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THE NEWTON

Cryer

APRIL 2021

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEWTON ABBOT TOWN COUNCIL





EDITOR'S NOTES

Small steps!

As we begin to cautiously look forward to the return of the everyday events and activities that we perhaps took too much

for granted in pre-Covid days, I hope we can all draw positive inspiration from our new appreciation of the simple things!

This edition of the Cryer is the first physical newsletter we've produced in almost twelve months and, as if anyone needs reminding, there have been quite a few changes during that time.

The Newton's Place project has been successfully completed and the town now has contemporary community facilities and a fantastic new museum that we can all feel justifiably proud of. Artefacts numbering many thousands have been carefully transported from our old headquarters in Devon Square to our new home in the former St. Leonard's church where they'll be lovingly catalogued and cared for by our dedicated team and their amazing volunteers.

Continuing this spirit of rejuvenation – it's very nearly springtime, after all – our community engagement officer, Kate Green, has been busy organising art activity packs to celebrate the passion of Newton Abbot's very own Victorian lepidopterist, Dr Henry Mapleton. See page six to find out how to apply for your FREE build-a-butterfly kit.

With the high street poised to make a comeback, outdoor events beginning to appear and plans afoot to encourage more ramblers to explore our town, we'll soon be walking back to happiness!

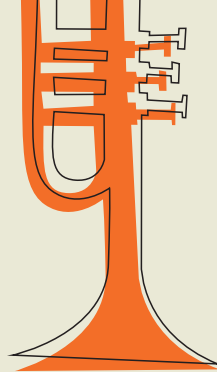
Samantha Scott, Deputy Town Clerk.

Keep in touch

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SUNDAY BAND CONCERTS 2021

All performances commence at 2.30pm at the Courtenay Park Bandstand.

In order to maintain Covid-19 regulations, we would kindly request that those wishing to attend concerts please bring their own chairs. Thank you for your understanding.

- ◆ 4th July – SOUTH WEST COMMS BAND 1
- ◆ 18th July – EXETER RAILWAY BAND 2
- ◆ 22nd August – DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE CONCERT BAND 3
- ◆ 12th September – SPECTRUM MUSIC CONCERT WIND BAND 4

Key (and many thanks!) to our kind sponsors:



Newton in Bloom Sponsorship

Newton Abbot Town Council would like to thank local businesses, which have once again so generously sponsored many of the displays in the town centre. Thank you for your continued support.



ACT ensures Nature takes Centre Stage

Co-founder of ACTION on Climate in Teignbridge, Audrey Compton, explains how...



If you have been enjoying your local wildlife much more than usual this year you are not alone!

Being outdoors and experiencing the natural beauty that surrounds us is a great antidote to the lockdown blues.

Sadly though, our wildlife is dwindling. Good habitats have disappeared because of economic pressures on farming, new housing, industrial development, and because we like our environment to be 'tidy'. Like us, our wildlife needs a place to call home, somewhere that can provide leaves, seeds, berries, insects and small mammals to feed on – it maybe a thick, bushy hedge, a wildflower meadow, a pond or a wood. Nature needs more space, as well as better habitats and it's our responsibility to better our understanding of where these are most needed.

If you can spare a few hours every month, you may be interested in a new volunteering scheme. To give wildlife a boost, Action on Climate in Teignbridge (ACT) is launching a Wildlife Warden Scheme and looking for at least two volunteers in every Teignbridge parish.

Maybe you love bird-watching, wildflower meadows buzzing with bumblebees, building hedgehog homes or wilding your garden or allotment. If so, you can share your passion with your community as a wildlife warden. You don't need to be an expert naturalist because ACT is providing training in many different areas – you would have the chance to learn more about wildlife gardening, species identification, monitoring and recording wildlife, habitat management and development control.

We will also need volunteers who can carry out desk-based studies, comparing old and new maps online and looking for ways to reconnect our best wildlife sites, so you can help from your home if you aren't able to be physically involved. Training will be with local experts, using local wildlife habitats; it will be friendly, fun and Covid-careful. Currently it is a combination of information packs, fact-finding visits by the wardens to their local nature sites and Zoom group discussions.

Our thanks go to Teign Energy Communities, Cllr Jackie Hook's Locality Fund, Dartmoor National Park Authority and the Nineveh Trust for funding the scheme for its first year.

With their backing, the ACT Ecology Group is being assisted by coordinator Flavio Ford Winkler, who will support the wardens and ensure that all of the work they do and the information they collect is used in as many ways as possible to aid nature recovery in Teignbridge.

Wildlife needs our help, and if you live in Teignbridge, volunteering as a warden is one way to provide it. Find out more through the ACT website or email flavio@climateactionteignbridge.org for more details.

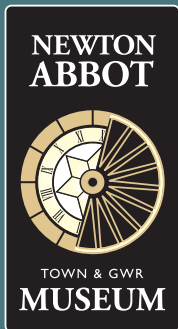


Audrey Compton





For tons more photos, video clips and all the latest developments, find us on Facebook!



Museum News

It's fair to say that 2020 has not been an easy year for the world, but we did have some good news amongst all the hardship: the new Newton Abbot Museum successfully opened its doors to the public for the very first time on 3rd October 2020.

To keep everyone safe during COVID the public visited the museum in groups of no more than six per hour and we were so pleased to see the bookings flooding in. Amongst some very positive feedback, several of you mentioned that the restored Chancel ceiling was tricky to see, so the museum team are now working on a solution: you spoke up and we listened!

Tickets for the Saturday hours were being snapped up extremely quickly as it was a prime visiting time for families (our COVID-reduced weekday opening hours were during school hours). We quickly responded to this by introducing additional family visiting hours on Fridays at 4pm.

Hordes of Stores

A lot has happened at Newton Abbot Museum since the last edition of the Cryer, despite the lockdowns. One of the biggest tasks was to relocate over 17,000 objects and documents from the old site to their new home in Newton's Place. The help of several specialist removal people was needed to carefully prepare the objects for transport and to move them from the old site to the new.

Once the objects arrived at Newton's Place the museum team began finding homes for them in the new stores that were fitted out with racking during the install earlier in the year. We have managed to safely house the items but there is still some sorting to do!

A Chance for Stored Objects to Shine

You might be wondering if there is a chance for some of these objects and documents to be displayed and the answer is yes! Our new Object of the Month showcase enables a different item from the collections to be displayed each month, so there is always something new to see. Keep an eye out on our Facebook and Twitter pages for your chance to have your say and vote for the next Object of the Month.

The latest Object of the Month is Ethel Baker's 19th century book of watercolours. The page displayed shows a local scene together with the interior of Sandford Orleigh house, where she lived with her parents, Sir Samuel Baker and Florence Baker (Victorian explorers).



Above: Object of the Month display case

Far left: Unloading just a small sample of the collections in the new museum

Left: One of the new store rooms



Call of Duty

It's always a thrill when you chose us to take care of a beloved family treasure and in 2020 we were very honoured to receive this item of Royal Horse Artillery uniform.



Over 100 years ago, this beautiful uniform was worn by local man William George West, known as 'Winky' when he served in India in the Royal Horse Artillery. He lived in Manor Cottages in Wolborough Street and used to come to St Leonard's Church on Sundays. Now his splendid uniform will join the collection in the former church.

If you have any objects connected to Newton Abbot that you would like to donate to the museum, do talk to us as we would love to hear the stories behind treasured items.



William's granddaughter, Sylvia, with her family on the day they brought the uniform along to the museum to donate it.

COME AND JOIN US!



If you are not following us already you are missing out, so find us at **@Newton.Abbot.Museum** on **Facebook** and **@NewtonsPlace** on **Facebook** and **Twitter** too. We've also been giving virtual tours of the museum to schools and historical associations, which have been great fun.

Did you know the museum website also has a blog? If you enjoyed the sneak peeks behind the scenes here in the Cryer, you are sure to enjoy our latest content about restoring the historical features all around the Newton's Place building:

As the world begins to open up once more, we will be ready and waiting to welcome you into Newton's Place, but as you can see, we have plenty of online spots where you can visit us and keep in touch.

We are always happy to hear from you so get commenting, liking and sharing on our social media. If you have a question, a problem or an idea use our 'contact us' form on the website and we will get back to you, our doors may be closed but our inboxes are always open!

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

We were delighted to welcome two new volunteers to the museum team in 2020, who jumped straight in on the reception desk, welcoming the public and keeping the space COVID-safe for visitors. We have several more volunteers waiting to join us once we are able to open our doors once more. If you are interested in volunteering, don't forget you can always use the 'contact us' form on the website to get in touch.

PRESERVING THE PAST, PROTECTING THE FUTURE

A new development for 2021: the museum has signed the Plastic Free Pledge. This means we are committed to reducing and, where possible, eradicating the use of single-use plastics within the museum.



At Newton Abbot Museum we tell you about the past, but our priority is to be able to do this long into the future. As the community groups who worked on our time capsules told us: we only get one planet!

MUSEUM FROM HOME

During lockdown the museum team – Charlotte Edwards, Kate Green and Charlotte Dixon – focused on digital platforms, adding blogs, film clips and behind-the-scenes videos to the museum's Facebook and website pages. Charlotte Dixon's recent film, unwrapping the museum collection of ladies' underwear/knickers attracted 4,374 hits!



What's the Story Newton Abbot?

ON
AIR

This is the question being asked by museum volunteers who are turning fascinating historical stories into radio programmes and podcasts.

The museum is where you can dive into enthralling stories of life in the town across the decades. But, as we are closed due to current restrictions, our community can't access what is on offer in our newly designed space. We wondered if we could take the stories from the museum and put them onto the airwaves, and so began plans for a series of radio broadcasts that tell tales of people and place, called 'What's the Story Newton Abbot?'

With expert guidance from local broadcasters, Soundart Radio, and funding from the South West Museum Development Fund, museum volunteers have learnt how to use recorders to capture a mixture of stories, events and happenings in our favourite market town.

The very first programme regaled local tales of Christmas and New Year. An assortment of interviews, sound recordings, and vox pop snippets provide a rich, multi-layered programme sharing memories of the Christmas flood, pantomimes over the years, the railways at New Year, the workhouse at Christmas and a special view of the town in the 1870s from the 'Observer' – a local resident who watched life from the top of the clock tower.



Our second programme takes the listener on a walk along the Stover Canal to hear about its rich heritage and the variety of flora and fauna that abound there, with the third programme exploring the health of the town past and present.



Programmes are broadcast once a month on Soundart Radio – 102.5 FM – and you can 'listen again' by following the link on the Newton Abbot Museum website. Look out for the project logo of the old, Bakelite radio.

Future programmes will focus on local parks, war in the town, the transformation of St Leonard's church, the markets and the railway. There is so much to tell.... Why not tune in?



WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

One way that you can join in is by sharing your experience of the pandemic and the lockdown with Kate, our community engagement officer. Kate is keen to hear your stories across a zoom chat that she can then record. For us at the museum, being able to capture your Covid-19 stories for future generations of Newtonians is such a vital thing to do. Please do get in touch with us here at the museum if you would like to help us with this important task.

We would love to hear from you!



Kate is always keen to hear from anyone with a story to share – kate.green@newtonspplace.org



Flutter into Spring

With the museum currently closed we are unfortunately not able to run any of our usual art activities and workshops and so we are going to send a free spring activity to your doorstep.

The museum has fifty spring art activity packs to post out to people of all ages in our local community – it's not just for the kids folks, we want adults to join in too: tap into your creative side!

← We are celebrating the amazing collection of butterflies that are in the museum. They were once owned and collected by Dr Henry Mapleton, the medical officer of health for Newton Abbot Urban and District councils from 1890 to 1932. Dr Mapleton had a passion for studying local butterflies and built up a huge bank of knowledge about local insects.

In the pack will be art materials that you can use to create your own butterfly, plus some information about Dr Mapleton. You will also get a chance to grow your own butterfly friendly flowers as we will include a packet of seeds to help support the local butterfly population.

Just send us your address and we will pop a pack in the post to you – be quick to ensure you get one!

When you have created something, you can send us a picture to share on our Facebook page and we would also love to show all 50 creations in our community cabinet in the museum.

What are you waiting for? Send Kate an email and she will head straight to the post office with your pack!

kate.green@newtonspplace.org





Out & About*

with **Sally Henley**, TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

There was a time when the only 'road maps' we were aware of were the ones produced by well know motoring organisations! We used these to get from A to B before the invention of Google maps and some of us still prefer the comfort and familiarity of a journey planned in this way. In current times though, we think of a very different thing and the government's 'road map' has been a long-awaited beacon of light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel in the midst of our journey.



*Within current Covid-19 social distancing guidelines, of course!



FOR MORE INFO:
check our website:
newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk



or follow us:

@newtontownwoman



Newton Abbot Now



Whilst we were operating in very different ways last year, we had a better summer in the town centre than perhaps we could have wished for. We missed our usual events, but businesses were pleased that people came out and shopped. We also managed a very successful Christmas season, with a superb display of festive lights, bringing with them a much welcome sense of normality.

