

County Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date: 7th May 2025
Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)
South Hams District Councillor for Dartington & Staverton
SHDC Executive Portfolio Councillor for Waste and Composting

Thank you to everyone who supported my re-election campaign &/or voted for me. It is a privilege and pleasure to represent and work on behalf of this wonderful part of Devon.

The vote share in this division was:

- **Green Party** **2,350 votes (majority 1,942) 61.8%**
- Reform UK 408 votes / 10.7%
- Liberal Democrats 408 votes / 10.7%
- Conservative party 383 votes / 10%
- Labour & Co-operative party 235 votes / 6.2%
- Heritage Party 20 votes / 0.5%

Devon County Council (DCC) key issues:

Devon Election results:	Lib Dems:	27 seats	
	Reform:	18 seats	
	Conservatives	7 seats	
	Green Party	6 seats	} now joined as:
	Independents	2 seats	

In the absence of an overall majority for one political group, there is a fair amount of negotiation ongoing to consider the political leadership, administration and seats on Cabinet and Chairs of Scrutiny.

Key priorities for the Green & Independents Group (GIG) have so far been identified as follows:

- Carry out a comparative review of costs of services currently mostly 3rd party agencies and similar companies, compared to bring services back in house as part of the work and deliberations towards proposals for Local Government Reform
- Introduction of a 20's Plenty across Devon policy, where Town and Parish Council's request this; "20's Plenty where people live, work, play and go to school"
- Reintroduction of Universal Access Youth services across Devon based on TRAYE model; i.e. where Town and Parish Councils are prepared to pay 50% of costs (current contribution approx. £3,500 p.a. per fortnightly service)
- Wider re-introduction of public transport

An induction day for all new and re-elected Councillors took place on Friday 9th May.

DCC Full Council is scheduled to take place on Thursday May 22nd.

- All seats on various committees etc will be allocated at that meeting
- I have tabled a motion as follows: "In light of the support for the Devon 20's Plenty campaign, this Council will support a new policy to permit 20's plenty where people live, work, play and go to school and the implementation of 20mph zones, where the local Parish Council has passed the 20's Plenty motion. There will be no further need for 3 fatalities to provide a score to support this".
- I have seconded the following Motion tabled by Cllr Jess Bailey: "Devon County Council today resolves urgently to:
A) Install swift boxes this nesting season at County Hall, Exeter including providing audio lures to attract breeding pairs and to roll out a full programme of swift boxes and audio lures at DCC owned properties across Devon before the next nesting season.
B) Write to Secretary of State Angela Rayner and all Devon MPs to express Devon County Council's support for the 'swift brick amendment' in the Infrastructure and Planning Bill. The amendment would make swift bricks mandatory in new housing developments."

Going forward: I will propose a new Policy at DCC for Emergency public service First Responders whereby they would have a vehicle disk that would enable them to park as close as possible to their home as they need to be able to carry heavy equipment to their vehicle as they rush to respond to emergency calls. The vital minutes saved could save lives. **I would value the support of Town and Parish Councils for this future motion at DCC.**

Closure of Rushbrook Youth Space, Totnes: Local parents attended the final DCC Full Council in April to hand in a petition with around 500 signatures and to express their concerns and disappointment at loss of this dedicated youth space in the town. The online petition is still available to sign to continue support and pressure for a Youth space in the town: <https://chng.it/jsnFnnzkwz>

I have since made enquiries and have still not received any response to my question about when and how this decision was made without and reference to myself as local Member or the Town Council. The rationale I have been given is that more funds need to be diverted towards the SEN and targeted Youth services. TRAYE has been asked to step in and is now delivering an additional fortnightly service at The United Free Church on Thursday nights and there are on-going negotiations about funding for these and the other lost services.

A Protest Rally was held on Saturday 26th April which was attended by Deputy Green Party Leader Zack Polenski who echoed the support for the urgent need and good value of universal access youth services as a preventative measure. I have since spoken with the Director of services at DCC seeking support for a replacement youth centre in Totnes. There is still no information on the future of that wing of Rushbrook, but I understand at present there is no intention to dispose of the centre. It seems that if a suitable location could be found in Totnes, that might be supported by DCC in the short-term.

Update on the sale of sites at KEVICC: The following has been posted on the Government's website under Approvals of disposals, February 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-land-decisions-about-disposals/decisions-on-the-disposal-of-school-land#approved-applications>
"Application by Education South West (trust) to dispose of playing field land and non-playing field land at the school. This is to rationalise its large site and make it more manageable whilst retaining sufficient playing field for any future expansion. The trust intends to consolidate the existing main site to the west of the road, leaving good quality playing fields, including the existing multi use games area, to the east of the road. The proceeds of sale of all of the land will be used to update facilities, including sports facilities, at the school."

This information was not sent directly to either the Education services directorate at DCC nor to myself as Local County Councillor. Given all the representations made to the Dept of Education and the Secretary of State over the last 5 years, announcing decision simply on the Government website without notification to the relevant bodies or public representatives seems very poor practice.

Public Consultation on proposed change of age range at The Grove School, Totnes. A consultation will be going live on Monday (12 May) on a proposal to extend the age range of The Grove School in Totnes. The proposal is to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 years of age, so as to establish Nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds. The public consultation is not yet live on DCC website but is likely to be available at this webpage: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/categories/education-and-schools/>

DCC Locality budgets for this year are £8,000; the grants reopen on 27.05.25 online access at this link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-info/locality-budgets/>

20's Plenty – New 20mph routes in Totnes proposed to fill in current 30mph gaps. Further to Totnes Town Council approving the proposed 20mph speed restriction routes which I sent back into the officers, (and the subsequent support from Dartington Parish Council for the proposed extension of one of the routes into Dartington Parish), I have still not heard further from DCC officers to confirm the routes affected and the timeline for implementation. Updates will be reported back and discussed at Totnes & District Traffic and Transport Forum meetings. (Next T&DTTF meeting in July).

Totnes – Littlehempston All Access Path. Work and representations quietened during purdah but will now resume. This has been supported by Caroline Voaden MP who raised this matter very recently in Parliament.

Swallowfields, Totnes Parking issues. The decision about whether there should be parking restrictions at Swallowfields and if so, what should these be rumble on. Live West have become involved as they need to sort out some issues about an area of parking they own, but are concerned also about the wider need to help residents with minimal parking space available. **An open meeting to enable a public consultation on site**

(Green Space near Dartington Lower Lane) has been arranged for Saturday June 28th 10am – 2pm. LiveWest intend to also have representatives from South Devon Community Energy to provide householders with energy efficiency information. I will contact Swallowfields residents about this event (as LiveWest will only be contacting their tenants)

South Hams District Council – matters



CAT Bikes in Totnes: Sponsored by SHDC: “A new fleet of hireable electric bikes will be available on the streets of Totnes in June. The new 'Catbikes' are being introduced as part of our commitment to promoting cycling. E-bikes will be available from several key places across the town and accessed by a mobile app 24/7. We'll be providing further information on the Catbikes – which stands for 'Cycles Around Town' - closer to the scheme's launch.”

Community Composting updates

Sustainable South Hams Community Composting Workshop 26.04.25. This was well attended and well received. A excellent and very engaging talk about worms and soil biodiversity was given as part of the training.

Next steps: a Community Composting groups networking event will be held at Follaton on **Thursday 19th June from 2-4pm for all Community Composting groups** to send representatives for sharing information and in particular a discussion about the machines that might be suitable for some of the more challenging sites emerging.

SHDC Locality funds are now reopened for applications. Each Ward Member has £2,000 for regular Community projects, plus £2,000 for Climate and Biodiversity projects. On-line applications link: <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/communities/community-grants-and-funding>

Totnes: Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 20th May at 6.30pm**. N.B. **This month's meeting will take place at Castle Meadow to discuss** The "Big Devon Meadows Count" and plan a biodiversity count at the Meadow in June. The Big Devon Meadows Count is a citizen science project aimed at creating a more detailed record of plants outside of nature reserves in Devon, specifically focusing on species-rich grasslands. This project is a partnership between Moor Meadows and the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. The goal is to increase knowledge of these habitats, improve meadow management practices, and ultimately protect important wildlife sites. More information: <https://moormeadows.org.uk/big-devon-meadows-count-2025/> (These monthly meetings usually take place on the third Tuesday of the month at 6.30pm at Totnes Climate Hub). All welcome.



Totnes Climate Hub hosts many events open to public participation, as does **Transition Town Totnes:** listings at this link: <https://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/events>

Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) project Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Saturday 31st May at 11.15am (-12.45pm) at Staverton Courtrooms. This will be an in-person meeting only. All Parish Councils with a TRAYE project are invited to nominate a parish Councillor to be their representative on the TRAYE Trustee board. Other Parish Councils are welcome to send a representative interested in finding out about the work of TRAYE project. **News update:** TRAYE project has been asked to take over all the open access youth services in Totnes; this will be a topic for discussion at the AGM.

Funding opportunities:

“Below are some **funding**/grants that I have found – please share far and wide to give people an opportunity to see if they are eligible to make a application

[Local Community Spaces Fund | Asda Foundation](#) £10,000 to £20,000 for UK community groups to allow them to provide safe spaces for people to meet and be together. The application window opens 7 May at 10am closes 28 May, 10am but may close early if they are oversubscribed.

[Bupa Foundation Green Community Grants - Groundwork](#) As part of their Healthy Cities campaign, their foundation is launching a £500,000 Fund in Jun for grassroots organisations – helping to improve community spaces in urban areas, give better access to nature and encourage wildlife to thrive. Up to £2,000 to fund community gardens, allotments, forest schools and more in the UK. Opens 2 Jun until 30 Jun.

Karen Dent | Community and Health Engagement Coordinator.

South Hams and West Devon Outreach | 07895 447613 (Usual working days: Tues, Weds and Thursday.”