

Covid Update

Devon is above the national average for vaccinations with around 90% of over 20s and over 95% of over 50s having been vaccinated. Covid cases in Devon stand at 218 per 100,000 population, below the national average in England of 259 per 100,000. Since the start of the pandemic there had been 6.8% of population with confirmed cases compared to a national average in England of 11.8%. The spike of cases in July/August was impacted by tourism and high-profile events such as Boardmasters. Numbers in hospitals with Covid, including Plymouth and Torbay, were 23 RD&E, 10 North Devon and 60 Torbay. There had been 772 reported deaths during the pandemic, with the national average being 0.2% of the population and Devon just under 0.1%.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

I attended the CSP meeting on 15 September. Key priorities and strategy are around Sexual Violence & Domestic Violence & abuse, Problem drink & drug abuse, Violent Crime, Exploitation, and Youth risk & vulnerability. Local Police reported that following a busy summer period they were returning to normal levels of demand and can focus on local priorities.

Seaton to Colyford Multi-use trail (Stop Line Way)

I attended a meeting with DCC officers for an update on the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of land between Seaton and Colyford. The two affected landowners have objected to the CPO so it will be determined at a public enquiry to be held at the end of October.

Highways Update

The highways team continue to struggle recruiting staff. They are currently operating with 33 vacancies from a total workforce of 240. Many of these vacancies are Civil enforcement Officers as I have reported before.

The Winter season will soon be upon us and DCC has good stocks of salt ready to spread onto the network. Six more pre-owned gritters have been purchased to bolster the fleet with newer and more reliable and environmentally friendly gritters.

Highway maintenance delivery has been impacted by the media driven fuel crisis. Supply of fuel to depots in the East & South of the county have been sporadic and Milestone have been instructed to prioritise safety related operations over planned works until such time that the position improves. Overall, DCC services are not experiencing the same significant

challenges as other parts of the country, however the Local Resilience Forum are monitoring the situation closely.

I have taken the decision to cease holding Traffic Group meetings in favour of a different approach. Most defects and highways related issues can be reported and tracked online at www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/

I would encourage all local Councillors, Clerks and members of the public to use this site for day-to-day highway problems alongside escalating more serious issues to me at monthly Parish meetings or by email. On a bi-monthly basis I will carry out a division highways inspection with the Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO) to monitor and discuss areas of concern across the division. I can then report back to each Parish/Town Council. I have already been out across the division with the NHO in September and will report back to each Parish/Town individually. Local group meetings can be held to discuss specific traffic related issues should the need arise.

Requests for changes to Local Waiting Restrictions must be submitted by Friday 29th October. Please raise any requests/proposals with me. There are already some requests from Beer PC that the NHO has put forward. This process is for minor and uncontroversial amendments to highways restrictions.

Four Dragon Patchers are currently in use across Devon, with one in each operational area. The machines have been double shifting since May to make the most of the longer days and better weather. I attended a Dragon Patcher demonstration at County Hall. It can fill potholes up to 100mm deep, seal cracks and crazed areas, and overlay areas with multiple defects.



Devon Funding News

If you haven't signed up already, I recommend you visit Devon Funding News at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/> to get regular updates on funding opportunities from small community projects to much more ambitious ones in our communities. DCC is heavily invested in measures to help tackle the impacts of climate change and the strategy can be viewed at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/energyandclimatechange/strategy/climate-change-strategy> with links to key information.

A couple of funding opportunities that have popped up this month that would help both town and parish councils in delivering their plans are at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/together-for-our-planet/> and <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/international-tree-foundation-uk-community-tree-planting/>

Greener Public Sector Pensions

As a member of the Investment and Pension Fund Committee I was pleased to support a shift to a new greener set of passive investments. Passive funds provide a low-cost way of investing in equities which help reduce fees paid to third-party investment managers. Companies within the new indices share DCC ambitions to achieve net zero carbon as quickly as possible. It will significantly reduce the Fund's exposure to fossil fuel companies such as Shell and BP and will also support companies that are transitioning their businesses in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Contact

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