In line with other towns and cities, we didn't have our traditional 'switch on' event, but there was something rather lovely about walking through town and just finding them on at the end of November. It was a lovely surprise for many and thank you so much to everyone who got in touch with the town council to say so! I would also like to thank South Devon college for sponsoring our beautiful 'Tree on the Tower' and to the other local businesses, which despite the unprecedented nature of the trading year, managed to dig deep to make contributions to the cost. We even managed some successful socially distanced late-night shopping events, featuring live music, additional market stalls and walk about characters.

You might have seen me, fellow officers and town councillors out and about doing our 'pop-up' giveaways during December and you might still be wearing one of the 'snoo' face coverings and the

hand sanitisers might still be in your pockets? We wanted to say thank you to people for shopping locally and for supporting the high street. It was very encouraging chatting to people in town and there was an overwhelming sense of an understanding that if we want to continue to be able to 'go shopping' then we need to 'get out' of the house and 'get into town' with our credit cards and cash.



It's disappointing that the lockdown was not lifted for Easter, but talking to businesses, without exception, the view is that they would prefer to open gradually and 'for good' rather than to rush things. We're all looking forward to the day when we will be able to shop, meet people outdoors, go to the gym and have our hair done! I do hope that residents will feel reassured that our businesses have done everything they can to ensure the safety of their customers and I really hope people will get offline and instead pop into town. We must wait a bit longer for most of the cafes, pubs and restaurants to open, but there is plenty of outdoor seating in town, for an opportunity to enjoy a takeaway in the meantime. Many businesses have been using lockdown to spruce up, to re-think and invest and so I'm sure that the community will continue to show the support which they did at Christmas.

I was approached by a member of the public recently, who complained to me about the number of empty shops in Newton Abbot. It always amazes me, that some people refer to what they see in the news, rather than to look at what is the reality in their home town. I carry out a regular survey of property which is available to let in Newton Abbot town centre and I did this at the end of February. It was very heartening to find that, contrary to what this gentleman told me, we still have a very high occupancy rate. In fact, it is lower now than before the pandemic! We have over 300 commercial premises, filled with some great shops, services and businesses in the town centre and only 19 of them are available to let at the time of writing. This represents a vacancy rate of under 6%, which is well below the national average of over 10%. This

shows an enormous confidence that people continue to think that Newton Abbot is a good place to do business. I am looking forward to accompanying the mayor on a bit of a ribbon cutting exercise when we come out of lockdown, to welcome those, which have recently set up business in our town.

In addition to the investment that individual businesses have been making, we also have the wonderful news that Future High Streets Funding – to the tune of several million pounds – is coming our way. With improvements for the Market Hall and Market Square, amongst other projects, this is another boost for Newton Abbot this year.

As with Christmas, we want to make sure that we have our best foot forward in the town this season and I'm thrilled that we will see the beautiful planting once again this summer, with hanging baskets and displays throughout the town and formal flower beds. Businesses too will be playing their part and so a trip into town should be an uplifting experience. Newton Abbot Town Council has also been busy ensuring that the public realm is clean and tidy. You may have seen our staff out with the jet washer during lockdown and so every effort is being made by the town council to make ours a town centre to be proud of.



We will be looking forward to welcoming shoppers back this month and for this we will be having a summer 'pop-up' giveaway, throughout the month. You have to be in it to win it though and I do hope that the community will continue to 'shop locally' and show their support for our town centre as we head into a bright new future!

Sally

Sally Henley
Town Development Manager

EVENTS UPDATE

NATC have been saddened to not be able to hold their calendar of yearly events in 2020, normally offering the town residents and visitors alike a showcase of their finest events from the carnival and band concerts in the summer to the lantern parade and Victorian Evening in the winter.

It may not have been possible to organise the events due to the pandemic last year, but we are positive that sometime this year, when it is safe to do so, we will start to hold our town events again, bigger and better than previous years.

We were fortunate to be able to hold one event last year, smaller than usual and our first ever 'live streamed' event of the annual Remembrance Sunday. It meant that the people of Newton Abbot were this year still able to remember those who have fallen, by following the service from the safety of their homes. There was a small gathering at the memorial with a few readings and wreath layings, all of which were live streamed onto the NATC Facebook page for people to watch while at home. Thank you for all your support, NATC and the Newton Abbot Royal British Legion were really grateful of the support of everyone who made this possible and safe during the pandemic.

A Message from our Events Chair

Councillor Carol Bunday

"2020 was a year that none of us want to see again; from hardships, lockdowns and personal sadness we have seen it all. Things that helped to bring our communities together, have had to be abandoned, we as a town council had planned 2020 as a year of celebrations but Covid sadly put an end to it all."



So, late in 2020 we started to look forward to a new year and new hopes. This year is not having the best of starts – in fact it is a repeat of last year with events being cancelled or put on hold, but we, as the town council, are planning to celebrate the reopening of our town centre as soon as the current restrictions are lifted. We look forward to welcoming you all back with events that will raise our spirits and support the businesses that rely on you supporting them.

Unfortunately, we have already had to cancel some of this year's early events but we are planning to have our "Town Criers" event in September, and hopefully a full Christmas events programme, so please keep an eye on the town council's Facebook page and website for up to date information. As chairman of events, I hope to see you all in the town soon and wish you well. Stay safe."



*We will remember them...
This year's Remembrance Sunday service
was stramed live via our Facebook page*

Lose some...



With a heavy heart the decision to not hold the Newton Abbot Carnival has been recently taken. Mike Ryan, the carnival committee chairman explains why:

Newton Abbot like many other places last year lost its annual carnival to Covid. This unseen enemy put us all on hold in a year that none of us wish to see repeated.

The carnival committee started this year with high hopes that we would again be able to put on our annual event, which, with your help, has in the past raised several thousands of pounds for local charities, but Covid, once again, has put an end to normal life as we know it.

As chairman I have spoken to my vice chair and our treasurer and we cannot see the restrictions on crowd numbers being lifted enough to allow us to hold the carnival and other associated events again this year. Consequently we have, with the support of the full carnival committee, made the sad decision that this year's carnival will not take place.

Last year we paid about £1,000 for our events insurance, as it turned out this was not needed, so this year we have decided to save the £1,000 and put our insurance on hold. This seemed the only sensible option, given that we have already decided to cancel our own carnival. It does also prevent us from attending other carnivals, but it would seem unlikely that any such events will be going ahead for the foreseeable future.

I am sorry that we have had to take the decision to cancel but I am sure you understand safety has to be our main concern; we will be back next year hopefully bigger and better!

We are also committed to helping with the town council's Christmas events, and will work closely with the council's events committee to make sure the programme is as successful and enjoyable as always (assuming we are by then back to some sort of normality).

I and the whole of Newton Abbot Carnival committee wish you all well, and please stay safe.

Mike Ryan
Carnival Chairman



Win some!

We are already starting to look at and organise our autumn events in the town centre, we are hopeful that some type of event will be possible in September and look forward to welcoming residents and visitors back into the town centre to enjoy our town events.

Date for the diary Saturday 11th September – annual Town Criers' Competition. This will of course be run in accordance with the current rules in place – please keep an eye out on our website nearer the time for more up to date information.

Oyez!
we're
back!

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that entertainment and event times are subject to change at short notice and some events are weather dependent – check online at www.newton-abbot-tc.gov.uk for the latest information.

All events are now subject to change with the current Covid rules and regulations, we understand that public health is paramount and NATC will only hold events if they are done safely and adhering to any restrictions which may then be in place.



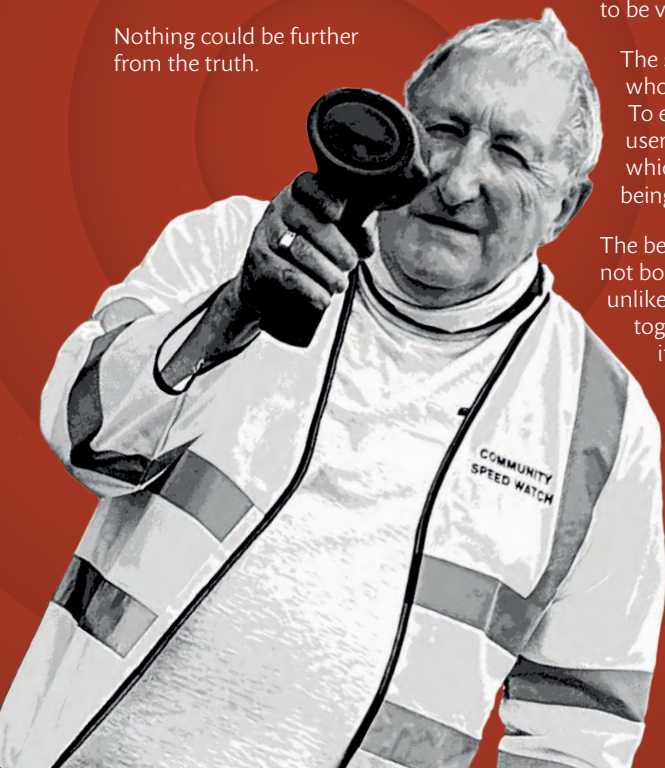
No Need for Speed!

