

Report from Barry O’Leary – August 2022

Working for you all year round

£150 energy rebate PAID to ALL households

I wanted to be sure that Mendip residents were the first to get their rebate in the county.

WE DID IT!

WE MADE IT HAPPEN

I am delighted to confirm Mendip District Council paid out a remarkable £6,047,250, providing help quickly pay energy bills.

All 40,315 eligible Council Taxpayers in Mendip have received their rebate.

In total we paid 84% of bill payers automatically back to their bank account, where we had up to date and accurate details, which was what most residents wanted. For the 6,430 Council Taxpayers where we would not pay by direct debit, the £150 came off their next payment instalment. For them this typically this meant £150 less to pay from their August instalment.

Speaking very generally and, barring a few notable instances, I think this whole piece of work has been fairly successful. The experience is more mixed elsewhere, some residents in Somerset are still awaiting payment. By acting quickly this has not been the case in Mendip.

Mendip Hardship Fund

Given the Cosy-of-Living Emergency had we had greater demand than ever on the Fund.

Mendip gave £71,670 of support last year, actually over £21,000 more than we had budgeted, but by making prudent savings elsewhere we were able to extend this help.

Four months into the new financial year and already £29,000 has been drawn on. I gave a promise to get our fund to £100,000 it is now a certainty those monies will be needed. I make a promise in the column to do more and will raise this at next week's Cabinet meeting next week.

Enviro Crime- TACKLED

A routine trade waste inspection by Mendip District Council enforcement officers has resulted in a local building firm, **AB Building and Clearance**, receiving a fine of £500, a Victim Surcharge of £50 and costs of £2,703.39 for failing to provide the required Waste Transfer Notes.



Following reports of an unlicensed waste carrier operating within Mendip, council officers issued the businessperson, Mr Alex Branch of Churchill Close, Wells, Somerset with a notice to provide Waste Transfer Notes for the last two years to understand whether waste was being transported legally and with correct audit documentation.

Branch had 14 days to provide the Waste Transfer Notes as failure to comply with the notice is a criminal offence punishable upon conviction to an unlimited fine and a criminal record. However, Branch failed to provide the requested documents within the stipulated time. Branch was then issued with two fixed penalty notices which he failed to pay and was ultimately summoned to Court.

The case was heard at Taunton Magistrates Court on Wednesday 13 July 2022 where Branch pleaded guilty. The Magistrates ordered Branch to pay a fine of £500, costs to Mendip District Council of £2,703.39 and a Victim Surcharge of £50, totalling £3,253.39. In determining the degree of culpability, the Magistrates concluded that the defendant had acted negligently in the duty of care he owed in respect of controlled waste, and this is particularly relevant in view of the Climate Emergency. Branch expressed remorse, apologised for his actions, and said that he had been stupid for ignoring correspondence.

*Make no mistake – Environmental polluters will be caught and made to pay. Mendip has a 100% success rate in these cases.
We have always recovered our costs.*

Mendip District Council Access Points

They are located in Mendip's five main towns and city: Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells. Opening times can be found below. Please note that on the last Wednesday of every month they will open later in the morning:



Mendip Business Hub



Mendip Business Hub is an online Council service which works with businesses in the district by providing expert advice, guidance, and support. It is a one-stop-shop for information, networking opportunities, consultancy, and events.

Learn more about the Hub and its service here: [Mendip Business Hub](#)

Supporting Local Business with first aid training

Mendip Business Hub is offering businesses the opportunity to attend 'Emergency First Aid at Work Training' with one of its qualified instructors. The courses will upskill staff and give them the confidence to treat casualties in a prompt, safe and effective manner in the workplace.

The training will be delivered in-person and will take place at a local venue. There is a one-day and a three-day course available. Up to twelve students aged fourteen and over can benefit from the courses.

One-day course = £80 per person

Three-day course = £180 per person

The three-day training courses will take on the following dates:

- 19 August(Day 1), 22 August(Day 2), 25 August(Day 3)
- 19 September(Day 1), 29 September(Day 2), 30 September (Day 3)
- 25 October (Day 1), 27 October (Day 2), 28 October (Day 3)
- 2 November(Day1), 3 November (Day 2), 4 November (Day3).

The one-day course will be available on day one on any of these sessions. Please note that Mendip Hun can offer bespoke training sessions for businesses that wish to have a training session for 10-12 employees at the same time. Please contact Mendip Business Hub directly for more details.

Learn more here: www.mendip.gov.uk/article/10932/First-Aid-Training.

Bitesize guides for businesses

Mendip Business Hub have a collection of handy bitesize guides for businesses to buy to help them unravel the maze of legislation around food production at home. There are guides for:

- Sweet and savoury preserves makers
- Bed and Breakfast businesses
- Oils and dressing makers
- Cake makers
- Self-caterers

Learn more here: www.mendip.gov.uk/article/10202/Bitesize-Guides.

Somerset Retrofit Accelerator Project – Control your Bills

Mendip District Council is part of a cross county project working with the other Somerset Authorities and Glastonbury, Bruton and Frome Town Council aiming to help people increase the energy efficiency of their homes. As part of the project, we are offering:

- Fifty discount retrofit plans are available to homeowners, delivered in partnership with The Centre for Sustainable Energy.
- Thirty free training places for those involved in the building trade interested in learning more, delivered in Partnership with The Green Register.

Summer is the perfect time to look at getting any work done and save money ahead of the bills rising in the Autumn. Currently the plans are 25% of their normal price and are nearly all sold out with just five remaining. Our training places are also nearly all gone with only three spots left. If you know of anyone that might be interested this offer available across Somerset so book now before it is too late!

