

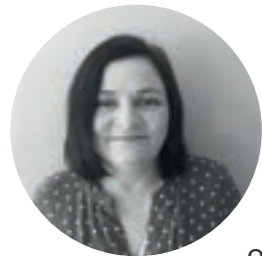


FROM COAST TO COUNTRYSIDE: SUPPORTING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Devon Communities Together: Measuring our Impact
April 2025 - March 2026

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

As I reflect on the past year, I am immensely proud of what Devon Communities Together (DCT) has achieved with our partners and our rural and coastal communities. Across Devon's towns, villages and rural communities, we have continued to see the extraordinary power of people coming together to support one another, strengthen local resilience, and create positive change.

The challenges facing rural communities remain significant. Rising living costs, pressures on public services, housing shortages, transport limitations and social isolation continue to affect many people across Devon. Yet throughout 2025-26, communities have demonstrated remarkable determination, creativity and compassion in responding to these issues. Our role has been to stand alongside them - listening, enabling, connecting and advocating.

This year's Impact Report highlights the breadth and depth of our work: supporting community-led housing initiatives, strengthening village halls and community buildings, enabling local action on climate and sustainability, tackling loneliness and exclusion, and helping communities access funding, advice and practical support. Behind every statistic in this report are individuals, volunteers, community groups and local partners who are making Devon a better place to live and work.

Partnership remains at the heart of everything we do. We are grateful to the many local authorities, funders, charities, businesses and community organisations who continue to work with us in pursuit of shared goals. Most importantly, I want to thank the dedicated volunteers and community leaders across Devon whose commitment and generosity make so much possible. Their energy and passion are the foundation of thriving rural communities.

I would also like to thank our Staff Team and Trustees for their professionalism, expertise and unwavering commitment during another demanding year. Their dedication ensures that Devon Communities Together continues to be a trusted source of support, guidance and advocacy for rural communities across the county.

As we look ahead through our "Rural Lens" (pg.9), we remain ambitious for Devon's future. We believe that rural communities should not simply survive, but thrive - with access to affordable homes, sustainable transport, strong local services, vibrant community spaces and opportunities for everyone to participate and belong. Achieving this will require continued collaboration, innovation and investment, and we are committed to playing our part.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our work during 2025-26. Together, we are building stronger, more connected and more resilient communities across Devon.

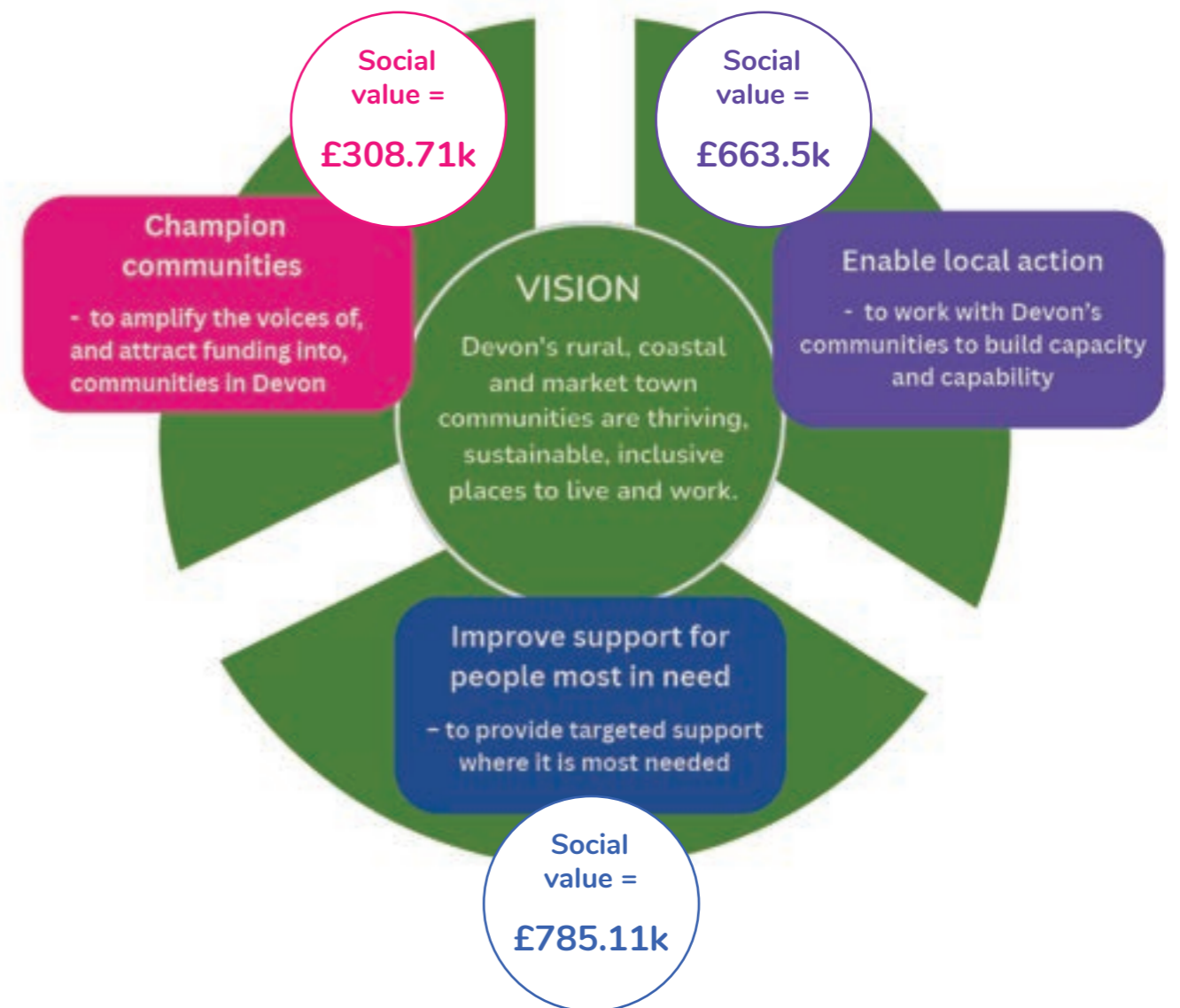
Nora Corkery, CEO



MEASURING OUR SOCIAL VALUE

The Social Value Engine, which uses specialist software to illustrate in financial terms what the value of our activities is to communities, was developed by Rose Regeneration and other partners in the Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) network, including Devon Communities Together.

We measure our social value against our strategic aims, which are shown below. The total social value DCT created from April 2025-March 2026 has been measured at £1.76m.

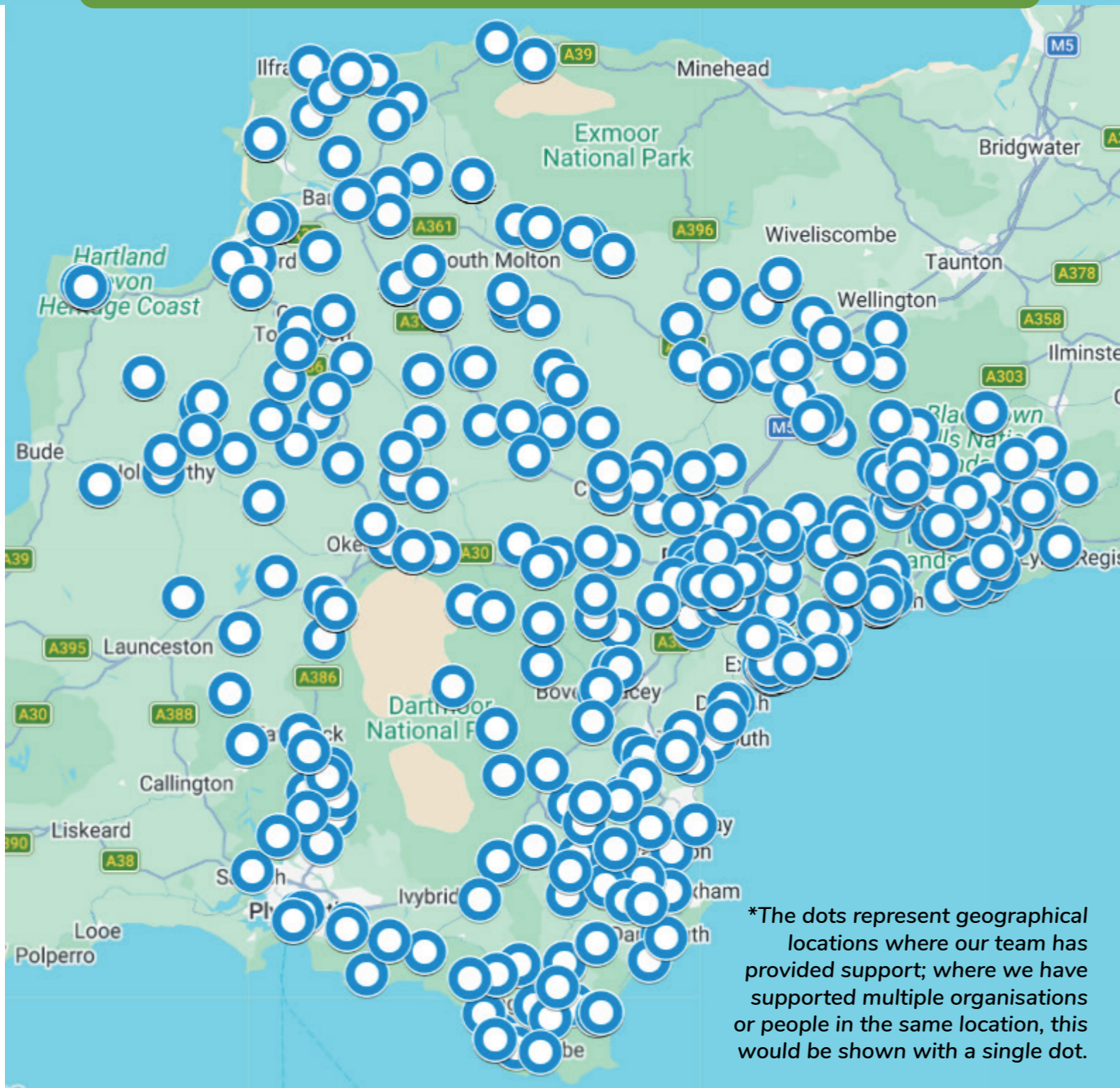


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www.devoncommunities.org.uk

FROM COAST TO COAST - SUPPORT ACROSS DEVON

As the Rural Community Council of Devon, we are committed to supporting communities right across the county, whether in remote villages, market towns or yes - sometimes even within our cities!

