

Parish Council of Coleford

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Newsletter for March 2024

Review Footpath report (North)

Our Footpath officer for the North of the village has submitted his first report for the last 6 months. All issues, including broken stiles or fallen trees have been noted but also reported directly via the Somerset Rights of Way (RoW) interactive map. There were issues on footpaths FR4/10 & FR4/34 which had been reported several years before, which were still outstanding. The Clerk agreed to press the RoW officer for these for be resolved as a matter of priority.



Police



During February there were 3 incidents of arson and criminal damage and 1 case of miscellaneous crimes against society within the village. Please remember that if you have been the victim of crime (but not an emergency) or have concerns, we would encourage you to report via the non-emergency number 101. Each report helps to shape how the police are deployed to keep our communities safer – if its not reported then the police simply will not know and cannot respond.

Planning Applications

2024/0310/VRC - Variation of condition 2 (drawings) of permission Ref Number 2022/0854/FUL (Erection of dwelling house.) Land South Of 62 Mendip Vale, Coleford, Radstock
Coleford Parish Council considered the application and recommended that the decision be left to the planning officer to satisfy the structural aspect re the West boundary.

2024/0305/LBC - Rebuilding of partially damaged entrance wall and pier.
Newbury Manor School, Tinkers Lane, Newbury
Coleford Parish Council considered the application and recommended that the decision be left to the listed building officer.



Highways

Councillor update – The following items have been reported to Highways:

- HIPPYS Lane - drains
- Dark Lane - potholes
- Brewery Lane - edge erosion, good to see sunken covers being sorted
Charlton Rd - sunken drain by Hackmead Farm
Charmborough Lane - sunken drain as you turn off Charlton Rd
Stockhill - pothole on left before 30mph sign coming into village
20mph lights not flashing - reported to Sara Davis the Somerset Highways Engineer.

Report of any new issues to be reported – Concern was expressed over the state of Charity Lane, which has many potholes and edge erosion. The students and support workers from Newbury Manor School regularly use the road as part of the school timetable and there is a concern that there could be an accident.

It was reiterated that any problems with the roads should be reported via the Somerset Council website: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

The Council has heard that if a claim was submitted to Somerset Council for a longstanding issue the Council have contested it on the grounds that the issue had not been reported.

Update on Local Community Network (LCN) Highways sub group meeting – The 1st LCN Highway sub group meeting was a success with the Terms of reference being agreed and signed off at the LCN meeting held on the 11th March. The group will meet quarterly and it has been agreed that a member of Somerset Highways will attend to provide expert knowledge as and when required.

Various options are being suggested to address the Somerset Council budget cuts in response to the financial emergency. Councils can sign up to be part of the Highway Steward scheme whereby a trained person will be able to complete verge maintenance, sign clearing etc. The cost of employing the steward would be approx. £60K which would be split between the councils wanting to use the service. Other options include Somerset Council providing training for Councils own staff or Councils buying services back from Somerset Highways. A price list will be provided in due course. It was agreed that those attending the Highways sub group meeting would report back and the Parish Council would monitor before 2025/26 when the budget reductions will become enforced.



Cllr Ham reported that all of the LCN Chairperson's had recently met at Somerton for an opportunity to discuss how things had been progressing since setting up. It was apparent that Highways was a top priority to all Councils.#

Community Payback Team

We are very fortunate to have the Community Payback team coming to our village every 6 weeks to help with various projects. The team can vary in size from as few as 3 or up to 10 people and there is no charge for the service.



We are hoping that over the next 6 months they will be able help by clearing fallen trees and overgrown hedges which are blocking the footpaths, treating the timber play equipment and benches, painting the play equipment, litter picking etc

Somerset Council

Somerset Councillors Philip Ham and Barry Clarke circulated the following report:



2024/5 Council Budget: Somerset Council has voted through plans to set a budget for the coming financial year but received a stark warning of significant challenges in the years ahead. LibDem Council Members unanimously agreed a range of measures to bridge a funding gap of £100m for 2024/25, including cost cuttings, increasing Council Tax by 5%, and using £36.8 millions of reserves (a council's equivalent of savings). The proposals also include a 'capitalisation direction' request of £36.9m – seeking permission from Government to borrow money or sell assets to pay for day-to-day running costs. Amid specific plans to cut costs and increase fees, around 1,200 jobs are expected to go at Somerset Council over the next three years equivalent to about a quarter of the workforce. As a result of the cuts some Town Councils have stepped in to save services (CCTV, public toilets etc) but this has resulted in a 179% council tax increase in Taunton, 90% in Yeovil and 164% in Bridgwater.

