

# The Riverporter

ISOLATION DAY 26 - READ AND FORWARD ON!

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A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

## There are highs among the lows

**W**hilst most of us are still hunkering down at home, possibly fearing the worst, there are several signs of good things happening, such as the amazing efforts of 99 year-old Captain Tom and the generosity of all his sponsors.

Locally too there are groups of people being good neighbours attempting to reach everyone who needs help.

The Town Clerk has asked us to let readers know that, although all office and museum staff are working from home, they are trying to maintain 'business as usual' with a focus on co-ordinating and supporting groups in the town.

### Do you know of anyone who needs help?

If you do, or you are someone seeking help, the Town Council has a telephone number to call: **01480 884343**, and they will be able to direct callers to a group or organisation that can help.

The Council are also compiling a list of tradesmen who are still working at the current time, should you need emergency work doing. One of the better side effects of the shutdown is the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the effects that this and our quieter way of life is having on our environment.

In this issue we focus on environment issues, and here we must apologise to our lovely Heidi, who we sadly upset by omitting her words of wisdom from our last issue. I hope she has forgiven me, as I'm not sure I can take another lashing from her [tongue, of course].

## It's like everyone has an electric car!

One of the main and unexpected consequences of isolation, now in its 26th day, is the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> caused by vehicles. Not long ago, following on the heels of the less than friendly Brexit debates, we argued over the need to take radical action about emissions, if we were to save the planet.

Some people said that reducing the levels to zero could not be achieved before 2050. The Government has set a 2035 date for car manufacturers to stop producing vehicles that use fossil fuels. Well now we know what the effects might be if we all drove electric cars.

Nitrogen oxide levels have dropped by as much as 40% in some places and with less flights and less coal burning, especially in countries such as China where factories are closed, the overall effects are unprecedented.

Greta could not have hoped for better action than this. It highlights two things. Firstly that it is possible to change the environment radically if the will is there. And secondly, just what it will take for the world to be saved from an ecological disaster.

Hopefully these benefits will not be lost when the pandemic is over!?

## The silence of the Lanes

Each day the government live update gives us the grim data on the virus outbreak and each day they preface the announcements with a thank you to us the public for staying in our homes depriving the virus the opportunity to take another life and it has been amazing to listen as journalist after journalist asks the same questions every day: How much longer? Why haven't you done this? Why haven't you done that?

For many the captivity in our homes feels unbearable, some can't stand the solitude, some worry about their jobs, for others it's family they worry about. But while we go through this extraordinary time nature continues its course into spring and we notice a silence we have never heard in town before.

Erik lives right here in the centre of town but there is no noise, no traffic, no aeroplanes, no extractor fans, no crowds, chatting or music from our pubs and clubs, but you can hear the Blackbirds and the swans on the river.

In fact you can hear the river itself lapping past the bridge and the daily exercise is a real pleasure. Early morning in Market Hill is an eerie mixture of calm tranquillity while at the same time a scene from a Hollywood post apocalypse movie. So, when a good friend who teaches 'Mindfulness' points out that while this is hopefully only a passing moment in history it's also a moment to take stock of our busy lives and remember that the world moves on with or without us.

Left: Trainee Sub Editor Milly was so concerned when she heard that a tiger had caught Covid 19 she insisted on wearing her facemask, particularly as her daily walk goes past a Zoo.



The Great Ouse River valley at Hemingford.

From our Environmental Correspondent Heidi N. de Tries

## HEIDI'S DOUBLE HEADER!

**W**ell, I can hardly believe it. Our beastly editor forgot my piece last time. It's taken me two weeks to get over the humiliation. What with that and Mr Ed Gasket's rejection [see RPs53 and 55]. What, you hadn't heard? Read on...

The consolation, luvvies, is that he's promised space for my new piece as well this time. Now I'm beginning to feel a bit better. Here's the one you missed.

### HEIDI'S LOCAL HEROES

Oh darlings, what a calamity! I can't get out! Isolated! Me? Desolated more like. Oh my! Even that roguish Mr Gasket has stopped calling.

I told you he wouldn't last long. He told me I was too vulnerable. He's correct of course. But a girl has needs. I'll have to turn to my own 'devices'. I'll also spend a lot of time looking out the window. I was gazing out recently and a disparate (ooh, big word) bunch of people came along and started singing and dancing to Mamma Mia! Yes, I couldn't believe it either. But it cheered me up no end. Heroes they were.

### HEIDI GETS SERIOUS

Sweeties! Remember I mentioned some lovely people on the Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT) who want to make sure our beautiful river valley is looked after? You see I do mix with some serious people sometimes. Well, they are very worried by the Comb. Authority Mayor's road transport schemes. He seems convinced we need a third river crossing over one of the most beautiful stretches of the river between Hemingford Abbots and Godmanchester.

GOVT don't believe there is a case for this, nor enough public awareness about the plan, so they've asked me to bring it to your attention. Oooh I do feel so important! Here's a cutting from the Cambs Independent, another fine newspaper, that sets out their worries.



### And here's another one.

Just before my incarceration I was popping out to the nail bar (well it's an essential isn't it?) and on the way I came across a Town Councillor litter picking - on her own! Now, if she's not a Local Hero I'm a geisha girl. Now that's a thought.



Well done Cllr Margaret King!

Bye luvvies. And if you are locked down like me - keep your pecker up!

[Apologies Heidi, but I'm concerned about the innuendo in this. It's worse than usual. Remember your brief please. Ed]

Do have a read if you feel like me that we need all the green space we can get - and especially once we are allowed out again!

