

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 64 Week ending 27/06/2021

#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. COVID-19 vaccine programme opens to all adults in UK

More than one million jab appointments have been booked since the NHS vaccination programme opened for every adult in England on Friday 18 June. People rushed to book 1,008,472 appointments in just two days – an average of more than 21,000 every hour, or six every second – on Friday 18 and Saturday 19 June.

The figure does not include appointments made through local GP-led vaccination services or people getting jabbed at walk-in centres. NHS bosses are urging people to book their appointment without delay as the health service enters the final push to protecting the country against the virus.

The NHS is contacting people aged 40 and over to bring forward their second dose in line with updated Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice with the NHS booking service now showing earlier time slots available for those who are eligible to rebook.

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

2. 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:

- Wednesday 30 June – **Community Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 25 June)
- Thursday 1 July – **Planning Committee**, CANCELLED DUE TO A LACK OF BUSINESS
- Monday 5 July – **Licensing Sub Committee**, 11am (no public participation as this is a hearing)
- Wednesday 7 July – **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 2 July)

From 7 May 2021, meetings can no longer be held virtually.

These meetings will take place in the Chamber at Deane House following the Government COVID-19 safety guidelines. As we are very limited to the number of people we can safely get into the Chamber, we are asking people to register if they wish to attend in person.

Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT website. This also gives alternatives to participating without attending in person.

The meetings will still 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.

Contact the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

3. Elections

The by-election of one District Councillor for the North Curry & Ruishton Ward took place yesterday and the result is as follows:

HALL, Barrie (Liberal Democrat) 798 **ELECTED**
LINNELL, Thomas (Conservative) 678
PARMENTER, Catherine (Green) 133

The Council is now back up to the full complement of 59 Councillors with the political make-up being:

- Liberal Democrats - 30
- Independents - 13
- Conservatives - 10
- Labour - 3
- Green - 2
- Non Aligned - 1

4. Restart Grants Scheme – Deadline looming

Restart grants are available to businesses occupying business rated premises in the non-essential retail, hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care or gym sectors. These grants are not loans. They are non-repayable payments of between £2,667 and £18,000 (depending on the rateable value of the business premises concerned). So far SWT has issued Restart Grants totalling £11.8m to eligible businesses within the District.

SWT has contacted businesses who have previously registered to receive COVID-19 business support grants, inviting them to apply for the Restart scheme. Some businesses are yet to take up the offer, therefore if you have received an email from the Council, please respond as soon as possible. The Government has set a final payment deadline of 31 July 2021 for the Restart scheme.

If you have not previously applied for COVID-19 business grant support, but believe you may be eligible, please read the [guidance](#) to check your eligibility. If you believe you fit the eligibility criteria please complete a [Register of Interest form](#).

The deadline is 30 June 2021.

5. Armed Forces Day 2021

SWT showed its support for the Armed Forces by holding two flag-raising ceremonies on Monday 21 June. Services were hosted at Deane House in Taunton, and West Somerset House in Williton by the Mayor of Taunton, Councillor Sue Lees and the Chair of Somerset West and Taunton Council, Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey respectively.

The Armed Forces Day flag was raised during the ceremonies and will be flown for the week leading up to Armed Forces Day on **Saturday 26 June 2021**.

Both ceremonies were carried out in line with the latest Covid-safety guidance. Residents wishing to pay their own tributes are encouraged to visit armedforcesday.org.uk/get-involved.

6. Consultation underway for new rented Council homes

SWT is developing plans for new zero carbon homes in Taunton in line with its ambition to build 1,000 council homes across the district over the next 30 years.

The Council is now encouraging members of the public to have their say on proposals for 20 of these council-owned homes split across Churchill Way, Charter Walk, Wheatley Crescent, and the former Oxford Inn site on Roman Road.

Most of the sites are currently used as garages which the Council is redeveloping to provide high quality new affordable homes for social rent. The budget for the scheme was recently approved by Full Council and work is now progressing on the plans.

