

# This plan sets out to:

44	Review some of our key	achievements 2022-2025		Section 1 p.2
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Examine our current external environment, opportunities and challenges ——— Section 2 p.5

 $\bigcirc$  Re-affirm and commit to our purpose and beneficiaries and our vision for 2030  $^-$  Section 3 p.8

Set out a matrix to communicate how we will achieve our strategic aims ——— Section 4 p.9

Illustrate our high-level Theory of Change Framework — Section 5 p.13

Set out our Key Objectives and Strategic Governance Framework 2025-2030 - **Section 6 p.15** 

# 1. Where we are today

Devon Communities Together (the operating name of the Community Council of Devon) is a registered charity, the Rural Community Council for Devon. In our seventh decade of serving Devon's rural and coastal communities, our charitable Objects and Area of Benefit as set out in our governing documents remain as relevant as ever:

## The Objects and Area of Benefit of Devon Communities Together (DCT) are:

- The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in the administrative County of Devon and the southwest region of England
- The advancement of education and culture, the protection of health, the relief of poverty, distress and sickness in all of the above areas
- The giving of assistance and the co-ordination of all statutory and other authorities and voluntary organisations engaged in any of the purposes set out in (a) and (b) above and the provision of agency services for such authorities or organisations.











It is timely to take stock and review our operations and where we wish to be in five years' time. We must remain focused on supporting Devon's rural, coastal and market towns and communities to thrive and grow in this period of uncertainty and global challenges. This strategic plan is designed to ensure that we remain a cornerstone of Devon and a respected and collaborative partner who will continue to champion its rural and coastal communities.

This plan builds on Devon Communities Together's Strategic Plan 2022 – 25. Overleaf is a high-level summary of our key achievements across the Strategic Objectives we set for ourselves during that period:

Building place-based partnerships and programmes to contribute to the improvement of our six strategic aims, to add value to the contributions of individual initiatives

Founding member of VCSE Assembly

Helped award £597,000+ grant funding

Supported evaluation of 50 community programmes

Championed Devon rural and coastal communities nationally, regionally and locally

Gathering and disseminating intelligence on rural and coastal communities' lived experience and resilience to secure the information necessary to inform future funding and service development strategies

12,714 Devon residents listened to via 67 community surveys

Regular resilience events with 700+ participants

37 rural communities supported to develop Community Emergency Plans

Empowering communities to develop asset-based community engagement and capacity building in partnership with public sector leaders, with the aim of reducing rural inequalities

Audited 80% of Devon village halls to create Community Asset Map. 595 specialist casework support

"Devon Prepared" Whole of Society Resilience conference

3 Rural Health Inequalities Studies; presented to 6 Devon Health Inclusion events; 7 Public Health case studies

2 programmes tackling transport access barriers for people with disabilities Tackling the lack of housing and services for people in rural areas by supporting communities to develop Local Community and Neighbourhood Plans and delivering Housing Needs Surveys

13,362 rural households had opportunity to contribute to 19 Housing Needs Surveys

2,071 people contributed to Neighbourhood Development Plans

Defra National Rural Housing Enabler Grant scheme in Devon

Supported 21 Parish Councils with Community Emergency Planning

Collaborating with communities, VCSE and public sector partners to identify and

reduce rural

inequalities to

improve health

and wellbeing

health

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Presented evidence to House of Lords Inquiry Committee on Integration of Primary and Community Care

Rural Proofing Review of 13 Devon County Council Adult Social Care policies

Co-designed and led Eastern Devon VCSE Virtual Wards Pilot

447 individuals/rural households supported to manage energy costs Actively supporting the economy of Devon by assisting community-owned, micro and small and medium enterprises (SME), and through the creation of training opportunities and skills development

£7 million Social Value generated

3,725 participants at 316 training and networking events

183 community businesses/ organisations supported in East Devon

Business support for **547** rural enterprises & **249** members of Devon Social Enterprise Network, with **19** jobs created

# All our key achievements contributed to one or more of our Social Objectives:

Champion diversity and inclusion, hear minority voices and respond to their needs Identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing

Work with communities to develop innovative ways to achieve community resilience and a positive impact for climate change and sustainability

Develop community capacity building, through local facilities, spaces, services, people and their skills Support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building Flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders and staff

# 2. External environment, opportunities and challenges

DCT Staff and Trustees have undertaken detailed SWOT and <u>PESTLE</u> analyses, to review and consider both the internal and external factors that may impact our strategic progress and objectives over the next 5 year period. The SWOT and PESTLE reviews have informed the development process of this strategic plan. This strategy has been informed by key national and local priorities and issues that are prevalent in the current landscape, as these impact rural and coastal communities in their work and lives. These external factors have directly informed and influenced our strategic direction. Examples include:



Global and national economic uncertainty, difficult funding landscapes and the need to sustain financial stability



New 'Civil Society Covenant', the Government's Plan for Change and a mission-driven approach to national government policy and Defra strategic priorities, with specific goals for economic growth, public service improvement, and social equity<sup>1</sup>



NHS 10 Year Plan for public health and prevention, with 3 strategic shifts, moving care from: hospital to community, sickness to prevention and analogue to digital<sup>2</sup>



Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) plans.



Increasing challenges and inequalities impacting Devon's rural and coastal communities



Grant-making charities and foundation grant applications have surged by a reported 30–50%, with some foundations seeing their number double (NCVO 2025).



Significant reduction in the proportion of sector income coming from both local and national government, new procurement regulatory framework<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> www.gov.uk/missions

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-to-recovery-the- governments-2025-mandate-to-nhs-england/road-to-recovery-the-governments-2025-mandate-to-nhs-england

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/the-procurement-act-2023-a-short-guide-for-suppliers-html



Increases to national insurance and the minimum wage, which have significantly increased overhead costs



The continuing Cost of Living Crisis, with further inflation and impact on investments and higher household costs



Sustaining a rapidly developing digital transformation programme and harnessing AI technology



The cross cutting need to continue to embed sustainability practices into operational practice in response to climate change and net-zero targets

These external factors have the potential to be both detrimental and to provide opportunities for growth for Devon's rural and coastal communities (including our Market towns), impacting on rural poverty and health outcomes, organisational funding and capacity. However, we recognise that external environment changes also bring new opportunities for funding for rural and coastal community-led influencing, creating change, and addressing the needs of our rural residents by providing targeted support where it is most needed. (see our key strategic objectives in section 5).







# 3. Connecting Communities, Creating Change

'Connecting Communities, Creating Change' encapsulates how we empower and unite communities across Devon. We facilitate connections between residents, local groups, local authorities, policymakers, and funders, ensuring that communities have a voice in shaping their futures. Working together with communities, we enhance access to vital services and strengthen community infrastructure. Our support enables diverse communities to address pressing challenges and build resilience. By fostering collaboration and providing tailored support, particularly for people most in need, we create sustainable, positive change that reflects the aspirations and needs of Devon's rural and coastal communities.

Statement of	Living in Devon's rural and coastal communities can often mean that people are
Need	disadvantaged by poor or insufficient essential infrastructure, services, and jobs.
Vision	Devon's rural, coastal and market towns and communities are thriving, sustainable and inclusive places to live and work.
Statement of	DCT champions rural, coastal and market towns and communities in Devon, enables
Purpose	local action and improves support for people most in need.
Beneficiaries	People who live in rural, coastal and market towns and communities in Devon, particularly those who face the greatest needs and challenges as a result of where they live.

# 4. Our vision and strategy for 2030

As we work in partnership towards our vision, our three strategic aims between now and 2030 are to:



# Strategy Matrix 2025-30

The three strategic aims proposed capture how we will achieve our new vision. To communicate how we will achieve our strategic aims across our core fields of activity, we have created a Strategy Matrix. This integrates our three strategic aims with our four core impact areas, the 3 Pillars of Sustainable Development and the UK Government's 5 Missions. These are:

- A. Economic, skills, enterprise (National Mission 1: Kickstart economic growth)
- B. **Environmental**, climate, energy (National Mission 2: Make Britain a clean energy superpower)
- C. Social, health, digital (National Missions 3-5: Break down barriers to opportunity; Safer streets; Build an NHS fit for the future)
- D. Infrastructure, village halls, housing, transport

Our **Strategy Matrix** enables us to 'plot' and 'communicate' our impact, aims, activities and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in a simple, compelling and consistent way. It provides us with an 'organising framework' for allocating resources, prioritising activities and producing plans: where we will focus our efforts, where we have gaps to address, which staff are focused on which aims, how we align with and contribute to wider agendas and DCT's particular role in this.

We will achieve our 2030 strategic aims in the following ways (see table overleaf), with our early priorities listed below.

# **Early Priorities**

Over the first 2 years of this strategy period, we will focus on the issues our members have identified as the greatest challenges facing Devon's rural and coastal communities and which are key to their future growth:

- Rural Digital Inclusion
- Rural Social Housing
- Rural Transport Poverty
- Health Promotion and the reduction of rural health inequalities

	STRATEGIC AIMS			
IMPACT AREAS	Champion communities- amplify community voices, attract funding	Enable local action- build capacity and capability in communities	Improve support for people most in need	
ECONOMIC Skills Enterprise  National mission: Kickstart economic growth	Advocate locally and nationally for the allocation of equitable funding and investment into Devon's rural, coastal and market towns and communities Raise awareness of the impact, needs and opportunities of Devon's social enterprise and social purpose sectors	Build capacity and capability in Devon's communities and VCSE sector by providing and brokering training and networking opportunities	Reduce poverty and support social mobility in rural, coastal and market towns and communities by connecting people to work, education and training opportunities and supporting financial resilience	
ENVIRONMENTAL Climate Energy  National mission: Make Britain a clean energy superpower	Raise awareness of the additional environmental, climate and energy complexities facing rural and coastal communities Lever increased funding from local and national sources for community action on environmental, climate and energy matters	Increase the resilience and environmental sustainability of rural, coastal and market towns and communities by coordinating networks, connecting actors and facilitating planning and action	Work with vulnerable and fuel-poor households to alleviate the impact of energy and climate challenges	

IMPACT AREAS	STRATEGIC AIMS		
	Champion communities-	Enable local action-	Improve support for
	amplify community voices,	build capacity and	people most in need
	attract funding	capability in communities	
SOCIAL Health Digital  National missions: Break down barriers to opportunity; Safer streets; Build an NHS fit for the future	Increase awareness nationally and locally of the particular health inequalities and needs of rural and coastal communities and advocate for equitable service provision in rural and coastal areas Increase awareness nationally and locally of the particular digital inclusion needs including access issues of rural and coastal communities and advocate for equitable service provision in rural and coastal areas	Increase the number of community buildings and assets in Devon being used to deliver health, social care and related services  Work with communities and local place-based health and social care service providers to co-produce the rural proofing of health and social care services Increase community-based and community-led health and social	Rural proof health and social care services to ensure hard-to-reach individuals and communities can access and benefit from them Increase digital connectivity, literacy and inclusion in rural and coastal areas for those most in need
	and coustat areas	research to influence change	

IMPACT AREAS	STRATEGIC AIMS		
	Champion communities-	Enable local action-	Improve support for
	amplify community voices,	build capacity and	people most in need
	attract funding	capability in communities	
INFRASTRUCTURE Village Halls Housing Transport	Champion investment into and the improvement of transport and community services in Devon's rural, coastal and market towns and communities	Facilitate community engagement to ensure community voices influence change, policy and decision making at the local level	Enable the delivery of affordable housing for local and low-income households in rural and coastal parts of Devon
	Advocate locally and nationally for funding and policy support for rural affordable housing Advocate for local, regional and national funding and utilisation of rural and coastal community assets, especially village halls	Work with communities to increase the capacity, capability and usage of community buildings and assets with a particular focus on village halls	Work with partners and communities to reduce transport poverty and ensure rural and coastal transport services are accessible, inclusive and demand-led

# 5. How we will achieve and measure our impact

We have developed a high-level Theory of Change Framework for 2025 – 2030, in order to ensure joined-up community action, programmes, services and campaigning in the specific focused thematic areas set out in our Strategy Matrix and to enable us to measure and evaluate our impact. More detailed frameworks are available for internal use that will be reviewed regularly to monitor progress.

