

County Councillor's monthly report, April 2021

Future of community hospitals

At the Devon Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee on 18 March, it was decided to use our legal power to refer the proposal to close Teignmouth Community Hospital to the Secretary of State. 11 members voted for this, with two hardline Conservatives against. When I made the same proposal in January, the majority had been against, but in the meanwhile a request for informal advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel, which advises the minister, had produced nothing - as I had predicted it would.

The threat to Teignmouth Hospital underlines the fact that the Devon Clinical Commissioning Group, which made the proposal, is still looking for savings through closures, since they expected their tight financial environment to be restored as the pandemic comes under control. Seaton Hospital, which until the opening of the vaccination centre was more than a third empty for 3 years, has still not been guaranteed a long-term future, and the local community will need to continue to work to secure this.

Compulsory Purchase Order for land needed for the Stop Line Way in the Wetlands

The two landowners concerned have objected to the order, which means that the matter is expected to be referred to an Inspector and will not be decided until later this year. Funding for the purchase of the necessary land was in the budget for the financial year just ending, but will be carried forward. Funding for the construction of the route is in the 2021-22 budget.

The County Council's current position is that it will not proceed with the remainder of the route (agreed in 2010), from Colyford to Axminster, but I will continue to contest this. I understand the importance of cycle routes in Exeter and other urban centres, but it is unacceptable that areas like ours are marginalised.

Seaton Seafront Enhancement Scheme

It is disappointing that officer absence is delaying discussions about this at EDDC, despite Jack Rowland's efforts. However I believe that Seaton Town Council should still initiate a new planning application to secure the permission, for which Northcott Building Company has once again offered pro bono assistance. I allocated money to the Town Council from my budgets two years ago, for Phase 1 of the scheme, and I am keen to see it begin.

Continued closure of Seaton Jurassic

A number of residents have contacted me about Devon Wildlife Trust's decision not to continue, but this is a matter for EDDC and I wait to see the outcome of their discussions.

Culvert opposite Branscombe Village Hall

I am pleased to hear that Highways have now unblocked this.

Improvement of Devon bank opposite White Hart, Colyford

I am frustrated to hear that delays in contractors receiving materials have led to another postponement.

Traffic Group

The next meeting of the Seaton and Colyton Traffic Group will be on 17 May at 2 pm, after delays because of the election.

Return to in-person council meetings

Since the Government will keep restrictions on indoor gatherings even after 17 May, I believe it is inconsistent for them to insist that councils meet in person from 7 May, and I hope this decision will be reversed.

County elections

I am standing for re-election. I have enjoyed working with our 9 town and parish councils, and I look forward to serving another term if the voters give me their backing.