

West Down Parish Council

County Councillors report

January 2026

Tarka Trail update

I am pleased to report that Devon County Council's Cabinet has formally approved a £2.2 million investment to complete three critical phases of the Tarka Trail between Willingcott and Knowle.

This funding represents a major milestone in our long-term goal to eliminate the "missing link" in North Devon's premier multi-use trail, moving us closer to a fully integrated, traffic-free route from Ilfracombe to the wider Tarka Trail network.

Current Challenges

While the trail currently provides a high-quality experience from Ilfracombe to Willingcott, the route south of that point remains predominantly on-road. The challenging topography and lack of segregation on these roads currently limit the trail's appeal to families, less confident cyclists, and pedestrians.

Approved Works and Funding

The project will be financed through a combination of the Department for Transport's **Active Travel Fund**, **Safer Roads Funding**, and the **Local Transport Plan**, this funding was secured under the previous administration. The approved construction phases include:

- **Spreacombe Junction to North Buckland Hill:** A new 300-metre off-road, segregated path will be built to provide a safe alternative to the A361.
- **North Buckland Hill & Bridleway Upgrades:** * Safety improvements to a 150-metre section of North Buckland Hill (improved visibility/markings).
- Widening and surfacing of a 560-metre bridleway stretch to create a high-quality multi-use path (generally 2.5m wide).
- Refurbishment of nearby rest areas.
- **Deans Copse to Knowle:** Widening and surfacing of the route between Deans Copse, Nethercott Road, and Knowle. This includes a Public Path Creation Order to re-designate existing footpaths as bridleways, legally allowing for cycling and horse riding.

Next Steps and Progress

- **Land Acquisition:** Negotiations are currently underway to finalise the purchase of necessary land parcels.

• **Remaining Section:** Once these three phases are complete, only the stretch from **Foxhunters to Spreacombe** will remain. Proposals for this final section are currently in development, and I am actively seeking funding opportunities to bring this to fruition.

I have been lobbying for the completion of this "missing link" for over 20 years. It is incredibly heartening to see that we have made more progress in the last five years than in the previous 15. This investment is a testament to our commitment to safe, sustainable travel and the local tourism economy, but most importantly the support and encouragement I have received from the Parish Councils involved.

Library Consultation- reminder

A public consultation asking people to help shape the future of Devon's 50 libraries was recently launched, this is to seek views about the future of the library service in Devon.

It will run for 12 weeks and focus on a number of options, including opening hours, the use of technology, and the potential for community-managed libraries. **Closing date 22nd February.**

The consultation is available online via a Devon County Council engagement platform at <https://devon.cc/devon-libraries-pm>

Visitors will be able to:

- Fill in one of two surveys (one is specifically for young people aged 13 to 17 years)
- View a detailed overview proposal
- View an opening hours document and other information

Printed copies of the survey are also available in libraries and Devon County Council reception areas (County Hall in Exeter, Taw View in Barnstaple)

Highway Defects

With the winter now very much upon us, it is more likely there will be defects in the highway network, this includes streetlights and signs.

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Weather conditions are being constantly monitored and gritting teams are ready to be called into action when needed. However, preparations started months ago. Gritting

depots across the county are topped up with almost 24,000 tonnes of salt for the start of the season.

Gritting lorries have been serviced and maintained, and five of the 37 frontline gritters have been replaced with newer models to help improve reliability and reduce maintenance costs. All of these newer gritters feature touchscreen controls to enable drivers to adjust salt spreading rates and the position of their plough attachments without leaving their cab, which improves safety.

The DCC website is very useful for reporting problems and the reports go straight to the contractor. Alternatively the highway contact number is 0345 155 1004

If it's a river flooding the environment agency can be contacted on 0345 988 1188

Please do get in touch if you think I can help with anything; Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

Happy New Year, I look forward to working with you in 2026.

Andrea

County Councillor

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