

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 50. Week ending 21/03/2021

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives

It is also important to remember the Coronavirus basics

- **Hands** – Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- **Face** – Cover your face in enclosed spaces
- **Space** – Keep 2m apart where possible

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](#).

[Click here](#) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to Coronavirus.

Key Messages this week

1. Census Day, Sunday 21 March 2021

The Office for National Statistics – which runs Census 2021 – has been working with SWT to deliver a successful census and help local services to fully meet future needs. Understanding the needs of the nation helps everyone from central government to local organisations, such as councils and health authorities, plan and fund public services across England and Wales.

The census, taking place on **Sunday 21 March 2021** and will shed light on the needs of different groups and communities, and the inequalities people are

experiencing, ensuring the big decisions facing the country following the Coronavirus pandemic and EU exit are based on the best information possible.

Census outputs inform where public funding is spent on services like transport, education and health – on cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries.

You will have received a letter and a unique access code to input for your household. For translated versions please click [here](#).

For those who cannot complete the census online, paper copies can also be obtained by calling **0800 141 2021**.

2. National Day of Reflection

Since the first lockdown began in 2020, over one hundred thousand people have died. Too many lives have been cut short and millions have been bereaved. Behind the statistics and whatever the cause, every death has been devastating for the people left behind.

Join Marie Curie on **23 March**, the first anniversary of the first UK lockdown, for a National Day of Reflection to reflect on our collective loss, support those who've been bereaved, and hope for a brighter future.

There are still tough times ahead, as the death toll continues to rise. This annual day will give us all time to pause and think about this unprecedented loss we're facing, and support each other through grief in the years to come.

Please [click here](#) to find out how you can commemorate this national day of reflection.

3. 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:

- Tuesday 30 March – **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 25 March)

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](#). 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.

4. Business Support Grants – Don't miss out!

SWT is pleased to announce that it has released in excess of £65m worth of grant funding to local business since March 2020. This includes over £3m of Additional Restrictions Grant funding, which although awarded by central government, SWT administered under its own autonomy to support businesses not eligible for other grant schemes. These grants are not loans and are not repayable.

The Council is urging any remaining businesses, which have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and are yet to receive or register their interest for a business support grant, to do so urgently.

The Government announced last week that the application window for the majority of the existing grant schemes will close on **Wednesday 31 March 2021**.

Businesses who believe they are eligible for support and wish to be considered for a grant should visit the Council's [Covid Business Support Grants](#) webpage to register their interest online.

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

5. COVID-19 Business Restart Scheme

Central Government has also announced a new grants 'start-up' scheme for rate paying businesses, which will come into effect from **April 2021**.

Councils have been promised full details along with the funding to administer the new scheme by early April, at which point SWT will implement as soon as possible, with payments anticipated to be made in mid-April 2021.

Please [click here](#) to keep up to date with the latest news.

6. Business Rates Relief Extension

In the spring budget the Chancellor announced the extension of the Expanded Retail Discount (for businesses in the sectors of retail, leisure and hospitality) and Nursery Discount (for child-care nurseries). To qualifying businesses this awards 100% relief from business rates for the first three months of the new financial year, followed by a 66% discount from 1 July 2021 until 31 March 2022

Both discounts have a cap of £105,000 per eligible business, or £2 million if your business was required to close under regulations in force on 5 January 2021.

To find out more information about Business Rates Relief, please [click here](#).

Links to the full guidance for both the Expanded Retail Discount and Nursery Discount can be found [here](#).

7. **SWT agrees plans to address rough sleeping provision**

SWT's Executive has agreed to support a draft Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy which sets out the Council's vision and objectives to end rough sleeping in the district by 2027.

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

8. **Have your say on affordable housing on Exmoor**

Residents on Exmoor are being urged to have their say on possible new locations for affordable housing in the National Park. The Parishes of **Cutcombe, Exford, Exton, Luccombe, Luxborough, Timberscombe, Winsford**, and **Wootton Courtenay** have been working together to stimulate provision of new affordable housing for local people.

