

**Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

**Issue 52. Week ending 04/04/2021**

**#Hands #Face #Space and Fresh Air**

**SWT Council priorities**

Somerset West and Taunton Council’s updated priorities during the Coronavirus pandemic are as follows:

* Preserve critical services;
* Safeguard the public;
* Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported; and
* Planning economic resilience and recovery

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

[Click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to Coronavirus.

**Key Messages this week**

1. **Public reminded to stay outside when meeting others to reduce the spread of Coronavirus**

From 29 March, groups of 6 people, or 2 households, are allowed to meet outside. Scientists and medics are urging the public not to be tempted to meet indoors as the risk of spreading the virus is significantly higher inside. The public are being reminded they must stay outside when meeting others as part of the next step of easing Covid restrictions in a new film released and narrated by GP Dr Hilary Jones MBE.

The film highlights the impact of fresh air on reducing the risk of transmission and forms part of wider government ‘Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air’ which reminds people to ‘take this next step safely’ as we gradually emerge from lockdown. For more information, please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-reminded-they-must-stay-outside-when-meeting-others-to-reduce-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19).

The Hands. Face. Space and Fresh Air campaign urges the public to adopt simple health behaviours and work together to keep their distance and control the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

You can read the [‘COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021’](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021) for more information on the roadmap out of lockdown in England.

**Shielding update**

From 1 April, if you have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable you will no longer be advised to shield. However, you should continue to take extra precautions to protect yourself. It is important that you continue to keep the number of social interactions that you have low and try to limit the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing. If you are in this group, you will previously have received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this.

To read a summary of the changes please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary).

1. **Local Government Reform in Somerset Consultation**

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP launched the consultation on the evening of Monday 22 February. The consultation period will run for 8 weeks until **Monday 19 April**.

To respond to the Government’s consultation, go to <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>. You can also respond by email or post.

The Government has asked Stronger Somerset to critique the One Somerset proposal and vice versa. The Stronger Somerset consultation response is being discussed at a Special Full Council meeting on the 13 April 2021. A briefing note for Town and Parish Council has been attached

Please [click here](http://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/) for more information on the Stronger Somerset proposal.

The Government is also consulting on Somerset County Council’s alternative proposal, One Somerset. [Click here](https://onesomerset.org.uk/) to find out more.

1. **Democracy and Governance**

**Committee Meetings**

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/council-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:

* Wednesday 7April – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 31 March – due to two Bank Holidays)
* Thursday 8 April – **Planning Committee, CANCELLED**
* Monday 12 April – **Special Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 7 April)
* Tuesday 13 April – **Special Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 8 April)
* Thursday 15 April – **Licensing Sub-Committee**, 11am (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 12 April)
* Thursday 15 April – **Special Full Council**, 4pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 12 April)

The meetings will 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](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting.  Please see the dates **listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.**

1. **Virtual Meetings – 7 May update**

The Government have now written to all Local Councils to confirm that they are not extending the section of the Coronavirus Legislation that relates to virtual meetings (letter attached). So, as things stand, we will no longer be able to hold virtual Committee meetings from 7 May 2021. This is currently being challenged in the Courts by the Association of Democratic Services Officers and Lawyers in Local Government with the aim of allowing Councils to continue holding remote meetings beyond the 6May 2021. The outcome of the Court case will not be known until mid to late April. We will keep you updated.

Town/Parish Councils may find the information on the National Association of Local Council’s (NALC) website useful. This is kept up to date with all relevant information for Town and Parish Councils.

Consultation

The Government are now calling for Local Councils to respond to a call for evidence so that they can consider whether to amend the legislation to make permanent provision, in whole or part, to enable Councils to hold remote meetings. This consultation ends on 17 June 2021 and then primary legislation would need to be amended.

1. **REMINDER- Notice of Election published**

SWT has published notices for the elections on **Thursday 6 May**.

There are three by-election notices on the Council’s [website](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/district-and-parish-elections/) –

* Somerset West and Taunton Council - Trull, Pitminster and Corfe Ward by-election
* Minehead Town Council - Alcombe South Ward, Central Ward and Periton & Woodcombe Ward by-elections
* Watchet Town Council by-election

The Notice of Election for the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Election can also be found on the SWT [website](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/police-and-crime-commissioner-election/)

Residents should soon be receiving their polling card and are advised to check their card to make sure that they know which polling station they need to go to. Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on **Thursday 6 May**.

If you don’t receive a polling card, you may not be registered to vote. You need to register to vote by midnight on Monday 19 April to make sure that you have your say at the ballot box. The easiest way to register is by visiting [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

To read the full press release and find out more information please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/notice-of-election-published/).

1. **Purdah – Pre Election Period**

The Pre-Election Period commenced on Monday 22 March and runs until the elections on 6 May.

From the start of the pre-election period, the council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986. In addition a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published in 2011 makes clear that particular care should be taken in periods of heightened sensitivity, such as in the run up to an election. The Act defines publicity as “**any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public**.”

Generally, the Act says that we should “**not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party**.” The Code of Practice recommends that authorities should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.

**Decision making -** In relation to decision making within the council, the position remains that it is ‘business as usual’ unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on normal council business, including the approval of planning decisions.

**What this means**

* The primary restriction is on proactive publicity by the council which particularly relates to candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election.
* The council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these do not identify individual councillors or groups of councillors.
* Councillors are still free to respond to enquiries received from the media in a personal capacity.
* Individual councillors can issue their own statements, write letters to the local newspaper(s) for publication, contact the media directly or say what they like in a personal capacity, but must not use council resources to do so.

It is still possible for the council to issue statements on behalf of a councillor holding a key political or civic position provided it relates to important events which are outside the council’s control and can be shown to justify a member response. These occasions are likely to be rare and to be the exception, rather than the rule.

1. **Council staff book 30,000 Coronavirus vaccines for Somerset residents**

More than 30,000 local people have been contacted and invited for a Covid-19 vaccination by staff from Somerset’s five councils. Since the opening of vaccination centres in the county, staff from Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council have been working together contacting residents in the top nine priority groups offering them a vaccine appointment – to date they have been in touch with more than 30,000 residents.

The latest data shows more than 310,378 vaccinations have been given in Somerset. Staff have found the calls are well received with the majority of the public thankful of the opportunity to be vaccinated against the deadly virus.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/council-staff-book-30-000-coronavirus-vaccines-for-somerset-residents/) to read the full SWT press release.

1. **Unauthorised encampment at Blackbrook Leisure Centre**

SWT has today been made aware of an unauthorised encampment taking place at Blackbrook Leisure Centre in Taunton. Having gained unlawful access, a group of caravans have been parked at the rear of the premises.

Avon and Somerset Police have visited the site and will continue to monitor the situation. SWT regrets any inconvenience this may cause and would like to reassure members of the local community that it is working with its partners to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

Any non-emergency concerns can be reported by calling 101.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/unauthorised-encampment-at-blackbrook-leisure-centre-0321/) to read the full SWT press release.

1. **Decision deferred on transfer of Open Space Land**

SWT is to postpone making a decision on the proposed transfer of land at the rear of Wellington Sports Centre to Wellington Rugby Football Club (WRFC) after receiving over 100 representations. The comments followed publication of a Notice of Intended Disposal of Open Space Land adjoining the Sports Centre in Corams Lane.

The consultation was focused on the land disposal rather than the future use of the land which is not a development site. However, three quarters of the objections concerned the proposed use of the parcel of land and the wider works proposed by WRFC.

Whilst these are not valid reasons for objection in the transfer process there is a clear concern being demonstrated and the Council believe there is a benefit to holding off any decision until the Club have consulted with the community.

SWT is therefore advising the Club that they should submit a planning application for their proposals and that the Council will look again at the question of disposal following this process. Until this time the Council has decided to defer any decision on the proposed transfer.

