

Dear Town and Parishes

Please see below a more detailed report on what is going on at Devon County Council. If you have any questions, or you would like me to attend any events/specific meetings, then please contact me via email or my mobile is 07976 780635

May Report 2022

Public Health, Communities & Waste

Ukraine Refugee Situation

As of the 18th May, subject to a successful visa application, currently some 1550 refugees are either due to arrive in Devon or are here as part of the scheme, around 900 adults and 650 children of school age – around 10% are over 60. They have been matched with some 600 sponsors/ properties.

In all, there have been an astonishing, to me anyway, 5,150 potential Devon sponsors in the DCC administrative area who have completed an expression of interest to host Ukrainian refugees. Time will tell whether all these are genuine, we are in the process of writing to all.

So far, over 150 applications for school places, with over 100 already allocated a school place.

We are currently working through the huge list of properties to see whether they are suitable to house refugees and over 1800 enhanced DBS checks are in process on potential hosts over the age of 16.

Finance

The government have allocated the following:

£10,500 per individual (to include £350 per month to the homeowner or sponsor and an initial £200 for each guest).

In addition, funding will go directly to school for individual students:

- Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
- Primary (ages 5 to 11) £6,580
- Secondary (ages 11 to 18) £8,755

District councils are making payments to guests on arrival and monthly payments to sponsors – it should be noted that Government payments are in arrears, we are only just getting payments for Afghan refugees from last September!

ESOL

An emergent ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) offer has been established across Devon drawing on existing resources at colleges and with Learn Devon alongside a range of local community offers from groups and individuals.

Overall – there is a lot going on with the scheme being led by DCC Communities Team in partnership with the Districts and Devon Communities Together (DCT).

Other Refugees

There remain approximately 100 Afghan refugees at hotels in Exmouth and Exeter which are gradually being dispersed across the country.

Adult Social Care & Health

After more than 2 years Integrated Adult Social Care has returned to business as usual following our response to the pandemic, but this is a different business as usual that we stepped away from in March 2020. Business as usual now includes living with COVID and ensuring preparedness to respond to any future necessary escalation and related activity.

COVID is still here, it is still impacting on the things we and our independent care provider market do and how we do them. As a service and sector we have been impacted greater and longer than most and that will leave a lasting legacy that will be challenging but within that there will be opportunity.

1. In-house Learning Disability Respite Team short listed for national award

Our in-house Learning Disability Respite Team has been shortlisted in the small team of the year category of the Local Government Chronical Awards. Members of the team will be heading-up to London as part of the process to meet the judges and showcase their amazing work during the pandemic. Their story is one of adapting, innovating, learning and leading across the system and ensuring that social care values and a person centre approach to care and support remained their focus in unprecedented times.

2. Dementia Action Week

Dementia Action Week is an awareness raising campaign. Each year, the Alzheimer's Society work with individuals and organisations across the UK to encourage people to 'act on dementia'. This year's campaign is running from 16-22 May and will focus on the theme of diagnosis.

As an organisation we pledge to:

- share positive examples of how employees who are Dementia Friends have been able to help customers or people they know with dementia

- praise colleagues who have gone above and beyond in their support of Dementia Friends
- promote Dementia Friends via internal communications and social media.

3. National and local challenges in adult social care

There has been a lot of media coverage this week about the challenging situation in health and care systems around the country in terms people waiting for care assessments and care. In Devon the experience is no different, largely driven around challenges in workforce recruitment and retention and it's not only independent care providers that are experiencing these challenges, our in-house teams who are responsible for completing assessments are experiencing this too.

We have 17.8 FTE (8%) social worker vacancies, which has improved from 32 as a result of a recruitment drive, but there are over 1500 people in Devon awaiting for a Care Act assessment up from 1,000 in March 2020. Between 1 January and 31 March this year we commissioned and supplied over 395,000 hours of personal care, but we we're unable to source 3,265 hours during that period.

