

Cllr Andrew Saywell DCC Report for Petrockstowe Parish Council

Dear Councillors,

I hope to join you later tonight but am attending both Ashreigney and Little Torrington Parish Councils tonight as well so my apologies if I am unable to get to you in time.

Please find a summary of my report. Main developments/updates from DCC:

Local Highways Matters

- **Aish Lodge drains** – Drainage works are due to take place here on the 8th December. There will be a short 1 day road closure.

Other matters

Devon secures £9.3m for skills, training and jobs – DCC's bid to the Government's Community Renewal Fund has been successful and we've been awarded £9.3m by the Government for investment in innovation and employment projects. There will be 13 pilot projects across Devon, backed by the largest funding allocation to any local authority area in England. Project benefits will include retraining for 3,500 people.

Improving Rail Links – The Okehampton to Exeter line will re-open on the 20th November. In the Budget today an announcement was also made to take forward early stage proposals to re-open the Plymouth-Tavistock line. DCC are also looking at improving rural bus links to our rail connections (see below).

Bus Route Funding Bid – DCC has submitted a bid worth £34m to the Government to improve and introduce new rural bus services throughout Devon. Proposed routes include a new strategic service through Torrington, connecting people to the railway line at Umberleigh, possibly also to an express bus service to Tiverton Parkway. Reintroducing Sunday services also being looked at. Precise route details though subject to funding but this gives you an idea as to the direction of travel of this bid.

'Node' Enterprise Centre opens – A new enterprise centre at Roundswell has opened. Known as 'Node', the coworking and office space will support SMEs, start-ups, freelancers and local workers in North Devon and Torridge (and Torrington Rural!).

The modern building boasts 37 small and medium offices, a coworking space for up to 50 people, a number of meeting rooms and an on-site coffee shop. It aims to facilitate the changing way people work, by providing flexible workspace for individuals.

Covid

- Torridge rate is expected to be above 800 per 100,000 over the next two days
- Observed increases across all age groups but higher increases in the 0-19 age group – particular primary, secondary and sixth form age groups (2,180, 2,185 and 1,788 per 100,000 respectively)
- Increasing trend of education cases coming through particularly over the last week
- More than two thirds of cases share at least 2 or more cases within the same property or household
- BUT, Hospital cases remain relatively low, there has been only a slight increase in numbers in hospital (134 in total). 12 in North Devon Hospital which has been fairly static over the past couple of weeks .

There was always an expectation that a couple of weeks after half term we would see an increase in rates particularly amongst young people and then the parents of these individuals so the rise in infections is not a surprise.

Vaccines – Almost 9/10 16+ adults in Devon are fully vaccinated. More than 100,000 have had booster jabs. The NHS can only invite people for their booster six months after they've had their second dose. When you are invited for a booster please book an appointment immediately.

Free school meal vouchers - DCC have sent families of nearly 18,000 children in Devon free supermarket vouchers this October half term, worth £15 per child per week and helping to prevent holiday hunger.

Foster Carers - DCC is still looking for more Foster Carers in Devon, especially for children with more complex needs. A recruitment campaign will be launched shortly... If you know anyone who would be interested, please refer them to this DCC webpage - [Child and Parent fostering - Fostering in Devon](#)

Funding for self-isolating residents – DCC have launched a new fund to help community organisations provide practical, social and emotional support to Devon residents self-isolating due to COVID-19.

- The grants of up to £5,000 for small projects and £20,000 for larger projects can be used to help those self-isolating with any caring responsibilities; accessing food and other supplies; practical tasks such as dog walking; and mental health and wellbeing support to address things like loneliness and boredom.
- More information available online - [The COVID-19 Outbreak Management Grant \(Self-Isolation\) - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

I hope this update is useful, please let me know if there's anything else you need me to look into.