2021 has been another year dominated by the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on so much of our society. The great hope offered this year though has been the widespread take up of the covid vaccine. Thank you to every one of you who has been involved in that process either by working so hard to get the thousands locally, and millions nationally, immunised or by receiving the vaccine yourself (thereby doing your bit to allow the opening up of society).

First bells for covid-19 memorial are cast at bell foundry

A memorial to mark the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on local communities in Charnwood is starting to take shape.  The first three, quarter bells of the planned Hope Bell project were cast at Loughborough’s iconic John Taylor and Co bellfoundry in September.

The Hope Bell project, backed by Loughborough Town Deal, will see the creation of a clock chime installation comprising four, quarter chime bells and the main Hope Bell to sound the hours.  The Hope Bell will be a lasting memorial to all those in Charnwood who have lost their lives in the Covid-19 pandemic and be a tribute to NHS and key workers. It will also be a beacon of hope for the future.

Loughborough is synonymous with bells, being home to the last working bellfoundry in the UK and the casting was part of a heritage open weekend at Taylor’s. The Loughborough Town Deal Board has been offered £16.9 million by the Government to boost the local economy and bring improvements to the local area. A series of projects backed by the Board have now been submitted to Government for further development, including the Lanes and Links projects of which the Hope Bell is part. It is anticipated the Hope Bell would be located in Queen’s Park

The four quarter bells will weigh between 3 cwt and 8 cwt and the main Hope Bell will weigh 1 ton 5 cwt, sound the note D and measure 4ft 4in in diameter.  Some aspects of the project, such as messages left by people, could be funded by public subscription.

The Town Deal Board wants the local community to be involved in the development of the Hope Bell project and that’s why comments and views are being invited. If you would like to have a say on the project in this early stage, please visit [www.charnwood.gov.uk/hopebell](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/hopebell).

Gritters on standby for freezing weather

As the nights draw in and temperatures drop, Leicestershire County Council is ready to tackle winter, with thousands of tonnes of salt in grit barns across the county.

The gritting team have been out since early November and drivers are on standby every night at this time of year, ready to spread salt wherever there is a likelihood of frost, ice or snow affecting roads. The salt is stored in grit barns in Melton, Misterton, Mountsorrel, Market Harborough and Nailstone, where gritters will roll out as required to keep the county’s roads moving.

Last year the county council’s gritting lorries carried out 77 runs of its 17 routes, using a whopping 12377 tonnes of salt to keep the roads safe. In addition to the gritters, there are also a number of snow wardens based in communities across the county who grit paths, as well as farmers who during deep snow, fit ploughs to their tractors and assist the council in clearing roads.

It is strongly recommended that people familiarise themselves with the gritting routes and keep up to date with local weather using the local radio or following the council on Twitter @LeicsCountyHall. For more information on winter maintenance in Leicestershire, and for advice about winter driving and snow clearance of the paths outside your property, visit <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/winter-weather>.

As this is my last article of 2021 I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry Christmas, and a happy and peaceful New Year.

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