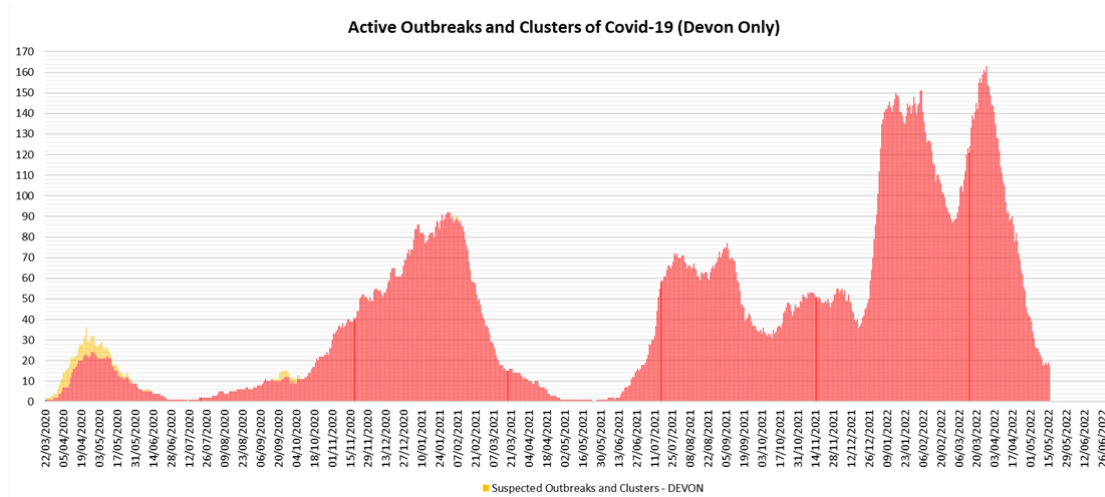
This is challenging and we are doing all we can to manage the situation that requires concerted local action and national support. Most importantly we ensure people presenting with urgent care and support needs are safe and get an immediate response ahead of the full completion of their assessment. For people who have had an assessment and have an eligible need for care and support that they are unable to meet within their own resources or community, then we will find a way of meeting urgent care needs as fully as possible but sometimes this is a temporary or less than optimum solution. This includes the use of interim personal care agency capacity, greater reliance on families, using our combined NHS and social care short term services or on occasion a temporary care home placement, but all while we continue to work with the individual to source the right care package.

4. Carers Week

From the 6 to the 12 of June it will be [Carers Week](#) and there will be lots of local activities led by [Devon Carers](#) -any details I have on this I can share if anyone is interested.

5. COVID update

As of Wednesday 18 May there were 18 care settings in Devon with a COVID-19 outbreak, reducing from a peak of 160 in January. There are 12 care settings with a single case. There are currently no care provider settings closed to new placements.



Children's Services and Schools Report

Council investment

The council has invested significantly in the service with an additional investment in the region of £12 million plus from the Council into social care, early help and SEND for 2022-23. We are also able to offer favourable rates to agency staff but this is not our long term aim – Melissa and the team are working hard to ensure that we provide an attractive package of professional support, training and well-being focussed policies that will, in time, make us the employer of choice.

DfE funding

The DfE grant of around £2 million to fully embed and future proof our restorative approach has been very welcome. It is up to us to ensure that we can evidence this through improved practice going forward.

Child friendly in the Strategic Plan and wider application

I am delighted that the council's strategic plan puts children and families at the very heart of the council's priorities. Our ambition is that we mobilise potential partners and ambassadors to help us to embed child friendly Devon across all of our communities. Investing now is investing in our future, to make Devon a prosperous, healthy and safe place to live for everyone.

The Childrens Scrutiny Committee recently held a spotlight session to hear more about Child Friendly Devon. The service has been working in partnership with Leeds City Council as part of the improvement journey. Leeds pioneered Child Friendly as a concept to bring the whole of the city together to recognise children and families as the bedrock of all communities and that investing in children is the equivalent of investing in a prosperous and healthy future. We have the same ambition for Devon.

Children and young people are one of the Council's top priorities in its new Strategic Plan. The Council is committed to considering children in all its activities – environment, transport, economic development, public health etc, and understands that everyone has a part to play, so it is not just the job of children's services to support helping children thrive and making Devon the best place to grow up.

Social mobility

The recent report published in April by 2 leading academics from Exeter university made difficult reading for everyone in the South West – It is further ample proof why we need to put Children and Families at the centre of everything we do!

It tells us that -

- School attainment gaps between poorer pupils and the rest are the largest of all English regions at the end of both primary and secondary school
- 40% of disadvantaged pupils¹ attained a standard pass in GCSE English and Maths in 2019 compared with almost 60% in Inner London
- 17% of disadvantaged students went on to university in 2018/19 – the lowest rate of all English regions – compared with 45% in London
- Upward occupational mobility was the 3rd lowest of 19 regions in 2015, and West Somerset ranked bottom of 324 local authority districts in the Social Mobility Index

The cabinet member will be working with our colleagues and staff to understand how we can address these issues and effect real change - I will update you.....

Visits

It has been difficult for members to undertake visits until covid restrictions were lifted, but I have undertaken a number of visits where it has been safe to do so, to see the work of the service first- hand. As a Scrutiny members I have now been to visits the MASH to see how Melissa and her team have responded to feedback. There have been improvements but there is still work to do, particularly in how we build our relationships with partners.

Early Help

Recruitment and Retention

Another area of concern for me is recruitment and retention. Cabinet have approved our increased offer for Agency staff, but my and Melissa's aim is to attract people who then want to become permanent because Devon is a great place to live and work. The service are pulling out all of the stops to get a range of experienced and new social workers through the door, you can help with this too by promoting a career with us in your communities.

Atkinson Secure Childrens Home Ofsted Report and visit

We were very pleased to see that the home has sustained its good rating (for the 6th year) following its Ofsted inspection. There were also some very well deserved complementary comments from the inspectors. This is a vital service for all children

and families in England, I think you will agree that this is very welcome news. The team will be attending one of our corporate parenting meetings to talk about the work that they do.

Fostering and Adoption

We are always looking to increase interest in fostering and adoption to ensure that, when it is not possible for children to return to their home, they can find safety and security with either a foster family or through adoption. Both adoption and fostering can be so rewarding and can really transform the lives of children. As part of Child Friendly Devon we want local businesses to make fostering or adoption easier for their employees and to provide incentives. Equally we would like as many leisure and entertainment outlets as possible to consider providing concessions for our fostering families. Please talk to local employers about getting involved. They can contact the Council using this email address to find out more childsc.childrensservicescommunications-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

Government papers on Schools and SEND are published

At the end of March, the UK government published a white paper on the future of education and a green paper for consultation on SEN and alternative provision. Both papers are part of the wider levelling up policy that sees government seek to ensure that access to opportunity is equal wherever you live. Please take time to read both papers to understand the impacts on children and families in your communities.

The White paper on schools focusses on the potential benefits of the case for a fully trust led system. [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child).

There has been recognition across government for some time that the way that SEND provision is funded is not sustainable. The SEND and alternative provision green paper is out for consultation until 11.45 on 1 July 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time>

Education

The gap between outcomes for disadvantaged children and their peers remains too wide. We know from schools that this spring term has been one of the most challenging during the whole of the pandemic.

Melissa and her team have consciously shifted our engagement with key education leaders in Devon to seek a more cohesive approach to ensure that no child is left behind as part of our Devon futures work. It calls for professional generosity across the sector and a collaborative approach to attainment for all children.

The most significant impact has been staff absence, and while this term pupils have mainly been in the school the challenge of putting teachers in classrooms has been immense.

SEND priorities

We have a great new Head of Service in place - she is called Jackie Ross, and she has brought real professionalism, direction, and a determination to succeed to the service - but she admits that there is lots to do.

Our priority is to create a more cohesive system to enable children to access learning without needing EHCPs

The latest available national figures show the proportion of Devon children with an EHCP that are educated in mainstream settings is higher than seen nationally.

Children on SEN support in Devon at **13.6%** is higher than seen Nationally (12.2%) and regionally 13.1% The highest needs are Autism, Speech Language and Communication and Social Emotional Mental Health in line with the National Picture.

Overall the number of children in special schools is lower than seen nationally (11.2 compared to 12.4 per 1000) but in Devon a higher proportion of these children are currently educated in the independent sector. Significant investment is addressing this balance with 80 additional places opening this year and a further 380 in progress.

TRANSPORT

Bus

Bus Service Improvement Plan

DCC been awarded £14.057 million for the next three years through the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan. It was one of 31 authorities to receive funding from the national programme to "level up" local bus services.

The capital element of the funding for Devon is just over £8.8 million and represents the majority of the funding the County Council requested for infrastructure to improve bus priority and bus stops.

However, the revenue allocation of £5.2 million, which goes towards service frequencies and fares for the next three years, falls significantly short of the £34 million **per year** that was in Devon's bid submission. i.e we are £96.8m short. Currently work underway to look at what we can do with the £5.2m Very disappointing after all the work that was done to get the bid in last October.

