



April - September 2025

Devon Communities Together Our Impact



In July, our staff team came together for an away day at which we got our creative juices flowing, creating some interesting cartoons and storyboards!



OUR VISION AND MISSION

In summer 2025, Devon Communities Together launched our [new strategic plan for 2025-30](#).

Part of this work involved the development of a new vision, accompanied by three new strategic aims, on which everything we do as a charity is focused.

Although much of our work accompanies two or even three of these aims, this Impact Report is arranged according to the most closely related aim.



SOCIAL VALUE:
total community
benefits from April-
September 2025 have
been valued at
£747.38k

MEASURING OUR SOCIAL VALUE

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

We're pleased to report that during Q1 and Q2 of 2025, the total benefits we generated have been measured by our Social Value Engine as £747,380. The chart below shows how the value can be allocated across our three strategic aims (pg. 2), although in reality much of our work encompasses more than one aim.

SOCIAL VALUE BY STRATEGIC AIM (SEE PG.2)

£166.40k

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

£326.27k

Enable local action - to work with local communities to build capacity and capability

£254.70k

Improve support for people most in need - to provide targeted support where it is most needed



CHAMPION COMMUNITIES

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

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
VALUED AT

£166.40K
SOCIAL VALUE

Listened to the voices of rural and coastal communities through **9** community surveys

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

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

Amplified the voices of rural and coastal communities at **13** strategic-level meetings, partnerships and events

Engaged with **11** stakeholders to understand flashpoints/barriers to sustainability in rural and coastal communities

Rural and coastal community development champion on the Executive Committee of the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly

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

Advocated for rural proofing processes in the development phases of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams for the Devon ICB, as well as the formalised involvement of VCSE sector

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

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



**IPSOS is a multinational market research and consultancy firm*

FACILITATING INTERNATIONAL RURAL RESEARCH

We were once again delighted to welcome 29 students from Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands to Devon this summer. The students spent two weeks in the county, conducting research into rural and coastal life to use in their studies.

As well as finding hosts and organising transport, our team was able to use our connections to recommend research subjects and support with arranging interviews.

What impact will the visit have? The students' data and experiences from Devon will not only support their academic careers but will also deepen understanding of a wide variety of rural topics, and hopefully inspire future research or careers in these areas. We also find that the hosts and their communities often benefit from welcoming people from a different culture into their lives for two weeks!



“My lovely student event featured on the local Facebook community page for their work in the area.”

“We had some really good feedback from some of the locals they interviewed, which was nice to hear. We take pleasure in seeing the students accomplish finding the information they need and seeing how they tackle being away from home.”

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS

As Devon's Rural Community Council, our senior leadership team regularly amplifies the voices of rural and coastal communities at a strategic level. Examples include:

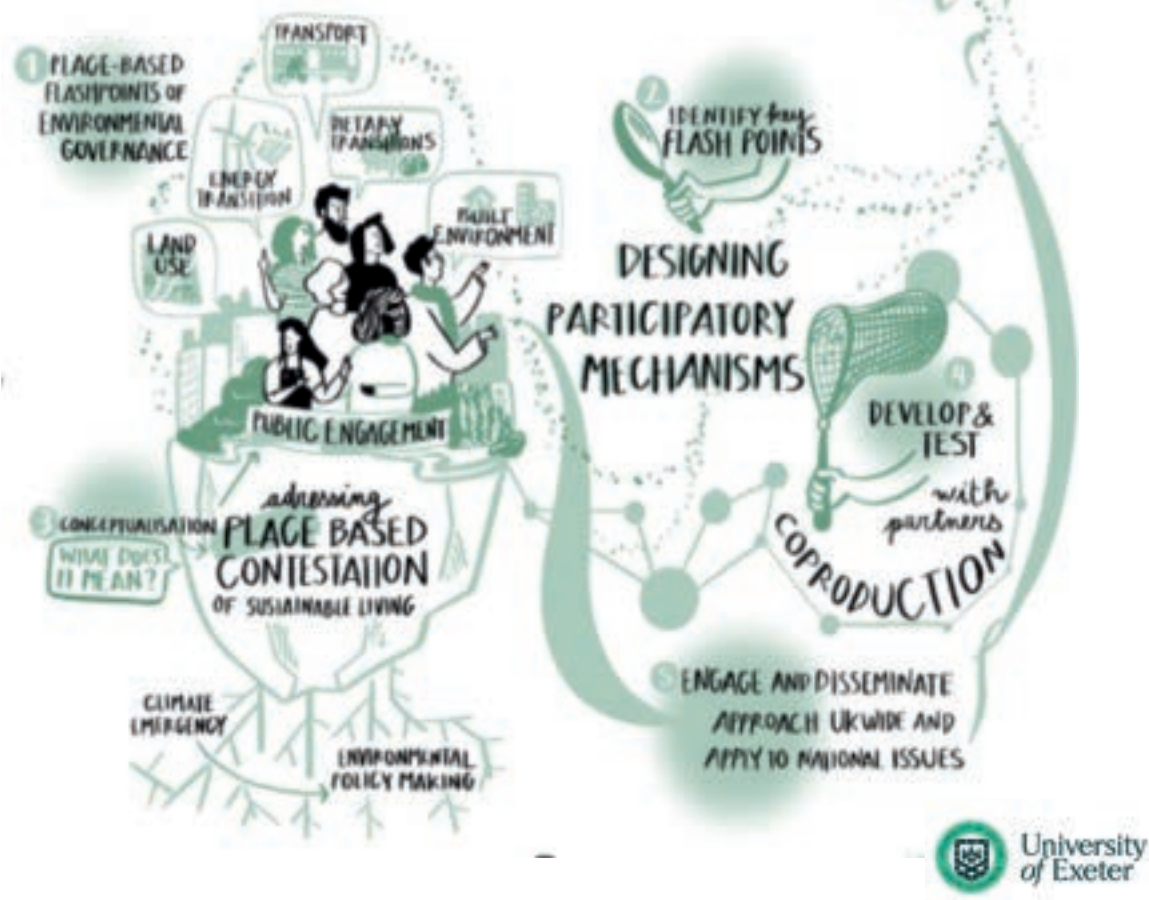
- Devon Combined County Authority Business Advisory Group
- Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Group
- Rural Transport Poverty Group
- Local Nature Partnership Board
- Devon and the South West Anchor Partnerships
- Devon and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Strategy workshop
- Devon Drug & Alcohol Partnership Board meeting

ATTRACTING FUNDING INTO DEVON

Despite a hugely challenging funding landscape, we remain committed to exploring a wide variety of funding opportunities to bring much needed money and services into Devon's rural and coastal communities. Our Funding Development Manager develops bids both for DCT and in partnership with other organisations. Recent successful bids include:

- East Devon Financial Resilience and Grants Project (pg.15)
- Digital Skills Devon (coming soon)
- Connecting People and Landscapes Phase 2 (coming soon)
- Energy Outreach (pg.18)

GOVERNING SUSTAINABLE Futures



UNDERSTANDING PLACE-BASED CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

One way we champion communities is by using our reach into rural and coastal areas to support research that amplifies local voices and informs policy. For example, we're working with the University of Exeter on Governing Sustainable Futures: Designing Participatory Mechanisms for Addressing Place-based Contestations of Sustainable Living.

This project explores “flashpoints” that hinder sustainable changes and develops tools and theories for policymakers, communities and practitioners. So far, we've engaged 11 individuals and organisations to understand sustainability conflicts - their triggers and how they've been resolved. One example is the National Trust using a nature engagement team to explain to locals why some estate land is rewilded instead of farmed.

What impact will the research have? The information gathered will be used to create a toolkit to support sustainability discussion with communities and enable sustainability change with less pushback.

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

ENABLE LOCAL ACTION

Work with Devon's communities to build capacity and capability

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
VALUED AT

£326.27K
SOCIAL VALUE

4 communities updated or developed their Community Emergency Plans. **81** communities engaged with emergency planning advice

£4,613 in grant funding administered to support communities to develop Community Emergency Plans and purchase emergency equipment

Produced stakeholder evaluation report for Devon Resilience Innovation Project phase 2

Awarded **22** community wildlife grants, totalling **£5,000**, to enable local action towards sustainability

Provided **174** pieces of advice to Devon Village Halls, including support for **7** Platinum Jubilee funding applications

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

1,307

households given
the opportunity to
have their say on
local housing need

66 people
attended **3** events
to raise awareness
of regenerative
farming

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

Supported
10 individuals/
organisations to
progress local
planning and housing
matters

47,833 litres of
oil ordered through
Devon Oil Collective
by rural, off-grid
households

394 people
trained and
upskilled and
45 learning
and networking
events

Facilitated
conference for over
40 stakeholders to
discuss strategic responses
to rural housing needs in
Devon, through Devon
Community Housing
Hub

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

Provided targeted
advice and support to
109 VCSE organisations
in East Devon, including
supporting **3** new
organisations to
establish





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TACKLING THE NEED FOR RURAL HOUSING

Our Rural Housing Enabling team along with Devon Community Housing Hub (DCHH) has established new Housing Needs Survey standard and enhanced packages to support communities to establish the need for additional local housing. As well as delivering the May 2025 Rural Housing Seminar, bringing together 40 housing professionals to discuss responses to the rural housing crisis set out in the Devon Housing Commission Report, DCHH also secured a representative to the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group to advise the new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.

A housing needs survey in Uffculme, Mid Devon, gave 1,307 local people the opportunity to record any housing needs, identifying a need for 23 new affordable homes over the next five years.



Devon Community
Housing Hub

What impact will the survey have? Evidence from housing needs surveys is used to feed into local planning policy and decisions, ensuring that local people's needs are met. Meeting local housing need helps people remain in their communities, contributing to maintaining vibrant, diverse places to live. www.devonhousinghub.org.uk

COMMUNITIES HAVING A SAY IN THEIR FUTURES

Our specialist staff team has supported Kenn and Exminster Parish Councils to develop first drafts of their Neighbourhood Development Plans, which once 'made', become legal documents that affect planning decisions in an area. Key to these plans are that they are created *by the community for the community*, through thorough consultation.

What impact will the Plans have? The Plans will ensure that the thoughts, experiences, ideas and needs of the local community feed directly into decisions about the future of the local area, for example what requires protection, where new structures may be built etc. This gives local people genuine power over their own futures.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/catalyst-consultancy



Kenn
Parish Council

Exminster
PARISH COUNCIL

£5K FOR COMMUNITY WILDLIFE INITIATIVES

In June, we launched the 2025 Wild About Devon Community Wildlife Grants programme, which allowed grass roots community groups to apply for up to £300 of a total £5,000 fund. This year the partnership of DCT, Devon County Council and Devon Local Nature Partnership shared guidance on what makes a good application, provided support for four small organisations with their applications and kept the process very simple, ensuring it was accessible to the widest possible audience. 54 applications were received, of which 22 were successful.

What impact will the grants have? The money is going directly to create sustainable impact for local nature and wildlife. Funded projects include creating a nature pond, installing tawny owl nest boxes, and equipment to support primary school children to connect with nature. We were also able to provide connections and signposting to some of the applicants to further support their initiatives.

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

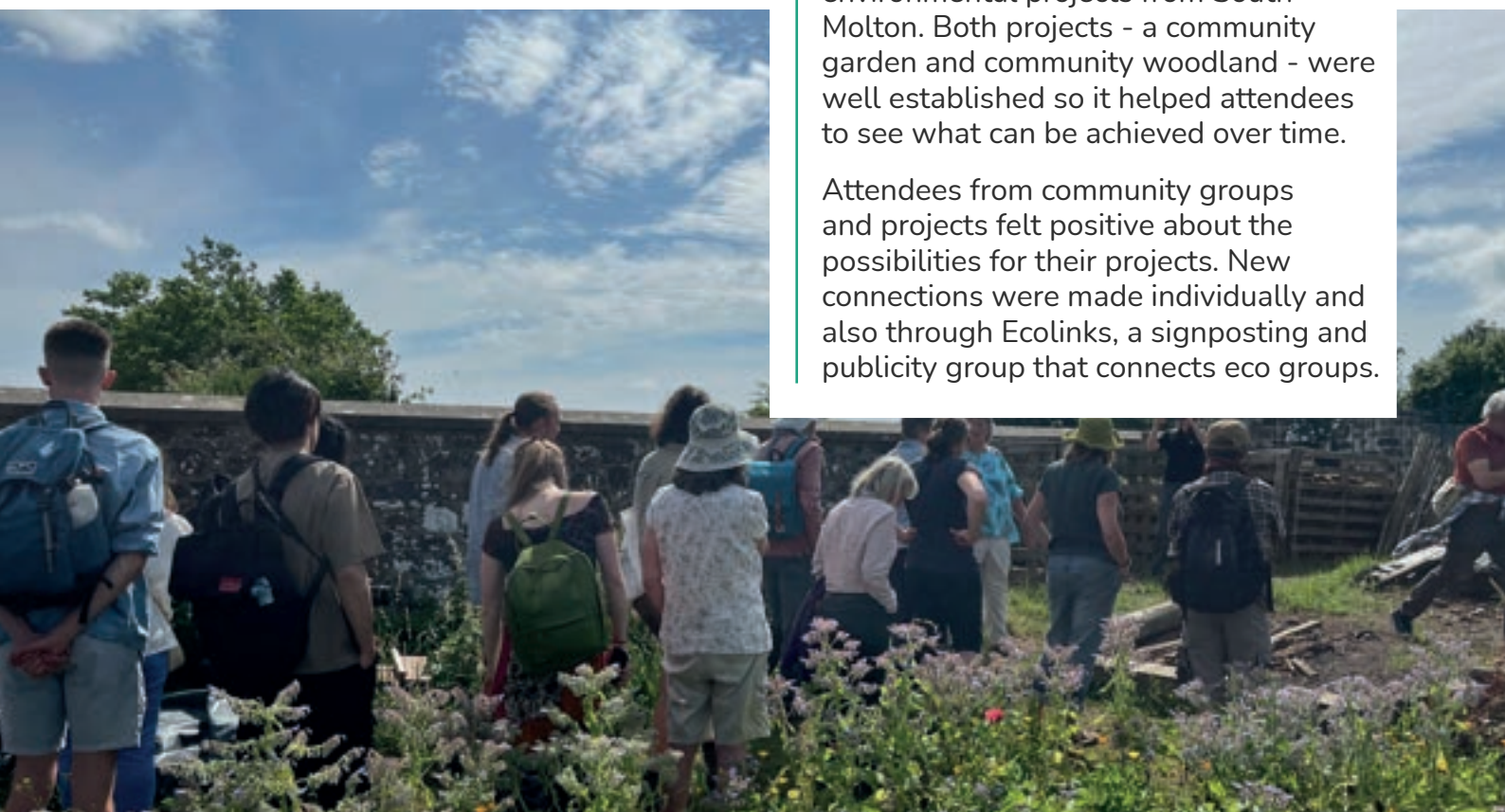
“

Thank you very much for your support of the work we are doing. We are very excited for what is to come. It is an honour to be a part of the WAD community.” Lisa, Woodland Warmth

WILD ABOUT DEVON SOUTH MOLTON FORUM

In July, our CEO, Nora and Project Manager, Charlotte, joined community groups at the Wild About Devon Forum in South Devon, which was an opportunity to showcase two community environmental projects from South Molton. Both projects - a community garden and community woodland - were well established so it helped attendees to see what can be achieved over time.

Attendees from community groups and projects felt positive about the possibilities for their projects. New connections were made individually and also through Ecolinks, a signposting and publicity group that connects eco groups.



BUILDING CAPACITY IN VILLAGE HALLS

We worked with Village Halls across Devon to provide 174 pieces of advice to support their successful running, featuring topics such as energy efficiency, accounting, internet connection, trustee liability and more.

