

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 102 Week ending 10/04/2022

SWT Council's priority strategic themes and outcomes

Somerset West and Taunton Council's four strategic themes are as follows:

- Our Environment and Economy
- A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
- Homes and Communities
- An Enterprising Council

[Click here](#) to view SWT's expected outcomes.

Key Messages this week

1. Nominations for Elections published

The list of people nominated for election for the 15 County Council seats in the Somerset West and Taunton Council district has been published. The statement of persons nominated for the elections on 5 May is available to view on our website somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/elections-2022/

The full list of nominations for the 110 County Council seats - two in each of the 55 divisions - can be found on the County Council website [Elections \(somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](https://somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections)

For their first year, the elected councillors will take responsibility for all current County Council services and oversee the local government reorganisation to establish a single unitary council on 1 April 2023.

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

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 20 April – SWT Executive – Cancelled**
- **Thursday 21 April – SWT Phosphates Planning Sub-Committee** at 1.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions is 4.00pm on Tuesday 19 April.
- **Wednesday 27 April – SWT Community Scrutiny Committee** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions is 4.00pm on Monday 25 April.
- **Thursday 28 April – SWT Planning Committee** at 1.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Tuesday 26 April.

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.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements. Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the [SWT website](#).

3. Town and Parish Council Elections

People elected to represent their community at the town and parish council elections also taking place on 5 May, will serve a five-year term.

For your information the only contested parishes/parish ward areas are:

- Brompton Regis
- Cheddon Fitzpaine (Maidenbrook Ward)
- Cutcombe
- Old Cleeve (Old Cleeve Ward)
- Porlock
- Stogursey
- Watchet
- Wellington (East Ward)
- Wellington (Rockwell Green Ward)
- Wellington (South East Ward)
- Wellington (South Ward)
- Winsford

Polling day is on **Thursday 5 May** and the counting of votes and declarations of the results for the town and parish council is scheduled to take place on **Saturday 7 May 2022**.

Please visit the [SWT Elections 2022](#) page on the Council website for more information.

4. Calls for voters to register in time for May elections

Anyone eligible to vote but not already on the electoral register has one week left to ensure they are able to vote in the elections. Applications to register to vote must reach the Electoral Registration Officer by **Thursday, 14 April**, and can be made online: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Voters have three options for casting their ballot – in person at the polling station, by post or by proxy - appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf.

The last day to apply for a postal vote is 5pm on **Tuesday 19 April 2022**.

The last day to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on **Tuesday 26 April 2022**.

If you have any queries regarding your right to vote, please contact a member of the Elections Team at elections@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk or contact Electoral Services on 01823 358692.

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

5. Beware of Council Tax Energy Rebate Scam

Residents are being warned that criminals are calling people and asking for their bank details in order to receive the [Council Tax Energy Rebate](#).

The Government announced the extra support amid the rising cost of energy bills, with payments being administered by local authorities.

SWT will start making payments to eligible households during April but will never cold call and ask for your personal bank details over the phone (or by email). If you receive such a call, hang up and report it to the Police on 101.

You can also call the **Action Fraud helpline on 0300 123 2040** or visit their website www.actionfraud.police.uk/how-to-report-fraud if you have concerns about fraud or have fallen victim to a possible scam.

If you are eligible for the payment from SWT you don't need to take any action now.

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

6. Jubilee Street Party and Road Closure Application process

Time is running out to submit a road closure order if you and your community are planning to hold a street party for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The number one tip for holding a party is to plan early, think about what you want to achieve and get in touch with SWT at least six weeks in advance, but preferably a little more.

Applications for temporary road closures need to be submitted no later than **Wednesday 18 April** to ensure adequate processing time. Please [click here](#) to visit the SWT website and find out more information.

If you are holding a Street Party, Village Hall Party, or another event, please submit details onto the interactive Platinum Jubilee event map: [Events – The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee 2022](#).

7. Changing Places to make a difference

SWT has been awarded Government funding to deliver two new Changing Places toilets.

The Council has been allocated £96,360 from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities towards the facilities in Taunton and Minehead.

The larger, accessible toilets are for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, and include specialist equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches, and space for carers.

One is planned in Tower Street, Taunton, and another in the Summerland Car Park, Minehead, which will be delivered by Minehead Town Council who worked in partnership with SWT to prepare the bid.

