

County Councillor Liz Leyshon
Report for Glastonbury Town Council
9th February 2021

This is my County Councillor report for February 2021. Inevitably it overlaps my knowledge and work as a County and District Councillor and my place on both the Glastonbury Living Spaces Panel at MDC and the Glastonbury Town Fund Board, for which the accountable body is MDC.

Please accept this report as it is intended – to inform Councillors of the complexity of the situation in Glastonbury, both in the recent past and in the current Covid times. As Glastonbury & Street is the only double Division in Somerset, I work with Cllr Terry Napper. He may share knowledge and views but this is not a joint paper.

When I have received feedback from the Town Council, the paper can be published through the Town Council website but I ask Councillors not to share it until I know that I have not misrepresented any situation or person or organisation.

Current Encampments & Parking in Glastonbury

I have been contacted by residents, businesses and Councillors in Glastonbury about these locations since my election in May 2017 (in alphabetical order):

- Ashwell Lane
- Beckery Old Road
- Bretenoux Road
- Dyehouse Lane
- Kennard Moor Drove
- Pomparles Bridge
- St Edmunds Hall car park
- Stonedown Lane
- Tor View Avenue

This is what I know about each location. But first the acronyms:

A&SP	Avon & Somerset Police
SCC	Somerset County Council as Highways authority
MDC	Mendip District Council
GLSP	Glastonbury Living Spaces Panel at MDC
GTC	Glastonbury Town Council
SWHT	South West Heritage Trust
EA	Environment Agency
NT	National Trust
NSL	Parking Enforcement Officers
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order (SCC Highways)

And the current situation on enforcement:

At present, and for the past 10 months following Government advice, there has been agreement between the local authorities (SCC & MDC) not to enforce on council owned land during the pandemic, in order to limit the spread of the virus. Any change in that arrangement needs revised

advice from Government. The only exceptions currently are where there are significant health & safety concerns, leading to enforcement.

Ashwell Lane. Residents are upset about parking in the residential road that sometimes prevents them accessing their own parking and has, on one occasion, ended up with a motorhome precariously stuck across the verge. They have also realised that Google sends visitors to the Tor to their postcode, to a private cul de sac in Ashwell Lane where there is no parking available and no access to the rights of way on the Tor. The residents group are trying to influence Google to get the postcode removed from the Tor listing. I have asked SCC if signage is possible to make it clear there is no parking for the Tor, I can also ask at MDC if the road signs for Ashwell Lane could include No Access to the Tor. Residents in the private cul de sac can erect their own signage (as long as it is decent).

Relevant authorities: SCC; MDC and Google

Beckery Old Road. Although there are many vans and caravans in this location, I receive fewer complaints but that's just because there are few domestic properties in the area. Of course, the Beckery area of Glastonbury is the main location for economic regeneration in the Town Investment Plan. It is also the location of the land owned by MDC and known as the Morlands site. Virtually every part of Beckery is included in the Town Investment Plan, with the exception of the Zig Zag Building and a small piece of land opposite.

At present the orchard land that adjoins Beckery Chapel and Cemetery is occupied by a number of vans and caravans. The land is owned by SCC and managed by SWHT, occupants have been advised that when Local Authorities can enforce again, post Covid, action will be taken. The land is earmarked for one of the regeneration projects in the Town Investment Plan.

Relevant authorities & Ownership: SCC, SWHT, MDC, also some private land/building ownership & BIRT ownership of the former Baily's buildings and adjacent land.

Bretenoux Road The first encampment situation I encountered in June 2017 when a public meeting on the Redlands estate for the Neighbourhood Plan introduced me to the considerable unhappiness of residents throughout the estate.

Consultation with residents followed before submission to SCC from both County Councillors (LL & Cllr Terry Napper) for parking restrictions. That Traffic Regulation Order failed, we're told because of significant number of objections and relative lack of support. When we tried again, we were told that there is not a problem with access along the road, due to its width, and no record of accidents. Therefore parking restrictions are not appropriate.

The SCC enforcement officer - there is only one post for the whole of Somerset - has in the past issued enforcement notices and vans have moved or been moved. Mostly they relocated within the town boundary.

