

Cllr Lindsay MacDougall District Council report – January 2021

I have attended Full Council, Cabinet and Planning Board meetings this month. Council passed a motion to support the Local Electricity Bill in Parliament; this is a Bill to enable electricity generators to become local electricity suppliers including for connected purposes. More info may be found here:

<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2019-21/localelectricity.html>

Mendip District Council (MDC) continue to promote switching to a 100% renewable energy electricity supplier. The deadline to register with the Big Community Switch is 9th February, details of which may be found at:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/6739/Big-Community-Switch>

At Cabinet councillors discussed the Somerset Growth & Recovery Plan where I presented questions re. proposals to retrofit social housing with energy saving measures, and how funding for the skilling-up of the workforce to carry out this work was to be provided. I also asked for further details on the Mendip agri-tech virtual cluster referred to in the document. Lastly I asked how the authors of this Economic Plan have demonstrated an awareness of the new reality we are faced with since the pandemic, and how it is linked to the climate and ecological catastrophe we were already facing?

At the meeting, Ros Wyke, leader of the council, announced a change in corporate priorities: the 'greener, fairer Mendip and protecting our towns and communities' has been changed to prioritising '**Supporting an Economic Recovery**' (with the implication that 'trickle-down' economics will provide for all, a theory that has long been widely discredited). Furthermore, it is proposed that the Climate & Ecological Emergency Group at Mendip is merged with Scrutiny Board, as, in the portfolio holder's words: "*the group has started to struggle to find an effective and real purpose latterly.*" Comments welcome to Tom Ronan, portfolio holder for Strategic Planning & Climate Change:

cllr.ronan@mendip.gov.uk. Likewise re. the change of corporate priorities:

cllr.wyke@mendip.gov.uk

The Planning Dept have held a number of consultations including on their draft Local Validations List and Consultation procedures. The Local Validations List requires certain reports on planning applications, including a Sustainability Report. Green councillors, including myself, are asking for a more rigorous process which relates to the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy aspirations.

Lastly, re. recent activity on the Tor, anyone who wishes to report an incident should contact Somerset.Countryside@nationaltrust.org.uk; roadside issues should of course be addressed to our county councillors. At my last visit yesterday there were 3 white campervans and 1 other live-in vehicle.

ENDS