

## County Cllr

**Pre-8<sup>th</sup> March Covid-19 Restrictions:** Currently residents must stay at home, they must not leave, or be outside of their home except where necessary. They cannot leave to meet socially with anyone they do not live with or are not in a support bubble with. Residents should not travel outside their local area.

**Road Map out of lockdown:** From 8 March - All schools will open with outdoor after-school sports and activities allowed. Recreation in an outdoor public spaces will be allowed between two people, meaning they would be allowed to sit down for a coffee, drink or picnic. From 29 March - Outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households will be allowed including gatherings in private gardens. Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis or basketball courts will reopen and organised adult and children's sport, such as grassroots football, will also return

**Coronavirus infection rates:** As at 26<sup>th</sup> February the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 18,890 (up from 16,417 on 29<sup>th</sup> January) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 722 (469). The rate per 100,000 stands at 71.5 for Somerset with Mendip at 63.2, Sedgemoor at 113.7, South Somerset 64.2 and SW&T at 52.2. The current number of total deaths across the County is currently 1% below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.6 and 0.9. *It is vitally important to remember, even those who have had a jab, to observe Hands-Face-Space at all times.*

**Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline:** A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

**Vaccination programme roll-out:** Teams across the wider health and care system have worked round the clock at 13 GP-led community vaccination sites, two hospital hubs, two large vaccination centres (Taunton Racecourse and the Bath and West Showground) plus four local pharmacy sites. As a result Somerset has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing 194,938 having received at least their first vaccination in the County or 42% of the 16+ population. Only Dorset at 44% are above Somerset in the list of County vaccination rates.

**Somerset County Council Finances:** SCC recently approved the budget for 2021/22 including an additional £10.2m investment into adult social care services, an additional £9m into children's services, £6.5m on climate emergency projects, and £130m in major infrastructure schemes such as roads and schools with £74m of new projects approved. A new £10.8m Emergency Fund has been established for activities to combat coronavirus and its impacts. Importantly the budget also includes a commitment to continue the extended Free School Meals provision for vulnerable families over the Easter holidays.

**Great Western Freeport:** Somerset has played a key role in the bid to develop a new Great Western Freeport – an area designed to create conditions for inward investment, business growth and job creation. The Government wants to create



up to 10 Freeports around the UK, and partners including the West of England Combined Authority have submitted plans to create a Great Western Freeport. The area would include Bristol Port, the Gravity Campus (Junction 21 Enterprise Area) and Avonmouth. Gravity would focus on clean growth and attracting hi-tech companies manufacturing electric cars, artificial intelligence, and robotics. It is expected to create approximately 4,000 jobs.

**Step up to social work:** Somerset County Council is opening the recruitment round for aspiring social workers across the region to join the 14-month *Step Up to Social Work* programme, to provide training for hundreds more children and family social workers to support children and families most in need. Of the 58 places being offered across the region, 12 are being offered in Somerset. Students receive a bursary during the duration of the programme to support them whilst in training. To date eighteen new social workers have qualified in Somerset with a further ten due this year. The Step Up programme runs every two years. Applications are open until 7 April 2021.

**Investing in communities:** Two new Enterprise Centres have joined the Somerset network with the completion and handover of purpose-built units in Wells and Wiveliscombe thanks to Somerset County Council and partners. The Wiveliscombe centre, offers 10 two-person offices and seven small light industrial units suitable for a solo or two-person business. The centre in Cathedral Park, Wells, has 10 two-person offices and two four-person offices. It has a further five industrial units that would suit 1 to 2 people per unit.

**Additional funding for Citizens Advice:** During the coronavirus pandemic, Citizens Advice in Somerset have stepped up the services offered through their freephone advice line, with face-to-face appointments and drop-ins scaled back. The charities are expecting demand for services to rise exponentially over the next 12 months; particularly as the furlough scheme ends and eviction proceedings recommence. Up to £400k extra funding from Somerset County Council will be used to develop and sustain the County-wide service, to extend opening hours, and to increase capacity for the inevitable increase in demand.

