County Councillor's Report 28th June – Kingskerswell & Abbotskerswell

"Delaying this next lifting of restrictions, especially the guidance around social contact, is sensible because it means that more people will have been vaccinated by the time restrictions are lifted further," says Steve Brown, Director of Public Health Devon.

The government has brought forward its target to offer all adults a first dose of a vaccine to Monday 19 July. Younger age groups (20-39year olds)– where rates of infection are currently highest – will also be offered the vaccine, which will help protect them and help slow the spread of the virus.

In Devon, the number of positive cases of coronavirus is still below the national average, but we are seeing numbers increasing. The weekly case rate in Devon right now is 70 cases per 100,000. In other parts of the country rates are much higher – Cornwall rates are double this figure.

Kingskerswell Middle Layer Super Output Area – 3 cases – 48.8/100,000 population
Abbotskerswell Middle Layer Super Output Area - under 3 cases

Delaying the lifting of restrictions could reduce the number of those cases ending up in hospital, by between a third and a half by the summer, according to the government. The more transmissible Delta strain is the dominant variant in Devon.

The virus spreads through social contact. Keeping restrictions that limit social contact in place is the correct decision right now from the public health perspective. But we must all abide by it. We cannot rely on the vaccines alone to stop the spread of coronavirus. We all need to play our part in preventing the spread.

- Keep your social distance from people who you do not live with or who are not in your bubble
- Wear face coverings when in public spaces indoors
- Wash your hands regularly and properly
- If you show any symptoms – the high temperature, new and continuous cough, or change to your usual sense of taste or spell – self isolate immediately and arrange a PCR test.
- If you do not show symptoms, please take up regular rapid, Lateral Flow Device testing, twice a week and when you are meeting socially with others. You will know your result within half an hour
- If you test positive, or develop symptoms, or you are advised to self-isolate, do so for the full self-isolation period of ten days.
- If you are travelling to other parts of the UK, know what the restrictions are in those areas, and be particularly cautious if visiting people in areas known to have the Delta variant

School communities across Devon completed over 23,000 active journeys during this year's Sustrans Big Pedal, the UK's largest walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting to school challenge.

During the competition, which took place between 19-30 April, Devon school children were physically active – walking, cycling, wheeling and scooting to school, and completing physical activities – for a total of nearly 240,000 minutes.

This follows data released by Sport England earlier this year that suggests there was a decline in the physical activity levels of children due to the pandemic, with almost a third of children in England engaging in less than 30 minutes of daily physical activity in the 2019 – 2020 academic year. If the children taking active journeys during Sustrans Big Pedal had travelled to school by car instead, this could have created 14 tonnes of CO_2 and 27kg of NOx. That's enough to fill over 510,000 party balloons with harmful CO_2 emissions.

New figures suggest that there are now more than 130,000 people in Devon who are carers, the figure having risen by half again because of the coronavirus pandemic. Worryingly though, just 21,000 of that number – roughly only one in every six – are accessing vital information and support that is available to them.

Devon Carers recommended that people contact Devon County Council's Care Direct Plus, who can assess people's needs and provided them with equipment to make life easier.

But while the pandemic has meant even more people in Devon taking on caring responsibilities, Devon Carers saw a 50 per cent reduction in the number of people approaching them for support between April and June last year.

Devon Carers, which is commissioned by Devon County Council and NHS Devon, provides information, advice and support for people who care for others, whether they need help because they are ill, frail, disabled or have a mental health or a substance misuse problem and couldn't manage independently without their support.

The Council and NHS Devon CCG are urgently appealing to carers to get in touch.

Devon County Council has been supported by Teignbridge District Council in preparing the proposals to develop a 5km section of multi-use trail between Passage House Inn in Newton Abbot and the A381 at La Roche Maurice Walk, east of Bishopsteignton.

The Trail will also include a shared-use path connecting from the A381 to the junction near Morrisons supermarket, at the western edge of Teignmouth. However further design work is being undertaken on this link which does not require planning permission.

A consultation about the proposals at the end of last year attracted more than 3,000 responses, with 92% of those who responded supporting the proposed route for the latest section.

The Trail is an important development for safer cycling travel as well as for leisure pursuits and I hope that the planning process is completed swiftly so work can get underway once funding is secured. The Teign Estuary Trail is being developed in sections as funding opportunities become available. The initial section between Kingsteignton and Town Quay, in Newton Abbot, opened in 2013.

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