

Summer Report:
July/August 2025
DCC Report from
Cllr Louise Wainwright to
Parish Councils in the
Salcombe Division



Aveton Gifford, Bigbury, Buckland-tout-Saints, Churchstow, Halwell & Morleigh, Kingston, Loddiswell, Malborough, Modbury, Ringmore, Salcombe, South Milton, South Huish, Thurlestone,

Local Government Re-organisation (LGR)

Whilst parish and town councillors are aware that our National Government in Westminster has decided to reorganise local government (County and District Councils), a surprising number of residents remain unaware. Very few have really considered what the implications will be for rural parishes and parish councils. This is all about money! There is not enough money to deliver the services that we are legally obliged to deliver.

In a nutshell - there is not enough money being sent down the line from National Government to 'local government' (County and District Councils) to deliver all the services which we are entitled to by law. National Government is unlikely to increase taxes so that they can send us more money because this will not get them re-elected and if they increase the taxes on the rich to pay 'the poor' – the rich could just move to a tax haven because they can.

Finding themselves between a brick and a hard place – National Government has taken the easy option which in my view is a smokecreen for the bigger issue of underfunding of local service provision. It will cost the taxpayer an estimated £100,000,000 to implement these changes, just in Devon, and there is not much real evidence that any savings can be sustained. But we have no choice.

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/news/2025/council-leader-challenges-government-local-government-reorganisation>

We are being pressed to proceed with Local Government Reorganisation and amalgamate the administration teams of Officers who run the service delivery departments inside District Councils and County Council. There will be some cost savings through redundancies and streamlining some departments that were spread over District and County Councils (eg Waste and Recycling). However, there is no evidence of sustainable long term savings and enhanced service levels from the Unitary model.

So now the bun fight commences. Where will the boundaries be? Boundaries matter because the council tax coffers will be filled by tax payers inside the boundary lines. Every council is struggling to make ends meet already so they are looking for options that increase revenues. They are also looking at boundaries that make it easier to manage travel and health services.

The **1:4:5 pattern** of dividing up Devon into three Unitaries was co-designed by the District Councils in Devon. Plymouth did not agree with this design and are currently lobbying parishes near Plymouth to join with Plymouth – hence the headlines “Plymouth Land-Grab”

Here is the design for the 1:4: 5 plan which puts Plymouth on its own but leaves the door open for Plymouth to join with the ‘4’.

- **A Unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay (4)**
- **A Unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torridge District and the City of Exeter (5)**

Find out and have your say

The number of councils in Devon is due to be reduced, with all six district councils and Devon County Council ceasing to exist within the next two to three years.

The councillors you have elected will be part of the team that helps to manage this transition. Many existing County and District Councillors will lose their roles in local government when we will all vote for **new Unitary Councillors**. This could happen in two to three years.

There will be more than one Unitary Authority in Devon – possibly three. The exact boundaries are yet to be decided and are the subject for serious power struggles, with the bigger cities manoeuvring to get support for options that allow them to be more financially viable.

Message from **Councillor Julian Brazil**
Leader, Devon County Council

“As we plan for the future, we want to hear from you. Your feedback will help shape local policies, services, and investments to reflect the needs and priorities of our community, so thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey”

https://devoncountycouncil.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/accessible-survey/start?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22919159976&gbraid=0AAAAABhgemc987mRSXpYROdbSl8ww5wjg&gclid=Cj0KCQjw_L_FBhDmARIsAltqgt7Lp1PbjZ8Bjk0wru151Q7d968bz4NcRDEhfzMSZFBt6f-w5omyH0waAo8_EALw_wcB

LGR Roadshow organised by SHDC :

- Modbury Memorial Hall 14.00 to 16.00 Monday 22nd Sept
- Kingsbridge Community College 18.00 to 20.00 Thursday 2nd October

I am using my 4 years as your DCC Councillor to follow the political manoeuvring and identify opportunities for the town and parish councils in the Salcombe Division to get '**Unitary Ready**'.

South West Peninsula Mayoral Authority

The Leaders of Councils across Devon have asked Government Ministers to consider a more comprehensive devolution agreement in the form of the proposed **South West Peninsular Mayoral Strategic Authority** (MSA). The proposal was jointly written by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council and District Councils across Devon. The MSA would replace the current **Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority**. The MSA would be delegated more powers and budget from Central Government than the Unitaries would have on their own.