Love to all.  
**Heidi**  
**xx**



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

## COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE

St Ives Town Council has suspended its usual council meetings for the moment, but is holding on-line meetings this and next month.

### Councillor becomes a mum

At the last face-to-face meeting on 11 March the Mayor informed Members that congratulations were due to Councillor Pegoraro on the birth of her son. He also welcomed the new Macebearer, Philip Ganny, to the meeting. The Mayor was pleased to say that he had come joint first in the Huntingdon Pancake Day Flipathon.

### Grants given

The Town Council has been generous over recent years in helping many of the Town's community groups and has agreed funding for four years to some enable them to plan ahead. The following organisations will receive these grants this year:

FEST - £7,150, St Ives in Bloom-£3,000, St Ives Christmas Lights-£10,000, St Ives Carnival and Music Festival - £9,000, Disability Information Service Huntingdonshire - £600, RELATE - £520, Hunts Association for the Blind - £500, St Ives Time Bank - £1,100, The Bridge Counselling Centre - £1,100, The Bridge Money Advice Centre - £1,100, CAB Rural Cambs - £2,000 and Kick Roots Youth Club - £500.

In 2019 St Ives Town Team did not apply for a grant as it had been successful in raising funds, which included working with the town's businesses. However to continue its work in promoting the town and improving the environment, it applied for and received, a one year grant of £9,390.

The following Small Local Groups received grants of £500: Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue, St Ives & Warboys Cricket Club, The Bobby Scheme and Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise. However an application from Hill Rise Dog Walkies was considered inappropriate as the park and dog walk area came under the jurisdiction of Huntingdonshire District Council.

### COMMUNITY PUBLIC ACCESSIBLE DEFIBRILLATOR

The Council resolved that a defibrillator will be sited on an external wall of the Norris Museum. Under District matters Councillor Fuller reported that there was no further progress on the Combined Authority Transport Study, or on the proposed river crossing.

### Virtual meetings

In April the Council held an on-line meeting and also intend to continue to do so in May when the agenda will include the usual decisions about the change of Mayor. The actual 'Mayor Making' civic event will take place later in the year. The Council had already taken a vote at February's meeting agreeing that the Mayor elect would be Councillor Jonathan Pallant and Councillor Pasco Hussain would be Deputy Mayor elect.

The April meeting also resolved the delegation of all matters that are linked to ongoing Council business, and/or directly resulting from the current COVID 19 situation, to the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and to defer all Committee meetings until such time as personal contact restrictions are lifted to allow meetings to take place in public again. Finally it was agreed that a meeting is convened and made available for public participation through ZOOM on the second Wednesday of each month to receive an update on those matters where delegated authority has been used.

### County Council matters

Councillor Fuller apologised he had been unable to attend the Annual Town Meeting. He had, however, provided an update for the Town Clerk to read to the meeting.

He reported that there was no further progress on the Combined Authority Transport Study and nothing further to report on the proposed river crossing.

### District Council matters

Councillor Fuller reported that the speculation that HDC was reliant on its reserves for the next year was untrue. The Council would be setting a surplus budget this year. He also reported that £200k had been put into budgets to investigate civil parking enforcement across the District.

[The Riverporter had highlighted in issue 54 that this money had been allocated in the accounts. It seems that this is just to investigate civil parking, which we were told at 2019's Town Meeting needed to be done across the District and couldn't be just in St Ives. Should a scheme go ahead then it will be possible to fine drivers who park illegally, something many of the town's people have been calling for for some time. It is likely that any decision will take time, especially in the current circumstances, so we suggest you don't hold your breath!]

### Are the police being heavy handed?

We have been hearing of some police officers being a bit too keen on enforcing isolation, such as telling a family not to use their front garden. Yesterday examples of what the authorities consider what is, and what is not, permissible were published. This included that it was okay for people to drive to a park for exercise as long as the car journey didn't take longer than the time exercising. The trouble is that one person's common sense can be another person's unreasonableness and that guidance will probably not clarify matters.

Sadly The Riverporter heard of a local lady being moved on by a Cambs Constabulary PCSO because she was sitting on a bench on the Waits. She was all by herself and probably not infecting anyone. She moved of course, without complaint, but the fact we heard of the incident shows she wasn't happy about it. We are not saying that the officer was wrong but it did seem a little heavy handed in the circumstances.

The success of the isolation programme relies on public support and it is clear that the stricter the rules and the enforcement, the harder it will be to gain total support and without a known strategy for exiting the lockdown we could see more heavy handed incidents.

## Corona Crafts!

How to use this moment of enforced leisure?



### Idle hands and all that ...

Many it seems are taking the opportunity to fix all those things around the house that need repair, many are taking to paint and decorating, and some are turning to art and craft as a release, Erik has learned of people painting, model making, sculpting, craftwork with tile mosaics ...

### So what have you been doing?

### The Riverporter is launching our Covid 19 Lockdown Challenge

Send us pictures of what you have been up to during the lock down (not the naughty stuff!) and when it's possible we will arrange a small exhibition of the entries and we'll ask our Town Mayor to pick the favourite and the winner will receive a Riverporter Trophy to mark their achievement. So don't be shy be creative and send in your ideas, it's only for fun but let's give the people of St Ives something to smile about.

### Self Isolation affects us all - even Banksy

Even our famous street artist has had to confine his latest work to his own bathroom. Sharing the image on social media he said, 'My wife doesn't like it when I work from home'. His work usually has a message, and this, it seems is no exception as it features toilet rolls and shows the possible chaos created by having to keep the children (the rats?) amused and schooled at home.