1. **REMINDER- Last Chance to consult on Local Validation Checklist**

SWT is reviewing its Local Validation Checklist for planning applications and wants to hear your views. Since 2008 local planning authorities have been required to publish a list of information they require to "validate" the planning applications they receive.

The validation checklist has two components - the National requirements including the application form, the fee and certificates; and specific local validation requirements known as the "Local List". The Government requires local planning authorities to review their Local List every two years. As such SWT’s current validation requirements are undergoing a significant review to reflect changes in planning legislation, policy and guidance.

The draft Local List is open for public consultation until **Tuesday 6 April 2021.**

The consultation can be found on the [consultations](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/consultations/) page of the SWT website.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/consultation-begins-on-local-validation-checklist/) to read the full SWT press release.

1. **Last Call to complete SWT Customer Survey**

SWT is carrying out a piece of market research across the district. The aim is to find out how you feel about SWT as a council and how you view SWT support to your organisation.

The results of the survey will help SWT to shape the way services are provided and engagement with you in the future. SWT would be grateful if your parish council could complete the survey by **Monday 12 April 2021.**

All answers are completely anonymous and confidential, and you will not be asked for any personal data.

The survey can be found by clicking [here](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XDHJ57N).

1. **Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)**

**Summer hours at recycle sites from 1 April**

Every household in Somerset will have Easter waste collection day changes but recycle sites will stay open, SWP has announced.

**With no pick-ups on Good Friday 2 April**, these will take place a day later on **Saturday 3 April.**

**No collections on Easter Monday 5 April** mean that all the week's kerbside services will be one day later, including Friday pick-ups on **Saturday 10 April**.

**Recycling Sites**

* All 16 recycle sites remain on their summer schedules, open for essential visits with required safety measures and government restrictions.
* On Good Friday 2 April, open 9am to 6pm: **Bridgwater, Minehead, Taunton, Wellington.**
* All sites will open 9am to 4pm on both Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.
* Site open 9am to 6pm on Easter Monday: **Bridgwater, Minehead, Street, Taunton and Williton**

To keep up to date with recycling sites, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk and follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter

**Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas**

**Somerset County Council (SCC)**

**Highway Maintenance Report**

We exited March with the hottest March day in the UK since 1968. However, as we enter April it just shows how capricious British springtime weather can be, with below zero temperatures predicted for the Easter Bank Holiday weekend and even the risk of snow on the high ground of the Blackdowns, Quantocks, Exmoor and the Brendon Hills. Needless to say, SCC Highway’s gritters are still on stand-by, ready to take any action that is required.

The start of a new financial year means a new programme of planned highway maintenance and improvement works. The renewal of the traffic signalling system through the **A358 Rowbarton** **area** **of Taunton** is now underway. On 6April SCC Highways will commence work at **Kingston St Mary** as a joint venture with the Somerset Rivers Authority to reduce the risk and impacts of flooding in the village. **Lodes Lane** will be closed for four weeks whilst the drainage system running down the lane is upgraded. Over in **Wellington, the B3187 Station Road** will be closed for four evenings whilst SCC Highways resurface the carriageway. The closure times will be 6.30pm to 11.30pm, from Tuesday 6April - Friday 9 April 2021.

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 on Twitter.

**Useful links to report faults**

Throughout winter, there are more queries about overgrown trees, verges or hedges, blocked drains and street lights that don’t work. To report faults in the following areas, please click on the relevant link:-

[Dangerous/Overgrown Tree alongside the public highway](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-problem-with-a-tree-by-the-road/#If-a-tree-outside-your-house-needs-pruning,-please-contact-us)

[Report an overgrown verge or hedge on the road](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-an-overgrown-verge-or-hedge-on-the-road/)

[Street light not working](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-with-a-street-light/)

[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-blocked-drain-on-the-road/)

**M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme**

**J25 Gyratory**

A crash barrier has partially been installed however this could not be completed due to the presence of existing services that required diverting. Upcoming works consist of continuing with finishing works for the next few weeks (dependant on weather and resources).