People are being asked to give their opinions on the proposals in a [consultation](#) available on SWT website until **4 July 2021**.

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

7. £50,000 secured towards restoration plan for Dulverton's weir and leat

SWT has received a grant of £50,000 to carry out investigative works as part of a joint plan to restore Dulverton's medieval weir and leat. Proposals for the restoration project were submitted to Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) in November 2020 in partnership with Dulverton Weir & Leat Conservation Trust (DWLCT) to address historical flooding issues suffered by the town.

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

8. Follow Taunton's landmark Rainbow Path

The Mayor of Taunton will officially open the new Rainbow Path in Goodland Gardens next week. The Mayor will be joined by members of SWT and the community as she marks the creation of what is believed to be the UK's first Rainbow Path. The path signifies inclusivity and hope and is being officially opened on **June 28** - the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots which served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement.

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

9. Somerset West Lottery summer 2021 bolt-on prize draw

The Somerset West Lottery is taking part in the second of two summer 2021 bolt-on prize draws. Everyone who signs up to purchase one or more tickets between now and 28 August 2021 will be in with the chance to win a Luxury Forest Staycation! The prize is a break worth £1,000 with Forest Holidays, who have a variety of locations situated in some of the UK's most beautiful forests in Scotland, Cornwall, Snowdonia, Norfolk and more.

If you know of a good cause wishing to raise funds or would like to buy a ticket contact the Somerset West Lottery on 0300 30 20 666; support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk

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

10. How to report fly-tipping

Fly-tipping – dumping rubbish - is an environmental crime. If you fly-tip you can be fined or jailed. It's a blot on our landscape and a threat to wildlife. We can all fight fly-tipping by reporting dumped rubbish and, if possible, who dumped it.

Everyone, including businesses, must be responsible for how they get rid of rubbish, even when it's left your home or premises. If you pay someone to remove your rubbish - man-with-a-van, builders, gardeners, carpet-layers or others - ask to see their waste carrier's licence, and make sure you know where your rubbish will go. If you don't you could be fined.

To report fly-tipping use SWT's [report fly-tipping](#) online form or phone **0300 304 8000**.

For more information check the 'How we can all fight fly-tipping' section on the [Somerset Waste Partnership](#) website.

11. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

LGV drivers – Your County Needs You

SWP would like to apologise for the disruption to waste collections in parts of Somerset in recent weeks. It's been a tough time. An escalating national driver shortage is making it very difficult for our contractor, SUEZ, to recruit drivers. Although temporary extra staff have been brought in from elsewhere in the company, there is no quick fix. SWP is working hard to get things back on track but unfortunately some disruption is likely to continue.

If you know anyone who is a qualified Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) driver, including anyone recently retired, please point them in the direction of current vacancies in Bridgwater, Evercreech, Taunton, Williton and Yeovil. Recycling collection crew staff are also much needed. Details of vacancies can be found here careers.suez.co.uk/vacancies or email careers.uk@suez.com

Waste collection crews have worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic to keep these essential services going. The current pressures are driven largely by a heightening of the long-term shortage of LGV drivers. COVID-19 has delayed training and testing, and EU drivers leaving the UK have worsened the picture – as has the demand coming from the recent reopening of non-essential retail.

With lots of distribution centres in the county, driver recruitment is especially difficult in Somerset - as is recruitment of collection crews and securing a supply of agency cover when it's needed. SWP thank you for your patience.

For more information on kerbside services, recycling sites, and on COVID-19 and waste, visit: somersetwaste.gov.uk, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter or follow @somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

After a wet few days the end of the week looks brighter. This helps a lot with the Routine Verge Trimming (Safety) which is progressing well despite the strong growth this year.