Council papers are still predicting a further £103 million budget gap in 2025/26.

Gigafactory plans for Puriton site: Agratas, a new business within the Tata Group, has confirmed its plans to build a gigafactory producing EV batteries at the Gravity Smart Campus site in Puriton, near Bridgwater. A £4 billion investment, the factory will create up to 4,000 jobs and many more as part of

the supply chain. It is envisioned that the plant will be operational in the second half of the decade, eventually producing 40GWh of battery cells annually, enough to supply approximately 500,000 passenger vehicles. Once fully operational, the factory is set to be Britain's biggest battery factory, and one of the largest in Europe. Over the next five years, Somerset Council plans to invest in the infrastructure, skills, site access and connectivity which will be paid for by the Business Rates generated by the factory once it is operational.

Under the surface exhibition: 'Under the Surface' is an exhibition of photographs by renowned Somerset-based photographer Matilda Temperley, reflecting on 10 years since the devastating floods of 2013-14. It is on display at Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury from Saturday 2 March to Sunday 19 May. Alongside the exhibition, a programme of events and activities will take place supported by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). These include family activities during the Easter Holidays, run in collaboration with the RSPCA and Somerset Wildlife Trust, where visitors can take part in climate-themed craft activities.

Healthy Somerset: A new website has been launched by Public Health to help people in Somerset lead a healthier life. The new site – www.healthysomerset.co.uk – features health and wellbeing resources tailored to all age ranges – making it even easier for users to find the information and support they are looking for. The new refreshed layout of the site breaks down services and support to represent the ages and stages of life from the 'best start in life' (0-5 yrs), through to 'starting well' (5-18 yrs), to 'living well' (18-65 yrs) and 'ageing well' (65+). To view the website and be empowered on your journey to a healthier lifestyle, visit: <https://bit.ly/healthy-somerset>.

Chard Enterprise Centre: The new Chard Enterprise centre, offers flexible office and light industrial workspace to support small and medium enterprises. Costing £4.2m the Enterprise Centre has been made possible after successfully securing £1.7m funding from the European Regional Development Fund. Chard Enterprise Centre forms part of a network of workspace services offered by Somerset Council. The Enterprise Centre network aims to offer quality workspace and business support in areas where commercial providers do not operate. There are currently 10 sites across the county and, in addition to Chard, there are centres in Highbridge, Dulverton, Wheddon Cross, Frome, Minehead, Wells, Williton, Wiveliscombe and Bruton.

Take the Pressure Off: Over half of all strokes and heart attacks in Somerset are caused by high blood pressure. Known as the silent killer, high blood pressure is quick and simple to diagnose and to treat. NHS Somerset, together with Somerset Council is launching their biggest ever campaign 'Take the Pressure Off' with the aim of testing thousands of residents to increase awareness and early detection of high blood pressure. The "Take the Pressure Off" campaign is designed to encourage residents, particularly those aged 40+, to regularly check their blood pressure and take necessary steps towards managing their health. In addition to workplace testing, the campaign will be partnering with local sports clubs to help raise awareness of the risks of high blood pressure, particularly to males and those who identify as male, across Somerset. Residents are also encouraged to borrow a free blood pressure monitor from their library to test their own blood pressure in the comfort of their home, or visit their local pharmacy for a quick and easy check.

Portrait of His Majesty the King: The government is offering a free framed portrait of His Majesty the King to all town, parish and community councils in the United Kingdom from 12 February. The Clerk confirmed that she had placed an order for the Village Hall.

Date of Next Meetings:

10th April 2024

Parish Council meeting



If you have any issues that you would like to bring to the Parish Council's attention, please contact the Clerk on 07971 516916 or email clerk@colefordpc.org.uk Check out the website www.colefordpc.org.uk

Philip Ham