COUNCILLOR **MIKE JOYCE** TAKES A PROACTIVE LEAD IN THE CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DRIVING

ONE of the top five complaints councillors receive is about speeding traffic. Enforcement is the responsibility of the police and as advocates we have heard that some motorists are complacent about limits, especially with the Covid situation in which traffic can be lighter than normal.

Limited police resources do not allow monitoring as much as we and they would wish. This leads to residents becoming frustrated by what they see as an apparent lack of action and in some instances arriving at the conclusion (which in my opinion is wrong) that they are not being listened to.

Nothing could be further from the truth.



When enforcement exercises are carried out, or indeed when officers using marked and unmarked patrol cars are deployed, drivers exceeding the limit will find themselves being brought to justice.

As advocates we receive reports at our weekly meetings into the success of these actions in various parts of the town and I'm sure word will get round that enforcement is being carried out.

Through the Community Speed Watch initiative residents can assist in monitoring of areas of concern. An active Community Speed Watch in Kingskerswell has proved to be very effective.

The schemes are made up of volunteers who work under a group coordinator.

To ensure their safety, and that of road users, there is online training through which volunteers need to go before being qualified to take part.

The beauty is that, as volunteers, you are not bound by constraints of other tasks, unlike police officers, and by working together as a team can choose when it is convenient to set up the observations.

I am convinced that this community-led scheme is invaluable, showing the motoring public that there is a presence on our highways and offering residents the reassurance needed.

The Kingskerswell Group coordinator told me that Community Speed Watch has

made a noticeable and quantifiable difference to traffic speed in the village. And thanks to a new online system, the data gathered is now reported back to the police and is also available to the highways authority.

The results that the group has gathered has led to frequent visits by a speed camera van and provided important information for highways staff.

Community Speed Watch for Devon is monitored and coordinated by a civilian member of police staff based in Plymouth.

Newton Abbot has just recently been granted approval for a group which has generated a considerable amount of interest amongst local councillors. Volunteers are at present going through the registration process and training to become operatives.

I must point out that Community Speed Watch cannot just pitch up anywhere; each site has to be risk-assessed and approved by the police and can only operate in daylight.

If this has whetted anyone's appetite then I would refer them to **communityspeedwatch.org** for more information about becoming a volunteer.

Alternatively, please feel free to email me for an informal discussion about the scheme:

mike.joyce@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk

Michael D Joyce
Councillor for Bushell Ward

THE CAMERA NEVER LIES...

Speed Indicating Device (SID)

Date on Site: 25th February 2021
 Time on Site: 1100 hrs
 Time Off Site: 1205 hrs

Location: Torquay Road / Forde Park

Total Number of Vehicles:
609

Number exceeding 35mph
24

Highest recorded speeds:
1 x 48 mph
2 x 40mph
2 x 38mph



Speed Indicating Device (SID)

Date on Site: 25th February 2021
 Time on Site: 1242 hrs
 Time Off Site: 1403 hrs

Location: Torquay Road / Forde Park

Total Number of Vehicles:
683

Number exceeding 35mph
27

Highest recorded speeds:
2 x 41 mph
1 x 40mph
1 x 39mph
6 x 38mph

The results shown here, from two sessions recording the various speeds of vehicles travelling along Torquay road, confirm that the majority of drivers observe the 30mph limit. However, there are still a number of motorists – around 4% – for whom the dangers of excessive speed need to be highlighted further.

Community Speed Watch aims to fulfill that need and make our roads safer for everyone.

Investing in our Future

As we begin to emerge from the global disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, planning for a strong recovery has taken centre stage in this year's allocation of funding and rates of taxation. As a result, an extra 11p per week will be added to council tax bills to help boost Newton Abbot's post-Covid economy.

The 5.6% rise in the town council's share of the precept will take the annual cost for a band D property to £107.63, or £2.07 per week.

Reasons for the increase were summarised by Samantha Scott, our Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, who explained that the reduction in the number of new homes being built had resulted in less income than predicted, and that the town council had made economic recovery its number one priority for both businesses and residents.

'We have a difficult year ahead, and no doubt beyond that, but Newton Abbot will prosper,' said Samantha.

'We are a town that's growing in size and importance; we must think carefully about how we make that work for everyone. The lower council tax base than we expected is a pity, but it won't reduce our aspirations.'

