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EDDC latest advice for residents and businesses re CV-19

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/latest-updates/east-devon-coronavirus-residents-update-21-august-2020/>

EDDC infographic on their recent performance during CV- 19

See end of document

Important message from Wales and West

Wales & West Utilities look after the pipes that keep the gas flowing to homes and businesses across Wales and south west England. They are the gas emergency service, connect homes and businesses, and upgrade old metal pipes to new plastic ones – delivering energy safe and reliably to 7.5m people – including those in our ward.

This month they have launched a safety campaign that reminds people how they can Stay Gas Safe this summer – with three top tips as many will be taking ‘staycations’ rather than going abroad this year.

Pack an audible carbon monoxide (CO) alarm: Whether you’re planning on staying at home or go camping, boating or caravanning, you still need to be aware of the dangers of CO poisoning. Remember to test the alarm and put it in the right place as per the alarm instructions.

- **Never, ever use a BBQ indoors:** Whether that’s a home, tent, caravan or motorhome. Always keep an eye on your BBQ when you’re cooking, and even when it’s gone out, leave it outside as it can still release poisonous fumes.
- **Be prepared:** If you smell gas, call us on 0800 111 999 at any time of day or night. And if you’ve had a BBQ and you feel dizzy, breathless or sick, it might not just be a bad burger, it could be carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and you should seek medical attention immediately.

Government White Paper August 2020 on Planning – consultation

The document is called Planning for the Future – publication date is August 2020. This is the most radical approach to changes to the planning regulations for many years and supports the ‘Build, Build, Build’ agenda. You can search for this online. There is text and then some written questions for you to respond to:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf

This is the information on how you can respond:

This consultation is open to everyone. They are keen to hear from a wide range of interested parties from across the public and private sectors, as well as from the general public.

Body/bodies responsible for the consultation: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Duration: This consultation will last for 12 weeks from 6 August 2020. Enquiries: For any enquiries about the consultation please contact planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk.

How to respond: You may respond by going to our website <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future> Alternatively you can email your response to the questions in this consultation to planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk.

If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which questions you are responding to.

Written responses should be sent to:

Planning for the Future Consultation,
Planning Directorate,
3rd Floor,
Fry Building,
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF.

When you reply it would be very useful if you confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation and include: • your name, • your position (if applicable), and • the name of organisation (if applicable).

Here are some extracts taken from the White Paper:

*First, we will streamline the planning process with more democracy taking place more effectively at the plan-making stage, and will replace the entire corpus of plan-making law in England to achieve this: • Simplifying the role of Local Plans, to focus on identifying land under three categories – **Growth areas** suitable for substantial development, and where outline approval for development would be automatically secured for forms and types of development specified in the Plan; **Renewal areas** suitable for some development, such as gentle densification; and **Protected areas** where – as the name suggests – development is restricted. In areas where development is restricted (Protected areas) any development proposals would come forward as now through planning applications being made to the local authority (except where they are subject to permitted development rights or development orders), and judged against policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.*

This could halve the time it takes to secure planning permission on larger sites identified in plans. We also want to allow local planning authorities to identify sub-areas in their Growth areas for self- and custom-build homes, so that more people can build their own homes.

***Local Plans** should set clear rules rather than general policies for development. We will set out general development management policies nationally, with a more focused role for Local Plans in identifying site- and area-specific requirements, alongside locally produced design codes. This would scale back the detail and duplication contained in Local Plans, while encouraging a much greater focus on design quality at the local level. Plans will be significantly shorter in length (we expect a reduction in size of at least two thirds), as they will no longer contain a long list of “policies” of varying specificity – just a core set of standards and requirements for development.*

***Neighbourhood Plans** - Since statutory Neighbourhood Plans became part of the system in 2011, over 2,600 communities have started the process of neighbourhood planning to take advantage of the opportunity to prepare a plan for their own areas – and over 1,000 plans have been successfully passed at referendum. They have become an important tool in helping to ‘bring the democracy forward’ in planning, by allowing communities to think proactively about how they would like their areas to develop. Therefore, we think Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system, but we will want to consider whether their content should become more focused to reflect our proposals for Local Plans, as well as the opportunities which digital tools and data offer to support their development and improve accessibility for users. By making it easier to develop Neighbourhood Plans we wish to encourage their continued use and indeed to help spread their use further, particularly in towns and cities. We are also interested in whether there is scope to extend and adapt the concept so that very small areas – such as individual streets – can set their own rules for the form of development which they are happy to see.*

***Affordable Housing** - We will be more ambitious for affordable housing provided through planning gain, and we will ensure that the new Infrastructure Levy allows local planning authorities to secure more on-site housing provision*

***Enforcement** - We will review and strengthen the existing planning enforcement powers and sanctions available to local planning authorities to ensure they support the new planning system. We will introduce more powers to address intentional unauthorised development, consider higher fines, and look to ways of supporting more enforcement activity.*

The full consultation document is 84 pages long. I have attended some Webinar virtual conferences on the implications of this planning document and there are some mixed views on how to interpret its content as well as concerns about what is omitted from the document as well as what is included.

It may interest you to know the Conservative Government has already received over £11 Million in donations from developers since they came to power in December 2019.

- The government wants 300,000 new homes to be built annually. They were not happy with the number of new homes delivered last year (over 241,000) even though this was the highest number to be built in one year for over 30 years. And as the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission found in its interim report last year, too often what is built is low quality and considered ugly by local residents.
- Local plans should be in place within 30 months, not take the years they have previously (the average time is 7 years). It appears there is very little opportunity for consultation except at the very start, although this is not what it says in the White Paper where it is stated that the government want more engagement from stake-holders.
- Residents should not have to rely on planning notices attached to lamp posts, printed in newspapers or posted in libraries – phew. However, the highly digitalised system suggested in this document could be a barrier to some residents.
- Developer contributions such as CIL and S106 will be reformed along with ‘viability’ assessments, this will allegedly see more infrastructure provided. We have seen too much of developers wriggling out of providing affordable housing and promised infrastructure in the past on the grounds of ‘viability’. The Neighbourhood (Plan) Share would be retained. The contribution would be paid on the end value of the development.
- Change of use for example from commercial to residential will be streamlined in growth areas in particular.
- I am unclear how the carbon neutral agenda will be achieved whilst the government ‘build, build, build’.
- There will be a new National Planning Policy Framework document which will continue to overarch both Local Plans and subsequently Neighbourhood Plans.
- CV-19 has had a massive impact on working practices, not least with more companies deciding that their employees can work just as well at home as in an expensive office building. I suspect the drop in demand for commercial office space could result in more of them being converted to residential use.

EDDC Full Council Meeting on 20th August 2020

[Leaders Announcement on Probity in Planning](#)

The full council meeting was streamed live on Youtube and here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jORz715zOFI>

I urge you to listen to minute 16.30 for the Chairman and then the leaders announcements. Leader Cllr Paul Arnott outlined his concerns about probity in planning since past administrations decided not to go ahead with the Task and Finish Forum in Planning after the Graham Brown affair. You may remember Graham Brown was a former EDDC councillor caught out on film by an undercover Daily Telegraph reporter boasting that if he couldn't get planning no one could and adding that his services "don't come cheap". Although he was suspended by the party at the time and removed from his posts at EDDC, he was not prosecuted and EDDC dropped plans to fully investigate the matter. Graham Brown was involved in the East Devon Business Forum, made up mostly of local developers, which was also later disbanded. The whole matter was covered up, although he continued to be responsible for a number of planning applications locally that should never have

been allowed and wouldn't have been allowed had he not been involved with advising and manipulating the system and influencing cllrs serving at the time, some of whom are still councillors.

Looking to the future the Leader said he was determined to ensure the Nolan Principles were adhered to, to ensure there is no further undue influence of developers on councillors, and that public are not left wondering after developments are completed 'where did our S106 money go to'.

With a new and renewed vigour in reviewing the Local Plan he is determined that no sites should come in under the wire such as happened with the Sidford site in 2015. He noted that some current serving councillors are friendly with large scale land owners, (some put their sites to be put forward for development in the GESP for example) and that these interests are not always declared. He said There should be clarity and commitment to ensure both councillor and officers act with probity. There will be a focus in future planning on the risk of undue local and national influence and corruption.

The Great Exeter Strategic Plan

As mentioned in my last report, in July over the course of a 4 hour meeting, the EDDC Strategic Planning Committee concluded they would recommend to Full Council that EDDC should withdraw from GESP (Greater Exeter Strategic Plan) - against the advice of the Senior Planning Officer.

This was their recommendation

That the Strategic Planning Committee recommend to Full Council:

- To notify our district partners that we are withdrawing from the GESP;
- In that letter we offer assurance that we will fulfil our duty to co-operate in an ongoing and positive partnership;
- That this council immediately begins the process to renew our local plan and that the Strategic Planning Committee meets as soon as possible to explore and define the processes involved.

This came to a vote at Full Council on 20th August where 56 ward councillors attended and voted.

Those councillors responsible for getting us into GESP over past administrations, entirely in secret until June 2020, were not happy about the recommendation to withdraw. It was clear that some of them had not read the governments White Paper on proposals for changes to planning laws as they continued to repeat exactly what they had already said at the Strategic Planning Committee about the 'Duty to Cooperate' and that East Devon would get no funding for infrastructure if they didn't go forward with GESP. One Councillor even proceeded to talk about funding bids that had already been very successful without us being in GESP, and then tried to convince us that unless we were in GESP, no funding would be forthcoming. Quite Bizarre.

Leader Cllr Paul Arnott kicked off the discussion at minute 34.36 into the meeting which you can see here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jORz715zOFI>

At the start of this discussion Leader Cllr Paul Arnott put forward a response to all the arguments he knew would be forthcoming, such as White Paper plans to drop the duty to cooperate, that housing would be out of control if we left GESP, that there would be no possibility of further infrastructure, but the opposition still continued to trot out the same arguments that had failed to convince us in

the July Strategic planning meeting, not least that it was undemocratic NOT to put the GESP draft plan out to consultation and so on.

The majority of councillors were unconvinced by the arguments of those in favour of GESP. A recorded vote was called for so that it was noted which way each councillor voted. You can see how each councillor voted at **1 hour and 8 minutes** into the meeting. Regretfully there are still councillors who cannot control their microphones and were seen muttering and grumbling in the background about the result, the Monitoring officer had to remind them again to mind their language and turn off their microphones.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jORz715zOFI>

The vote to accept the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee and withdraw from GESP as passed with:

33 councillors in favour
22 against
1 abstained.

In early August Mid Devon cabinet voted in the same way, with a recommendation to their Full council (who will meet on 26th August 2020) to withdraw from GESP. The reasons they cited were 'an unacceptable risk of large scale developments that are not warranted by any formal measure of local housing need'. They too agreed it was more important to work on the Local Plan Review and also to work sincerely and cooperatively with its former neighbours in GESP without entering into the formal partnership.

Motion: Support for Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) impacted upon by Covid-19

- A. East Devon District Council supports the WASPI call on Government to take urgent action to support 1950s-born women affected by the Coronavirus outbreak to:
 1. Give WASPI women who would be otherwise eligible early access to Pension Credit
 2. Give WASPI women due to reach State Pension age this financial year early access to their State Pension
- B. The Leader of the Council should formally write an open letter to all our 3 MPs urging them to take up the above matter and promote it in Government. Also that this Council should provide maximum publicity about this letter.

Proposed by Councillor Fabian King, Seconded by Councillor Val Ranger
Supported by Councillors Millar, Rylance, Rowland, Arnott, Hayward, Bickley, Rixson, Wragg, Davey, Jeffery and Whibley

Cllr King spoke very eloquently about the difficulties the WASPI women face. There was cross party support for this motion.

Motions - Celebrating Pride and Tackling Bi-phobia

Two further motions on **Celebrating Pride** (This Council notes with concern that across Devon the number of hate crimes against people on the basis of their sexual orientation rose by 9.6% and against transgender people hate crimes rose by 26.5% 2018-19 (Source: FOI request made to Devon

and Cornwall Police by Cllr Jeffery). This Council also recognises the contribution made by LGBT+ citizens to East Devon and beyond) and **Tackling biphobia** also received cross party support with some very moving stories from those who put the motions forward. The council agreed that it was united in seeking to stamp out all forms of discrimination.

EDDC revenue

There were concerns about the increased costs to the council as a result of CV-19 added to the reduced budget from car parking. However, car parking revenue has bounced back really quickly and against all predictions owing to the fine weather and the number of people who are either on furlough or working flexibly and able to take their families to the beach and enjoy the sunshine. The car parks in seaside resorts have been absolutely jam packed.

There are still complaints about the number of public toilets which remain closed, owing to the amount of cleaning that is needed throughout the opening hours, the design of them which means it is impossible to ensure social distancing at the entrances, the fact that there are staffing shortages owing to the summer holidays or illness impacting on cleaning rotas. More will open as soon as is practically possible.

DCC highways matters

I wrote the DCC Councillor Stuart Hughes in his role as Cabinet member for Highway Management and Chairman of the Highways and Traffic Orders Committee asking when we can expect to see the work on Four Elms Hill given it is no longer appearing on the one.network site at all. He replied 'in the autumn as I have told you previously'. He also went on to say that it would be wrong to close the road just as businesses are trying to get back on their feet after lockdown, however, last time the works did appear on One.network it said the work would be done overnight so local businesses would not be affected. There has to be at least 3 months notice to close a road which would bring us to November so I would therefore expect to see the work listed on the One.network site but it isn't.

DCC has a policy called Doing What Matters. This is supposed to mean organising work so that if a road is closed for any reason, any work that needs doing in that area is co-ordinated to happen at the same time. However, work has been done at the bottom of the hill but not at the top where the accidents happen. This doesn't really seem to fit in with 'Doing What Matters'.

I also asked Cllr Hughes if it was true that the contractors responsible for the Parking Prohibition Orders (double yellow lines) in Newton Poppleford would not come back to finish the work they started before lockdown unless they were paid for the return visit but that DCC do not pay for return visits to complete work and hence there might be an impasse. He has not replied. I know our local DCC Councillor Claire Wright has also chased this for us to no avail. Hopefully the Parish Council will also chase this up. The money that is wasted by schemes like this is astonishing at a time when councils are supposed to be being careful with their finances.

101 Non-emergency police service

I had cause to try contacting the police using this service this month. The first time I tried my call was answered within about 15 minutes of being on hold. The next time I tried I was on hold for 1 hour, 5 minutes and 4 seconds before giving up. Someone else told me they had been on hold for nearly 4 hours before giving up and a contact I have who works in the service said the 'on hold' time this week was over 4 hours. It is a dreadful reflection of what policing cuts have come to, very sad that the service is disrespected for being so poor when the people who are employed through it are

working so hard. I will be asking my EDDC council colleagues what influence we can have on this and writing to MP Simon Jupp asking him whether he is aware of this and what he is going to ask his government to do to improve the service.

Parish Matters

On line talk - Air Source Heat Pumps – everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask

Some of you have walked past Peeks house in Harpford in recent weeks and spotted the planning application for an air source heat pump. A number of people have asked for more information about them, so the applicant Adrian Pope has decided to give an online talk about what he has learnt. You can register for this using the details below. It is being hosted by the Devon Cambridge Society on 7th September 18.05, and guests are very welcome. There will be an extremely short AGM for the society beforehand at 18.00 which you are also welcome to attend.

This is what Adrian said:

The government is pushing Air Source Heat Pumps as part of its energy efficiency programme. They produce more heat energy than the electrical energy that they consume. How do they appear to break the Laws of Thermodynamics ? I will talk about some of the theory and about some of the practical matters. Click here to register -

<https://webcollect.org.uk/devoncambridgesociety/event/air-source-heat-pumps-zoom-talk-by-adrian-pope>

Venn Ottery and problems with ongoing works by Western Power

I am grateful to the Chairman of VOSRA for raising the following:

Just to keep you up to date, we've once again been having electricity supply problems in Venn Ottery for the last 2-3 weeks. Western Power personnel are working on this but have so far failed failed to identify the actual source of the breakdowns and we are once again reliant on generators (3 of them).

The electric power issue is of course in addition to the disruption caused by the gas pipeline work ongoing, and I tend to wonder if their projected completion date of 4//9/20 is over-optimistic. The gas supply does not reach past Bowhayes Farm so residents in the centre of the village do not have the alternative of a gas supply unless they have bottled gas (which we have, but only for the cooker hob).

*I have received comments from residents about their wish to be connected to the gas supply, but at present the pipeline cuts across the fields, avoiding central Venn Ottery. **It seems to me that it would be sensible for the pipeline to be rerouted along the edge of the road, so there would be the possibility of connection to the houses.***

Red bridge, Harpford

As I write this 2,694 people have signed the online petition which is an amazing response. DCC have drawn up the plans for the repair and it now all rests on the necessary permissions from the landowner. Time is very tight to secure this bridge for the winter. The picture below was taken in 1997, before mass erosion on both the east and west sides. The river at that time was very straight upstream of the bridge, there was a ford immediately upstream of the bridge in the photo and there

was no 'island' of gravel, sand and trees upstream and no sign of the island that has now formed downstream of the bridge. There was an entire camp site on the western side of the bridge, now long gone.



Tipton St John Local Cub/Scouts urgently seeking funds

Many families will know the riverside cub/scout site on the road between Harpford and Tipton St John. Although they are called the Tipton St John cubs/Scouts children from Newton Poppleford, Harpford and the surrounding towns and villages are also members. The riverside field a really lovely site but at the moment it can only be used in the summer months as there is no electric lighting nor running fresh water. CV-19 has brought additional challenges with the requirement for frequent hand washing and hygiene and all that clean water has to be carried down onto the site.

The plan is to put in a bore hole and pump, and run electricity to the site from across the river. During the winter months the group has to meet in the village hall which adds to their costs and reduces the outdoor scouting experience. Furthermore having both electricity and running water would allow the site to have more events that could also raise further funds. Scout Leader Brian Foulkes, who lives in Newton Poppleford, is a force to be reckoned with and is working hard to raise funds. The entire project could come in at over £20,000. If you feel able to offer some financial support to this excellent club that does so much for young people or you can help with the fund raising, please contact **Brian on 01395 567600**.

Dog Poo in Webbers Meadow and surrounding fields

It really beggars belief that despite dog bins being provided, I walked through Webbers Meadow the other morning and within the first 20 yards there were several piles of dog poo right on the mown path, (not that its OK to leave it in the long grass either). I urge anyone who sees someone not pick up to catch their attention (excuse me, would you like a poo bag?) and offer them a bag. I think people are generally afraid that the situation will turn confrontational if you say anything to a person who does not pick up, but in my experience of always challenging anyone who doesn't pick up, they never refuse to do so and always make much of not realising it had happened etc. As for the

extraordinary individual who takes the time to bag it up, and then flings it in the bushes, it is hard to work out the thought process. The start of the river walk near to the play park is a hot spot for this. The danger to wildlife and the plastic pollution is a real scourge on the countryside and antisocial on so many levels. I imagine these same people would consider themselves 'animal lovers' given that they own dogs but their actions show they are certainly not.



Harpford Village Hall

The committee met this week and decided that we would not open yet but that hoped to hold a picnic socially distanced event in the near future. More details to follow. Work as continued inside with woodworm treatment, loft insulation and the committee were successful in a funding bid of £1,000 toward loss of income and ongoing running costs during lockdown. The Committee did not take up the £10,000 business rate relief offer as it seemed immoral to claim this when there are people in real hardship during this time.

Vacancy for a Harpford Ward Councillor on the parish council.

As mentioned last month there is a vacancy on the parish council. Unfortunately the government has said there can be no elections until May 2021 due to CV-19. The Harpford ward extends beyond the village of Harpford, it runs along the village north of the A3052, for example through the Bovis Estate and westward along to Burrow. You can watch parish council meetings online if you want to get a flavour of the meetings where decisions are made, although of course the actual work of the parish council takes place outside of the meetings themselves. Do consider whether you could get involved in the work of the parish council - with meetings now convened online it is easier for those with ties at home to be able to be engaged. Meetings are once a month, with occasional finance meetings in between for those on the finance committee.

Handling of complaints

Thank you again for your ongoing support and for raising matters that are important to you and that affect our parish. There has been quite a rise in the number of issues raised over the past few months which I have passed onto EDDC as people are spending more time in their local environment and noticing this that previously went unnoticed. I always pass these onto the appropriate officers where appropriate.

Stay safe and well.

Cllr Val Ranger

Tel: 07475 201 340

Email: vranger@btinternet.com

East Devon District Council infographic on their recent performance.

