsibility for building the single unitary council to a new Implementation Executive, while setting the legal basis for the new council that will replace Somerset County Council and four district councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset) on 1 April 2023.

Following the approval of the Structural Changes Order, the notice of elections will be published on Monday 21 March and nomination papers for prospective candidates will need to be submitted by 5 April.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## 2. Democracy and Governance

### Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- **Monday 21 March** – SWT Licensing Committee in the JMR at 6.15pm. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **Tuesday 22 March** – Special Meeting, SWT Audit and Governance Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **Thursday 24 March** – Phosphates Planning Sub-Committee at 1.00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **Monday 28 March** – Tenants Strategic Group in the JMR at 6.00pm.
- **Tuesday 29 March** – SWT Full Council in the JMR at 6.15pm. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 25 March).

The meetings will still all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences, please visit the SWT website by [clicking here](#). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements. Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT [website](#).

Contact the Governance Team [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

## 3. National action needed to address phosphates issue

Councils in Somerset are a step closer to minimising delay and uncertainty around planning applications which could contribute to unacceptable amounts of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors.

They have now received a detailed report on potential solutions which would enable developments to come forward. However, it is clear from the report that action is also needed at national level to address the issue and unlock housing development.

The district councils at Somerset West and Taunton, Mendip, Sedgemoor and South Somerset together with Somerset County Council have been working in

partnership to address the issue using funding support provided by Homes England.

The Councils will now study the report, commissioned from consultants [Royal Haskoning](#), which has helped to identify measures required to unlock current and future developments impacted by the phosphates issue.

More information on Phosphates on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site can be found on the SWT [website](#).

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

#### **4. SWT Members attend Seaward Way Turf Cutting Ceremony**

Work to build the first council homes in West Somerset for over 30 years is due to start at Seaward Way, Minehead.

54 social housing units with affordable rents set between 60 and 80 per cent of market rates will be built by SWT over the next two years.

The housing mix consists of 21 two, three- and four-bedroom houses and 33 one- and two-bedroom flats, enabling accommodation for up to 177 people. Three properties will be fully adapted for residents with mobility support requirements and a play area space will also be included.

To mark the occasion a turf cutting ceremony was held on Tuesday, 15 March at the site.

The building work is projected to complete during 2023 to 2024. Priority will be given to those living in or having connections to Minehead.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

#### **5. Taunton Moon at the Minster**

Museum of the Moon opens today, Friday 18 March. SWT has teamed up with UK artist Luke Jerram and St Mary Magdalene Church to bring the Museum of the Moon to Taunton.

[Museum of the Moon](#) is a touring artwork which has been seen by over three million people at venues across the world.

For times and further details of the exhibition please visit [visitsomerset.co.uk/Taunton/Whats-On/Exhibitions/Taunton-Moon-of-the-Minster](https://visitsomerset.co.uk/Taunton/Whats-On/Exhibitions/Taunton-Moon-of-the-Minster).

#### **6. County VIPs mark the Platinum Jubilee**

Dignitaries from across the county came together last Friday as part of the National Association of Civic Officers' Tree Planting Day, to plant trees and unveil commemorative plaques in a tribute to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

With 11 March 2022 signifying the 70th day of the year in which The Queen reached the 70th anniversary of her accession, SWT held ceremonies at 10am in Hawthorn Park, Taunton; 11am at Fox's Field, Wellington; and 1pm in Culvercliffe, Minehead.

During the ceremonies, the dignitaries unveiled plaques and planted a final tree at each of the three sites as part of a nationwide project known as the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC). Initiated by HRH The Prince of Wales, the QGC encourages individuals and organisations to plant trees in celebration of HM Queen Elizabeth II's 70-year reign and to mitigate climate change.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **7. Unlocking Firepool**

The green light has been given to a programme of work opening up SWT's flagship redevelopment site at Firepool.

The planning committee last night approved an application to demolish the Auction House building and carry out associated infrastructure work which will lift the whole site out of the flood plain as required for development.

It also approved a separate application for a four-storey office building at the northern gateway to the Firepool site.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **8. Joint project creating lasting woodland legacy**

SWT and [Exmoor National Park Authority](#) are partnering to create a new joint Woodland Creation Officer post to support the delivery of both local and national tree planting and nature recovery targets.