The map below shows the reach of our team over the past year*, from facilitating training, attending events, working with partners or providing direct support for hundreds of people and organisations, we've got Devon covered!



*The dots represent geographical locations where our team has provided support; where we have supported multiple organisations or people in the same location, this would be shown with a single dot.



CHAMPION COMMUNITIES

Amplify the voices of, and attract funding into, communities in Devon

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
VALUED AT
£308.71K
SOCIAL VALUE

19 rural and coastal community surveys will inform service delivery, including local training needs, community emergency planning, and local housing need

Engaged with peers from **43** European countries at the 6th European Rural Parliament

Amplified the voices of rural and coastal communities at **39** different strategic-level meetings, partnerships and events (pg.8)

Ensured rural inclusivity in planning a programme to support communities to tackle climate change through activities in local libraries

10 meetings with stakeholders to support research into barriers to sustainability in rural and coastal communities (pg.11)

Member of national ACRE Network Rural Proofing Group

Facilitated the hosting of **29** students from the Netherlands to support their research programmes into rural life in Devon

Engaged with over **450** people at Devon County Show, Totnes Show and Honiton Show

Welcomed ACRE CEO, Corinne Pluchino, to Devon, giving opportunities for communities in Lypstone and Whimble to share their experiences with a national influencer

Succeeded in bringing in **£718.67k** funding to support communities in Devon (pg.10)

Member of the Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Resilience VCSE Partnership

29 people attended a Rural Transport Poverty Panel Q&A with local service providers (pg. 11)

Participated in an IPSOS* interview evaluating the impact of the Rural England Prosperity Fund

Rural communities shared challenges and successes at our AGM

Presented the Devon Village Hall Audit online Asset Map to ACRE National Network

*IPSOS is a multinational market research and consultancy firm

RURAL PROOFED

CHAMPIONING 'RURAL' AND INFLUENCING CHANGE

As the Rural Community Council for Devon, Devon Communities Together is uniquely placed to amplify the voice of rural and coastal communities. Our senior leadership team frequently represents rural Devon in spaces where policies are developed, decisions are made and funding is allocated

IMPACT: Decision makers are influenced to look at policy and practice through a 'Rural Lens' (pg. 9) while shining a spotlight on rural issues, to ensure that future services work for ALL, not just those in urban centres.



Advocated for specialised rural provision for social enterprise and employment programmes through the Plymouth, Torbay and Devon Social Enterprise Networks Peninsula Partnership, and Devon County Council's Connect to Work programme.

Contributed rural insight to strategic planning as part of the Devon and Torbay Combined Authority Business Advisory Group. Influenced the Local Growth Plan, Skills and Future Workforce Plan, Housing and Spatial Development Strategy, and Local Transport Plan through a rural proofing perspective.



Progressed rural and coastal community wealth-building priorities via the Devon and South West Anchor cross-sector partnerships. Supported inclusion of community wealth building in the Local Economic Growth Delivery Plan.



Our CEO chairs the Devon Nested Rural Deprivation Group and presented to a Devon County Council cabinet meeting, after which a full Council motion was passed on addressing rural deprivation.



Member of the ACRE National Network Health & Care Rural Proofing Working Group.

Our CEO delivered a presentation to 200+ people at the Devon GP Health Inequalities Fellowship Symposium "Community As Medicine" on "Why Rural Proofing Matters for Devon - Improving Health & Wellbeing in Rural Communities"



As members of the Devon Transport Poverty Group we have focused on testing and refining rural transport poverty metrics and sharing local intelligence.



Our previous [rural and coastal lived experience research](#) has positively influenced and been featured in the new Devon Drug and Alcohol Partnership Strategic Plan.



Collaborated with Devon Association of Local Councils and Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly members to submit a rural response to the Government's Local Government Reorganisation consultation.



Advocated through County Family Hub Partnership for Village Halls as rural family health hubs to ensure equity of access for families in diverse rural areas of Devon.



Represented rural and coastal communities on the Executive Committee of the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly.



INTRODUCING ... RURAL LENS!

Rural communities face persistent and often hidden inequalities, for example, access to healthcare, transport, housing, digital connectivity, employment, and services. These realities can be misunderstood or overlooked when compared to urban challenges.

There are also fantastic things going on in our rural and coastal communities like inspiring community projects, wonderful Village Halls, and invaluable volunteers.

Our Rural Lens campaign is here to put all things rural - great, challenging and everything inbetween - into focus, shining a spotlight on rural life in Devon.



You'll be seeing our green glasses at meetings, events, shows and on social media ... and we'd love you to get involved!

Find out more: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/rural-lens

Watch our growing Rural Lens playlist on YouTube and look out for #ThroughTheRuralLensThursday!

ATTRACTING FUNDING INTO RURAL AND COASTAL DEVON

During 2025-6 we secured £718,673* in funding from a wide variety of sources.

IMPACT: Funding enables projects and ongoing work to make a direct, positive impact in rural and coastal communities in Devon. Some of these projects launched in 2025-6 and others will launch in the coming year!



As well as those new initiatives highlighted above, we were also pleased to secure extensions to a number of projects, including our Rural Housing Enabling work, Connecting People and Landscapes, Energy Outreach and supporting the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly, as well as our core agreements such as the Defra Local Action Grant through Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), and Devon County Council. **Thank you to all our funders and partners!**

*this figure does not include funds generated through our Catalyst Consultancy service

INVESTIGATING PLACE-BASED BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

DCT is bringing a rural perspective as a strategic delivery partner on the four-year Economic and Social Research Council-funded University of Exeter research project, "Governing Sustainable Futures". The place-based programme explores why environmental issues can become community flashpoints.



DCT helped identify three Devon case studies for the next two years: White Cross Floating Wind Farm on the North Devon coast; Sustainable Food Futures in South Devon; and coastal erosion and sea level rise in East Devon. We also supported promotion and planning for the first public engagement workshops and helped develop stakeholder engagement tools.

IMPACT: The research will create a toolkit to support more collaborative sustainability discussions in rural and coastal communities, helping drive change with fewer local conflicts.

www.exeter.ac.uk/research/institutes/gsi/research/climateriskresilienceandadaptation/gov_sust_futures/

HIGHLIGHTING RURAL TRANSPORT POVERTY AT OUR AGM

29 DCT members and rural representatives joined the DCT team and a panel of local transport and public health experts at a Rural Transport Poverty Panel at our AGM in November 2025.

We facilitated a lively Q&A session where Devon residents and decision makers came together to debate and discuss inequalities around rural transport experiences.

IMPACT: everyday experiences from residents of rural Devon were shared with stakeholders with the power to influence decisions and policy, shining a spotlight on the issues and bringing lived experiences to the fore.

Thank you to Sarah Gibbs - Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Devon; Peter Knight - Managing Director of Stagecoach; Tim Lamerton - Project Manager, Devon Access to Services; Chris Smith - Integrated Public Transport Manager, Devon County Council.



ENABLE LOCAL ACTION

Work with Devon's communities to build capacity and capability

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN VALUED
AT **£663.5K**
SOCIAL VALUE

21 communities updated or developed their Community Emergency Plans. **60** communities engaged with emergency planning advice (pg.18)

52 people attended events to raise awareness of regenerative farming (pg.19)

Supported communities in Exminster and Kenn to produce and consult on Neighbourhood Development Plans

Supported **14** individuals/organisations to progress local planning and housing matters

£16,770 in grant funding administered to support communities to develop Community Emergency Plans and purchase emergency equipment (pg.18)

Awarded **22** community wildlife grants, totalling **£5,000**, to enable local action towards sustainability (pg.15)

1,725 people trained, upskilled and connected at **178** learning and networking events

Launched new programme to tackle rural health inequalities in Mid Devon, with Village Halls as rural health and wellbeing hubs (pg.16)

Created **3** new Rural Community Connector roles to work with communities to bring people together around Village Halls to influence local services and support (pg.16)

Engaged **389** times to provide advice to Devon Village Halls, including **72** instances of support for fundraising (pg.16)

Planned new campaign to attract new volunteer drivers to boost capacity of Community Transport Schemes

Member of the Devon Connect VCSE digital platform steering group, plus management of the East Devon webpage

1,995 rural households given the opportunity to have their say on local housing need

Provided targeted advice and support to **192** VCSE organisations in East Devon, including supporting **6** new start-ups

Facilitated conference for over **40** stakeholders to discuss strategic responses to rural housing needs in Devon, through Devon Community Housing Hub (pg.21)

Engaged with over **100** people, including at **4** community listening sessions, to understand barriers to financial resilience in Dunkeswell (pg.20)

169,674 litres of oil ordered through Devon Oil Collective by rural, off-grid households

8 aspiring social entrepreneurs trained in the fundamentals of social enterprises

Operational and marketing support for the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly to support capacity building across the sector

Produced stakeholder evaluation report for Devon Resilience Innovation Project phase 2

Member of the Devon Local Nature Partnership Board and contributed to the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) consultation

Supported Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue to get community feedback on proposed changes to services in Plymouth



INCREASING BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVING LOCAL WILDLIFE

In June 2025, DCT launched the Wild About Devon Community Wildlife Grants programme for local community groups to establish or expand initiatives to support local wildlife, encourage learning and volunteering, and increase biodiversity.

22 groups were successful in applying, with a range of exciting initiatives funded including bird boxes, hedgelaying, pond installation, wild flowers and more. You can read more about the project in the final report using the link below.

IMPACT: 3,714m² of habitat was created or restored, with 42 new plant species introduced. 300 people were engaged with their local schemes, with over 1,408 volunteer hours banked.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wild-about-devon-community-wildlife-grant-scheme-2025

CASE STUDY: Bovey Tracey Swift Project

Swifts have declined across the UK due to the loss of nesting sites in older buildings. The Bovey Tracey Swift Project, led by the Bovey Tracey Wildlife Group with support from the Town Council and partners, aims to reverse this trend by installing well-placed nest boxes across the town.

The project combines practical conservation with community engagement, encouraging residents, businesses, and young people to protect this iconic summer species.

Thanks to Wild About Devon funding, three swift boxes were installed on a Grade II listed building near the River Bovey, close to an existing colony, offering good feeding conditions and flight access. Two more boxes will be added to the Old Town Hall, extending habitat into the town centre.

Residents can track box locations and updates, helping make swifts more visible locally. The project has already generated interest, positive media coverage, and increased willingness among property owners to get involved.



“Very glad our building was identified as being a good location for the swift population and very happy to have helped make it happen!” Hannah at Make South West

Attendees enjoy a Torrridge Village Hall Cluster meeting at Milton Damerel Parish Hall in March 2026



STRENGTHENING DEVON'S VILLAGE HALL NETWORK

For over 60 years, DCT has recognised and supported Village Halls as invaluable community assets. Our more recent focus has been to enable and encourage 'strength in numbers' through district-based clusters of halls that can learn from and support each other at regular meetings, facilitated by a member of the DCT community buildings team.

We delivered 13 cluster meetings across East, Mid, North and West Devon, South Hams, Torrridge and Teignbridge, engaging 274 trustees from 136 rural Village Halls. These were delivered in addition to the tailored advice given to individual halls on topics such as fundraising, capital improvements and governance.

IMPACT: We have significantly strengthened Devon's village hall infrastructure, improving trustee confidence, governance and community resilience. Peer support and shared resources increased halls' capacity in safeguarding, energy efficiency, legal compliance, finance and digital connectivity, enabling them to maintain their place at the heart of their rural communities.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/services/community-buildings

TWO EXCITING NEW PROJECTS WITH VILLAGE HALS AT THEIR HEART!

We've been awarded £80,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund's Community Power Fund for our **Power in Place** initiative.

This project supports Mid Devon communities to use local knowledge to tackle rural inequalities and develop health and wellbeing hubs.

Launched in February 2026 at a Village Halls cluster meeting in Willand (pictured pg.17), the project began by focussing on community listening with local stakeholders. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/power-place

Devon Communities Together has also secured £250,000 over three years from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for our new **Vibrant Villages** project. This initiative will help rural communities shape local services, with Village Halls as key hubs. Central to the project are three new locally-based Rural Community Connectors, working across Devon to engage diverse voices and strengthen community influence.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/vibrant-villages



COMING IN 2026-2027!

22 people attended the launch of Power in Place at Willand Village Hall in February 2026



CASE STUDY: Funding success in Teign Valley

After seeking support from DCT, Teign Village Sports and Social Club began a concerted focus on securing grants to improve their building. Early ideas included converting the first floor into an affordable flat, alongside an urgent need to replace the deteriorating roof. They first assessed what would best serve the community and what was practical. Following a SWOT analysis and updated financial projections, they prioritised replacing the roof, upgrading the kitchen, and installing accessible toilets.

DCT supported the committee in identifying funding opportunities and preparing strong applications. In February, the club secured a £20,000 grant from The National Lottery to replace the flat roof. A second application with a different funder has reached stage two, with a decision due in June 2026. The club has also raised funds to rewire the building, and significant improvements are now well underway!



I have been working on various grant applications for the last two years so far and the whole experience has taken me right out of my comfort zone. Su at Devon Communities Together has encouraged and guided me through the process. She helped me to construct a business plan, pointed me in the right direction for grant applications and generally helped me to navigate the whole procedure.

"We have now received our first grant from The National Lottery which gives us the encouragement to continue with further applications. I genuinely could not have done this without Su's help."

"The National Lottery grant is fabulous and, apart from anything else, it gives us all the encouragement to carry on."

Jan Williamson, Teign Village Social and Sports Club C.I.C.





RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



Managed by DCT, the Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF) supports communities to prepare for emergencies such as severe weather, power cuts and cyber-attacks through Community Emergency Planning.

Two Devon-wide forums in Teign Valley and Honiton brought together 120 delegates, offering expert advice. In total, 60 communities were supported and 21 emergency plans were created or updated, including Sticklepath, West Hill, Hartland, North Molton and Rattery.

We distributed £16,770 in resilience equipment to 35 communities and launched a Community Emergency Hubs programme aiming to establish 100 hubs. So far, 10 communities, including Chardstock, Kennford, Newton St Cyres, All Saints and Coldridge, have set up hubs, providing community-led responses during incidents.

Through forums and strategic meetings, we have strengthened communication between communities and partners including local authorities, the fire service and the Local Resilience Forum. We also strengthened the knowledge and future planning of the DCRF through attending a University of Manchester webinar on Localising Resilience – Rethinking Community-Led Disaster Management.

IMPACT: Communities are better prepared for emergencies through strengthened planning and local emergency hubs. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum

CASE STUDY: Responding to a gas outage

On 3 January 2026, a contractor punctured the main gas line serving Kingsbridge, Salcombe, Malborough and nearby parishes, leaving around 5,000 homes without gas during severe cold weather. Initially, there was little information about the scale of the incident or how quickly supplies could be restored.

Kingsbridge Town Council quickly activated its Community Emergency Plan, establishing a control centre, coordinating communications between parishes and the utility provider, and helping deliver heaters and supplies to vulnerable residents.

Although reconnection took a week, the Community Emergency Plan significantly reduced the impact by providing both practical support and vital communications to residents and partners. Following the incident, several neighbouring parishes without emergency plans approached DCRF for support in developing one.

