

West Down parish Council

County Councillors report

April 2024

Visit to the Parish by SoS for Transport Mark Harper last Thursday.



The SoS was very interested in the Safer Roads Scheme and our plans to improve safety along the road, including the ambition to put in average speed cameras, we had a chat about the Tarka Trail and he was enthusiastic about the electric buses you will have on the 21 route. I was very happy to bring him to West Down and have the opportunity to explain life for us in rural Devon with regard to transport and how it differs from our more urban neighbours.

Highway updates for the Parish.

Sue helpfully highlighted to me the state of the A361 in the Mullacott area, yesterday I did a site visit with the local highway officer who will be chasing up why the safety defects have not been completed. What I have asked for is drainage works to be done and resurfacing. This will now be planned up and programmed in if my request is successful, I will keep pushing. In the meantime 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. Yesterday they had all been reported (I think by your hard working and diligent chairman!)

Some good news for West Down.....

Safer Roads Fund

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.

You will see the contractors have moved in for the next stage of the Tarka Trail

Some detail for you;

Phase 2 – works to start this 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

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.

Devon Retrofit guide

Devon County Council have published a free guide giving Devon homeowners, tradespeople and architects detailed advice about adding energy efficiency measures to the house types most commonly found in Devon.

We have led the production of the guide on behalf of Energy Saving Devon, as part of our work to improve the quality and speed of work to improve the energy efficiency of homes – also called 'retrofitting' .

The retrofitting of homes in Devon is needed to eliminate carbon emissions by 2050, lower energy bills and create comfortable, healthy homes.

The guide focuses on how to upgrade four of the most common housing types in Devon: Victorian granite detached houses, mid-century detached houses, mid-century semi-detached houses and cob houses.

Almost 25 per cent of Devon's greenhouse gas emissions come from our homes and around 80 per cent of the housing we will occupy in 2050 has already been built.

The Devon Retrofit Guide covers a range of retrofit components including insulation, renewable energy systems and ventilation. It gives technical details to equip installers and architects with the knowledge and tools to advise clients about how to reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions. It's equally useful for competent DIYers.

The Energy Saving Devon Retrofit Guide is free to download here: [The Devon Retrofit Guide](#)

Devon 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.

With the rainfall forecast over the next few days on already saturated ground.....

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)

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