Following a Housing Needs Survey in 2018, the Affordable Housing Working Group was set up with representatives from the Parish Councils, working with Exmoor National Park Authority and Somerset West and Taunton Council. In 2019, the Working Group carried out a call for sites, asking local landowners to come forward with land they might offer for the development of affordable housing.

A consultation is currently underway on the seven sites. Initially it was hoped the consultation could be through drop-in sessions at village halls within the parishes, however, COVID-19 restrictions have meant the consultation is being carried as an online questionnaire.

The online survey is hosted by the ENPA on their [website](#).

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

9. **North Taunton Woolaway Project**

All residents who live within Phases B – D of the North Taunton Woolaway Project area were sent a letter advising them that they will receive a formal notice that SWT is proposing to demolish their home at some point in the future. They then received the Initial Demolition Notice together with a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ's) on 18 March.

Initial Demolition Notices are issued to residents when the Council has decided to regenerate an area and the proposals require some homes to be demolished, but it is yet to be established when this will happen. These Notices can last up to seven years so it does not mean that demolition work is about to start.

The purpose of the Initial Demolition Notice is to alert tenants on the suspension of their Right to Buy. Demolition can only start after planning permission has been granted and after a Final Demolition Notice has been issued.

The Council needs to issue the Initial Demolition Notice to allow the regeneration scheme to commence and the Council is required to publish the

Notice on the Council's website and Somerset Gazette. It will also be published in the tenants' Housing Newsletter.

Enquiries on this project should be directed to Jane Windebank, Development Manager (Regeneration) on J.Windebank@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

10. Don't miss out on free delivery by shopping with ShopAppy

SWT has joined forces with [ShopAppy](#) in a joint first to offer free delivery on goods purchased using its e-commerce platform. The free delivery offer commenced from Thursday 18 March and will be available on the first 200 orders on a first-come, first-serve basis.

SWT launched [ShopAppy](#) in October last year as part of its economic plans to help businesses recover from the impact of Coronavirus. The award-winning platform provides a simple-to-use, centralised online marketplace for residents to buy locally from businesses in Dulverton, Minehead, Taunton and Wellington.

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

11. Community Chest Fund Closure

As of the 15 March 2021, applications to the Community Chest fund have now closed. Any outstanding applications will be determined before the end of the month.

12. REMINDER- Stronger Somerset Public Consultation launched

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.

Please [click here](#) for more information on the Stronger Somerset proposal.

The Government is also consulting on Somerset County Council's alternative proposal, One Somerset. [Click here](#) to find out more.

13. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

COVID-19 Home testing? Dispose of the kits carefully

Secondary schools across the county and country are providing the home Lateral Flow Testing kits for pupils, though exactly when and how may vary from school to school. And as the kits come home, Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) is highlighting the Government guidance on disposing of them – once used, kit contents should go straight into standard rubbish bins.

Whether the result is positive or negative, the used items from each test – including the testing strip, swab and extraction tube – should be put in the

small plastic bag that comes with the pack. This bag should then go straight into your normal rubbish bin.

The kits are not considered clinical waste requiring a special collection, nor should they be recycled. If a test result is positive, as well as following the reporting instructions included in the test kits, people should make sure they then treat their personal waste appropriately.

The advice for any household with a confirmed COVID-19 case or any symptoms is that tissues, disposable cleaning cloths, masks and gloves should be double-bagged and kept separate from other waste for 72 hours before going into your usual rubbish outside your house.

Full guidance on disposing of waste during the pandemic can be found [here](#).

In a household without any COVID-19 cases or symptoms, if you need to throw away used face coverings or PPE, such as gloves, please put them in your 'black bag' waste (or a litter bin if you are outside). Do not put them into your recycling bin as they cannot be recycled through conventional recycling facilities. You do not need to put them in an extra bag or store them before throwing them away. Cloth face coverings should be washed and reused to prevent and reduce waste.

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

The fine, dry spell of weather continues which is of great assistance to highway maintenance. There could still be some chilly nights, however, to watch out for which may require some road salting. The removal of dead and diseased trees suffering from ash dieback on **Exford Road, Winsford** continues for the week of 22 – 26 March. A similar task is also taking place at **A361 Burrow Wall, Burrowbridge**, also during the week of 22 – 26 March. Both schemes will be carried out using temporary traffic signals.

