**Report from Hilary Bastone – (My April notes for Parish Councils)**

**THIS MONTH’S TOPICS**

**Police Councillor Advocates**

**£2 bus fare cap extended**

**Sea Safe Campaign**

**Waste Update**

**Enjoy swimming safely as we welcome the holiday season**

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**THIS MONTH’S TOPICS IN MORE DETAIL:-**

**Police Councillor Advocates**

As you will be aware, we have been facing some challenges around contact over recent months and we are working hard to improve our service to the public.

Following the successful go-live of single online home – our new website – we are working to improve our non-urgent and non-emergency online contact service.

As a result, we will be asking partners and members of the public to contact us using the online forms available on the new website, rather than emailing 101.

Current situation

Last year (2022) we answered nearly 285,000 999 calls, 241,623 101 calls and responded to nearly 963,000 web chat requests. We also received 146,000 emails.

In February of this year (the shortest month) we received 22,255 999 calls; just over 25,000 101 calls; 3,631 webchat requests – and 10,749 emails.

As you can see, emails make up a significant amount of our demand and can come from the public, partners, or other police forces.

We want to improve the way we deal with online contact to give everyone who contacts us in this way a better service.

What is the issue?

Currently when partners and members of the public email us, we often need to engage in a lengthy email conversation to understand vital information which may have been left out of the initial message, and which is essential to both be able to understand the situation properly and respond appropriately.

This email back-and-forth can take significant time which, unfortunately, can then impact on our ability to deal with other reports coming not our contact centre in a timely way.

The use of the web forms available on our website will prevent this issue because they are constructed with “prompts” to ensure we have all the information we need from the very first time a member of the public gets in touch. This allows our response to be both faster and more efficient.

To support the exclusive use of web forms, we aim to remove the facility to be able to send emails to 101 on 17 April.

New way to make a non-urgent/ non-emergency report online

If you or a member of your office engages with a member of the public who wish to make a make a report of non-urgent or non-emergency report to us, please direct them to the website: www.devon-cornwall.police.uk and the new web forms are available on the home page.

Staff from partner agencies who wish to report to us are directed to our partner services page of our website: www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/partners/partner-services

(Remember - if a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger, always call 999).

What is not changing?

The 101 phone line and all emergency contact options remain unchanged.

This will only affect the old 101 email addresses (101@dc.police.uk or 101@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk)

All web forms will be dealt with by the same dedicated and hardworking contact team who would have picked up the email correspondence.

What are we asking from you?

We would be grateful if you could support us in managing this change. We know that many partners and agencies use the 101 email address, but in future they will need to submit reports via the Partner Services section of our website: www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/partners/partner-services

We would also be grateful for your support in sharing this message and request that any future correspondence does not include any reference to the old 101 email address. We would also ask that if you have a website or any literature these are reviewed to ensure they no longer include the email address.

In the event you have any questions about this change, please contact Superintendent Matt Bourne via email: matthew.bourne@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk.

Thank you for your support.

Assistant Chief Constable Nikki Leaper, Devon & Cornwall Police

**£2 bus fare cap extended**

As part of the Help for Households support, the government has announced that the discounted bus travel is being extended for another three months across 5,000+ routes from over 140 bus companies.

The £2 fare cap means passengers can save on single bus tickets. The scheme began in January this year and has seen an uptick in passenger numbers.

**Sea Safe Campaign**

Safe swimming at Salcombe, and around South Hams beaches, is a key message for South Hams District Council this Easter break and beyond.

Most people head out to enjoy a dip in the sea, especially when the weather starts to warm up and the water laps invitingly against the shoreline.

This holiday period, South Hams District Council is urging all water-users, whether weekend bathers, paddle boarders, boat users or intrepid wild sea swimmers, to be safe and visible.

Read the full press release on our website.

**Waste Update**

We have organised for litter clearance works to take place on the A38 on both carriageways in both directions including the slipways starting on Tuesday 11 April.

This will take place over six nights by a standalone team, covering Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday and Monday night.

We are working closely with the teams to make sure that this operates as smoothly as possible and any fly tipped items found in harder to reach areas will be removed during this time.

**Enjoy swimming safely as we welcome the holiday season**

Safe swimming at Salcombe, and around South Hams beaches, is a key message for South Hams District Council, as the weather begins to warm up and the busy holiday season gets underway.

Most people head out to enjoy a dip in the sea, especially when the weather starts to warm up and the water laps invitingly against the shoreline. This holiday period, South Hams District Council is urging all water-users, whether weekend bathers, paddle boarders, boat users or intrepid wild sea swimmers, to be safe and visible.

The majority of swimmers stay on lifeguarded beaches, between red and yellow flags, but where do you swim when there aren’t lifeguards nearby?

The Salcombe Harbour Master strongly advises swimmers to swim where boats are expecting you to be, and never, ever, in the boating channels. This means, you cannot swim across the estuary, from one side to the other. He stresses that it is exceptionally dangerous, and you are endangering your life and that of other people by doing so.

To those swimming in the River Avon, particularly between Aveton Gifford and Bantham, the Council ask you to take extra care to be seen. Swimmers often do not realise how very difficult they are to spot from a boat, and it can be really dangerous when there are a lot of craft out on the river.

Swimmers are at great risk from boats and jet skis if swimming in open water without any visibility aids. Rather than swimming alone, enthusiasts might be interested in the many organised swim groups within local communities.

Wherever swimming or enjoying water sports this holiday season, please take care:

The RNLI’s key safety advice for taking a dip is:

Visit a lifeguarded beach and swim between the red and yellow flags.

Check the weather forecast, tide times and read local hazard signage to understand local risks.

Keep a close eye on your family – on the beach and in the water – don’t allow your family to swim alone.

If you fall into the water unexpectedly, FLOAT TO LIVE. Fight your instinct to thrash around, lean back, extend your arms and legs, and float.

If in doubt, stay out – there is always another day to go for a swim.

Take plenty of warm clothes for before and after your dip, along with a hot drink to help you warm up again when you come out of the water.

Wearing a wetsuit will help increase your buoyancy and reduce the chances of suffering cold water shock.

Be seen – wear a brightly coloured swim cap and consider using a tow float.

Acclimatise to the water temperature slowly – never jump straight in

Stay in your depth and know your limits.

If you get into trouble, remember FLOAT to live by leaning back in the water, extending your arms and legs, and resisting the urge to thrash around to gain control of your breathing.

Take a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch.

If you or someone else is in trouble, call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

Cameron Sims-Stirling, Salcombe Harbour Master, said: “We understand that water activities are always a popular choice across South Hams, especially as the weather warms up and school holidays begin. Families should keep a very careful eye on children and leave any inflatables at home.

“There is an ever-increasing number of those who use the water, not just for swimming, but for water sports such as paddleboarding, surfing, canoeing, kite surfing and boating. Everyone on the water should take extra care, have the correct equipment and keep an eye on the sea conditions.

“Those on the water should beware of rip tides and follow the RNLI’s advice of remaining calm. If you find yourself pulled out to sea, relax as much as you possibly can and do not fight against the current. When you are no longer being pulled out to sea, and if you can stand, wade back towards the shore. If the water is still too deep to stand, swim parallel back to the shore. You can also raise your hand and shout for help to quickly raise the alarm. Please also make sure you acclimatise to the water’s temperature slowly, never jump straight in.

“As the busy season approaches, and we welcome tourists to the area, it is important that we remain sensible and respect the water in order to avoid any emergency scenarios. When visiting any harbour, always check for local restrictions and byelaws regarding use of the water. With the right precautions, we can all safely enjoy the beautiful coastline here in South Hams.”

You can find more information on beach safety and how to enjoy cold water swimming at the RNLI website here:

https://rnli.org/safety/beach-safety

https://rnli.org/safety/respect-the-water