

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date: 11th February 2026
Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
Cabinet Member for Climate & Biodiversity (incl. Public Transport)
 (division incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)
South Hams District Councillor for Dartington & Staverton
SHDC Executive Portfolio Councillor for Waste and Composting

Devon County Council (DCC) key issues: Public Consultation for Local Government Reform in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. This is the on-line link for information and to make a submission:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-devon-plymouth-and-torbay/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-devon-plymouth-and-torbay>

This is open to all stakeholders and the general public from 5th February 2026 – 25th March 2026 (23.59pm)

(Long awaited) Government announcements were received this week about Core Funding for Local Authorities: This has confirmed that the draft budget presented at Cabinet in January will be the basis for 2026/27 financial year. The government settlement includes a further £1.9M revenue support grant, a further £106,000 grant for Domestic abuse bring the total revenue grant to £129.5M. The capital grant is separate and is included in the draft budget proposal below.

DCC will also receive (est late Autumn) £200M refund for its SEND overspend over the past few years.

It is expected that the Council tax for Devon will be raised by 4.99% in line with the Government's maximum rise allowed.

	2025/26 Adjusted Base £'000	Inflation and National Living Wage £'000	Other Growth and Pressures £'000	Savings Plans, Alternative Funding and Income £'000	Target Budget £'000	Net Change 2025/26 to 2026/27 £'000 %	
Service Budgets							
Integrated Adult Social Care	385,944	15,850	15,224	(21,137)	395,881	9,937	+2.6%
Children and Young People's Futures	248,987	8,106	19,892	(8,940)	268,045	19,058	+7.7%
Public Health and Communities	15,632	271	17	(1,500)	14,420	(1,212)	-7.8%
Performance and Partnerships	6,180	108	0	(610)	5,678	(502)	-8.1%
Corporate Services	57,591	1,594	2,170	(3,100)	58,255	664	+1.2%
Climate Change, Environment & Transport	91,601	4,023	4,942	(3,693)	96,873	5,272	+5.8%
Total Directorate Budgets	805,935	29,952	42,245	(38,980)	839,152	33,217	+4.1%

Devon County Council will debate and approve the 2026/27 budget at their forthcoming Full Council meeting on February 24th (11am)

Extreme Weather and resilience in local areas:

Local Communities are being actively encouraged to come together and review their Emergency Plans to be well prepared for the more extreme weather we are experiencing due the warming seas affected by Climate Change. Predictions of much dryer summers and more extreme wind and rain are indicating that the weather we are now experiencing is likely to get worse due to the volumes of carbon we continue to pump into the atmosphere.

Devon Communities Together (DCT) have been assisting Local Town and Parish Councils for some years now to create their local Emergency Plan. However, we now need to develop larger local teams that can be alerted and respond locally and rapidly. Many communities have engaged Snow Wardens and Lengthmen roles, but ideally there needs to be a larger team of people who have direct contacts with each other, a knowledge of what to do, resources prepared and have practiced for these emergencies. **This is the link to DCT's website about resilience planning, Devon Community Resilience Forum and grant funding than can be accessed to assist with creating Emergency Plans: <https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum>**

Staverton Parish Council have worked on their Emergency Plan some years ago and even prior to COVID had planned for a pandemic; they were well prepared in 2020. They review it every year. This is the link to their Plan which might be a helpful start to other T&PCs. <https://www.staverton.org/community-emergency-plan/>

Ideally the human race will address this problem head on, but it is likely to take some time, so we need to be as prepared as we can in our local communities to each other and ourselves. We can do this by working together to develop and adopt resilient Emergency plans to respond to and reduce the impact of extreme weather events in the short term. Longer term we need to also work together to adapt our lifestyle to accommodate and mitigate the impacts ideally taking some action to reduce our collective carbon footprint and support initiatives that will mop up the excessive greenhouse gases

Flooding in Totnes. Storm Bram (and more recently Storm Goretta) caused floods in December that caused flooding in 9 houses behind the Plains in Totnes, are being investigated by Devon County Council and the Environment Agency for a report that is due to be finalised this month. The main cause has been initially assessed as due to the surface water usually draining directly into the River, but due to the extreme river height during storms these drains are unable to take rain water away, rather they allow the river water to spill into the streets. Excessive silting into the rivers can also create flooding problems. A few years ago, over £4M was spent on flood defence in Totnes on doors alongside the river bank to contain the overspill of high waters, however, the issue of the surface water drainage system does not seem to have been part of that prevention work.

I am in communication with DCC's Flood Team officers about this issue and have asked about other places that have sought to address this, potentially by having means to attenuate these higher waters and perhaps divert the drainage pipes to discharge further down the river downstream from the residential and other riverside properties.

- In Broadclyst, (East of Exeter), they have a pump that is used to remove the water away from properties and discharge further away to reduce flood potential
- In newer developments there is a requirement for attenuation of surface water drainage during heavy rainfall, whereby the risk is assessed, and appropriately sized underground tanks are installed that can slow (attenuate) the drainage and reduce the peak flow of water that is generally the most damaging.

Emergency Planning Meeting for Totnes and wider Environ: A meeting has been arranged by a group in Totnes to discuss these issues and consider some Emergency Planning measures. A representative of Devon Communities Together will be in attendance, and I have invited DCC flood Team and Environment Agency to send representatives to assist with discussions at this meeting:

Date: Tuesday 24th February

Venue: Totnes Methodist Church

Time: 7pm

Flooding prevention works in Harberton; The timescale for flood prevention works may be delayed as the initial investigations have indicated that to avoid future flooding risk, this scheme may require much larger piping to be installed. This is likely to cost far more than anticipated, so these works are likely to be delayed. I'll keep asking for updates on this scheme.

Devon County Council is planning a 2-day resilience workshop in July'26. The dates and venue are yet to be agreed, but this may take place in Dartington. I will share further information as it becomes available.

DCC Cabinet 14.01.26; key decisions:

1. **Boniface Trail** (Crediton – Exeter, essentially following the line of the A377) Multi-Use Route – Adoption of preferred alignment RESOLVED (a) that the preferred route alignment for the Boniface Trail, be endorsed; and (b) that the commencement of the acquisition of land through negotiation with landowners affected by the scheme and/or a Compulsory Purchase Order, be approved, subject to funding being identified.

This significant Active Travel Route has had to have some compromised elements included in this endorsed route to bring up to a possible route so that funding can now be actively sought to bring this forward (i.e this is likely to be mainly externally sourced).

2. **Devon Libraries** - Future Contract Arrangements RESOLVED (a) that the extension of the current term of the contract for Libraries by two years, to cover the period from 1st April 2026 to the 31st March 2028, with a further one year if required; in line with the negotiated service fee for 2026/27 and (b) that delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Broadband, the Director of Public Health and Communities and the Director for Finance and Public Value to confirm the budget level of the book fund.
3. **Youth Service Contract** (I declared a personal interest in this matter by virtue of being Chair and Trustee of TRAYE (Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement) project.
RESOLVED (a) that the extension of the current term of the contract for Youth Services by 2 years to cover the period from 1st April 2026 to the 31st March 2028 with the option of a further 1 year extension to 31st March 2029, if required, be approved;
(b) that the development of a Youth Strategy for Devon, working with all areas of the Council and taking into account the National Youth strategy* be progressed; and
(c) that delegated authority be given to the Director of Public Health and Communities and Director of Finance and Public Value, in consultation with the Cabinet lead for Rural Affairs and Broadband, to enter into the extension of the contract.
*The National Youth Strategy can be accessed at this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy>

Active Travel Route: Totnes to Littlehempston update: Littlehempston Parish Council is in the process of submitting a Planning Application for the All Access Route (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists) route that goes from the NC2 cycle path behind Totnes station, across Bulliver Bridge (behind South Devon Steam Railway and links to the Staverton to Littlehempston Road via South West Water's fields and private road. This would then link into the rural network that can enable safer route to Newton Abbott for cyclists and walkers avoiding the A381.

Devon County Council's Proposed protocol for working with Town and Parish Councils. I raised this my previous (January) report. I then brought this to Totnes Planning Committee and subsequently discussed Totnes & District Traffic & Transport Forum where points raised about this document included the following:

- Document content – lacking in detail, with embedded links not working or reference to documents that cannot be found on the DCC website.
- Training – inadequate training is currently offered for the voluntary warden roles.
- Insurance – concerns about the personal liability of volunteer wardens. For example, snow wardens who may spread grit - if an accident/injury occurs, are they personally liable?
- Emergency Planning – little cross-reference to the warden roles in emergency planning situations.
- No mention of vehicle activated sign installation, which would be of use to many parishes and towns.

- Concern that if a town/parish were to sign up to this document for warden scheme, does this then mean that they accept liability to self-fund road schemes and traffic calming? The introduction of a box check system to say which elements of the protocol a town/parish wishes to sign up to (rather than an assumption that it is all elements) would be beneficial and clearer.
- More support is required from Highways Neighbourhood Officers. The most reliable way for towns and parishes to undertake road safety/traffic measures would be to commission DCC on a payment basis to draw up feasible schemes and costs for programmes/proposals. Using external contractors is no guarantee that they will be acceptable to DCC Highways and this approach could help alleviate this problem.

Participants at Totnes & District Traffic & Transport Forum AGM (28.01.26) agreed with the above points and added the following:

- If the protocol is intended to support a collaborative approach, it needs to be written collaboratively (involving Town and Parish Council rep's) to ensure all perspectives are properly addressed.
- It would be most cost effective for all public liability insurance for volunteers to be provided by DCC, rather than by each individual Parish Council.
- The 'capacity' of Town and Parish Councils is highly variable. The needs of residents (especially vulnerable people) must be remembered, even if they are not well served by their Council.

I will bring these responses back to DCC Cabinet for further consideration. (Link to Protocol for reference: <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s53929/Community%20Protocol%20Agreement%20Dec%2025.pdf>). .

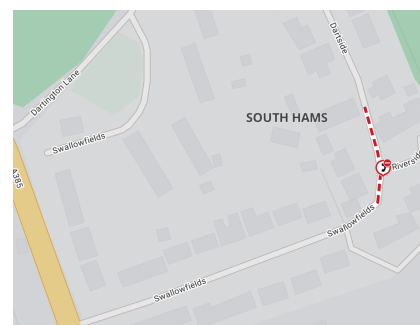
KEVICCs Elmhirst School and Field is on sale again. Despite repeated written request from the public, the Secretary of State has approved the sale of this field. I will be writing to Alan Salt, Headmaster asking him to consider selling the field for off-set Biodiversity Net Gain, which could enable the school to raise funds without building development that would in all likelihood cause further detrimental traffic fumes along this part of the AQMA (South Hams / DCC Air Quality Management Plan – due to excessive traffic emissions)

Roadworks

Temporary Traffic Notice - RIVERSIDE, Totnes (TTRO2668052)

TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL hereby give **NOTICE** that From **TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026** for a maximum of 5 days Until **THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026** (both dates inclusive) No person shall cause or permit any vehicle to proceed on the sections of Affected Roads. Roads affected **RIVERSIDE, TOTNE**. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE ROUTE. This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable - **EXCAVATE TO LAY 14M DUCT** For additional information contact: **FREEFLOW TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT** Telephone: **07368977325**



Notification of Road Closure – Work Ref: SV001KR-CDF091 Moreleigh Road, Harbertonford

“We are writing to inform you that Kier has applied for a road closure on behalf on the Environment Agency to undertake ground investigation works on Moreleigh Road, Harbertonford, in relation to the upcoming flood mitigation works in the village. The closure, subject to approval from Devon Highways, will need to be in place between 18/03/2026 and 20/03/2026.

All efforts will be made to maintain access to properties within the area of the suspension and minimise disruption. If you require further information, please call the project agent, David Luffman, on 07764734871 between 8:00am and 17:00 (Mon-Fri).

Thank you for your patience and understanding, we’ll make sure the work is completed as quickly as possible to minimise any disruption. Kier, on behalf of the Environment Agency.

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 12.12.25. These changes in Planning legislation affect Planning decisions. SHDC DM Planning Committee 15.01.26 demonstrated the impact of recent changes to the Government's new housing development demands on Local Planning Authorities.

Prior to the new delivery numbers, SHDC could demonstrate a comfortable 5-year supply of approved housing development proposals, which is the legal requirement to achieve. When the number of housing numbers in approved developments falls below this figure, the local authority is not in a strong position to refuse new housing development applications, unless there are strong tangible material reasons, since any such refusal, when the Council apparently 'needs' this additional housing could be taken to Appeal and win, costing the Council thousands of pounds in legal costs, and still the development would go ahead. Not having enough approved housing applications to meet the 5 year supply makes SHDC very vulnerable and unable to apply policies and requirements to use only allocated sites such as those developed in Neighbourhood Plans.

Under these new Government regs, SHDC can only now demonstrate a 2.53 year housing land supply

On 15.01.26, SHDC DM Committee debated the following planning application from Bloor Homes. Land at Sx 656 522 Barrack Road, Modbury seeking up to 75 dwellings. Despite a prolonged debate and strong points made, in particular about the legal position of the made Modbury neighbourhood Plan. The vote was taken to approve in line with the Officer's recommendation, as there were inadequate substantial reasons to refuse due to the lack of 5-year housing land supply to back up the Council's position. (My self and one other Councillor voted against, others abstained and 2 Councillors voted in favour, plus the chair had a casting vote). This **planning decision for Modbury**, highlights the new and unfortunate position of South Hams District Council regarding decision making on planning applications and the position of Neighbourhood Plans further to the Government imposing these new housing delivery quotas. Very disappointing and for me demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the astonishing level of hard work and dedication put into the Neighbourhood Plans and the associated waste of public funds that have supported their delivery.