“The Kingsbridge community and local businesses were incredible! They rallied around friends and neighbours, collected heating equipment for people who could not leave their homes and various restaurants offered hot food to those in need. Everyone stayed positive despite the unusually cold weather for this area.” Kingsbridge Town Council Debrief



CONNECTING PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPES

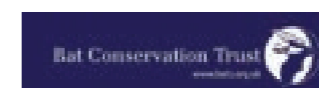
Following a successful pilot which finished in April 2025 (read the pilot report using the link below), DCT was delighted to work with our partners, led by The Bat Conservation Trust, to launch the second phase of the Connecting People and Landscapes project in late 2025, which brings together farmers, landowners and communities across the South West and beyond to create a more resilient landscape in the face of a changing climate. This is an exciting three-year project.

We have so far supported the recruitment of Junior Landscape Surveyors to work within the project, providing entry-level conservation job opportunities. The DCT team has also supported digital engagement around the project, including planned public nature events, introducing the team and developing the mailing list. To date, 52 people have engaged with events such as tree planting at local farms.

A key element of DCT’s role in the partnership is to launch and administer a small grants scheme for community groups to engage with nature-friendly farming, increase knowledge of local farming practices and local biodiversity, as well as support community building and community environmental projects. The grants were planned during March 2026 and launched in April. More on this next time!

<https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/connecting-people-and-landscapes-phase-2>

IMPACT: DCT’s digital campaign has so far given over 28,000 people the opportunity to read/hear about the project. At the time of writing, 52 members of the public and 124 farmers and landowners have engaged with the activities, with over 50 hectares of local habitat created or improved. Better relationships between local farms and the public are developing, awareness of regenerative farming is raised and local biodiversity is improved.



Connecting People and Landscapes project is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

BUILDING VCSE CAPACITY IN EAST DEVON

Our VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprise) support service in East Devon has supported 192 organisations since April 2025, including six new enterprises. Support included funding advice, business planning, volunteer management, training and VCSE network meetings across Honiton, Sidmouth, Axminster, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and surrounding villages. Activities addressed rural barriers including volunteer shortages, transport, digital exclusion and access to funding.

We also partnered on a Financial Resilience Pilot in Dunkeswell, examining factors affecting financial security in rural communities and informing district-wide anti-poverty strategies.

Impact: Rural VCSEs have improved access to funding, strengthened service continuity and reduced delivery risks despite workforce and cost-of-living pressures. Partnership working also improved access to employment, transport, wellbeing and advice services across rural East Devon.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/east-devon-vcse-support-service

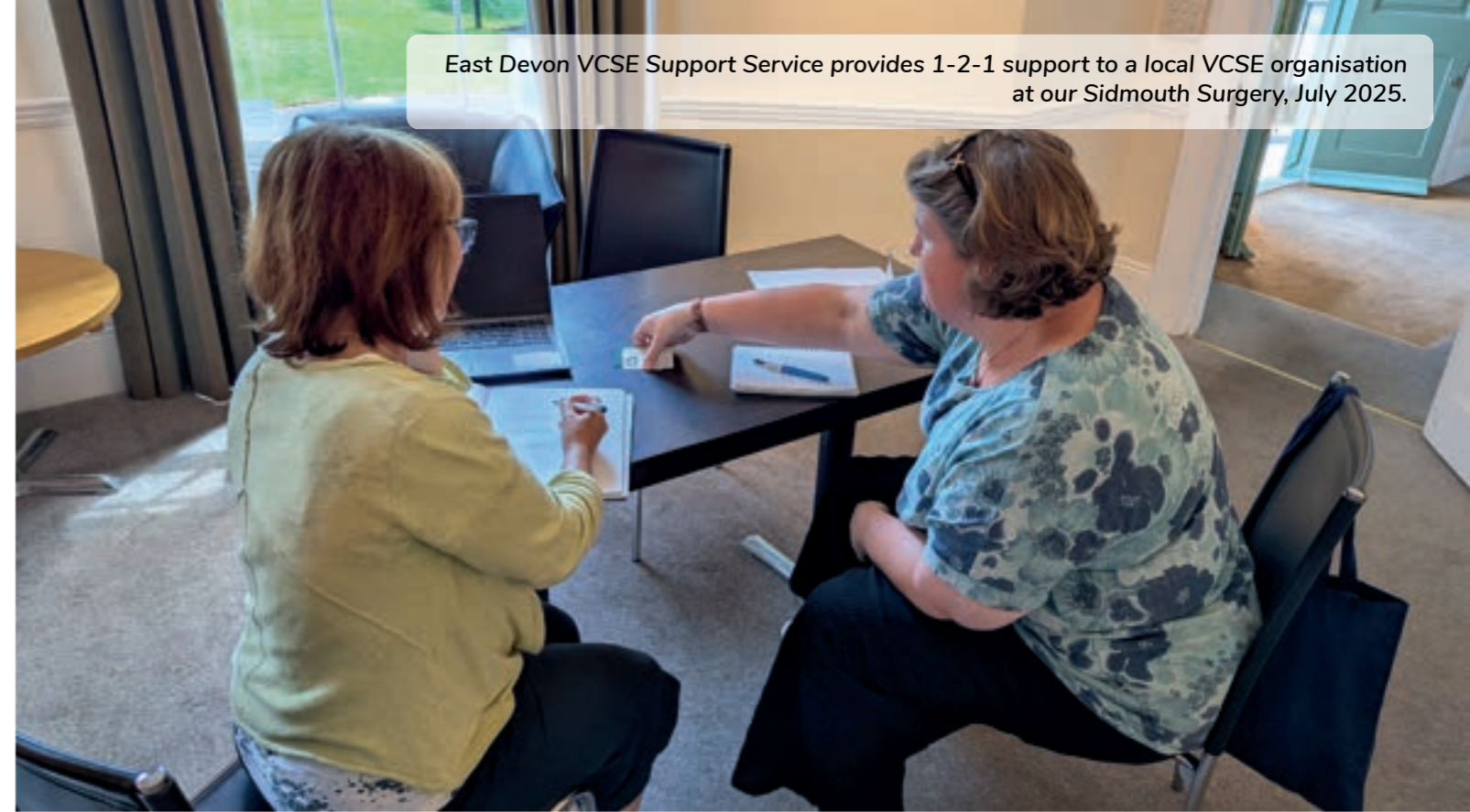
CASE STUDY: Taiko drumming for all!

