

Mendip District Councillor Report - March 2021 - Lindsay MacDougall

I attended meetings of the Full Council, Planning Board and Cabinet and a Habitats Regulations Assessment training re. the phosphates issue.

MDC has announced a new phosphates calculator to address the problem of excess phosphates in the east of the district; details here: <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/phosphates>. Wessex Water has committed already to investing in improvements to water quality for the Rivers Parrett and Stour with more expected to address these issues for the River Brue associated with the Ramsar wetlands site in question.

At Full Council on 22 Feb, motions were passed for Mendip District Council (MDC) to propose a Universal Basic Income trial in Mendip; a motion was also passed to complete Supplementary Planning Guidance documents to complement the Local Plan in order to press for more stringent environmental and renewable energy guidance including tree-planting and solar panel installation on new buildings.

Somerset County Council's draft Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (which was due to be adopted in January 2021, due soon) highlights some helpful news re. new electric vehicles; it is now possible to buy an electric vehicle for as little as £16,000 and central government provides grants for up to £3000 (35% of purchase price). Fuel costs are around 1/3 the cost of a petrol vehicle and less than 1/2 the cost of a diesel one (based on 10,000 miles a year usage). Further details here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/somersets-climate-emergency-strategy-documents/>

Tom Ronan, Portfolio holder at MDC for Strategic Policy and Climate Change, is lobbying Somerset County Council for 'meat-free' days on the menu for school children, in order to tackle the share of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in Mendip, substantial at more than that of transport (29%), with energy for buildings and light showing a greater share at 57%. Livestock account for around 14% of emissions globally. Central government's Committee on Climate Change recommends a reduction of at least 20% in meat and dairy consumption by 2050.

MDC continue to plant trees with 500 plus being planted early in 2021 in the Mendip Hills AONB at Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke.

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