



Special Issue...

Keep Warm and Well this Winter!

2012 has been a challenging year in meteorological terms, with heavy to severe flooding in many areas of Somerset and the forecast of a cold winter to come.

To help people who have been affected by the recent flooding, Somerset County Council have made £50,000 of funding available in small grants which can help people try to get their lives back to

normal as quickly as possible. The Somerset Community Foundation is administering these grants of up to £250 for those in immediate need. To apply for a grant visit http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/surviving_winter_appeal.html and click on the link in the second paragraph.

The **Surviving Winter** campaign has also been running successfully over the past 2 years in Somerset and the Community Foundation



has called on those who can afford to forego some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment (see below) to help those who need extra assistance. It is estimated that over 400 vulnerable people died in Somerset over the past 2 winters from causes directly attributable to the cold and poor living conditions—over 90% were aged 65 or over. If you are able to donate to this worthy cause please visit http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/surviving_winter_appeal.html to find out how. The Community Council for Somerset is one of the organisations helping people to access the Surviving Winter grant scheme; if you are a person in need or know of someone who needs extra help contact us on **01823 331222** and we can help with the application form.

If you were born before 5th July 1951 You could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills. Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get your money by Christmas. You should get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you get the State Pension or another social security benefit. Visit <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/what-youll-get>. to find out more.

You could also get a Cold Weather Payment if the weather is forecast to be an average of zero degrees Celsius for 7 or more days—again visit <https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment> to get further information. If you are unsure about any payments you are entitled to then you can find out about benefits, disability, housing and pensions at <https://www.gov.uk/>.

STOP PRESS...We are very pleased to welcome 3 new Village Agents to join our team.



Christine Stephens covers Berrow, Brean, Brent Knoll, East Brent and Lympsham.

Trudi Morgan up on the Blackdowns is covering Churchstanton, Corfe, Otterford, Pitminster and Stoke St Mary

Caroline Harding in the West Somerset area is covering Exford, Exmoor, Hawkridge, Winsford and Withypool.

Village Agents help people in Somerset's rural communities to access information and services.

To contact any of the agents please call us on 01823 331222.

Contact us:

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01823 331222
info@somsetrcc.org.uk
www.somsetrcc.org.uk

Advice from NHS Somerset about Keeping Warm and Well in Winter

Keeping warm over the winter months can help prevent colds, flu or more serious health problems like pneumonia.

You can help keep yourself warm by:

- wearing plenty of thin layers, rather than one thick one
- putting on a coat, hat, scarf, gloves and warm shoes or boots when you go outside
- wearing clothes made of wool, cotton or fleecy synthetic fibres
- wearing bed socks, thermal underwear and a nightcap or headscarf at night

By setting your heating to the right temperature (between 18-21 degrees centigrade or 64-70 degrees Fahrenheit) you can still keep your home warm and you can lower your bills.

If you feel cold at night, use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket - but NEVER use both together as you could electrocute yourself.

If you have an electric blanket, check what type it is - some are designed only to warm the bed before you get in, and should not be used throughout the night. Make sure your electric blanket is safe to use by getting it tested every three years - the Fire Brigade can test your blanket to make sure it is safe.

If you use a fire or heater in your bedroom during the winter months, open the window or door a little at night for ventilation.

Try to eat well, eating hot meals throughout the day (little and often is best) and drink plenty of hot drinks.

Somerset's Community Oil Buying Scheme-



Save money on your heating oil.

The Community Council for Somerset is operating a county-wide oil buying scheme which has seen members save an average of 4.37 pence per litre against average prices quoted from various oil companies. The scheme is a membership scheme which costs £20 per annum for individuals and £30 for community organisations such as Village Halls. Orders are placed each month (except December) and a broker scours the market to find the best price for our members; we currently have about 440 members. You can order oil as often as you like during the year and based on the average saving you would easily recoup your membership fee in a first order of 1000 litres. For further information or to join the scheme with our online webmail membership form please visit our website

<http://www.somersetccc.org.uk/oil-scheme.php>

Tips for making your home more energy efficient

- **Walls** - A third of the cost of heating your home is lost through the walls, so insulating them is the best way to save energy in the home. Installing cavity wall insulation can save you up to £160 per year on your heating bills.
- **Loft** - Laying your loft with 10 inches/25 centimetres of insulation can save you a quarter of your home's heating costs.
- **Bulbs** - Replacing just one old light bulb with an energy saving recommended one can reduce lighting costs by up to £78 over the lifetime of the bulb. Plus they last up to 12 times longer than the ordinary light bulbs.
- **Central heating** - If your boiler is over 15 years old consider switching to a new energy efficient one. High efficiency condensing boilers can save up to a third of your annual heating bills, and there are grants available to help cover the cost. Also turning your thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent and save you around £100 a year.
- **Hot water** - Is your water too hot? Your cylinder thermostat shouldn't need to be set any higher than 60°C/140°F.
- **Turn off appliances** - Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge unnecessarily. It is possible to get a power-down to automatically turn off equipment such as the television or your computer..
- **Save water** – remember to use the half-load or economy programmes if you're not filling up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher. Also, a dripping hot water tap can waste enough hot water to fill half a bath in just one week, so fix leaking taps and make sure they're all fully turned off.
- **Cup of tea?** - Only boil as much water as you need — but remember to cover the elements if you're using an electric kettle, you can buy energy saving kettles which save water and energy by doing this for you.

Also, you could get help with making your home more energy efficient through the new **Green Deal Scheme** where the costs of energy saving improvements can be paid for through the savings you make in fuel bills.

If you are quick can also register for extra cashback amounts. Call **Energy Saving Trust on 0300 123 1234** or visit <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/> to find out more.