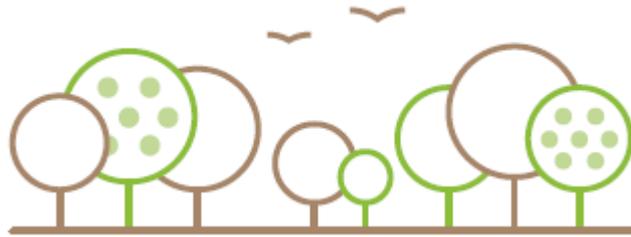


MDC Green Briefing



Issue 2

16th May, 2020

Welcome

An introduction by Cllr Tom Ronan, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Policy and Climate Change, Mendip District Council

“Despite lockdown, work has continued behind the scenes at Mendip – though there is still much more to do, as we push on with our Climate Emergency agenda. That’s why we thought you’d enjoy this briefing, dedicated solely to updating you on environmental issues.

Obviously nobody wanted this coronavirus outbreak to happen and the loss of life plus the huge disruption has had a negative impact on everybody.

It is important though that we acknowledge this has led to behaviour change on an undreamt of scale, and that this may have had some positive environmental impacts. The coming together of the community groups throughout Mendip to support those more vulnerable and in need has been another really positive story of the CV19 pandemic. It would be fantastic if this community cohesion and resilience was a lasting legacy from these very difficult times that we are going through, as it will prove invaluable in helping us tackle the climate emergency.

We were able to hold our Mendip Climate Emergency drop-in event in Frome on 3rd March which was well attended and we received some good feedback on the night. Unfortunately we had to postpone the one in Wells, but we would hope to put that on again once the lock down conditions make it possible.

Mendip's Climate Change and Resilience Officer is putting together a staff climate champion's toolkit with "green" behaviour guidance and advice sheets. A staff travel survey was also carried out which will be published soon. The results will help identify ways the Council can support the staff commute more sustainably.

Analysis of the Council's carbon footprint is currently being conducted and we are also investigating options to support the development of a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2030.

I'm looking forward to the next meeting of the Climate & Ecological Emergency Group (CEEG) on 21st May, after which, I can update you all further. In the meantime, you may wish to view the video attached to this email on how lockdown has impacted the animal world. Enjoy!"

Cllr Tom Ronan

Latest news

No idling at the tips please

Queues and delays are expected at recycling centres as they re-open and people take to the roads to dispose of their waste. Mendip and Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) are asking people to kill their engines while queuing. Idling gets you nowhere. Full details from SWP here: www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/reopen/

Lockdown businesses – check your water systems

The Environmental Health team at Mendip District Council continue to contact owners of public buildings and volunteer-run premises to ask they properly service their hot/cold water and air con systems before re-opening to staff and the public. This is because of the heightened risk of Legionnaires' disease, a type of pneumonia. Any water systems lying dormant during the COVID-19 emergency are likely to have increased levels of bacteria present.

Businesses can call **0300 303 8588** or email: environmental.health@mendip.gov.uk
Find out more here: www.mendip.gov.uk/covid19legionnaires

Somerset Wildlife Trust: nesting animals not ready for visitors

Following the government announcement that people in England will be able to spend more time outdoors for leisure purposes, and that households will also be able to drive to other destinations in England - such as parks and beaches - SWT wanted to update potential visitors of their response. Read it in full here:

www.somersetwildlife.org/news/covid-19-update-12th-may

No Mow May: how to get ten times more bees on your lockdown lawn

Please take on this special challenge to support Plantlife's 'No Mow May' project. You'll find out more here: www.plantlife.org.uk/uk

Mowing tips for encouraging wildlife:

Based on advice from by Dr Trevor Dines. Bio Botanist and conservationist at Plantlife.