**A358 East/Ruishton Junction**

All kerbing works have been completed and ducting has been installed for the new traffic signals. The majority of the footpath/cycleway surfacing has been completed. This will be ongoing for the remainder of the week.

The splitter islands have been filled to level and dressed with topsoil. These will be landscaped and seeded at a later date dependent on weather.

**Ruishton junction will be open from 10 April 2021.**

Please [click here](https://community.alungriffiths.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/Newsletter-MARCH-2021.pdf) for more information.

**Somerset Medal to honour county’s unsung heroes**

From vaccinators to van drivers, health staff to home-schoolers, countless people have kept Somerset going over the last 12 months – and now SCC is honouring them with a new accolade.

It has been one year since the first lockdown was introduced – and now it also marks the launch of the Somerset Medal in tribute to all those who made superhuman efforts during the pandemic.

The Medal is designed to say a heartfelt thank-you to the best of the best, nominated by the people and presented on behalf the people on **Somerset Day, 11 May 2021**.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2021/03/23/somerset-medal-to-honour-countys-unsung-heroes/) to read the full press release.

**Exmoor National Park (ENP)**

**New Exmoor Tree Nursery**

A new tree nursery will go ahead in Exmoor National Park thanks to funding from Devon Environment Foundation, Devon Community Foundation and donations to CareMoor for Exmoor.

It forms part of ongoing ‘Land Visioning’ work the National Park Authority is leading across its own estate (comprising 7 per cent of the National Park), bringing together key stake holders to propose fresh ways of enhancing the land for nature, climate mitigation, people and cultural heritage. An update on the proposals is due to be given to Members at next month’s Exmoor National Park Authority meeting on **6 April 2021.**

Please [click here](https://myemail.constantcontact.com/NEW-EXMOOR-TREE-NURSERY-PART-OF-NATIONAL-PARK--LAND-VISIONING-.html?soid=1102765974837&aid=O6_gO-GD_yU) for further information and to read the full press release.

**Exmoor National Park (ENP)**

**Proposed Diversion WL26-27 (Old Stowey)**

As the Government has lifted the stay at home order, Exmoor National Park Authority are looking to start Public Path Orders again and are therefore, hoping that the public will be in a position to respond to consultations. In particular, ENP started a consultation back in December 2020 for a proposal to divert part of the public footpath WL6/27 in the parish of Cutcombe. Prior to making a Diversion Order, ENP would like to hear your views on this proposal. Please find attached the proposal summary, schedule and plan.

If you could return any comments on the proposal by **23 April 2021** to cerirapsey@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk or to Ceri Rapsey, Rights of Way Support Officer, Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor House, Dulverton, TA22 9HL.

If you would like to discuss the proposal prior to making your comments, please do not hesitate to contact the Public Rights of Way and Access Officer, Sue Applegate on **01398 322292.**

**Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (D&SFRS)**

**Remember to check your smoke alarms**

One, two, three breaths is all it takes.

Smoke from fire is toxic and can leave you unconscious in just two or three breaths.

A working smoke alarm will detect smoke before you do, meaning you can act quickly in the event of a fire. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service ask you and your family to test your smoke alarms.

Please [click here](https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/SmokeAlarms/Index.cfm?SiteCategoryId=4&T1ID=35&T2ID=45) for more information and for advice on how to maintain your smoke alarms.

**HM Coastguard Watchet**

**Remember to check the tide timetables**

HM Coastguard Watchet was tasked to St Audries Bay Waterfall following a report of 2 persons stuck on the cliff having climbed up to avoid the incoming tide which had cut them off. Having realised they were unable to reach safety the adult male and female dialled 999 for the coastguard where the operations centre in Milford Haven tasked the Cliff Rescue team; Minehead RNLI Lifeboat Station; the Coastguard Rescue Helicopter “Rescue 187” from St Athan in South Wales, and Lynmouth Coastguard Search and Rescue as the backup cliff rescue team.

