

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date of Report: 4th December 2023
Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)
South Hams District Councillor for Dartington & Staverton

Devon County Council: key issues

17.11.23: Government gives green light to finalising a Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/draft-government-gives-green-light-to-finalising-a-devon-and-torbay-devolution-deal/>

Extract: *“ Working with business and education leaders, this funding will aim to accelerate Devon and Torbay’s transition to a net-zero economy and capitalise on expertise in environmental science and technologies, with a focus on new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth, seeking to attract additional private sector investment into these areas.*

It is just one element of a much wider package of devolved powers and funding which are the subject of advanced negotiations with Government. Councils are also seeking greater local control and resources to tackle key local challenges such as the need for more affordable housing and improved public transport.

The Deal being negotiated with the Government does not require an elected Mayor for Devon and Torbay. Instead, the Government will introduce secondary legislation to create a Combined County Authority (CCA) for the area.”

08.11.23. DCC Cabinet approved A382 Drumbridges to Newton Abbot major road network scheme (phase 3) submission of full business case, contract award and construction to the Dept. for Transport, subject to the satisfactory acquisition of the primary land areas required (and any changes required by the Director of Services & / or Local Members). The construction contracts were awarded at £56.76M and will require the serving of compulsory purchase notices. (This will improve the rural roads network connecting the area South and South East of Newton Abbot with Exeter and hopefully reduce the traffic using the arterial A385 route through Totnes and Dartington).

16.11.23. Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee:

A representation was made regarding concerns with DCC’s banking with Barclays as this bank’s investment policies does not accord with Climate Emergency plan and other key issues.

Community Self-Delivery of Highway improvements. A report from the Director of Services was provided and discussed. This was a proposal to trial the self-delivery of minor road improvement works to the highway network (e.g. 20 mph speed limits or provision of footways) by Parish and Town Councils on behalf of their communities. This would help address local requests that DCC had been unable to carry out due to its limited resources, both financial and staffing. The emphasis was on enabling communities where they had funds and ability to take on this commitment, but not a requirement to do so. A draft guidance document was provided (attached at the end of this report). A lot of concern was raised about this proposal, including the need for a clear checklist for PCs, including links to the Association of Consultancy and Engineers and a Bond calculator. Also, the capacity of smaller communities to take on these kind of works. I raised a somewhat different approach whereby P&T Councils would pay DCC who have the expertise to carry out these schemes. The proposal was approved by the committee.

Devon Electric Charging Strategy: DCC will fund its £7.07M strategy planned for Jan’24 through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund.

Bus Service Improvement Plan: The programme and schemes to deliver the £14.1M Government funding were reported. These included the formation of an Enhanced Partnership with bus companies, improvements to bus shelter provision, real time information and the national £2 fare initiative. This funding does allow for some works that could increase bus use and I asked about the installation of additional zebra crossings to

enable potential passengers who may now need to access busses along busy roads (rather than the bus routes that previously picked up passengers from within housing areas e.g. Bridgetown). On that basis I have proposed new zebra crossings to link bus stops at Bridgetown Hill, Totnes, Huxhams Cross, Dartington and St The Lamb, Totnes.

DCC Full Council 7.12.23. I tabled the following questions:

Re; Plymouth & South Devon Freeport:

Will recent announcements regarding South Hams District Council's (SHDC) change of plans regarding the Langage site and Plymouth City Council's (PCC) finances where SHDC has switched its main investment from the main Langage site (where the intention was to purchase additional land) to be invested in the Sherford site instead, and the alleged refusal of Grant Thornton, the Council's auditors at PCC, refusing to sign off the 2019/20 annual accounts due to PCC using a Treasury Loan of £70M loan to help finance their £100M pension fund deficit instead of the capital projects it was intended for, provide DCC with an opportunity to rethink of its own £15M involvement in this contentious project?

Reply from Cllr Hart. "The overall potential job and economic growth from the Freeport remain. It is therefore the County Council's intention to continue to support the designation including the capital investment agreed previously by Cabinet. The recent Autumn statement announcements to extend Freeport Tax Relief until September 2031 and the £150million investment Opportunity Fund to secure business investment opportunities available over the next five years for Freeports are welcome incentives and should stimulate additional opportunities to secure inward investment and high value jobs into the Freeport benefitting Devon".

I asked the following supplementary question: My question regarding the Langage site is pertinent as South Hams District Council has indicated that this site may not go ahead as planned. If that is the case then what would be the situation regarding DCC's commitment to provide the new spine road and the new cycleway over the A38, both at Langage as this is the substance of DCC's contribution of £15M to the Freeport?

Re: Closure of Residential Care Homes:

The closure of two care homes in my division just this year is causing huge concern and distress to many residents. I'm very aware the same is happening in other Devon divisions. Surely the responsibility for adult social care is with this Council to ensure that all residents affected by such closures should have the new opportunities available to them before they are simply faced with eviction. What is DCC doing to avoid what could be a crisis for care in the making?

Reply from Cllr McInnes: "Although care home closures are relatively uncommon, only 7 out of 314 in Devon in 2023, when it happens we are duty-bound through Care Act legislation to respond. This is in addition to all the supportive and preventative work we deliver to reduce the risk of individual provider failure and providers leaving the market.

Choice, control and wellbeing are key elements of the Care Act, shaping how we work with people, and that is no different when we are working with people in response to a care home closure that cannot be avoided and the conversation we have. The setting that people choose to go to will depend on many factors, factors personal to them such as to support their connections in a particular area, or wanting to move to an area closer to family.

We always try our best to support people to receive their preferred care in their preferred setting, and this will inevitably depend on the specific setting being available at the particular time, if it's not, then this could result in people not receiving their first or preferred choice.

Our market sufficiency duties are important, and our Market Position Statement helps us understand the type of care people want and the places and settings they want it in. Our Market Position Statement is currently being reviewed and updated after it was placed on hold through Covid and the subsequent market recovery period (in common with many other Local Authorities)."

Request for Cabinet Report: regarding potholes and maintenance

Please can a full assessment be provided of the number of requests for repairs and potholes reported in this financial year to date, the number of road maintenance and repairs that remain outstanding and the number and value of claims for compensation due to road defects. Please could comparable data for the previous year also be provided.

Reply from Cllr Stuart Hughes, Cabinet Member for Highway Management

“The number of potholes reported by the public in this financial year to date is 28,801. As of 1st December 2023, there were 1,505 potholes awaiting repair with our contractor.

Since the 1st April, the organisation has received 1,229 claims for damage to vehicles or personal injuries due to road defects. The combined value of these claims is just over £1.1m; to date £48k has been paid.

At the same date last year, the service had received 38,851 public reports and there were 1,222 potholes awaiting repair with our contractor. The number of claims received was 966 and the combined value was £855k and had paid out £35k to date.”

Adult Social Care:

Forder House has given notice to its residents that this residential house is closing. The date provided is January 17th, which has caused a lot of local concern. Support and advice is being provided by South Devon Rural Housing Association and Devon County Council’s Adult Social Care Team working with NHS local team. The most recent update is that all the residents have been successfully found new accommodation (some have been able to move back home) and that the last one will leave on December 10th. This is the information I have received from the latter who can be contacted directly by anyone who is affected or needs information: [Emily West](mailto:emily.west@nhs.net): Mobile: 07464656592. Email emily.west@nhs.net
Community Services Manager for Moor to Sea Health & Social Care Teams

Devon County Council is currently carrying out a review of the Public Rights of Way Improvement

Plan. Feedback is invited from interested individuals, groups and organisations – particularly with regards to the objectives and policies as set out in table form at Section 4 of the draft document. If you would like to comment, please do so either via email or by post. By 22nd December 2023. Consultation link: [Draft Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) Contact Richard Walton, Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager, Devon County Council Highways, PO Box 968, EXETER, EX1 9DQ. Email: prow@devon.gov.uk Phone: 01932 383000

New Funding opportunities for Local Library projects - specific funding from Devon County Council to support the development of community and library spaces for local people to enjoy and expand their love of reading in their local area. This opportunity is also open to charities, voluntary and community groups and church\faith groups. The fund is now open for small grants. Full details can be found at [Community Library Support Fund - Communities \(devon.gov.uk\)](#) Please let me know if you have any specific questions or contact corpor.communitygrants-mailbox@devon.gov.uk. Simon Kitchen, Head of Communities DCC

Additional Funding for Highways Maintenance Briefing-8th December 2023

From Cllr Stuart Hughes, DCC Cabinet member for Highway Management

“ The Government’s announcement ahead of the Autumn Statement of an £8.3 billion investment for road maintenance over the next 11 years is very welcome. Devon will receive an extra £6.663 million this financial year and next. It is unclear how the funding will be allocated beyond next year. The funding is being put to use immediately to carry out patching work and other serviceability repairs.

However, the majority of the funding will enable the County Council to bring forward resurfacing schemes earmarked within its future works programme. The schemes have been identified based on ‘need’ using the Council’s asset management approach. Road condition surveys and pothole data, together with local knowledge has been used to prioritise the next 66 resurfacing schemes in the forward programme. Bringing forward this work will replace worn out road surfaces and prevent the formation of potholes. The team have been working closely with the supply chain through the summer and autumn based on the rumour of

additional funding and hope to complete these works before the end of the financial year. A list of scheme locations can be seen at the bottom of this briefing note.”

There are 66 schemes to be delivered with additional £6.663m – These are the 12 in South Hams:

Scheme Name	Parish
Baddaford Cross	Ashburton
Church House Inn	Marldon
Kerse Lane	Thurlestone
Kiln Road	Marldon
Lower Weekaborough	Combe Fishacre
Parkfield Cross	Ashburton
Stoke Cross to Revelstoke Park House	Newton and Noss
Wallingford Rd	Kingsbridge
Weirfield Road	Totnes
Westover Lane	Ivybridge
Preston Down Road	Marldon
East Leigh Cross	South Brent

Local highways issues:

Castle Street, Totnes– the bay window hit by an oversized van. Further to my enquiries to DCC I have been informed that no improvements apparently possible. The Town Council will need to provide support for any improved signage

The problem that caused this accident was that the vehicle driving through this narrow section of Castle Street was too wide and too high. There is a single (and bent over) bollard on the pavement at the point where this road narrows, but that does not give any protection to the overhanging first floor bay windows, one of which was the victim of this incident and has suffered considerable damage. This bay window as far as I can tell is probably Victorian. It is part of local heritage in the conservation area of the town.

I am concerned that this could happen again as there is no clear signage indicating a maximum width and height of vehicles, nor are there adequate bollards to offer some protection to overhanging buildings that high vehicles can hit. I requested that this be looked into, but the response from Highways was that there is signage (stating 7’ 6” max width) and DCC no longer installs bollards. Further to a discussion at Totnes TC on this matter I will raise the issue of signage again.

A resident also suggested that this road should be pedestrianised to avoid these problems and provide safety for both vehicles and pedestrians. I was advised this would not be a current priority.

I copied Richard Gage, Senior Conservation Officer at SHDC into my correspondence with Highways as this is possibly a conservation matter too.

Removal of advertising vehicle at Brutus Bridge. This vehicle which remained parking for months on end, preventing the application of agreed double yellow lines was finally removed and the lines painted in the last few weeks.

Swallowfields Resident’s parking scheme - The recommendation from DCC, based on the comments received, would be to not proceed with the scheme. However, if we wish them to re-advertise the residents parking they can progress this in the new year, either as a modification or just starting the process again, and they will discuss with our legal team the best course of action. They have asked me to confirm the timing; whether that is 7 days a week 5am – 10pm or all day everyday (24/7). Based upon what is most appropriate/desired by the residents. I will get back to them with the residents’ and Totnes TC views on this.

Pavements along The Lamb, Totnes TQ9 5SE – I received an enquiry regarding persons seen with clipboards and the overdue works on the footpaths at the Lamb. The reply from DCC: DCC do have plans to slurry seal these footways and there is a need for some preparation work next financial year so before that can take place. It was DCC design team that was probably seen on site. There are a few areas of patching to be undertaken along with the replacement / resetting of some kerbs and the replacement of 4 tactile slabs but there is currently no intention to modify the profile of the footway to raise the kerbs on the south east corner.

Camomile Lawn, unadopted roads (the development of 100 houses, on the site previously referred to as Riverside), that was built out around 8 years ago in Bridgetown, Totnes. It is my understanding that developments generally aim to have their public roads adopted by DCC and I enquired as to whether this was part of the 106 agreement and what is the reason that the roads at Camomile Lawn have not been adopted? The reply was that this has been referred to the S38 officer for clarification and an update.

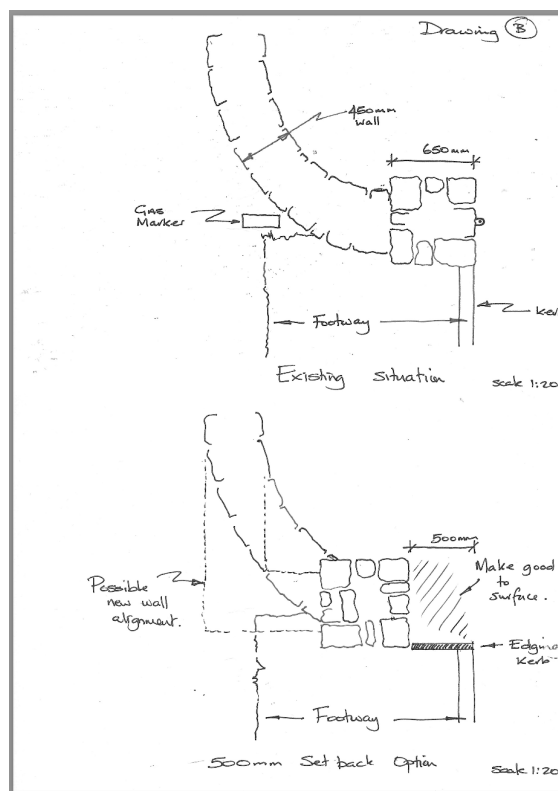
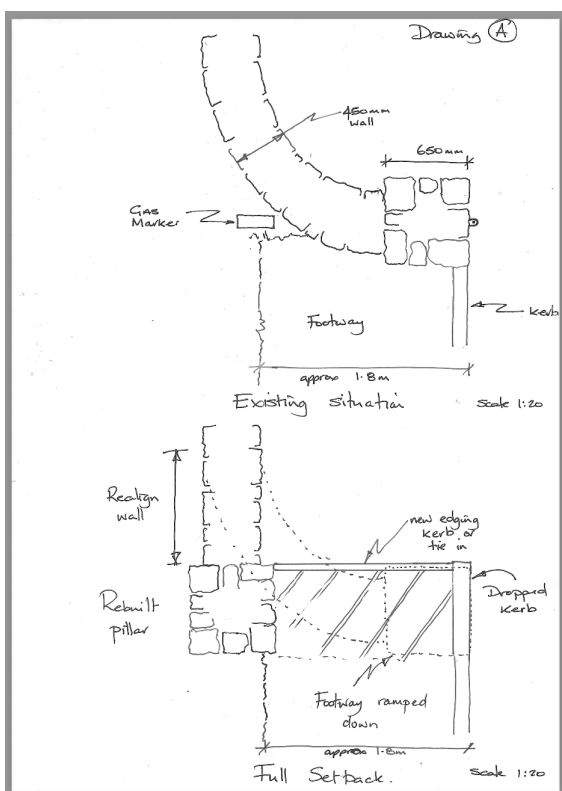
Staverton lanes: severe deterioration around Penn Farm and excessive flooding at The Halt by Staverton station. A site meeting has been arranged with the Neighbourhood Highways officer and Chair of parish council and myself.

