

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 53 Week ending 11/04/2021

#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](#).

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

Key Messages this week

1. HRH Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh

Following the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, the Leader and the Chair of SWT have issued a statement of condolence -

“On behalf of the residents of Somerset West and Taunton we would like to offer our heartfelt condolences to HM The Queen and the Royal Family. Our thoughts are with them at this sad time.”

Our social media banners have been changed and condolence posts have gone out across our channels. Our [website](#) has also been amended in memory of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

Flags are lowered to half-mast at Deane House and West Somerset House. There is also a picture of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and commemorative wording by the door in Deane House for the public to see.

In line with current restrictions and guidance from the Royal Household, we ask that members of the public do not leave floral tributes in public spaces or gather at monuments at this sad time, to ensure each other's safety.

The Royal Household has suggested that people could make donations to charity instead, if they wish to do so.

Also in view of public safety in the light of current Covid-19 restrictions, an [online book of condolence](#) has been opened to allow people to pay their respects. For more information, visit royal.uk

2. Further easing of COVID-19 restrictions confirmed for 12 April

Some of the rules on what you can and cannot do will change on **Monday 12 April**. You can read the '[COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#)' ([the roadmap out of lockdown](#)) for more information on how COVID-19 restrictions will be eased in England. You can also read the [law](#) that underpins these changes and the ongoing restrictions.

There will be no changes to social contact rules and many restrictions are still in place. Outdoor gatherings must still be limited to 6 people or 2 households, and you must not socialise indoors with anyone you do not live with or have not formed a support bubble with.

Please [click here](#) for information outlining what you can and cannot do from Monday 12 April 2021.

3. 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. PA Consultancy who are experts in this field have completed analysis of the One Somerset Business Case, and the report on Consultation of Local Government Reform - Response to the One Somerset Proposal going before the Special Full Council meeting on the 13 April 2021.

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.

4. Democracy and Governance

Committee Meetings

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

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

- Monday 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)
- Wednesday 21 April – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 16 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](#). 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.

5. COVID-19 Business Restart Grants

You may be aware that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a Restart Grant scheme in his Budget statement. These grants will be payable to non-essential retail, hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses, within the business rates system, to help them get through to June 2021. The Government has published a [guide to the Restart scheme](#), Annex C of which provides details of the types of businesses that are eligible for this scheme.

SWT expects to receive funding from the Government shortly. In the meantime the Council is currently preparing pre-payment bank and company checks (required by Government) as well as designing a short confirmatory email

process to send to businesses that have previously received a grant from SWT, that may be eligible to receive a Restart Grant.

SWT anticipates being able to start to make Restart Grant payments around 16 April. Payment will be made to the person / business named on the Council's business rates system for the premises concerned at 1 April 2021.

For businesses within the rating system that meet the criteria within the guide, that have NOT received a business support grant from the Council since November 2020, it will be necessary to firstly complete a [Register of Interest](#) form via our website. This step is not required for businesses that have received a business support grant from the Council since November 2020.

6. Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)

Businesses which are not eligible for a 'Restart Grant' may still be eligible for support under the Additional Restrictions Grant. However in April 2021 the policy will be reassessed to align with the easing of restrictions which are expected over April and May 2021. SWT expects the new scheme policy to be in place by mid-April, at which time the scheme will publicised. If you have previously completed a Register of Interest form and received a payment from SWT under the ARG there is no need to reapply as the Council will be in contact if your business is eligible under the new policy.

For businesses that have not received support from the Council since November 2020 it will be necessary to firstly complete a [Register of Interest](#) form via the SWT website.

7. 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.

8. Deane House Hub opening for appointments

The Deane House Hub will re-open for appointments only on **Monday 12 April** as we enter step two of the Government's Roadmap out of lockdown. SWT offices will remain closed to protect the community and staff while still delivering critical services and ensuring residents are fully supported.

The customer services team are continuing to answer calls between 8am – 6pm, and people are being encouraged to access services online. However, when a face to face meeting is required appointments can be made at the Deane House Hub in Belvedere Road by calling 0300 304 8000.

All visitors and staff will be required to wear a mask unless exempt and to follow social distancing guidelines. SWT staff manning the interview rooms will be wearing face visors rather than masks to make communication easier and minimise any impact on visitors with a hearing impairment.

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

9. Stay local and enjoy our coastline responsibly

With the 'Stay at Home' order lifted SWT is expecting to see a rise in visitors to its popular beaches and coastal communities this half term. The Council is asking visitors to the area to be considerate to local communities, park responsibly, dispose of litter carefully and follow the signage in place to keep everyone safe. COVID-19 wardens will be present along Minehead beach and in the town centre to offer help and advice; and will carry masks and sanitizers to hand out if necessary.