Our programme of learning and networking events continued at pace, with four Village Hall 'Cluster' Meetings in East, North, West and South Devon, where 79 trustees from 56 halls came together to share best practice, discuss challenges and receive peer support. Clusters in Teignbridge, Torridge and Mid Devon are in the works!

DCT delivered Capital Fundraising training to seven individuals from five organisations, upskilling them in finding and applying for funding. Four halls successfully applied to the Platinum Jubilee Fund, bringing much needed grant funding into the county to improve facilities and increase the halls' capacity to serve their communities. An example of this is Brayford Village Hall, where trustees were previously unsure of where to start but after our training and support, made their application, which turned out to be successful!

What impact will the support for Village Halls have? This vital support helps to build or keep village halls as viable rural community centres across the whole county. We empower trustees to be more confident in their governance which leads to well-run halls being more likely to attract funding and provide a better offer to their users. We encourage halls to look to the future and have a direction for their hall to move in to ensure its business capacity. By sharing good practice and different approaches we look to build on the offer halls make to their communities, thereby boosting health, wellbeing and resilience...not to mention having fun!

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



“Thank you so much for inviting us to the meeting last night - I attended with my fellow trustee ... and we wanted to convey how helpful we found it... it was heartening to see so much enthusiasm from so many other trustees. The local community really values our Jubilee Hall here in Chagford and we appreciate the valuable help that Devon Communities Together is able to provide for us.” Sarah O Connell, Jubilee Hall Chagford



MILTON ABBOT VILLAGE HALL: FROM DAMAGED BUILDING TO COMMUNITY HUB

Milton Abbot is a small Devon village in a sparsely populated rural area. Its listed Village Hall was found in 2023 to have serious dry and wet rot, forcing a complete kitchen strip-out. For a time, the hall's future was uncertain, but the trustees' response has become a strong example of community action.

After taking professional advice, a group of volunteers came together to removed the damaged fabric and sought DCT's guidance to re-energise the hall as a well-used, well-run community hub in order to attract funding for the repairs. With our support and advice, including the provision of ACRE documents and model policies, the hall is now on a solid governance footing. Milton Abbot trustees regularly attend our West Devon hall cluster meetings, actively sharing and learning from peers. In fact they hosted the most recent session (pictured above).

By supporting and upskilling the trustees, we have helped build their confidence. They now use social media effectively, maintain a lively Facebook hub, and continue to grow their events and fundraising efforts, including a Pop-Up Pub, Big Breakfast, Christmas Fayre, and a revived Friendship Group.

“Keep up the good work, it is so good to feel supported.” Sonia, Milton Abbot Village Hall trustee



UPSKILLING COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Through our training programme we provide accessible, high quality training on topics driven by community need. In the last six months we've facilitated 45 sessions with 394 attendees, covering topics including designing community projects, social media and marketing, benefits and money advice, AI, capital fundraising and more. The learning supports growth and capacity building within organisations that provide direct support to communities, and strengthens the voluntary sector in Devon.

Would your organisation benefit from upskilling in a particular area? Our expert team can build bespoke training sessions to meet your needs. Contact info@devoncommunities.org.uk / www.devoncommunities.org.uk/courses

Lots of ideas generated, loads to think about. Great chance to ask questions.” Building Resilient Communities attendee

It greatly improved my knowledge and confidence around using AI.” Introduction to AI attendee

The session focused on the elements required to prepare the best possible fund application and that is what we wanted from the session” Capital Fundraising attendee



SUPPORTING VCSE GROWTH IN EAST DEVON

Our VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprise) support service in East Devon has supported 109 organisations since April. Activities included five trustees from The Beehive, Honiton, receiving bespoke funding training. Over 30 VCSE events were promoted via social media and new initiatives like Sidmouth Snorkel Group and Colyton Youth Club launched with our support, the latter already enjoying growing attendances. The team attended multiple network meetings and the Honiton Community Safety Group, facilitating strategic connections and recruitment links across Honiton, Sidmouth, Topsham, Colyton and Axminster.

