

# The Riverporter

ST IVES AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

Issue 77: 22 January 2021

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

## Why we should feel optimistic

**T**here are fundamentally two sorts of people - optimists and pessimists. My wife says I am the optimist. Although it has been very hard to remain positive over the past year, I remain optimistic. You might wonder why?

Well despite the constant supply of bad news nationally, *The Riverporter* has regularly reported on the good work being done by local people and organisations to help our community and it has taken a pandemic to bring this to our attention.

Another reason is that, alongside the great work being done by groups and individuals, we are seeing our town councillors making every effort to deal with problems, particularly those caused by the virus and the recent flooding.

This is important because public pressure is seldom enough to achieve change. It needs the backing of elected councillors and our local authorities for things to happen.

### Problems - what problems?

Under the guidance of the Mayor, Jonathan Pallant and Deputy Mayor, Pasco Hussain, the council is working well, despite the difficulties of meetings being held on-line.

Back in May we reported on the attempted coup by some councillors to replace the Mayor elect on the basis that his inexperience would prove a problem due to Covid 19. (See On-line Issue 4: 15 May 2020).

Fortunately those councillors have been proved wrong and Mayor Pallant's adept use of zoom has been

a bonus. If ever proof were needed of this then last week's Town Council meeting is it. Sixty six people zoomed in to discuss the floods, which may be a record attendance for a normal council meeting.

## Flooding

The meeting heard from many of the people and businesses affected by flooding. The Town Council are not responsible for flooding issues but the meeting was well received and Lucy Wilson of Imray, Laurie, & Wilson, one of the affected companies, said she was impressed by the quick response and concern shown by the Town Council.

The Mayor told *The Riverporter* that he had invited those affected by the floods to give first-hand accounts during the 'Public Participation' period of the meeting.

He said 'I can safely say that anyone listening in could not help but be deeply moved by these harrowing accounts of homes being destroyed by sewage just as families were preparing to celebrate Christmas. My heart goes out to all those involved and I would like to re-iterate that I will push the Town Council to do whatever we can to ensure that the

various Councils, companies, agencies and land-owners responsible for the water courses in St Ives get on and do what needs to be done to prevent a reoccurrence of this terrible event.

On a positive note, I am aware that Huntingdonshire District Council's response will be to establish a Scrutiny Panel to collect evidence and make recommendations for all the towns in Huntingdonshire that were affected, but in the meantime I would urge anyone who has evidence of flooding to:

a) keep high-resolution pictures taken on smartphones and cameras so that they can be submitted when the call for evidence is put out, and b) to immediately report any instances of flooding or drainage issues to the relevant authorities, as indicated on the attached diagram from Cambs County Council.'

St Ives County Councillor Kevin Reynolds, who joined the meeting, confirmed that it was not an easy issue to solve (see diagram) with so many authorities involved and that over the years the cuts to services had affected regular maintenance.

The Town Council resolved to put together emergency plans so that they can be better prepared, should this kind of event happen again.

## Deputy Mayor delivers



Deputy Mayor, Cllr Pasco Hussain, dressed in full Covid outfit, is seen about to deliver 120 food parcels as part of the annual Langley Bread donations to St Ives widows, widowers and orphans.

The Council wish to thank Coop Manager, Darren Hammond for organising the supply of goods this year and in future years. Due to interest from investments it is hope to expand the range items next year.

Cllr Pasco Hussain was aided by Parish Church Warden, Barry Willis in delivering the bags. Any items that were left over went to the St Ives Food Bank, run by St Ives Parochial Church Council.

### Langley Bread Tradition

Back in the 1650s, a philanthropic St Ives man, Robert Langley, left money in his will to feed the town's widows. The Langley Bread tradition still continues each January, although it now includes more than just bread.

The Mayor told *The Riverporter* ...

'This will involve both policies and procedures for the Town Council to follow should an emergency event occur in St Ives again, and also how we can best obtain and circulate guidance for residents, both in advance of and during an emergency situation. This guidance will, of course, be based on best practice and discussed with the other relevant Local Authorities, Agencies and Emergency Services.'

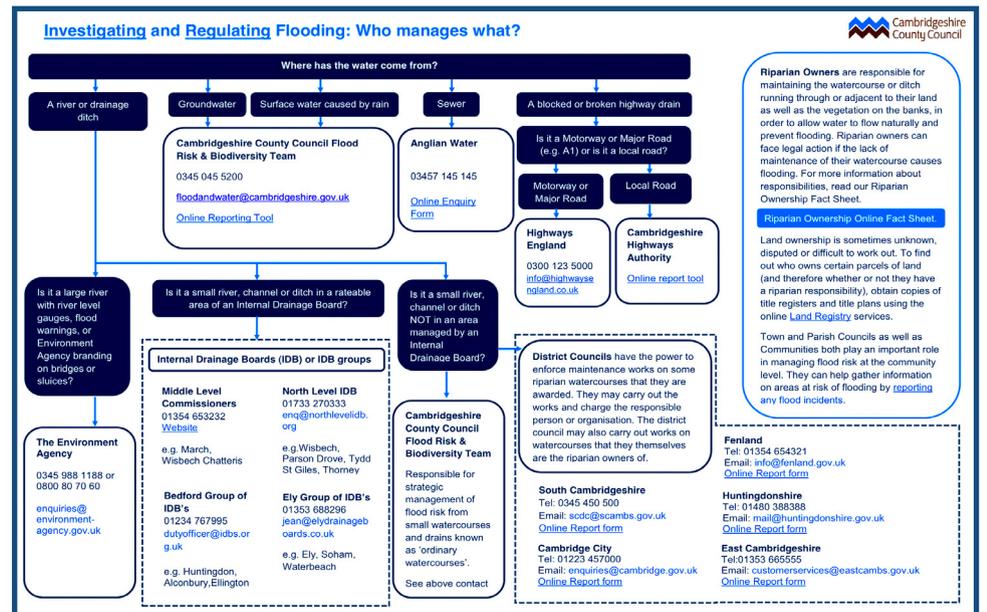
### What will be done?

This will depend on the cooperation and desire of the various authorities to prevent flooding. *The Riverporter*

was informed that a meeting is being held on site with interested businesses, the County Council's Flood Risk Officer and Matt Chudley of HDC to assess what might be done. We have also been aware that the ditches on St Audrey Lane have been cleaned, which is a good sign.

### Will my optimism be rewarded?

Only time will tell. The signs of greater cooperation among organisations and a tremendous public spirit to do good are very welcome. Whether this translates into real progress, will, as always, depend on the people we elect to govern us.



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## More 'Recycled' Snowman Festival Prizes

St Ives Town Team donated ten £20 vouchers for children who completed the Snowman Trail. Townrow donated two more prizes so that 12 young people won prizes.

The vouchers can be used to buy items from either Toys at No.9 or Townrow. Winners, including Sienna Desborough aged 8, Alexis Crouch aged 7, Maddie Pearson aged 3, Halle Scrimshaw-Davis aged 12 and Erin Scrimshaw-Dumont aged 5 have been informed by the Festival.

The Snowman Festival was altered to fit in with Covid guidelines and resulted in some wonderful displays, such as this host of characters which decorated Natalie's Sewing Service in Merryland (below).



## Community Rally Round to Support Vaccination Rollout

Here is another good example of the community rallying together to support healthcare staff and volunteers who are working over the weekend (8am - 8pm) to ensure the most vulnerable in the local population and those working with them receive the vaccination first. Waitrose kindly provided milk, sandwiches and snacks. The Co-op provided sandwiches and pot noodles. The St Ives Food Bank and

St Ives Mayor also provided provisions and support and Shopmobility in Huntingdon have loaned wheelchairs. Thanks go to James Eskriett (Manager), and staff at Waitrose, and to Darren Hammond (Manager), James Cox and staff at Co-op. Pictured (below) is Helen Dye from the Hub at 8am picking up provisions from Waitrose.