Another unusual item of tree work that SCC Highways are progressing is the removal of the broken-off tree stump on **Eastwick Road, Taunton**, at the junction of Cheddon Road. This has been a long-standing issue and residents and drivers may have been wondering why it has taken so long? The roots of the tree had become so entangled in both the underground high voltage electricity cable and gas supply pipe, the removal operation has posed some unique challenges. It has required considerable planning to ensure the safety of the workforce and public. Preparation for the job includes turning off the electricity and gas supply for several hours on

Thursday 25 March. A generator is being supplied to nearby Taunton Academy to ensure lessons are not interrupted and all residents have been informed of the interruption to the power supply. It is appreciated that this will be inconvenient but it is essential to ensure the safety of residents, the wider public and the workforce. It is anticipated the removal of the tree stump and footway repairs will be completed on **Friday 26 March.** A temporary road closure of Eastwick Road will be in force whilst work is being undertaken (Monday 22 – Friday 26 March).

SCC Highways will also be working on a drainage improvement scheme at **Honiton Road, Churchinford**, just to the south of the village, on the approach to the Devon boundary (temporary road closure, 22 – 26 March).

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit 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](#)

[Report an overgrown verge or hedge on the road](#)

[Street light not working](#)

[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](#)

REMINDER- Temporary Road Closure: Princes Street, Taunton

There will be a temporary road closure on Princes Street, Taunton for approximately 75 metres. The works will commence on **31 March 2021** between the hours of 12am (midnight) – 11.59pm.

These works are for Paragon TM Ltd to access telecom equipment for general maintenance on behalf of T-Mobile (UK) Ltd, their works reference is Unknown (reference).

The link to view the new Notice can be found [here](#).

For any further information about this closure please contact Paragon TM Ltd on **0113 3470 074** quoting the above works reference number.

A map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) can be found [here](#).

Lockdown is easing – but please take care

Somerset residents are being urged to be patient as the county and country begin to emerge from the latest lockdown. The first careful step towards easing national COVID-19 restrictions began on Monday 8 March with the return to school of thousands of children and young people, and changes to some rules on social mixing.

The first steps are welcome, but people must remember to keep to the guidance to keep Coronavirus cases low and make sure the four-step route to easing national restrictions is a success. As well as reopening schools, rules on socialising in a public space have relaxed.

Under the new rules one person can sit down with another person from outside their household or bubble for a coffee or picnic. Please remember to stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in your household or bubble and stay within your local area. For further guidance and detail on the Government's updated route to easing national lockdown restrictions please [click here](#).

West Coast 360

Providing Opportunities for West Somerset

Recent economic studies focusing on the Minehead area, have highlighted that in West Somerset about a third of the local workforce is employed in hospitality and tourism related jobs. This figure rises to 55% in Minehead.

An associated study highlighted the need to support the local industry to ensure the area can provide the skilled staff needed. It also highlighted the opportunity to develop the local area as a Centre of Excellence for associated training, building on the strengths of the businesses and organisations that already exist.

As a result, a partnership group of businesses, training providers and Somerset West and Taunton Council have developed 'West Coast 360' and as part of this an offer to local schools, jobseekers (i.e. the future workforce), employees (the current workforce) and businesses (Business Support).

The partners strongly believe that by developing a highly skilled, productive and efficient workforce we are more likely to see visitors returning to the area and/or recommending West Somerset to others.

Follow [West Coast 360 on Facebook](#) for information; training and course offers and local opportunities. You can also visit their website by clicking [here](#).

Idverde

REMINDER- Community Investment Fund

The [idverde Community Investment Fund](#) aims to empower local people to deliver sought after projects that improve their local green space or the public realm, enhance the local environment, and boost the wellbeing of local people.

Funding can be granted for a variety of projects and activities, including promotion, marketing, and education, as well as practical equipment and running costs.

