



**Devon Communities
Together**

helping communities help themselves

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES & CREATING CHANGE

**Devon Communities
Together: Measuring
Our Impact**

April 2024-March 2025

CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO	2
OUR VISION AND AIMS	3
OUR SOCIAL VALUE	4
DEVON'S FIRST VILLAGE HALLS ASSET MAP!	5
WE AIM TO ...	
...champion diversity and inclusion, hear minority voices and respond to their needs	6
...identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing	10
...work with communities to develop innovative ways to achieve community resilience and a positive impact for climate change and sustainability	16
...develop community capacity building, through local facilities, spaces, services, people and their skills	22
...support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building	30
...flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders and staff	34
THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS	36

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Looking back on the past 12 months, I feel immense pride in everything that our dedicated Staff Team and Board of Trustees have achieved alongside our rural and coastal communities this year.

This Annual Impact Report reflects both innovation and achievements and the challenges and barriers Devon's rural and coastal communities continue to face. Our report is intended to showcase the stories behind the statistics—of individuals who have overcome adversity and communities that have come together to highlight and address challenges, and to demonstrate that Devon's rural and coastal communities, when empowered with the right resources and opportunities, can thrive.

Over the past year, we have worked hand-in-hand with communities, local leaders, families, and a broad range of partners to bring meaningful change to underserved rural areas. However, we cannot ignore the fact that our rural and coastal communities are facing some significant challenges. Set against a backdrop of uncertainty created by local government reorganisation, climate change, the cost of living crisis and budgetary pressures at all levels of service provision, we are determined to continue to work to enable communities to become sustainable, inclusive places in which to live and work. We invite you to explore the impact we've made this year—and to join us as we continue building a future where no rural community is left behind.

Nora Corkery, Chief Executive, Devon Communities Together

OUR VISION AND AIMS

Our vision is to inspire rural and coastal communities to thrive and be sustainable and inclusive places to live and work. We have done this over the past year by working towards six strategic aims ...

...work with communities to develop innovative ways to achieve community resilience and a positive impact for climate change and sustainability pg.16

...develop community capacity building, through local facilities, spaces, services, people and their skills pg.22

...support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building pg.30

...identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing pg.10

...champion diversity and inclusion, hear minority voices and respond to their needs pg.6

...flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders and staff pg.34



OUR SOCIAL VALUE

THE VALUE OF OUR WORK IN 2024-5
HAS BEEN MEASURED AT
£2.02M

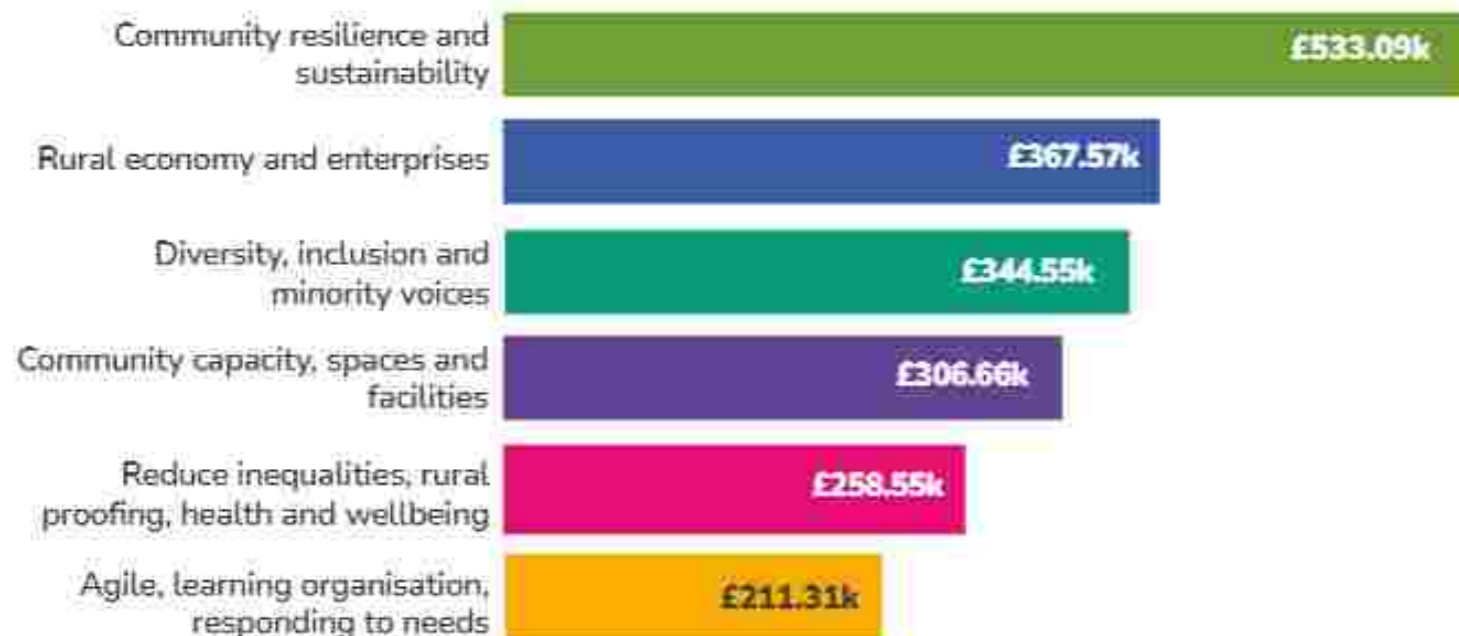


Through 2024-2025, DCT has calculated our estimated social value each quarter, which illustrates, via a monetary amount, the value of our activities to communities. This year, our work has been valued at £2.02m.