What impact will capacity building in the VCSE sector have? This work tackles key issues like funding barriers, isolation, and weak infrastructure faced by rural VCSE groups in East Devon. By providing tailored support and training it enables organisations to launch services, secure funding and build resilience, reducing social isolation and improving mental health support. Long-term, it encourages sustainable change by strengthening local capacity and empowering communities to lead solutions. This creates inclusive growth, enhanced wellbeing and stronger networks, ensuring Devon's communities are better equipped to thrive and adapt to future challenges.

This 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



Funded by
UK Government



SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATION FOR HONITON CARERS SUPPORT

Winnie Cameron from Honiton Carers Support identified the need to future proof her organisation, which has recently become a charity. She also needs extra support to handle enquiries and run their outings, all of which support carers and ex-carers.

On DCT's recommendation and with our support, she applied for National Lottery funding to facilitate a paid member of staff. We were delighted to find out in August that their application had been successful and they are busy recruiting for the post, which will help to ensure the longevity of the vital services they provide.

Next for our support service will be assisting Winnie through this process to ensure the charity complies with relevant employment laws and regulations.



EXPLORING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE IN DUNKESWELL

DCT has been a key partner in an innovative Financial Resilience Pilot Project conducted in the rural community of Dunkeswell, East Devon. This work was commissioned by East Devon District Council as part of its wider poverty strategy and aimed to deepen understanding of community resilience in rural areas, exploring how financial resilience underpins overall wellbeing and stability.

This work was not simply about identifying immediate needs; it was about listening to residents, mapping existing assets and uncovering the barriers and opportunities that shape life in rural East Devon.

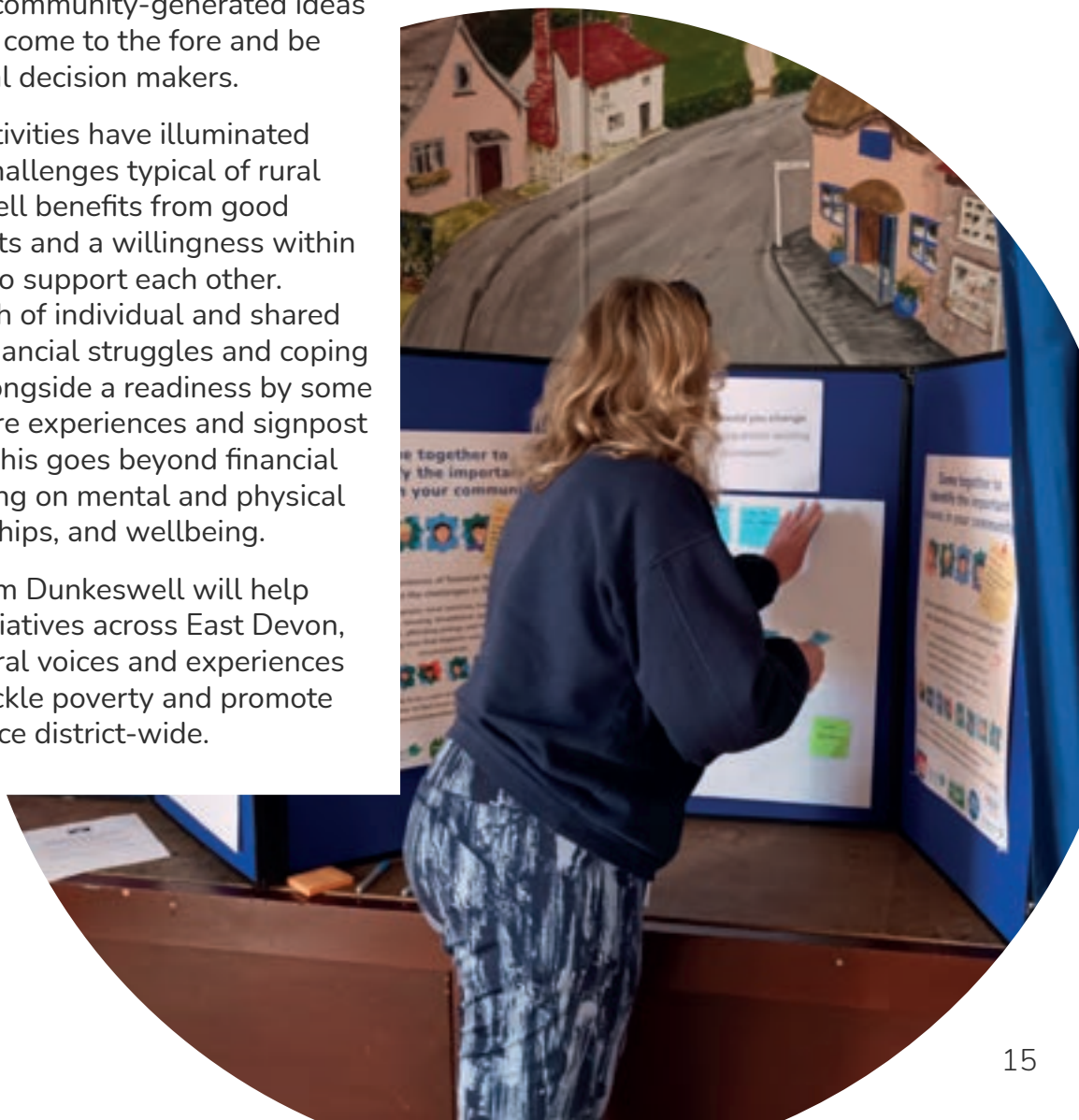
Using an Asset Based Community Development approach, we engaged with over 100 people in the area to listen to their experiences and needs, providing a unique opportunity for community-generated ideas and solutions to come to the fore and be shared with local decision makers.