The purpose of the proposed MSA would be to coordinate cross-boundary partnerships between the new Unitary Authorities and create efficient transport and energy systems as well as address affordable housing, economic growth and skills development across the region. At present Cornwall does not want to be part of the South West MSA but there remains an innovation for Cornwall to join at a later stage.

Devon County Council Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029.

At Full Council on **4th Sept 2025**, Council approved the Strategic Plan 2025-29, which sets out the Council's vision, values and strategic priorities; the performance management arrangements to track progress and that outcomes to measure performance are being developed and the Strategic Plan will be taken to Cabinet for approval in November 2025.

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s52548/Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

Devon County Council Rural Affairs Brief and Broadband

It costs a lot more to deliver services in a rural county like Devon, which makes it more difficult to deliver quality services. Devon used to have access to the Government's **Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG)** to help pay for the delivery of services in sparsely populated areas. This was withdrawn in late 2024. Councillors are concerned that the replacement one-off **Recovery Grant**, which **weighted by a 'deprivation factor'**, may not reflect the county's need for extra funding. All this is telling us is that things are going to get worse.

Connectivity

The latest kick in the rural community teeth was the withdrawal of Airband to deliver internet connectivity to rural areas. This was the purpose of Connecting Devon and Somerset contracts so is very disappointing.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/airbands-full-fibre-broadband-delivery-for-cds-scaled-back/>

All 16 of the parishes in the Salcombe Division have been removed from the list of areas included in the recent Airband Contract

<https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/list-of-clusters-and-communities-not-in-build/>

As your County Councillor I am working with cabinet member Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin to explore what options remain for those premises which are not on fast broadband (above 30 MbS).

I am grateful to the DCC Officer at Connecting Devon and Somerset, **Matt Barrow, CDS Stakeholder Engagement Officer**, who has offered to attend parish council meetings with me to help explain to excluded parishes what the other options are for connecting to faster internet.

The Government closed all **Voucher Schemes** in spring 2025 which enabled communities, not served by the CDS Airband Broadband contract. CDS are lobbying to get this reinstated as soon as possible. I am expecting that there will be some competition for these vouchers, in spite of assurances that there is enough money for everyone.

I am recommending to parish councils that they undertake a **local community survey of current internet connection speeds and costs**, with a view to measuring local need for improved internet services. Following this, I propose

that Parish councils make communities aware of the Voucher Scheme so that they can make applications in a timely manner.

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s52538/Cabinet%20Member%20Report%20-%20Rural%20Affairs%20and%20Broadband.pdf>

Twenty is Plenty Motion – DCC Full Council 4th Sept 2025

Councillors unanimously approved the motion of **Cllr Jacqui Hodgson**, to allow parish and town councils to ‘move themselves up the list’ of areas where the **20mph zones** have been reviewed and agreed with Highways, but there is no funding to implement them soon. Currently only 6 or 7 new 20 mph zones can be implemented per year due to insufficient funds at DCC.

This proposal will go to the DCC Cabinet for final approval in November 2024. More details will be provided then about next steps. If an approved 20mph zone is ‘on the list’, a parish/town council can proceed without delay by agreeing to **pay for the process from their Precept**. This could cost from **£5,000 to £10,000**. Estimates can be confirmed through the Neighbourhood Highways Officer.

If the proposed zone is not yet ‘on the list’, the parish and town councils should follow the guidance below for identifying parish priorities.

Parish Priority Lists for Highways matters

Road maintenance and traffic management continue to be a high priority for the Salcombe Division. Underfunding and exceptional demands due to our extensive road network are causing frustration and anger. We need to sort this out and make sure that we can contribute to a fair process of prioritisation in respect of where the limited DCC funds can be allocated. There are 362 parishes in Devon each competing for their position in the pecking order. When it comes to the local road networks, including A roads, our key partner is our Neighbourhood Highways Officer, Adam Keay

1. Our Neighbourhood Highways Officer and I have contacted Clerks to request that we improve communication and efficiency in the following way:
2. All enquiries to myself and NHO will be directed to bring their concerns to their parish council as a member of the public.

