

# Somerset West and Taunton

## **Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

### **Issue 94 Week ending 13/02/2022**

#### **SWT Council's priority strategic themes and outcomes**

Somerset West and Taunton Council's four strategic themes are as follows:

- Our Environment and Economy
- A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
- Homes and Communities
- An Enterprising Council

[Click here](#) to view SWT's expected outcomes.

## **Key Messages this week**

### **1. Grant Funding available for business groups, clusters and networks**

Business groups in Somerset that have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic are being given the opportunity to apply for grant funding this month.

The grants are worth up to £5,000 and can be used by business groups (including Social Enterprises), networks and clusters to aid the recovery from COVID-19.

Applications should focus on initiatives that support employment, enable shared learning, support growth and restarting, boost decarbonisation plans, or to develop collaborative projects and community-led initiatives.

There is only a short window to apply for these grants, with the call for applications opening on 11 February and closing on **25 February**.

Information on how to apply can be found at [Community Renewal Fund 2021 – 2022 \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/community-renewal-fund-2021-2022/) under the section on 'Local Network and Cluster Support'.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## 2. Democracy and Governance

### Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- **Wednesday 16 February**, SWT Executive. - **CANCELLED**
- **Wednesday 23 February**, SWT Community Scrutiny Committee in the JMR at 6.15pm. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 18 February).
- **Thursday 24 February** – SWT Planning Committee in the JMR at 10am. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm Monday 21 February).
- **Thursday 24 February** – SWT Special Full Council for Budget Setting in the JMR at 6.15pm. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 21 February).

These meetings will take place in the Chamber at Deane House following the Government COVID-19 safety guidelines. As we are very limited to the number of people we can safely get into the Chamber, we are asking people to register if they wish to attend in person.

Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT website. This also gives alternatives to participating without attending in person.

The meetings will still all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences, please visit the SWT website by [clicking here](#). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Contact the Governance Team [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

## 3. Result of Alcombe by-election

The election result for the Alcombe Ward of Somerset West and Taunton Council, which took place on Thursday 10 February 2022, is as follows:

COLEMAN, Craig James (Conservative Party) 223  
HAWKINS, Nicole Suzanne (Liberal Democrats) 259 - elected  
LILLIS, Richard Patrick (Independent) 13  
ROOS, Shandi (Labour Party) 21

Turnout was 25.57%  
Electorate is 2026  
Spoilt ballot papers 2

Nicole Suzanne Hawkins was thereby duly elected.

#### **4. Calls for voters to register in time for May elections**

Voters in SWT are being reminded to make sure they are registered to vote and able to take part in local elections for the new unitary council for Somerset, and town and parish councils, on Thursday 5 May.

It's quick and easy to register to vote, but after the deadline of 14 April, it will be too late.

Research shows that young people, students and recent home movers are particularly less likely to be registered to vote. So, if you have moved house recently, then make sure you're registered correctly.

To register to vote, visit [register-to-vote](#) before midnight on Thursday, 14 April or contact [elections@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:elections@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

#### **5. SWT partnership encouraging apprenticeships**

Somerset West and Taunton Council and construction contractor ENGIE are working with local schools to promote careers in construction through the [South Bristol Youth](#) Insight into Apprenticeships programme.

The [Insight into Apprenticeships](#) programme aims to increase students awareness of apprenticeships and provide the skills, knowledge and confidence to help access opportunities provided by them.

South Bristol Youth deliver the programme across the Southwest. Officers from the Council's [North Taunton Woolaway Project](#) team in partnership with ENGIE, who are currently on site completing the new homes in Phase A of the regeneration scheme, are focusing on schools in the Taunton area.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

#### **6. Funds on offer to boost Somerset's tourism economy**

A new grant scheme has launched which will help expand Somerset's tourism offer as the county's visitor economy recovers from the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Grants of between £25,000 and £40,000 are available for Somerset SME businesses (small and medium size businesses of up to 250 employees), business partnerships, or community organisations wishing to introduce and implement a project that delivers genuinely new provision for visitors to the county.

The grant is part of the Visitor Economy Support Programme (VESP), an initiative developed in partnership by Somerset's Local Authorities (Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West & Taunton Council, and South Somerset District Council) working closely with business representative bodies and wider stakeholders including Visit Somerset, Visit Exmoor, and Exmoor National Park Authority.

