

Cllr Steve Keable

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

Bickleigh • Brushford • Cadbury • Cadeleigh • Chawleigh • Cheriton Fitzpaine • Coldridge • Cruwys
Morchard • Down St. Mary • Eggesford • Kennerleigh • Lapford • Morchard Bishop • Newton St. Cyres •
Nymet Rowland • Poughill • Puddington • Sandford • Shobrooke • Silverton • Stockleigh English •
Stockleigh Pomeroy • Thelbridge • Thorverton • Upton Hellions • Washford Pyne • Wembworthy •
Woolfardisworthy • Zeal Monachorum

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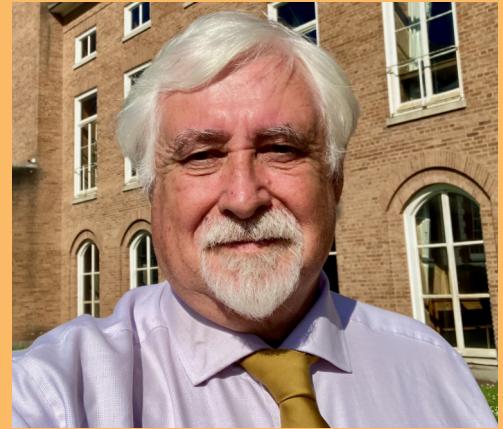
Mid Devon Councillors Report - Taw Vale:

Chawleigh • Lapford • Nymet Rowland • Wembworthy

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January 2026



With the close of another year, as your Devon County Councillor and Mid Devon District Councillor, I would like to extend warm season's greetings to all residents, partners, and parish councils as we start 2026, a new year which will be full of change and challenge.

Don't pick a fight with farmers

CAMPAIGN WIN: Government makes significant changes to the Family Farm Tax, raising the Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) threshold from £1 million to £2.5 million & £5m to spouses. This concession, to help small squeezed farms, has been hard won with Devon MP's working with farmers, NFU and other campaigning groups, who in the New Year will press hard to scrap the tax all together.



Devon cabinet member & farmer Cllr Simon Clist with Rachel Gilmour MP

Liberal Democrat farming spokesperson Tim Farron MP said: "It is utterly inexcusable that family farmers have been put through over a year of uncertainty and anguish since the government first announced these changes.

"We demand that the government scraps this unfair tax in full and if they refuse to, Liberal Democrats will submit amendments in the new year to bring it down."

Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin, who is a farmer and the Devon County councillor for Torrington rural as well as cabinet member for rural affairs, hailed the news a very welcome concession and said it was 'a significant win' for farmers and rural communities across Devon.



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

Active Travel funding welcomed

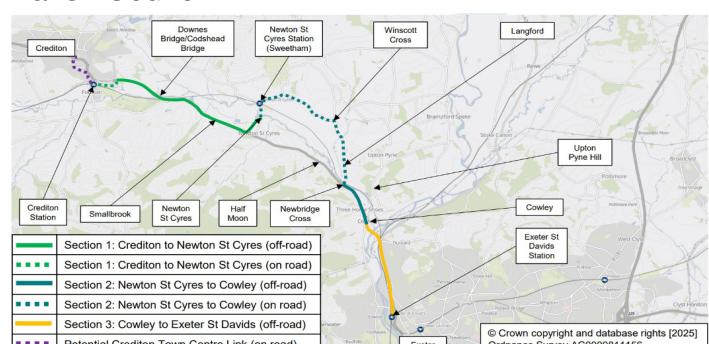
Devon County Council welcomed confirmation of over £13 million in funding from Active Travel England to support walking and cycling schemes, with delivery linked to the new Devon & Torbay Combines County Authority from April 2026.

This is great news for the Boniface Trail (Creditor Exeter) and the adoption of preferred route which is to be considered by Devon's Cabinet on Wednesday 14th January. This largely follows the A377, except for the section of trail between Newton St Cyres and Langford, where it follows a 'Quiet Lanes' route for a short section, before rejoining the A377 and then onto Exeter St Davids.

In 2024, public consultation was made on two different routes - A377 or Quiet Lanes. While there was overwhelming support for the trail there was no majority support given to either option with a balanced split between both. This outcome has led to this proposal which now costed circa £15.5m (2025 prices) without any land purchase, ecology or inflation.

