

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date: 3rd March 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

Full Council 22.02.25 To approve the annual county budget 2025/26. Despite DCC and Torbay having formed a combined authority (formalised on 05.02.25), this budget was for DCC only. It was agreed to raise the DCC element of the precept by 4.99%.

The Target Budgets for services reflect an estimated inflationary pressure of £17.7 million due to National Living Wage impacts.

The cost of inflation places sustained financial pressures both on our households and communities, and our suppliers and service providers, contributes to the ongoing impact in terms of price and demand pressures on the Authority's budget. This is reflected in the proposed Target Budgets with total investment of £31.9 million to cover inflation and national living wage plus £33.8 million to cover demand and other spending pressures and priorities. To enable the authority to set a balanced budget, savings, alternative funding and additional income of £21.7 million have been identified.

It is not currently planned to support the proposed budget targets by using general reserve balances. This reflects a strategy of 'living within our means' and as such to set service budgets that are affordable within anticipated income and funding totals for next year.

The targets set for each service area have been subject to different pressures and influences. The table below shows the 2025/26 Budget Targets by service area.

	2024/25 Adjusted Base Budget £000	Inflation and National Living Wage £000	Other Growth and Pressures £000	Savings, Alternative Funding and Additional Income £000	2025/26 Target Budget £000	Net Change 2024/25 to 2025/26 £000	%
Integrated Adult Social Care	354,322	19,120	18,190	(8,185)	383,447	29,125	8.2%
Children and Young People's Futures	224,970	7,834	11,054	(6,530)	237,328	12,358	5.5%
Public Health & Communities	13,931	225	365	(1,450)	13,071	(860)	-6.2%
Performance & Partnerships	7,431	121	75	(447)	7,180	(251)	-3.4%
Corporate Services	54,709	1,251	2,822	(3,319)	55,463	754	1.4%
Climate Change, Environment & Transport	84,753	3,346	1,312	(1,808)	87,603	2,850	3.4%
Totals	740,116	31,897	33,818	(21,739)	784,092	43,976	5.9%

Income estimates:

Summary	2024/25 Settlement £'000	2025/26 Provisional Settlement £'000		2025/26 Final Settlement £'000	
Core Funding	112,269	113,345	0.90%	113,345	0.90%
Other Grants	158,125	162,597	2.80%	168,396	6.50%
Subtotal – Core grants and settlement funding	270,394	275,942	2.05%	281,741	4.20%
Assumed Council Tax Requirement	523,974	555,475	6.00%	555,475	6.00%
Total Core Spending Power	794,368	831,417	4.66%	837,216	5.39%
Increase / (Decrease) compared to 2024/25		37,049		42,848	

The only amendment proposed to this year's budget was my own to reinstate the Members Localities annual grant fund back to £8,000 rather than the reduction to £5,000 in the draft proposals. This required £180,000

to be drawn from elsewhere in the budget, which I proposed would be taken from the unallocated community fund (which organisations can bid into and is generally approved by officers rather than Councillors). This was approved at Full Council with strong cross-party support.

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). DCC Members Day 25.02.25

County Councillors together with CEO Donna Mason, Directors of Services and senior officers were brought together to provide information and a background and forum for discussion about the Government's request for bids for Local Government Reorganisation. Devon County Council together with Leaders of Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council are working together to explore the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority. They are also meeting with leaders from the seven district Councils across Devon to consider the various options of unitary authorities within that larger strategic authority.

A number of options for possible unitary authorities across the county are being looked at by various councils. Devon County Council is working on the premise of have some possible options on the table and ready for the new incoming Council in May, based on discussions over the next few weeks that will prepare for provision responses to government by the 21st March initial deadline.

Three presentations provided at this event that interested me in particular were from the Directors of services for Children's Services, Adult and Social Care and Financial services. Between them they narrated the case for the 80% of DCC's total annual budget that is spent on Children's Services and Adult social health care. The Director of finances then said that if an enlarged single unitary across Devon was formed and aggregated these two service areas across that area, the savings / efficiencies would amount to £100M p.a. If however, these DCC services were to be disaggregated across a number of new smaller unitary authorities, the cost of disaggregation could amount to at least £111M.

A further element being discussed is the **new public elected representation for the new local Unitary authorities** and how this should be decided. The Boundary Commission is unlikely to be making recommendations due to the sheer number of local authorities involved in this reshuffle. The ratio of electorate to public representative is part of this, plus a decision on how the Wards, divisions etc could be reset. Concerns have been raised about the possible impact of confusion for the public if representation boundaries are substantially changed.

The Governance group that I sit on is currently meeting weekly to shape up the options and the associated potential costs and benefits. I will report further as this proceeds.

20's Plenty – New 20mph routes in Totnes proposed to fill in current 30mph gaps. I have met with officers to consider their proposals. The draft document has been discussed with the Totnes & District Traffic & Transport 20's plenty working group and the map with proposals will be brought to the Town Council at FC meeting this week. Once approved and then agreed with the officers this will then go out to public consultation across the town for final agreement. It looks very positive!

Totnes – Littlehempston All Access Path. A lot of work has taken place behind the scenes to make progress with this route. There is a very proactive local group leader for this work and in just this last 2 months a number of meetings have taken place including DCC officers. I raised this at a key scrutiny meeting in January that led to my hosting a meeting with the LCWIP officers at DCC that has engaged their support and the DCC Cabinet portfolio holder Cllr Stuart Hughes. Cllr Hughes has now requested that this route is added to the formal DCC LCWIP list for approval at next week's cabinet and thereby provide improved status that it is hoped will benefit the position with SWW in their current planning application for a solar array that shares the same location. The route will also be discussed at this week's SH HATOC to reaffirm it's approval of the route.

South Hams HATOC 03.03.25. This meeting will include:

- Affirmation of Totnes – Littlehempston All Access Path to DCC LCWIP list for capital schemes
- DCC Annual Waiting restrictions programme 2025/26 (none proposed in this division)
- Proposals to stop up a small section of Forder Lane, Dartington

Devon Bus Forum 03.03.25

This group meets quarterly to discuss improvements to bus services, routes and access and uptake of use. This meeting covered the following topics:

- **A further £10.3M has been received from Government to continue the work of the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP).** This is based on match funding. The capital spending on this will include **capital spending on Zebra 2 electric buses** due to start being rolled out in Exeter in June and there will also be an initiative use this also to help smaller operators to reduce their carbon footprint. The revenue elements are intended to;
 - **Improve highways access routes** for buses to improve services
 - **Better integration of smaller bus service operators** and other services including trains and making timetables work well etc.
 - **Supporting the flat price bus fare** that has improved take up of services. This has been increased from £2 to £3 charge.
 - Bus users can (and are being encouraged to) **report buses that fail to arrive or very late at this link:** <https://submit.forms.service.gov.uk/form/5338/report-buses-arriving-late-early-not-stopping-or-not-turning-up/18341>
- **The Bus Services charter 2023 is being reviewed.** Link for information <https://devoncc.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicDocs/Transport/Travel/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FPublicDocs%2FTransport%2FTravel%2FBSIP%20%2D%20Published%20Documents%2FBUS%20Forum%2FDevon%20Bus%20Passenger%20Charter%20%2D%20v1%20Published%202023%20%281%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FPublicDocs%2FTransport%2FTravel%2FBSIP%20%2D%20Published%20Documents%2FBUS%20Forum&p=true&ga=1>
- **Community Rail Network is delivering a project funded by Motability.** <https://communityrail.org.uk/major-new-initiative-to-empower-disabled-people-to-use-the-railway-with-confidence/> Devon is not within the project area but you can be put in touch with the Project Manager for any sharing of learning etc.
- **Connecting You project** is helping people to access bus passes and permits. There is considerable work to help learning disabled persons. One of the initiatives will be the introduction of audio bus stops. Karen Rose is the officer leading on this work and I've mentioned to her that Inclusive Totnes might be a helpful contact to feed in views about facilities and services for all disabled persons.
- **Bus Driver Disability Training.** Devon County Council, partnered with Devon in Sight (The Devon County Association for the Blind), Living Options Devon and North Devon Voluntary Services to help smaller & medium sized commercial bus operators and Community bus schemes to design and deliver a first-rate Disability Awareness Training Programme. The Driver Disability Awareness Training recognised how critical the role of the bus driver is to a passenger's journey experience. Helping drivers to overcome their own concerns about offering help to passengers with protected characteristics such as disability. A manual is also available. <https://devoninsight.org.uk/professionals/bus-driver-disability-awareness-training>
- **The Bus Services Bill** is currently being debated in the house of Lords. The intention is to make provision for local and school bus services and for connected services. Among the number of proposed provisions in this bill, is the
 - Repeal of the law that prevented Local Authorities being bus operators
 - The Power of Local Transport Authorities to make bus bye-laws
 - More information: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3910>

Local Highways issues:

The rising water problem at Cistern St reported at the last Town Council meeting has been raised with Devon Flood Team and the Environment Agency (EA). It has been confirmed that it is not an EA matter. The Flood Team are now investigating and will report back to me. DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer has logged it with

SWW but does not anticipate them investigating further as they claim this is not connected to their supplies or services. I will update when more information is provided

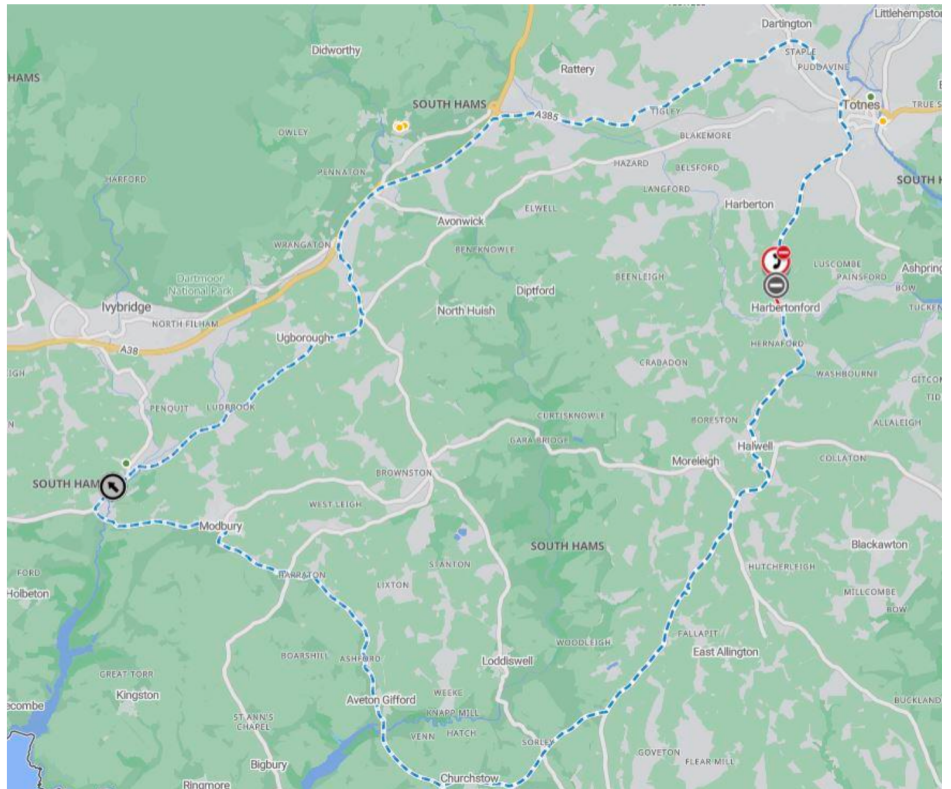
Scheduled Road Works & Closures

TTRO2562000 TEMPORARY RESTRICTION) (A381 BROCKHILLS CROSS TO MAIN ROAD, HARBERTONFORD) ORDER 2025. TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC. NOTICE is hereby given that Devon County

Council has made the above titled order. From **SUNDAY 6 APRIL 2025** for a maximum of 18 months. Anticipated Finish **SUNDAY 20 APRIL 2025**. Between the hours of 07:00 and 11:00. No person shall cause or permit any vehicle to proceed on the sections of Affected Roads. Roads affected **A381 BROCKHILLS CROSS TO MAIN ROAD, HARBERTONFORD**

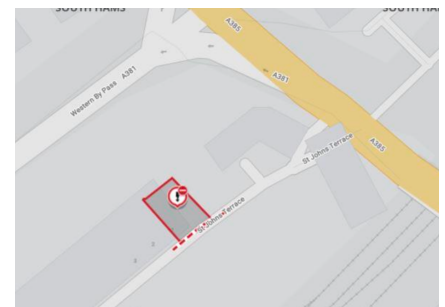
The alternative, signed, route for vehicles will be via - **A381 - A379 - A3121 - A38 - A385 - A381 - VICE VERSA**. This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable - **POLE REPLACEMENT AND POLE TESTING. SUNDAY WORKS ONLY 06/04, 13/04, 20/04**

For additional information contact: **SUNBELT RENTALS**
Telephone: **03700 500792**



TTRO2561897 (TEMPORARY RESTRICTION) ST JOHNS TERRACE, TOTNES. ORDER 2025

TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC. NOTICE is hereby given that Devon County Council has made the above titled order. **From MONDAY 12 MAY 2025 for a maximum of 18 months. Anticipated Finish MONDAY 19 MAY 2025.** No person shall cause or permit any vehicle to proceed on the sections of Affected Roads. Roads affected - **ST JOHNS TERRACE, TOTNES.** THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE ROUTE. This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable - **INSTALLATION OF NEW ELECTRICITY SUPPLY.** For additional information contact: **NATIONAL GRID.** Telephone: **01271 347735**



Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) 11.02.25. The meeting was provided with an update on the Clean Devon Action Plan for 2025- 2027. This included

- Surveillance interventions to deter fly tipping and the logistical barriers to involvement from some districts (who were keen);
- Support for the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean Campaign support. DASWC supports this campaign each year, but is widening the scope of its support, including using bus backs for advertising with a focus on litter from vehicles.
- How success would be recorded, including practical difficulties around metrics such as net tonnage, where reuse of materials would mean lower tonnage of materials recycled, which should not be recorded as a negative. Officers acknowledged the difficulties and advised that the key metric would be participation rates, determined by the data collected on bin usage by loading crews, with dedicated monitoring pre- and post-intervention;

- How data collection would be ensured, including incentivising loading crews to record the data;
- How the proposed segmentation model differed to the Acorn segmentation used for waste analysis. This was in line with advice received from the Waste and Recycling Advisor Project (WRAP);
- Vehicle littering (in laybys etc), with concern raised around lack of police effort / involvement. It was noted that Devon and Cornwall Police were regular attendees at Clean Devon meetings, and that enforcement of fines for things like littering was the responsibility of the relevant local authority. Reference was also made to Operation Snap, which encouraged members of the public to upload footage of people contravening road safety rules, and whether there were opportunities to ensure closer working with the police to support local authorities in enforcing rules around littering; and

I informed the meeting that SHDC has initiated a review into its waste collection services (further to my concerns about the number of recycling bins in and around the streets and the dilapidated state of many of these collection bins). In line with this, I requested that information is provided comparing costs etc of the use of Shared MRFs (Material Recovery Facilities) across the county with the current varied kerb recycling services provided. It is hoped that this information could inform the review and assist in the sharing of waste collection services that will go forward in the wake of the Local Government Reform current shake up.

**JOIN THE GREAT
BRITISH SPRING
CLEAN**

The Great British Spring Clean and [Great Big School Clean](#) 2025 will take place from 21 March to 6 April. In a YouGov survey carried out on our behalf ahead of the Great British Spring Clean, more than 31.6 million people said 'litter-free' streets would help them love where they live – and 72% of UK adults said seeing litter makes them less proud of their neighbourhood. So if you want to

protect our wildlife and the places you love this spring, join us and [pledge](#) to pick up a bag – or more.

<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean>

Devon County Council – Children’s Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) services is inviting views on their services. *“We are changing how we do things so that we can improve the outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families in Devon. Your voice is valuable, so to make sure we’re making the right changes, we want to hear about your experiences of our health, care and education services (including schools, colleges and other settings). We’re working with Genuine Partnerships, a not-for-profit community interest company from Rotherham made up of practitioners, parent carers and young people working together as equal partners. They developed ‘The Four Cornerstones Approach’ based on research involving children and young people with SEND and their families. It’s known to help build the trust needed for good quality co-production, so we’re using it to help us embed a new culture which focusses on positive relationships”.* You can find out more about this in the new Devon Local Area SEND Strategy here - devon.cc/sendstrategy

This is the link to the survey: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=gzehjWjLP0S7S5I_d_1b--JBubONt110koNg7HWxayRUN1JBQ1FKNTJSRURNMTZKUUFaV1k1QVhXMi4u

Devon Communities Together (Quarter 3) October – December 2024 Impact Report – at this link <https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/case-studies>. Devon Communities Together is an independent charity that helps to enable and empower communities across Devon to tackle insecurities and inequalities that can arise from living in a largely rural county. They are Devon's Rural Community Council and a member of Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), through which they receive DEFRA funding to support our rural and coastal communities.

Energy Savings Trust: Free webinars and sessions: An introduction to EVs (Electric Vehicles) and EV Charging for Councillors. Online, various dates and times are available including daytime and evening sessions. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/event/an-introduction-to-evs-ev-charging-for-councillors/>

Totnes Allotments Association AGM 01.03.25: The current number of Members currently on the waiting list for an allotment is 57. The expected length of waiting time is 2-3 years.

Totnes: Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 18th March at 6.30pm.** (These monthly meetings take place on the third Tuesday of the month at 6.30pm at Totnes Climate Hub). All welcome.

Community Composting update & Sustainable South Hams Workshops

Totnes Community Composting group has launched a public survey across the town to assess the interest and demand for a community composting facility. The survey is available as a paper copy (distributed by Totnes Directory) or online. This is the link to the online survey: www.bit.ly/4fPNloy



HOME COMPOSTING MASTERCLASS
With 'Dr Compost' Nicky Scott

Home Composting Masterclass
Saturday 15 Mar 2025
South Brent Community Compost Centre, TQ10 9QF



COMMUNITY COMPOSTING
Gathering & Masterclass

TWO DAY Community Composting Gathering & Masterclass
Saturday 26 Apr 2025
South Brent Old school Community Centre

Sustainable South Hams is running workshops to provide information and training for those interested in being involved in home composting and community composting. The next events are a Home Composting workshop on March 15th and a 2-day Community Composting masterclass (back by very popular demand) on Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th April.

This is the link for more information and booking the workshops:

<https://www.sussh.org/inspiration/events>

Funding opportunities: Please find below some funding opportunities that maybe of interest to your parishes and residents in your areas. Please may you share any information to any relevant parties that potentially would be interested in applying for the funding.

BERNARD SUNLEY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Each year, the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation gives more than £4.5 million in grants to capital projects that support communities and provide facilities for those in need. Charities that are seeking funding for a capital project such as new build, major refurbishment or transport, can apply to the Foundation for a contribution towards the costs.

- Community – village halls (especially in isolated rural areas), scout huts, youth clubs, community centres and sports facilities. Funding is also available to churches where the project will benefit the wider community.
- Education – support for children and young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs/disabilities. This can include the purchase of new minibuses for children with special needs and educational facilities at museums, galleries and arts organisations
- Health – improvements to care homes, hospices, day centres or other facilities for the elderly and those with special needs; the creation or refurbishment of outdoor or recreational spaces for patients and specialist new transport.
- Social welfare – residential and other facilities to support and improve the lives of vulnerable people including veterans, the elderly, those seeking help with addiction, homelessness, ex-offenders and victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

There are three levels of grants: Large – £25,000 and above; Medium – up to £20,000; and Small – £5,000 and under. Applications are accepted from registered charities, CIOs, specialist schools, scout and guide groups and housing associations. Co-operatives and Community Benefit Societies registered with the FCA can also apply.

Application deadline: Apply at any time

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/bernard-sunley-charitable-foundation/>

ALPKIT Foundation

Grants from the Alpkit Foundation are in the region of £50 to £500 and are intended for:

- Health projects enabling people to gain physical and mental wellbeing from the Great Outdoors. Education projects such as First Aid, D of E, Forest Schools and Mountain Leader.
- Participation projects that get more people experiencing the Great Outdoors
- There is particular interest in projects that:
 - Encourage responsible outdoor activity, which have long lasting benefits
 - Introduce new people to getting outdoors

Application deadline: Apply at any time.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/alpkit-foundation/>

Church of England: Boiler Replacement Hardship Fund

As part of the Church of England's Net Zero by 2030 programme, grants up to £45,000 are available to churches and church halls to cover the difference in cost between a low-carbon heating system and an oil or gas heating system. The Boiler Replacement Hardship Fund will help churches to reduce their carbon emissions. It aims to provide support to churches that most need it: where the existing heating system is failing; and where the church cannot afford to fund a low-carbon replacement in full.

The grant will cover the full difference in cost between the low carbon system and an oil/gas system where the difference is less than £25,000. If the difference is more than £25,000, deprivation data will be used to determine the level of grant that can be awarded. The maximum grant is £45,000.

The grants are for churches and church halls where activities are taking place in a building owned by part of the Church of England. The existing oil or gas boiler must be at end of life or have failed and need to be replaced urgently. You will need to have received professional advice about the proposed low-carbon solution and this needs to be supported by an energy audit or action plan.

The funding is for projects that can start before December 2025.

Application deadline: Apply at any time.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/church-of-england-boiler-replacement-hardship-fund/>

High Street Rental Auctions Fund

High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs) are a new power for local authorities to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants such as local businesses or community groups. If a commercial high-street property has been vacant for 366 days or more in a 24-month period, a local authority can instigate a 'rental auction' to find a suitable tenant for the property.

To facilitate the process, the government is providing grants to help local authorities to:

Create a high-street commercial vacancy register:

Refurbish properties that are subject to a High Street Rental Auction to the required minimum standard. It is anticipated that the cost of producing a vacancy register will be approximately £3,000 to £8,000; and the average refurbishment costs will be approximately £50,000 per property. Local authorities can also claim a new burdens payment of £5,223 to cover the cost of setting up the scheme eg. marketing, auction and legal costs incurred as a result of implementing the new powers.

The scheme is for local authorities with planning powers.

Application deadline: 31 January 2026 (the fund may close sooner if all the funding is allocated)

Children's Alliance

Non-profit organisations including schools, registered charities, community interest companies and registered community groups can apply for grants to deliver water-based projects for disadvantaged children. The funding comes from the Children's Alliance which aims to get children into water safely to learn, develop and purposefully play for the benefit of their physical and mental wellbeing. Projects must support children under the age of 18 and clearly show the relationship to water or water environments within the project.

The Children's Alliance is interested in projects that address the following themes:

Physical activity, mental health, environment, education, participation and diversity

The grants will usually be up to £15,000 with most grants awarded being under £10,000.

Focus of fund/fund aims: Grants for projects to give children and young people a better start in life through the medium of water. Application deadline: Applications can be made twice a year - in September and March
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/childrens-alliance/>

William Sutton

The Clarion Housing Group awards the William Sutton Prize for high-impact ideas that have the potential to create lasting benefits for social housing residents and communities. The fund is for new and breakthrough ideas that have the potential to be scaled up across the social housing sector.

- **William Sutton Prize for Sustainability** – up to £50,000 for innovative ideas that help the social housing sector and residents restore and preserve the natural world including green construction, retrofitting, circular solutions and biodiversity
- **William Sutton Prize for Connected Communities** – up to £25,000 for high-impact ideas that enhance the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of social housing residents including innovative technology, social inclusion and community spaces. Applications are invited from both not-for-profit and commercial organisations, including registered charities, community interest companies, social enterprises, community groups and other registered companies. Individuals can also apply.

There is an applicant webinar for each of the two prize categories – both are being held on 19 February 2025. Focus of fund/fund aims: For innovative, scalable projects that will have a positive impact on the social housing sector; <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/william-sutton-prize-2/>

Karen Dent | Community and Health Engagement Coordinator.

South Hams and West Devon Outreach | 07895 447613

Usual working days: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday