

## **Dorset Councillor's Report for Char Valley Parish Council Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

I enclose my interim report.

As I write this, the number of Covid patients in Dorset hospitals is 340 ( Source Sam Crowe, Public health Dorset. 8th January 2021)

A great deal of my report will be devoted to Covid matters.

### **Hardown Hill**

I am aware of the aware of the problem caused by off roading on Hardown Hill. I am in touch with Alex Bishop of Dorset Police and Russell Goff Senior Ranger (West & Coast) Dorset Council.

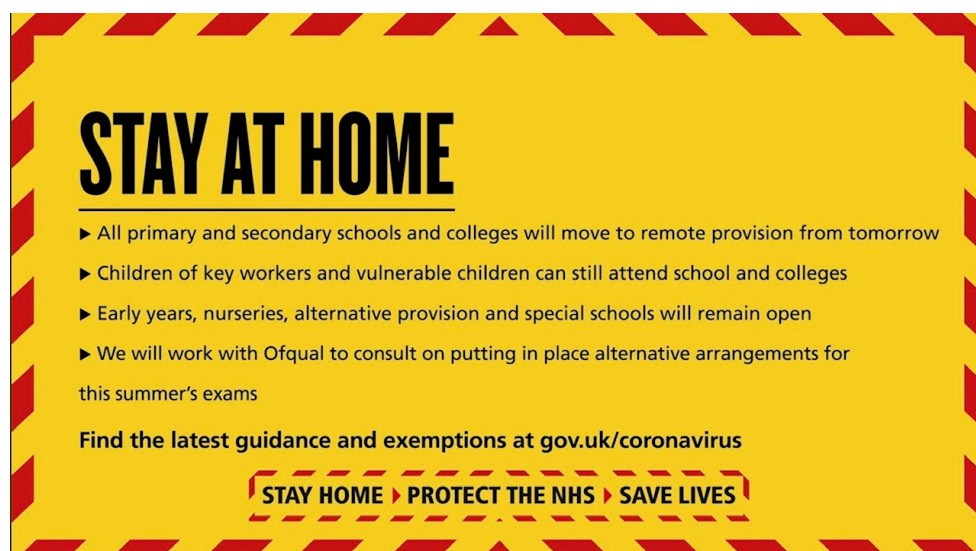
My understanding from Russell Goff is that he has visited Hardown Hill this week to assess the damage. My further understanding is that the damage is on land owned by Chideock Manor, probably accessed using the National Trust land.

I understand the deep wheel ruts have scarred what is a priority dry heathland habitat. I understand the damage does not impact on a right of way , however they are using a public footpath to access the hill and its an offence to drive a vehicle on the right of way and trespass against the landowner, providing its not them doing it.

I understand Dorset Council could install a covert wildlife camera in order to catch those responsible in the act. Russell Goff stated that he would need to ask the Dorset Council legal teams regarding what the law is about using the footage gained from doing this.

### **Update on Schools, Colleges and Child Care**

Here is the the government's latest advice for parents and carers: [Click link to access](#)



**STAY AT HOME**

- ▶ All primary and secondary schools and colleges will move to remote provision from tomorrow
- ▶ Children of key workers and vulnerable children can still attend school and colleges
- ▶ Early years, nurseries, alternative provision and special schools will remain open
- ▶ We will work with Ofqual to consult on putting in place alternative arrangements for this summer's exams

Find the latest guidance and exemptions at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**STAY HOME ▶ PROTECT THE NHS ▶ SAVE LIVES**

## Long Description

### Government information for Parents and Carers

Schools and colleges in Dorset remain open for critical workers and vulnerable children, details of who is included is here. Other children will move to remote learning.

Early years settings, special schools, alternative provision and learning centres in Dorset can remain open to all children. We are updating our childcare directory, please contact your provider if you have specific enquiries.

### **Free school meals update – 5 Jan**

Dorset Council is working with schools to make sure families who need it (including those who receive free school meals) can receive food vouchers if they are not in school. If your child gets free school meals their school will give you details. Find out more.

### School transport in Dorset update – 5 Jan

All school transport, including SEND transport, will continue to run. This may be reviewed in future if routes aren't used.

### **Home learning resources for parents and carers**

Schools are offering remote learning to families, here are some extra resources to help families, we are updating these at the moment too.

Dorset Council has worked closely with schools throughout the pandemic to support school leaders. Our schools have been open throughout for children of key workers and children with additional vulnerabilities.

Leader of Dorset Council Spencer Flower said: “We are proud of our schools, colleges and early years settings and our education leaders in Dorset and will continue to support them.”

### **Lockdown**

You will perhaps have already seen that Dorset Council is calling for front line public sector workers to be prioritised for vaccines.

This is a particularly concerning time for our most vulnerable children and families and this continued period of restrictions will no doubt be having an increased impact. Right from the start of this pandemic all partners have been committed and continued to work incredibly hard to support the children and families. A reminder that the government guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care can be found here.

### **Children's Centres update**

Our Children's Centre core sites will remain open for the services listed below:

- health service appointments where required
- family time
- parenting assessments
- where childcare is provided

Parenting groups will however have to move online.

### **IT equipment for families who are homeschooling**

We are working in partnership with our school colleagues to ensure that children can access learning wherever possible through mobile devices in Dorset. The DfE have significantly increased the number of devices available for secondary schools to order for vulnerable children. We're assisting school colleagues in getting these orders processed and out to families. A similar approach is expected for our primary school colleagues, we are awaiting information on this. Meanwhile we have been made aware of some issues in Dorset of children not being able to access IT equipment and are dealing with these on a case by case basis. Currently we're looking at whether we can repurpose some of our old machines and issuing wireless routers to enable children to get on line. I am once again incredibly impressed by the strength and resilience shown across our Early Years, Schools and Colleges.

Finally, on a financial note.

Dorset Councillors were advised that despite an overspend during the year , the delivery of more than £10 million of savings from the reorganisation had been achieved. The executive director of corporate development has highlighted a general point about collecting council tax, in that at present we are in exceptional times and officers were tracking but not actively pursuing collections given the economic frailty. The needed to wait until a more normal time to actively pursue. Officers are forecasting around £13million worth of Council Tax and business rates could be at risk but would continue to be monitored.

Stay Safe.

Councillor Simon Christopher  
Dorset Councillor for The Marshwood Vale.