The deadline for applications to the Visitor Economy Innovation Grant is **Monday, 14 March**. Visit [Somerset Visitor Economy Innovation Grant Scheme](#) for more information about applying.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **7. Online calendar launched to promote districtwide events**

SWT Council has commissioned Visit Exmoor and Visit Somerset to develop and host a searchable online 'Events & Things to Do' platform for the area.

The platform, which has been funded by SWT's ERDF *Welcome Back Fund*, is hosted on [Visit Exmoor](#)'s website and enables event organisers and representatives from towns and villages across the district to submit information about local events via an online form.

Visitors to the platform can search and filter events of interest according to type, location and date, and to check whether they are free of charge, family or wheelchair friendly.

The events calendar is being promoted via Visit Exmoor and Visit Somerset's social media pages, which have a combined audience of over 100,000 followers across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **8. Reminder - Hazardous tree to be thrice replaced**

A tree which is leaning perilously over Taunton High Street opposite the Vivary Park gates, is set to be replaced with three new saplings.

Public notices have now been displayed within the vicinity and the removal works have been scheduled for **Sunday, 13 February**.

In line with its three-for-one policy, SWT will replace the Silver Maple with three new specimens to include: a Gleditsia Triacanthos (Honey Locust) in Victoria Park, a Metasequoia Glyptostroboides (Dawn Redwood) in Taunton Green and a Liquidambar Styraciflua (Sweet Gum 'Worplesdon') in Priorswood Playing Field.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **9. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)**

### **Recycle More: two weeks to go for Sedgemoor and West Somerset**

Around 35,000 Bright Blue Bags have been delivered across Sedgemoor and West Somerset ahead of the launch of Recycle More at the end of the month.

A similar number will be delivered next week so don't worry if you live in the area and haven't had yours yet. They should be left somewhere obvious – usually in an empty recycling box.

The new recycling container is a key component of the SWP expanded service which adds the following to weekly collections: plastic pots, tubs and trays; food and drink cartons, small household electrical items and batteries.

**Please don't use your bag until your first new Recycle More collection day** – this is made clear in the collection day calendar in your "Recycle More is coming" leaflet.

Around two thirds of households will have a new collection day so make sure you check.

Please also resist the urge to stockpile new materials for your first Recycle More collection. It's important not to overwhelm the crews as they get used to different routes and extra items.

Around 12,000 homes will get an extra, one-off Saturday collection – of rubbish only - on 26 February or 5 March. This is to make sure they don't go more than three weeks between rubbish collections.

If this applies to you it is made clear on the front of your leaflet and on the calendar itself. Please check.

Recycle More is the biggest step forward in recycling in the county for more than a decade. It is already working well in the rest of the county, collecting hundreds of extra tonnes of recycling each week and seeing a big drop in the waste in people's rubbish bins.

You can find lots more information about Recycle More online at [somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more](https://somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more) Extra guidance and support can be requested using a form on this page, or by calling SWT.

## **New Council for Somerset**

On 1 April 2023, Somerset will become a unitary authority, replacing the current County Council and four District Councils with a single council governing the whole area. Find out more [here](#).

## **Elections on the 5 May 2022**

Elections to the new council will take place on the 5 May 2022 for 110 councillors. They will be the biggest local elections in Somerset for many years and will set the course of local government in Somerset for a generation to come.

Voters will choose who represents them for next five years at County and local levels – a term that is longer than usual. They will assume responsibility for all local government functions for Somerset, including those of the current four district councils, in April 2023.

Two candidates will be elected for each existing electoral division of the county council, as well as a proposed new Glastonbury division and a new Street division with each of these electing two members for each division. It is anticipated that there will be a full boundary review after the May 2022 elections and ahead of the subsequent elections in May 2027.

The Government is also proposing that city, town and parish elections will be brought forward to 5 May 2022. It is proposed that councillors elected in May 2022 will have a five-year term of office. The Government's intention is to ensure that local councils' elections in Somerset remain aligned and that the subsequent elections are in 2027.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

The website <https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk> contains a link to the One Somerset Business Case, recent press releases and details of Local Government Reorganisation Governance meetings. It will also signpost queries from the public to the mailbox at [newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk).

## Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

### Somerset County Council (SCC)

#### SCC Highway Maintenance Update

The end of January brought us much milder temperatures and consequently fewer salting actions on the Highway network- this mild weather has continued allowing SCC Highways to focus on safety defect repairs. In the SWT area alone the highway's contractor has completed 185 safety defect repairs this week. Currently SCC Highways are carrying out a programme of footway resurfacing schemes. These include: ]

- **Broomfield Close, Taunton** (now completed)
- **Broughton Close, Taunton** (starting on 14 February).

Road Edge ploughing works:

- **A396 Exe Valley** – various locations (now completed)

Drainage works are:

- **A39 Exeter Road Sampford Arundel** (started on 31 January, temporary lane closure) – planned completion 18 February.
- **Ash Priors Common, near Bishops Lydeard**, (all works now completed)
- **Higher Lodge, Willet** (now completed).
- **A39 Bratton Straight**, between **Minehead** and **Selworthy** (starting on 7 February, temporary traffic signals).

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter.

## **Urgent Emergency Road Closure – Albermarle Road, Taunton**

Please be aware that SCC has received a notification of a TTRN (urgent / emergency) road closure at **Albermarle Road, Taunton** which commenced on **31 January 2022** and is expected to last until **18 February 2022**.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site **is not permitted** on this occasion.

For any further information about this closure please contact **Wessex Water** on **0345 600 4600**, quoting reference: **ttro480198**.

## **Reporting a problem on the road**

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you’ve reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/).

The new development means that if you’re reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it’s safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You’ll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **Exmoor National Park (ENP)**

### **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks**

These are integral to our national identity and are some of our most important places for nature.

Protected landscapes:

- allow species to flourish,
- improve how we feel,
- help tackle climate change,

That’s why the Government have announced plans to make sure these landscapes are protected for future generations to enjoy.



If you care about our treasured landscapes, take part in the landscape's consultation, which can be accessed [here](#).

## **Quantock Hill AONB**

### **Accessing grant schemes to achieve environmental outcomes**

**Wednesday 23 February 2022, 2.00pm – 4.00pm**

Farmers and landowners in the Quantock Hills are invited to an event. This meeting will give an overview of the current and future grant schemes becoming available both locally and nationally through the agricultural transition period. It will cover the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant as well as the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Farming Investment Fund and the Woodland Creation Offer.

The team will discuss how to access them, who is eligible and how they link into local and national priorities and initiatives such as net zero and local nature recovery networks.

This event is part of the Levels Up Project funded through Defra's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Booking for this event is essential. Please [click here](#) for more information.

## **Idverde Ltd**

### **Reminder - National Nest Box Week (14 – 21 February)**

In February, Idverde take part and promote National Nest Box week. Since 1997, [Nest Box Week](#) was set up and developed by the [BTO](#) (British Trust for Ornithology) and always runs for a week around the 14 February. It is timed to take place when "love is in the air", and smaller birds are pairing up ahead of the breeding season.

Idverde have nesting boxes available to be given to parishes and community groups, to put up in public places for the enjoyment of all.

If you would like to find out more about this offer, please contact Idverde on [Julie.Lynch@idverde.co.uk](mailto:Julie.Lynch@idverde.co.uk) at the Minehead depot.

## **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)**

### **Test your smoke alarm**

Ninety people die every year due to the battery in their smoke alarms being flat or missing. A smoke alarm will only save your life if it's working.

Test yours today, and at least once a month.

Please [click here](#) to read safety advice about smoke alarms and what is best for your home.



# **Community Support – What help is out there?**

## **Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

### **Spark Somerset**

#### **Grow for Good Forum**

**Wednesday 16 February 7.30pm – 9.00pm (Online)**

A free forum for voluntary groups and individuals in Somerset who use growing and gardening to support positive change in their communities.

Recent events have highlighted the important role that community growing projects can play in promoting health and wellbeing and protecting our natural environment.

Whether you're involved with a community allotment, therapeutic garden, or any other initiative which uses growing and gardening to support positive change, come along to network and share ideas with others who are involved in similar projects.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and book your place.

### **Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)**

#### **Local groups benefit from Charitable Endowment Fund**

A Wiveliscombe food project set up during the pandemic, a therapeutic counselling service for children and young people, and a personal development project for those not currently in employment, education or training are among the first charity projects of 2022 to receive backing from Taunton-based legal firm Clarke Willmott.