More information can be found on the [Somerset Retrofit Accelerator Webpage](#).

We have also been running some virtual open homes with homeowners highlighting what they have been up to. To see what we've done so far check out our videos online [Somerset Retrofit Accelerator Project - YouTube](#).

Do not Miss Out Community Grants & Funding Opportunities

A timely reminder of not just grants but of the oversight obligations that go with them. Always make sure you use public money in line with the Nolan principles as well as common sense value for money!

- The Tree Council are offering funding to plant trees between £200 - £2000 for schools, community groups and parish/town councils for winter 2022/2023. If you are interested, please get in contact as we are now a member of their Tree Warden Scheme. More information can be found on their website [Branching-Out-Guidance-final.pdf \(treecouncil.org.uk\)](#)
- Local School Nature Grants. Funding of up to £500 towards an assortment of nature equipment such as bird boxes and bee hotels for schools. <https://naturegrants.ltl.org.uk>
- DWF Foundation. Funding for registered charities towards a range of areas such as health and wellbeing, environment and sustainability, education [DWF Foundation | DWF \(dwfgroup.com\)](#)
- Morrisons Foundation. Up to £25,000 to fully fund a wide variety of projects [Grant Funding Request | Morrisons Foundation](#)
- Prince of Wales Charitable Fund– Funding of up to £5000 for small grants and £15,000 for larger projects focused on themes including Heritage &

Conservation, Education, Health & Wellbeing, Social Inclusion, Environment and Countryside. [Prince of Wales Charitable Fund](#)

- Screwfix Foundation – Grants for improving, repair and maintaining homes and community facilities [Screwfix Foundation](#)
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Health Matters COVID-19

Mendip remains the Authority responsible for COVID Information, always you are your information from trusted sources.

COVID cases are on the rise again and we are urging people to do all they can to protect themselves and others from the virus. We are asking residents and visitors alike to make sure they and their families are fully vaccinated against COVID. Vaccines are still available for anyone aged five and older who has not yet taken up the offer. If you are eligible for a spring booster, please do book this month to ensure you will have a six-month gap before the next booster is offered in the autumn. We are also encouraging people to go back to the basics of 'hands, face, space':

- wash or sanitise hands regularly
- try to meet outdoors if possible
- keep indoor spaces well ventilated
- wear a mask if you can in busy indoor settings
- do not mix with people if you are feeling unwell.

If you require support, please [contact Mendip District Council](#): call 0300 303 8588.

For more information, visit: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/nhscovid>



Walking in Mendip Hills AONB

The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Service has secured £20,000 of funding from the National Grid Community Grant Programme to continue their long-term programme to develop a more sustainable approach to recreation on the Mendip Hills. The 'Connecting on Mendip' project will draw on the information gathered over the last year to help better connect local people and visitors with the landscape and nature.

The project will collaborate with volunteers, visitors, local people, and land managers to improve accessibility at key visitor hotspots and routes in the AONB. This will include installing gates and resurfacing paths. It is hoped that improving physical connections and access to the countryside, as well as improving people's emotional connection to nature, will encourage recreation that is more in tune with the natural environment.

The project also sees the continuation of the AONB Service's work to collect and analyse data on visitor numbers and behaviour at key locations across the AONB – thanks to previous funding from the National Grid Community Grant Programme – informing management of sites and forming part of this longer-term initiative to manage recreation in a more sustainable manner. The Connecting on Mendip Project will be running from May 2022 to April 2023 and is part of the Mendip Hills AONB's 50th Anniversary in 2022. For more information or to share your views on recreation within the Mendip Hills AONB, please email

mendip@mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

NASS FESTIIVAL – Concerns

I was delighted to see many young people enjoy this festival although not without its problems.

It was only after my intervention that a bus service was confirmed as restored, preventing much of the traffic chaos of the 2019 event.

There have been multiple concerns regarding crimes against a person, drugs, noise and a tardy clean up. I will be taking these matters to the licencing committee.

Separately I have reminded NASS to the Community Support obligations and that of course these allocations should not influence or sway stakeholders in giving a true to record feedback to the festival and its impact.

Greencore Site

The officer **compiled her report and published granting a REFUSAL** on multiple grounds. This was not a surprise to me as the owner and his appointed developer continued to ignore community feedback, stakeholder feedback and planning policy feedback

There is every possibility the landowner may appeal this to a planning inspectorate.

It continues to be a disappointment that the owner has failed to realise the heritage value there and has not brought forward a mixed-use site, something I believe our community has now reached a consensus on, and that the community has had what I can only describe as a “dialogue of the deaf” with them.

And finally .Cllr Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, RIP

It is with regret I heard of the passing of Cllr Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, Mendip District Councillor for Butleigh and Baltonsborough. He had served at Mendip District Council since 1991.



Like me he was Deputy Leader of the Council, a Cabinet Member, and in addition will be known to many Parish Councillors as former Chair of the Planning Board at Mendip. He first encouraged me to “gent involved” at Mendip- I was always grateful for his advice, and criticism, as he was always a complete pleasure to deal with and performed his duties impeccably. He was also a former Somerset County Council member. Tributes from the opposition leader Cllr Tom Killen and Council leader Cllr Ros Wyke, here: www.mendip.gov.uk/article/11036/Condolences-Cllr-Nigel-Woollcombe-Adams-Mendip-District-Council-an-honourable-gentleman

My deepest sympathies to his family, his friends, and his Conservative Party “family,” he will be much missed.

That is all for this month’s report, please do let me know or get in touch if you need help on any items. Remember I continue to be your MDC Councillor until April 2023!

Barry

Your Mendip Councillor,  here for you
Cllr. Barry O’Leary

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