The carriageway resurfacing of A358 Williton Road, Combe Florey was completed four days earlier than scheduled and all closures and restrictions have now been lifted. SCC Highways were assisted by some very warm weather which is conducive to both a high quality finish and long term durability. The team would like to take the opportunity to thank both the local residents and the road using public for their patience whilst these essential works were carried out.

There will be daytime road closures (7.30am - 6pm) on **Neroche Road, Otterford** from the 5 to 16 July for surface dressing preparation works. On the minor works programme, SCC Highways have completed drainage work at A38 Bridgwater Road, Walford Cross. This week there will be minor drainage schemes undertaken at **Wiveliscombe Road, Fitzhead** and **Castle Lane, Wiveliscombe**.

In Minehead the construction work related to the new puffin crossing on the A39 Bircham Road, outside West Somerset College, has been completed and the temporary traffic signals have been removed. Installing the power supply and commissioning the apparatus will now take place, and the new crossing should be in operation by the end of July. Again, SCC Highways would like to thank everyone for their patience thus far and look forward to the opening of the crossing which will benefit local residents, school users and the adjacent care home.

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

Extended- End date amended - Emergency One Way Order Maidenbrook Lane, Taunton

Please be aware that SCC Highways have received notification on the 18 June 2021 of a continuation of works to the emergency one way order at Maidenbrook Lane, Taunton. This work is now expected to continue until **16 July 2021** (24hrs), and the restrictions will only apply when indicated by traffic signs.

A copy of the draft Traffic Regulation Order and the associated plans can be examined at www.somerset.gov.uk/TRO. There is no alternative route for this. The works promoter will contact residents and business directly to discuss access arrangements.

Reminder- Temporary Road Closure: Galmington Road, Taunton

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along

Galmington Road for a distance of 502m. This Order will enable Western Power Distribution to replace high voltage cable that feeds Musgrove Park Hospital.

Please [click here](#) to view the map of the above road closure; with further information of the alternative route. The works commenced on 1 June 2021 and are expected to end on **2 July 2021** between the hours of 12 midnight to 11.59pm for a total of 32 days.

For information about the works being carried out please contact Western Power Distribution on **01823 348592** quoting the reference number tto448106.

Useful links to report faults

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.](#)

Alun Griffiths Ltd

M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme

Toneway - Creech Castle Improvements

Work at M5 Junction 25 is almost done and contractor, Alun Griffiths Ltd is commencing the next phase nearby on the **Toneway - Creech Castle** Improvement works. The latest Project Bulletin can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

Toneway - Creech Castle Improvement Scheme

A38 Bridgwater Road Closure

This is a major improvement scheme to reduce congestion and improve access to Taunton by increasing the capacity of the junction. As well as greatly improving this route for motorists, the upgrade includes much better access for pedestrians and cyclists and is a really important part of ensuring the network can cope with the ongoing development at **Monkton Heathfield**.

Work will begin on **Monday 9 August 2021** and is expected to be complete in Summer 2022.

Extensive public consultation on the scheme took place back in 2018 which showed most who participated were supportive of the scheme's objectives. Traffic surveys show that a considerable number of cyclists use the junction, therefore one of these key objectives is to encourage walking and cycling and make the **A358 Toneway** much easier to get across for those on foot or bike.

The Creech Castle scheme includes road widening and very significant structural work with heavy machinery and excavations on the road. Therefore, in order to keep both the workforce and travelling public safe, it will be necessary to close **Bridgwater Road** north of the junction to vehicles for the duration of the scheme.

Access for pedestrians and cyclists will be maintained. Please find attached to this newsletter a letter and plan outlining further details. Other alternatives were

considered – including use of temporary multi-way traffic lights instead of a road closure – but projections showed these would cause much more severe disruption with long queues on the Toneway potentially impacting on the M5.

You may have questions about the works, if so, please visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk/toneway.

Here you will find more information and frequently asked questions. You'll also find a video on this page which explains how the scheme fits into the wider context of Somerset County Council's road improvements in Taunton and across Somerset.