Linda from Happibeats approached DCT for guidance on strengthening their community work. Formed by members of Taiko Journey Collective, Happibeats delivers Taiko sessions for people living with Parkinson's and dementia, supporting physical activity, symptom management, cognitive function and social connection.

A key challenge was that the group was not constituted, limiting access to funding. Through our partnership with East Devon District Council Community Grant, we are able to manage funds on their behalf, removing the need for embryonic organisations to have a bank account and helping them get established more quickly and easily. We also signposted them to Devon County Council's Locality Fund, where they were successful.

Happibeats now has funding for essential equipment and continues to access our support as they grow, expanding access to Taiko drumming for those living with Parkinson's and dementia.

Right from the beginning, Anderson and Devon Communities Together have been instrumental in helping me to get this project off the ground. Their advice and support is invaluable and I look forward to working together with them as Happibeats becomes more established and active in the community." Linda Cameron, Happibeats



East Devon VCSE Support Service provides 1-2-1 support to a local VCSE organisation at our Sidmouth Surgery, July 2025.

MODELLING COUNTY-WIDE HOUSING NEED

Devon Community Housing Hub (DCHH), facilitated by DCT as part of our Rural Housing Enabling service, supports communities to develop affordable rural housing where need is identified. This year, DCHH strengthened its position by representing rural interests in county-wide housing groups, building links with Homes England, and sharing evidence-based insight. In May 2025, it hosted a Rural Housing Seminar for 40 housing professionals to discuss responses to the rural housing crisis highlighted in the Devon Housing Commission Report.

Building on the parish-level Housing Needs Surveys it already facilitates, DCHH commissioned arc4 to develop a Devon-wide Rural Affordable Housing Needs Model. Open access census, house price and rental data were analysed to provide parish-level evidence, with DCT adding value through plain English guidance and interactive mapping to ensure the data could be used confidently by non-experts. The model identifies affordable housing need across the entire county, including parishes without recent surveys.

IMPACT: The new model improves understanding of rural affordability pressures, helping the Rural Housing Enabling team target support, inform planning and investment decisions, and increase delivery of affordable homes that sustain diverse, vibrant communities.

www.devonhousinghub.org.uk



Delegates listen to a presentation at the Rural Housing Seminar, May 2025

IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR THOSE MOST IN NEED

Provide targeted support where it's most needed

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
VALUED AT
£785.11K
SOCIAL VALUE

Engaged with **64** older people in rural areas to understand their thoughts around Falls Management Exercise (FaME) and its potential digital delivery

207 people supported to conserve their household energy, understand available financial support and manage their energy bills

Continued to support The Pelican Project with data collection and evaluation to demonstrate the impact of this collective of young people with disabilities and their families

125 people with disabilities supported with travel training to foster skills and confidence on public transport

Provided independent evaluation services to **3** VCSEs (pg.27)

Chaired and supported the VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Partnership Group

Contributed to development of new Composite Exclusion Risk Index Data Dashboard

Participated in the Local Government Association Governance Peer Challenge with the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority

Presented to GP Health Inequalities Fellowship event on rural primary care and community engagement

Chaired Devon Nested Rural Deprivation Strategy Group

Interviewed **6** stakeholders to explore the benefits of Axewoods Community Log Bank to members and the community, as part of our evaluation programme

1-2-1 support for **75** people with using digital devices, in partnership with Wellmoor

29 bus drivers engaged in training to promote awareness of the travel experiences of disabled people

Continued evaluation support for Bovey Tracey Riverside Community Centre to help them demonstrate their community impact

14 advisors upskilled in supporting people to navigate the benefits system, with Citizens Advice Devon



ENERGY ADVICE FOR RURAL RESIDENTS

DCT is commissioned annually by the National Citizens Advice Service, through the National Energy Outreach Programme to identify, advise and support those vulnerable rural residents struggling to pay energy bills and keep warm.

