

## County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date of Report: 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021

### Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington

(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)

#### Devon County Council: key issues

**COVID-19 – Team Devon remains in place.** Rates of infection and cases continue to decline and vaccination programmes continue. Regularly updated information and advice is at this website link:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/>

**DCC Full Council & AGM; (27.05.21)** This was the first in person meeting of the new Council and to enable social distancing was held at Sandy Park Conference centre. The new Council is made up of 39 Conservatives, 9 Liberal Democrats, 7 Labour Party, 3 Independents and 2 Greens

The new Council Chairman for this year is Cllr Jeffrey Trail (Exmouth); deputy Chair, Cllr Debo Sellis (Tavistock)

Cllr John Hart (Bickleigh & Wembury) remains as **County Council Leader** until 2025

Deputy Leader, Cllr James McInnes (Hatherleigh & Chagford)

#### **The new cabinet members / portfolio holders are:**

Cllr Roger Croad (Ivybridge)	- Public Health, Communities & Equality
Cllr Andrea Davis (Combe Martin)	- Climate Change, Environment & Transport
Cllr Rufus Gilbert (Salcombe)	- Economic Recovery & Skills
Cllr Stuart Hughes (Sidmouth)	- Highways Management
Cllr Andrew Leadbetter (Wearside & Topsham)	- Children's Services & Schools
Cllr Phil Twiss (Feniton & Honiton)	- Finance
Cllr Andrew Saywell (Torrington Rural)	- Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation

Due to the increased size (5 Members) of the new Independents and Green Group, we now have 18 Committee seats between us. I'm now deputy Group Leader and have the following Committee Seats:

Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Committee – (covers highways matters)

DM Planning Committee

Investment and Pension Fund Committee

Procedures Committee

South Hams HATOC (Highways and Traffic Orders Committee)

Minerals & Waste Framework Plans working group

Devon Rail Forum (tbc)

The following **motion** was tabled at this meeting and referred to cabinet for a recommendation:

1. This Council applauds the Deaf Academy Student Council campaign to reduce the speed of traffic in Douglas Avenue (Exmouth). Council calls on our Highway Officers to urgently introduce a 20 mph speed limit in Douglas Avenue and install a zebra crossing outside the school to ensure that these children and young people can cross the road in safety, and,
2. Additionally, this Council calls on Highway Officers to bring a Report to Council before the end of 2021 on implementing 20 mph speed limits in the vicinity of all schools in Devon to ensure that all children and young people can arrive and leave their schools in greater safety.

I am intending to table an amendment (to add an additional point to include permitting 20mph speed limits in town and village centres and residential areas) when this returns to Full Council in July for decision.

A further, brief **Extraordinary Full Council** meeting was also held to approve the nomination of eight new Honorary Aldermen proposed for the County.

Highways Matters:

**A381 from Totnes to Harbertonford.** The road works are set to continue on the Western by-pass (see the maps at the end of this report regarding the remaining road closures for work schedules to be carried out).

### **Additional A381 repairs requested – road condition**

Further to that area set for repairs, the A381 is in a very poor state of repairs and there have been a lot of reports which I have followed up on. The Neighbourhood Highways team have informed me that they have carried out an inspection and agree the surface is deteriorating quickly. “The route is inspected monthly but I am apprehensive to say that that will resolve all the issues as some of the delamination of the surface may not be at an actionable defect level. We did also raise concerns as this is the route of the Tour of Britain and under that work flow inspections were to take place and there are plans to patch sections. Those inspections only took place this week so we should have a finalised idea of what is needed to deliver and the practicalities of how quickly that can be achieved shortly.” Further to which I have received an update “A work design will now be drawn up that will be reviewed and progressed by our Asset Management Team.” I have requested that this is urgent and prioritised.

### **Request for pedestrian lights and crossing at Plymouth Road Junction**

When I was notified of these 12 weeks of closures for repairs, I wrote to Highways to point out that as these provide an extended window of opportunity which is also cost-effective to install the changes to the lights, signage etc for a safe pedestrian crossing, I requested this be considered as a matter of urgency, the need and evidence for the benefit of having a having a pedestrian crossing at this junction has been agreed at HATOC, further to which it was one of the Active Travel routes for Totnes that was identified during COVID last year as providing a safe route for residents and their children to reach the town centre and the schools. Since the 12 weeks period of roadworks was about to start, I asked that this be initiated without delay. I have been advised I will receive a response after June 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Totnes Air Quality Management Action Plan.** I also reminded the Highways officers that I had raised a question about funding for the Totnes AQMAP at the previous (April) DCC Full Council with regard to the obligation of DCC to fund the proposals to reduce the toxic pollution on the A385 arterial route through Totnes. (At that meeting I was advised it is a matter for SHDC, however, that has to be erroneous advice as SHDC is not responsible for highways or highways funding). I intend to follow this up as a matter of urgency.

### **No Mow May – Life on the Verge**

Many residents in this division are anxious to retain our roadside verges for wildlife and prevent mowing unless necessary for visibility. The following (somewhat poetic) email was recently sent by a resident to Sarah Jennings, County Ecologist:

“The sun came out yesterday – hooray – oh it’s gone again...

On a sunny drive to Totnes, it became clear the council’s contractors had been out.

It’s that time of year when the verge police are on duty.

Must tidy!

For several miles between Buckers and Dartington verges had been cut.

Wild flowers all set to bloom have been reduced to fine clippings.

The one remaining orchid on the verge by the turning to Riverford had been cut down.

Banks of blue vetch, cow parsley and flowering ransoms have been cut more ruthlessly than ever before.

So called 'visibility splays' have been extended it seems.

Why on earth do councils need to cut verges 50 yards or more before the sign for a bend?

Road signs are at least 6 feet above the ground and at least a metre above the highest hogweed.

Why do we need vast visibility splays when we can clearly see cars coming?

There were even mown areas where there was no need for visibility!

I guess grass and wild flowers might be in danger of touching car tyres?

Why spend (now valuable) resources on mowing verges when they could be spent on repairing roads?

Or even cleaning filthy road signs?

That would surely be money better spent.

The irony and sadness of all this: Councils are promoting 'caring for wildlife', then destroying and killing it.

For info: <https://www.devonnewscentre.info/may-is-devons-naturally-healthy-month>

The much publicised NO MOW MAY is clearly of no interest to the councillors we elect.

Have they read or heard about declining insect populations?

If so, why do they seem happy to sanction the destruction of habitat that has the potential to feed thousands of much needed insects.”

Sarah Jennings issued the following reply (which I shall follow up, as I am keen to prevent any unnecessary hedge trimming to spare the wildlife and save money): “ Highways have contacted Skanska to check the situation. I have just chased and someone should get back to you next week.”

### **Changes to Bus services: Local Bus Service: Totnes - Kingsbridge - Salcombe**

I have been informed of changes to bus services between Totnes, Kingsbridge and Salcombe which will increase the choice of travel times, particularly for passengers using rail services to and from Totnes Station. This results from joint working between the County Council, Great Western Railway and Tally Ho Coaches. The Council is supporting the service using new government funding allocated in early 2020, but unfortunately put on hold due to the COVID pandemic

From 21st June the two services between Totnes and Kingsbridge (164) and Kingsbridge and Salcombe (606) will be combined into one through service at an improved frequency, providing connections with Great Western trains to and from London, together with a range of connections with Cross Country services. Buses will run approximately hourly from early morning into the evening Monday to Saturday, with a Sunday & Bank Holiday service of three through buses a day.

The timetable can be found on the Tally Ho web site [www.tallyhocoaches.co.uk](http://www.tallyhocoaches.co.uk) It will also appear in the County Council’s South Hams area timetable book which, after not appearing during 2020, is now being republished and distributed in the area.

### **Local Issues – TOTNES**

**Totnes TC Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Planning working group** is hosting good discussions & actions

The next meeting will take place on (the third Tuesday of each month) **Tuesday June 15<sup>th</sup> at 6pm**. All are welcome to attend. This will be a virtual Zoom meeting as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81632190242?pwd=ZFZlNnZKbXJ3Wm5DdXhnczBUZkpqdz09>

Meeting ID: 816 3219 0242      Passcode: 299511

**Totnes Area Tree Planting** – Community tree planting events were carried out in March / April in Totnes. Meetings are now being held to plan for next season’s planting in the autumn. The next tree network meeting will take place on **Tuesday June 8th at 5.00pm** on Zoom at this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89194825051?pwd=K2x3RmhFdnpzNStsbktVbTVESDlmUT09>

**Totnes & District: Traffic & Transport Forum** The next meeting takes place on **Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June at 6.30pm**. Agenda and Link will be published on Totnes TC website at this link:

[http://www.totnestowncouncil.gov.uk/Traffic\\_and\\_Transport\\_614.aspx](http://www.totnestowncouncil.gov.uk/Traffic_and_Transport_614.aspx)

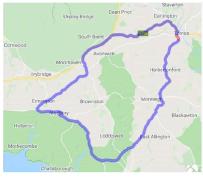
**DARTINGTON:** A request by Devon Highways / School’s patrol to remove the dedicated schools patrol crossing by the Texaco Garage in Dartington. I have have strongly objected to this as not only is it likely to be furnished with a proper zebra crossing (as a condition attached to the proposed baker estates development at Broom Park), but also is provides a pedestrian links between Cott, the Post Office and shop at the garage to the recreational fields, community centre and the schools at Shinner’s Bridge. South Devon Rural Housing Association has also supported my request for this crossing to remain in place.

### **Subject: NEW FUNDING AVAILABLE: Apply Now for the Fast-Track Retrofit Coordinator Programme**

The Retrofit Academy CIC has been awarded additional funding under the Green Home Grant (GHG) Skills Training Competition to train an additional 138 Retrofit Coordinators by 30th September 2021. All applications on a first come first serve basis. Details and eligibility in the link below.

<https://www.retrofitacademy.org/new-funding-available-apply-now-for-our-fast-track-retrofit-coordinator-programme/> Do let us know if anyone or anyone you know ends up going through this programme.

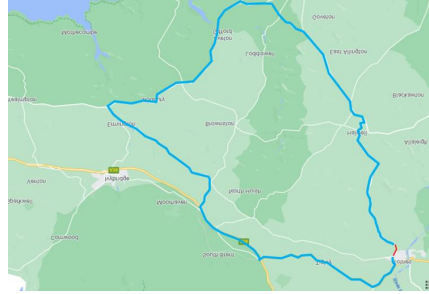
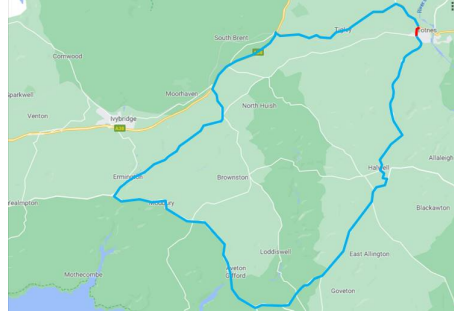
**Road Closure on A381 Western By-Pass – A381 maintenance and repairs - Scheduled roadworks (nightly) for up to 12 weeks from 3<sup>rd</sup> May.** More highways works have been scheduled from 3<sup>rd</sup> May to 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 from 19.00 to 07.00 to enable highways maintenance works, waterproofing, surface drainage, road lining and Traffic signs.



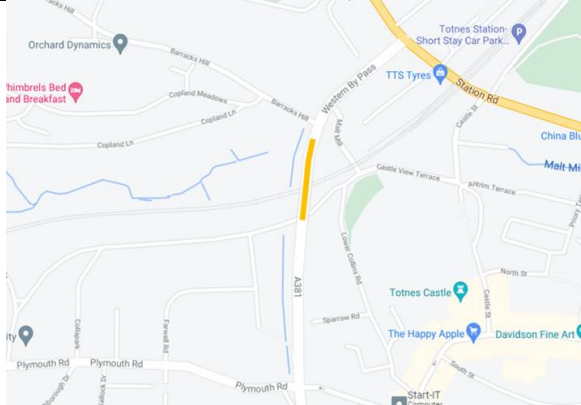
**These works will NOT take place over the bank holiday weekend in June**

Major diversions will operate via A381, A379, A3121, A38, A381, and vice versa (see map). However local routes can still be navigated, as per the information and maps attached at the end of this report.

**A381 Road Closures continue– maintenance and repairs across the REMAINDER of the 12 weeks for local route access**

Dates: all night time closures	Road closed	Diversion route
1 <sup>st</sup> June to 4 <sup>th</sup> June	 <p data-bbox="280 1032 667 1061">Plymouth road will remain open</p>	
7 <sup>th</sup> June to 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	 <p data-bbox="280 1406 671 1435">Plymouth Road will remain open</p>	

**Dates for the lane closures location and traffic management used**

Dates:	D/N	Lane closure location	Traffic management
7 <sup>th</sup> to 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Day		Footway across bridge will be closed alternately.