In April 2026 responsibility for the transport capital programme will transfer to the newly formed Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCCD). Upcoming active travel plans, such as the Boniface Trail, will make use of these funds and will form part of a capital programme report planned for the DTCCCD Board meeting in March.

The purpose of the Devon Cabinet report is to endorse the preferred route and approve the start of negotiation on land acquisition. As the local Councillor I have ensured consultation with the Boniface Trail Association and Newton St Cyres Parish Council.



DCC Have your say on public libraries

Devon residents are being asked to help shape the future of the county's 50 libraries. The consultation runs until Sunday February 22 2026. Forms can be completed online, at local libraries, or returned by post. Residents are encouraged to take part and share their views before final decisions later in the year.

No libraries will close under the proposals. We currently have 50 libraries, run by the charity Libraries Unlimited, alongside a Home Library Service and outreach programmes. Last year there were 2.6 million visits, more than 14,000 events, ranging from children's story sessions to digital skills workshops. Our consultation comes as we face mounting financial pressures which means that we must now look at how services are delivered.

Councillor Cheryl Cottle Hunkin, Cabinet Member for Libraries, said:

"Devon's libraries are trusted spaces at the heart of our communities, and we remain committed to keeping all 50 libraries open. As the way people use libraries continues to change, this consultation is an important chance to rethink and update the service, so it better reflects how people use libraries now and how they hope to use them in the future.

"By making sensible use of new technology, we can support libraries to develop further as community hubs, giving local people and organisations more opportunities to make good use of their library spaces. We've seen this technology used successfully in other parts of the country to extend opening hours, improve access, and offer more flexibility for residents.

"We've also looked at how other authorities, such as Lincolnshire and Cornwall, manage a mix of council-run and community-led libraries to help inform our thinking.

"This consultation will play a key role in shaping the long-term future of the library service, and we want to hear directly from everyone – residents, young people, library users and community groups so we can work together on a sustainable future for Devon's libraries."

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

Local Elections and Democracy

The Leader of Devon County Council, **Councillor Julian Brazil**, strongly criticised government proposals to postpone local elections planned for May 2026, describing the move as undemocratic. The council has urged neighbouring authorities such as Exeter to follow Plymouth in committing to go ahead with elections despite uncertainty about the government's plan.

A special council discussion will happen in January as Devon County Council considers its formal response to the government's election proposals. This issue will dominate council business in 2026.

Local Government Reorganisation:

My personal view

Now government has received proposals from all local councils in historic Devon, it will examine these submissions. Government will then decide which proposal(s) will go to statutory stakeholders for consultation during the first half of 2026.

A final decision is expected by government next summer and shadow elections are due to be held in May 2027. The *chosen* new authority/authorities will take on its new powers and responsibilities from April 2028.

a) Devon County Council is proposing that it continues by absorbing the existing (9) district councils & Exeter into a **single Devon** unitary authority serving around 840,000 residents, and the existing authorities of **Plymouth** (1) and **Torbay** (1) also continue. (Aka 9:1:1)

Councillor Julian Brazil, Devon County Council Leader, said: "At the end of this process we all have to come together. Our duty is to deliver the services that our residents deserve. Within that is proper funding for local government. The fact children in Devon get less than nearly every other area in the country is grossly unfair and affects their life chances". *I totally agree with this point.*

There's a sense of frustration that councillors are not making the decision, I have witnessed this in both DCC and MDDC council debates. The consensus is that we are all being pushed and pulled, and forced to do this by government.

b) Seven District Council are proposing a 5:4:1 *model* a bold plan for 'Reimagining Devon' with reorganisation by 3 unitary councils: the **north East Devon, Mid Devon, Exeter, Torridge & North Devon** (5), the **south South Hams, West Devon, Teignbridge and Torbay** (4), and **Plymouth** (1).

My view: is that there is no point in dying on the hill of Local Government Reorganisation when a government minister will decide what happens. We will be told late spring when the government formally goes to consultation. Shadow elections will be held in May 2027. This is the point when will must come together to deliver the service our residents deserve.

My view: on balance 'Reimagining Devon' is my preferred option but I recognise the Devon case for children and vulnerable people. As we wait for the Minister's decision there is work to be done.

Links for details of both proposals a) & b):-



Devon County Council

A trusted, inclusive and innovative council



a) <https://www.devon.gov.uk/devolution-and-lgr/>

Reimagining Devon



b) <https://www.reimaginingdevon.org>