Working with Rose Regeneration and other members of the ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) Network, we have participated in four meetings to share our knowledge and experience around social value calculation, supporting other organisations that are interested in following suit.

The process we have developed to combine our social value data with other data in our systems is something that we believe is currently unique to DCT. If you would like to learn more about this, please get in touch!

SOCIAL VALUE BY STRATEGIC AIM (SEE PG.3)



DEVON'S FIRST VILLAGE HALLS ASSET MAP!

Since 2022, Devon Communities Together has been travelling to all corners of the county to gather data from hundreds of Devon's Village Halls, allowing us to create the first ever Village Halls Asset Map. There are an amazing 340 halls on the map, that's over 80% of all Devon halls!

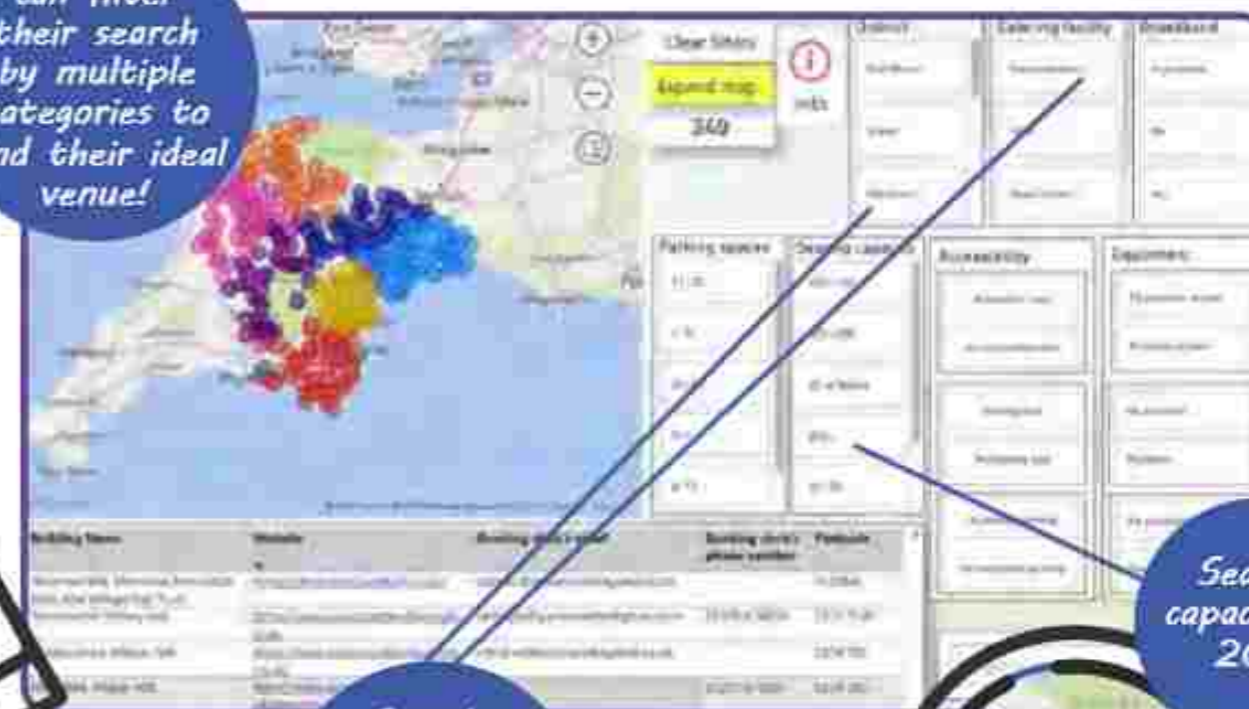
In July 2024 we were delighted to publicly launch this interactive online map, which allows users to search for their local hall using criteria such as capacity, car parking, broadband, accessibility and much more.

Not only does the map provide a searchable database for people looking to hire local venues, the data contained in it is also valuable in understanding where opportunities lie to provide further support to Village Halls. Accompanying the map at the launch was a full analysis of all the data in the form of a report, which has been shared widely and is being used to inform the development of support programmes and funding applications for Village Halls. Read more on p.26.

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



Users can filter their search by multiple categories to find their ideal venue!



Search: capacity of 201+

Search: Mid Devon + comprehensive catering facilities

WE AIM TO ...
champion
diversity and
inclusion, hear
minority voices
and respond to
their needs



Undertook
Disability Awareness
training to empower
our staff team to
continually make our
working practices
and services more
inclusive



Trained **47**
people, including people
with disabilities, on how
to use public transport
with more confidence,
to increase
independence



OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£344.55K
SOCIAL VALUE

Listened
to the voices,
ideas and experiences
of **3,864** people
across Devon
through **27**
community surveys



Conducted
15 in-depth
interviews to understand
the experiences of young
people with learning disabilities
and their families, as part
of an evaluation
programme for The
Pelican Project



10 people
with disabilities co-
designed the travel
training programme

Reached
over **9,000**
people with an
awareness raising
campaign to highlight
the experiences of
using public transport if
you have a disability



Engaged with diverse
groups of people
at **288** community
events, workshops and
trainings





Spotlight on ...

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Travelling with Confidence is a Devon-wide project being co-delivered by Devon Communities Together and Living Options Devon, designed to support people with disabilities to gain confidence using public transport and raise awareness of their experiences.

Travel can be a significant barrier for people with disabilities, leading to isolation and poor health outcomes, particularly in rural and coastal communities where transport is often needed to access services in urban areas. A [Motability Foundation report](#) found the UK transport accessibility gap currently stands at 38%, which means that disabled people take 38% fewer trips than those without disabilities. That the main challenges faced by disabled passengers included physical access to buses and trains, availability and quality of digital, visual and auditory information, dealing with crowds and the attitudes of other people. We co-designed a travel training course with 10 people with disabilities, to address some of these challenges and give attendees more confidence and independence.

We have so far welcomed 47 people to our travel training sessions, including students from Exeter College, residents of retirement living accommodation and members of Honiton Carers. We're also working with Stagecoach, Citybus, TallyHo and Plymouth City Council to devise disability awareness training for bus operators.

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

IMPACT

Building independence enables people to travel more for social reasons, but also for work, shopping and medical appointments.

It will help to reduce isolation and could also lead to improved health outcomes.

"A personal highlight was accompanying a travel session from Exeter to Dawlish; seeing the commitment and skill of the trainer and the responses of the participants, who were fully engaged and enjoying putting their new knowledge into practice." Rod Birtles, Project Manager, DCT



Trained and travelling!

JOY AND JEAN

Joy and Jean planned and undertook a trip together from Exeter to Barnstaple, following our travel training. They both live in retirement accommodation, and while Joy drives, they don't use public transport and both have some mobility restrictions.

Having successfully used phone apps for the first time to book tickets and assistance, they encountered a number of obstacles including diverted buses due to roadworks and a traffic accident, resulting in longer walking distances and missing their passenger assistance. Having been on the training they had the confidence to deal with the unexpected changes, adapt to the circumstances and ask for help and directions when needed.

HONITON CARERS

Winnie, chair of Honiton Carers, organises a lot of group outings but when she does, she tends to organise everything, even holding everyone's tickets. She realised it would be a good thing if she included the group in the planning of trips.

We delivered our travel training programme to a group of the carers, who have since become more confident in planning trips and using public transport. The responsibility for planning trips is now shared, making the group more of a community, and - if they use buses - it will also be cheaper to run monthly outings.



"Thank you all for your patience and time. You gave us the opportunity to find our way there and back on Public Transport and at the age of 94 and 89 years we were really chuffed. We achieved it all thanks to you." Joy and Jean

"When you do everything for the group, you don't see what they are capable of." Winnie, Honiton Carers



WE AIM TO ...

identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing



OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£258.55K
SOCIAL VALUE

Shared information about Devon's cancer screening services with **4,327** people - through a mix of face-to-face and digital engagements

22 interviews to gather experiences with drug and alcohol treatment services in rural and coastal communities to uncover barriers to accessing treatment



Provided direct support to **51** East Devon organisations that deliver health or wellbeing services in their communities



Presented to the Devon GP Health Inequalities Fellowship on reducing rural health inequalities



Amplified the voices of rural communities at **54** different strategic meetings, steering groups, events and partnerships



Rural proofed **13** Devon County Council Adult Social Care policies

Co-chaired **10** meetings of the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Group

Active role in the Executive Committee of the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Assembly



Worked with the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly to award **£14,200** funding to VCSEs to enable community feedback on the NHS 10 Year Plan

171 local people had their say via a survey in Berrynarbor to ensure that a potential new recreation ground is what the community needs





Spotlight on ...

RAISING AWARENESS OF CANCER SCREENING IN RURAL AND COASTAL DEVON

DCT was commissioned by the Peninsula Cancer Alliance to deliver a series of cancer outreach activities at a place-based level with rural and coastal communities, to increase screening knowledge for breast, bowel and cervical cancers.

People in rural and coastal communities face additional challenges when accessing services and appointments due to where they live. As a result, they experience health inequalities, which can impact their long-term health outcomes.

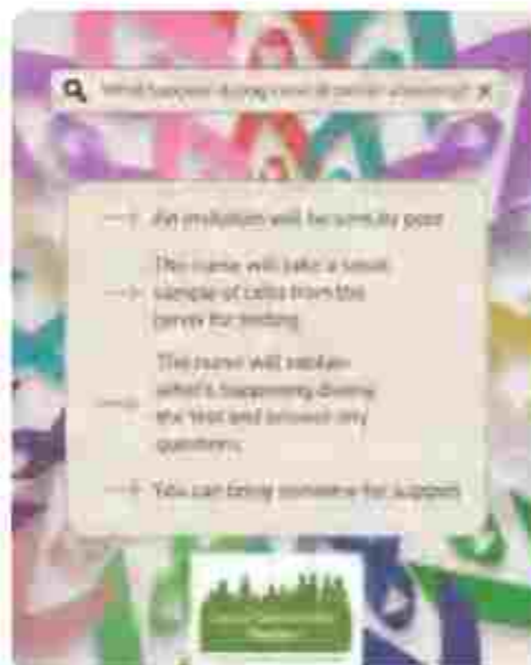
Through a combination of linking with existing community organisations to deliver presentations and digital outreach via email and social media, we reached a total of 4,327 people with easily digestible information about the screening programme.

As well as sharing information, we were also able to gather views and experiences of the screening service from the communities. Read the full report here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing

IMPACT

Increased knowledge of cancer screening supports people to make informed decisions about their own health, which could lead to early detection and improved outcomes.

By involving community groups and spaces in this outreach programme, we have also been able to recommend further collaborative working with rural and coastal groups and venues about how they could support further work, for example by using Village Halls and community buildings as rural health hubs.



"We all need to try and cut out the stigma of testing, to help others."