The new position, funded by the Council and hosted by the National Park Authority's woodlands team will run for an initial two years.

It aims to create 50 hectares of new woodland on Exmoor NPA-owned land within the SWT district boundary in the first year, and to work with interested landowners and partners to create a further 75 hectares during the second year.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **9. Firepool Vaccination Centre set to relocate**

Taunton's Firepool COVID-19 Vaccination Centre gave its final jabs at 7pm on Wednesday 16 March. The vaccination site will be relocating to another central town location at the former Bus Station in Tower Street.

The new site, named the Tower Vaccination Centre, is undergoing several repairs to ready it for use and is due to open at the beginning of April. During this period the vaccination team will be offering a roving service at planned pop-up clinics in and around the Taunton area.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **10. New pay and display machines on the way**

SWT is updating its parking machines in the West Somerset area. The Council is purchasing 25 new machines which will be installed in a number of our car parks in West Somerset by the end of April 2022.

The area will benefit from the MS1 parking terminal which is the latest generation of unattended payment systems from IPS Group making it easier and more convenient for customers to park.

The biggest benefit is that the new payment machines will allow people to pay for parking using their bank card both by chip and pin and contactless, as well as by cash.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **11. SWT is looking for a Sergeant-at-Mace**

SWT is looking for an additional Sergeant-at-Mace to provide crucial support to the Mayor of Taunton.

As well as driving the Mayor to and from engagements, the Sergeant-at-Mace traditionally carries the Mace in civic ceremonial processions and keeps a watchful eye on the Mayor and the Civic Regalia.

It is a paid part time job that requires flexible working for about 24 days per year.

The ideal candidate would have a keen interest in history and civic events, be a confident public speaker and enjoy meeting people in social situations.

Please [click here](#) to view the job description on the SWT website.

## **12. Reminder - Grassland management Strategy supporting our local ecology**

SWT has a new [Grassland Management Strategy](#) to ensure that mowing routines support the climate and our ecology.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **13. Reminder - Set up Council Tax direct debit to receive energy rebate quickly**

SWT is urging bill-payers to set up a direct debit to pay their council tax, to ensure they get their £150 energy rebate payment as quickly as possible.

To set up a council tax direct debit please call SWT on [0300 304 8000](tel:03003048000). For new direct debits the Government require SWT to have successfully collected a first payment of council tax by direct debit before the energy rebate can be paid.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## 14. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

### And the winner is....

The votes have been counted and SWP now has a name for its new repair and reuse initiative.

Nearly 1,500 people cast a vote for one of five short-listed name options for the new service which will see a customised van travelling the county, supporting Somerset's network of repair and reuse groups.

'Phoenix' and 'Revival' had strong showings, but in the end 'Fixy /Fixy McFixface' came out on top, a throwback to 'Boaty McBoatface' the famous winner of the 2014 poll to name a British research vessel.

SWP thanks everyone who took the time to get involved. The number of votes is a promising sign of the interest there should be in this exciting new service. We are working hard to bring the Fixy Service to life, with the aim of launching in the summer or earlier if possible.

In its first year, Fixy will be dedicated to all things electrical - from toasters to tablets, record players to remote controls - if it has a plug or takes batteries, this project is about giving it a new lease of life when it stops working. Providing practical help, useful tools and a PAT testing service, the van will encourage people to get things fixed and reused rather than throwing them away or recycling them.

The transit van will also visit events, schools and businesses to provide hands-on help, training and promote the repair and reuse initiative. If its first year is a success, the project may continue and be used to support repair and reuse initiatives across the board.

It is being led by Resource Futures and also working with Donate-IT, a local community-interest company which refurbishes laptops, tablets and phones and distributes them to families who need them. The van will have a collection point for these items. Donate-IT will securely wipe data from donations.

The Somerset project is one of three being funded by this year's Ecosurety Exploration Fund which supports innovative approaches to reducing the environmental impact of packaging, batteries or electrical items.

Collection day information is also available online using the "My Collection Day" feature on the [somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk) website. Calendars can be downloaded for printing or directly into your laptop or mobile device's calendar - creating helpful automatic reminders.