With the help of SCF which administers Clarke Willmott's charitable endowment fund, the sum of £1,450 was contributed to Wivey Cares as part of a £2,450 grant. Wivey Cares used local rugby club facilities to turn food supplied by FareShare into meals for local people during the height of the pandemic.

A further £750 was given to Wellington Community Counselling as part of a £1,750 grant to support the continuation of the 1,400+ hours of free or low-cost online counselling delivered during the last year, largely to vulnerable children and young people.

Another contribution of £800 was given as part of a £4,800 grant to the charity Actiontrack to support the provision of bespoke creative and personal development sessions for individuals or groups of young people referred to them who are not currently in employment, education or training, or are in danger of becoming such. The sessions aim to increase employability and access to further learning among participants, as well as developing improved mental health, providing positive peer group networking, and countering tendencies towards negative behaviour.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

## **Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

### **Reminder- Meal and food boxes**

Meal and food boxes are available in your community. Anyone can request a meal or food box, regardless of your financial situation. You can access these free meals by contacting your local Village Agent call – **01823 331222**. Please [click here](#) for further information.

### **Reminder- Do you need an emergency delivery of fuel?**

The CCS Oil Scheme partners AF Affinity have a great scheme where they can deliver a fast, emergency parcel of fuel to tide you over until you can get a full delivery! Call them on **01603 881888** between 9am – 4.30pm to order or email [somersetbuying@af-affinity.co.uk](mailto:somersetbuying@af-affinity.co.uk). For more information, [click here](#).

## **Community Employment Hubs**

### **NHS jobs and Sector-based Work Academy Explained**

**Tuesday 15 February 6.30pm – 7.30pm**

Are you used to thinking that a career in the NHS is just for Doctors & Nurses? Think again...

Would you enjoy a practical or administrative based role? If so, there are over 300 different non-medical job roles in the NHS waiting for you!

Whatever type of role you are looking for the SWAPs programme offers free training and guidance that can lead to a fixed term or permanent employment in the NHS in a role that's right for you.

Please [click here](#) to register for this free event and find out more information.

### **West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair**

The Recruit West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair will take place at, Studio 36, Butlins, Minehead, from **3:00pm to 5:00pm** on **Wednesday 9 March 2022**.

Are you looking for your next job or to develop your skills for your next role? If so, don't miss out on the Recruit West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair taking place in Minehead.

The event, which is being hosted by Butlins, are expecting more employers to attend this year, who are keen to raise awareness of employment opportunities within their businesses and organisations in West Somerset.

Many employers attending will have current vacancies and apprenticeships on offer and will be keen to seek out local talent. Therefore, attendees are advised to bring along an up-to-date copy of their CV.

If you would like any further information or you are an employer who has current vacancies and would like to book a stand at no cost: please contact Minehead Job Centre on telephone number, **01643 435822**

## **West Somerset Green Forum (WSGF)**

### **More volunteers needed**

WSGF is the new name of the well-established green campaigning group “Forum 21”, who organise West Somerset Together gatherings and have been behind many other green projects over the last three decades.

The Forum is on the lookout for new board members – especially if you have social media or project management skills. To find out more email [wsforum21@gmail.com](mailto:wsforum21@gmail.com).

### **Help and support for businesses affected by COVID-19**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has made available webinars and videos about the support available to businesses to help them deal with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

HMRC cover the following government schemes:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme

Please [click here](#) for further information.

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The Government has announced that the measures put in place under plan B in England are lifted. You should continue to follow safer behaviours to protect yourself and others:

- If you haven't yet had a vaccination, you should step forward, whether it's a first dose, second dose or booster. Please check [here](#) for full booking details.
- Please continue to take regular lateral flow tests – particularly before meeting others. These can be ordered [here](#). Also, remember to report your test results [here](#).
- Wear a well-fitting face-covering when in enclosed spaces such as supermarkets and try to meet others outside or ensure there is good ventilation when meeting inside.
- If you have any Covid-19 symptoms you need to take a [PCR test](#). If you test positive, you must self-isolate.
- Keep your hands clean by washing often with soap and water or using an antibacterial handwash, this protects against a lot of infectious diseases.

[Find out how to stay safe and help prevent the spread.](#)

You can find full coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance and support on the [GOV.UK website](#)

## **Somerset COVID Cases**

In the week ending 6 February approximately 111,487 tests were carried out across the county. There were 5,749 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain very high but have decreased slightly in the last reporting week to 1,022.5 per 100,000. This is above both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset is around 64 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

Rates are particularly high in the school age population, and the highest rates are amongst primary age students. Most children and young people who are infected with Omicron will have mild symptoms or are asymptomatic. Hospitalisation for severe COVID-19 illness remains highest in older age groups and the unvaccinated.

## **Clintons COVID Catch Up Living with Long Covid.**

In his latest [Covid catch up film](#), Clinton discusses both long Covid and reinfections of the virus.

## **Have you had your jabs? Update on COVID-19 Booster Programme**

Over 80% of eligible residents have received two doses of the vaccination. The Vaccination Programme is working with health and community partners to identify locations for mobile vaccination pop-up clinics. By localising the offer, the programme aims to reduce the barriers to access and better understand community needs.

The boosters are very important as they significantly reduce the likelihood of serious illness or hospitalisation should you catch COVID-19 so, if offered, please make a booking without delay.

Over 60% of Somerset's young people aged 12 to 15 have had their first COVID-19 vaccine since rollout began in September. The second vaccination for 12–15-year-olds is now available to [book via the national booking service](#) and is also available at many [walk-in local](#) vaccination centres [COVID-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#). Please continue to ensure that all eligible groups are aware of the vaccination offer available to them, including those that may be contacted by their GP as part of the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable cohort.

The in-school offer for the second COVID-19 vaccination for 12-15 years olds has also begun, alongside the HPV vaccination. Parents and carers may find their local vaccination centre is able to administer the second COVID-19 jab to 12-15 year olds sooner than the school appointments.

Once you have received the national invitation you will be able to go on the **National Booking site**: [nhs.uk/CovidVaccination](https://nhs.uk/CovidVaccination) or call 119. Vaccination centres across Somerset remain busy, but with slots becoming available all the time, please remember to check the National Booking Service regularly.

## Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19

Coronavirus remains a serious health risk. You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

- Meet outside, or open windows and doors for indoor visitors
- If you think you have symptoms stay at home and [take a PCR test](#)
- Wear face coverings in crowded places and on public transport
- Check in to venues when you go out
- Wash your hands with soap regularly, and for at least 20 seconds
- [Get vaccinated](#).

It has been noted recently that a high proportion of cases are now defined as being reinfections – the figure nationally is around one in ten. This means if you have caught COVID-19 before, you can still catch it again. Of course, this makes it additionally important to continue to follow the advice to protect yourself and others from the virus.

## COVID-19 – latest advice

Please refer to the links below for the latest Coronavirus-related advice, help and guidance, should you need any help in the future.

- [Order your lateral flow tests online](#)
- [How to do a COVID-19 lateral flow test](#)
- [Log your lateral flow results here](#)
- [Book or request a PCR test online](#)
- [List of local pharmacies offering lateral flow testing](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- [NHS – Help and Advice](#)

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England](#).

[Click here](#) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to Coronavirus.

## The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

This single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am – 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments including vaccinations
- Waste collection and disposal

- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online.

If you would like to find out more about the Corona helpers, offer assistance, or need support please visit [www.corona-helpers.co.uk](http://www.corona-helpers.co.uk).

### **Need to seek help?**

If you, or someone you know are feeling like things are too much, please know that you / they don't have to be alone. Here are some numbers of organisations that can help:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

## **FAQS**

**Q. I have received a text advising me to apply for an Omicron PCR test. It's not come via Test and Trace so what should I do?**

**A.** Public Health England are urging the public to be cautious if they receive a text asking them to apply for an 'Omicron PCR test'. The text contains a link which directs you to a site resembling that of the NHS, and you are then asked for personal details. **Do not submit your personal information as this is a scam!**

Please note that any texts you receive will be from NHS Test and Trace, and this will only be in relation to: a positive LFD test you have undertaken and [reported online](#); a positive PCR test result, or because you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive – NHS Test and Trace will provide detailed guidance on what your next steps should be, including how long you have to self-isolate for depending on your vaccination status.

