

## Cllr Lindsay MacDougall report – December 2021

This month I attended the following meetings/trainings:

Equalities steering group: at Mendip District Council (MDC), where Edwina Heard, Gypsy Liaison Officer at West Somerset District Council presented, including re the Roma (first described as such in 1989), Irish travellers (accepted as an ethnic group in the UK in 2000, 2017 in Ireland), 'New Travellers', which she referred to as 'occupational travellers' which don't have the same protection since it is not about their ethnicity; Ed talked about their aspiration to live off-grid, but thought this didn't work. Ed is of traveller heritage herself, and spoke of how there are Irish sites, which are just used by Irish travellers and therefore cannot be fully used. Louise Hill, Gypsy Liaison Officer for the East of Somerset was not present at the meeting.

### Planning Board

Scrutiny: where the Scrutiny Climate Emergency Working group reported: in addition to the 9 areas of work in response to the climate emergency undertaken by the council with Somerset County Council (see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/somersets-climate-emergency-strategy-documents/>) 3 specific project areas have been identified: (1) Renewables: including exploring the feasibility of the installation of solar panels on Mendip owned car parks; (2) Retrofitting: including identifying retrofit need and facilitating discounts and an ad campaign to promote the ECO flex scheme providing grants for the vulnerable/ those on low income (via eg. GPs, the third sector, enquiries to cse.org.uk and their Safe and Warm Somerset scheme); (3) Transport: including supporting the council's work with sustainable travel routes (cycling and walking). Further details to be announced.

First Homes training: a new government initiative that has passed the pilot stage this year and is now to be applied to new developments to improve access to home ownership for local first-time buyers.

EPC training: re new regulations applying to landlords.

Cabinet: MDC have improved their target to decrease carbon emissions from 30% to a 37.25% reduction by 2030. Somerset Waste Partnership have purchased a new electric refuse collection vehicle and photovoltaic panels are to be installed at their two main depots; they also have 5 new supervisor electric vans; they intend to provide a Repair Bus as an educational and mobile repair facility for which a funding bid has been submitted. "Recycle on the Go" is a scheme being piloted in Chard to provide recycling facilities in parks and public spaces.

As part of my own COP26 programme of activities I attended a Centre for Alternative Technology webinar on Co-creative practices to gain a better understanding of collaboration and consultation best practice in the community, key to achieving success with our Climate Emergency goals.