The fund is open for applications from formally constituted, not for profit groups, such as charities, volunteer groups, forums, sports teams, societies and schools. Your project must be based in areas where Idverde currently operates a contract – [check out the main contract locations here](#), but if you've seen the Idverde vans driving around, you're in luck!

To find out more about the Community Investment Fund please [click here](#).

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

REMINDER- Village Halls to remain closed until 17 May

National charity, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) has issued new information to help village halls make sense of the latest announcements about the lifting of national lockdown restrictions.

Contrary to the Government's announcement on 22 February, village halls will not be able to reopen after Easter, except for a small number of permitted activities. As it currently stands, England's 10,000+ rural community buildings will instead have to wait until **17 May 2021** before they can be hired out for many functions including exercise classes, coffee mornings, performances and celebrations.

The [update](#), should be read alongside previous [advice and information](#) issued by the charity which provided a detailed commentary on how village halls could previously reopen following the Government's COVID-secure rules. However, the guidance does make it clear that one of the exceptions to the guidance is that Village Halls can be used for the Elections being held on 6 May 2021.

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Hill Farmer – Mental Health in Agriculture

Last month, a study by the Farm Safety Foundation revealed that 88% of farmers under the age of 40 rank poor mental health as the biggest hidden problem facing farmers today.

Please take a few minutes to watch this important film, [The Hill Farmer](#), highlighting the vital role support organisations can play in helping farmer's mental health and wellbeing, featuring a well-known Exmoor farmer, Oliver Edwards.

The film has been produced by The Somerset Mental Health in Agriculture Group (SMHAG). SMHAG is group of individuals, from various rural organisations, with a common interest in raising awareness about mental health in agriculture.

The Farming Community Network (FCN), a charity and voluntary organisation with volunteers in England and Wales, has seen an increase in the percentage of calls to its Helpline (**03000 111 999**) over the past year that contain a mental health component, such as stress or anxiety. It is hoped that the video will be used to train others in giving support to the farming community.

Somerset Wildlife Trust

REMINDER- Youth Environment Summit

Aged 11-18, live in Somerset and care about the environment?

Join the Youth Environment Summit Somerset (YESS) on **Saturday 27 March 2021** on Zoom & help make change!

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

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

HM Coastguard Watchet

HM Coastguard Watchet were tasked to investigate reports of a potential vessel in distress following 999 calls reporting sightings of distress flares in Watchet Harbour Marina. Whilst search teams deployed; officers from Avon and Somerset Police joined the Coastguard. They had received reports that a party had been taking place on a vessel within the marina, in breach of COVID-19 guidance and regulations.

Police identified the vessel and located a freshly dropped maritime Distress Flare next to the same boat in the mud. Officers liaised with a person identifying himself as the owner / skipper of the vessel, however this person declined any knowledge of the incident and with no other evidence present, the police resumed making further local enquiries.

With no stranded vessels located and no further signs of distress or persons located within the marina, the coastguard search was stood down at 1.30am.

Distress Flares are not toys or fireworks to be played with, and if used maliciously can lead to prosecution and causes the emergency services to unnecessarily enact searches costing money and potentially endangering lives of searchers both on land, sea and in the air, especially when the weather and sea conditions are unfavourable.

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Easter Provision

[Somerset County Council](#) (SCC) has joined up with [Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership](#) (SASP) to organise a programme for the forthcoming Easter Holidays aimed at countering the triple inequalities facing Somerset's most disadvantaged young people – holiday hunger, physical inactivity and social isolation.

SCC has already confirmed it will continue to fund Free School Meals provision for vulnerable families over the Easter holidays. Now, existing or prospective organisers of holiday activity programmes will deliver daily, four-hour programmes where young people in receipt of free school meals will be able to take part in a range of food, sports and cultural activities, and receive advice on nutrition and cooking skills.

Programmes will be led by a range of organisations from public, private, community and voluntary sectors. In the light of ongoing restrictions and uncertainty, the programmes – subject to any prevailing lockdown restrictions – will be held at a range of venues including schools, community halls, parks, and leisure centres to name a few. The programme will also include a virtual offer for young people to take part in with a menu of activities that can be done at home and online, along with the face-to-face provision.