This couple had unfortunately made the decision to visit the waterfall and beach without knowing the tide times. Once they realised the danger they were in, and unable to climb the cliffs; they did the right thing and dialled 999 and asked for the coastguard.

As the Easter weekend approaches the Coastguard would like to remind everyone to take care when visiting the coast, and in an emergency to dial 999 and ask for the coastguard.

Please [click here](https://www.facebook.com/WatchetCoastguard) to read the full story.

**Minehead RNLI Lifeboat Station**

**RNLI launches £250,000 local appeal for Minehead station upgrade**

The RNLI has unveiled plans for a £1 million upgrade for Minehead’s historic lifeboat station. The scheme will involve extending and remodelling the 120-year old building to reduce response times and provide vastly improved facilities for the volunteer crew. And now an appeal fund has been opened with the aim of raising at least a quarter of the cost within the Minehead and West Somerset area.

The station operates a 24-hour sea rescue service, responding to between 30 and 40 emergency calls a year along more than 30 miles of the Somerset and Devon coastline from Hinkley Point in the east to Lynmouth in the west. It’s an area offering some of the most challenging conditions found anywhere in the Bristol Channel.

Remodelling will see the station extended westwards onto land the RNLI has bought from the local authority, with the ground floor extension enabling the creation of a crew changing room with showers and a separate female crew changing space, a dedicated mechanics workshop and a souvenir shop. But one of the most important improvements will be the provision of a full-length garage at the rear of the building.

People wishing to support the appeal can donate and / or fundraise in a number of ways. Please [click here](https://www.facebook.com/Minehead-RNLI-Lifeboat-Station-227903260619204) for further information and to find out how you can donate.

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

**Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

**Spark Somerset**

**Community Food Forums**

Are you involved with a local food bank or community fridge? Would you like to know how to set one up, or find out what support is available? Then go along to Spark Somerset’s regular Community Food Forums. They're an opportunity celebrate the valuable work taking place across Somerset, share ideas and information and discuss common interests. Meet via Zoom on the last Wednesday of the month.

Next meeting will take place on Wednesday **28 April**, and again on **Wednesday 26 May.** Please [click here](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-food-forum-tickets-138922566135) to find out more and book.

**Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

**Community Buildings**

CCS offers a friendly, independent service providing local expert advice and practical support to volunteers managing community buildings and village halls in Somerset.

CCS is continuing to support community halls with information, advice and training, helping them adapt to these challenging times. CCS is keeping halls regularly updated with information about financial support, as well as guidance on the practicalities of maintaining halls during closure and planning for their reopening.

If you are already running a community hall, are just starting out, or need help expanding the work you’re already doing – or for anything else – feel free to contact Sally Sargent, Community Buildings Officer by calling **07946 461560** or emailing

sallys@somersetrcc.org.uk

For more information relating to community buildings, please [click here](https://ccslovesomerset.org/community-buildings/).

**Somerset Diverse Communities**

**COVID-19 Roadmap to Recovery Translated**

When the Government roadmap to recovery was released, Somerset Diverse Communities acted fast to work with communities to produce as many translations as possible for Somerset and beyond.

COVID-19 brings additional challenges for anyone who’s first language isn’t English as it is more difficult to understand changing Government guidance. Somerset Diverse Communities works collaboratively with BAME communities in Somerset - bringing people together, providing support, developing skills and building long term relationships and networks.

So far, the team and their network have delivered 10 translations in:

Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, French, Italian, Lithuanian, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese & Mandarin.

Get your translations [here](https://ccslovesomerset.org/covid-19-translated/).

**Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)**

**SCF receives High Sheriff’s Special Recognition Award**

SCF is delighted to have been awarded a High Sheriff’s Special Recognition Award, which cites their 'outstanding work to the community in Somerset and for their acts of thoughtfulness and kindness during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.'

SCF launched the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal on 19 March 2020, just a few days before the first national lockdown was announced. The High Sheriff’s Special Recognition Award is made on the one-year anniversary of the first emergency Somerset Coronavirus Response grants, which were approved for payment less than a week after the appeal was launched last year. These first grants were made to food banks across the county, and in those first few weeks of lockdown SCF continued making emergency grants to frontline charities across our county, every day.