You can find lots more information about Recycle More online at [somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more) Extra guidance and support can be requested using a form on this page, or by calling SWT.

## **New Council for Somerset**

On 1 April 2023, Somerset will become a unitary authority, replacing the current County Council and four District Councils with a single council governing the whole area. Find out more [here](#).

### **Local Government Association backs Local Community Networks**

The Local Government Association (LGA) has awarded a £50k funding boost to help develop innovative new Local Community Networks (LCNs) in Somerset.

LCNs promise to set a new standard for keeping a large unitary council embedded in the towns and villages it serves.

The grant is to develop LCNs and deliver new ways of working prior to April 1, 2023 (Vesting Day), when the unitary authority officially begins.

Some of the £50k will be used to facilitate three community-led LCN pilots which have been established in different areas of the county (Frome area, in Exmoor and in the Wincanton area). They are bringing public services together with local people and other community organisations to explore opportunities around children and families; health and wellbeing; and local street scene and highways matters in the first instance.

The grant will enable the pilots to explore how some of the grant can be used to leverage match funding or other resources, and some of the finance will be ringfenced to support voluntary sector engagement.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

A leaflet explaining the changes and the importance of the election has been issued by Somerset County Council and is being sent to all households across the county. It is available [here](#).

If you are interested in standing for election, at county or city, town, and parish level you can find out more here:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/how-the-council-works/elections/>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor>

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections>

### **LGR Advisory Board – 17 March**

This week the LGR Advisory board met in Stoke St. Gregory village hall. People were also able to join online and take part in exercises to kick-off thinking about the culture in the new council. Other discussion focused on the principles of asset and service devolution. You can view the slides from the event [here](#).

The website <https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk> contains a link to the One Somerset Business Case, recent press releases and details of Local Government Reorganisation Governance meetings. It will also signpost queries from the public to the mailbox at [newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk).

# Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

## Somerset County Council (SCC)

### SCC Highway Maintenance Update

This week much better weather has contributed to the finishing of various smaller jobs as the financial year end approaches. The programme for the new financial year is building apace and there are some large improvement schemes in the pipeline – watch this space!

SCC Highways have carried out a further 188 safety defect repairs in the SWT area this week (118 in Taunton area and 70 in West Somerset) and are coming to the end of the scheduled works for this financial year.

The current schemes in the area are:

**Honiton Rd, Trull, Taunton**, drainage works – commenced 7 March (temporary road closure).

**The Parks, Minehead**, footway works - commenced on 22 February (temporary traffic signals).

**Bathealton, Wiveliscombe**, local drainage – completed.

A programme of drainage grip (small channels cut across verges for highway drainage purposes) cleansing is also underway on our network of rural lanes.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter.

### Reporting a problem on the road

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you've reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/).

The new development means that if you're reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it's safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You'll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.



## Temporary Road Closures

### Honiton Road, Trull

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14 (1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along **Honiton Road - from the junction with Wayside, northwards for 130 metres.**

This Order will enable Somerset Highways to carry out drainage works. The Order becomes effective on 3 March 2022 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to commence on **7 March and will last until 25 March 2022 between the hours of 00:00 - 23:59 for a total of 19 days.**

Please visit <https://one.network> for further information on the alternative route.

### Blackdown Hill Road, Wellington Without

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14 (1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along **Blackdown Hill Road, Wellington Without for approximately 1288 metres**

The works are expected to commence on **24 March 2022** and last for **5 days** to enable Milestone Infrastructure to carry out preparation and surface dressing works.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site is **not permitted** on this occasion.

For any further information about this closure please contact **Somerset Highways** on **0300 123 2224**, quoting reference: **ttro481875TD**

Please visit <https://one.network> for further information on the alternative route.

### Toneway, Taunton

Taunton Toneway will be closed to all traffic on **Sunday 20 March to Monday 21 March, from 8.00pm to 6.00am.**

It will then be closed on **Monday 21 March to Tuesday 22 March, from 10.00pm to 6.00am.**

This is to allow the team to change traffic management. Please note there is no access to the A38 during these hours as the road is totally closed.

## Exmoor National Park (ENP)

### Exmoor Young Chef Competition

Exmoor National Park Authority is looking for aspiring and passionate young cooks to enter the brand new [Exmoor Young Chef Competition](#), open now for applications.