"We could make it easier for the less mobile to access screenings by having it at a local Hall – it's less distance to travel."



Spotlight on ...

INVESTIGATING BARRIERS TO DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT IN RURAL AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Deaths from substance misuse are rising in Devon. From 2021-23, 201 people died from drug poisoning, compared to 176 from 2018-20. DCT was commissioned by Devon County Council to engage with rural and coastal communities to listen to barriers that prevent people accessing drug and alcohol treatment. This is especially important in these areas, where issues are exacerbated by lack of transport, lack of temporary housing and overloaded services.

We co-designed a research programme with Public Health clinical research partners, which comprised focus groups (in Dawlish, Ilfracombe and Okehampton) and 25 interviews with people in our target communities, both with lived experience and from local support services.

The stories we gathered and the barriers to treatment we discovered are in our report: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing. We also produced a case study in conjunction with the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly for the Research Engagement Network (REN) to demonstrate the benefits of collaborative research involving the voluntary sector: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/research-engagement-network-case-studies. According to our findings, the actions with the biggest impact will be to develop community-driven support models, with better co-ordination between services.

"Our team spoke to a great variety of people today, including those with lived experience, at Belle's Place. One even got a mini-focus group style conversation going in the café area. They used a relaxed, conversational approach so people felt at ease to speak about their experiences." Natalie Campbell, Funding Development Manager, DCT

IMPACT

Key service commissioners now have a deeper understanding of how they can better engage people with drug and alcohol treatment services in rural and coastal areas.

If our recommendations are taken forward, there will be greater integration of treatment and support services, and community groups will be included in the commissioning of treatment processes, which could lead to better health outcomes.



AMPLIFYING RURAL AND COASTAL VOICES

As well as delivering our programmes and services, DCT also ensures that rural and coastal voices are represented within a number of partnerships and at a strategic level at board meetings, working groups and events. For example ...

We chair the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Group, which has been producing a Devon Digital Skills Framework and co-designing a rural digital inclusion collaborative delivery model, as well as liaising from a rural perspective with BT and Ability Net UK on the roll-out of the BT Landline cessation.

DCT is the rural health inequalities partner in 'By Land, By Sea: Health Innovation in Rural and Coastal Communities', a new digital innovation programme led by the University of Plymouth's Centre for Coastal Communities aimed at the promotion of effective technological and strategic responses to poor health.

The Group is also working with Devon County Council Public Health Intelligence Team to develop a digital exclusion heat map of rural and coastal communities of Devon. The aim is to increase digital technology use in these areas and develop a 'Digital Citizen' role, to address inequalities in access to services.



We actively engaged in the ICS Population Health Management

Digital Inclusion programme, to address digital inequalities in rural areas with significant health disparities.

We presented to the GP Health Inequalities Fellowship events on rural and coastal inequalities, and opportunities for collaboration between primary healthcare services and community groups.



DCT has continued to collaborate with VCSE and NHS partners on the development of an embedded referral pathway model for the ICS Virtual Wards programme, based on agreed areas of commonality, to support 'hospital at home' patients.

We worked in partnership with Devon County Council and the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly to co-design and facilitate a Rapid Health Impact Assessment on the Devon and Torbay Draft Local Transport Plan 4. An outcome has been the establishment of a Devon cross-sector rural transport and poverty group to better understand rural transport poverty and how lack of transport services/options impacts access to essential services.



We attended cross-sector meetings to explore the role of Village Halls as rural family hubs to address diminishing rural services and improve access.



WE AIM TO ...
work with
communities to
develop innovative
ways to achieve
community resilience
and a positive impact
for climate change
and sustainability



OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£533.09K
SOCIAL VALUE

Engaged
with
stakeholders at
38 meetings/
events about nature-
based flood resilience
measures in their
communities



Reported on
the evaluation of **10**
Community Fridges across
Devon to understand the
impact on the
community and
reduction of food
waste



Key delivery partner
in Governing Sustainable
Futures programme, which
aims to work with rural and
coastal communities to enable
an enhanced understanding of
place-based environmental
challenges and solutions

Supported
Axewoods Co-
operative's East
Devon Community
Log Bank with an
evaluation
programme



Supported
21 communities to
develop new or updated
emergency plans to
help keep people and
property safe in local
emergencies



£8,598
awarded in
community
emergency grants



Supported
71 communities
with Community
Emergency
Planning

Active
participation in
local nature strategy
via a seat on the
Devon Local Nature
Partnership Board



Awarded
33 community
wildlife grants of up
to **£500**, a total
of **£10,000**

Engaged with **42**
people at **4** events
to raise awareness of
regenerative farming
and encourage
connection with local
landscapes





Spotlight on ...

BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Whether it's flooding, heatwaves, large scale power cuts or even cyber attacks, it's important to build community resilience against threats that could affect people and property in Devon. Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF), managed by Devon Communities Together, works with communities to create and harness local resources and expertise to build resilience and plan for adverse situations.

Over the past year we supported 71 communities with emergency planning, including 21 which either developed a new Community Emergency Plan, or redeveloped an existing one. We also administered £8,598 in grant funding to aid the development of Community Emergency Plans, or to purchase equipment.

Our regular DCRF events provide a fantastic opportunity for communities across the county to come together to learn from experts and network with each other, sharing ideas and best practice. This year we welcomed a total of 134 attendees from 54 communities to our events in Crediton (September 2024) and Langtree (March 2025). www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum

IMPACT

Communities are better prepared and resourced to cope with emergency situations, helping to safeguard people and property.

Community Emergency Plans are shared with emergency services, allowing for a joined up response.