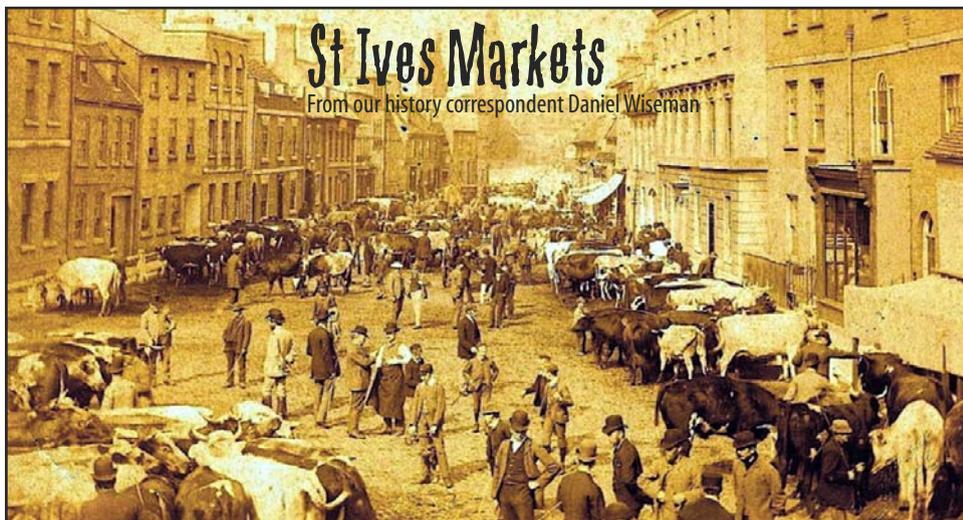


## Farewell to Norris Museum Director

According to the announcement by the Friends of the Norris Museum, Sarah Russell has resigned and will be leaving today, 22 January 2021.

The Chairman of the Friends said in a letter to Friends of the museum ... 'I am sure you would wish to join us in thanks and appreciation for the tremendous work that Sarah has done for the Museum during her time as Director and we wish her well for the future'.

Sarah became Director when the Museum was seeking to secure Lottery Funding to make the building changes which have now taken place. That work also included funds to assist with some additional staffing. Sarah took maternity leave in 2019 and returned to work last March just as lockdown began. On Wednesday the Town Council agreed to advertise for a new Director.



## St Ives Markets

From our history correspondent Daniel Wiseman

**T**here has been a market in St Ives since the 12th century when Henry I gave his approval for a week-long fair each Easter. These must have been quite a novelty because there were only three other towns that received such permission from the king.

The town's Monday market, still going today, was established a century later under King John. By the 1300s, markets became a common sight across the country and in St Ives, the increase in trade had meant the old wooden bridge had begun to struggle with the weight of all of the heavy traffic that had been crossing it and in 1425 the bridge was rebuilt in stone.

This gives us an idea of the importance and scale of the St Ives markets – at one point we had the second biggest cattle market in the country after Smithfield in London. It's thought the size of the market is what led to the large number of pubs in St Ives – in 1838, there were 64.

Originally the livestock markets were on the streets. The cattle market was held on the Broadway (see picture of the Broadway in the late 1800s held in the Norris Museum) and the sheep market was in the east end of Market Hill. But they soon grew so large they needed to be moved. Consequently, in 1884 the cattle market moved to where the bus station and car park are now located. The green wooden shed, The Octagon, that you see in the car park was once the home of the cattle auction. The sheep market was moved to where Poundstretcher now stands. When the sheep pens were not being used, they were stored in the building now occupied by Tom's Cakes. The two lodges where the buses exit the bus station were the original entrance lodges for the cattle market.

Markets have had such an important impact on our town that its emblem is four bull's heads.



## The good news is ... Covid vaccine is rolling out - Credit: CCG

A network of four GP practices in St Ives, Somersham, Fenstanton and Warboys have worked rapidly to redesign their site and put in place safe processes to meet the tough logistical challenges of offering the vaccination to patients.

The practices are: The Grove Medical Practice, Riverport Medical Practice, Moat House Surgery and The Spinney Partnership.

There will be a dedicated vaccination hub, so some patients will have to visit a different practice to their usual one. Full details will be given to patients when contacted.

Dr Emma Gayton, GP Partner at Grove Medical Practice and Clinical

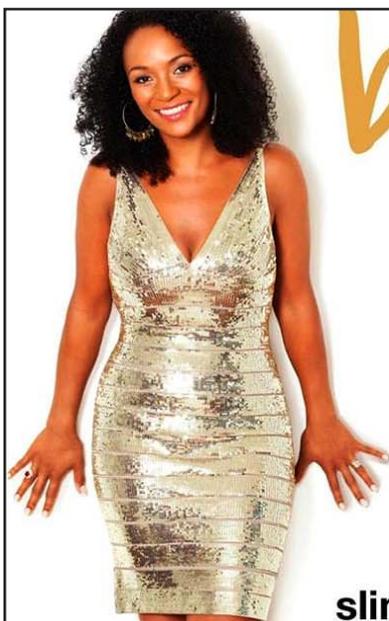
Director for St Ives Primary Care Network said, 'We are delighted to support the biggest and most highly anticipated national immunisation campaign in history by vaccinating and protecting our vulnerable local residents against Covid-19.'