The listening activities have illuminated strengths and challenges typical of rural living. Dunkeswell benefits from good community assets and a willingness within the community to support each other. There is a wealth of individual and shared experience of financial struggles and coping mechanisms, alongside a readiness by some residents to share experiences and signpost others to help. This goes beyond financial hardship, touching on mental and physical health, relationships, and wellbeing.

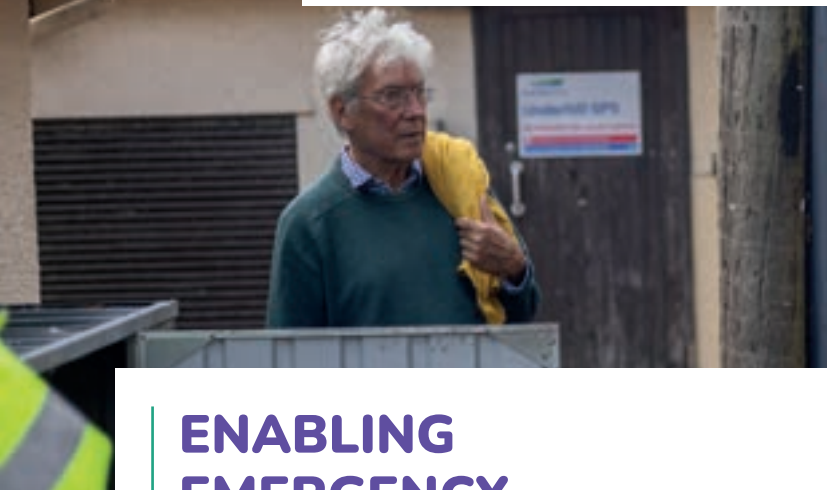
The findings from Dunkeswell will help shape future initiatives across East Devon, ensuring that rural voices and experiences guide how to tackle poverty and promote financial resilience district-wide.



“We’re just a village, everything is in towns or cities now, or you have to go online. It sometimes feels like we are being forgotten. People need local help that they can get to easily.”



In September we welcomed ACRE CEO Corinne Pluchino to visit Lypstone and meet with the local flood resilience group to understand their challenges and local solutions.



ENABLING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Managed by DCT, the Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF) helps communities prepare for emergencies like severe weather, power cuts and cyber-attacks, through Community Emergency Planning. Four Community Emergency Plans (CEP) were updated or created this period.

We also run a small grants programme for safety equipment and working towards a Community Emergency Plan. Recent grants supported Brendon, North Molton, Tiverton, Dittisham and Sticklepath with items such as radios, blankets, sandbags, hi-vis clothing and torches. Three communities funded engagement events to raise awareness and recruit volunteers.