"[The best part of the event was] speaking to a real range of people from communities, local authorities, emergency services, giving different perspectives and answers." DCRF attendee



Additionally DCT has been supporting the stakeholder and community engagement for the Devon Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP), which has been piloting nature-based flood prevention initiatives in Devon communities. Through collaboration between the DRIP project and DCRF, we have been working in the pilot areas to encourage them to create Community Emergency Plans, including in Exton (see below). www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme-fcrip-managing-big-problems-small-places



Evolving a Community Emergency Plan Following a flood

EXTON FLOOD GROUP

In November 2024 Storm Bert hit the South West. We previously reported on the East Devon village of Exton having just completed its Community Emergency Plan before the storm arrived, allowing them to put it straight into practice. But how well does the theory translate into action?

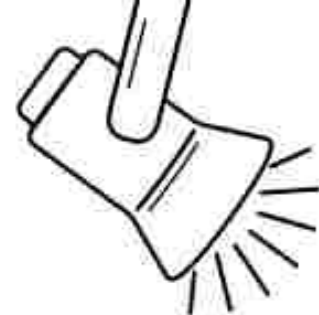
Following the storm, the Flood Group, Parish Council and DCT came together to discuss how the Community Emergency Plan had worked and what, if any, amendments should be made.

The attendees agreed that the Plan had worked well but there was discussion around improvements to the Plan. Key outcomes from the meeting included:

- It was agreed that the Church should be included as one of the places of safety as it was on the other side of the area that generally floods
- DCT discussed the possible purchase of a depth marker to make it clear to drivers when the bottom road should be avoided. Different types of radio were discussed as mobile signal wasn't reliable. We were able to recommend potential funding sources
- It was agreed that the clear up after a flood should be included in the Plan. The flood water brings a lot of silt with it, blocking drains and making the area very messy.
- The lack of flood group members was discussed and on the back of the meeting two new people volunteered!

Next time Exton floods, the community will be even better prepared to respond.

"It was a really useful discussion, thank you."



Wild About
Devon



Devon
County Council

Spotlight on ...

WILD ABOUT DEVON COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GRANTS

The Wild About Devon (WAD) 2024-25 grant programme has successfully supported 33 community-led environmental projects across Devon and Torbay, fostering biodiversity, community engagement, and environmental sustainability. The programme, funded by Devon Environment Foundation, Devon County Council and DCT, allocated total funding of £10,000, which enabled local groups to initiate or advance initiatives that improve local habitats, engage volunteers, and raise awareness of nature conservation. You can read the evaluation report here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/climate-change.

IMPACT

Overall benefits so far, include:

13 new projects and 21 helped to expand

7831.5m² habitat created or restored across 11 projects

22 new plant species introduced

722 people directly engaged through volunteering, events, and hands-on activities, leading to an enhanced public understanding of local ecosystems



Woodland wellbeing

THE DEER WOOD TRUST

The Deer Wood Trust provides a safe and inclusive place for local communities, socially disadvantaged people and all visitors to experience wellbeing through woodland-based outdoor activities and therapies.

The team received grant funding of £500 to increase the productive capacity of its native tree and woodland plant nursery, as well as to start teaching courses in its unique systems of Woodland Horticulture.

The course covers the unique system of holistic and organic native tree and plant care. In sharing the system with others, they are supporting the implementation of new, richly biodiverse woodland biomes beyond the Deer Wood project.

"All the monies we have received that have gone towards the ultimate aim of sharing this holistic approach to tree care and cultivation, have greatly assisted the effective progress and speed that we have been able to achieve these aims." Deer Wood Trust



Spotlight on ...

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPES

Connecting People and Landscapes is led by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, aiming to build an understanding of how nature-friendly regenerative farming supports biodiversity and creates resilient landscapes, bringing communities and farmers together.

Over the past year, DCT has facilitated two focus groups; one for young people not in education, employment or training, and another for people with limited engagement with the countryside. Learnings from these focus groups was fed back into the project to inform strategies to engage wider communities with farming and the countryside.

We also partnered with BCT to create a series of farm visits for different community groups, including* for 12 members of Honiton Carers, five members of Autism After Hours (an organisation for autistic adults without a learning disability), 17 Ukrainian refugees, and four Junior Youth Leaders from Torbay Play.

The group from Play Torbay, a charity supporting and encouraging children to play and be active outdoors, attended a day of activities at Gappah Farm in Teignbridge. They saw a newly born calf, and learned about soil types, herbal lay, and the role that sheep and cattle play in keeping the land healthy. Hearing about how the farm had been in the same family for several generations helped them understand the connection between people and land. They are already planning to co-create a day of activities for a larger group in spring 2025!

"Please can I, on behalf of the carers group, thank you so very much for giving our group such a wonderful day yesterday. They are all totally full of it all and have shared so much with us ..."

Honiton Carers

IMPACT

Farmers and their local communities are better connected and there is more widespread awareness of the need to care for our eco systems, our food production industry and our wildlife. We also have insights into how to continue to inspire and encourage people not already engaged with the countryside, to care for their local landscapes.



*A note on language: we have endeavoured to use terminology that is used by the specific organisations and people to which we refer, as we feel it is important to reflect how they chose to describe themselves.

WE AIM TO ...

develop
community
capacity building,
through local
facilities, spaces,
services, people
and their skills

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£306.66K
SOCIAL VALUE

Distributed
£2,200 to
fund toys and play
equipment for rural
community groups



Launched first
ever Devon Village
Halls Asset Map
featuring **340** halls
(pg.5)



Engaged **251**
times with Village
Halls to support them
with specialist advice,
including **41** pieces of
funding advice



Produced
28 bespoke
evaluation reports for
our communities and
funders. Read many of
them here!