As life slowly returns to normal, [national surveys](http://cpwop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/03/NTU-Covid-voluntary-sector-report-Mar-2021_DIGITAL.pdf)warn that charities will face a funding crisis following 2020, and SCF is standing by to make sure essential charitable services are not lost. If your organisation is based in Somerset, has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic and has an annual income under £250,000 you may be able to apply for a grant of up to £5,000.

Applications must be made by **Friday 23 April**. Please [click here](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/grants-groups) to find out more.

**West Somerset Together**

**Green Forum 21’s – Next Gathering**

Green Forum 21's, West Somerset Together bimonthly gatherings (currently by zoom) are for individuals, parishes and community groups working on climate and biodiversity actions plans and associated community and social projects - with themed discussions and updates on funding and local and central government initiatives.

The next meeting is targeted at Local Parish and Town Councillors, as well as community leaders who are looking for support and ideas in implementing or developing their own climate and biodiversity action plans.

**Wednesday 7 April** – **7pm to 8pm**
[Zoom Meeting Link](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87187451247?pwd=Q3Y0MDdwbVpqZ0NQNWoySkZpT05QUT09)

Meeting ID: 871 8745 1247

Passcode: 441420

If you are not already on the mailing list or want to find out more email: westsomersettogether@gmail.com.

More information can be found on the [website](https://www.west-somerset-forum21.org.uk/west-somerset-together.html) and [Facebook.](https://www.facebook.com/WestSomersetTogether)

**REMINDER- Charities in SWT benefit from almost £60,000 grants**

The Somerset West and Taunton Small Grants Fund, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) on behalf of the Somerset West and Taunton Council, awarded £18,000 of grants in the area to help support charities during the early days of lockdown last year.

The funding helped 21 groups to set up virtual services, urgently deliver food where it was needed the most, purchase PPE, and support people’s mental health. It was matched by SCF with an additional £39,650 of funding which was raised by a national coronavirus appeal run by the National Emergencies Trust (NET).

Grants of up to £1,000 are also available for local charities, voluntary or community groups, sports clubs, or social enterprises based within Somerset West and Taunton from Wednesday 7 April and the deadline to apply is **Friday 7 May**.

To see who benefitted and read the full press release please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/news/404/73/Charities-in-Somerset-West-Taunton-benefit-from-almost-60k-grants-funding).

**National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF)**

**REMINDER- Communities Can Conference**

The event, held on 24 March 2021, saw a range of speakers discuss ideas on how best to harness and extend the renewed sense of community spirit across the UK and enable communities to thrive going forward.

Themes explored included; ‘how young people hope to build their future post COVID-19’, ‘how communities are taking control of the environmental crisis’, ‘the unequal impact of COVID-19 on communities’ and ‘how communities plan to recover and rebuild’. The final session saw a range of funders come together with the conference delegates to consider their role in building a better future with and for communities.

To access more information about this event and view the highlights please [click here](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/covid-19-resources/responding-to-covid-19/covid-19-events/communities-can-event).

**Somerset Skills and Learning (SS&L)**

**REMINDER- Courses for April 2021**

As the days are getting longer and our natural energy and enthusiasm improves, spring is the perfect time to refocus, plan and refresh.

SS&L are excited to showcase their brand new Level 3 qualifications, with more to follow in the next few months including Management, Counselling, Mental Health, Advanced Digital Skills, Supporting Teaching & Learning in Schools, Childcare and Principles of SEND.

For more information and Featured Courses and Workshops: [Click Here](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAzMTkuMzczNDEyNjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5zc2xjb3Vyc2VzLmNvLnVrL2NvdXJzZXMvIn0.mlcjillUk4u2FUvkIq8VZpXufSsfNLoxJUfbODdLPUQ/s/1159348122/br/100358487025-l)

**Health and Welfare**

**April is National Stress Awareness Month**

April Stress Awareness Month is held every year to help raise awareness about the causes and cures for our modern stress epidemic. Stress is a significant factor in a multitude of physical and mental health problems. Individually we need to understand what is causing us personal stress and learn what steps we can take to reduce it for ourselves and those around us.