**One Somerset:** The government has begun a public consultation into changing the way local councils work in Somerset including the County Council's ambition to replace the county's five existing councils with a simple, single unitary model. This would end confusion for residents, remove waste and duplication, and free up funding to invest in vital public services. It would also offer more powers for local Town and Parish Councils and one strong voice to lobby for funding and support. To take part in the Government's consultation visit <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>

Barry O'Leary

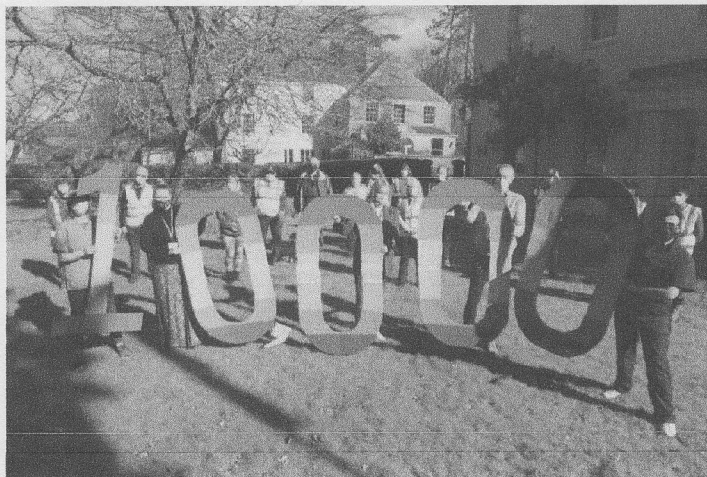
*Hi everyone,*

## MDC Member Report - February 2021, For Evercreech Parish Council

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### Mendip's COVID response: 10,000th vaccine given at Mendip District Council offices, Shepton Mallet

I am trilled to announce that the 10,000<sup>th</sup> vaccine dose was administered at the Shape Mendip Hub on Friday. Congratulations to colleagues at the NHS and all our amazing District Council staff for their dedication to the Covid response. They are having massive impact in the fight against *Coronavirus* and saving precious lives.



Cllr O'Leary said: "the work of the Council and NHS staff is outstanding, it's a real matter of pride to me, it's good to see things getting better, one vaccine, one home, one family at a time, let's keep on going".



## **Government Roadmap**

The Prime Minister announced a [4-step plan to ease lockdown in England](#). Two handy graphics that layout the roadmap are attached to this email which you may wish to share with your communities.

## **Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)**

Coronavirus-related staff shortages have led to many missed recycling collections right across the area this month. To date I have dealt with just short of 100 complaints. Many other members are dissatisfied, and the administration has called an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Board on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 6.30 pm. The purpose of the meeting is to consider especially the Somerset Waste Partnership issues in recent weeks.

## **Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) activated in February**

SWEP was implemented on 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> February. Severe Weather Emergency Provision in Mendip has two aims; to ensure that no one dies on the streets due to severe weather, and to ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support. Visit: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/swep>

## **Mendip Markets extend operating hours thanks to public support.**

Mendip District Council extended outdoor market opening times and reinstated its Saturday offer in Frome and Wells, following positive footfall figures and feedback from customers. From Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> February, Mendip Markets operated Monday to Friday, 9am-2pm in Glastonbury, Street, Shepton Mallet, Frome and Wells. And from Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February, there were markets in Wells and Frome, 9am-2pm. Stalls sell essential provisions such as food, cleaning products and pet supplies.

Press Release: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9784/Mendip-Markets-to-extend-operating-hours-thanks-to-public-support>

## **MDC Additional Restrictions Grants (Round 2)**

Mendip District Council supports businesses affected by Covid-19 lockdowns through its Additional Restrictions Grants (Round 2) which closed on 12<sup>th</sup> February.

For information and further details of national lockdown support visit:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/businessgrants>



### **Planning: Phosphates calculator launched**

The councils across Somerset are continuing to work on solutions to the Phosphates issue to unlock development. A Phosphates calculator has been launched to help minimise delay and uncertainty around planning applications, following recent guidance over the number of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site. Learn about it here: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9820/Councils-publish-phosphate-calculator>

### **Planning: Consultation ended 28th February**

The Council recently extended the deadline for comments and contributions to its revised District Landscape Character Assessment. The study divides Mendip District into 8 main landscape areas and then 56 individual character areas. The consultation ended on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

### **Public Spaces Protection Order, Berkley Marsh, Frome**

Despite the efforts of the community, the parish council, the district council and other agencies, measures put in place have not resolved fly tipping issues in and around the locality. Mendip is taking a fresh approach and determining all mechanisms available to us and other agencies. The Council has written to residents to give them an update and to also thank them for their help and support.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9801/Corporate-Statement-Berkley-Marsh-Public-Spaces-Protection-Order-Berkley-Marsh-Order-No-2-PSPO-for-Berkley-Lane-Frome>

### **Mendip's creative industries take centre stage, after 'decade in the dark'**

Mendip District Council is to kickstart local creative industries with a £40k investment, and the promise of a cultural renaissance for the area. Creative organisations and practitioners can finally look forward to more opportunities, support and investment after a 10-year funding gap. The one-off windfall will provide a welcome boost to the struggling sector, hard-hit by the pandemic during the past 12 months. The monies will be used to leverage other funds into Mendip from organisations including, potentially, Arts Council England.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9813/Mendip-s-creative-industries-take-centre-stage-after-decade-in-the-dark->

### **Fair pay promise for council staff at Mendip**

Mendip District Council will adopt the Real Living Wage from 1st April 2021. The move means Mendip commits to paying its staff a minimum hourly wage of £9.50 for those aged 25 and over. That's the suggested figure advocated by the Living Wage Foundation and is well ahead of the statutory National Minimum Wage of £8.72 an hour.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9821/Fair-pay-promise-for-council-staff-at-Mendip>

### **Tough measures needed to drive down district's emissions**

A major shift in current behaviours is required by Mendip communities to reduce CO2 emissions by 2030. These are the frank findings of a Future Emissions Pathways report commissioned by the District Council to identify the most suitable roadmap towards carbon neutrality. The first report of its kind ever carried out in Mendip revealed the urgency and scale of intensity required.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9802/Tough-measures-needed-to-drive-down-district-s-emissions-new-report-reveals>

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### **Barry events, commemorations and campaigns:**

#### **Time to Talk Day 2021**

Time to Talk Day is the day the nation gets talking about mental health. I highlighted this in the village and took part in the national event on 4<sup>th</sup> February and the day was marked, with signposting on social media.

Visit: [Cllr. Barry O'Leary & Alfie the dog, out in Pilton #timetotalk - YouTube](#)

#### **Big Community Switch – closed 9<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Mendip encouraged residents to register their interest in switching energy providers with the Big Community Switch by 9th February 2021. This year, for the first time, the Big Community Switch auction had the option of 100 per cent renewable energy tariffs from wind, biomass and solar for electricity, at really competitive market prices.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9732/Mendip-residents-urged-to-think-greener-with-the-Big-Community-Switch->

#### **Rainbow flag flies from Mendip on Valentine Weekend**



Mendip District Council flew a rainbow flag from its buildings in Shepton Mallet to signal love kindness and hope. It was a 'thank you' to our NHS professionals and volunteer staff for their efforts in fighting COVID and saving lives. As February is LGBTQ+ History Month, it seemed doubly appropriate to display it. The rainbow flag has long been associated with the LGBTQ+ communities and has been recently adopted by the public as a symbol of hope for our NHS heroes.

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9794/Rainbow-flag-flies-from-Mendip-this-Valentine-Weekend> **Check out my YouTube clip:** <https://youtu.be/p91PMR7NlxI>

### **Mendip supports National Empty Homes Week**

Mendip District Council's Housing Team asked homeowners to take up the free help and advice available to bring any empty properties they own, back into use. The call marked this year's National Empty Homes Week (15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> February).

**Press Release:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9788/Turn-an-empty-property-into-someone-s-home-during-Empty-Homes-Week-2021->

### **Councillors in the news**

Our councillors have appeared on BBC Radio Somerset talking about Mendip Markets and fly tipping at Berkley Lane (Cllr Josh Burr) the council's Empty Homes campaign (Cllr Richard Pinnock) and the Police and Crime Panel precept veto (Cllr Heather Shearer). Cllr Lois Rogers also featured on the Breakfast Show on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb to discuss light pollution issues at Morrisons supermarket in Wells.

There's been much excitement about the multi-user paths plan featured on BBC Radio Somerset two days running, including on March 2<sup>nd</sup> just as this publication went to press (Cllr Ros Wyke). More on this in next month's edition...

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### **Council Leader's Column**

Cllr Ros Wyke writes a weekly column, published the Somerset Series newspaper titles. Recent topics have included fly tipping, praise for parish councils and highlights from Full Council.

**All columns listed here:** <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/leaderscolumn>

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I am very concerned and dissatisfied about the performance of SWP, I will be pursuing this with vigour. We cannot have the Parish's efforts especially with a new street cleaner in place be undone when basic services are late.

*Barry*

Your Mendip Councillor,



here for you

Cllr. Barry O'Leary

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