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

8. Winner scoops £2000 in Somerset West Lottery prize draw

Another lucky Somerset West and Taunton resident matched five numbers and won £2,000 in the latest Somerset West Lottery prize draw held on Saturday, 2 April 2022, with a further 17 players winning cash prizes and free ticket prizes.

From every £1 ticket sold, 50p is given to locally registered good causes and 10p is entered into a community grant fund for local good causes to apply from annually. The remainder goes toward prizes and operating costs.

If you would like to apply for funds towards a good cause or you would like to show your support by buying tickets, contact the Somerset West Lottery on 0300 30 20 666, support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit somersetwestlottery.co.uk.

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

9. Purdah – Pre-Election Period

During local government elections, there is a period described as a ‘period of heightened sensitivity’ (formerly referred to as purdah). For the forthcoming elections, this is from **Monday, 21 March 2022 until Thursday, 5 May 2022**. During this time, the focus is on the publicity that certain actions or decisions may create. It certainly does not mean that all council activity grinds to a halt, that committee decisions cannot be made, nor non-contentious consultations launched.

Elected Members, who are currently members and seeking election to Somerset Council can continue to express their own views to the press and are at liberty to organise any proactive publicity themselves, **but not** utilising any resources of the council; the auspices of the press offices, photographs that the authorities have paid for or taken.

The important detail is that no publicity from any Council at this particularly sensitive time should appear to support a particular candidate or even to support a single specific viewpoint as advocated by a particular candidate.

Any publicity should not be perceived as seeking to influence public opinion or promote the public image of a particular candidate or group of candidates.

The main point to bear in mind is that a local authority shall not publish any material that, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect support for a candidate or political party.

If in doubt, please contact:

Amy Tregellas, Monitoring Officer
A.Tregellas@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Kevin Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer
K.Williams@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

10. How to access support if you're sponsoring a Ukrainian refugee

A new webpage has been set up to provide information and support for Somerset households who have volunteered to sponsor Ukrainian refugees.

The new webpage can be found at www.somerset.gov.uk/Ukraine. This includes a digital form which should be completed by sponsors who are matched with refugees. This will help local services to carry out the checks sponsors need to safely welcome their guests.

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

11. Reminder - SWT Housing Newsletter – Spring 2022

SWT Housing has produced the latest tenants' newsletter which is due to hit doormats soon. Approximately 6000 publications have been printed and will be distributed to all SWT tenants and leaseholders signposting readers to help and support.

There has been a particular emphasis on post pandemic recovery such as debt management, housing maintenance and how tenants can access available services.

Please [click here](#) to view the Spring Newsletter online.

12. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Bank Holiday Collection arrangements

When's bin day? All your collections change for Easter, bank holidays and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

At Easter, Good Friday 15 April pick-ups move to **Saturday 16 April** and with **no collections on Easter Monday 18 April**, all Easter week collections are a day later, including Friday collections taking place on **Saturday 23 April**.

Bank holiday Monday May 2 means the week's collections are a day later, with Friday pick-ups on **Saturday 7 May**.

To see, download, print or add to a smart device all your collection days - for recycling, rubbish and garden waste - visit My Collection Day at somersetwaste.gov.uk. (When entering your post code in the search bar, please include the gap i.e., AB12 3CD)

Calendars can be downloaded for printing or directly into your laptop or mobile device's calendar - creating helpful automatic reminders.

You can find lots more information about Recycle More online at somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more. Extra guidance and support can be requested using a form on this page, or by calling SWT.

The Joint Councils

Councils agree mitigation package with EDF regarding worker increase at Hinkley Point C

Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and North Somerset Councils (the Joint Councils) have jointly agreed a package of proposed measures to help minimise the effects of a rise in workers on the HPC construction project. In 2020, it was first reported that EDF Energy intended to increase the peak number of workers on the HPC site to 8,600, a rise of around 3,000 on original estimates. The increase is driven by the need to maintain safety and quality standards on the site as well as ensuring that the revised construction programme meets its target of electricity generation from 2026.

Since then the joint councils have been reviewing a series of assessments undertaken by EDF of the impacts of the worker increase across a range of topic areas including accommodation, transport, workforce development, community safety, health and environment and have agreed a series of additional measures, including:

- Additional worker accommodation within the existing campuses and the use and expansion of caravan sites and a range of financial contributions to support further housing initiatives aimed at supporting local people to access housing.
- An updated bus strategy, increased park and ride facilities, a car sharing scheme and changes to the allocation and timing of worker travel modes to minimise impact on peak periods.