The wardens are employed by the four district councils in Somerset – Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset and are

recognisable from their pale blue waterproof coats with COVID Warden clearly marked on the back.

When visiting Somerset West and Taunton people should remember it's their responsibility to follow the Government guidance on staying safe to avoid spreading coronavirus in our communities. It is also asking people to observe the Countryside Code which has just been updated and can be viewed [here](#).

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

10. Take pride in your local park and dispose of litter responsibly

SWT is responsible for maintaining a variety of parks and open spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. These treasured assets provide numerous health and wellbeing benefits to individuals and communities; the importance of which has been highlighted in recent months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the 'Stay at Home' order lifted, people can now meet outdoors either in a group of six or from two households; and with the half term now here, the Council is expecting to see a rise in the use of its parks and open space amenities.

The job of keeping the district's parks and open spaces maintained for public use is a continual process. The Council's Open Spaces team and cleansing contractor [idverde](#), are regularly seen carrying out their cleaning, grounds maintenance and landscaping duties. In many cases, the parks are also maintained in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, and 'Friends groups' made up of local volunteers who help improve and develop them. Their input is invaluable and supports the maintenance programme carried out by the Open Spaces team.

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

11. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Disposal of waste from lateral flow testing kits at home

To dispose of the lateral flow testing kit safely, place all of the items from the test and the plastic packaging into the bag provided and then put this bag with your general waste into your black kerbside bin. This applies whether the test be positive or negative.

Any disposable gloves or face masks should also be put into the general waste bin (not recycling).

Revised collection days for public holidays 2021

For single bank holiday Mondays, such as those in May and August, all collections (including clinical waste) will be one day later than usual, for example, Monday collections on Tuesday and Friday collections on Saturday.

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)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

The weather pattern seems to be repeating itself as, after temperatures picking up after the cold bank holiday, they are now set to dip again for the weekend. As previously, SCC Highways are ready to carry out any salting actions that are required on the main road network.

Carriageway patching work is currently ongoing in the **Brompton Regis** and **Huish Champflower areas**. Over in **Burrowbridge** a group of diseased and dying trees will be removed from the roadside. This will require the temporary closure of **Stathe Road** on 15 and 16 April, between 8.30am and 4.30pm on both days.

The Somerset Rivers Authority/ SCC Highways joint venture to reduce the risk and impacts of flooding in **Kingston St Mary** continues, with **Lodes Lane** remaining closed until 26 April to facilitate the improvement of the drainage system there.

There is a major item of work the following week when SCC Highways will be resurfacing the **A358 Williton to Taunton road at Combe Florey**. The road will be closed to traffic between 9.30am and 3.30pm on Monday 19 April for five days through to Friday 23 April.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

M5 Junction 25 - next major milestone reached

A multi-million pound project to upgrade Taunton's M5 Junction 25 reaches another important landmark next week with the opening of the permanent road layout. This is a significant milestone for the award-winning £19.2 million Somerset County Council scheme, as it moves towards completion in the next few months. It will see the reopening of the newly refurbished eastbound A358 section heading towards Henlade, which has been closed since January.

Junction 25 of the M5 is vitally important to Somerset's economic future. The project aims to ease congestion and improve access to Taunton and the motorway, as well as providing safer cycling and walking routes into the town. The scheme is part of a major infrastructure plan to support growth in employment and housing development in Taunton.

Earlier this year the project took another huge step forward with the opening of the new A358 Nexus Link road and now the next important component comes into play. The newly revamped, two-lane eastbound section of the A358, incorporating the improved Ruishton Lane junction and signals, will carry all eastbound traffic heading away from Taunton, the M5, and the newly widened Junction 25 roundabout, while westbound traffic heading towards Taunton and the M5 will continue to use the new Nexus link road.

This layout is set to reduce congestion both heading towards Taunton and away from the town on the A358, by separating eastbound and westbound traffic at the improved J25 gyratory. It will also help to reduce congestion on the J25 slip road and provide a dedicated bus lane from the Park and Ride.

Important- Road Closures

In the run-up to the opening key works will be taking place throughout the week, which are being undertaken to coincide with Highways England night-time works on the M5 between Junctions 24 and 26 northbound, which will see a closure in place overnight northbound from 7-9 April.

Work will also take place at night (8pm-6am):

- From Wednesday 7 April to Friday 9 April Toneway will be closed during these hours
- From Wednesday 7 April to Friday 9 April J25 roundabout reduced to one lane

The eastbound A358 and Ruishton junction are set to reopen during the week commencing Monday 12 April 2021.