In 2018 and 2019, the numbers of vans and caravans fluctuated, fewer in summer when people were working on festival sites or travelling. All festivals were cancelled in 2020 and we don't yet know how reopening after the current lockdown will impact on the 2021 Festival season.

Since the start of the pandemic, the numbers of vans and caravans has increased. MDC, working with SCC, provided sanitary facilities (portaloos and water bowsers) under Government guidance, to keep people from moving around the country. The plan was to remove the facilities at the end of September but then the numbers of positive tests started rising again.

Relevant Authorities: SCC for highways and enforcement; MDC & SCC for sanitary provisions during Covid.

Dyehouse Lane There are relatively few vans in this industrial area of Glastonbury but at least one long-stay caravan near a right of way across the fields.

Relevant Authorities: SCC highways

Kennard Moor Drove There are vans and caravans at this location, some of them having been moved by enforcement from Bretenoux Road. Residents in Cinnamon Lane are impacted by proximity of the vans, the riverbank ownership is different from the highway. There have been a number of reported cases of damage to homes and attempted break in, most recently last weekend.

Relevant authorities: SCC highways; EA for riverbank; A&SP

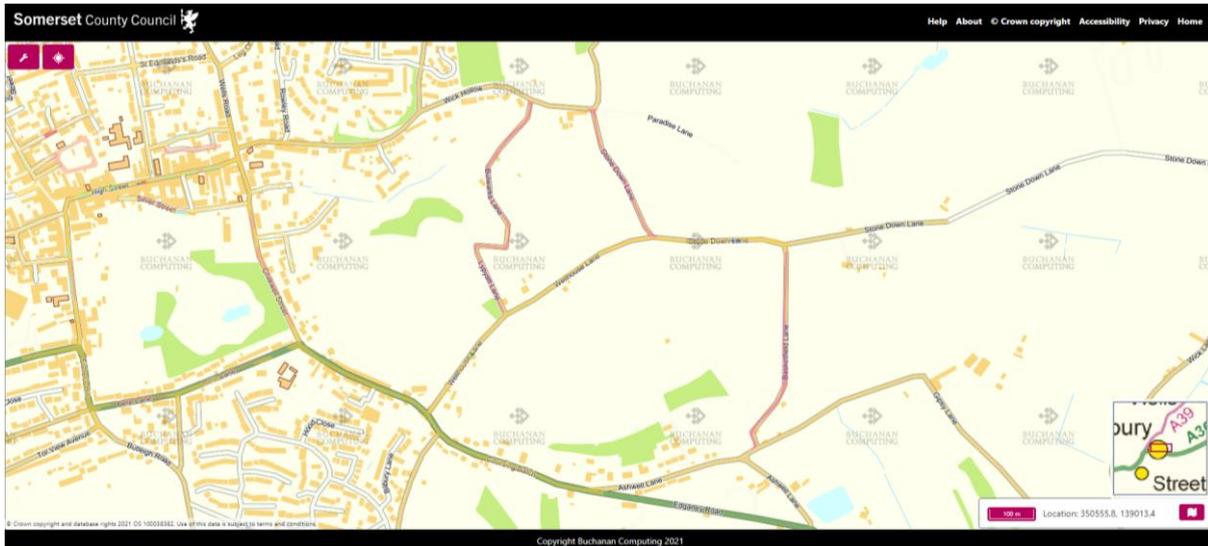
Pomparles Bridge The grassed land at the newer part of The Roman Way is owned and maintained by MDC. The land is immediately adjacent to the pavement and road which is SCC highway. Enforcement on MDC land had started at the outbreak of Covid and had to be stopped. Enforcement on the last remaining vehicle was possible because of safety concerns on a tree that had been burnt in a fire. MDC has been negotiating with GTC to transfer ownership of the land having planted trees, removed the unsightly rocks and created a bund to protect the land nearer the river.

Relevant authorities: SCC; MDC; GTC

St Edmunds Hall car park The land that includes the Hall, the surrounding trees and bushes and the car park is owned by MDC. The Hall and car park are leased to a charitable Trust. Town Fund accelerator funds are being used to refurbish the Hall and in order to allow safe working, MDC has been working towards a clear car park. The project will also pay for a height restricting barrier to be installed at the entrance to the car park.

Relevant authorities: MDC

Stonedown Lane Parking restrictions apply in Stonedown Lane. Part of it is a Clearway (pink on the map) with no stopping allowed at any time, as are Basketfield Lane, Bulwarks Lane and Lypyatt Lane. The wider part near the moneybox field has double yellow lines, a bus stop for the Tor Bus and disabled parking bays that are limited to 4 hours parking, no return within 4 hours. All these restrictions date from a TRO in 2016.



Recent parking on the double yellow lines has meant mud from the verges has covered some of the lines, so that enforcement was not possible. The GTC team cleared the lines of mud and leaves, but some of the lines further down Wellhouse Lane are badly worn and in need of refurbishment. An order is in place for that work, but there is no date given for completion.

NSL staff have been issuing Penalty Charge Notices recently but they are not prepared to enforce without the Police working with them. The Police have accompanied NSL whenever possible. A plan for NSL to wear body cameras like the Police has been delayed, NSL is currently trialling bodycams in London. We need them in Glastonbury.

If NSL cannot affix a PCN to a vehicle it can be sent direct to the registered address of the vehicle, with photographic evidence submitted. There are different types of vehicles parking on the double yellow lines in Stonedown Lane, some are walkers' cars and some are live-in vehicles. The vast majority of the vehicles have been found to have a registered address, and to be taxed and insured. Parking on double yellow lines is a civil offence, it is not a criminal offence, so the enforcement is by NSL not A&SP. If a vehicle is causing an obstruction to the highway then the Police can be called. The team (A&SP/SCC/NSL) are now planning for future busy dates including the summer solstice when closure of the road may again be necessary.

Relevant authorities: SCC (inc NSL)

Tor View Avenue There is a short piece of residential road that has been a place for caravans at different times. As it is within 10metres of the mini roundabout it could be considered for double yellow lines if there is a possibility of proposing some new TROs in Glastonbury (the last tranche was in 2017/18).

Relevant authorities: SCC

What have the authorities done so far?

SCC Highways have enforced on the highway in Bretenoux Road and in Beckery Old Road on multiple occasions. MDC has brought forward enforcement at Pomparles Bridge, and created the Glastonbury Living Spaces Panel (to replace the Morlands Panel).

MDC has commissioned a report into roadside encampments – executive summary here

https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/26068/Mendip-Roadside-Executive-Summary/pdf/Mendip_Roadside_Executive_Summary.pdf?m=637358661311530000

The full report includes responses from van dwellers and from residents in traditional homes in affected areas of Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury Living Spaces Panel responded to the report by agreeing the appointment of a specialist housing officer to work with the roadside community. Details here, the officer has started work but is limited in how much he can visit town during the current lockdown

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9445/Council-to-provide-roadside-residents-extra-support-in-seeking-housing-solutions>

GLSP has explored all possible local authority land in Glastonbury for a traveller site(s). No private land has come forward, the only land going to auction was withdrawn as soon as MDC expressed interest.

SCC Highways and Parking Services are considering all the possible options for Stonedown Lane. The options are: Clearway to link the other Clearways; one way system; continuation of current parking restrictions.

Current restrictions are not respected. NSL officers have had poor experiences, Police and PCSOs are limited in time they can spend with NSL officers. Disabled bays were being used 24/7 for residential vehicles.

Options for a one way system brought forward some significant safety concerns.

A Clearway would require moving the bus stop and removing the disabled parking bays on an experimental basis. Consultation on the effectiveness and impacts of a Clearway would continue throughout the experimental period, and would take responses into account before any permanent TRO was proposed.

Note that an experimental TRO does not mean a permanent TRO follows automatically. It is exactly that – an experiment.

The National Trust's Coast & Country Manager for the south west, on a call with Police & SCC, said they do not have plans for car parking or other facilities in the vicinity of the Tor. They want the Tor to remain a wholly rural experience.

SCC highways have been looking at the possibility of Park & Ride in Bretenoux Road, as the nearest point to the Tor. The Tor Bus could be re-routed when it's running again. National Trust would support this idea, which came from a Redlands resident.