Strategically, we've worked with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, British Red Cross, and the Local Resilience Forum on Whole Society Resilience and Emergency Hubs, and with Devon Climate Emergency and South Devon Bioregional Learning Centre on climate preparedness.

What impact does Community Emergency Planning have? Climate change brings more severe, unpredictable weather and new risks like cyber-attacks. Communities with Emergency Plans are better equipped to respond and recover. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum



TOPSHAM PREPARES

Topsham, near Exeter, faces coastal and surface water flood risks, with many properties vulnerable during storm surges and heavy rain. Although a flood group exists, the community lacks an up-to-date emergency plan, and DCRF is supporting its development.

To help residents prepare for forecasted bad weather, Topsham Flood Watch invited people to deploy their flood boards for an hour while wardens, joined by DCRF, checked measures and offered advice. Many had set up their defences, allowing us to speak with residents and visitors about upcoming weather risks, identify those absent for follow-up, and highlight any inadequate protections.

Residents showed strong awareness of ongoing flood risks, shared the precautions they take, and expressed appreciation for the efforts of Flood Watch volunteers. Following the exercise, vulnerable areas of Topsham were better prepared for the imminent weather event.

IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR THOSE MOST IN NEED

Provide targeted support where it's most needed

OUR ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN
VALUED AT

£254.70K
SOCIAL VALUE

Engaged
with **30** older
people to understand
their thoughts around
Falls Management
Exercise (FaME) and
its potential digital
delivery

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

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



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

2 staff
undertook Level 3
Energy Awareness training
to deliver energy saving and
cost management advice from
October, with **23** community
energy workshops already
arranged

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



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

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

INCREASING TRAVEL CONFIDENCE

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 is 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.

Since April we have delivered eight travel training sessions to 47 participants from groups including Learn Devon, Young Devon, Kingsbridge Dementia Group and Bicton College. We also delivered three disability awareness sessions to 29 bus drivers in Plymouth and South Devon. We have engaged with transport and education partners such as South Devon Community Transport Groups, Travel Devon, SEND schools, the Plymouth Enhanced Bus Partnership, Stagecoach and the Deaf Academy.

What's the impact of this programme so far? So far, 47 disabled participants have gained public transport skills, seven support workers can now assist clients and 50% of trainees report increased confidence, with some reporting independent travel already. Driver training and awareness work are helping create more supportive travel environments.

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



ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT NEEDS

We approached The Deaf Academy, who were interested in training for Deaf young people with complex needs. It became clear that a general approach would not work, and we lacked the lived experience to design suitable training.

After a workshop with Academy staff, we agreed to adapt the programme by commissioning BSL interpreters for all sessions and adding video elements so students can revisit the learning. These resources will also create a legacy for future Academy students and others with hearing loss.



“

I liked the practical side, [it] showed how different people can struggle getting on a bus”. Bus Driver on completing Disability Awareness Training



LISTENING TO RURAL COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT HEALTH PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

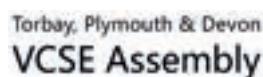
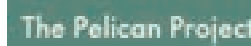
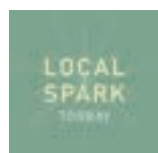
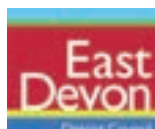
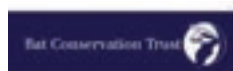
Falls Management Exercise (FaME) aims to improve strength and balance in older adults and reduce fall risk. DCT was commissioned to manage a short-term consultation in Torridge and Mid Devon to explore opinions on online FaME classes. We contacted 11 organisations and engaged 30 people, mostly over 75, using structured questions about digital access and attitudes.

Only two participants had used Zoom or FaceTime, though most owned devices. Most preferred in-person sessions and were uneasy with remote delivery, though some were open to hybrid options.



What's the impact of this programme so far? Findings will guide future service design, underscoring the need for community-based support, co-designed models, and stronger digital inclusion efforts to build confidence, connection and ultimately greater resilience to falls.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...



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