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.](#)

The Exmoor Society Poetry Competition for Adults 2021

In 2018, The Exmoor Society decided to reintroduce a poetry competition as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations in recognition that Exmoor has long been an inspiration for artists and writers – especially poets. The competition generated a lot of interest and consequently The Exmoor Society has decided to hold the competition annually.

The 2021 competition is now open to anyone aged over 16 years-of-age for original poems inspired by any aspect of Exmoor – be it topical, historical, archaeological, literary, recreational, spiritual or relating to flora or fauna, dark skies, landscape, etc.

1st Prize – £75

2nd Prize – £50

3rd Prize – £25

[Click here](#) to enter The Exmoor Society Poetry Competition for Adults.

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

REMINDER- 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**.

Enjoy the countryside – and follow the Code

A new, refreshed Countryside Code has been launched by Natural England, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the creation of the founding booklet.

With more people enjoying the outdoors than ever before, the code has been revised to help people enjoy countryside in a safe and respectful way. Changes include advice on creating a welcoming environment, for example by saying hello to fellow visitors; clearer rules to underline the importance of clearing away dog poo; staying on footpaths; and not feeding livestock. It also provides advice on how to seek permissions for activities such as wild swimming. Please [click here](#) to find out more.

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

Fire safety for thatched homes

Thatch fires are very difficult for D&SFRS to put out. They often result in total loss of a home. Over a quarter (22 of 74) of thatched property fires D&SFRS have attended in the past six years saw the whole building damaged.

If you live in a thatched property in Devon or Somerset, then you qualify for a free home safety visit. D&SFRS are also offering a free magnetic stovepipe thermometer to help you burn your stove more safely.

To talk to a friendly adviser and get your visit booked in:

- Call **0800 05 02 999**
- Text **07800 002476**
- Email firekills@dsfire.gov.uk

Please [click here](#) to read about the main causes of fires and how you can reduce the risk of a fire in a thatched property.

HM Coastguard Watchet Patrolling Incident Hotspots

For the rest of the Easter School Holidays, HM Coastguard Watchet along with teams from across the South West will be operating high visibility patrols to known incident hotspots in the area, maintaining a consistent, enhanced level of readiness.

The Coastguards will also be providing safety advice to members of the public who request it, or to those seen to be putting themselves at unnecessary levels of risk.

Patrols will include Minehead, Dunster Beach, Blue Anchor Beach, Watchet Harbour Marina, St Audries Beach, Kilve Beach and Lilstock Beach.

The advice when visiting the coast is to:

- Check the weather forecast, tide times and read local hazard signage.
- Take a fully charged mobile in a waterproof pouch
- Keep a close eye on your family.
- Don't use inflatables.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency Change to broadcast times

The broadcast times for the Shipping Forecast on BBC Radio 4 has change very slightly from 5 April 2021. For the most up-to-date information on UK broadcasts of marine weather forecasts and maritime safety information for all UK seafarers, please [click here](#).

Community Support – What help is out there? Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Somerset for Refugees Online Event – Saturday 10 April at 6pm

This special and rare event will include refugees, activists, supportive organisations, and communities from Somerset. You will hear stories of people who had to leave their country and started a new life here in the UK. They will share their challenges and hopes but also, there will be discussions between the people and organisations that helped them to settle into life in Somerset.

You can take part! Do you have something to say or are you interested in hearing about the challenges and available support? Perhaps, you would like to become a volunteer or a friend of refugees? Then Somerset for Refugees is for you.

Please [click here](#) to register your attendance at this special event.

REMINDER- Community Buildings

The Community Council for Somerset (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@somersetccc.org.uk

For more information relating to community buildings, please [click here](#).

Spark Somerset 2021 Spark Somerset Survey

Spark Somerset is working hard to support voluntary and community organisations across the county. To make sure they're doing this well, they are conducting a survey. Please spare a few minutes to take part and tell them about your experience with Spark Somerset.

Your feedback will help them to understand your needs, shape their services and improve the support they offer to VCSE organisations in Somerset.

Please [click here](#) to take part in the survey.

The survey closes at 5pm on **Friday 16 April**.

REMINDER- 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 to 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](#) to find out more and book.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) Apply for money to help your charity or community group get ready for life after Coronavirus

As life slowly returns to normal, [national surveys](#) 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.

You can apply for money if:

- you work or volunteer for a charity or community group based in Somerset

- your charity or community group usually has an annual income under £250,000
- your charity or community group has been affected by coronavirus

Ask for money by **23 April 2021** and SCF will let you know if they can help you by 28 May 2021. Please [click here](#) for more information and to apply.