- **Cut once every four weeks (maximum).** Ideally leave for longer if possible, and always leave around three to five centimetres of grass length. The optimum for wildlife is not to cut areas that have wildflowers between April and mid-July as this will allow the local plants to produce seeds to boost the local flora population.
- **Leave areas of longer grass.** If the patch does not consist purely of coarse dense grasses and has some wildflowers already, you'll get a greater diversity of flowers in areas of grass that are left completely unmown, with oxeye daisy, field scabious and knapweed offering up important nectar sources. No need to cut birdsfoot trefoil at all. It's the food plant for butterflies like the Common Blue and day-flying moths, such as the Six Spot Burnet. Mowing risks killing the larvae and pupae and reducing the population of pollinators.
- **Grow – don't mow.** Some species, such as daisy are adapted to growing in shorter swards. Cutting flowers from these plants stimulates them to produce more blooms. If you have the time to manage an area, a good approach in limestone soils (such as in Mendip) is to plant a species called yellow rattle in the sward. This is an annual plant which parasitizes pernicious, coarse, rank grasses that would otherwise outcompete many of the flora. A mixed sward of flora adds to the biodiversity and is ideal for insects to flourish.

National news

COVID-19 and climate change in five charts

No war, no recession, no previous pandemic has had such a dramatic impact on emissions of CO2 over the past century as Covid-19 has in a few short months. Multiple sources indicate we are now living through an unrivalled drop in carbon output. [Read here](#)

Coronavirus: UK 'must prioritise green economic recovery'

An open letter to Boris Johnson from a range of businesses, including Iceland Foods, Barratt Developments, The Body Shop, Ben and Jerry's, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the National Trust and Greenpeace UK has urges the Government to prioritise a green UK economic recovery following the coronavirus crisis. [BBC Online](#)

Cleaner air saves 1,750 lives around country

More than 1,700 deaths in the UK have been avoided in the past month due to lower air pollution during lockdown, according to a report. The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said nitrogen dioxide levels have fallen by 36 per cent and toxic particles by 9 per cent on average in British cities in the past 30 days. [Times](#)

AI to predict pollution surge and hold drivers on red to slow traffic

Traffic lights will be used to cut air pollution by holding drivers on red to delay their arrival in areas at risk. The AI system developed by Now Wireless, which supplies pollution sensors and communication systems to 20 local authorities in large urban areas with significant air quality challenges, analyses live and historical data on local pollution and traffic levels to predict increases up to an hour ahead. Meanwhile, traffic volumes in Britain during the lockdown are now similar to those recorded back in the 1970s, according to the AA. [Times](#), [BBC Online](#)

3,000 hydrogen buses to help cut air pollution

Up to 3,000 zero-emission hydrogen buses could take to the road in the next few years as a clean alternative to diesel. Wrightbus is planning to build the vehicles within the next four years to help cut air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, which could lead to 10 per cent of the UK's bus fleet being powered by hydrogen by 2024. [Times](#)

Funding for cycling and walking

A **£250 million emergency active travel fund** will help encourage cycling and walking through new infrastructure such as pop-up bike lanes, protected space for cyclists, wider pavements, safer junctions and bus-only corridors.

The Government will fund and work with local authorities on the measures, with the aim of encouraging more people to walk or cycle to work to relieve pressure on public transport.

The Local Government Association (LGA) is making the case for **long-term certainty of infrastructure funding** to ensure a sustained increase in active and cleaner travel.

Cycle to work – useful links

[Local bike shops](#)

[Sustrans](#)

Local cycling/walking maps

[Frome](#)

[Glastonbury & Street](#)

[Shepton Mallet](#)

[Wells](#)

Stay connected

Mendip District Council has a corporate Facebook page. Please follow us for the latest news, commentary and campaigns. **MDC Official Facebook Page**. Also on Twitter twitter.com/MendipCouncil and LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/mendip-district-council



**On 25th February 2019,
Mendip District Council declared a climate emergency**

A Timeline of Mendip Climate Change Actions

Feb 2019 Mendip declares Climate & Ecological Emergency and commits to be carbon neutral by 2030 www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8648/Climate-Emergency-Declaration

July 2019 Mendip forms the Climate & Ecological Emergency Group (CEEG) who are responsible for engaging and supporting community activities to deliver the carbon neutral pledge www.mendip.gov.uk/mendipsclimateemergency

Sept 2019 Mendip appoints new Climate Change & Resilience Officer www.mendip.gov.uk/mendipsclimateemergency

Sept 2019 Mendip's Cabinet approved quick win actions to support the council's climate change goals:

A review of Glyphosate (weed killer) usage

Tree provision

Wild Flowering distribution

Increase council office recycling facilities

Reduction in CO₂ and increase in renewable energy provisions on site

www.mendip.gov.uk/mendipsclimateemergency

Dec 2019 Mendip plants 100 trees in Wells with contractor Idverde who donated the trees to mark their 100th anniversary www.mendip.gov.uk/toptrunks

Feb 2020 Mendip hosts drop-in session for residents to have their say on the Somerset Climate Strategy www.mendip.gov.uk/climatesurveyinvite

Feb 2020 Mendip to gift staff and councillors 2 trees each. It will see 2280 trees planted in the next 4 years - leading to a carbon saving of 50 tonnes annually www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8669/Mendip-marks-climate-milestone-with-a-great-green-giveaway

Feb 2020 Mendip publishes its first-ever carbon emissions report

www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8615/Mendip-publish-first-ever-carbon-emissions-report

Feb 2020 Mendip publishes Corporate Plan 2020-2023 with one of the corporate priorities being to deliver our climate & ecological commitment

www.mendip.gov.uk/corporateplan

March 2020 Mendip hosts its first Climate Action drop-in event in Frome for residents to have their say on how to tackle climate change together:

www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8685/Mendip-Climate-Action-drop-in-events



Total baseline carbon emissions district-wide

893,195 tCO₂e,

[tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent]

Service updates

Pomparles Bridge

A large section of land at Pomparles Bridge has now been landscaped. Work was to begin on the smaller section when COVID-19 hit. Work will resume in the area once it's safe to do so. Landscaping was completed with the knowledge of, and in consultation with, local residents.

Fly-tipping – we're still watching

Protecting our countryside from the menace of fly-tipping is an issue. In these difficult times Mendip continues to pick up fly-tipping, and where possible, enforce against those disposing of the rubbish on public land.

Please use the online [Fly tipping form](#) to report dumped waste or alternatively call **0300 303 8588** to make a report.

Preserving wildlife habitats

The Council recently resumed grass cutting on large, public open spaces to enable people to continue to use these as part of their daily exercise, in a safe way. However, significant areas of land remain uncut.

With this in mind, Neighbourhood Services are working with IDV to understand which of these areas could be left *indefinitely*, in line with the previously notified wildflower and rewilding proposals. Mendip is working with neighbouring Town Councils on this.

Discussions are ongoing to determine this plan, and future Cabinet meetings will be presented with full details of this proposal.

The Council is committed to preserving wildlife habitats across the district, and will continue to protect these environments, while still maintaining safety.

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points

The work continues. All soft market testing conversations have been completed with those companies who expressed an interest, including questions about what electricity supplier they would use, could they help the Council with grants, and whether we pay for the hardware infrastructure. A paper is currently being prepared.

Mendip's first EV taxi is licensed!

Meanwhile, just prior to lockdown, Mendip announced it had licensed its first ever zero-emission electric vehicle taxi. A licence plate was issued to taxi operator Mr Barry Clark, who was first licensed in 1998. Mr Clark's company is ABC Executive Travel Ltd, and provides executive hire. The taxi – a Tesla model – can travel around 300 miles on one fast charge. The milestone further demonstrates Mendip's commitment to reduce carbon emissions in the district. [More to follow on this, next week].



**65,600 cars are registered in the district and
0.3% are Ultra Low Electric Vehicles**



Climate Change link: www.mendip.gov.uk/climatechange