- A range of support for employment, skills and training to maximise local job opportunities.
- Additional resources for community safety activities and financial support towards police and fire services.
- An increase in health capacity through an expansion of onsite medical facilities and financial contributions to the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Increase in environmental reporting and financial contributions towards air quality monitoring

In addition, financial support is to be made available for regeneration projects in Bridgwater, localised car parking solutions in rural areas to manage the impact of worker parking and financial contributions towards extending council resources to support the programme past peak construction.

Supported by legal advice, the Councils agree that the increase in worker numbers would not be a breach of the original consent for the project as worker numbers were not restricted and the previous 5,600 figure was only an estimate. With the timely delivery of the agreed package of measures the Councils conclude that there would not be any materially significant impacts arising from the proposed increase in workers on the project.

New Council for Somerset

New Council ‘opens for business’ in 12 months

One year from now, on 1 April 2023, a single council for Somerset will be open for business. This brand-new council will replace Somerset County Council and the four District Councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton, and South Somerset).

It will build on the strengths of all five organisations and give them the scale to have a bigger impact on the issues that most affect people’s lives.

A dedicated inbox to ensure enquires about the new council and the unitary programme are dealt with quickly and efficiently has been set up.

Email info@newsomersetcouncil.org.uk.

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

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee 2022

A celebration to remember in Somerset

The Lord Lieutenant of Somerset is calling on the county’s residents to come together to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and make it an event to remember.

The Queen formally started to celebrate her personal Platinum Jubilee year on Sunday 6 February – the date of her Accession to the Throne in 1952.

The Lord Lieutenant of Somerset Mrs Annie Maw is encouraging the communities of Somerset to make the most of the once in a lifetime chance to commemorate this unique milestone in the nation's history.

The focus of celebrations will take place over the extended Bank Holiday Weekend **June 2-5**. During that period the Queen will be attending several official events including Trooping the Colour, a service in St Paul's Cathedral, a huge concert at Buckingham Palace on the Saturday evening, and a spectacular pageant outside Buckingham Place on Sunday 5 June.

In Somerset, there is the chance to mark the occasion with a range of activities over the Jubilee weekend, not least the Beacon celebrations which are due to be lit at **9.45pm on Thursday 2 June**, and the traditional Street Parties or Village Hall parties on **Sunday 5 June**.

Everyone who is planning or organising a Beacon ceremony, please register it. There is no cost to registering a beacon and it means your event is on the national map – and you can obtain a certificate to mark the occasion.

For guidance on planning and registering events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, visit www.platinumjubileesomerset.org.uk.

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

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

As we enter the new financial year, the first footway resurfacing scheme in Somerset West and Taunton was at **B3222 Jury Road, Dulverton**. This involved a temporary road closure and was scheduled to be completed on 8 April.

There will be further similar schemes in **Bishops Lydeard at Darby Way** and at **King George Road, Minehead** towards the end of the month.

Kerbing and drainage repairs will take place in **Quirke Street, Minehead**, commencing on **11 April**, using a temporary road closure. This is preparation works for carriageway resurfacing later in April.

Another temporary road closure is on **Holywell Lake Road, Langford Budville**. This commenced on **4 April and will run until 19 April**. It will allow for construction work to improve the highway drainage there.

For information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter.

Reporting a problem on the road

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you've reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.

The new development means that if you're reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it's safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You'll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

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

Temporary Road Closure – Trenchard Way, Taunton

Please follow [this link](#) to view the above road closure.

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 **Trenchard Way** - 110 metres from the junction with **Station Road** in an easterly direction for a total distance of 180 metres. This Order will enable SCC to carry out resurfacing works.

The works are expected to commence on **11 April 2022** and last for **16 nights (6.30pm – 11.00pm)** to enable **SCC to carry out resurfacing works**.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site is **not permitted** on this occasion.

Please visit [one network](#) for further information on the alternative route.

Temporary Road Closure – Park Street and Cann Street, Taunton

Please follow [this link](#) to view the above road closure.

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; **Park Street, - from the junction with Cann Street, westwards for 30 metres and Cann Street - from the junction with Park Street, southwards for 45 metres. A total distance of 75 metres**

This Order will enable Jurassic Fibre Ltd to dig and remove blockages.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site is **permitted** on this occasion.