Local Pantry Launch Update

The Somerset West and Taunton Community Resilience Team are working in partnership with SCC and Rowbarton Methodist Church to offer a new Local Pantry

in Rowbarton, North Taunton. The first of its kind in the District. By partnering with surplus food charity FareShare, this project will offer low-cost, nutritious food for residents, and provide an annual saving of up to £1,144 per family.

The initial set up costs, for essentials such as a fridge and storage, are funded from a Central Government Covid-19 relief scheme, and ongoing costs will be covered through membership fees: Local residents are invited to join for up to one year, paying a small fee (£3.50) for their weekly food parcel. The scheme will be run by volunteers and supported by SWT and other partners.

The proposed launch date is **Tuesday 23 March 2021**. The plan is to support the households and the project for 6-12 months but within that time to have built resilience so that going forward it can become community lead and sustainable.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Talking Café Live

The 8 Parishes Affordable Housing Consultation was discussed during a Talking Café Live this week. Village Agent Jane Lillis was joined by Nicola Kemp from Somerset West and Taunton Council as part of the Exmoor Rural Housing Network and Jane Birch of Smart Communities who undertook the initial Housing Needs Survey. They looked at the background of the project, from the rural housing needs survey, to how the 8 sites were identified and now are under consideration for an affordable housing development in the Exmoor area.

You can watch a replay of the Talking Café Live by clicking [here](#).

Taunton and West Somerset Bike Appeal

Somerset charity CCS would like to say a huge 'thank you' to people in Somerset for donating their second-hand bikes as part of the Taunton & West Somerset Bike appeal. So far **100** bikes have been matched with new owners.

Now the CCS are on the hunt for yet more adult bikes. The donated bikes should be adult-size and in good condition - meaning nearly ready to ride, with two wheels, pedals and handlebars. Donated bikes may need a little TLC, but sadly the CCS can't take bikes that are rusty or beyond repair.

If you have a bike to donate please get in touch with CCS Village Agent Izzy via email izzy@Somersetccc.org.uk with your name and phone number and a brief description of the bike or call **07931 018 045** to arrange for a free collection.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

Step up Somerset

Aged 15-18 and unsure what career to path to take?

Making career decisions can be intimidating and challenging, but there are lots of people and resources to help you. Get help transitioning from education to work with Step up Somerset. Please [click here](#) for further information.

SWT Employment Hubs

Newly unemployed or out of work for a while? At risk of redundancy? Looking for new skills, career progression or starting your own business?

The Employment Hubs focus on offering one to one practical support such as CV writing, searching and applying for work, how to deal with online application forms, help with interviews and signposting to other agencies for further help and support.

For support, a chat and a virtual cup of tea, please [click here](#) or you can email: employmentsupport@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk. Please see attached flyer for ease of reference.

You can also find out more information on the [SWT website](#).

REMINDER- Redundancy support for employers and employees

SWT is fully committed to supporting businesses and their employees who are facing redundancy during this very challenging and difficult time. Working with partners including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Somerset County Council (SCC), SWT can provide a package of support to help businesses looking to restructure and make redundancies in their workforce and for the employees directly affected by the changes.

For further information please [click here](#).

Somerset Skills and Learning (SSL)

REMINDER- SSL Workshops and Courses – March 2021

This month SSL are continuing with the health & wellbeing theme and have a variety of free workshops to keep us all going through lockdown and beyond. Plus, they also have lots on offer to help you learn, connect, develop new skills, job hunt, change career, support your children's learning and also help you get creative!

To find out more, please [click here](#).

REMINDER - Advice for people struggling to pay essential bills

The Government has updated the advice for those in difficulty with utility bills, or repayment commitments on credit cards, loans and mortgages, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

The guidance sets out what people should do if they are struggling to pay bills and sets out the action the Government has taken with different utility providers, as well as loan, credit card, insurance and mortgage providers.

The Government has extended the deadline for applying for a mortgage payment holiday to **31 March 2021**. Please [click here](#) for more information and further advice.

