

Cllr Andrew Saywell Report for Torrington Rural - 22 May 2020

[Public: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for Devon on our website](#)

Latest

Reminder to “think twice” before heading out

The fine weather and upcoming bank holiday weekend has seen an influx of people visiting Devon’s coast and countryside – [prompting Devon County Council to remind people to “think twice” before heading out.](#)

Some of the county’s beaches and areas of Dartmoor have been besieged by people this week, with inconsiderate parking creating issues on local roads.

In Woolacombe in North Devon, on Wednesday 20 May, around 70 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued in the Challacombe Hill area after people parked on a clearway, where it is illegal to park at any time and could potentially block access for emergency vehicles.

[Councillor Andrea Davis](#) said

“The local community in Woolacombe was inundated on Wednesday. Police have said that even if car parks had opened with reduced capacity to meet social distancing guidelines, there would still have been problems due to the sheer volume of visitors. There is currently no lifeguard cover on the beach, the car parks are closed, the loos are closed, the shops and cafes are closed, so it makes sense if people put off their visit until the county has had chance to re-open.”



Three simple steps you can take to ensure you travel safely as the lockdown eases

No one sets out to cause a crash when they take to the road, yet an easing of COVID-19 restrictions last weekend was marred across Devon and Cornwall by a series of serious injuries and deaths on the region’s highways.

South West Peninsula Road Safety Partnership (SWPRSP) members remain very concerned about the number of serious collisions that have taken place in recent weeks and the change in traffic patterns as lockdown regulations are eased.

Over five days immediately after the easing of restrictions, there were six people either killed or seriously injured on the roads in Devon and Cornwall.

[Find out what three simple steps the partnership has asked road users to do.](#)

Keeping people safe

Schooling and welfare

Following the Prime Minister announcement on Sunday 11 May, some children will be returning to school from 1 June, for the first time since the lockdown.

Dawn Stabb, Head of Education and Learning at Devon County Council, has [written to parents and carers about the arrangements](#), and the [information is also on our website](#).

Schools and Multi Academy Trusts across Devon County Council are working closely with the local authority and others to support families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The school day and the usual classes will look different, as schools follow all the safety guidance. To be as safe as possible children will be in smaller classes and will not mix with other groups, they are likely to have different break times. Attendance has been encouraged. If parents feel worried about their family's safety, please signpost them to talk to their school in the first instance.

No action will be taken (such as a penalty notice) if parents decide it is not safe to send their child/ren to school.

Children of keyworkers or vulnerable children will be able to continue to attend school as they have been. Most schools have remained open for the period for children of key workers and vulnerable children. But now they're working hard to be able to be [open safely to a wider number of pupils](#).

Not all year groups will be returning to school immediately. The Government has prioritised which year groups they would like schools to open places to.

[Dawn Stabb, Head of Education and Learning](#), said:

"The Government has been clear that it will only start inviting more children back into schools when its five key tests have been met.

"In the meantime the Government has provided detailed advice so that schools and early years settings can plan how they can open for more children.

"The County Council is working in close cooperation with Devon headteachers to put in place all the Government guidelines on safety in schools. When all the necessary safety and risk assessments have been completed, we will fully support schools in offering more places for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

"Individual schools will be in touch with pupils' families about the measures they are taking and when they may be able to offer a place to their child.

"Parents will reach their own conclusions on when it is best for their children to return to school and it is only right that they do so.

"But we should also remember that education is an important part of children's development, not just academically but also socially. While we cannot eliminate all risk in every circumstance, we are providing as much information and reassurance to parents as possible so they can take their own informed and balanced decision."

The local authority has sent schools a checklist and risk assessment templates to consider key issues and measures required before re-opening.

Department for Education (DfE) has published a [planning guide for primary school leaders](#) to help them open their schools to more pupils from 1 June .

The [initial planning framework for schools in England can be found on the Government's website](#).

As of 19 May 2020, there were 3401 children in Devon schools, 1096 of which are vulnerable children, and 915 children in Early Years of which are 144 vulnerable. This is reduction on last week but now reflects that some children may previously have been attending more than one setting (such as going to a childminder for two days and playgroup for two days) and therefore being counted twice in the figures.

Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, spoke at the daily press conference on Saturday 16 May about the Government's response to the coronavirus outbreak and plans for schools safely opening to more pupils. [Here is the transcript of the speech](#).

Useful guidance from the DfE:

- New guidance on [preventing and controlling infection, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\), in education, childcare and children's social care settings during the coronavirus outbreak](#).
- Updated guidance on [the actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- Guidance on [awarding qualifications in summer 2020](#)
- Updated guidance on [providing free school meals during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- Updated guidance on [managing school premises during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

Supporting and protecting our children in care

The Department for Education has updated [guidance for education settings and local authorities on supporting vulnerable children and young people](#).

Youth Service initiative gives young people the means to stay connected

Our youth service is raising money to buy tech and other means to help vulnerable young people access their services remotely. [We've given nearly £10,000](#).

Adult care and health updates

Supporting communities and the people we serve

- Through DCC's Local Engagement Contract which DCC holds with Living Options Devon, we have commissioned work to ask how people and minority groups are coping with COVID-19 and social isolation, using technology and how well our services are supporting them.
- We are continuing to support our care providers with the complexity of testing, including reminding staff and our care providers that the route for arranging COVID-19 testing for an individual prior to a placement into a care home is via the relevant Local Coordination Centre. Details are set out on the [PEN website](#).

Supporting our social care providers

- Care homes continue to be the primary focus this week after the Department of Health and Social Care has announced a [£600m Infection Control Fund](#) as part of its [support package for care homes](#). The fund will support adult social care providers to reduce the rate of transmission in and between care homes and support wider workforce resilience. The local [allocation for care homes](#) in the DCC footprint is £10.5m. Final grant determinations are pending.
- This week DCC have written to our providers of supported living, shared lives accommodation, enabling and day service setting out additional financial support. We have put in place arrangements whereby DCC will make a single payment to the value of 5% of the services DCC commission from them, for 3 months, back

dated to 1 May. This aligns to approaches we have taken across our other care markets.

- Although the Care Quality Commission has paused its routine inspections, it has developed an [emergency support framework](#) that it will follow during the pandemic period to support care providers.
- Through our [Provider Engagement Network](#) we are signposting our social care providers to a range of resources they can access to support their mental health and wellbeing, including bereavement support

[Cllr Andrew Leadbetter](#) said:

"During this period, many in the social care sector are going above and beyond what is normally expected. They may be feeling worried and anxious about coronavirus and how it might affect their life.

"To help them during this time, there is [guidance](#) to support their mental, physical and financial wellbeing."

We have updated the [bereavement information on our public website](#) about what to do when someone dies.

For care providers, there is up-to-date advice on [mental health, wellbeing and bereavement support](#) including local and national organisations to help people in Devon.

Community

Kindness matters in Devon

It's [Mental Health Awareness Week](#) this week (18 to 24 May) and the theme is kindness. The power and potential of kindness couldn't be more relevant to the current situation we find ourselves in. As we all adjust to a very different way of living, being kind to each other and to ourselves has never been more important.



- The [Mental Health Foundation](#) has lots of useful advice specifically about looking after your mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.
- [The NHS Every Mind Matters website](#) includes tips to help if you're worried about coronavirus (COVID-19). You can also [start your own online action plan called 'Your Mind Plan'](#) to take simple, practical steps to look after your mental

wellbeing by dealing with stress, boosting your mood and feeling on top of things.

Alongside positive mental wellbeing, keeping physically well is equally important to help protect us against COVID-19. One of the measures you will have heard talked about lately is the use of face coverings.



The [Government now advises](#) that you should wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing is not possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you from coronavirus. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed [symptoms](#), it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with.

Our Public Health colleagues have put together some [helpful guidance for Members and staff](#) on the use of face coverings. Please remember, minimising time spent in contact with others, and increasing hand and surface washing remain the best ways of managing risk.

Refer to public information on [making and wearing face coverings on our public coronavirus web pages](#).

