

# West Down Parish Council County Councillors Report February 2021

## Coronavirus updates from Devon County Council

The link below may be of interest to residents with the situation changing and many interested in what is happening locally this link is a useful starting point for questions and the current situation in Devon.

The link takes you to the Covid-19 pages on the Devon County Council Website, it has daily updated information as to positive cases within the area, information about testing and track and trace.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/coronavirus-data/>

## Further social care funding

- Following pressure from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the Government has provided additional £269M funding to adult social care. This breaks down as:
  - £149M, equating to £2.5M for Devon to support staffing levels in care homes. The funding will support existing activity that we have had in place since wave 1 of the pandemic to ensure we can access the skilled staff we need.
  - £120M, equating to £1.7M for Devon to support testing in care homes. 80% of the money being given to the care sector on a per beds basis, with 20% used at the local authorities discretion to support the care sector in delivering additional lateral flow device testing.
- Although short term additional payments like these are welcome, and indeed a standing feature in normal times, we can't forget the bigger picture and the real need to finally see the long-awaited reform of adult social care.

## Care and Health working priorities across Devon

- Adult Care and Health has moved to Business Important A. This status reflects the growing escalation of the COVID pandemic and further supports our response. Business Important A means the vast majority of all transformation and change programmes have temporarily paused enabling staff to be redeployed to the areas of the service that are experiencing significant activity and pressures. This status is regularly reviewed.
- Similarly, the CCG has reduced its focus to three priorities that major on the vaccination programme, the COVID-19 response and keeping essential services running.

## Mass vaccination programme

- Work is continuing across the county at pace to deliver the local mass vaccination programme. The CCG is producing regular vaccination briefing notes and I shall endeavour to circulate these as they are published. People aged 70 and over and the clinically extremely vulnerable have begun to receive invitations for vaccinations as of the 18 January, alongside frontline Health and Care staff and the over 80s who were the initial priority groups.
- With so much going on and at such pace it can be hard to keep track with developments. To date there are three main ways the vaccine is being delivered in Devon:
  - All four of the county's main hospitals – in Plymouth, Exeter, Torquay and Barnstaple – are giving the vaccination to priority groups in line with national guidance
  - GP practices are working together in groups to set up local vaccination centres. Across the county, 20 centres are now in operation, serving all 123 of Devon's GP practices
  - GP-led facilities are delivering the vaccine to residents and staff in care homes

## Community Testing

- Following the government announcement on 10th January, Devon County Council is working at speed with partners to introduce community testing. This will support existing testing arrangements and complement the national roll-out of lateral flow tests in some settings such as universities and schools and with some large employers. Community testing will help to find individuals who have COVID-19 but do not have symptoms and need to isolate and who may inadvertently be spreading the virus.
- Testing will be prioritised to help key workers and workers in high-risk occupations who still have to attend work, and people who are in contact with vulnerable individuals, such as carers. The first site is planned to open near the end of January, at County Hall in Exeter, with other sites planned to become available across the County in February and March. Updates on community testing will be provided on the community testing pages of the DCC website

## Children's Services.

With the third lockdown services are very busy. Last week 825 children were in care, and the pressure on Early Help is very high. Some additional funding from COVID 19 funds is supporting this pressure. The Edge of Care Service, which is mostly support for teenagers and families, is starting to make a difference. Social work staff on the front line are starting to be vaccinated and this will continue to be rolled out over the coming weeks.

Schools are having a difficult time. There are more children in school in this lockdown. It has settled a bit now and we are seeing an average of about 30% of children in school. There has been concern about some children not having suitable devices, to learn virtually at home.

The DfE has made available additional devices (laptops or tablets) available for

- disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 who do not have access to a device and whose face-to-face education is disrupted disadvantaged
- children in any year group who have been [advised to shield](#) because they (or someone they live with) are clinically extremely vulnerable
- disadvantaged children in any year group attending a hospital school
- Disadvantaged children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Disadvantaged children in this context are those with:

- with no digital devices in their household
- whose only available device is a smartphone
- with a single device in their household that's being shared with more than one other family member

This offer applies to maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy trusts and hospital schools, as well as sixth-form colleges who have enrolled 14 to 16-year-olds.

Secondary Schools can request the devices now and it is anticipated primary schools will have access over the coming weeks. Local Authorities can also make requests for specific children.

The number of devices schools can request is determined by the DfE and is based on the number of children in years 3 to 11, the number of children in on free school meals (FSM) and the number of devices the school has already received. (These laptops are in addition to the approximately 4000 DfE funded laptops for vulnerable children without access and other disadvantaged children that were distributed by the LA and schools during the summer term. A further allocation was made directly to schools in the autumn term.) Orders should arrive within 5 days of the request.

The DfE is also providing support for pupils who have no internet access or who cannot afford increased data charges. Information on this scheme is available here. ( [Increasing data allowances on mobile devices to support disadvantaged children -](#)

It should be noted that Parents, carers and pupils cannot apply for digital devices or internet access through this scheme themselves. They should contact their school to discuss requirements for accessing remote education.

There are also several charities donating devices. The advice is that parents must talk to their school about the need for help.

