

Mendip District Council

COVID-19 Briefing

Issue 1

9th May, 2020

Latest News

The lockdown continues

Sunny weather is forecast but we are being urged to hold our resolve and **stay home, protect the NHS and save lives.** Prime Minister Boris Johnson will outline plans for the next stage of England's lockdown on Sunday. More than 30,000 people have died as a result of COVID-19 in the UK.

Tipping point

Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP), who manage waste services for all councils in Somerset, have announced 11 recycling sites are to reopen and garden waste collection is to restart. To ensure social distancing, protect public and staff and to limit numbers, there will be a range of temporary restrictions in place. SWP say recycling sites will reopen on Monday 11th May for essential visits only. They warn queues are likely. *Do remember to turn off your vehicle engines when queuing. Idling pollutes!* There will inevitably be delays, so they are asking for patience and calm. Enforcement at each site will be applied by SWP and only if absolutely necessary will the police be involved. Full details are here: www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/reopen/

Bank Holiday bonfires

Please avoid having bonfires this Bank Holiday weekend. Smoke from fires can aggravate the symptoms of vulnerable residents and cause people stress when they are staying at home to shield, isolate or social distance. Be considerate to your neighbours, and spare our Fire Service from unnecessary demand.

www.mendip.gov.uk/article/7521/Smoke-Nuisance-and-Dark-Smoke

Somerset Day Monday, 11th May

This year Somerset Day will be celebrated online. The theme of the day is to share with others why you love Somerset. Once decided, simply add your 'Why I love Somerset' expression to social media on May 11th. Use the hashtag **#somersestday**.

Buildings closed by coronavirus now face Legionnaires health risk

The Environmental Health team at Mendip District Council is warning owners of all public buildings and volunteer-run premises to properly service their hot/cold water and air con systems before re-opening to customers, shoppers, staff and the public.

Buildings like shops, offices, hairdressers, beauty salons, hotels, pubs, clubs, restaurants, sports centres/clubs, gyms, residential buildings as well as campsites – in fact anywhere that has a water supply and is currently shut down – will need to check and maintain their systems.

This is because of the heightened risk of Legionnaires' disease, which is a type of pneumonia. Any water systems lying dormant during the COVID-19 emergency are likely to have increased levels of bacteria present.

Legionnaires' disease is a lung infection you can catch by inhaling droplets of water from things like air conditioning or hot tubs. It's uncommon, but can be very serious. Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to COVID-19 and include high temperature, feverishness and chills, cough, muscle pains, headache, and pneumonia. Its name originates from a deadly 1976 outbreak of the disease at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia.

The Environmental Health team at Mendip District Council will be contacting local businesses about the threat. Meanwhile, advice can be found online here:

www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8813/COVID-19-Managing-Legionella-in-Building-Water-Systems

Businesses can call 0300 303 8588 or email: environmental.health@mendip.gov.uk

Find out about the symptoms here: www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/symptoms.htm

Guidance and procedures by the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease on how to best manage Legionella in building water systems during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found here:

www.escmid.org/fileadmin/src/media/PDFs/3Research_Projects/ESGLI/COVID_buidling_water_system_guidance_27_3_20_v4_DS_pk.pdf

Mendip in the news as district's village halls and community centres take up £10K Government grant offer

Great piece on BBC Radio Somerset on Thursday 7th May about grants available to eligible community centres and various village venues across Mendip. It featured Holly Smith, Chair of West Pennard Village Hall and Leader of Mendip District Council, Cllr Ros Wyke. Don't forget, if you run a village or community hall you can apply for the COVID-19 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

You can listen again to Thursday's broadcast here [shuffle forward to 7.24am]

www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/live:bbc_radio_somerset_sound

You'll find the press release here: www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8984/Village-halls-Community-venues-across-the-district-benefit-from-10K-grants-don-t-miss-out

Check out the eligibility criteria from Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) here: acre.org.uk/cms/resources/guidance-on-eligibility-for-government-support-for-halls-2.4.20.pdf.

Register to get your grant: www.mendip.gov.uk/businessrates

Coronavirus Helpline: 0300 790 6275: 7 days a week, 8am to 6pm

The Helpline has now received **4,000 calls** since it was set up on 6th April, 2020. Common issues raised include food supplies, prescription delivery, transport to medical appointments, financial advice on council tax and business grants, housing and homelessness issues and Household Waste Recycling Centres opening hours. The Helpline continues to operate seven days a week between 8am and 6pm, including Bank Holidays.