Rail

Dartmoor Line

To launch the hourly service the Rail minister Wendy Morton last week visited the Dartmoor line with Andrea, they met rail passengers, toured the station to see the progress on improvements to facilities and spoke to passengers and the driver on the 118 bus service which Devon County Council funds to connect with trains, this

has extended the reach of the new rail service to Tavistock and the surrounding communities.

Tavistock to Plymouth

Following on from the success with the Dartmoor line to Okehampton, Devon County Council were successful with the bid to Restoring your Railway Fund and we are currently working on the strategic outline business case which we will submit in June.

The business case is around reinstating 5 miles of track between Tavistock and Bere Alston to enable an hourly service to be delivered between Tavistock and Plymouth, while maintaining a 2 hourly service between Plymouth and Gunnislake. In doing so, it delivers an increased frequency of local city rail services in some of the most deprived parts of Plymouth.

Longer term the scheme would have potential to extend east serving other communities east of Plymouth in the travel to work area, e.g Ivybridge and potential new station at Plympton.

Improved connectivity encouraging mode shift from car to rail for journeys between Tavistock and Plymouth, addressing congestion on the A386 corridor and tackling the Climate Emergency by supporting lower carbon travel options.

Enhanced access to employment, education and healthcare in Plymouth for Tavistock residents and residents of west Devon and north Cornwall, e.g Babcock International employs 1000s of people at Devonport Dockyard.

Provide an improvement in rail services for the communities of St Budeaux, Keyham and Devonport in Plymouth.

Improve visitor access by public transport to the natural environment, particularly the Dartmoor National Park.

Tavistock station has an annual passenger demand forecast of 363,000 pa, which is comparable to other Devon stations like Honiton (359,000) and Barnstaple (432,000).

The new station serves 13,000 Tavistock residents and 8,000 residents of rural villages in the wider catchment area including Horrabridge, Lamerton, Mary Tavy and others. Encouragingly, 98% of passengers at the Tavistock station will be new rail users.

The new train service generates an additional 31,000 rail passengers at the existing Gunnislake line stations, several of which are located in Plymouth communities that fall within the 40% most deprived areas in the country. As an added incentive to new rail users travelling from Tavistock to Plymouth by rail will on average be 4 minutes faster than by car, and 10 minutes faster than by bus.

Tavistock to Plymouth Rail Link

The Case for Investment

The Tavistock to Plymouth rail link will reopen the route to Tavistock with new hourly services complementing existing Tamar Valley services to Gunnislake.

This will transform public transport between Tavistock and Plymouth encouraging modal shift, addressing congestion and creating new opportunities. It will treble the train service for deprived communities in Plymouth and also boost access to jobs in Devonport Dockyard. It will also make efficient use and achieve better value from existing rail assets.

The scheme is being developed jointly with NR and GWR with broad community support and will allow future expansion eastwards. The scheme is a key component of the Local Plan and also part of the Peninsula Rail Task Force Twenty Year Plan.

Extensive Development

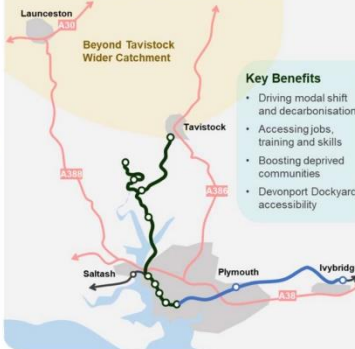
The scheme has benefited from extensive development:

- 85% of land in DCC ownership.
- detailed feasibility, conceptual design and operational planning.
- Extensive business case analysis undertaken.

Partnership Approach

Devon County Council is working with NR and GWR to develop the scheme, building on the partnership established for the Dartmoor Line, with support from Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council. Broad stakeholder and community support includes LEPs and MPs.