Gave **7,927**
households the
opportunity to contribute
to surveys about local
housing need



Supported
283 DCT
members, along with
787 community,
voluntary and other
organisations



Administered
£99,300 of
grant funding to
communities



170,481 litres
of oil ordered by
the **195** members
of the Devon Oil
Collective



146
organisations
supported as
part of the East
Devon Voluntary,
Community and Social
Enterprise Support
Service



841
people
contributed to
their community's
Neighbourhood Plan in
Exminster



Supported
Bovey Tracey
Riverside Centre
with evaluation
programmes to
inform future plans

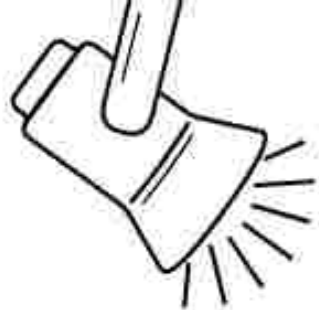


Facilitated **2**
community engagement
events in Lapford, where
407 insights were
gathered from **110**
people sharing ideas for
the future of their
community



Supported
Bradinch Town
Trust to develop
a new strategic
vision





Spotlight on ...

Funded by
UK Government



SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN EAST DEVON

Since 2023, we have been providing a comprehensive programme of support to build the capacity of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in East Devon, which provides so many vital services in the district.

During 2024-5 we supported 146 organisations across the district in a variety of ways. These ranged from specialist training events to drop-in surgeries and 1-2-1 support.

Through engagement and listening to the needs of VCSE organisations in East Devon, we have tailored the training and support to address critical needs in the areas of financial sustainability, volunteer management, business management, making connections and partnering.

IMPACT

Outcomes have included:

4 new organisations helped to set up

6 organisations helped to develop a business plan

60 organisations helped to apply for funding

64 organisations supported with publicity

21 organisations supported to become more sustainable

109 people attended training sessions, many benefiting from multiple sessions

VCSE organisations in East Devon are better equipped, resourced, and connected, to achieve their purpose.

"Thank you so much for the detailed info about funding organisations in our area, we will make a start asap. Just wanted to say a massive thank you for all your help, guidance and support over the last few months. To be honest, without you I think I might have walked away and taken up gardening instead. Your support really made a difference to our small little group and I will always be grateful to you."

Jocelyn Hewitt, Cooking from Scratch



ALSO ...

We were delighted to participate in the East Devon District Council VCSE Thank You event in February 2025, including hosting a Q&A panel.

We are collaborating with East Devon District Council, other local partners and the community, to facilitate a place-based financial resilience pilot in Dunkeswell. What are the challenges of living in rural East Devon? How might we develop local solutions? We held our first community listening session in March. Watch this space!

DEVELOPING A GREAT IDEA INTO A REALITY

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS SAFETY PROCESS

Tess contacted our VCSE Support Service for help with writing a business plan. A retired social worker, Tess is also a qualified and experienced Psychodynamic Counsellor and a Protective Behaviours (PB) Safety Process Trainer. She has over 30 years experience of teaching safety awareness and life skills that empower individuals to recognise situations where they might feel unsafe and to develop skills to take action and seek help.

Tess recently moved to Seaton from Milton Keynes. Her business idea is to offer PB training to vulnerable children and their families/carers in Seaton and the surrounding area. She would like to set up as a CIC (Community Interest Company) so that she can offer a funded service.

We met with Tess to discuss her business plan, talking through questions such as: how does she know there's a need for this service and how could this be evidenced? Who would have an interest in the organisation? Who may be more difficult to engage? Who the competitors could be? By the end of the meeting Tess had formulated a plan to circulate a questionnaire among stakeholders to gauge local support and need.

As well as following up with further business plan resources, we also helped Tess to shape her questionnaire, which has since been sent out to 200 local organisations that work with children, young people and their families.

Tess has had a positive response to her proposal and now has survey evidence she can use to further develop her business plan and funding bids. She has also made valuable connections in her local area, which will help support the development of her CIC.

Read more about PB here: www.protectivebehaviours.org/protective-behaviours-resources-training-room/articles/10-overview-of-pbs-process

The East Devon VCSE Support Service project is funded by east devon district council, through the UK government's UK shared prosperity fund. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/east-devon-vcse-support-service

"Everyone has been so friendly and positive about my potential CIC that I'm very enthused and excited about it ... everyone has said that, given the state of children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, it would be a welcome addition to the available children's charities and organisations in East Devon and would also take pressure off the NHS/CAMHS in Exeter and School Counselling Services etc ... Thanks again - your support and advice is invaluable!" Tess





Spotlight on ...

CONNECTING, PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING DEVON'S VILLAGE HALLS

Over the past year, our specialist Village Halls and Community Buildings support team has engaged 251 times with committees and trustees to provide specialist support for these vital community spaces. This includes facilitating district-based 'cluster' meetings, in East, North and South Devon (and the beginnings of one in West Devon), which allow local halls to come together and benefit from peer support and sharing best practice.

A particular highlight from this year was our live Devon-wide Village Hall Question and Answer panel session in November 2024, featuring an expert panel of Martin Rich (Village Halls Advisor, DCT), Deborah Clarke (Village Halls expert, Action with Communities in Rural England), and David Ayre (longstanding Treasurer for West Down Village Hall). 42 Village Hall representatives attended this lively event in Colaton Raleigh, hearing valuable advice on funding, volunteers, governance and more. A video of this session can be viewed here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjWLBXIO6I

Read all about our new Village Hall Asset Map on pg.5.