Big boost for Devon's economic recovery

A major step to boost Devon's economy after lockdown is being taken by the county council and partners Exeter College. [A new academy for future skills will be created to offer training for high-tech jobs in engineering, digital, construction and clean growth.](#)

Devon County Council has agreed to purchase the vacant former Flybe Training Academy at Exeter Airport which closed when the airline went into administration. The deal will see Exeter College, the city's Ofsted outstanding education provider, run the new academy.

Our Council leader, [Councillor John Hart](#), says:

"We must all continue to be extremely vigilant and maintain the restrictions which have seen our region emerge as the area which has been least affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

"But as lockdown is gradually eased, we must plan for the future and do all we can to protect and improve our economy.

“Creating and retaining a highly skilled workforce underpins the economic prosperity of Devon and will be a key part of our economic recovery plan after COVID-19.”

Pandemic offers glimpse into a carbon neutral future

[Devon's carbon emissions have reduced by almost a quarter \(23 per cent\) during the lockdown new data suggests.](#)

Lower traffic levels and energy use has led to a 23 per cent drop in emissions during April. Average traffic flows in Devon have reduced by 60 per cent, reducing the county's total emissions by 17 per cent. The closure of many buildings has significantly reduced energy use and led emissions to drop a further six per cent.

Air quality has also improved with the concentration of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter in the air falling by 50 per cent from last year.

Our Chief Executive, Phil Norrey said:

“In the most tragic of circumstances, the lockdown has given a glimpse of how a more sustainable Devon might look, feel and sound. People have experienced quieter streets for walking and cycling, heard more bird song, seen wildlife and felt a greater connection and appreciation for green spaces around them.

“Amongst the sadness of the pandemic there is a huge opportunity to use the economic stimulus measures that are necessary to enable communities to recover, to improve public health, our resilience and our wellbeing as well as address the climate and ecological emergencies.

“There are projects in Devon, for instance sustainable transport and energy production, that could respond quickly to a cash injection to develop supply chains and skills for a low carbon future.

“But as we begin to recover from this pandemic, we must be careful not to fall back into the same old routines. We all must think differently about the way we work and the way we travel.”

Service updates

On-street parking enforcement due to resume

With the Government encouraging some sectors of the economy back to work, and enabling people to travel more, we're starting to see increasing traffic levels on our roads. Police, local councillors and some of our local communities, particularly coastal

resorts, are calling for enforcement officers to help deal with parking issues that are arising from increased numbers of visitors.

This week [our parking enforcement officers are being deployed to areas where issues have been raised by communities](#)

They'll not be issuing penalty charge notices this week; instead they'll just be issuing warning notices to anyone flouting parking restrictions in on-street pay and display, limited waiting bays and residents' parking areas.

[Councillor Stuart Hughes](#) said:

“It will be a proportionate return, starting with only warning notices at first, to make people aware that ‘live’ enforcement will be scheduled to resume on pay and display, limited waiting bays and residents’ parking areas from Monday 25 May.

“While the pandemic continues, consideration will be provided via the appeals process, and should a driver receive a penalty charge notice, the impact of changing enforcement will be fully considered along with any other mitigation they may offer. We will also be considering some form of short-term permits for those continuing to have to work from home or self-isolate.”

Although enforcement of on-street parking across Devon was temporarily relaxed near the end of March, ‘no waiting’ restrictions (including single yellow lines and double yellow lines) have had to be enforced throughout lockdown. They will continue to be enforced to enable clear access for emergency vehicles, care workers, food delivery and refuse collection.

And finally...

Thank you foster carers

One of our children’s social workers has written about why foster carers deserve a huge thank you, especially now. Read about his experience of working with vulnerable children, and how foster carers make such a difference to young people’s lives: [In the words of a social worker — thank you to foster carers](#)

By pulling together across the Council, with our partners and our communities, we are doing everything we can to help us all through this incredibly difficult time. Thank you to you and your community and stay safe and well.

Please note that all of our sites and offices are closed to the public, except for necessary prearranged visits

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Andrew Saywell

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