Tavistock to Plymouth Spatial Context



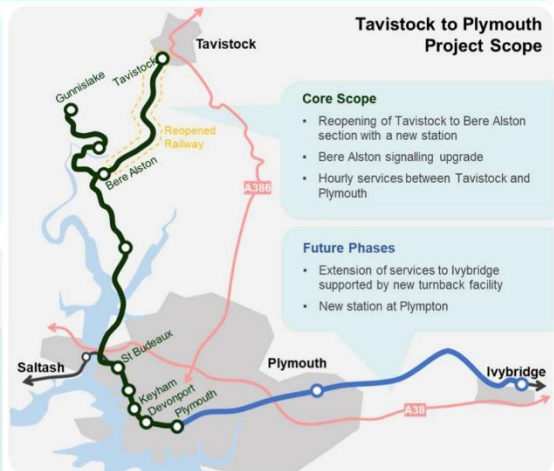
Tavistock to Plymouth Project Scope

Core Scope

- Reopening of Tavistock to Bere Alston section with a new station
- Bere Alston signalling upgrade
- Hourly services between Tavistock and Plymouth

Future Phases

- Extension of services to Ivybridge supported by new turnback facility
- New station at Plympton

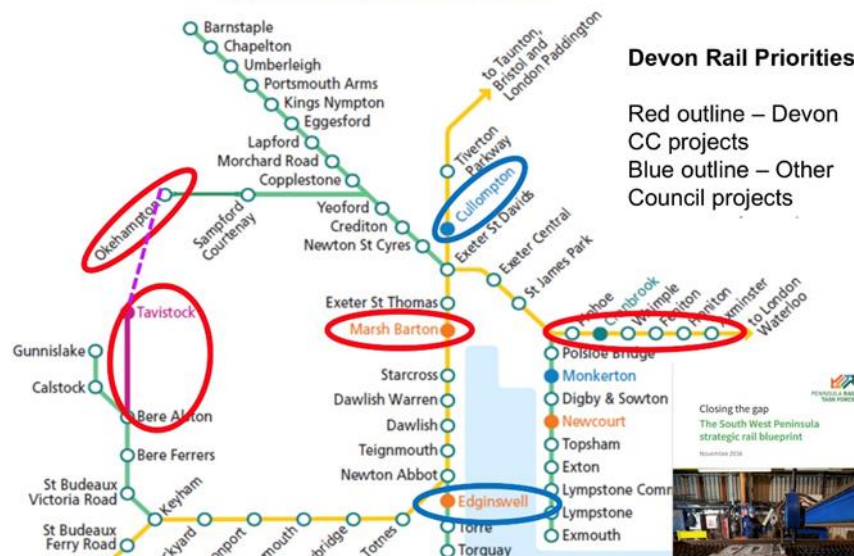


Timetable Structure



Devon Metro and restoring your Railway projects

Devon Metro Network Map



The Devon Metro strategy, recognised the importance of Exeter as a hub for the County and how rail had huge potential to serve the work, learning, shopping and leisure needs of a large population living in the market towns and villages in northern, eastern and southern parts of the County. Also, with its 8 stations within the city, there was strong local connectivity for journeys being made within the city.

The solid foundations of the Devon rail network enabled a plan to be developed around

- delivering new stations to increase access to our strong rail network;

- ii) working closely with the train operator to make the case for increased frequency of services and capacity on trains and
- iii) working closely with local rail groups and Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership to strengthen the appeal and promotion of the Devon Metro brand.

Embedding this strategy in our Local Transport Plan and in District Local Plans was critical in enabling land and funding to be secured for rail infrastructure on the back of development. This approach enabled us to be opportunistic with Government grant bids, with two successful New Stations Fund bids and also in feeding into franchise processes where we were able to make a strong case for better rail services to complement our station investment.

Looking ahead, Government are seeking local authorities to refresh their Local Transport Plans with decarbonisation central to these plans and we aim to refresh our Devon Metro strategy to consider the next chapter involving schemes like Tavistock to Plymouth, supporting the North Devon Line and, importantly, securing CMSP infrastructure improvements on the West of England line to enable more reliable and resilient rail services and better cross city connectivity for our communities with half hour frequency rail services to our East Devon towns.

West Devon Transport Hub levelling up bid

Single platform station on eastern edge of Okehampton with bridge and lift to enable access between the car park, platform and housing and employment sites in the vicinity.

Close access to the A30 means it will better connect the rural hinterland of North Cornwall, rural Torridge and West Devon with the national rail network (currently a rail desert).

Multi Modal Hub will include a diverted bus route and stop immediately outside the station, aligned to the rail timetable to enable bus/rail interchange and cycle links and storage will be provided to support sustainable short-distance local trips.

The car park will have EV charging to support transition to zero emission vehicles. (DCC contribution £1.2m)