DCT Theory of Change High-Level Framework (overleaf)



- DCT Workforce & resources
- National ACRE Network
- Funding streams
- Partnerships

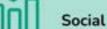
# **ACTIVITIES**

#### Economic

- Rural & coastal skills
- · Rural and social entrepreneurship
- · Community wealth-building

#### Environmental

- · Community resilience
- · Sustainable land use & climate change

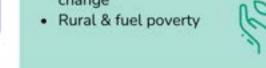


# · Rural & coastal health & wellbeing

- · Public health & community safety
- · Reduction of rural and coastal health inequalities

#### Infrastructure

- Devon Village Hall Network
- · Community capacity building
- · Digital rural and coastal connectivity and inclusion
- · Rural & coastal housing, planning & transport





# OUTPUTS

- Number of Rural & coastal communities worked with
- · Number of Village Halls, partners & stakeholders worked with
- Number of community-led projects completed
- Number of policies/strategies & research influenced
- Number of learning & development & networking events held

# **OUTCOMES**

- · More rural diverse & minority voices are heard & responded to
- · Reduced inequalities, rural proofing of services, & improved health and wellbeing
- · Increased rural & coastal community resilience & climate change sustainability
- · Improved rural & coastal community capacity building
- · Contribution to Devon's rural & coastal economic growth & community wealth building



The voices of communities are amplified & funding is attracted into Devon.

Support for people & places is improved, targeted to where it is most needed.

Community capacity & capability grows, enabling local action.















# 6. Connecting the parts: governance and delivery

Bringing our strategic plan together, we have identified key objectives and actions required for us to successfully deliver against our 3 Strategic Aims and Impact Objectives set out in our Strategy Matrix above. during the next 5 years.

# Champion communities

 to amplify the voices of, and attract funding into, communities in Devon

Create a sustainable financial resilience model that enables us to plan for the long-term, take advantage of opportunities and respond to change, so we can increase our impact for our members and beneficiaries.

#### WE WILL

Maintain services which directly impact the people and rural and coastal communities in Devon that rely on them.

Increase opportunities for community engagement and participation, to ensure people living in Devon's rural and coastal communities can be heard and make a difference.

Grow and demonstrate our impact and social value.

Invest in workforce development and wellbeing programmes and digital technology and upskilling, to improve our long-term ability to recruit and retain a skilled workforce.

## Enable local action

 to work with Devon's communities to build capacity and capability

### **KEY OBJECTIVES**

Work alongside our rural and coastal communities, partners, stakeholders and funders to find new ways to work together so we can increase our collective impact, such as sharing best practice, securing new resources and increasing our resilience.

### WE WILL

Facilitate/support regular rural community events, community interest groups and peer networks to hear local voices and identify priorities.

Provide a countywide VCSE rural and coastal community development service.

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

# Improve support for people most in need

to provide targeted support where it is most needed

Build new relationships with a wider range of interests in order to increase understanding of rural and coastal communities, build new alliances and achieve more change, more quickly.

#### WE WILL

Conduct community consultation needs assessments and community engagement activities.

Identify and highlight areas with high levels of deprivation, low service access, or at-risk populations and engage local residents and groups to identify "hidden" needs (e.g., fuel poverty, digital exclusion).

Champion Devon's Village Halls as rural community hubs, hosting accessible services so beneficiaries can access multiple types of help from one point (e.g., financial, digital, mental health).

Increase and sustain key partnerships and collaborations – to ensure effective service delivery and influence policy making. (eg health and wellbeing and mental health programmes tailored for rural isolation.)



The Governance Framework for our strategy development work overleaf reflects the above strategic priorities.



# THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...











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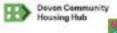


























































































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