Research has also identified that 65% of people in the UK have felt more stressed since the COVID-19 restrictions began in March 2020. The three key causes for concern are feelings of disconnection, uncertainty, and a worrying loss of control. Therefore, the theme for Stress Awareness Month 2021 is ‘Regaining Connectivity, Certainty and Control’.

You can visit the website [here](https://www.stress.org.uk/national-stress-awareness-month-2019/) to find out more information and practical resources to help you to reduce stress.

**Be prepared and choose the right NHS service this Easter bank holiday**

Local health leaders are asking people to prepare for the upcoming Easter bank holiday weekend by organising their prescriptions, keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet and calling 111 first for urgent, but not life-threatening, health advice and treatment. They will make sure you get the help from the most appropriate service for your healthcare needs.

GP surgeries will be closed as normal over the bank holiday weekend and will reopen on **Tuesday 6 April.**

You can also find health advice and information on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/) or from your [local GP practice](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP) website which links to a range of online services and, in most cases, you can order repeat prescriptions online.

For children’s health advice you can download the HANDi App, available for Android phones on [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.myoxygen.handi.taunton) or on the [App store](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/handi-paediatric/id969445171) for iPhone and iPad.

For injuries which are not life-threatening, you can get help in any of Somerset’s Minor Injury Units, in Bridgwater and Minehead, which are also open and will continue to operate as a walk-in service.

**Spark Somerset**

**Open Mental Health Grants**

Spark Somerset is a proud member of Open Mental Health, an alliance of local voluntary organisations and the NHS. They are working in partnership to ensure that residents of Somerset get the support they need, when they need it.

Open Mental Health supports people to live a full life by enabling access to specialist mental health support, debt and employment advice, volunteering opportunities, community activities and exercise.

The service is available to adults in Somerset who are suffering from mental health problems. The organisations in the alliance form part of a wider ecosystem of mental health and wellbeing support across Somerset. By working in partnership, they want to ensure that there is 'no wrong door' for anyone who needs help.

Open Mental Health are looking to expand the provision of support in Somerset by inviting local organisations to apply for a grant of up to £15,000.

To find out more about this service and how to apply, please [click here](https://sparksomerset.org.uk/open-mental-health-grants).

**REMINDER - Latest Vaccination data for Somerset**

You can check Somerset’s vaccination data on the Coronavirus dashboard. The information provided by the NHS will be added every Friday. Please [click here](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/) to view the latest figures relating to doses that have been administered in Somerset.

The dashboard provides an overview of Coronavirus cases, a map, the R number and more detailed district-level information.

**REMINDER - Please don’t drop your guard once vaccinated**

While there are many things that we are still discovering about COVID-19, one thing that we know for certain is that it can be destroyed with simple soap and hot water. That’s the reason that the ‘hands’ part of the ‘Hands, Face, Space’ message is such an important part of our ‘toolkit’ for tackling the virus and preventing its spread.

The golden rules are: wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water; wear a face covering when required and keeping a social distance of at least two metres.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2021/01/29/please-dont-drop-your-guard-once-vaccinated/) for more information.

**The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline**

In Somerset, the Councils have responded to over 12,200 phone calls on the Coronavirus Support Helpline and have emailed or written to over 22,000 residents shielding to advise them of the helpline and to make contact if they need support.

This single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related 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 during these tough times?**

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 in these tough times:

* Samaritans - 116 123
* CALM - 0800 58 58 58
* ChildLine - 0800 1111
* Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
* Mind - 0300 123 3393
* National Domestic Abuse helpline - 0808 2000 247

**Please refer to the websites below for the latest advice, help and guidance:**

**Links to the most up to date COVID-19 guidance can be found here**

[Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/#latest)

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

[Public Health England](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

[NHS – Help and Advice](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

**FAQS**

**Q**. **I feel a little hesitant on participating in a game of football. Am I allowed to return to the pitch?**

**A.** A video has been designed by Sport England to inspire people to get back out there and highlight benefits like socialising, having fun and freedom with people getting active in a safe way. It features a range of sports so can be used by anyone from National Governing Bodies to small grassroots organisations.

You can download the full one-minute version and shorter versions of [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNVwDam-gSY).

Sport England have also updated their guidance on a range of topics to help you plan for returning including FAQs on the rules, the latest Government guidance, tips on inclusion and accessibility, legal support, a reopening toolkit for clubs, hygiene guidance and more. Please [click here](https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play.) for further information.

**Q. I have been prioritised for supermarket delivery slots during the pandemic. Will I be able to continue this arrangement as I am still confined to home and have no support?**

**A.** Supermarkets have agreed to continue to offer priority access to delivery slots for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals already receiving them for a grace period, which currently extends to 21 June 2021.

**Crime / Safeguarding**

**REMINDER- Crime Prevention through Sport Fund**

Avon and Somerset Police launch new Crime Prevention Through Sport fund in partnership with Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP) and The West of England Sport Trust (Wesport).

The Crime Prevention Through Sport Fund aims to support projects that use sport and physical activity to reduce violence, crime and anti-social behaviour. This fund is for projects that focus on using activity as a tool to engage and support young people up to the age of 25. Applications that use sport in its widest sense including traditional, informal sports and activities will be considered and encouraged to apply.

Together the partners are invested in supporting projects that thoroughly consider all the aims of the fund and those who are future-proofing their work to leave a lasting impact & support for the communities they work with.

**Funding information:**

* **The second phase opens on Monday 5 April and closes Monday 17 May.**

Please [click here](https://www.sasp.co.uk/crime-prevention-fund) to review the relevant documents and to submit an application.

For further details on the Crime Prevention through Sport Fund please [click here](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/news/2021/02/crime-prevention-through-sport-fund/).

**Somerset Survivors**

**Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is much more common than people think; one in four women and one in six men will experience it at some point in their lives. It can happen to anyone, in all types of relationships, regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability, sexuality, lifestyle, nationality or age. It’s rarely a one-off occurrence, but usually a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour.

A video highlighting the impact of parent’s abusive relationship on teenagers and their relationship has been circulated as a part of the 16 days of action campaign that started in December 2020. This video has currently received more than 17,000 views and is uploaded on the [SCC Youtube channel.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFp6FXu_U8Q)

SCC is also promoting the video on [Facebook.](https://fb.me/a5RGzyVtJ2aHHC)

Do you want to talk to someone about domestic abuse?
Contact the Somerset Domestic Abuse Support helpline: **0800 69 49 999**

Or email [Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service](https://somersetsurvivors.org.uk/professional-resources/somerset-integrated-domestic-abuse-service/)

General Enquiries: youfirstsidas@theyoutrust.org.uk

Opening Hours – 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday and Sunday.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please always call the Police on 999.

**Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)**

**New images released and update provided in relation to Bristol violent disorder inquiry**

Avon and Somerset Police are appealing for the public’s help to identify a number of people they would like to speak to as part of their investigation into the disorder which took place in Bristol on Sunday 21 March. The images have all been added to the A&SP [online gallery](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/images-released-as-part-of-investigation-into-bristol-disorder/).

Anyone who has information which can help to identify any of the people in the images is asked to call 101 and provide the call handler with the letter associated with the person/people.

If you have additional information, footage or photos of the incident, you can share them using the [send evidence relating to Bristol disorder form](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/bdf).

**Finally**

**As we come to the end of SWT Newsletter issue 52, we would like to thank the regular contributors of news and information over the last year.**

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.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter @swtcouncil

Please see our dedicated [webpage](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-advice/) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and Coronavirus please visit the [NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/) website.

**#Hands #Face #Space and Fresh Air**