Spark Somerset launch information pack for COVID-19 volunteers

Spark have run the Volunteer Service in Somerset for many years. Recently, they've been supporting local COVID-19 support groups, many of who have shared their ways of working with them. This has given them a valuable insight into what works well, and has helped identify the areas in which groups most often need support. They've now captured this information and produced a pack for volunteer groups. You can find it here: sparksomerset.org.uk/VolunteerPack

NHS Volunteer scheme poster

NHS England and the Royal Voluntary Service have created a new poster to promote the use of the NHS Volunteer scheme. Local organisations are invited to use the poster in community settings to publicise the scheme. The poster can be found here: volunteering.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/documents/final-rvs-nhsvolres-postertemplate-v2-1008.pdf

Rough sleeping taskforce created

A specialist taskforce has been created to lead the next phase of the government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic. The taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils across the country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

www.gov.uk/government/news/dame-louise-casey-to-spearhead-government-taskforce-on-rough-sleeping-during-pandemic

Coronavirus advice for tenants and landlords

The government has brought forward a package of measures to protect renters affected by coronavirus. For those privately renting (and those in social housing accommodation), this means they will not be forced out of their home. There is specific guidance on this, plus more general advice on landlords and tenants rights and responsibilities during the COVID-19 outbreak on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Keep connected

Mendip District Council has a corporate Facebook page. Please follow us for the latest news, commentary and campaigns. [MDC Official Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/MendipCouncil). We are also on Twitter twitter.com/MendipCouncil and LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/company/mendip-district-council

In Focus: Business, Finance and Grants

A round-up of the latest offers from Government, plus where to get help advice and support.

Hope for the high street: More than 1,800 local businesses receive help

Mendip District Council continues to process business grants. Some **£22 million** has been issued by the Council in emergency funding to 1,800 local organisations to date. Any business who believes they are eligible for a grant but has not yet submitted their details online, can register here: www.mendip.gov.uk/businessrates

Enquiries relating to the Business Grants

For enquiries relating to the current Grants, please email economy@mendip.gov.uk. Mendip staff are working their way through these increasingly complex enquiries as quickly as is possible.

Additional Discretionary Business Grant Fund

An additional discretionary Business Grant fund has been announced by the Government. The purpose of this fund will be to provide additional support for some of those small businesses not covered by the current schemes. The businesses will need to meet criteria defined by Government. We have just received an update from the Government confirming that guidance on this new approach will be given next week. We will review this at pace and put in a process, however this will take time. We will keep you updated, and once ready, information will go on our website and we will contact businesses.

www.gov.uk/government/news/top-up-to-local-business-grant-funds-scheme

www.mendip.gov.uk/businessrates

Business Financial Support Tool

The Government has launched a new tool to help businesses find coronavirus financial support. The business support finder will show which loans, tax relief and cash grants a business can access whether an employer or those self-employed.

www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder

Bounce Back Loans for small businesses

The scheme is now live. It helps small and medium-sized businesses affected by coronavirus to access loans from £2,000 to £50,000. The government guarantees 100% of the loan and there won't be any fees or interest to pay for the first 12 months. Loan terms will be up to 6 years. No repayments will be due during the first 12 months. The government will work with lenders to agree a low rate of interest for the remaining period of the loan. The scheme will be delivered through a network of accredited lenders.

www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-coronavirus-bounce-back-loan

Business rates revaluation postponed

The Communities Secretary announced that a revaluation of business rates will no longer take place in 2021. Legislation had been introduced to bring the next revaluation forward by one year from 2022 to 2021, but following the recent economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, ministers want to ensure businesses have more certainty during this difficult time.

The government is continuing work on the fundamental review of business rates, with the key aims of reducing the overall burden on businesses, improving the current business rates system, and considering more fundamental changes in the medium-to-long term. The call for evidence for the review will be published in the coming months.

www.gov.uk/government/news/business-rates-revaluation-postponed

HMRC webinars and digital assistant

HMRC are continuing to hold free webinars over the coming days on; Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) rebate scheme; Self-employment Income Support Scheme; Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; Running a business through the coronavirus pandemic.

Links: www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-if-your-business-is-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19

www.gov.uk/guidance/additional-government-resources-to-support-your-business-during-coronavirus-disruptions#webinars

They have also created a digital assistant to help the public find information about the coronavirus support schemes available.

Digital assistant: www.tax.service.gov.uk/ask-hmrc/virtual-assistant/support-for-coronavirus?VA=GOVUK

HOTSW Growth Hub and Somerset Business Agency have put together a programme of free business support to help organisations through the current crisis. This gives businesses **three hours of free remote support** with a dedicated Business Advisor.

To see if you are eligible or for more information check here:

www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/covid-19-support-for-business/covid-business-recovery-support/

Free courses to build skills and boost job prospects

Explore the range of free courses, pitched at all levels. They are open to all, whether they've recently been furloughed and want to learn new skills, are out of work and looking to build up their CV, or just keen to keep their mind busy during time spent at home. theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/#sw

Self-employed invited to get ready to make their claims for coronavirus support

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has been contacting around three and a half million customers who may be eligible for the government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) to explain the application process and help them get ready to make a claim. The claims service will open on 13th May and is being delivered ahead of the original timetable.

www.gov.uk/government/news/self-employed-invited-to-get-ready-to-make-their-claims-for-coronavirus-covid-19-support

Council Tax Support

Mendip residents on a low income will likely be able to get a discount under our Council Tax Support Policy. In particular, if you're claiming Universal Credit for the first time, you may also be eligible to claim. www.mendip.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

Pension credit claimants now able to apply online

Pensioners are now able to apply for Pension Credit online in a move to assist those who are self-isolating or shielding during the coronavirus pandemic. Existing methods of claiming Pension Credit, by phone or on paper, will remain available to claimants. The digital claim will simply provide an additional option.