*'Please do not call your GP practice to book, we will contact you. If you are invited to book an appointment, we would encourage you to take up this opportunity. When you attend your appointment, you will need to follow social distancing guidance, bring and wear a face masks or visor, and follow hand hygiene guidance.'*

*These steps help to save lives.*

## Watch out for Covid naysayers

Local social media sites have been very active recently with arguments between those who insist that the virus is a hoax and those who attempt to refute the misleading entries. One St Ives hoaxer this week says he won't be getting the jab because it doesn't mean he won't have to wash his hands any more or wear a mask, so why bother? Extraordinary selfishness it appears that regardless of his own protection he doesn't care about spreading it to the rest of us ... Unbelievable! Ed



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having your say ...

# The Riverporter

Voted Best local newspaper of the year 2019/20 in the Cambridge Building Society's Community Magazine Awards



Get it off your chest, email Erik at: [editor@theriverporter.uk](mailto:editor@theriverporter.uk)

## NEWS UPDATE

Dear Erik,

**Subject: doggy droppings**

Responsible dog owners unite and challenge the newbies who have rushed to purchase pooches to make their regular exercise more appealing. On our daily walks in St Ives, dodging excrement on our pavements is a regular occurrence unfortunately.

A self policing community is best and a disapproving look may be sufficient reminder that this is not acceptable in St Ives.

**Pam Edey**

*Dear Pam, Since lockdown began I have noticed a major increase in people not clearing up after their pooches. There really is no excuse and I have had it confirmed that if it gets reported offenders will be fined. So it's up to good owners to confront and report the problems because at the moment we are all in the mire, literally!* Erik

Dear Erik,

**Subject: St Ives Markets**

We do visit the Markets but would welcome them in the centre of town as before, people love the buzz, enjoy the friendliness, and hate the red zones everywhere. Just do something about the pavement widths, ask the locals for their knowledge of the town, then the planners might not make so many mistakes.

At last St Ives seems to have got going with the jabbing! But could do with a hub larger and more parking facilities than 'the old exchange' Thanks Erik for all the news – no where much to walk at the moment is there?

We love The Riverporter **Paula & Brian Luter**

Dear Erik,

**Subject: The Famous St Ives Market**

As a relatively new boy, I have lived in St Ives for 33 years, and when I chose to live in this pleasant and in many ways unique market town it now grieves me to see it suffering. It does not please me that it has been held as a good idea to allow a small encampment of the retail circus to lodge in the town. It was generally felt that Morrisons was an asset then the remainder of the national retail virus came. This has effected the commercial viability of the town centre. The ancient and historic town market which we recently celebrated has been left to erode over recent times and the shops of the town centre seem to have lost stability. Government has presented money to be given to market towns for their improvement and support but St Ives seems to have missed out or is certainly at the back of the queue. In my time there have been well considered plans to improve the town centre and recently a botched attempt to put together a further new plan for the town centre.

St Ives market should be resourced and promoted to be the best in the area, as let us face it, which other of the town markets in the area have a world famous rhyme about it.

I am not sure how the Civic Society is empowered to help in supporting the town centre and market but I would like someone to

sponsor an independent report on the recent past and current plans to improve and develop St Ives town centre and market. There are always noises of good intent but now action is urgently required. Could I at this point commend you for the wholly necessary and good local newspaper you help to produce. Perhaps we should have a crowd funding exercise and promote a report.

Best Regards

**Phil Sly**

Dear Erik,

**1) Cromwell Place Surgery.** Whilst much has been said about the aesthetics of the new extension there are other aspects which could/should have been addressed. Not everyone is fleet of foot and finds it difficult to walk from either of the two car parks so dropping them at the door solves the problem except you have to block the road to do so. A little forethought and a widening of the road adjacent to the entrance would make it easier to drop people off and overcome the displeasure exhibited by those held up.