Pillar and Wall at Plymouth Road /Weston Bypass:

The Senior Engineer for Bridges and wall at DCC has provided a couple of hand sketches that shows the situation they are faced with and how the options will work. I am contacting the affected residents for their views on these options.

“Drawing A shows the existing situation and where the pillar was originally. Below that is our recommended pillar location at the back of the footway and the straightening of the wall. This opens up the end of the footway and provides safe pedestrian egress in this area. The footway can also be ramped down to remove any trip hazard.

Drawing B also shows the existing situation, with a sketch below showing the pillar set back by 500mm (I am advised that a 300mm set back has never been discussed). You will note that this does not tie in particularly well with the existing wall and may look ‘clumsy’ when complete. It will also create a 0.5m gap that is of no use to pedestrian safety and leaves at least a 100mm upstand that may become a trip hazard. It is for these latter reasons that both Safety Audit and my team are strongly in favour of the option shown on Drawing A.”



















DCC Council Leader Autumn briefings for Town and parish Councils. Cllr John Hart hosted the online meeting with Town and Parish Council's on, Thursday 30 November 2023. At this meeting he outlined the devolution deal.

Education / Local Schools: KEVICC site sales – no update

Please continue to use the Report it webpages on Devon County Councils website to report in any potholes, broken street lamps, overgrown hedges obstruction pavements, simply 'Google' Devon County Council Report It or use this link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>

Any severe potholes or dangerous areas of the road can also be reported via this link on the Report It website: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/help-and-support/make-a-complaint/#:~:text=If%20you%20have%20a%20complaint,Centre%20on%200345%20155%201004>

 <p>Pothole Large 40 mm vertical-edge hole that is also greater than 300 mm wide</p>	 <p>Parking Request enforcement in residents' parking and on-street parking zones</p>	 <p>Overgrown vegetation Pedestrians forced into road, cars over central line, reduced visibility</p>
 <p>Public rights of way For example, blocked access or broken stiles</p>	 <p>Hazardous or fallen trees Trees that have fallen into the road or are leaning, unstable, diseased or dying.</p>	 <p>Debris or obstruction Thick mud, soil, stones, embankment slips, large branches, fallen trees</p>
 <p>Defective road markings or signs White and yellow, stop or give way lines or warning signs</p>	 <p>Trip hazard Hole or significant difference in level on pavement or cycleway</p>	 <p>Traffic lights Damage or fault to traffic lights or signals or school crossing patrol light</p>
 <p>Broken manhole cover Broken, missing or rocking manhole cover</p>	 <p>Grit bin Empty bin, damaged bin or a bin with contents that are unuseable</p>	 <p>Bridges and retaining walls Structural damage or significant obstructions restricting water flow</p>
 <p>Fences and barriers Damaged or missing roadside fences or barriers</p>	 <p>Ice Ice or snow on the road</p>	 <p>Street lights, lit signs, lit bollards Faulty street light, zebra crossing, bollard, lit sign</p>
 <p>Flooding and blocked drains Standing water, blocked drain, flooded property, impassable road</p>		

Other matters:

Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group. Discussions are now underway for this to be combined with Totnes Climate Hub to broaden attendance and involvement of the wider community and possibly to work on a more project-based approach. There will not be a meeting this month, but it is hoped that the new arrangements will start in January, hopefully located at the Climate Hub in the Mansion

Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) Project – Steering Group meeting Friday 15th Dec 3-5pm at Staverton Court Rooms. The main discussion will be the Service Level Agreement between participating Town and Parish Councils, all of which are invited to send two representatives. RSVP to me if you wish to attend.