REMINDER- Charities in SWT benefit from almost £60,000 grants. Funding Opportunity

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

The Youth Hostels Association (YHA) Kickstart Placement

Do you know anyone aged between 16-24 who is claiming Universal Credit and is ready to Kickstart their career? The Youth Hostels Association (YHA) (England and Wales), are looking for a team member to join them on a Kickstart placement at their hostel based in **Alcombe Combe, Minehead**.

As a team member with YHA, they will cover a wide range of customer facing duties across the hostel, delivering excellent customer service to all guest and visitors. These will include working on reception, serving food and drinks and cleaning and housekeeping.

Please be aware that in order to be eligible for a Kickstart role, you must be aged between 16-24 and be in receipt of Universal Credit. For more information, speak to your job centre work coach to be referred, you will need the post code for the role which is TA24 6EW.

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 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

For more information and Featured Courses and Workshops: [Click Here](#)

Health and Welfare

Free Coronavirus testing will be available to all

Everyone in Somerset will be able to access free, regular, rapid coronavirus testing from **Friday 9 April** as part of a new Government initiative in England. Rapid testing has so far been available to those most at risk and people who need to leave home for work, including frontline NHS workers, care home staff and residents, and schoolchildren and their families. Now rapid testing will be offered to everyone, with people encouraged to take regular tests (twice a week) to help prevent outbreaks and reclaim a more normal way of life.

One in three people with COVID-19 do not experience any symptoms and may be spreading the virus unwittingly. Rapid testing detects cases quickly, meaning positive cases can isolate immediately. The expanded regular testing offer for people without symptoms will be delivered through:

- community testing on site at one of the testing sites, offered by all local authorities
- collection at a local test site to take away during specific test collection time windows
- workplace testing programmes, on-site or at home
- testing on-site at schools and colleges
- a home ordering service, which allows people to order lateral flow tests online to be delivered to their home: About the people in your household or bubble – [Get a coronavirus test – GOV.UK](#)

To find out how to book a lateral flow test if you do not have any symptoms – [Coronavirus – Getting tested](#)

A new 'Pharmacy Collect' service is also launching which will provide an additional route to regular testing. People aged over 18 without symptoms will be able to visit a participating local pharmacy and collect a box of 7 rapid tests to use twice a week at home. More details on which Somerset pharmacies are participating will be available shortly.

Please take part in Somerset County Council's community survey

People taking part in lateral flow testing on a regular basis will be really important as we move forward especially as society starts to open up again. Regular testing helps break the chain of transmission which might otherwise have gone unidentified and helps to identify and suppress new variants of concern – more people getting a test will increase the ability to identify and control these variants.

Somerset County Council has recently launched a community survey to seek the views of people across Somerset. The team is keen to hear from as many people as possible about three key areas:

- Testing
- Vaccination
- Self-isolating

Somerset County Council would like to understand people's knowledge of the above and any barriers that may prevent them from doing these things or having the vaccine when it is offered. Please share the survey with your networks.

Please [click here](#) to respond to the survey.

NHS COVID-19 app updated in England

To coincide with the offer of free rapid testing for everyone, there were updates to the NHS COVID-19 app in England from 8 April. In line with new regulations, when a group enters a hospitality venue, every individual must check in either by scanning the official NHS QR code poster with the NHS COVID-19 app, or by providing their contact details. Previously, only the lead member of the group needed to provide contact details to check in.

If an app user tests positive, they will be asked to share their venue history in a privacy-protecting way via the app. This will allow venue alerts to be generated more quickly and improve the ability to identify where outbreaks are occurring and take steps to prevent the virus spreading.

If a person has been at a venue on the same day as several other people who have since tested positive for COVID-19, they may receive an alert advising them to book a test immediately, whether they are showing symptoms or not. This is to support finding asymptomatic cases who may have caught the virus but are not displaying symptoms.

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

April is National Stress Awareness Month How stressed are you?

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.

You can check your stress levels on The Stress Management Society website. Here you will find lots of useful tips, quizzes and strategies for how to cope with stress as well as their 30 Day Challenge on regaining connectivity, certainty and control. Please [click here](#) to check your stress levels.

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](#).

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.

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 and Fresh Air' 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

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

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. My son / daughter is under the age of 30 and I have concerns about them having the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine due to the reports of blood clots / unusual bleeding side effects. Where can I obtain accurate information?

A. Recently there have been reports of a very rare condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after vaccination. This is being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.