You will also not be asked to have a confirmatory PCR test if you reported a positive LFD test, unless you have been [advised to for specific reasons](#). You will also only be asked to book a test through the official Government website: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#)

# Crime / Safeguarding

## Which? Consumer Rights

### How to spot a text message scam

Messaging scams can be very convincing, so it's important to know what to watch out for to stay ahead of the fraudsters. Scammers are increasingly taking advantage of smartphones and are getting very clever with how they try to take your hard-earned money.

They can even make it look like a legitimate organisation is contacting you via text or a messaging app by using identity masking technology to change the name displayed as the sender. This is known as 'number spoofing'.

If you get sent a scam message, it's important you report it so others don't fall victim. Reporting a scam message is free and it will help stop the spread of these messages. Fraudsters can use many different types of messaging systems and apps, like SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Viber, Skype, Google Hangouts, Snapchat and many other platforms to try scam you out of your money.

Please [click here](#) to find out how to report scams and warn others.

### Spot a scam bank message

If you get a message purporting to be from your bank, always treat this with caution. And know the eight things your bank will never ask you.

Your bank should **never**:

- Ask for your Pin or internet banking password
- Send someone to your home to collect cards or banking information
- Ask you to email or text personal or banking information
- Email a link where you have to then input your internet banking details
- Ask you to authorise a funds transfer which you haven't requested
- Tell you to invest in diamonds, land or other commodities
- Ask you to carry out a test transaction
- Send you to a mobile app other than their own official app

### How to avoid message scams

Here are a few tips to help you avoid message scams.

- **Don't follow any links**  
This is the most effective way to avoid text scams. Links can take you to cloned websites designed to steal your money or personal data. Because links are often shortened to help them fit into the message, it's not always easy to tell the real ones from the fakes. Clicking on links could also lead you to download malware - malicious software that can take over your phone and access your data.



- **Don't share personal information**  
Treat all messages requesting sensitive information - or that link you to websites asking for personal details - with suspicion. Legitimate organisations will never text you to ask for your personal or banking details upfront.
- **Contact the organisation directly if you're unsure**  
If you're not sure if a text is real, contact the company that claims to have sent it to check. Use the official contact details listed on the company's website or documents you might have been sent, if it's your bank then you can usually find its official number on the back of your credit or debit card.
- **Don't reply**  
Replying to a fake text, calling the number it's been sent from or clicking through on suspicious links only lets the scammers know your number is being used. You might be bombarded with even more scam messages and calls. The number has likely been spoofed anyway, which means you'll probably only be messaging an innocent member of the public who has had their number stolen.
- **Report it**  
You report the fake text by forwarding it to 7726 - a free reporting service provided by phone operators. This information is then shared with the police and intelligence agencies working to stop text scams. If you've fallen victim to a text scam, you can report it to [Action Fraud](#).

## **Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

### **Sexual Abuse and Violence Awareness Week**

More than half of people who experience sexual assault or abuse don't seek help. It can be hard to come forward in these situations but it's important to tell someone – if you don't tell the police, tell a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

SARCs provide a safe space and dedicated care for people who have been raped, sexually assaulted, or abused - regardless of when the incident happened. They can hold evidence for up to two years and offer confidential specialist, practical, medical and emotional support.

If you have been raped, sexually assaulted or abused and don't know where to turn, visit [www.nhs.uk/SARCs](http://www.nhs.uk/SARCs) to find your nearest service.

Please [click here](#) to watch a video that shows how SARCs can help.

### **Beware of Catalytic Converter Theft**

While any type of vehicle can be affected, hybrid cars – such as older Toyota Prius and Honda Jazz models – are particularly likely to be targeted for their catalytic converters. Thefts can occur at any time of day or night.

Catalytic converters contain precious metals such as rhodium, platinum and palladium. The sharp rise in the value of these metals over recent years has driven up the rate of catalytic converter theft.

They can take less than a minute for a thief to cut and remove.

There are a number of easy steps, vehicle owners can take to prevent catalytic converter theft. Please [click here](#) to find out more information.

To report a theft, or if you have any information that could help police, call 101 or contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. If you witness a theft in progress, call 999.

Many catalytic converters are also being sold as replacements and ASP are keen to hear from vehicle dismantlers and advertisers, should they be approached by sellers who don't have the requisite documents to show ownership.

### **For further Neighbourhood Policing Updates...**

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

- [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](#)

## **Finally**

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the Government](#).

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/](https://www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/) or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil).

If you have concerns about your own health and Coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.