Grants available to tackle child minder shortage

Somerset County Council (SCC) is renewing its campaign to tackle a shortage of child minders across the county through a 'Golden Hello' grant worth £250.

The number of child minders in Somerset has fallen year upon year, in line with what is a national picture. The number of registered child minders in the county has decreased by over 31% since September 2015. In response, SCC has been working hard to boost numbers and is extending an initiative aimed at encouraging more people to start their own childcare business.

The grant is available to new child minding businesses offering early years funded places who apply before **28 February 2022**. The Council also offers guidance and training to newly registered child minders and supports them through Ofsted registration and beyond.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release and find out more information

First Bus Somerset COVID-19 update

As the Government restrictions ease more people are travelling and coming together safely. This means that places and buses are busier than they have been; so once passengers board, they might find they have to sit next to someone.

To help with the additional number of passengers, First Bus increased the capacity on their buses, as well as adding extra journeys to the timetables to cope with the expected demand. From Monday 17 May this was set at 80%, but there might be times where the bus has reached this, and people waiting to board might see a "Bus Full" sign. Travellers should allow plenty of time for their journey and be prepared to wait.

It is wise to check the bus timetable and plan the journey before setting out. This can be done by downloading the First Bus app, or visiting the [First Bus Website](#).

BREXIT

EU Settlement Scheme Deadline Looms

EU citizens protect your rights by applying to the EU Settlement Scheme
If you are an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen, you and your family can protect your rights by applying to the EU Settlement Scheme to stay in the UK. You do not need to

apply if you are a British or Irish citizen, or you have indefinite leave to remain or enter. **The deadline to apply is 30 June 2021.**

The [EU Settlement Scheme](#) allows you and your family to get the immigration status you need to:

- continue to live, work and study in the UK
- access public services like the NHS

Successful applicants will receive settled status or pre-settled status, depending on how long you have lived in the UK. You will get digital proof of your status through an online service. Please [click here](#) to apply and find out more information. A guide on EU Settlement Scheme Important Information can be found [here](#).

Have all your staff and service users applied?

Most EU citizens living in the UK (as well as those from the EEA and Switzerland) need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to gain Settled Status so they can continue to live and work in the UK after **30 June 2021**. The pandemic is having an impact on application times to the EU Settlement Scheme, so it's vital that people apply as soon as possible.

You can apply for settled status at <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

You should consider the impact on your organisation if staff do not have Settled Status, as they will not be able to work after **June 2021**. You can also play an important role by sign posting your service users to the scheme, as some people and children in our community may not be aware of the need to apply or may need help.

Local charity **Diversity Voice**, in partnership with SCC are working with the Home Office to provide help from regulated advisors for those who need it, including vulnerable people and employers. They can provide posters, hand-outs for service users and 1:1 help for applicants in any language. **There's no charge for this service.** Contact euss@diversityvoice.org.uk, **0300 075 0105**.

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

Beat the Street – Join the fun, free game!

Taunton transformed into A Giant Physical Activity Game

Beat the Street is an active travel project that has been very popular in towns and cities across the UK. Managed by Intelligent Health and delivered by Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP), the project aims to increase physical activity levels in a community through walking, running, and cycling. The game works by turning the town into a real-life game and residents will have noticed special sensors called Beat Boxes on lampposts.

The game is running in Taunton with 37 Beat Boxes spread across the [map](#); so mainly Priorswood, Holway, Halcon, Town Centre, the canal, green spaces and parks. Primary Schools in Taunton are participating, and an impressive 4209+ registered players have managed to travel 21,236 miles in just one week!

Please [click here](#) to watch a video which explains the project in more detail: Play until the **14 July**. Beat the Street is the perfect way to get you and your children safely back into action. [Sign up today](#) and follow the [Facebook page](#).