Health and Welfare

More than 25 million people in the UK have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

A significant milestone has now been reached as almost half of all UK adults in the UK get the vaccine.

- 95% of people aged 65 and over have been vaccinated with first dose
- 9 in 10 of those clinically extremely vulnerable have received first jab

Figures out today show the UK health services vaccinated a total of 25,273,226 people between 8 December and 16 March with first doses of the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, while 1,759,445 people have had their second dose.

This means almost half of the adult population (26.5 million) have already been vaccinated and will soon develop strong protection from serious illness, saving countless lives and significantly reducing pressure on the NHS. Please [click here](#) for further information.

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](#) 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.

Unpaid carers invited for vaccination

Unpaid carers are now being invited to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination. Carers will be contacted in phases, starting with those carers already known to health and social care services. All eligible unpaid carers will be contacted by the NHS when it's their turn to receive the vaccine and will be given information about how they should book their appointment. This will either be at a vaccination site in their local community supported by their GP practice, or at a large vaccination centre.

In some cases where caring responsibilities are shared, an additional person can be classed as a primary carer and receive a vaccination. Every possible effort will be made to vaccinate eligible carers at the same time as the people they care for, such as when they accompany them for a vaccination.

If you are an unpaid carer and you are unsure if you are eligible, contact your local council or [local carers organisation](#) and they will advise you if you are able to receive your COVID-19 vaccine.

Director of Public Health encourages all households with school age children to regularly COVID-19 test

SCC recommends all Somerset families and households with children start to take a free COVID test twice every week. Each person in a household with primary,

secondary and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, are encouraged to test themselves at home twice every week to help find more COVID-19 cases and break chains of transmission.

Free 'lateral flow' test kits are available to collect from test sites between set times. To find your nearest test collection site, please click [here](#).

If anyone does a 'lateral flow test' at home and gets a positive result, you should book a further test, known as a polymerase chain reaction test (PCR test) at a local Covid testing site to confirm the result. Also, anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should still book a test online or by calling 119.

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

REMINDER- All businesses can sign up for free COVID-19 testing

All businesses in England are now able to sign up to the government's free COVID-19 workplace testing programme, including those with fewer than 50 employees (previously restricted to those with more than 50 employees).

Businesses can register to order tests if:

- the business is registered in England
- employees cannot work from home

Businesses must register on or before **31 March** and can get the forms they will need to order free lateral flow tests to test employees in the workplace. Please [click here](#) to register and find out more information.

Please do not use this service if you or your employees have symptoms. Anyone with symptoms should [order an individual test](#) and stay at home.

REMINDER- Coronavirus home testing kits easier to order

The Government has announced that it has introduced improvements to the home testing programme to make it easier to get tested.

They include:

- People who do not have access to the internet can now order home testing kits over the phone by calling 119, without needing an email address or any other digital requirement.
- A new NHS Test and Trace partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) to improve the home testing service for people with visual impairments.
- A new video-call support service with specially trained NHS Test and Trace staff that will help people with vision impairments to test at home.

[Read more on GOV.UK](#)

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](#) 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

Mind in Somerset

Following the announcement that London Marathon Events plans to stage the world's first 100,000-person marathon on **Sunday 3 October**, Mind in Somerset are inviting runners all across the UK – and the world – to be a part of it by running to raise funds in their name.

Mind in Somerset have 25 places in the Virtual London Marathon, all they ask is that you raise £200. In return, you will receive a runner's number and if you finish your 26.2 miles, a coveted 2021 Virgin Money London Marathon medal, as well as the official finishers T-shirt. For more details please email fundraising@mindinsomerset.org.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.gov.uk/coronavirus>

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

FAQS

Q. Where can I find out how many people in Somerset have been vaccinated?

A. The NHS are sharing vaccination figures for Somerset each week. This information is available on their social media pages as well as the NHS website. You can also view the national dataset [here](#). This dataset is updated every Thursday and provides regional and county level figures.

Q. I'm due to have my Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine next week but I've heard worrying reports that the vaccine may cause blood clots. Where can I find out more information?

A. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) have responded to the precautionary suspensions of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, stating it has not been confirmed that the reports of blood clots are being caused by the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. The Government advise people to get their COVID-19 vaccine when asked to do so. For more information, please [click here](#).

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Beware of the census form scam

Trading standards has issued a warning over a census form scam where fraudsters are trying to trick members of the public into giving out personal information by pretending to be from a Council. They issued the warning after receiving reports from victims who claim to have been contacted by someone purporting to be from the Local Authority and acting on behalf of the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The caller suggested that the individual's Census form was completed incorrectly and they had a fine to pay. The caller asked for basic identification details which they said was to confirm the Census record and the individual's bank details so they could process the fine.

The ONS are aware of similar scams in parts of the country where money has been taken from an individual's bank account. The ONS have warned that they would never ask for this type of personal information and advised that Local Authorities are not acting as agents for them.

Always check a cold caller's identity with the genuine organisation before talking with them. For further information, please [click here](#).

To report a fraud, call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or use our online fraud reporting tool.

Trading Standards Alert

Young people alerted to fake job scams

Trading Standards is warning young people to be wary of fake job adverts on social media that at first glance might appear to be the answer to their financial woes. The pandemic has hit the pockets of many financially, but none more so than young people many of which are students who rely on jobs in the tourist and hospitality sectors. However, as a consequence of lockdown and jobs not being available, many are struggling to make ends meet.

Some fake job adverts on social media have the sole aim of harvesting personal details, which are later used to commit identity theft. Fake jobs advertised have included roles such as COVID-19 testers or admin support.

Action Fraud has been alerted to 4,540 COVID-19 related fraud and cybercrimes, resulting in total losses of £21.8m since the start of the pandemic. Often, criminals who want to move money through accounts but want to avoid the scrutiny of banks, employ 'mules' who allow their account to be used. According to fraud prevention experts Cifas, more than four in 10 cases of money mules involved victims aged 21 to 30. For more information, please [click here](#).

For more advice or to report an incident go to the [Safer Jobs](#) website.

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Williton Police Move to West Somerset House

Avon and Somerset Police have moved to a new police station at West Somerset House, Williton, the offices of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT).

The Response and Neighbourhood Policing teams in Williton and Watchet have transferred to the new shared location on Killick Way, Williton and will be joined on site by the Response team for Minehead. The Minehead Neighbourhood Policing team and enquiry office will remain at the Townsend Road site in Minehead.

The newly refurbished offices provide the teams with a modern and fit for purpose base, in a location which will give them better access across West Somerset, whilst enabling them to continue to be accessible to the local community. The new location does not affect the number of officers or PCSOs in the surrounding communities, who will continue to work as they currently do.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

Minehead PCSO receives Royal Humane Society Award

A PCSO has been recognised for his courage in helping an ambulance crew stabilise a seriously injured man while on patrol in Minehead last May. Joe Norris was presented with a resuscitation certificate from the Royal Humane Society and received commendations and thanks from the Chief Constable.

To read the full press release please [click here](#)

Wellington Neighbourhood Policing

Team Sergeant Dan Bishop has received a High Sheriff Special Recognition Award. The award which was presented on 10 March during an online presentation by [The High Sheriff of Somerset](#) recognises Sgt Bishops outstanding contribution to the community in Somerset and his acts of thoughtfulness and kindness during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

Taunton Neighbourhood Policing

Part of the rural team's commitments are [Farmwatch](#) and [Horsewatch](#) which are free crime prevention initiatives. If you are a landowner with a farm or small holding, no matter how big or small, or are part of the Equine Community please visit the A&SP website and find out how you can join these schemes. The service also includes free tack marking, property marking and when signed up to the scheme there are signs for your gates, outbuildings and stables.

#StayHomeSaveLives

Is your trip out really necessary? Bending the rules costs lives. Your local neighbourhood teams have been out spreading this very important message. "Stay at home and play your part. Protect the NHS. Save lives".

[#COVID-19](#) [#stayhomesavelives](#) [#yourcommunity](#)

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/ or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil)
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

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

#StayAtHome

#ProtectTheNHS

#SaveLives