'We have an excellent new Facilities Maintenance Officer who is making a real difference around town, as seen by thousands of people when a video of him steam-cleaning the streets proved very popular. It demonstrated how we're investing in the town centre, making it an attractive place for shoppers when better times return.'

'We have employed Kate Green, our community engagement officer, who, in line with all the restrictions, is very busy arranging activities with residents as social well-being is of great importance. In addition, our town development manager, Sally Henley, is in constant contact with retailers, helping them through these challenging times and preparing for life after the pandemic.'

The council awarded grants worth £13,160 in 2020, the biggest recipients being Citizens Advice Teignbridge who received £3,000, and Newton Abbot Community Mutual Aid who were awarded £2,750.

'Supporting the community is our number one priority and Newton Abbot Town Council will ensure it has the resources, both in terms of income and expert staff, to achieve that,' added Samantha.

'Any increase in council tax bills is regrettable but, given the challenges we face, I believe 11p per week isn't too much to ask.'



The Path to Recovery?

THE Covid-19 pandemic has hit us all, hit us hard. Individually we have had our lives turned upside down and many families are still feeling the grief of losing a loved one to the virus.

Nationally our economy has taken a battering, a picture very much reflected in and around Newton Abbot with so many traders forced to shut their doors for months.

Exactly when things will return to 'normal', if indeed they ever will, is open to speculation. But one thing is certain, we must begin to lay the foundations of a stronger future. Economic recovery will be the town council's number one priority in the coming years and our action will take many forms.

One very interesting and unexpected idea we are looking into is a project designed to make Newton Abbot attractive to ramblers. It's a scheme called Walkers are Welcome (WaW) and is one that our town clerk Phil Rowe came across in a professional journal.

He said: *'I read a lot of material as part of my job, much of it national and local government news and to be honest it can be a little dry at times. But when I saw this article about Walkers are Welcome it really piqued my interest.*

'There are many wonderful walks in and around Newton Abbot and it struck me that perhaps we ought to put some effort in to promoting them. Indeed, perhaps we can create new trails based on residents' favourite strolls.

'The more people who use them the better as it will bring extra footfall into the town. That means our shops and eateries will do more business and that not only helps with recovery from Covid but also gives our town centre a better identity as we enter a world in which online shopping is changing the face of high streets nationwide.'

Phil brought the WaW scheme to the attention of the Newton's Place Working Group, a small team that has not only helped to deliver our new museum and community hub but is actively working on a number of community engagement initiatives. As a result, contact was made with a number of other towns and villages that have gained WaW status to see what could be learned from their experiences.

Team member Nigel Canham said: *'If I'm honest, at first I was doubtful that Newton Abbot would find it easy identifying as a WaW town as many of the other communities in the scheme are perhaps more picturesque or located in popular tourist areas, but actually, we have a lot to offer.*

'I recall walking around town many years ago with a chap called Gordon Crane, a lifelong Newtonian and retired railway man. His tales of the past completely changed my understanding of the place, he brought its history to life. His stories were so vivid that in my mind's eye I could see long-demolished walls rising once again. Voices of the past, rich in dialect, filled my ears and a town I never knew was opened up to me.

'I also recalled Philip Carter's excellent book on the history of Newton Abbot. The foreword, written by museum curator Felicity Cole included the following lines: "Newton Abbot has had a fascinating history and no book, so far, has had half as much information on the subject. It positively rushes the reader along in a whirlwind of amusing, poignant and detailed information."

'That's exactly the spirit I believe we can inject into the WaW project, Newton has so many tales to be told, we just need to give them some life. Apply that revitalised heritage to the network of paths that already run in and out of town, notably the excellent Templar Way and great parks such as Bakers and Decoy, and I think we're onto a winner.'



Gaining WaW status means being able to use the official logo and the opportunity to promote the town via websites and publications popular with the walking fraternity. It also brings about benefits to residents through a commitment to proper path maintenance and signage. And talking of community, this is a project that the WaW rules say CANNOT be led by the town council but instead by a steering committee, whose members are drawn from the general public. Only if enough people decide to join together and make this happen will the scheme proceed.

Your town council will be right behind you every step of the way and provide help in any way we can. We're already talking with a number of interested individuals and groups and now we're asking you too to get involved. We'll need keen walkers, business owners, community group representatives – all sorts of people from all walks of life, if you'll excuse the pun!