Ten finalists will be selected to cook a three-course meal showcasing local produce on competition day, **Saturday 2 July 2022**, at West Somerset College, Minehead. Finalists will be coached by professional top chefs from Exmoor to help plan their menu.

The competition is open to young people living or at school within the Greater Exmoor area and aged 14-18 years. ENP welcome support and encouragement from parents and guardians, schools, colleges and groups to help young people enter the competition.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **Quantock Hills AONB**

### **Please keep dogs on leads**

Just a reminder that it is a legal requirement to keep your dogs on a lead on open access land between 1 March and 31 July.

The Quantock Hills has an abundance of lovely dog walks, although you'll need to be mindful of wildlife and livestock. Please keep dogs on a short lead to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds and help to protect ewes and lambs.

## **RSPB England**

Here's a great little [video](#) from [RSPB England](#) about ground nesting birds and how we can help to give them space to breed safely.

## **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)**

### **Fire services across the UK are supporting firefighters in Ukraine**

DSFRS are supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council as part of a national effort to supply firefighting equipment to help in Ukraine.

They have supplied sets of firefighter clothing and uniform, helmets and boots, hoses, thermal imaging cameras, rescue tools, generators, lighting and ladders, which will be sent to Ukraine as part of a convoy of more than 5,000 items of fire and rescue equipment from fire and rescue services nationwide.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **Community Support – What help is out there?**

### **Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

## **Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)**

### **Holiday Activities and Food Easter Programme**

Thousands of children and young people eligible for free school meals in Somerset will be able to enjoy free fun activities during the upcoming Easter holidays.

There are a total of 12,000 places available, with more than 70 venues offering a wide range of activities from kayaking to music workshops, swimming, climbing and much more.

Parents will need to get a code from their school to book the activities. All details on what's on offer, the locations of holiday clubs and days operating can be found at [www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays](http://www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays).

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **Spark Somerset Events for Social Enterprises**

Do you run an established Social Enterprise, or are you an aspiring social entrepreneur with a great idea that will benefit your local community?

**Tuesday 29 March, 10.00am – 11.30am, via zoom**

**Write your business plan in an hour.**

Patrick is Managing Director at [Enterprise Values](#) and has spent the last 20 years working with charities to create successful, profitable Social Enterprises. He will guide you through how to write a simple, tangible plan that will outline your objectives and bring your idea to life!

You can find out more and reserve your place on any of these events by visiting the website: <https://sparksomerset.org.uk/free-workshops-and-networking-events-social-enterprises>.

## **Community Council for Somerset (CCS) New Somerset Food Resilience Grant is available**

Smart Communities Ltd has a Grant Fund to enable communities that support or directly work to develop food resilience in communities across Somerset. Any Somerset community group, charity, organisation, and agency can apply for a maximum of £2,000. **The deadline for applications is 31 March 2022** and funded by Somerset County Council.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, food security became a huge focus for communities across the nation and many communities reacted to their local needs. Supporting individuals, families, homeless people, anyone isolated, and anyone in need with easy access to food, through deliveries, collection points, and storage solutions. Often these needs were always there in our communities but not seen.

The funds can be used in many ways and there is no fixed list of things the CCS will fund but are here to support your local needs, ideas and solutions as every community is different. The grant aims to support organisations and groups to build resilience for the future.

Please [click here](#) for application details.

## **The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NCLF) Dynamic Collections Campaign**

The latest campaign from the NCLF supports collecting organisations across the UK to become more inclusive and resilient, with a focus on engagement, re-interpretation and collections management.

At the Heritage Fund, they want to support museums, libraries and other organisations to make the most of their collections.

It is designed to address long-term challenges in the sector, many of which have been made worse by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It will also help organisations build on innovative ideas and trends developed over the past few years, particularly in digital engagement.

The campaign also acts on the demand for collections to evolve to meet the changing needs of the communities around them, and to reflect more people's history and experiences.

There are no specific deadlines – but applications can be made as part of the campaign until **Friday 31 March 2023**.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information.

## **Somerset Wildlife Trust**

### **Reminder - Annual Frog and Toad Spawn Count**

Frogs and toads typically spawn from Jan to March and their spawning can be a good indication of where good quality water bodies such as ponds are, and the quality of surrounding habitats. So, until the **31 March**, Somerset Wildlife Trust are running a spawn count to collect important data on the location of breeding frogs and toads across the county. They want you to record both toad and frog spawn in your garden ponds, local community ponds, and any ponds you come across in your adventures in the countryside.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and download an information pack.

## **Community Employment Hubs**

### **Way to Work**

Way to Work is a new partnership between government and employers to get 500,000 jobseekers into work by the end of June 2022.

This partnership will help fill record numbers of vacancies, supporting job-ready people into the labour market and helping them progress into a career.

Whether you're a jobseeker finding your way back into work, or an employer who's looking for a way to get the right person to help their business, Jobcentre Plus and Way to Work can help.

Please [click here](#) to visit the website and find out more.

## **Job and Career Opportunities in the NHS**

### **Tuesday 22 March, 6.30pm – 7.30pm – Online Event**

Would you enjoy a practical or administrative job or perhaps a supportive patient facing role? With more than 350 different careers in the NHS – there is bound to be one to suit you.

The Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) offers free training and guidance that can lead to flexible, fixed term or permanent employment in the NHS.

Please [click here](#) to register for this online event.

## **Construction Industry Job Fair**

**Thursday 24 March 3.30pm - 6.30pm**

**St Peters Church Hall on Eastwick Road, Taunton**

In partnership with [Skill Up Somerset](#), SWT is also hosting a [Construction Careers Fair](#). The fair is intended for people looking to start a career or gain a qualification specifically within the construction industry, including carpentry, bricklaying, roofing, ground works, plumbing, labouring and more.

Employers within the construction sector who are interested in booking a stand free of charge, should email Angela Bolitho at [A.Bolitho@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:A.Bolitho@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

## **Somerset Jobs Fair – Taunton**

**Tuesday 29 March, 12.00pm – 6.00pm**

**Somerset County Cricket Club, St James Street, Taunton**

Are you looking for work in or around the area? Perhaps a new job or career change might be on the cards? Either way don't miss the first ever Somerset Jobs Fair being held at Somerset County Cricket Club.

Sectors attending include emergency services, insurance, retail, care, groundworks, labouring, driving school, apprenticeships, education, catering, hospitality, construction, early years, leisure and tourism, volunteering and many more, as well as support from the [National Careers Service](#) and SWT's [Community Employment Hubs](#). Tone FM will also be joining the event, chatting to employers. Job-seekers can attend for free!

Job seekers will also be able to speak to employers directly and ask questions about income, flexible working, remote opportunities and work-life balance. For more details please contact 01823 777000 or email [info@somersetjobs.co.uk](mailto:info@somersetjobs.co.uk).

## **Somerset Recovery Fund**

### **Reminder - Opportunity Boost Scheme Project**

A new grant has been launched to help people in Somerset overcome financial barriers when seeking employment and returning to work.

The Opportunity Boost Scheme will provide grants worth up to £500 to help with the cost associated progressing into work, such as transport costs, childcare, work clothes, learning resources and training courses.

The funding for the scheme has been provided through the Somerset Recovery Fund, and the initiative is being delivered in partnership between Somerset County Council and Citizens Advice Somerset.

To qualify, applicants must live in Somerset, be aged 16 or over, not be entitled to any other financial assistance for job seeking and had a pre-COVID salary of less than £25,000.

**Applications are now live and will close on Friday 25 March.**

Please [click here](#) to find out more and make an application.

## **Help and support for businesses affected by COVID-19**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has made available webinars and videos about the support available to businesses to help them deal with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

HMRC cover the following government schemes:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme

Please [click here](#) for further information.

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Since 24 February, the legal requirement to self-isolate has been removed in England and replaced with [guidance for living safely with the virus](#).

Case numbers have increased significantly in the last week so we should all continue to do all we can to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19, especially to the most vulnerable in our communities.

The SCC Public Health team still advise basic infection control measures should be followed, as these will help slow the transmission of many seasonal illnesses and have a positive impact on reducing sickness levels and improving business continuity. These include regularly washing your hands, maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes and keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

### **Somerset COVID Cases**

In the week ending 13 March, approximately 111,064 tests were carried out across the county. There were 5,655 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain very high and have almost doubled in the last reporting week to 1,005.8 per 100,000. This is above both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has **increased by a significant amount** over the last week to around 150 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals. The majority of these patients are not ill with COVID-19 but have been detected through routine screening.