GTC has consulted with residents on the Redlands estate, both County Councillors are pursuing this option with support of the MP James Heappey. SCC support is essential, as is capital funding for the development of plans and implementation. It may be possible to also include a cycle lane on the road. Further consultation will be planned with Town Council and residents as potential plans are developed by SCC Highways.

In the longer term, the Park & Ride could tie in with the proposal in the Town Investment Plan for a Park & Ride with electric bus and renewable energy site in Beckery.

Other factors?

There is concern within local authorities about lack of understanding of Covid-19, and potential low take-up of the vaccination opportunities in Glastonbury. There is further concern that these beliefs are drawing more people to town, and that vehicles are still arriving regardless of the lockdown regulations.

There may be people in town in live-in vehicles who have left high density housing areas, and there are likely to be considerable numbers of people who would otherwise be homeless. Some will have a local connection to Glastonbury, others not.

There is impending legislation on criminalisation of trespass on private and public land but Police do not expect any new legislation to be available to them in the near future. Ramblers groups, amongst others, are very concerned about the legislation. We need to understand the impact of the new legislation, as proposed.

Opportunities?

The greatest opportunity is the Town Investment Plan (TIP), up to £24.5million of Government funding for economic regeneration. The 12 projects are mostly centred in Beckery but there are three projects that would link to the town centre and two enabling projects: traveller site(s) and phosphates mitigation. The Planning Inspector for Mendip's Local Plan has also included his views on the necessity for a traveller site on the Morlands site in Beckery.

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/22966/ED20-Inspector-s-Interim-Note-Post-Hearing-Advice-27-Jan-2020/pdf/ED20 - Mendip Local Plan Part 2 Examination - Inspector's Interim Note on Post Hearing Advice - 27 J.pdf?m=637351804884570000>

The Town Fund Board was adamant that the **enabling project** of at least one traveller site was essential to the success of the whole plan. Land in Beckery is owned by MDC, SCC, by not-for-profit organisations and privately. GTC owns land elsewhere in the town. Traveller sites need planning permission, and facilities as well as open space. The Town Investment Plan can be downloaded here <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9777/Glastonbury-Town-Investment-Plan>

If the Secretary of State decides this month to consult on one or both of the business cases for **Unitary/Unitaries in Somerset**, then we will have the County Council elections deferred for a year. Following that timeline, a shadow authority (or two) would be created in April 2022, with elections for that shadow authority/ies in May 2022. A new local authority (or two) would then be in place for Somerset in 2023. The move to Unitary authority would, at least, stop the current situation whereby both County & District have to agree and work together on a course of action, there would be just one Council to report to and to look to for resolutions. The Town Council could also take on greater responsibilities under a Unitary authority.

Summary

Although the work has started, this is a medium to longer term project to resolve lack of living spaces in Glastonbury and unhappiness of residents. It is anything but easy.

Covid has divided the community, as it has in many parts of the world, and will continue to affect the financial position of local authorities for some time.

For me the following list includes some of the most relevant factors. Some we can influence, some we cannot. Some are my views; some have been repeated to me all my life; some I've heard more recently. I don't offer them in a judgemental way, just as an aide to understanding the complex situation in Glastonbury today. Glastonbury is:

- A place of pilgrimage
- A place of tolerance
- A place where free food is available but not always linked to wider support

- A place where denial of Covid-19 has increased throughout 2020 and into 2021
- A place where take up of vaccination may be lower than average
- A place in a country where many people, of all ages, cannot afford a traditional bricks and mortar home
- A place in a country where local authority reserves will be depleted by the Covid response, but where there may be opportunity for a local authority to work on more creative solutions for properly affordable housing
- A place in a world where whole countries will be affected by the impacts of Covid-19 and economic downturn for many years.

And a final thought. If we don't work together, we'll achieve nothing but continued unhappiness. The Town Investment Plan has shown how MDC, GTC, businesses, organisations and residents have pulled together for the common good. We need to ensure this way of working continues and becomes our norm.

Note that this paper has had some amendments and additions made following the Town Council meeting on 9th February 2021. I am extremely grateful to Town Councillors for their support and for devoting time in their meeting to consider the paper in detail.

LL 10.2.21