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Digby the Therapy Dog

Digby is a three year old Labradoodle who volunteers for DSFRS supporting the delivery of critical incident defusing. This is a process where firefighters and control room operators are able to discuss their experience after dealing with challenging and difficult incidents where members of the public have been seriously injured or lost their lives. The purpose of defusing is to reduce the risk of developing post-traumatic stress and where necessary, supporting individuals to gain access to counselling or other support.

Digby provides a positive distraction when crews arrive back at station or in the control room. Therapy dogs are simply themselves and people automatically feel at ease and comfortable engaging with a dog that is comfortable being stroked and made a fuss of. This is known to lower blood pressure and heart rate which in turn helps the defusing process.

The DSFRS would like to thank you for all the offers of treats and gifts, but Digby would rather you donate to people who are in difficult situations like the Samaritans www.samaritans.org or The Fire Fighters Charity <http://orlo.uk/DXPxp>.

Don't jump into the unknown

Weeds, rocks, shopping trolleys, litter...

If you jump into water, do you know what's in there? Please don't jump.

Jumping from height into water can lead to life changing injuries or death. Take your time, get into water slowly, and make sure you know the risks.

HM Coastguard Watchet

The dangers of tombstoning

Tombstoning is the act of jumping into water from a high platform, such as a cliff, bridge or harbour edge in a straight, upright vertical posture, resembling a tombstone. Whilst this may be fun it can be dangerous: People can't see what they are jumping into; have no idea how deep the water is and the West Somerset coastline has strong currents especially around its harbours. Some people are unaware of the dangers of the second fastest and highest tide in the world racing in around them, turning semi dry top mud found on shorelines and harbours back into a liquid posing a real danger of being trapped.

The Coastguard would appeal to parents to know where your children are, especially if they are heading out with swimming gear intent on the dangerous practise of tombstoning or harbour jumping. The dangers of the mud are real and entrapment can happen in seconds and the mud shifts all the time.

Don't get stuck in the mud and caught out by the tide

Despite the mixed weather forecast at the moment, HM Coastguard is still expecting many people to visit the beautiful coastlines. As always, they want everyone to enjoy the sunshine and a trip to a coastal hotspot, but it's the Coastguard's job to help ensure everyone stays safe.

Unfortunately, incidents can happen at any time – it could be you, your friends or family who need assistance in a coastal emergency. In a recent Safety Spotlight Blog, the dangers of getting stuck in the mud were highlighted. You might be surprised to hear how often the highly-skilled Coastguard Rescue Teams carry out these quite complex mud rescues.

Please follow the advice, stay safe and don't get stuck in the mud...

- Parts of the UK coastline – including beaches – can be categorised as soft ground (mud or quicksand) which means areas of low-lying water are open to the elements causing soft ground to form – particularly in bad weather conditions.
- If you become stuck in mud, our advice is always the same 'Stay calm, try and spread your weight as much as possible and avoid moving. Call 999 and ask for the Coastguard'.
- Anybody trapped should also discourage other well-meaning members of the public from attempting to rescue others because, without the proper equipment and expertise, they could become stuck too.

Don't get caught out by the tide

And, in a timely reminder of the dangers of the sea, the Coastguard Rescue Team helped eight people from the water – all of whom were cut off by the tide in an incident at Blue Anchor Bay, Watchet.

Safety first

Please always check your local conditions, tide times and carry a fully-charged mobile phone when venturing out to a coastal area so that you are easily contactable. It also goes without saying that you should visit a lifeguarded beach and swim between red and yellow flags. If you do get into trouble – Float to Live – lie on your back and relax, resisting the urge to thrash about.

And, as ever, call 999 in an emergency and ask for the Coastguard.

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

Appeal launched to help fund new Exmoor woodlands

ENP has launched a new [CareMoor Woods and Trees Appeal](#) towards the creation of a major new woodland on its land near Winsford. Named 'Bye Wood', it forms part of a drive to increase tree cover across Exmoor from 13.5% to at least 17% by 2050 – the amount recommended by the UK government's independent Climate Change Committee. It will be one of the biggest woodland creation projects to have taken place in the National Park in the past 15 years.

Further funding is now needed to support the planting of at least 13,000 mixed broadleaf tree species on the site this winter. It follows a grant of £8,000 from SWT's

Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Fund towards the cost of the trees, with further funds now sought to help pay for materials, preparation of the site for planting, and the use of state-of-the-art sustainable techniques.

To donate or find out more about Bye Wood and the CareMoor Woods & Trees appeal visit www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/caremoor or to sign up as a volunteer see www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/getinvolved.

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

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

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

The Micro provider network

The Somerset Community micro-enterprise Project has been helping local people to set up small (micro) businesses that can provide local services for people who need some help and support. These Micro-providers are paid professionals that can offer you support in the areas you need help at home. To find out about Micro-providers - what they are, how they can help you and how to become one, please [click here](#) to watch a video.

Please [click here](#) for the Micro Providers' Dictionary.

Reminder- Talking Cafes have reopened in venues across Somerset

The CCS are opening slowly and due to COVID-19 restrictions all Talking Cafes are **strictly by appointment only**. There will no longer be a drop in facility due to the requirement to maintain hygiene standards. Book an appointment by calling **01823 331 222** or by completing this [online form](#).

Bridgwater: The Hub at Angel Place, Every Thursday 11am – 1pm

Minehead: The Beach Hotel Minehead, Every Monday 10am – 12pm

Taunton: The Great Western Hotel Station Approach, Every Monday 10am – 12pm

Williton: Williton Pavillion, Killick Way, Every Tuesday 1pm - 3pm

The CCS will be continuing their Facebook Live Talking Cafes, so keep tuning in Tuesday - Thursday at 1pm.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)

Funding available

Funding is available from SCF for young people, from two grants programmes:

Enterprise Grants

You can apply if you are aged 18 to 30, currently live in the county of Somerset (but not North Somerset or BANES), are not in education, employment or training, want to start your own business and know what products or services you want to provide.

Apply for up to £1,000. Ask for money by **Wednesday 30 June 2021** and SCF will let you know if they can help you by the end of July 2021.

[Click here for more information and to apply](#)

Training and Employment Support Grants

You can apply if you are aged 16 to 30, currently live in the county of Somerset (but not North Somerset or BANES), are not in education, employment or training, and need some help with the cost of essential things for training or employment, an apprenticeship or job.

Apply for up to £500. Ask for money by **Wednesday 30 June 2021** and SCF will let you know if they can help you by the end of July 2021.

[Click here for more information and to apply](#)

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](#).

Advice and Support for Voluntary Groups

Spark Somerset is the local infrastructure charity providing free support and advice to voluntary sector groups and organisations across the county. They also run the Volunteer Service, [Spark a Change](#), helping hundreds of people in Somerset to volunteer each year.

If you are a voluntary group or organisation and you'd like to talk about how Spark Somerset could support you then please get in touch with your advisor for the Taunton and West Somerset area, Jenny Hannis on jenny.hannis@sparksomerset.org.uk or **07971 912452**.

Volunteer to become a Vaccination Buddy

Some people might be worried about having the COVID-19 vaccination. In partnership with SCC, Spark Somerset are recruiting a team of volunteer Vaccination Buddies who can offer 1-2-1 support to people who are worried or unsure about

having the vaccine. Vaccination Buddies will receive full training, including information on the latest scientific developments from Public Health at SCC.

If you would like to volunteer as a Vaccination Buddy and help people to make informed decisions about whether to have the COVID-19 Vaccination, you can find out more and sign up [here](#).

Reminder- Introducing Spark iT!

In partnership with Barclays Bank and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Spark are delighted to announce the launch of [Spark iT](#), a new project which aims to tackle digital exclusion in Somerset and help people to access health care online.

The Spark iT Helpdesk is now live, and anybody in Somerset who is digitally excluded can get in touch for free IT support with a range of activities. This might include using IT equipment, connecting with others online or accessing local support and services that could improve their health and wellbeing.

The Helpdesk is available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm on **01458 550977**. Please share the details with anybody you know who could benefit from this exciting new service. Spark are also recruiting a bank of Digital Champion volunteers who will receive training from the Barclays Digital Eagles and offer additional 1-2-1 support.

For further information about Spark iT, please click [here](#) or email Verity Baum, Digital Inclusion Project Manager, verity.baum@sparksomerset.org.uk.

Help and support for businesses affected by COVID-19

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has made available webinars and videos about the support available to businesses to help them deal with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

HMRC cover the following government schemes:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme

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

Health and Welfare

Public Health England

Somerset Public Health campaign encourages residents and tourists to stay safe

In partnership with Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor, SCC's Public Health department is launching a new campaign thanking Somerset residents and visitors for adhering to the COVID-19 guidance and encouraging them to keep doing so.

The launch of the campaign comes as the Government announced a delay in moving to Step 4 of the roadmap amid rising cases of the Delta variant. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is set to make a decision on the easing of restrictions by **19 July**.

However, people are and will continue to travel into and around the county under current freedoms and it is of utmost importance to communicate safety messages to people in a way that they will respond to – especially in light of rising cases.

The campaign will be widespread across the county and will be seen on digital platforms as well as billboards, bus stops, service stations and on the back of buses. The aim of the campaign is to empower residents and visitors while encouraging them to keep up all the great work as we move towards more freedoms.

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

The importance of regular testing

There are five good reasons for regular testing:

- It finds and isolates people early who have Coronavirus but don't have symptoms (asymptomatic), helping to stop the spread of the virus
- Alongside the vaccine rollout and social distancing, it is key to reducing infection and transmission, helping the country to keep moving
- It helps to identify and suppress new variants of concern, playing a vital role in limiting the spread of Coronavirus
- It protects you and your loved ones
- When done correctly, the tests are at least 99.9 per cent specific, which means that the risk of false positives is extremely low – less than one in a thousand

In short, it's a simple and effective way for everybody to do their bit in stopping the spread of the virus. Testing regularly, even when you do not have symptoms, means we can keep infection levels low.

Reminder- People aged 18 or over can now book their COVID-19 vaccination

Everybody in cohorts 1 to 9 has been offered a vaccine, with people aged 18 and over now invited to book their appointments. Use this service to book a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination or manage your appointments.

Please [click here](#) for further information and to book your vaccination.

Reminder- Lateral Flow Testing Available in Local Pharmacies

A **full list** of participating pharmacies can be found [here](#). If you are unable to get to a pharmacy or test centre to collect a test kit, you can order a home testing kit to be sent to your home [here](#). If you are taking a Lateral Flow test, please report to your managers how often you are testing.

Order your lateral flow tests online

You can order one box of lateral flow tests per household each day. A box contains 7 test packets. [Please click here to order your rapid lateral flow tests.](#)

Please remember – if you are taking the tests at home it is very important for you to [log your results here](#). Please make sure that if you are symptomatic in any way take a confirmatory Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test as quickly as possible.

Your step-by-step guide for COVID-19 self-testing

Many people with COVID-19 have mild, or even no symptoms, but can still spread the virus. With regular self-testing we can slow the spread and help protect the most vulnerable in our families and communities

Please [click here](#) for a step by step guide on how to use your lateral flow tests at home. You can also [click here](#) to view a video that provides a great demonstration of the correct testing technique.

Reminder- Do you need to book a PCR test?

Somerset residents are being reminded that they need to book a PCR test if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive using a 'lateral flow' (rapid) test kit. You can [book or request a PCR test online](#) or by calling 119.