The Order becomes effective on 21 April 2022 and will remain in force for eighteen months. **The works are expected to commence on 27 April 2022 and last until 29 April 2022 between the hours of 6.30pm – 6.30am for a total of 2 nights.**

Please visit [one network](#) for further information on the alternative route.

Western Power Distribution

Community Matters Fund

Western Power Distribution (WPD) is pledging to support its most vulnerable customers with grants from its Community Matters Fund ahead of this year's Mental Health Week. The upcoming awareness week (9-15 May) aims to tackle loneliness - particularly in the wake of the pandemic, which has left many people reporting feelings of isolation.

To provide much needed support for the local organisations tackling these vital issues, WPD is calling on charities, councils and community groups in the South West, the Midlands and South Wales to apply for grants of up to £10,000.

This is the latest round of grants from WPD's annual £1 million Community Matters Fund, which has already seen the energy distributor support more than 100 grassroots organisations with crucial fuel poverty grants.

The application window for funding is open until **Sunday 24 April**. To help guide applications, examples of projects the fund will consider supporting are:

- Digital skills and inclusion projects
- Social inclusion and connectedness projects
- Mental health interventions
- Employability skills
- Projects increasing community access to outside space
- Inter-generational support projects
- Befriending services
- Innovative solutions to combating loneliness.

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

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

Award for Exmoor National Park Centre, Dunster

The team at the Exmoor National Park Centre in Dunster are celebrating, having last night (Thursday 7 April) received Bronze Award for Visitor Information Service of the year in the [South West Tourism Awards](#). This puts them at the top of their game, as one of the leading visitor information services within the South West.

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

Parish of Oare

Notice of Confirmation of an Order

Highways Act 1980, Public Bridleway WL17/3 (PART)

Path Diversion Order

On 1 April 2022, Exmoor National Park Authority confirmed the above order.

A copy of the confirmed order and the order map have been placed and may be seen free of charge at the Lynmouth National Park Centre, The Esplanade, Lynmouth from 10.00am – 5.00pm, seven days a week or viewed on the ENP website – [Changes to the Path Network](#).

Exmoor Young Chef Competition

Exmoor National Park Authority is looking for aspiring and passionate young cooks to enter the [Exmoor Young Chef Competition](#), which is still open for applications.

Ten finalists will be selected to cook a three-course meal showcasing local produce on competition day, **Saturday 2 July 2022**, at West Somerset College, Minehead. Finalists will be coached by professional top chefs from Exmoor to help plan their menu.

The competition is open to young people living or at school within the Greater Exmoor area and aged 14-18 years. ENP welcome support and encouragement from parents and guardians, schools, colleges and groups to help young people enter the competition.

Closing date for Applications is 2 May 2022. Please submit your completed entry form by attaching to an email to exmooryoungchef@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

A shortlist of 10 finalists will then be selected by the competition organisers. Finalists will be notified by Monday 9 May and their names will be added to the ENP webpage.

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

Falcon Rural Housing Ltd Meadowlands, Washford Development

Meadowlands is a new housing scheme situated on the old allotment site in Washford. It has been developed by local Social Housing provider, Falcon Rural Housing, in response to housing needs in the area. It will provide five social rented properties, comprising two 2-bedroom and three 3-bedroom homes, located just a short walk from the school and local amenities. The target completion date is the end of May 2022.

Falcon Rural Housing is looking for local people who are in housing need and may be interested in applying for one of these homes. For more information regarding the development and an application form for housing, please contact Falcon Rural Housing Ltd. on **01823 667343** or via email info@falconhousing.co.uk.

The properties will also be advertised on Homefinder Somerset, a choice-based lettings scheme that allows people to apply for social and affordable housing in Somerset. If you are registered, please apply online at www.homefindersomerset.co.uk. If you are not already registered online, please contact Falcon Rural Housing direct.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Beware of running appliances at night

Recent advertising about using your dishwasher at night goes against DSFRS advice and could put you and anyone else in your house in danger.

Dishwashers, tumble dryers or washing machines can cause electrical fires. The Fire Service recommend only turning them on when you are awake and at home.

DSFRS understand rising energy prices are a big concern, but they want you to be safe.

[This dishwasher](#) caught fire after the family went to bed. Thankfully they had a smoke alarm and got out of the house safely.

Exmoor Search and Rescue Team (ESRT)

New search and rescue drone launched

After many months of hard work behind the scenes, support from local subject experts and a very generous donation of a DJI Mavic Pro, the Team has commenced the process of training and qualifying four Drone Pilots. Drones have a well proven track record within search and rescue, and this new resource bolsters the specialist skills and services the Team can deploy when assisting the statutory emergency services with search and rescue taskings.

This is the first evolution in a two-part project; this new drone offers day-time search capabilities and the option to live-stream search footage back to the incident control vehicle to enhance search strategy and Team deployment based on real-time feedback. ESRT anticipate that this 'eye-in-the-sky' resource will improve search efficiency over open terrain and enable the Team to coordinate the deployment of Team Members, and other search resources, more effectively.

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

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

Happy Healthy Holidays Programme

If your kids qualify for benefits-related free school meals, you can book a place on a free holiday club this Easter.

Fun activities, a free meal and plenty of new friends.

Grab a free code from your school to book, and browse the range of activities [here](#).

Somerset Community Foundation

West Somerset Youth Trust Fund

The West Somerset Youth Trust Fund offers grants to encourage young people aged 14 - 25 to enrich their education.

Grants are usually awarded for up to 25% of the total cost of a trip or activity, with a maximum grant size of £300. A larger percentage of the costs will be considered if the young person, or their parents/carers, are in receipt of means-tested benefits.

Grants can be used to pay for course or event fees, travel costs, equipment or materials. Previous grants have been awarded to attend international scouting jamborees, gap year trips, work experience placements, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, and workshops at the National Youth Theatre.

You can apply if you

- live in West Somerset or have close ties to the area (**this excludes Taunton and the former area of Taunton Deane**)
- are aged between 14 - 25
- are able to provide the details of a suitable referee (e.g. a tutor)
- are able to provide evidence of means-tested benefits (if applicable)

SCF welcomes applications from students to subsidise trips organised by your college or school but cannot support activities that are part of the normal curriculum.

Closing date for applications is Friday 29 April 2022.

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

Spark Somerset

Celebrating Thriving Communities Somerset

Wednesday 27 April, 10.00am – 1.00pm at CICCIC Memorial Hall, Taunton

Thriving Communities Somerset is a project being delivered by [Spark Somerset](#), in partnership with [Take Art](#) and [Somerset Wildlife Trust](#). Together, they are working to strengthen and expand the range of creative and nature-based Social Prescribing activities available across the County.

Join them for the final live event, where they will celebrate the activities that have been supported by the Thriving Communities Somerset project and hear first-hand the impact they have had.

This event is open to anyone with an interest in supporting Social Prescribing. Tickets are freely available to Health and Social care staff, VCSE organisations, activity providers and community groups working to improve and support wellbeing in Somerset.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and register for this event.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Reminder- Meal and food boxes

Meal and food boxes are available in your community. Anyone can request a meal or food box, regardless of your financial situation. You can access these free meals by contacting your local Village Agent call – **01823 331222**. Please [click here](#) for further information.

Community Employment Hubs

The SWT Community employment hubs offer bespoke individual support towards work for **anyone** whether employed, unemployed or facing redundancy or those who wish to upskill or thinking about a career change.

The Hubs are coordinated by Georgie Bowden and Iolanda Tocco and supported by a team of trained volunteers. SWT are planning to have 5 new hubs open for face-to-face appointments in Wellington, Taunton, Priorswood and Halcon by the 17 April.

The Youth Hub is already operational at the Minehead EYE (Aimed at ages 16-25). Throughout COVID-19, the Hubs have been providing support via online and telephone and this will continue in addition to the face to face (appointment) sessions. All referrals can be made via employmentsupport@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

Somerset Nature Connections

FREE Nature and Wellbeing Courses

Somerset Nature Connections project aims to tackle some of the barriers that prevent people experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits of Somerset's spectacular natural environment. Somerset Nature Connections will help people to access these natural spaces, with a focus on supporting mental wellbeing and physical activity.

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the partnership project with the Somerset Wildlife Trust, Mendip Hills, Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AONBs (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) will support local communities and individuals most vulnerable to mental health issues, providing better access to nature spaces to encourage and increase self-management for individuals, and develop a network of skilled volunteers who can support communities for the longer term.

A series of inspiring six-week courses are being held on the Quantocks, Mendips and Blackdown Hills which will explore the five pathways to Nature Connectedness. You will learn self-care techniques including nature-based mindfulness, sit-spots, and gratitude. You will also have the chance to participate in practical conservation activities and natural crafts.