**2) Bus Station Toilets.** St Ives is a bustling, thriving market town or so we are led to believe. After you've rattled in from the villages on the bus you then find it's a half mile walk to have a 'wee'. Not all of us have the elastic bladder of our youth so it impacts on our shopping too. An extensive survey was recently carried out on the sewers but no work has followed. Surely when traffic levels are at their lowest, because of Covid 19, now is the time to start. Regards, **Paul Whiteman**

Dear Erik,

**Subject: St Ives Market (RP 76).**

I was wondering if people who come into the town (particularly by bus) are put off because there are no public lavatories in the town centre. In normal times visitors could possibly use the Corn Exchange, The Golden Lion or other pubs and cafes. The Council should be ashamed by the lack of town facilities.

Regards **Terry**

### No Sitting

'Don't sit on a park bench', says vaccinations minister amid concerns about the rise in Covid rule-breaking. Government sources warn of 'tougher curbs if rules are broken'. As we were preparing this weeks *Riverporter* we received the latest report from the Cambridgeshire Police who have requested that we warn people taking their exercise that they will be clamping down and fining those of us that flout the rules. Indeed we have spotted police cars cruising the town and parking conspicuously on The Quay and The Waits. 'People must not sit on park benches to chat with friends' a minister has declared, amid mounting concern that rule-bending by the public was undermining lockdown.



At the same time Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty warned that the NHS was now at the 'most dangerous time' in its history and appealed to the public to obey the rules or risk spreading infections. While it's frustrating it is difficult to ignore the dreadful daily numbers which seem to present us with a new unwelcome record figure each week, a tiny ray of good news in our area is that numbers seem to be reducing with the exception of Peterborough.

### Sir John doesn't want to share his words

*The Riverporter* has been informed that Sir John Major, former PM and Huntingdon MP does not wish us to know what he has written in his letter included in the St Ives Mayor's Time Capsule. He has decided that he would like to keep to the spirit of the Time Capsule and so anyone interested in knowing will have to hang on for 30 years! [Guess we will never know Eds]

### Councillor Co-opted

Brandon Bent, the landlord of the Seven Wives and White Hart, was surprisingly disqualified from standing for co-option to the Town Council at the last minute. It turned out he has a US passport. To be a Town Councillor candidates should be a British or Irish passport holder. In the end Craig Smith, a candidate in the last Town Council elections in 2018 was elected.

Dear Erik,

Piecing together the weekly Police report and what I saw and was told by neighbours, I think that there is much to be said about the causes and effects of the flooding in St Ives on 24th Dec. The severe flooding of residential and business areas, well away from the river, affected numerous roads (several of them impassable), houses, mobile homes, garages and gardens, not forgetting premises in parts of the commercial area, especially Harding Way. It was caused in my view by a combination of:

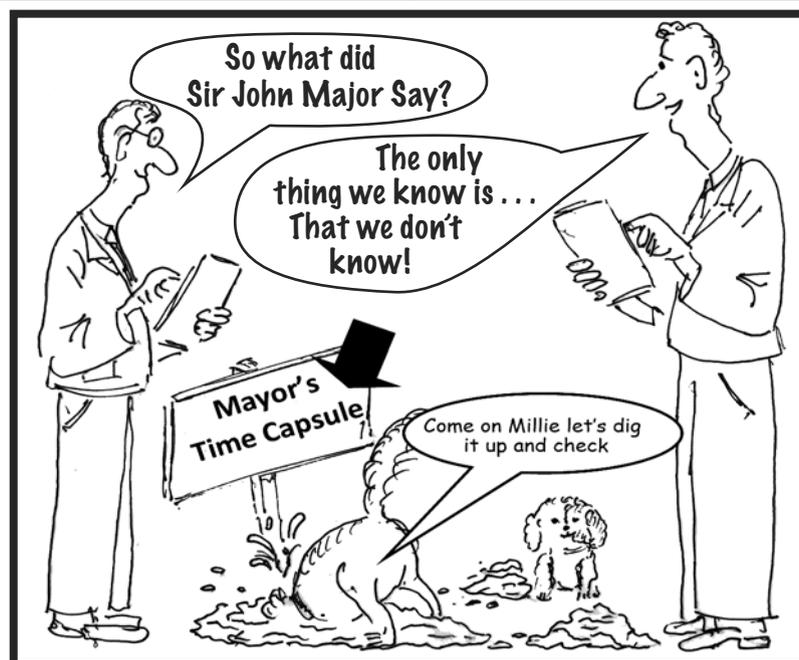
- inadequate drains and watercourses
- the already high water table
- drainage pipes and pumping installations rendered ineffective, with water gushing from roadside drains and levels in ground-floor

WC's rising precariously

- ultimately the flooded river and flood plain. Roads affected included Marley Road, Somersham Road, Harding Way, Edison Road, St Audrey Lane, Nursery Gardens, Woodside Way, Needingworth Road, Elsworth Close, Rookery Close, Farthing Lane and the mobile homes and Fairfields.

To prevent a recurrence, now and in the future, surely a root and branch investigation is urgently needed. The Town Council appears to have made a useful start to gathering information. Hopefully they will help coordinate the efforts of the four responsible authorities: Anglian Water, the Environment Agency and the County & District Councils.

**Ian Dobson**



### The Riverporter thanks its readers

Once again the lockdown has prevented us from distributing printed copies to all our outlets. You can still obtain a copy from the main newsagents in town and at Kings Hedges as well as Morrisons. You can read each issue on-line at [www.theriverporter.uk](http://www.theriverporter.uk) or by visiting our facebook page **and more people are ...**

The Editors are delighted that the number of readers has increased each month. Our website is now registering over 9,000 hits a month. With a further 2,000 looking at our Facebook page it seems that our readership is now in excess of 6,000 per issue.

The Editors thank you, our readers for making our efforts worthwhile. We produce The Riverporter entirely for fun and we also thank our loyal advertisers who make it possible. Please support them if you can.

HYPERION

## Entries Invited for Our Next Fine Art & Antiques Sale on 13th February



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From our environmental correspondent Heidi N. de Tries

## Heidi and her blue bosomed friends

[Sorry I had to change your headline ED]

Hopefully that's still got your attention darlings! Hasn't it?

Well, as you know I am rather fond of the sweet things, and now I've discovered that it's time to sponsor them! I'm meaning of course the Blue and Great Tits that have such a lovely time on the Holt Island Nature Reserve.

Those friendly Friends that look after the reserve have let me know that they have loads of tit boxes ready and waiting for new tenants. And I can sponsor one for only a tenner donation!

I get a map to show me where it is and a certificate and an invitation for a rendezvous on the island to learn more (just like the old times!). This will hopefully be in May when we all hope we will have seen the back of all these damp patches.

**The Friends have asked me to spread the word. You too can be tit friendly. All you have to do is go to <http://www.holtislandnaturereserve.org/index.php/adoptabox> Download the Adopt-a-Box form, follow the instructions and make the donation. Wouldn't it be lovely if we all met up on the island in the spring?**

Bye, Heidi xx

Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve

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# ADOPT-a-BOX

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# MORTGAGE APPROVALS RECOVER: HIGHEST LEVEL OF MORTGAGE APPROVALS SINCE AUGUST 2007

Rising to their highest level since 2007, mortgage approvals have all but recovered following the forced closure of the housing market in spring 2020. A new report from Dataloft collated the number of mortgages approved from January to November 2020 and compared the total to the same period in 2019. This set of data shows that 104,969 mortgages were approved in November 2020, the highest level since the pre-Global Financial Crisis.

## Mortgages available for First-Time Buyers boost the market

Lenders expanding the number of mortgages available to first-time buyers helped boost recent figures in the housing market. The report reveals that 160 deals are currently available for buyers with a 10% deposit, up from a low of 51 in October 2020. However, this figure of 160 is significantly lower than previously; with 762 deals being available in January 2020.

Accordingly to the report, the remarkable recovery of mortgage approvals is attributable to households' re-evaluating their housing requirements and has been fuelled by the stamp duty holiday.

Another feature of the 2020 housing market has been the surge in cash purchases. Comparing housing market indices, sales agreed in July 2020 were higher than mortgages approved, accounted for by cash buyers.

## Housing Price Forecast: What will happen over the following months

Dataloft consensus house price forecast, based on the average from five leading commentators, expects 0.9% growth 2021. Published forecasts for 2021 range from mildly negative to strongly positive. Rightmove forecast a 4% rise in 2021, Zoopla 1%, Knight Frank 1%, Savills 0% and JLL -1.5%.

2021 will be host to a lot of changes and deadlines which will no doubt impact transaction volumes and house prices. The stamp duty holiday deadline, changes to Help to Buy, potential changes to Capital Gains Tax, 2% surcharge for overseas purchasers.... and let's not forget Covid-19 and Brexit!



Source: Dataloft

# ellis&co winters