Want to know more? Visit www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk, call us on 01626 201120, or email phil.rowe@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk

Keep an eye on our website, Facebook page and the local press for further updates.

What's your favourite walk?

If lockdown gave us anything good then it was the chance to explore properly our surroundings on foot. So we were wondering, what's your favourite stroll in and around Newton Abbot?

Perhaps it's a well known route that takes in some of the nicest spots in town, or maybe one that, on the face of it, appears to be nothing special but has a special meaning for you personally. Whatever your revered route, we'd like to know about it!

To gain Walkers are Welcome status we'll need to demonstrate that the town provides plenty of choice for visiting walkers. Your route might take in several miles, or it might be a simple stroll around the block. Is it urban or rural, what tales does it have to tell?



There are no rules, other than it's a route you can follow on foot and, if needs be, use public transport to access. If you can, please draw a rough map or list the place names and pop it over to us. Remember to add your name and contact details and tell us why you enjoy the walk.

Email your suggestions to info@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk or write to us at: Walkers are Welcome Project, Newton's Place, 43 Wolborough Street, Newton Abbot, TQ12 1JQ.



Walkers are Welcome

Walkers are Welcome is a non profit-making Community Interest Company launched in 2007 to encourage towns and villages to be welcoming to walkers.

There are now more than 100 member towns, but very few in South West England.

The primary aims of Walkers are Welcome are to help towns and villages to:

- ✦ be attractive for walkers with excellent information on local walks
- ✦ ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are maintained, improved and well signposted
- ✦ contribute to local tourism plans and regeneration strategies
- ✦ promote the health benefits of walking and increase participation
- ✦ encourage the use of public transport.

Our First Ten Steps

Sheila Talbot, Chair of Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome explains how her community gained WaW status.

I had followed *Walkers are Welcome* from the start in 2007, when Hebden Bridge announced that they were the first town and were inviting other towns to join a network. I knew it was the perfect thing for Winchcombe but I kept quiet for 18 months because I knew it would take over my life. Eventually so many shops and pubs were closing, I felt I had to do something. Here's what I did...

- 1 I made sure I had all the facts then I wrote to the town council, suggesting the idea.
- 2 I attended one of their meetings, presented the idea to them and answered questions. My enthusiasm won them over and they asked me to set up a steering group, agree a constitution and open a bank account. They agreed to pump prime the project with £500 and a local visitor attraction agreed to pay the associate member fee.
- 3 I knew that a good steering group was vital. I invited people from the following:
 - ◆ Town council (I asked for one person and four volunteered!)
 - ◆ Borough council tourism department
 - ◆ Local businesses that would benefit from more walkers in the town
 - ◆ Keen walkers
 - ◆ Ramblers members
 - ◆ Cotswolds voluntary wardens
- 4 I made sure that we had people with a range of skills including guiding walks, footpath maintenance, finance, fund raising, graphic design, marketing and administration. Most important of all, it shouldn't be council led and everyone should be enthusiastic do-ers!
- 5 We adapted the general WaW petition to suit our needs and asked the steering group, local businesses and the Tourist Information Centre to collect signatures. We aimed for 250 and collected over 500 in less than three weeks.

- 6 We contacted the local newspapers and radio stations to tell them what we were doing and gradually built up a network of contacts that could help us promote the town in the future.
- 7 We researched where we might obtain further funding, put together a business plan with costs, then wrote letters and submitted applications. By providing this information and detailing the anticipated benefits to the town, we had a good success rate.
- 8 We built a website – winchcombewelcomeswalkers.com – with the aim of providing walkers with all the information they needed to visit the town and enjoy a local walk.
- 9 We spoke to our mentor regularly to exchange ideas and to check that we were going about things in the right way. We asked him to comment on our application before submission and double-checked the deadline – then crossed our fingers! We started the process in February 2009 and had gained WaW status by July of the same year.
- 10 We told the world and started creating publicity material, working with other groups and businesses in the town and planning our first walking festival. We are always learning from others and if any of us visit another WaW town we always make ourselves known and exchange ideas. We're involved at a national level; we mentor other towns, we have a place on the national committee and we attend every conference. We believe in the old saying 'The more you put into it, the more you get out of it.'

It seems to be working here: we have now delivered three successful three-day walking festivals; we have launched our own 42-mile route, the Winchcombe Way, with a five page article in *Country Walking* magazine; the roads to the town have WaW signs; we have a new walking group, no empty shops and visitor numbers are up. And yes – it has taken over my life, but in a good way. I've just been invited to Japan to help them start up a similar scheme over there!