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WEEKLY CHAIRMAN'S' COLUMN – 06 August 2020

As you may know, I am very passionate about cycling and how it can help reduce car use on short journeys and help us lower our carbon footprint. Today, Thursday 6 August is cycle to work day. It is also the day free parking ends in Mendip District Council car parks. What better day to get your bike out than this morning if you are reading this early enough! If you work in Wells, it's only a 5-mile jaunt predominantly downhill and should take under half an hour. Driving to and parking in Wells would take about 20 minutes. If you live and work in Shepton why not try cycling in? If your bike needs a tune up, we have a couple of good mechanics who service bikes in the town.

At the Town Council Open Spaces meeting last week, we agreed to back a project with The Somerset Wildlife Trust to improve the ability of pollinators to do their work. Pollinator insects such as honeybees, butterflies and moths are crucial to the work of nature. They are not only critically important in food production, with an estimated value of £691m annually, but also for biodiversity, pollinating wildflowers and trees that in turn support other species. We are hoping to invest £16,000 over a 3-year period towards this vital project, which was presented to us by the trust and campaigned for by Councillor Tristan Faith, who champions many ecology projects across the town. We would then be one of three towns selected as partners for the scheme, alongside Taunton and Frome. More in this in the months to come.

On that note, last week we had an ecology study carried out in Collett Park, to identify the natural habitats in the park and its biodiversity. We will receive a report on how we can enhance the park and our management of it, to encourage more varied wildlife by creating and improving their habitat. We know we also need to be mindful of the many varied users of the park, from picnickers to parkrun and ball game players.

In other news, we have now made good progress with the County Council on the Market Place resurfacing. We will be having a site visit later this month to consider our options within budget. All being well, the work is scheduled to begin in Spring next year. I'm sure you will all agree that this is long overdue.

Finally, I was delighted to have my committee proposal to sponsor a few seats in the revamped stand at Shepton Football Club accepted. If you go to a game next season, look out for our sponsor's sticker on five of the seats. The club has worked hard in the close season to raise money with sponsorship schemes for players and seating/ These have raised £3000 towards the running costs. There is a good atmosphere at the club and Western Premier League is a good standard, I highly recommend popping up when we are allowed and watching a game.

Well that's it from me for this week and for those in the know, UTM!

Edric Hobbs Chair Shepton Mallet Town Council.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Shepton Mallet Town Council, Town Clerk – Ms Charlotte Starkie
Shepton Mallet Town Council Chairman – Councillor Edric Hobbs