These courses are for you if you are feeling socially isolated and or are experiencing mild to moderate depression, low mood, anxiety or stress.

Free transport is also available if required.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information and book your place.

Young Somerset

Taunton Edventure

A practical, 11-week experience in community entrepreneurship and turning ideas into reality.

Edventure: Taunton offering young adults (18-35ish) the opportunity to gain real-life experience of setting up a community enterprise in response to a local need on behalf of a local not-for-profit.

Your team will be challenged to start-up a platform to host a community of "Bold and Brave Voices." It might be a radio station, it might be a concert, it could be a blog and a WhatsApp group. You will decide.

What is exciting? What does Taunton need? How might we build a platform that can share art and music, that can discuss health and work, and can help amplify the voices of young people in Taunton?

The project is a partnership between Edventure, Young Somerset, Bridgwater and Taunton College and Barclays. Please [click here](#) to watch a video which explains more about the scheme.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and register for the Edventure Start Up Course.

Health and Welfare

Clintons COVID Catch Up

As April is Stress Awareness month, Clinton considers how some people may be feeling anxious about the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

He also shares some top tips for how to deal with stress and highlights some of the support available.

Please [click here](#) to watch his video.

Age 40-74? Get your free NHS Health Check

The [NHS Health Check](#) is available for anyone between the age of 40 and 74 years, every five years, who does not have a pre-existing long-term condition.

The [NHS Health Check](#) is an important step for many people towards improving their health and becoming more aware of what they can do to lead a healthier life. It can help lower people's risk of developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of dementia.

Attending a free NHS Health Check helps people be better prepared for their future. It identifies risks early on, giving people the opportunity to take steps to reduce them and improving their chance of staying healthy as they age.

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

Living safely with respiratory infections including COVID-19

The [Government has published important advice](#) for people with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test result and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, such as flu and protect those at highest risk.

Things you can choose to do are:

- Get vaccinated.
- Wear a face covering or a face mask.
- Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
- Stay at home if you have [symptoms](#)
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Practise good hygiene:

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Please [click here](#) to read the guidance on what to do if you have symptoms but have not taken a test.

Somerset COVID Cases

In the week ending 1 April approximately 111,106 tests were carried out across the county. This is a reduction on previous weeks, but lateral flow testing is now no longer free of charge to the public. There were 6,188 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain very high at 1,100.6 per 100,000. This is just below the South-West average, but considerably higher than the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has **increased by a significant amount** over the last week to around 226 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals. Most of these patients are not ill with COVID-19 but have been detected through routine screening on hospital admission.

COVID-19 now presents with a very wide range of [symptoms](#), similar to other respiratory infections, so without testing it is not possible to know if symptoms are of COVID-19, or flu, or a common cold for example. COVID-19 case numbers in Somerset are at record levels, so there remains a significant risk of contracting COVID-19, and thus a significant risk to business continuity if a large proportion of staff are sick at any one time and isolating.

Although it is no longer a legal requirement to isolate as a case or contact, many of the controls that businesses have had in place will remain important in reducing risks to business continuity, including workers isolating while symptomatic and good workplace ventilation.

COVID-19 Testing

Free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for COVID-19, for the general public, came to an end on the **31 March 2022**, in line with the move to the [Living with COVID-19 strategy](#).

Please [click here](#) to find out more information on who can access free COVID-19 tests from 1 April 2022 and how to get them.

Spring Booster Jobs

SCC's Public Health team is urging older and more vulnerable residents to take up the offer of a free, further COVID-19 booster vaccine.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), as part of its latest review of the UK vaccination programme, has recommended an additional spring booster dose for our most vulnerable individuals. People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those individuals aged 12 and over with weakened immune systems, will be offered a spring booster of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.

The Spring Booster has been rolled out for these groups of people because they are at higher risk of developing severe complications from COVID-19. Protection from their previous vaccinations may be lower and may decline more quickly over time. If the number of infections increases over the summer, this booster should help to reduce their risk of developing serious illness and being admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

Across Somerset, there are more than 80 thousand people eligible to receive their spring booster. They will be contacted by the NHS when it is their turn to receive the vaccine, although anyone eligible who has had six months since their last booster can also go online to book through the [National Booking System](#) or by calling 119 for an appointment.

There are also plenty of walk-in appointments available across the county. Please check the local NHS website: [COVID-19 vaccinations in Somerset](#) to find clinics in your area or use the national portal to find a clinic: www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab.