IMPACT

Supporting community buildings and enabling them to develop their offerings and spaces, means rural and coastal communities benefit from social interaction, cultural activities, education, health services, and recreation.

Many of these buildings serve as the only accessible gathering spaces in rural areas, reducing isolation and bringing people together.

FROM LONELY HALL TO BUSTLING COMMUNITY HUB!

SHILLINGFORD AND PETTON VILLAGE HALL

In September 2024 DCT was invited to a celebration at Shillingford and Petton Village Hall to mark the completion of its new roof. More than that, it marked a real turnaround for a hall that was once a deteriorating building in the 'middle of nowhere', in a sparsely populated rural community.

Our involvement with the Hall was sparked by a chance conversation at the 2019 Mid Devon Show. We followed up with the trustees and learned of the extensive works needed to make the building warm, weatherproof and more functional. We decided to test local interest and hold a public meeting with a simple 'use it or lose it' message. The hall filled and many stories of family connections to the hall emerged. There was enthusiasm, ideas and offers of help. The trustees felt encouraged, had the building assessed and works costed. DCT provided guidance on developing and managing the project along with ideas for funding and activities. Despite the disruption caused by Covid, the planning went on and the ambition remained.

Following the pandemic, we explored the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund (QPJF), but fundraising was far short of the 80% contribution required and the timescale to investigate other sources was tight. We discussed loan funding, its implications for trustees and talked about incorporation to make trusteeship more attractive and less of a personal risk.

A Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund application was made with a supportive assessment from DCT and a generous personal loan from within the community, which got the application over the threshold. We all worked hard on the QPJF application, gathering information, making financial projections, drafting and re-drafting responses. The efforts paid off and a grant of nearly £16,000 was awarded.



Not only have the works been paid for using a variety of funding sources, but use of the hall has reignited. A number of events to bring local people into the hall and to raise funds were organised with Adam Henson of BBC Countryfile being a popular speaker at a hall that has more animals for neighbours than people! A hundred club was formed and a Facebook page was created, listing concerts, speakers on a wide range of topics, quiz nights, bingo sessions and many other activities. The original charity has now closed and the hall is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with three dedicated trustees and a progressive committee. The hall still stands 'in the middle of nowhere', but now it's a thriving community facility with range of events and regular activities to benefit local people.





Spotlight on ...



Funded by
UK Government

Devon Community
Housing Hub

ENABLING AFFORDABLE RURAL HOUSING

Rural Housing Enabling work is crucial to address housing shortages and maintain dynamic, diverse rural communities. As a member of the Devon Community Housing Hub (DCHH), DCT's Rural Housing Enabling team provides specialist advice and services to communities in need of additional housing, including Housing Needs Surveys to establish how many additional homes are needed, of which we facilitated 14 last year.

Thanks to a Rural Housing Enabling grant from DEFRA, received through ACRE, we were also able to provide communities with additional support, including identifying sites and brokering relationships with landowners, housing associations and developers, to further their journeys towards getting the required homes built. We worked with 21 communities and individuals, including six communities that are actively engaged in bringing forward new homes. Examples include helping to bring forward a rural exception site for affordable housing in St Giles in the Wood and support for a housing developer and community group seeking to develop co-housing for older people in South Molton.

We were pleased to have provided evidence for the Devon Housing Commission report, published in July 2024, which provides a comprehensive analysis of housing challenges. www.devonhousinghub.org.uk/2024/08/05/devon-housing-commission-report/. This report is one of the topics for discussion at the DCHH 'Future of Rural Housing in Devon' seminar we have planned for May 2025, with a range of guest speakers and strategic delegates coming together to address key rural housing issues.

IMPACT

Developing affordable homes in rural and coastal communities tackles the problem of people having to leave these communities to find homes, helping to maintain vibrant, diverse villages.



Spotlight on ...

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Our team has extensive expertise in working with Parish and Town Councils and other community organisations to engage with their communities and progress local projects. If a community project is shaped by the wants and needs of those who will benefit from it, not only is the positive impact on the community likely to be greater, it also helps to attract approval and funding, as the evidence of community need and support is robust.

“

“Community development, at its simplest, necessitates that people are heard, and their views are captured and accounted for in any project that will involve them and their local community. Meet people where they are at, and help them with where they are going.” Luke Groves-Davis, Project Manager, DCT

”

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

BERRYNARBOR AND LAPFORD

Berrynarbor Parish Council wishes to upgrade its recreation ground with more modern equipment, particularly for teens and adults. We supported them with a survey to encourage local residents to share their views, which garnered 151 responses. The consultation highlighted a strong desire from the community for improvements to the recreation ground. Key priorities included increasing green space, upgrading play equipment, hosting more community events, and creating dedicated walking and cycling paths.

Lapford Parish Council was seeking community feedback on its Neighbourhood Development Plan, which would incorporate newly acquired land, a newly established Community Trust, and the significant changing demographic within Lapford. We supported them with two engagement events, where our team listened to local people, identifying 407 insights from 110 different people. Using these 407 insights, we worked with Councillors to develop a household survey, which received 127 responses.



”

“Thanks for your help and support at the event on Friday and Saturday at Lapford. You both engaged extremely well with the community, young and old alike ... We had a far better turn out than expected.” Julie Down, Lapford Parish Council

“

IMPACT

Both of these communities will benefit from the future of these initiatives, whether it's a new recreation ground to facilitate health, fitness and socialisation, or a community-led Neighbourhood Development Plan which gives them a say in the future of their area.

