

Gas Emergency

The Gas Emergency in Salcombe Division affected around 4,600 households which were without mains gas supplies from Saturday 3rd January in Kingsbridge, West Alvington, Malborough and Salcombe areas. The gas system was damaged by a third party when it appears that a fence post was being installed and the underground gas main was fractured.

Wales & West Utilities (WWU) were promptly on the scene and set up an emergency command centre at Malborough Town Hall from where 100 engineers were organised to visit all affected houses as quickly as possible. Engineers were able to repair the damaged main overnight on Saturday, and the mains gas supplies were switched off to all businesses, hospitals, care homes, schools, public buildings and households.

Engineers immediately began visiting all properties in a series of two visits per property, to first switch off the gas and then switch on and test the household system is safe. WWU has maps of all customers and can prioritise those who have registered with them as 'vulnerable' to ensure they have also been provided an emergency 'warm pack' during the first visit. Devon County Council and South Hams District Council have been partnering with WWU and have shared their lists of vulnerable households.

Warm packs included hot water bottles, blanket, socks, gloves, insulated hot drinks flask. In addition, electric heaters and twin plate cooking equipment was provided if needed. Malborough Hall provided enough space to house this very large volume of emergency supplies and car park space for probably 50 WWU vans and more cars for the support team members. The command centre benefitted from good internet and mobile phone coverage to enable the progress to be monitored and maintain communication with engineers. WWU organised accommodation for their team who have been billeted in Plymouth and Exeter. They have been a tremendous example of a professional, well equipped, trained team capable of addressing a very complex emergency. The communities concerned are in awe of the speed of their reaction.

Good communication has been critical. WWU has updated their social media regularly and these have been shared through local social media channels. They have been working closely with local government. Parish and Town Councils have been key to providing information to the local community and encouraging parishioners to check in on neighbours, provide them updates if they are not on social media and even collect warm packs for them.



Warm places were made available in all areas, including Kingsbridge Care Hub, Salcombe Rugby Club and West Alvington Village Hall. Even hot showers were offered at Kingsbridge Leisure Centre. This has been particularly valued because we have been experiencing a Yellow Weather Warning for sub-zero temperatures throughout the Gas Emergency Period.

The town gas network can only safely begin being turned back on in sectors once 90% of those households have been visited twice by engineers. At the time of writing (Tuesday 6th Jan), the emergency is on-going because engineers have not been able to access all properties. Malborough services have been restored, and good progress has been made in Kingsbridge. Salcombe has had additional challenges due to the high proportion of properties which are not occupied. Where possible gas supplies have been turned off outside the unoccupied properties, but some gas mains taps are situated inside buildings. Holiday let companies have been facilitating access wherever possible.

We are hoping the situation will be resolved very soon. See WWU website for latest news.

Parish and Town Emergency Planning

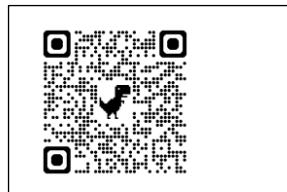
The Gas Emergency has focussed the attention of parish and town councils on the need to develop or update the Parish Emergency Plans. **Devon County Council** provides support for this through **Devon Communities Together** and offers grants of £150 for councils to begin the process and up to £1,500 to purchase essential equipment. Experts from DCT offer free training sessions for parish councils and templates are provided to facilitate local planning. A good communication system

and an informed local emergency team is the foundation of a useful local emergency plan.



Snow wardens

Devon County Council's **Snow Warden** scheme uses trained local volunteers, coordinated by a designated Snow Warden for each parish, to provide community self-help during severe winter weather by clearing snow and spreading salt on priority local routes, with support, training, and insurance from the council, supplementing the main gritting network for safer local travel. They manage salt supplies, organize volunteers, and act as the link between the parish and DCC for local paths not covered by county gritters.



Snow wardens



DCC winter service and Emergency plans for snow and floods

This shows the primary and secondary road salting networks. It also explains the emergency plans for flooding, high winds and high temperatures, as well as other road network blockages.

Highways

Together with our Neighbourhood Highways Officer, I will be making further site visits in January to tour the priority areas identified by parish councillors in **Halwell & Moreleigh, Buckland-tout-Saints, Bigbury and Ringmore**.

To date we have made site visits, begun collating priorities and providing feedback on options and realistic time tables to parish councils in: **Modbury, Kingston, Aveton Gifford, Churchstow, Malborough, Salcombe, Thurlestone, South Huish, South Milton and Loddiswell.**

Parishes have begun reaching out to neighbouring parishes to explore sharing a **Parish Lengthsman** contract for a more proactive approach to maintenance of the minor road network and the drains that keep water off the roads.

I am finalising a **Parish Highways Handbook** to provide simple guide to FAQs that I am often asked with QR codes to relevant links on the DCC website which explain the service levels, defect criteria that initiate action and signpost local action which parish and town councils can take. Publication aimed for February.

Local Government Reorganisation

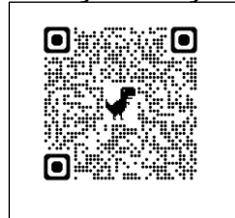
I am meeting with Modbury Parish Council today to explore how to organise the next **Salcombe Division Parish Assembly**, following the productive meeting at Salcombe on Saturday 29th November. It is suggested that the next meeting will be held in **Modbury** at the **QE2 Hall** probably in **March**. This venue has ample local parking.

By this time, we may know more about which **Unitary Boundary** option is likely to be adopted and how the **Neighbourhood Area Committees** are likely to work. In the meantime, we will continue to debate how parish and town councils themselves want to propose these NACs will effectively represent local issues.

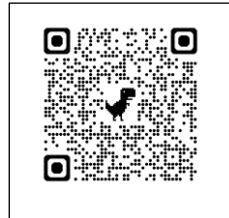
Libraries Public Consultation

Devon County Council is committed to ensuring that library services continue to meet the needs of our communities, but financial pressures mean we must now look at how services are delivered. We are inviting you to give your views on the proposed changes to the library service and any alternatives you may wish to propose.

Have your say on the proposals before 22 February 2026



Young people can complete a survey here.



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

I have begun working with the cabinet member for SEND at DCC to support my casework for local families having trouble accessing effective support. As I learn more about this complex issue, I am sharing information with affected families.