The pandemic has been going on for ten months and staff in child social care and schools have been brilliant, but everyone is getting tired.

Drive to combat holiday hunger in Devon continues for February half-term

### **Half term arrangements for children who receive free School meals**

More than 15,000 children across Devon will be receiving food vouchers over half-term as Devon County Council combats holiday hunger. Families of children currently receiving free school meals will automatically be sent supermarket vouchers to help them buy food over the week-long holiday to replace the meals a child would have received during term-time.

The vouchers – worth £15 a week for each child – can be redeemed in major supermarkets across Devon. Arrangements are in place for families who cannot get to a supermarket.

It's part of a £2 million programme organised by Devon County Council to combat holiday hunger over the Christmas, half-term and Easter breaks.

Many families in Devon have seen their financial circumstances change due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. If you didn't previously qualify for free school meals but your income has recently reduced or stopped, [please apply online through the Devon County Council website](#) to check if you are eligible for this support as soon as possible, and **before Friday 5 February** in order to receive the holiday vouchers for the February half term holiday.

The quickest and easiest way for your eligibility to be assessed is [through the Devon County Council website](#) and you will get an instant decision. Alternatively, contact Devon County Council's education helpline on 0345 155 1019.

[More information about the free school meals holiday voucher scheme is available on Devon County Council's website.](#)

### **Devon Recycling Centres are still open, with restrictions.**

Our recycling centres are still open, although the resale areas within them are closed.

The national lockdown advice right now is for us to stay at home as much as possible and only to make journeys out of the house for essential reasons only.

Therefore, we are encouraging you to think about how you can reduce the amount of waste you create.

- Try to postpone projects at home that produce waste that would normally require you to make journeys to recycling centres
- If you do produce waste that you would normally dispose of at a recycling centre, can you temporarily store it at home safely instead, until we're out of the current lockdown restrictions
- Remember that garden waste and other recyclable material can be removed as part of your usual curb side collections

If you make a visit to the recycling centre, please expect them to be operating differently during this lockdown period.

Restrictions are in place, including social distancing, which may lead to queues. If queues do start forming, we may need to restrict vehicles from joining the queues towards the end of the day and if queues become a safety hazard on the public highway, we may need to temporarily close the site.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/waste-disposal-and-recycling/>

### **Highways Update.**

The Highways and traffic management service is maintaining a business as usual approach to this current lockdown, works have been able to carry on as the supply chains are still active.

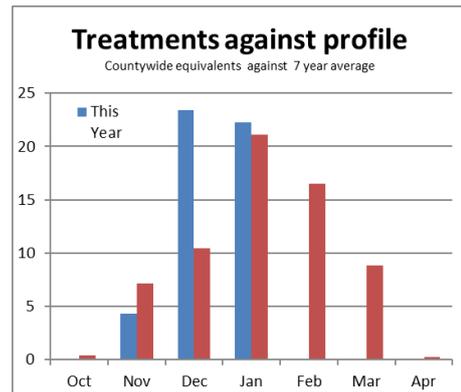
Unlike the first lockdown in the Spring the traffic flows have not seen the reductions that happened then. At the moment weekday traffic flows (on A roads) are down 33% and weekends about 50%.

A few headlines on winter maintenance to date

- Lowest road temperature -7.2°C on Dartmoor on 31<sup>st</sup> December
- About 7cm of snow fell on Dartmoor on 4<sup>th</sup> December

- Over 10,000 tonnes of salt used so far (more than total for last winter)
- 23 tonnes of salt provided to Snow Wardens

The graph adjacent shows the number of treatments that have been carried out so far this winter (blue) compared to the 7-year average (red). This graph clearly explains why we have used more salt so far this winter!



February will start with northerly airstream and low pressure dominating but high pressure may build by middle of month bringing drier but cold conditions, but there is low confidence of this!

The beast from the east #2 is not predicted now to roar as the Sudden Stratospheric Warmer event is most likely to bring northerly airstream rather than easterly from current predictions and hence more impact on the NE of UK.

Assistance to NHS with COVID vaccination centres

The Network Operations Team have been supporting the NHS with their deployment of Vaccination Centres by:

- Supplying salt and grit bins where requested
- Increasing salting routes to take in most centres where not already on the network
- Enabling the NHS to achieve an acceptable Traffic Management Plan for Westpoint and working with TCS to allow local buses to divert through the site.
- Supporting with VMS where appropriate.

**Call for evidence seeks views and evidence from all those with an interest in rural transport.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence>

The government published the Future of mobility: urban strategy, in March 2019, the Department for Transport are now seeking views and evidence on what could be incorporated into a Future of Transport: rural strategy.

There are three sections in the consultation document:

This consultation is part of the Future of Transport programme, which aims to shape transport innovation and secure the UK's position as a leader in the transport sector of the future.

The consultation closes on the 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**Finally**, if you are a family who are worrying about money and struggling to pay for basic household essentials, please be aware that you can apply for help through funding that is available via the District Council hardship funds, this was the money sent to the District Councils from DCC for any households requiring extra help. There's more about what [financial and food support is available for families in Devon on the website.](#)

Reminder about reporting a highway problem:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

telephone: [0345 155 1004](tel:03451551004)

Andrea Davis

[Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk)