

28 January 2026

Chair's Report to Traffic & Transport AGM

The Changing Context

As the statutory Highways Authority, Devon County Council (DCC) has a key role in supporting (or otherwise) the aspirations of local councils on traffic and transport issues.

With the May 2025 local elections, the leadership of Devon County Council changed to the Liberal Democrats (the largest party), in coalition with the Green Party.

An article in the Totnes Times (10 July 2025) written by the new Council Leader, opined that "Highways must work collaboratively with local groups, using local knowledge and resources. Cooperation, not obstruction ... by building constructive partnerships with our communities, I'm sure we can achieve so much more."

In a subsequent email exchange, the Leader advised that "the Cabinet (has) resolved to create a new protocol of how the relationship between highways and our communities will work. It will be a reset. Our responsibility as councillors is to get this to happen."

A Draft Protocol is now out for consultation with Town and Parish Councils, and is to be the focus of discussion with our County Councillor in the Forum meeting immediately following the AGM. This Protocol is intended to deliver the desired constructive partnership for cooperation with DCC, and our County Councillor is looking forward to discussing this with you.

Project Teams

During 2025 work has been progressed by Project Teams as agreed at the 2025 AGM. (Agenda Item 4 reviews this new way of working.) A number of those Projects are now ready to work with the new DCC Protocols, hence the importance of the draft out for consultation.

Planning Applications

2025 saw the refusal of the Planning Application for the Baltic Wharf development.

Community consultations have started for the Bowden Pillars development, and a Planning Application is anticipated in early 2026. This may well include the creation and extension of Active Travel routes in its immediate locality, which could have the potential to benefit the wider network.

Partnership Working

During 2025 submissions were made for the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to DCC and South Hams District Council (SHDC), the Plans being an important Policy reference for our Active Travel Routes.

LCWIP Although successful in making contact with Peninsular Transport (PT) to discuss the need for investment in roads linking Torbay and Plymouth, we now know that PT is to be disbanded.

We have also recently had successful engagement with GWR, who have demonstrated a strong willingness to work with local communities. The public ownership of the line is anticipated, with staff being transferred across, so contact is being continued in the hope that something positive can result. Meanwhile GWR has announced a round of bids for their Customer and Community Improvement Fund, with a submission deadline of Noon on Monday 2 February.

We have met with our MP who has expressed willingness to meet and discuss specific issues on which she can lend support. In 2025 this has included the Littlehempston route and also support for Bob the Bus.

The programme for Local Government Reorganisation is presently for elections to shadow authorities in spring 2027, and vesting in spring 2028, but no date yet for Mayoral elections.