WE AIM TO ...

support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£367.57K
SOCIAL VALUE

Facilitated
43 training
and learning sessions
themed around
business,
enterprise and
financial support, with
280 attendees



Supported
**Blackdown Support
Group** to develop a
three-year business plan
for health and social
care priorities



Participated in
the South West Anchor
Partnership and the Devon
ICS Anchor Partnership Group,
contributing to the development
of an "Anchor Blueprint" Strategy
highlighting the importance of
inclusive working and increased
local investment to
grow the local
economy



Key partner in
planning a pilot
community engagement
programme in Dunkeswell
as part of East Devon
Financial Resilience
Group



Provided
105 pieces of
funding/business advice
to community groups,
Village Halls and other
voluntary organisations



59 social enterprises
contributed to a survey as
part of a collaboration with
Torbay and Plymouth Social
Enterprise (SE) Networks
to understand needs and
priorities, and to progress
future strategy for the SE
sector

286 members
of Devon Social
Enterprise
Network



Sit on the Devon & Torbay
Combined County Authority
Business Advisory Group, aiming
to highlight the VCSE sector's
value and make the case for
increased investment in rural
SMEs, Social Enterprises and
Community Businesses



263 people
were supported
to reduce their energy
output and manage
their costs, through 1-2-
1 consultations and
community events



Evidence
gathering and
funding application
support for South
Molton Pannier
Market 's new roof





Spotlight on ...

citizens
advice

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO MANAGE GROWING ENERGY BILLS

Devon has higher levels of fuel poverty (13%) than the UK average (10%)¹, with North and West Devon and Torridge being particularly affected. DCT was once again commissioned by Citizens Advice through the National Energy Outreach Programme to deliver advice and support to those facing challenges in managing their energy bills and keeping their homes warm, particularly in rural and coastal communities.

We delivered this in a range of ways, including providing 1-2-1 consultations, community presentations and visiting public locations for drop-in sessions. As well as advice on topics such as conserving heat, reducing energy usage, accessing financial support and more, we were also able to provide practical resources including comfort zone thermometers, radiator foil, and fleece blankets. By linking up with local organisations such as housing associations and community groups, we were able to target our support where it was most needed. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/energy-outreach-project

IMPACT

263 people have been supported to reduce their energy output, better manage their bills and access other financial support, against a backdrop of rising energy costs and the continuing cost of living crisis.

¹ <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/foia-requests/45484/Cost%20of%20Living%20Spotlight%20Review.pdf>

"Working in partnership with LiveWest has ensured that residents have access to information, advice, and guidance on dealing with their energy costs. Being invited to their events and locations - for example attending Holsworthy Food Bank and in-house events in Bideford - has resulted in us being able to support some of the hardest-to-reach individuals in the most deprived areas."

Anderson Jones, Community Development Officer



SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

HELP FOR 'JOE'

Over the winter we were able to support a wide range of people, including those in particularly challenging circumstances. For example, Joe (not real name), was referred to us by their support worker. They were described as 'reclusive', with mental health challenges, so we were only able to give advice by phone. Joe lives in rented accommodation with storage heaters and was struggling to pay for his heating, only keeping one room warm. We gave advice on managing storage heaters and overall energy usage in the short-term. Long-term, we referred him to LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership) for management of the landlord's responsibilities with a dedicated caseworker, with the aim of making Joe's home more energy efficient and comfortable. He was previously unaware of energy efficiency certification but is now on a path to ensuring he has the standard of housing he's entitled to.



ENTERPRISE SUPPORT ACROSS DEVON

105 pieces of funding/business advice given, and 43 training sessions held, to enable entrepreneurs, small businesses and VCSEs to prosper, including ...

"Great guidance on how to start using [InShot]. We are looking to use more videos to promote our service."

Marketing training for VCSEs, including messaging, social media, designing posters and producing videos.

Training sessions and 1-2-1 advice on governance, policies and establishing new enterprises.

"Extremely helpful ... the Business Model Canvas was really useful."

Training and support for writing simple business plans.

"The in-depth knowledge of the workshop facilitators is amazing and I have found the templates provided to be particularly useful for writing policies such as Safeguarding and Health & Safety, and wouldn't have known where to start without them!"

Training and support with evaluation and impact measurement.

"Very relevant content, great trainer ... Very timely for our current situation seeking funding for new projects."

WE AIM TO

...flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders and staff

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
MEASURED AT
£211.31K
SOCIAL VALUE



Attended
4 summer

shows in Holsworthy, Honiton, Tiverton and Okehampton, engaging with **416** people

17

partners, funders and stakeholders attended our AGM and heard inspiring community stories from **3** guest speakers



Trained
6 people from **2**

District Councils on an Asset Based Community Development approach to working with communities



Welcomed **27** students from the Netherlands to conduct community research in rural



Began



a series of meetings with Devon MPs to highlight rural and coastal issues

Facilitated
14 benefits



awareness courses in collaboration with Citizens Advice Devon, with **53** attendees being upskilled to better support people on low incomes



1 Trustee Board away day



4

team training sessions in: Disability Awareness, Cyber Security, Defibrillators and Neighbourhood Planning



1,518

attendees trained at **134** learning, development and networking events

Supported **19** meetings and issued **12** newsletters for the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly, strengthening the connections and strategic collaboration between **264** VCSE organisations

Worked with the Assembly to produce **1** case study demonstrating the value of community-led research that amplified lived experiences of barriers to accessing drug and alcohol treatment (pg. 13)

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...

