



TRANSITION CHEPSTOW

Acting today for tomorrow

July 2020 Newsletter



What next in Chepstow?

The four nations of the UK are in the process of easing the unprecedented restrictions of the last few months. Many people are looking forward to the return of some kind of normality, being able to meet friends and family and in due course resume interrupted lives.

Mingled with anticipation, relief, and not a little uncertainty, many of us are keen that we take something from the lessons of the last few months and do not return to 'the old normal'. People have appreciated cleaner air and less congestion, community solidarity and mutual support and for many people (though by no means all) a chance to spend more time together as families. For those with access to them, gardens and local walks and cycles have been a lifeline. Many of us have reflected on what, and who, is important to us.

At the same time, many of us are acutely aware of our vulnerability - to a second peak, to future pandemics, to interruptions in our food supply, economic hardships and especially to climate change.

Within the Transition Chepstow steering group and through our Facebook group we have been having discussions about what kind of community we want, and how we, as a community, can make it happen. These are some of the areas where it's possible for us to take action in the shorter term.

- Let's use our new-found Zoom skills for those who can work from home to do so, at least a couple of times a week, and let's think twice before getting in the car for meetings or visits. The daily walk has been the high point of the day for many families during lockdown - let's keep it up, with children walking to school and all of us who can walking or cycling for short distances within Chepstow. Let's call for safe cycle routes around the town. Every car journey avoided helps to reduce air pollution and congestion.

- Gardening has exploded! Many of us have dug up our lawns for potatoes, swapped seeds with our neighbours and introduced our children to the magic of watching seeds sprout on a window sill. Let's keep this up and let's look out for sites for communal growing too - from demonstration planters to allotments and more community orchard sites. Many of us have enjoyed the blooming verges during the more relaxed mowing regime - let's keep this up.
- Our high street was struggling before Covid-19 and will face difficult times ahead. Many of us have appreciated corner shops and local businesses delivering vegetables, meat and takeaways. Let's nurture those businesses. People have said they would love an independent baker, a greengrocer, a zero-waste shop. If there are would-be start-ups out there, let's help them to succeed.

For many, life during lockdown would have been difficult or impossible without the help of the [Chepstow Covid-19 Helping Group](#), which responded incredibly quickly to the situation and throughout has operated with efficiency, warmth and humour. At the same time, checking on neighbours has become the norm for many. Technology has been harnessed to develop street or neighbourhood groups. Friendships have been formed on doorsteps over the Thursday night clapping. Let's keep this community spirit alive and make sure no-one is left behind.

Longer term, a robust response to climate change and future threats demands actions at all levels from the individual to the international - an end to our love affair with private cars and flying, an emphasis on green energy and carbon-neutral homes within a land use system. Strong communities with a clear vision and good information about the carbon consequences of their decisions can't achieve this alone, but they can move in the right direction. Please get in touch if you'd like to help make this happen.



[TransitionChepstow.org.uk](https://www.transitionchepstow.org.uk)



Monmouthshire Food Partnership

The pandemic has raised many issues of concern about food security, from food poverty at a local level to harvests threatened by labour shortages - against the background of worsening impacts of climate change. Transition Chepstow members joined staff of Monmouthshire County Council and various private, public and third sector organisations in the county to discuss the future direction of Monmouthshire Food Partnership. This is a new initiative which emerged from work with food businesses in and around Abergavenny, and is taking on a broader role in the light of these issues. Its role will become clearer in the next few weeks so watch this space and please contact us if you'd like to get involved.



Garden City Sensory Garden

The Garden City Community Group's Sensory Garden has become a much valued resource during the lockdown period. The garden has been planned for several years but work began with the planting, by residents, of willow tunnels in early 2019, followed by installation of seats and planters. The emphasis is on plants which can be touched, seen and smelt. The latest additions are a path to make the area fully accessible, and a wildflower area under development. Over recent weeks residents have added personal touches like children's games, knitting and artworks. Children and adults alike have appreciated the garden, and the development and maintenance has helped to draw the community together.



Defibrillator donated to Chepstow

[Gwent Energy](#) recently donated a defibrillator to Chepstow, thanks to the funds raised to provide community benefit from the electric car charge points installed previously. The new defibrillator is mounted in the Welsh street car park alongside the electric car charge points. Photo above shows Phil Powell handing over the defibrillator to Paul Jordan, Monmouthshire council cabinet member.

Keep Chepstow Tidy

[Keep Chepstow Tidy](#) would like to thank all those who have helped to keep the streets clean during lockdown, as well as the Town Crew who have been doing a great job in the town centre. We hope it won't be too long before we can start organising community litter picks again - please let us know if there is somewhere you feel would benefit:

litter@transitionchepstow.org.uk



Highbeech junction white line lane access road improvements:

Partial welcome only for half-a-job completed

The local press report that Wales Trunk Road Agent officials remain “unconvinced” of the advantage conferred by the additional white-lined clear demarcation dual lane road access to Highbeech roundabout, is a logical puzzlement as well as a serious disappointment.

Clearly, if the work already undertaken at the westwards A48 and Fairview roads is considered of worthwhile benefit/cost ratio, rational consistency would require the same planning principle to be also applied to the two other busy main access roads - the eastwards A48 and the southwards A466.

The doubling and specific white-lined lane marks of the immediate access road junctions, would provide a readily comprehensible, simple, low-cost and positive contribution to facilitating traffic flow, alleviating congestion, enhancing road safety as well as reducing air pollution hazards to human health and the climate emergency.

The current dangerous tendency of inconsiderate drivers to hog the middle of the access roads, is a practice not to be condoned by protracted prevarication and potentially negligent unnecessary delays to implement the required beneficial remedial action.

The two recent packed public meetings on the contentious issue at which Transition Chepstow [Transport](#) and [Health Group](#) spokesman Dr Peter Evans initiated the particular proposals, Chepstow residents and vehicle drivers voiced their increasing frustration on the topic, and expected the highway authority commitments for urgent short-term road improvements to be expedited.

Despite the transient reduced traffic during the pandemic lockdown, existing and planned housing developments will exacerbate the already intolerable congestion at the bottleneck junction.

Evidently, as usual in such matters, vociferous public pressure on our political representatives is required if effective progress is to be made on this recalcitrant issue.



Highbeech roundabout westwards A48 access with new dual white line lane road markings



Highbeech roundabout southwards A466 access with NO dual white line lane road markings

Timebanking Webinar

11th August 2020 at 18:00

Register for the free webinar:

<https://ourmonmouthshire.org/activity/see-how-timebanking-works-webinar>

Find out more about timebanking:

<https://www.timebanking.org/what-is-timebanking/what-is-timebanking/>



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