Vaccinated? You still need to take care

Vaccination is a vital part of moving out of the Coronavirus pandemic, so getting your vaccine when offered is something to celebrate. Although the COVID-19 vaccine gives the best protection against becoming seriously ill if you catch Coronavirus, it's important to remember that it doesn't make you invincible.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective, but it doesn't take full effect immediately. The first dose should give you good protection from three or four weeks after you've had it. But you need to have the two doses to give you longer lasting protection.

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.

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?

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:

- 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)

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

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

FAQS

Q. My child has been told to self-isolate. Can I make arrangements for my child to self-isolate at another household, such as their grandparents?

A. Somerset's Public Health Team would like to reiterate the guidance on self-isolation of children who have been contacts of a child with COVID-19. A child who has been advised to self-isolate must return home immediately and self-isolate in the household where they live. A child who is required to self-isolate may be incubating the infection and become infectious, so it is advised they do not have contact with anyone outside of their own household (e.g. grandparents or other families, regardless of their vaccination status) during their 10 days of self-isolation due to the risk of transmitting COVID-19 infection to another household or vulnerable person.

Q. Is it true I cannot pass COVID-19 onto anybody else if I've had two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination?

- A. It is not yet known whether it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus, it is expected to reduce this risk, but it is important to still follow the guidance.

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Beware of ticket fraud as restrictions ease

Action Fraud is warning the public to take extra care when buying tickets for festivals and events online, as figures from the national reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime reveal almost £1 million has been lost to ticket fraud so far this year.

Data from Action Fraud reveals that 1,085 reports of ticket fraud have been made so far this year, equating to an average loss of £850 per victim. Almost two thirds of victims (61 per cent) were aged between 20 to 49 years old.

Action Fraud received 374 reports of ticket fraud in March this year – the highest number of reports received since March 2020 when lockdown restrictions were first implemented. Victims reported losing over £200,000 in March this year alone.

Please [click here](#) to read more about how to spot the signs of ticket fraud and how you can protect yourself.

Crimestoppers UK

Crimes of particular concern during the pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several crimes where victims may be especially isolated and hidden from view. These include domestic abuse, child neglect and modern slavery. Please [click here](#) to find out more about how to spot the signs of these crimes, and what you can do about it.

Reminder- How to Report Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is any activity which causes harm to an individual or a community. A list of ASB activities can be found [here](#). When reporting repeated instances of anti-social behaviour, it is useful to record a description of what happened and the date, time and location. To help you keep track of ASB incidents, [download the ASB Incident Diary document \(PDF\)](#).

Don't report crime on social media platforms, please call 101 or visit Avon and Somerset Police website. In an emergency always call 999.

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Drink driving e-scooter rider given 20 month driving ban

A man has been disqualified from driving for 20 months and fined £380 after admitting driving an e-scooter while above the legal alcohol limit.

The man, who is aged in his 30s, blew more than twice the legal limit in a roadside breath test after being stopped riding the scooter on Taunton Road, Bridgwater at 5.55am on 6 May. He appeared at Taunton Deane Magistrates' Court on Friday (18

June) where he pleaded guilty to drink driving. In addition to the ban and fine he will also have to pay court costs of £85.

E-scooters are classified as motor vehicles for the purposes of law. As such, regardless of whether they are used on a road, pavement or public place, anyone who decides to ride one when above the legal alcohol limit risks the same consequences as if they were to get behind the wheel of a car.

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

Avon and Somerset Police implements transformative approach to investigating rape and sexual offences

A&SP is at the helm of a new evidence-based approach, which will transform the way police respond to, and investigate, Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO). The approach, named Project Bluestone, was developed in partnership with leading academics and in consultation with partners across the criminal justice system, as well as victim services.

In addition to being rolled out locally, Project Bluestone is set to inform a national change in the policing approach to rape and serious sexual offences after being hailed as 'pioneering' in the Government's Rape Review, published on Friday, 18 June 2021.

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

For further Neighbourhood Policing Updates...

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

- [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)

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

Attachment:

PDF: *Alun Griffiths Ltd, Creech Castle Letter Drop June 2021.*