Home and Allotment Composting Workshop

Saturday 28 Feb 2026
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

SHDC Community Compost Project: This project continues to be administered and supported by Sustainable South Hams under my executive portfolio. Link to main webpage for updates of events hosted <https://www.sussh.org/sub-categories/compost>.

Upcoming event:

Bookings are still being taken for their next composting workshop which will take place at the Mansion, Totnes

Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement Project (TRAYE) – 10 year Celebrations. Monday 13th April daytime. TRAYE project will be hosting a Conference about Youth Work, listening to some of the young people who are part of this and demonstrating the TRAYE project Model. This will be an interesting and engaging event at Stover Country Park. Details TBC. Hold The Date.

Totnes & District, Traffic & Transport Forum & AGM. 28.01.26. This meeting was well attended including representatives from local interest groups and neighbouring parish councils. Graham Bennett was re-elected at Chair, with Cllr Luisa Auletta and Cllr Anna Presswell as joint Deputy chairs. Two new project groups were proposed, **Air Quality and the AQMA** (from Shinnars Bridge to the top of Bridgetown Hill) and another **Review status of the dropped kerbs in the area** to assess any obstacles for people with accessibility issues; these will be discussed at the next Steering group meeting. Link to the notes from this meeting: <https://www.totnestowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/200-v2-TTF-AGM-28Jan26-Notes.pdf>

Totnes Climate & Biodiversity Emergency Working Group: The **FINAL** meeting of this group will take place on Tuesday February 17th at The Climate Hub (The Mansion, Fore St., Totnes). A victim of the successful range of more specialist groups that have been set up to focus on the wide range of issues that need to be addressed as we go adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change and reduce our carbon footprint. Join us for a celebration of our local community response.

REMINDERS

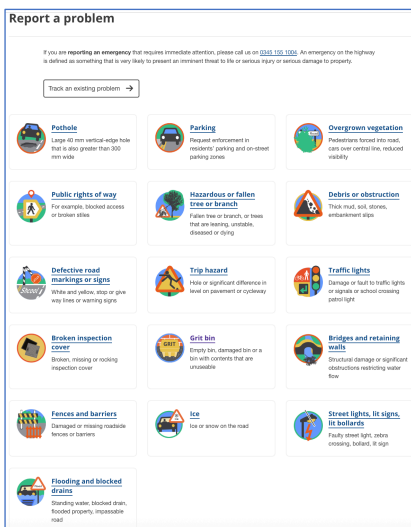
Warm Home Grants are available: link to grant information and applications:
<https://www.energysavingdevon.org.uk/help/warm-homes-local-grant/>

Libraries unlimited (the not-for-profit organisation that run the 50 public libraries in Devon) has put together a response to Devon County Council’s public consultation on the future of our public libraries. This together with their vision going forward is at this link. https://www.librariesunlimited.org.uk/devon-libraries-at-the-heart-of-communities/?utm_source=Libraries+Unlimited+Audience&utm_campaign=acc640cb47-Happy+National+Year+of+Reading+2026_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4d94df1602-acc640cb47-439630794



Devon Libraries – public Consultation - REMINDER to let your views be known - Shaping the future of Devon's library service. Use the link above to access the consultation.

Highways issues and defects that you need to report into Devon County Council. Please use the Devon County Council Report It webpage. Main webpage link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>



This will take you to the page shown in the picture and you can then click on the relevant icon. This will take you to a map where you can navigate to and identify the location of the problem and then make the report.

Ice and dangerous road surfaces: Major highways, A Roads and Bus routes are gritted by DCC teams.

However other roads and footpaths are required to be gritted and salted by Town and Parish Councils under the Snow Warden Scheme.

GRIT / SALT Bins. Please check your grit and salt bins. You can re-order supplies using the DCC REPORT IT webpages (links above)

Or this direct link for Grit / Salt bins and maps of their locations: This is the direct link (from the Grit Bin icon): <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/safe-travel/winter-travel/grit-bins/>

Extreme Weather and Flooding: You can use the Flooding and Blocked Drains link on the **DCC Report it** page above. There is also a dedicated Flooding Risk Management section on Devon County Council’s website for more information if needed at this link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/>