

Loxhore Parish Council
County Councillors report
May 2024

Highway updates for the Parish.

Last week I did several site visits with the local highway officer who will be chasing up why the safety defects and drainage issues have not been completed. Please keep reporting the safety defects as they will be done, if you keep a note of the number and send over to me if they aren't done, I can easily chase up.

News from today's cabinet meeting where we were already set to discuss a £10 million boost to pothole repairs and pre-emptive road drainage work. But have now agreed to add a further £2 million to the total after hearing that the overall county budget for 2023/24 has come in underspent.

So the county's budget for repairing potholes and drainage work will be boosted by a total of £12 million overall. This is a significant cash injection which will have a positive impact on the condition of our roads, not only by repairing potholes but also improving drainage to make our roads more resilient. The extremely wet weather over the past year has inflicted a huge amount of damage on the network so there's no denying that there's a substantial amount of work that our highway teams will be tackling.

Safer Roads Fund A361. (Combe Martin Division)

Devon County Council has been awarded more than £5m by the Department for Transport (DfT) to deliver safety improvements on the A361 in North Devon. As mentioned above this will include average speed cameras along the route and improvements to junctions and crossing points. Detail will be worked up over the next weeks

This is one of only 17 roads in England to be allocated funding from the Safer Roads Fund.

Next stage of the Tarka Trail (in Combe Martin Rural Division)

Some detail for you;

Phase 2 – works started last week

700 metre long x 3.5m wide tarmacked track, built on the former railway.

Works entail extensive vegetation clearance, drainage construction including 3 new culverts, earthworks, construction of the new track which consists of recycled road plantings for the base and a tarmacked surface.

Directional signing, fencing and picnic/rest areas to be installed along the trail.

Land acquired from 3 separate landowners over an 8 year period.

Planning permission granted for construction in 2023. Works to start Easter 2024.

Biodiversity Net Gain work agreed on three off site DCC owned locations, which entails tree and shrub planting.

Overall Cost £583k.

Devon Awarded £5.3m for zero emission buses (21 runs in Combe Martin Rural Division)

A fleet of 41 electric buses are set to take to Devon's roads in Exeter, North Devon and Torridge.

DCC's successful joint bid with Stagecoach has secured £5.3 million from the second round of the Department for Transport's [Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas \(ZEBRA\) scheme](#).

[Stagecoach](#) will be investing a further £15 million into the project to roll out new EV buses in Exeter on Service 4, Service A and the Green Park and Ride service, while in North Devon and Torridge they will operate on Services 21/21A as well as town services in Barnstaple.

The introduction of electric buses, which should be on the road by early 2026, is expected to create a new image which we hope will appeal to new passengers, boost park and ride use and improve air quality by reducing pollution.

Stagecoach is ready to roll out EV charging infrastructure across its depots, including Exeter and Barnstaple.

This new investment will form the basis for the bus company to expand its fleet of zero and low emission vehicles across the south west, and there are also plans in place to develop a community charging hub at the Matford depot in Exeter.

Councillor Andrea Davis, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, said:

We want to tackle carbon emissions and reducing emissions of public transport can have a huge impact in helping us achieve our net zero targets. These new electric buses can help transform our local bus network in Devon and hopefully they will appeal to more people and encourage them to travel by bus. I am very pleased that the 21 buses are included in this as not only will it show that buses on long rural routes can be electric it also serves some of the communities I represent.

Devon County Council are one of 25 local authorities across the country receiving a share of the £143 million funding through the second round of the ZEBRA programme, enabling the rollout of 955 zero emission buses in England.

General Devon updates.....

Government cash support for Devon's special needs education

A high level agreement has been signed between Devon County Council and the Government which will see an extra £95 million of national funds set aside to reduce the deficit on special needs

education. In common with councils across the country, we have been negotiating with the Government for extra funding under the so-called Safety Valve programme.

Growing Communities Fund

If you know of a community group that has a project that could improve people's wellbeing, relieve hardship, or provide a warm space to work, learn or socialise in the area there is a grant available:

Information at communitygrants@devon.gov.uk

DCC awarded more than £7m to deliver more Electric Vehicle charging points

Devon County Council has been awarded more than £7m of Government funding to support its delivery of thousands of new, publicly accessible, Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points across the county over the next few years.

The capital funding comes from the Department for Transport's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund. The Fund aims to support the roll-out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across England, for drivers without off-street parking, and we've received one of the largest allocations in the country.

Household Support Fund

It is welcome news that we are able to confirm that DCC have been allocated a little over £5 million from the government to help households struggling to pay higher bills for energy, food, water, and other essential items.

This will be the fifth round of Household Support Funding that we have received from the Department for Work and Pensions, to run between April and September 2024. It will take Devon's total level of Household Support Funding received so far to just over £30 million.

The funding is to support households in most need, but specifically those that may not be eligible for other support that is already available from the government.

We must submit plans mid-May to the Department of Work and Pensions, setting out how we, with Devon's District, City and Borough councils and other voluntary and community partners, will make the latest funding available.

Plans are expected to include:

- a funding allocation to specifically support families in receipt of Free School Meals, to provide food vouchers that can be exchanged at supermarkets to buy food during school holidays. 21,700 children in Devon were eligible for free school meal vouchers during the last holidays

- some funding will also go to provide financial support for food, energy and other essentials to eligible low income households with children and young people, through the County Council's Early Help service
- Team Devon's District/City/Borough councils will plan to continue helping households that are in greatest financial need and struggling to pay for food, energy and other related essentials. They will publicise further details soon, once plans have been finalised
- Citizens Advice Devon will continue to receive funding to support households that are using pre-payment and credit meters, to help with energy costs
- Devon Community Foundation will deploy funds to voluntary and community organisations that support specific groups who may struggle to access the help and support they need

The Household Support Fund is one aspect of the support that councils across the county are making available to households. For [more information about the range of support available, visit our website.](#)

Highway emergency number is :0345 155 1004 (If you are reporting an emergency that is very likely to present an imminent threat to life or serious injury or serious damage to property).

Reporting defects on the highway the Devon County Website [Report a problem - Roads and transport \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

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