

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date of Report: 2nd October 2022
Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)

Devon County Council: key issues

Stagecoach Bus Services and changes services in Bridgetown:

Further to my previous report, I have received a reply to my letter to Stagecoach regarding their withdrawal of the Gold Service in Bridgetown:

"Further to my initial e-mail of 16th September, thank you, again, for getting in touch with your concerns regarding the decision to withdraw our Gold service from operating in the Higher Westonfields area of Totnes.

Given your previous involvement you will, no doubt, be aware of the recent history of our Gold service in this area, and the difficulties that have been caused by large vehicles meeting given the restricted road space in the area. We did consider whether alternative options would be sufficient to address these concerns which had been consistently raised with us by residents over a sustained period of time. Although slight modifications to the road layout may have ameliorated the issues to a degree, and efforts made to slightly re-time the vehicles passing through the area the latter would, unfortunately, not prove a guarantee against vehicles continuing to meet in the area due to the possibilities of buses becoming delayed - something which is made all the more possible on a long route such as the Gold service.

We took the concerns of the local residents very seriously and this was certainly a significant factor in our decision making process in removing the Gold service from Higher Westonfields, albeit not the only one and, ultimately, we felt this area would be more appropriately served by extending our 88 service.

As an operator of commercial bus services, Stagecoach is having to respond to a challenging, and ever changing, business environment. Covid has accelerated certain travel trends and, although we are starting to see a recovery, bus operators across the country are experiencing significantly reduced passenger demand whilst costs are rising, not least to enable us to attract staff at a time when many employers are facing shortages. Whilst, as an industry, we have been grateful for government support to enable us to keep operating during the pandemic, this support is due to end by the end of this calendar year. This means that we, in common with other bus operators across the country, are in a position where we must consider the financial viability of our services very carefully, and this is a process which we have been undertaking in conjunction with the Transport Co-Ordination team at Devon County Council over recent months. As a result of this process, some difficult decisions may need to be taken to protect the financial viability of some services and, ultimately, the company.

Following such a review, it was concluded that the recent changes to the Gold and 88 services would be appropriate and enable us to provide a service to the residents of Higher Westonfields and to maintain links with the town centre and further afield. Whilst I can emphasise with residents facing the reduction of buses serving the area, we ultimately felt this to be a necessary decision for all of the above reasons.

I will follow up with our roadside team to ensure that up to date service information is posted to any bus stop timetable case in the area."

Further to this, I have submitted the following question to Devon County Council Cabinet member for Infrastructure & Highways to be answered at the DCC Full Council meeting taking place this Thursday:

"With the substantial withdrawal of public bus services, in particular by Stagecoach, how will the Council try to ensure that the public can reduce their car use for local journeys? Will the subsidies otherwise offered to these bus companies, be invested in more pedestrian crossings and more 20mph speed limit zones to encourage more walking instead?"

I am also compiling a letter of complaints from the councils I represent and various individuals who have contacted me about the failures and problems with Stagecoach and in particular the most recent withdrawal of services in Bridgetown and the manner in which it was carried out, i.e. failure to consult the public and failure to provide notice, (in particular on the relevant bus stops). This will be part of the documentation being sent to the transport commissioners who are looking into Stagecoach's services and the complaints from the public and councils.

Bridgetown Alive! discussed this matter at their recent meeting. The local petition (brought to our last TC meeting) is still to be signed and a detailed assessment of the options and problems of the withdrawal of services was outlined at the meeting by a Bridgetown resident, and provided to Cllr Collinson who brought it to the Traffic & Transport Forum last week (copy attached separately). Another local resident also attended that TT&TF meeting regarding the failure of Stagecoach buses to stop on request on the Totnes to Newton Abbot route.

Speed limits, Safe routes and zebra crossings

I went out across this division with our Neighbourhood Highways officer two weeks ago and took him through each and every area and place where there have been long running issues that remain unresolved. In Totnes I took him to:

- Bridgetown: Coronation Road and over the old bridge – could this be a one-way (as raised at the recent public meeting about traffic)
- Weston Lane and on into Dukes Road – the need for traffic calming and more 20mph signs
- Past Courtfields – is there a need for double yellow lines to prevent obstructive parking
- The left turn out of Blackpost Lane – the need for an additional pedestrian crossing to allow safe passage to reach each bus stop – now more urgent with the reductions in bus services
- The Traveller at Babbage Road – still on site
- Travis Perkins the queueing of vehicles waiting to make deliveries 0 – they should be waiting in the industrial area
- The parked cars at the top of Newton Abbot road – confirmed this is not DCC land – it's a SHDC enforcement issue
- Redworth Junction – could this be a roundabout instead of lights and when is the next refurb due (when changes are more possible)
- A385 AQMA – options for safety (on the narrow pavement), finances to address the Air Quality Management Action Plan?
- The Plymouth Road / Weston Bypass traffic lights – need for pedestrian lights on both side of the junction (to link with the footpath from Colins road)
- Colins Road / Smithfields – the requests from residents for traffic calming to reduce speeding vehicles
- St. Katherine's way – request for pedestrian crossing at the lamb (going back to HATOC)
- Kingsbridge Hill – the residents' request for partial single way to reduce rat running (being reviewed)
- ATMOS site – crucial transport hub option. Important that the DCC Highways team recognise the importance of this site.

Further to which I have also submitted the following question to the portfolio holder for Infrastructure & highways at this week's forthcoming DCC Full Council

"How can the long running, 18 plus years of local campaigning for a safe pedestrian and cycleway route between Littlehempston and Totnes be included in plans for capital funding? This could provide an important and safe link from the National Cycle route that comes from Buckfastleigh into Totnes towards the route that is part of the new proposals submitted for the South Devon Cycle way funding bid from the Government's Levelling up fund. The recent cut backs to services by Stagecoach has left a deficiency of non-car choices for all those living along this part of the A381 and since COVID started the A381 between Totnes and Littlehempston has seen a huge rise in cyclists using the main road, but this is such a busy and dangerous road, that alternative safe provision needs to be provided so that a wider range of cyclists and pedestrians can walk or cycle this two mile distance."

Further to my report on Freeports last month I have also submitted the following questions to Cllr John Hart, Leader of DCC for this week's FC:

1. Will the publication of the Devon Carbon Plan mean that Devon County Council policies will be aligned to ensure compliance and support for the implementation of this important plan sooner rather than later, and thereby provide the leadership and good example that is needed to ensure we make a real difference?
2. At what point will the people of Devon be formally consulted on the plans by Devon County Council to borrow up to £15M of Treasury monies towards the South Devon Freeport proposals that are part of the Government's Levelling up plans? Since DCC cabinet agreed this sum in April this year, interest rates have been risen, is this likely to affect the repayments for that loan. Does the leader really believe that we should be borrowing against the Council taxer's public funds of the county, to fund a series of plans that include upgrading the nuclear deterrent at Devonport and a company building a luxury super yachts facility in Plymouth. <https://new.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth-and-south-devon-freeport>

Helping people manage the cost of living crisis

Libraries open their doors to support local residents this winter

“Our libraries in Devon are throwing their doors open in welcome this winter, to provide a range of help, support, advice and comfort to people who may be struggling, or beginning to struggle with the rising cost of living. The ‘Libraries for Life’ campaign, launched by Libraries Unlimited which run Devon’s libraries on our behalf, will continue right through until March next year.

[More details can be found in the news story on our website](#), but some of libraries are providing:

- *warm spaces, where people are welcome to join and spend time in the library. Some will host sessions with advice about energy efficiency, debt advice and other topics*
- *community fridge projects, making surplus food from local supermarkets available to all for free. They’re working with local groups to provide the service*
- *coat rails, where people donate warm winter coats for people to use, and some are also collecting donated clothing*
- *free baby weighing facilities at many of our libraries*
- *free drop-in IT sessions to help people boost their digital skills and confidence*
- *work clubs in libraries can help with CV writing, and developing skills to help apply for jobs, and our Business and IP Centres in Barnstaple and Exeter libraries have webinars with advice for budding entrepreneurs and local start-up businesses*

Libraries are always looking for volunteers, and that’s a great way to meet new people and support you local community this winter, so if you have time spare, please contact your local library to enquire about volunteering.”

FOOD in COMMUNITY – launch leaflet

[Launch of the ‘Worrying About Money?’ leaflet for South Hams Tickets, Thu 6 Oct 2022 at 10:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Join us to:

- *discover what financial advice and support options are available in South Hams*
- *connect with others delivering help and advice for the public in South Hams*
- *know how to access copies of the leaflet*
- *understand more about a ‘cash first’ approach to food insecurity*

The South Hams version of the leaflet, **‘Worrying About Money?’** has now been published on the Independent Food Aid Network’s website - <https://ifanuk.org/south-hams-leaflet>

You can also find it amongst the Cash First leaflet collection at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cash-first-leaflets You can browse the other local authority areas that have adopted Cash First.

Here’s a digital/interactive version - www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/south-hams

Totnes Air Quality Management Area:

I have had a detailed conversation with SHDC’s Air Quality Liaison (with DCC) officer about air quality monitoring along the A385 & A384. The new Environment Bill is expected to have detailed regulation being brought out in the next couple of months and that could influence the monitoring, in particular regarding particulates. I will report further when I have heard back from the DCC Public Health team who I have also written to on this matter.

Climate & Ecological Emergency: THIS SATURDAY 8th October – South Hams Climate Assembly in Kingsbridge

“A [major half-day gathering](#) for South Hams community groups wanting to see local action to reduce carbon and regenerate nature. Places are limited. It’s a great way to get informed and inspired. Special sessions on community energy and community composting schemes: find out if could we run those in our villages. (notice from Sustainable South Hams)

At that event, from 1 - 2 pm, we will have a dedicated room for our new **Parish Council Specialist Group** to meet and form.

Adam Williams, **Climate** Officer at SHDC, will also be there to run a short workshop with us using a simple-to-use tool which maps the key areas where the highest CO2 emissions come from in our Parishes.

You can book your free place here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sustainable-south-hams-assembly-sat-8th-oct-22-tickets-410493155077>

News from the Totnes Climate Hub:

The Hub is now open at the Mansion: Tues, Weds, Fri and Saturdays from 11am – 4pm

Energy Advice at the Hub; 11am-3pm, Wednesday, 12th October.

Mark is able to offer advice on every 2nd Wednesday of the month

Energy Savings and Transitions Fair

12-5pm, Saturday, 29th October. Totnes Civic Hall

An afternoon of inspirations and advice about reducing your electricity costs and waste, as well as the various ways that we can shift to cheaper, locally generated renewable energy supplies.

More details available soon on our events page. <https://totnesclimatehub.info>

Sustainable south Hams has been promoting a **Gardening for Wildlife booklet** (edited by John Nightingale). It has been written by different members of the Sustainable Dittisham Habitat Group and the pictures were all taken in the South Hams. They are distributing it to everyone who lives in the parishes of Dittisham, Blackawton, Cornworthy and Ashsprington and have made the pdf of the booklet available to other South Hams Parishes who would like to print a copy for their parishes. They can supply the copy, the names of the villages on the front can be changed and then it's just necessary to arrange the printing. Staverton has already done this and Dartington are likely to print and distribute copies in their parish too. What about Totnes?

Devon County Council's Carbon Reduction Plan has been finalised and published last month. It is available as a pdf at this link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/our-environmental-performance/environmental-performance-action-plans/carbon-reduction-plan>

Public consultations:

South Hams Joint Local Plan – closes 17th October 2022

South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council, working in partnership with Plymouth City Council, have launched a new consultation asking local residents what they like about their neighbourhood and what could be improved.

The survey, My Place, My Views, is open for comments until 5pm on 17 October 2022 and residents can fill out the survey by visiting: pshwd.commonplace.is/

Anyone who fills out the survey can opt into a raffle with gift vouchers of up to £100 as prizes. These can be spent across a range of dining, entertainment and experiences across the South Hams, West Devon and Plymouth.

The comments will help shape important future conversations about the Joint Local Plan.

If you want to contact the Joint Local Plan team directly e-mail jointlocalplan@plymouth.gov.uk

South West Water public consultation – closes 07.10.22

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/our-environmental-performance/environmental-performance-action-plans/carbon-reduction-plan>The deadline for consultation has been extended until 7th October following intervention from the Environment Agency in response to outrage from the Avon Valley Estuary Forum about inadequate consultation. This is the summary page for the DWMP: [Drainage and Wastewater Management Planning – Our emerging plan to 2050 \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](#)

Level 2 plans can be found by clicking on the area within the interactive map or by using this link:

Yealm-Erme: [sww-draft-dwmp-l2-yealm-erme-v1.0.pdf \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/siteassets/document-repository/business-plan-2020-2025/sww-draft-dwmp-l2-yealm-erme-v1.0.pdf)

Kingsbridge and [Avon] South Devon: [SWW Draft DWMP L2 Kingsbridge-South Devon V1.0.docx \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/siteassets/document-repository/business-plan-2020-2025/sww-draft-dwmp-l2-kingsbridge-south-devon-v1.0.docx)

Dart: <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/siteassets/document-repository/business-plan-2020-2025/sww-draft-dwmp-l2-dart-v1.0.pdf>