NHS staff are ready to welcome you whether it's for your first, second, or third dose.

COVID-19 and mental wellbeing

The impact and experience of the COVID-19 outbreak has been different for everyone, as has how we have reacted, but there's no doubt it's been a really difficult time for us all.

That's why it's so important to do what we can to look after our mental health and wellbeing, now more than ever.

Please [click here](#) to get help and advice from Every Mind Matters.

Coronavirus Helpline Update

In line with the lifting of Government restrictions the Coronavirus Support Helpline is now closed having taken over 18,000 calls from Somerset residents who needed help during the pandemic.

Launched in April 2020, the single phone number helpline made it easier for people in Somerset to access local authority support. It linked together the District and County Council Contact Centres, operating seven days a week, 8am to 6pm, including bank holidays.

Anyone in need of Coronavirus-related support should contact their local authority from now on:

Somerset West and Taunton Council call 0300 304 8000

Mendip District Council call 0300 303 8588

Sedgemoor District Council call 0300 303 7800

South Somerset District Council call 01935 462462

Somerset County Council on 0300 123 2224

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
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Beware of holiday fraud as travel restrictions ease

Action Fraud, the national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime, received 1,907 reports of holiday and travel related fraud in 2020/21 financial year – a decrease of over 70 per cent when compared to the previous financial year.

However, although a decline in reporting was predicted due to the fact travel was banned for large periods of the year, losses by victims still totalled £2,205,251 during this time – an average loss of £1,242 per victim.

Last year, criminals targeted unsuspecting holidaymakers booking airline tickets (56 per cent) and holiday accommodation (29 per cent). Almost three quarters of victims were aged between 19 to 50 years old (73 per cent).

Almost a third (32 per cent) of reports stated the victim had contact with the suspect after they responded to an approach, or advertisement, on a social media platform.

Out of these reports, Facebook was the most common platform (62 per cent) where victims were defrauded.

Online booking platforms, such as Airbnb and Booking.com, were mentioned in almost 10 per cent of reports made. Online booking platforms act as a platform for third parties to advertise accommodation.

Whilst many accommodation providers who make use of online booking platforms are legitimate, some criminals will use these platforms to defraud victims by advertising bogus accommodation.

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

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Crime Prevention Fund

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner ([OPCC](#)) has set up the Commissioner's Crime Prevention Fund to help create safer communities. It is run as a partnership between the OPCC, Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) and Quartet Community Foundation ([QCF](#)).

Groups can apply for a grant of between £1,000 to £5,000 to run a project:

- in a particular neighbourhood so that everyone benefits from reduced crime and antisocial behaviour, or
- for a specific group of people who are at higher risk of being the victims or perpetrators of crime and antisocial behaviour.

There are 3 opportunities to apply each year. **The next deadline is Friday 27 May 2022**, followed by Friday 30 September, and Friday 24 February 2023.

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

Enough Stopping violence against women and girls

The Government has launched '[Enough](#)', a campaign that highlights what we can do to safely challenge the abuse of women and girls. Created in collaboration with victims, academics and organisations working on this issue, the campaign aims to challenge perpetrators and the harmful attitudes that exist in wider society.

[Abuse takes many forms](#) it can be emotional, physical, sexual or financial. It can be words or actions. It can be online or in person. At home or in the street. It can be inflicted by a partner, ex-partner, family member, colleague, friend or stranger.

Whatever form it takes, abuse should never be justified as 'an act of love' or dismissed as 'harmless fun'. Any behaviour that embarrasses, demeans, frightens or distresses someone is abuse. And it must stop. Knowing what abuse is helps us all recognise it when it happens. So, we can all do our bit to keep each other safe. Please share widely with your networks.

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Bike Marking Events – Saturday 16 April

[BikeRegister](#) deters cycle thieves and reunites stolen bikes with their owners.

The Minehead and West Somerset Policing Team will be holding events over the Easter holidays, where you can register your bikes for free. Please bring your bike, a photo of the frame number (if possible) and an email address to complete the registration process.

Porlock Visitor Centre (Front Parking Area). 10.30am until 11:30am

Dulverton Police Station (Exmoor Gardens). 12.30pm until 2.00pm

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](#)
- [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Rural Affairs Unit – Avon and Somerset Police.](#)

Finally

This is the final newsletter before the Easter holiday. The SWT newsletter will return for week ending 1 May 2022.

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).

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