Please note the Public Dashboard is being reviewed following changes to the national policy. This week, the Office for National Statistics shows that around one in every 30 people have coronavirus, and in Somerset, our case rates are still high.

## **Symptoms of COVID-19 or a Positive Test**

Children and young people who test positive for COVID-19 are advised not to attend their education setting while they are likely to be infectious. They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one; if they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature. They should continue to follow the guidance for their educational setting.

With case rates rising rapidly Public Health are concerned to see some national employers are requesting staff who have tested COVID-19 positive to go into workplaces, contrary to guidance. While it is no longer a legal requirement to isolate if you have COVID-19, there is a risk to worker health and business continuity, and for customer-facing businesses to customer health and safety, from the spread of COVID-19 from infected persons.

The general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act continue to apply, it being a legal requirement to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others, such as customers, as far as is reasonably practicable.

## **COVID-19 Testing**

Free testing will come to an end on 31 March, with most people having to pay for PCR and lateral flow tests from 1 April.

In the meantime, [free Lateral Flow Tests are still available to order online](#). You can order one pack online every 3 days. A pack contains 7 tests.

## **Have you had your jabs? Update on COVID-19 Booster Programme**

Over 80% of eligible residents have received two doses of the vaccination. The Vaccination Programme is working with health and community partners to identify locations for mobile vaccination pop-up clinics. By localising the offer, the programme aims to reduce the barriers to access and better understand community needs.

The boosters are very important as they significantly reduce the likelihood of serious illness or hospitalisation should you catch COVID-19 so, if offered, please make a booking without delay.

Once you have received the national invitation you will be able to go on the **National Booking site**: [nhs.uk/CovidVaccination](https://nhs.uk/CovidVaccination) or call 119. Vaccination centres across Somerset remain busy, but with slots becoming available all the time, please remember to check the National Booking Service regularly.

## **The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline**

This single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am – 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments including vaccinations
- Waste collection and disposal
- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online.

If you would like to find out more about the Corona helpers, offer assistance, or need support please visit [www.corona-helpers.co.uk](http://www.corona-helpers.co.uk).

### **Need to seek help?**

If you, or someone you know are feeling like things are too much, please know that you / they don't have to be alone. Here are some numbers of organisations that can help:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

### **Action Fraud**

#### **Beware of scam emails #Ukraine**

Action Fraud have received 196 reports about FAKE emails purporting to raise money for those affected by the crisis in #Ukraine. Some of the emails even claim to be from Wladimir Klitschko.

Report suspicious emails by forwarding them to: [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk).

[Follow these simple steps to help ensure your donations reach their intended cause.](#)

## **Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

### **Did you witness racially aggravated incident on A38 in Taunton?**

ASP are appealing for witnesses to come forward who may have seen a racially aggravated public order incident in Taunton recently.

It happened on the A38 Wellington Road at about 5.15pm on Tuesday 8 March.



The victim was driving towards the town centre when she saw a cyclist riding his bike and using a mobile phone near the hospital. Stopping at the traffic lights, at the junction with Parkfield Road, she challenged him about what he was doing.

The cyclist is reported to have responded by using racially abusive language and kicking the victim's car. No damage was caused.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

### **CCTV appeal after van stolen from Taunton business**

A Ford Transit van was stolen in Taunton last weekend and ASP are appealing for information to help them with their enquiries.

The vehicle was stolen during a commercial burglary in Enterprise Park, Priorswood Road, at about 9.30-10pm on Sunday 13 March. A quantity of brass and steel goods were also stolen.

The vehicle has since been recovered.

CCTV enquiries have been carried out and ASP have released images of two men they hope the public can help identify, as they would like to talk to them both in connection with their enquiries.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

### **For further Neighbourhood Policing Updates...**

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

- [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Rural Affairs Unit – Avon and Somerset Police.](#)

## **Finally**

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>  
It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the Government.](#)

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/](http://www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/) or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil).

If you have concerns about your own health and Coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.