Although this condition remains extremely rare there appears to be a higher risk in people who have had the first dose of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine.

Around 4 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine doses given. This is seen slightly more often in younger people and tends to occur between 4 days and 2 weeks following vaccination.

This condition can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of COVID-19 infection. An increased risk has not yet been seen after other COVID-19 vaccines but is being carefully monitored.

Currently the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ. Should the individual choose to have another COVID-19 vaccine they may have to wait to be protected. They may wish to go ahead with the AZ vaccination after they have considered all the risks and benefits.

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

Q. My son / daughter is under 30 and has already had a first dose of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine. Should they have the second dose?

A. If your son / daughter has already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering any serious side effects they should complete the course. This includes people aged 18 to 29 years who are health and social care workers, unpaid carers and family members of those who are immunosuppressed. It is expected that the first dose of the vaccine will have given them some protection, particularly against severe disease.

Further information can be found at [NHS.UK](#).

Q. As the lockdown restrictions are easing, I'm feeling anxious about what is next to come. Is it normal to feel this way?

A. As lockdown restrictions ease, many will be feeling uncertain about taking part in some activities or worried about what new pressures will come. It's normal to feel this way. Over the next few months, it will be as important to look after ourselves as it was at the start of the pandemic. You might be finding it harder to stay motivated after the past few months of lockdown, and that's OK. There are a lot of things happening in our lives that we may be balancing. If there were activities that helped you cope before, try focusing on these.

As guidance changes, we may be able to see family or friends more. For many of us, these changes may be welcome, but they may also affect our mental health. We've all faced challenges over the past year and many of us will need time to readjust to the new rules. Be kind to yourself and take things at your own pace – If you're finding things tough, try to talk about how you are feeling with others. You can read more [here](#).

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Have you completed your Census 2021?

The Office for National Statistics will send Census branded reminder letters by post to households who have not yet completed their census. If someone receives a reminder letter they should complete their census as soon as possible. If they have already submitted their census form they can ignore any reminder letter.

A census field officer may also knock on the door of your home. The role of field officers is to give help and encouragement to those who have not yet filled in their census questionnaire online, or on paper, and direct them to any support services

they might need to complete it. They will not enter the household, and will carry ID to show they are genuinely working on the census.

Field officers will never ask for payment or bank details.

Stay safe from potential scams by visiting the [Action Fraud website](#). People still have time to complete the Census 2021 and should do so as soon as possible to avoid getting fined. You will never be issued with a fine by text, phone call or email. Field officers cannot fine you on your doorstep either.

Fake emails claiming to be from the DVLA

Watch out for fake emails claiming to be from the DVLA. Action Fraud has received 440 reports in one day. The DVLA will never ask for bank details over email. The only place to access official information on the DVLA and its services is [GOV.UK](#). If you receive a suspicious email, you can report it by forwarding the email to - report@phishing.gov.uk

For more information, please [click here](#).

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Avon and Somerset Police announce research collaboration to transform policing response to rape

A&SP are pioneering a transformative programme, Project Bluestone, which sees police professionals work alongside prominent academics to transform the police response to rape and sexual offences. Improving the experiences of victims is at the heart of the project, which also aims to tighten the grip on offenders and help address falling conviction rates for rape and sexual assaults.

The research programme will combine academic learning with expertise and insight from professional perspectives to deliver practical tools and processes which will be embedded as a specialist approach within A&SP's investigations department. Project outcomes will incorporate the latest academic research into areas such as offender behaviour, with innovative policing practices including trauma informed and offender centric investigations.

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

Avon and Somerset Police enquiries desk at Deane House opening

The Avon and Somerset Police enquiries desk in the Deane House Hub is to open from **Monday 12 April**. No appointment will be necessary but customers may have to queue outside so that social distancing can be observed.

Chief Constable announces plan to stand down this summer

Chief Constable Andy Marsh has confirmed he will not be seeking to extend his contract when it expires at the start of July 2021. CC Marsh said it had been the "honour of a lifetime" to lead a force he first joined as a new recruit in 1987.

After starting at Avon and Somerset Police, CC Marsh took on both operational and detective roles up to the role of Chief Superintendent and BCU Commander, first for South Bristol and then Somerset East. He went onto serve as Assistant Chief Constable at Wiltshire Police and then Avon and Somerset Police, before being appointed Deputy Chief Constable and then Chief Constable at Hampshire Police, before taking on the Chief Constable role at Avon and Somerset Police in February 2016.

CC Marsh was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 2018, the same year he was recognised by Women of the Future in its list of 50 'Kind Leaders'.

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

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.

#Hands #Face #Space and Fresh Air