

Cllr Steve Keable

February 2026

Devon County Councillors Report - Creedy, Taw & Mid Exe:

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Mid Devon Councillors Report - Taw Vale:

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Welcome to the February Newsletter - As we begin this month, I will reflect on a busy and productive January, which saw several major decisions that will shape our county's future. In this month's edition, I'll summarise some significant decisions made last month and preview the council's agenda for February and March 2026.

Stay informed about local decisions, community initiatives, and opportunities to have your say

Extra funding identified for highways

The appalling wet weather has renewed the winter pothole crisis on our roads. Devon has responded with an immediate increase in funding now and to the end of March - at least £1.5-£2m.

The extra cash will be used for reported "safety defects". Additional work crews and equipment have been brought in, with around 50 teams working to repair potholes and highway damage, which have increased dramatically because of the recent weather.

One week of storms causes thousands of potholes

In just one day DCC received more than 200 calls reporting issues on the roads - and responded by mobilising hundreds of highways engineers across the county - with nearly 2,900 pothole repairs, all linked to the recent storms, and that number continues to rise. An additional 1,600 reports of road damage are awaiting assessment, with inspectors handling an average of 620 public reports per day, totalling around 2,500 in the last week of January.

Patching safety defects between November and March will not last, because there is no time for the road to dry out and tarmac to harden. Rectifying hazards must be done even in the relentless rain. Freezing conditions makes it worse. Once it dries out that is when the best use of money can be made.

Councillor Julian Brazil, Leader of Devon County Council, said:

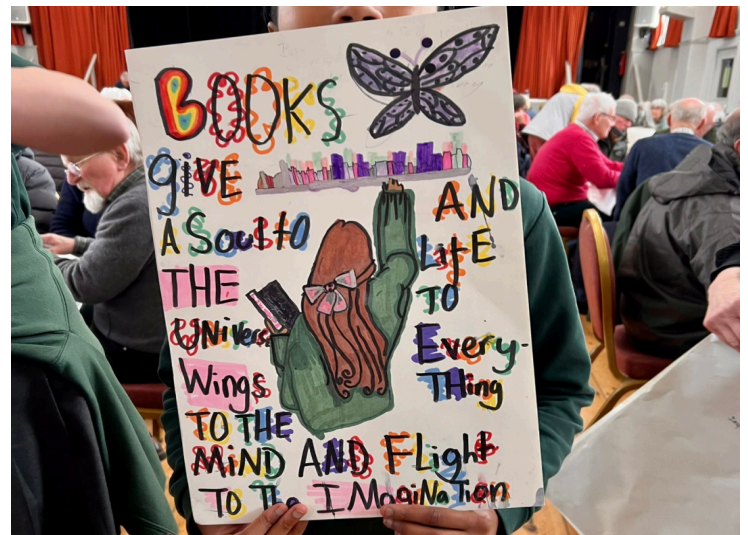
"We are experiencing more frequent and more severe storms in Devon, bringing high winds and heavy rain with them, and these have a significant impact on people's lives.

"This week our residents will experience the very real impact of decades of under-investment in sea defences, flood alleviation schemes, and roads and rail infrastructure.

"Our council officers have done an amazing job of patching up roads, keeping them open, and supporting residents affected by flooding, but there is only so much we can do when the Government continues to deliver real-terms cuts in funding."

Libraries Consultation:

A consultation began on the future of Devon's library services, looking at how libraries can best meet community needs - consultation ends 23 Feb.



There are plans to transform Devon's libraries through community involvement, with extended opening hours, expanded digital resources, and improved community spaces. Following past years of budget reductions, the initiative seeks not only to make libraries more accessible, but also to turn them into vibrant community hubs for learning, social connection, and digital inclusion. Volunteer will have an important role as with other councils.

Local conversations continue about possible changes to library opening hours, with residents encouraged to respond for reports in March.

Get Involved

 <https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

The council encourages residents to attend public meetings, participate in consultations, and share feedback on upcoming decisions. Stay informed: Council agendas, reports and updates are available online. We look forward to a collaborative and successful year ahead.

Devon Decisions and Events

Cabinet Meeting - Setting the Year's Priorities:

The first Cabinet meeting of 2026 took place on 14 January. Councillors discussed major service priorities, including transport, education, adult care, and community resilience.

Approval of the 2026/27 Budget: In landmark decisions, the Council has a comprehensive draft budget for the coming year. Government is expected to confirm the financial settlement for the next 3-years on 9th February.

Improving SEND Services: Devon County Council appointed Dr André Imich OBE as the Independent Chair of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board. This will help strengthen support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. SEND services (Special Education Needs & Disability) continue to be a major priority in both policy discussions and financial planning for 2026/27, for improved quality of local delivery and to drive costs down.

Boost for Walking and Cycling: Crediton-Exeter Boniface Trail is given go-ahead for design and land negotiations, which are likely to bring other improvements for vehicles on the A377.

Storm Response and Recovery: Emergency teams coordinated responses to severe winter storms, supporting communities affected by flooding.

Supporting Adult Skills and Training: A new delivery framework was approved to help improve adult learning opportunities, employability support, and workforce development across Devon.

Looking Ahead: February & March

Budget Approval: Full Council will consider the final budget for 2026/27, including Council Tax levels.

Street Light Trial Update: Decision on the pilot of reduced intensity that could save £300k p.a.

Parks Farm Crediton: Recommendation to dispose and release for housing development.

Library Consultation Outcome: The Council will consider feedback and decide next steps for library services.

Highways Maintenance Update: Reports are expected on pothole repair trials and road improvement work.

Youth Engagement Initiatives – Plans to increase youth participation in council decision-making are set for debate.

Public Health and Communities: Ongoing discussions will focus on wellbeing, resilience and support services.

Spring Forward Planning: Early planning for transport, climate, and infrastructure priorities for the rest of 2026.

Mid Devon Decision and Events

Car Park Solar Panels to save £67.6k: The Phoenix Lane Solar & Battery Storage System will have a payback within 10-years and save up to 215 tonnes of CO₂ annually, located on the top levels

Green Enterprise Grants: help Mid Devon businesses to invest towards making their operations more sustainable through energy and resources efficiency. The scheme is to be extended to December 2028. The scheme is to be opened to premises that offer community benefit like village and church halls.

North Devon (Tarka) Line: Proposals for investment in the railway are to be supported by the Council. Since Covid there has been an unprecedented change and growth in passenger demand which in 2025 amounted to one million passenger journeys on the Barnstaple to Exeter line – up 8.3% since 2024 and 37.5% up on the pre-pandemic in 2019.



Cllr Steve Keable campaign with Steve Munday at Eggesford

The downside was the increase in demand was not being satisfied by capacity with insufficient trains and seats at peak times. Short term GWR plan to introduce larger Class 175 carriages later this year.

The Council will work with the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance in the development of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for modernising the line with a £100m capital investment in the next 10-years.

The objective is to increase capacity and double the hourly frequency to two trains per hour:-

- reduce the Exeter – Barnstaple journey time from 75 minutes to below 60 minutes,
- enhance green travel and journey time competitiveness with roads,
- boost line reliability, resilience and reduce disruption;
- support economy, job, tourism, housing and unlock development;
- improve active travel and connectivity corridors of the Taw Torridge estuary, Okehampton, Exeter city region, Cullompton, Tiverton, Exmouth, Newton Abbott and beyond.

