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## **AUTHORITY SAYS SECOND HOME COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM WILL STAY**

Pembrokeshire County Council has justified its decision to continue to charge a 50 per cent Council Tax premium on second homes.

The Authority has faced criticism from some second home owners who claim the extra charge should not be levied as they are unable to use their properties in Pembrokeshire because of the coronavirus travelling restrictions.

But the Council say that the Covid-19 outbreak has no bearing on the reason for introducing the premium in the first place three years ago.

“It was brought in simply to help increase the supply of affordable homes, particularly in our rural areas” said the Council Cabinet Member for Finance, Bob Kilmister.

“It is a fact that second homes can reduce the amount of housing available for local people. A holiday home in a village can mean one less property available for occupation by a local family. That we are in the middle of this terrible pandemic does not alter that.”

There are around 3,600 second homes in Pembrokeshire.

Councillor Kilmister also pointed out that the extra cash generated by the Council Tax premium was being put to good use.

“Half of the proceeds go towards the provision of affordable housing and the remainder funds the Enhancing Pembrokeshire Grant which gives money to help pay for community projects” he explained.

“To date we have paid out in excess of half a million pounds to scores of local projects which are making a huge difference in the day-to-day life of our communities.”

“Without the 50 per cent Council Tax premium, that money would not be forthcoming.”

Council Tax is collected on domestic properties and the money is raised to part-fund local services, such as the local authority, the police, and town and community councils.

Prior to the premium being introduced, the Authority's policy was not to award any discounts to owners of second homes and they were liable for 100 per cent Council Tax, namely the standard rate.

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