Over the past year, we have engaged with 207 individuals through 30 workshops and drop-in sessions at libraries and warm hubs including Broadclyst, Sidmouth, Holsworthy, Exmouth, Teignmouth, Torrington, Ottery St Mary, Woodbury and Budleigh. The support is marketed to rural communities where high-cost electric and oil-based heating predominates, and coastal towns with significant numbers of older residents.

IMPACT: Over 200 people have been supported to keep warm and minimise their energy costs. The greatest impact is in rural areas for people faced with high-cost electric and oil heating.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/energy-outreach-project

CASE STUDY: Support for a vulnerable client with urgent heating needs

In November 2025, our Energy Advisor attended the East Devon District Council warm hub in Seaton to deliver an energy advice and guidance session. We were invited by the Community Housing Team's Jamie Claydon who wanted the residents she works with to have access to advice and guidance, as many individuals are described as 'hard to reach'.

We sat with the group of 20 people who were very engaged when we chatted about energy efficiency in the home, providing practical advice to help people conserve energy. One individual was experiencing problems with her boiler, as it wasn't working and she was concerned about the colder weather. Unfortunately, she had previously had a very negative experience with an unscrupulous tradesperson, leaving the customer feeling vulnerable to being exploited again. After reassuring the individual that we could help with no charge, we referred the customer to our partner organisation Exeter Community Energy (ECOE). She has since benefitted from a home visit and was due to have a new boiler fitted in February 2026, through the LEAP boiler scheme.

“I'm pleased with the service and your assistance...We wouldn't have got this free service a few years ago.”

DIGITAL SKILLS DEVON

Digital skills are increasingly vital for people in rural communities to access services and stay connected.

Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and delivered in partnership with Wellmoor, Digital Skills Devon provided client-led support across rural and coastal Devon through home visits, community drop-ins and small-group learning.

The project delivered 129 one-to-one sessions for 75 individuals, trained 16 organisations in the Devon Digital Skills Framework, and ran 13 community events across rural Devon communities.

IMPACT: Participants reported increased confidence, independence and wellbeing, gaining skills to book appointments, communicate with services, send documents and use devices safely. Many reported reduced anxiety and felt more connected to family, community and everyday life, while organisational training strengthened frontline staff ability to identify and respond to digital needs.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/digital-skills-devon



CASE STUDY: Regaining control during a move

A client living on the coast attended a library-based session focused on password management and multi-tasking on a tablet. Previously, they relied on family members to navigate digital tasks and were anxious about “doing something wrong” and losing information.

The session came at a critical time: they were in the process of buying a home and needed to handle significant digital paperwork. With calm coaching, the practitioner demonstrated safe password practices, recovering files and using split-screen functionality to view two windows at once. The client reported a marked increase in confidence, reduced dependency on family and immediate practical benefits in progressing the house purchase. They described the experience as “really special” and expressed enthusiasm for joining future courses.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

According to Motability, 1 in 5 disabled people cannot travel due to unsuitable transport, and 30% say public transport difficulties reduce their independence. Disabled people take 38% fewer trips than non-disabled people. Travelling with Confidence was a Devon-wide project run by Devon Communities Together and Disability Together to help people with disabilities gain confidence in using public transport and to raise awareness of the challenges they face.

We delivered practical, experiential travel training to 125 people via 11 training sessions across Kingsbridge, Budleigh, Honiton and Newton Abbot. These sessions were specifically designed to address the barriers to using public transport and increase confidence. We also trained 33 bus drivers operating across the county in disability awareness. A wider awareness campaign about the experiences of disabled people reached over 4,000 people.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/travelling-confidence

IMPACT: Over 50% of travel training participants reported increased confidence in planning travel. 61% reported improved confidence while travelling and 78% said they had a greater awareness of travel information. 100% of bus drivers we trained said they now had better knowledge and skills for supporting disabled passengers. All of these outcomes will lead to improved experiences for disabled people when using public transport, enabling greater access to services, leisure activities and making connections.

CASE STUDY: Success with independent travel

Two of our travel training clients, Chris and Sue, who attend a dementia group in Kingsbridge, didn't previously use public transport but were pleased to enjoy a self-organised train journey to Bristol.

This couple would not have planned and gone on this trip without travel training. They were able to use what they learned to plan and book tickets and Passenger Assist. More importantly, they were able to deal with things going wrong, having learned coping techniques and strategies.

They have since planned a trip to London! You can read their self-penned account on our website here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/case-studies/travel-training-success-chris-and-susan



EVALUATION & IMPACT MEASUREMENT TO STRENGTHEN SERVICES

Beyond delivering our own projects, our specialist team supports charities, community groups and social enterprises with independent evaluation and impact measurement. We work with organisations to design tailored evaluation frameworks using a Theory of Change approach, combining qualitative insights and quantitative survey data. Our interim and final reports meet funder requirements while helping shape future delivery to build capacity in these vital services.

Over the past year, we supported organisations including Axewoods' East Devon Community Log Bank, which provides logs to people experiencing fuel poverty; Bovey Tracey Riverside Community Centre; and Pelican Project, supporting young people with learning disabilities and their families.

IMPACT: Organisations are better equipped with robust evidence to demonstrate value, secure funding and strengthen future services, which will impact the people most in need across Devon.

Contact our team if your organisation would benefit from evaluation support info@devoncommunities.org.uk



Picture credit: Pelican Project



OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