Make an online application: www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim

New funding to support dairy farmers through coronavirus

A new fund will enable dairy farmers in England to access up to £10,000 each to help them overcome the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Eligible dairy farmers who have lost more than 25% of their income over April and May due to coronavirus disruptions will be eligible to access this funding for those qualifying months, with no cap set on the number of farmers who can receive this support or on the total funding available. The Government has said more detail on this fund will be issued shortly.

Rural Response Emergency Grants

The Prince's Countryside Fund is inviting applications for emergency funding from farming and rural community support groups.

www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk/grant-giving-programme/grant-programme

Western Power Distribution (WPD) Fund

Cash is available for registered charities or community groups, parish and town councils and local authorities.

www.westernpower.co.uk/customers-and-community/in-this-together-community-matters-fund

Community updates and information

NEW! Essential information for Community Groups, Organisations and Residents now available online at Mendip

Content includes:

- How community groups might go about getting funding and managing donations. Encouraging all community groups and organisations to use SPARK's website for the most up-to-date information.
www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8930/COVID-19-Information-and-Guidance-for-Parishes-and-Community-Groups
- Which national and local shops are operating and what options exist in relation to food deliveries and/or collection.
Local Shops - www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8971/COVID-19-Food-Collection-and-Delivery-Options-Local-
National Shops - www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8963/COVID-19-Food-Delivery-Options-National-

- Which local shops are operating and what options exist in relation to non-food (gardening, pet supplies...) deliveries and/or collection. www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9012/COVID-19-Other-Businesses-with-Collection-and-Delivery-Options-Local-
 - How Banks and the Post Office are working to support residents throughout the Civil Emergency. www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8945/COVID-19-Information-on-Banking-and-Payment-Options
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Heath Matters

Keep your vaccination appointments

NHS England is urging people to attend all regular vaccination appointments to prevent outbreaks of serious diseases and reduce pressure on the health service. The NHS is continuing to help people to manage illness linked to coronavirus, but is still urging parents to bring children forward for lifesaving jabs to stop killer diseases like measles and mumps.

Essential, routine vaccinations like the MMR jab can save a child's life and are available through family doctors, including in some parts of the country through new children's immunisation drive-through clinics. A full list of vaccinations and when they are available, for children and adults, is accessible through the [NHS website](#).

Good posture, healthy habits

Many of us have been working from home for more than six weeks. Our lives are changed, and our office environments too. Health experts tells us it's important to maintain a good posture and healthy habits to avoid feeling uncomfortable and unproductive. If you want to check your physical set-up, your emotional well-being and enhance your productivity, you can try this short Q&A-based webinar. www.posturite.co.uk/webinars/2020-webinars/working-from-home-a-health-check

More than 300,000 quit smoking over COVID-19 fears

More than 300,000 smokers in Britain have quit smoking during the coronavirus crisis, a survey has revealed. The YouGov and Action on Smoking and Health study found that growing evidence which suggests smoking makes people more vulnerable to COVID-19 has helped more than 300,000 people to stop smoking and an extra 2.4 million people to cut down. Read full article here: [Guardian](#)

Mental health weekly radio slot

Mindline. The charity has teamed up with BBC Somerset and Spark to broadcast a weekly slot with Charlie Taylor on [Wednesday evenings 7-8pm](#). They are available on 01823 276 892.

Coronavirus testing

Information about who is eligible for COVID-19 testing can be [found here](#).

Keeping Fit: Try these 10-minute workouts - [click here to get active!](#)

Where to find the latest trusted information, help and advice

Domestic Abuse

As much as we want you to stay at home, we also want you to be safe

www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help.

Remember: [Boots chemists are offering safe spaces](#) within their pharmacies for victims of domestic abuse. Anyone needing help can ask staff at the counter to use the consultation room, where they will be able to contact local services for help and advice. Call Victim Support on 0300 303 0554. Lines are open 12pm-6pm Monday to Friday. You can [access Victim Support's free live chat for 24/7 support](#).

LGBT services

Contact [The Intercom Trust](#), which has a helpline and counselling service.

Citizens Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

The National Debtline: Call 0808 0808 400 or www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

StepChange: Call 0800 138 1111 or www.stepchange.org

Coronavirus links

Mendip District Council: www.mendip.gov.uk/coronavirus

Government information on coronavirus: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

NHS information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

The latest travel advice can be found here:

www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus

Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus:

publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/

The LGA have issued some general guidance specific to elected councillors that you may find useful: www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-outbreak-councillor-guidance

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