

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date: 7th February 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

Devon County Council (DCC): key issues

Devolution Bid: Devon County Council received late on 05.02.25, a formal letter from Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution along with a response to its bid submitted in January sent in response to the Government's initial Devolution proposals in the White Paper announced in December 2024.

A copy of the Minister's letter is attached with this report.

Also on February 5th in parliament, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Angela Rayner announced that the council's request was among those which have been rejected, meaning that it has not been successful in its early bid to be a Devon wide Unitary and that its request to delay the County Elections this coming May has been refused. The elections will therefore go ahead as planned.

And on the same day, DCC received confirmation that the Government has signed the necessary legislation to bring the Devon and Torbay's Combined County Authority (CCA) into being on 5th February 2025. The formal inauguration will take place on March 19th. 2025.

Along with other political Group Leaders at County I have met with the CEO and other senior officers yesterday to start the process of next steps in a very short time frame. The Council has been instructed to work with all the principal authorities within Devon to come up with proposals to meet the Government requirement for unitary authorities and prepare plans for the incoming new Devon County Councillors and submit the final bids by 28th November 2025.

I attach Donna Mason's briefing that she presented to provide an overview which sets this out.

An interesting summary of the situation and some background is covered in this recent report by Exeter Observer:
<https://exeterobserver.org/2025/01/29/south-west-peninsula-devolution-disarray-devon-exeter-plymouth-torbay-cornwall-conflicting-goals-seven-devon-districts-contempt-local-democracy-unlawful-county-hall-failure-publish-plan-postpone-elections-regional-governance-reorganisation/>

Other DCC matters

Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee meeting 30.01.25

The budget proposals for all the services were discussed. A number of recommendations were proposed by the Committee, including a request for the Members' Locality Budget to be kept at £8,000 for 2025/26, instead of the proposed reduction to £5,000. The document that details the budget proposals is at this link: <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s50974/Budget%20report.pdf>

Reduction in costs of lighting attributed to the replacement of lights to LED has saved £6M per annum. The trial of reduced lighting with dimmer periods, which is now available across the county is anticipated to reduce costs by £300,000 per annum.

Capital expenditure– from external grants. Included for this County Division:

The Grove Primary School, Totnes – Replacement HWS Heater £30,000 in 2025/26

River Dart Academy-Dartington school site development £506,000 in 2026/27

The Devon Countywide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan was recommended to be approved by Cabinet. This comprises the following new routes that the committee recommended to Cabinet to approve for listing under the approve capital expenditure programme (albeit that the programme has very limited funds for any new schemes at present.

Consultation responses to prioritisation of routes

Respondents were invited to choose the order in which routes should be prioritised. The table below shows the percentage of respondents who ranked a given route as their top priority, alongside the priority assigned to each route in the consultation draft Countywide LCWIP.

| Route | Consultation Draft Priority | % Top Priority |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Route 7: Teign Estuary Trail | Medium-term | 26% |
| Route 1: Tarka Trail (Knowle to Willingcott) | Medium-term | 25% |
| Route 8: Otter Trail | Long-term | 18% |
| Route 9: Sidbury to Sidford | Short-term | 7% |
| Route 4: Yealmpton to Newton Ferrers | Long-term | 5% |
| Route 10: Beer to Axminster and Uplyme | Long-term | 5% |
| Route 3: Clearbrook to Roborough (<i>now extended to Dousland</i>) | Medium-term | 5% |
| Route 6: Boniface Trail | Long-term | 3% |
| Route 2: Ruby Way (Holsworthy to Hatherleigh) (<i>now extended Meeth</i>) | Long-term | 3% |
| Route 5: Ashburton to Buckfastleigh | Long-term | 1% |

N.B. Officers advised that The Government Dept for Active Travel is producing a new Rural Design Guide.

Totnes to Littlehempston All Access path - At this meeting I also asked the officers to advise on how the Totnes – Littlehempston cycle path could be reconsidered at DCC, given that there have been significant changes and new opportunities of late: namely the change of board view at South Devon Steam Railway to allow full public access to Bulliver Bridge, providing the Local Authority approve it as a safe all access public route and, the current South West Water planning application for a solar array on the area that the off-road new stretch of route provides an opportunity to secure the route is preserved for this purpose. Further to this I have arranged a meeting between the officers, relevant Council members and the South Cycle Link reps to see what can be achieved during this window of opportunity.

Bus Service Improvement Plan: Update on developments to improve services and uptake by passengers. The council was awarded £14.1M by the DfT in 2022 (split into £8.8M capital and £5.3M revenue) which was to be spent from 2022/23 – 2024/25. The report presented by the officers is at this link: <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s50970/Report.pdf> Relevant to the Totnes & Dartington division was the report of the improvements to the following 2 bus services:

Service 92 improvements: Totnes - Dartmouth

- Service increased to hourly and connects with service 7 to/from Exeter at Totnes.
- Improved service started September 2023
- Improved journey opportunities to/from Totnes railway station, Newton Abbot, Torbay Hospital and Exeter

Service 149 improvements: Totnes - The Willows

- Simplified, more frequent service between Totnes, Marldon and The Willows via Torbay Hospital.
- Improved service started January 2024
- Improve access from Totnes and Marldon to Torbay Hospital and shopping facilities

Further to a question raised at the December'24 Full Council meeting; the following website details have been provided on the Devon Information Advice and Support Service(DIAS). Councillors are encouraged to provide this information to their constituents if they're seeking support and advice around SEND.

- [Home - Devon Information Advice and Support](#) – homepage
- [Contact Us - Devon Information Advice and Support](#) – contact details and how to get in touch
- [About Us - Devon Information Advice and Support](#) – information about our service and how we work, and details of the Ambassador Volunteer Programme
- [Resources - Devon Information Advice and Support](#) – links to printable versions of all our Parent / Carer resources. Printed copies of these can be requested by contacting us. We'd be happy to send out a selection of our most popular booklets to councillors if that would be helpful.
- [Young People - Devon Information Advice and Support](#) - information and resources specifically for Children and Young People

Flood Risk and Flooding from storms and Extreme weather: useful links can be found on this DCC dedicated webpage: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/>

Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP) newsletter. This contains updates on the projects DCC are carrying out across Devon to improve flood resilience in their target communities. For sharing. [Devon Resilience Innovation Project \(DRIP\) newsletter](#)

Local Highways matters

Notification issued on 05.02.25 from the Neighbourhood Highways Team. "We were notified this morning that the decision has been made to postpone programme work to redirect the resources to combat the increasing defect numbers. Currently the delay is expected to be for two weeks starting Monday 10th February, but this may alter. This seems to be affecting different areas differently. At present this redeployment will mean that only one order (Challons Combe to Bowls Cross, Aveton Gifford) will be deferred into 2025/26, but any further disruption to the programme will mean further works being deferred."

20mph proposals for Totnes and environ (30.01.25). I attended a meeting with officers to discuss the proposals for 20mph roads submitted by Totnes TC that have been agreed in principle by DCC for this year's tranche to take forward in 2025/26 (under the annual invitation to all parishes to submit roads that are then scored and top scorers prioritised). Totnes TC had proposed that all the roads in the general 20mph zones across the town where there remain 'gaps' where 30mph applies were submitted for reduced speeds. The officers have created a map that has taken these proposals into account, with the exception of Camomile Lawn in Bridgetown, where the estate roads remain unadopted – but are likely to become adopted eventually). The new residential roads within the Great Court Farm estate (berry Pomeroy Parish) had not been included, but which I have asked the officers to now consider for completeness and safety. Similarly the new proposals include the Totnes part of Barracks Hill, which leaves a 30mph gap between the top of Barracks Hill and Cott Road in Dartington. I asked for this to also be considered, in particular since Dartington PC are intending to install a Vehicle Activate Sign (VAS) to make this route that is popular with pedestrians, safer.

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS): Totnes Town Council (via the work of the Traffic & Transport Forum) has now proposed 4 potential sites for these speed reduction measures, which have now been passed on to DCC to approve them from a public and highways safety perspective. The locations proposed are in St Katherine's Way, Bridgetown Hill, Plymouth Road, Western Bypass (below Cistern St.). (FYI These VAS signs are currently paid for by Town and Parish Councils and their cost has grown significantly to around £3,000 each, plus installation).

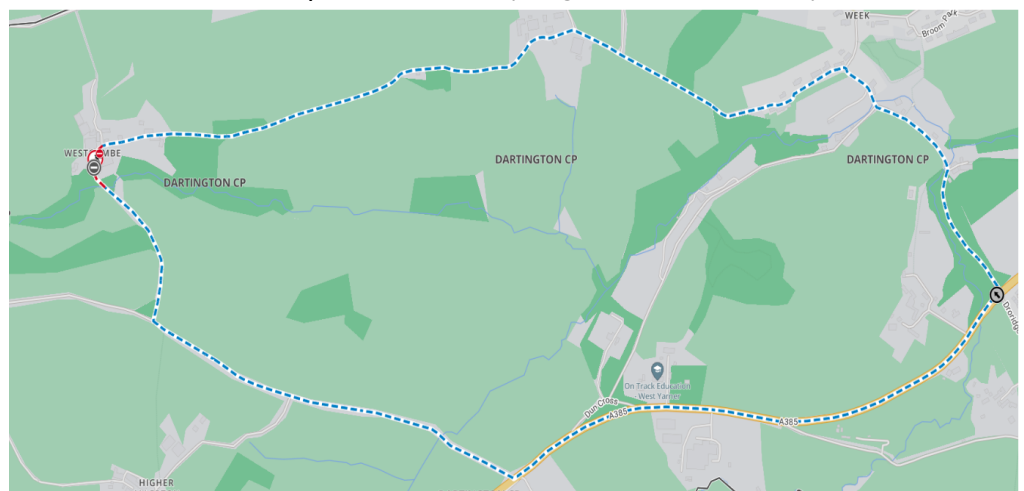
The Next South Hams HATOC will take place on Wednesday 5th March 10.30am at Follaton. The proposed (retrospective) stopping up of a short section of public footpath on Forder Lane in Dartington will be discussed and a recommendation for DCC Cabinet made.

Road Works & Closures

Current scheduled programme (notwithstanding the above notification regarding work programmes):

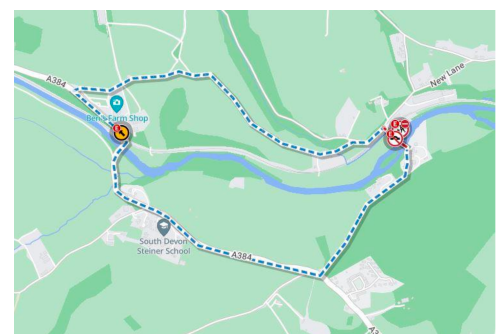
Ref: ORD2201437 Westcombe to Billany. Updated information about the forthcoming drainage improvements between Westcombe and Billany close to Dartington. The start date has been amended due to recent poor weather causing delays on existing sites. Due to the nature of the works a road closure is required and the diversionary route for traffic will be signposted and advance signs will also be placed on the Highway. The planned on-site working hours will be **Monday 10th February to Tuesday 18th February.** Gully and Pipe improvement and install new Devon Haunching between Westcombe to Billany. The road closure and works area highlighted in red on the map, there will be a signed diversion route which is shown on the map in blue. "We apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused, including noise.

We will endeavour to keep all disruption to a minimum and appreciate your co-operation. Should you have any questions please contact us and we will do our best to try to help. Highway Liaison Officer, Devon County Council, Email: highway.highwaysliaison-mailbox@devon.gov.uk. Website: Roads and transport (devon.gov.uk)



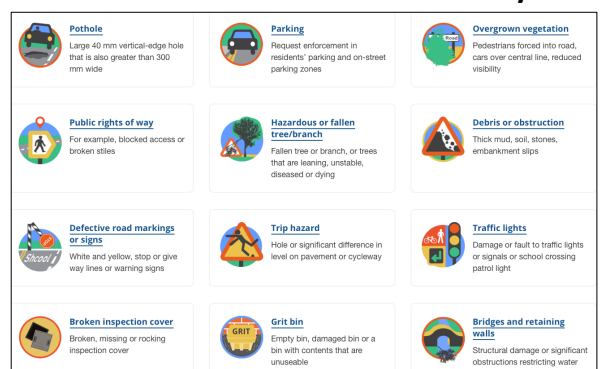
Emergency Temporary Traffic Notice - Huxhams Cross to Staverton Bridge, Staverton (TTRO2561767) TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC & PARKING. From WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025 for a maximum of 21 days Until THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2025 (both dates inclusive)

No person shall cause or permit any vehicle to proceed or wait on the sections of Affected Roads. Roads affected - **HUXHAMS CROSS TO STAVERTON BRIDGE, STAVERTON** The alternative, signed, route for vehicles will be via - FROM STAVERTON BRIDGE CROSS TO A384 TO HUXHAMS CROSS TO STAVERTON BRIDGE. This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable - REMOVE LARGE TREE FROM BRIDGE SPAN BLOCKING FLOW UNDER BRIDGE. For additional information contact: MARINE AND CIVIL SOLUTION LTD Telephone: 07792 952308



Information on current and planned roadworks in your area can be found on this link: Causeway one.network

Need to report a Highways Problem – Please go to DCC Report it webpage to log any problem from potholes to fallen lampposts or signs etc. A page of icons (see screen shot) enables reports to be made directly on maps and sends a direct message to the DCC Highways services team. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>



Totnes: Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 18th February at 6.30pm.** This meeting will discuss activities for Transition Town Totnes' 20th Anniversary in June. There will also be feedback from Sustainable South Hams Visit to the Waste based Frome Loop microbusinesses this month (10.02.25) and an update on the community composting project for Totnes; the group are currently finalising a survey that will be out for public responses later this month. (These monthly meetings take place on the third Tuesday of the month at 6.30pm at Totnes Climate Hub). All welcome.

Totnes & District Traffic & Transport (T&DTT) Forum AGM. 29.01.25. A new Steering Committee was appointed including representatives from Littlehempston, Staverton and Dartington, there remain spaces on the Steering for representatives from the other neighbouring parishes. The following projects were agreed to be taken forward with named leads to progress the projects:

- 20's Plenty
- Vehicle Activated Signs
- Totnes Old Bridge safety options feasibility
- School Green Travel Plans
- Strategic Road Network Investment
- Active Travel Routes

The next T&DTT Forum meetings for this year are scheduled for 30 April, 30 July and 29 October.

Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) project will be holding its AGM in March and would welcome all towns and parishes that host the project to appoint a representative to the Board of Trustees. Any interested parties that would also like to attend the AGM to hear about TRAYE's work are also welcome to attend the AGM. The date for the AGM will be circulated shortly.

<https://trayeproject.org>