3. All parish councils will review the various requests for improvements and prepare a **Parish Priority List** of requests for action on highways issues.
4. Our NHO and I will organise a **Priority Site Visit** by coordinating dates with your parish clerks. We will review the issues and feedback on the feasibility, potential costs of these interventions and the possible timescale for action. These Priority Lists can be updated. They are live lists. Send revisions to myself and our NHO.
5. Members of the Public and the Parish Council should also use the **Report it** portal to report problems – even if they have been included in the above Parish Priority List. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>

Please explore all the FAQs and maps on the various Report it topics. Really useful.

Parish and Town Council Precepts

At the DCC Full Council meeting on the 4th Sept Cllr Dan Thomas, Cabinet Member for Highways unveiled two useful initiatives:

1. There will be two pilot studies in North Devon and East Devon this autumn which will review the economic feasibility and improvement in services for pothole fixing – if all potholes in a road are fixed at the same time irrespective of whether they meet the definition criteria as a pothole. The outcome of this feasibility study will be used to reform the details of the next Highways Repair Contract. The current contract with Milestone Ltd expires in 2027.
2. Cabinet will be asked in November to approve the Motion to allow parish and town councils to increase their Precepts to pay for a faster delivery of repairs and maintenance for roads, where this is too slow because DCC do not have the funds to proceed more quickly. More details to follow.

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s52542/Cabinet%20Member%20Report%20-%20Highways.pdf>

Smart phone bans in Schools in Devon from Sept 2026

Full Council unanimously approved the Motion that Smart Phones would be banned from all schools in Devon to protect children from harm. Some schools,

including Kingsbridge Community College have already banned smart phones. Schools do not have to wait until September 2026.

Zero Tolerance for Hate Crime Motion – Full Council 2025

A motion was passed at Full Council to reinforce the DCC commitment to 'Zero Tolerance to Hate Crimes' and the principle of DebatenotHate.

It is Hate Crime Awareness Week 11 to 18 October <https://nationalhcaw.uk/>

River Rights Motion 4th Sept 2025

Due to insufficient time, this Motion and others were deferred to Cabinet to debate in November 2025.

River Summit – Saturday 4th October 2025 (BluePrint for Rivers)

All parish councils in the Salcombe Division are invited to send at least one representative to the River Summit organised by the BLUEprint for Rivers Project. <https://www.blueprint-for-rivers.org/>

The River Summit will be held at Kingsbridge Community College from 10.00 am to 1.30 pm on 4th October 2025. Attendees will be able to put themselves forward for inclusion in a bid for £500,000 to £2million to support stakeholders to improve water quality in the:

- River Gara & Slapton Ley
- River Avon
- Kingsbridge Salcombe Estuary.

Cllr Paul Arnott, Deputy Leader of DCC and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Water Quality will lead the breakout sessions for the parish and town councils to deliberate what it is they want to be able to achieve and how they could be involved in Phase 2 of this project. Likely to cover topics such as:

River Water Quality Groups; planning decisions in relation to the spare capacity of sewage and waste water treatment works; flood risk management plans; Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; maintenance of road drainage and run - off, networking with parish stakeholders to improve river-sensitive lifestyles and having some oversight of the effectiveness of interventions that reduce water pollution.

Top reserve a seat contact Project Leader Dr Juliette Jackson
jjackson@seadreameducation.com

Connecting Parishes in Salcombe Division

The **Louise4Devon website** now includes more information about the 16 parishes in the Salcombe Division to promote good practice and encourage cross parish partnerships (e.g. co-funding a Lengthsman etc)

<https://www.louise4devon.com/>

Parishes can now compare **Neighbourhood Plans** and **Parish Carbon Footprints** here. Soon they will be able to compare parish precepts, S106 funding, budgets, strategic plans, bank balances and more. The purpose of this transparency is to pave the way to explore opportunities for partnerships to solve common problems.

The Louise4Devon site will also soon provide a directory to all local parish social media and other forms of communication so that good practice can be shared.

The first of two full digital reports for the Salcombe Division, due to be published in August, is not quite ready yet. To be published shortly.

At the same time, these 'monthly reports' will also be prepared in a different format to be much shorter and with 'read more' expand buttons. Parishioners will be encouraged to sign up to these monthly e-newsletters from myself so that they land directly in their inboxes. I am doing this because I want more people to hear these messages, attend parish council meetings, get excited about local government and maybe even apply to fill any vacancies which arise.

Emergency Planning and Flooding

With the recent flooding experienced across the Salcombe Division, I have made contact with the Devon Resilience Forum (part of Devon Communities Together and part funded by DCC) who are working with parish and town councils to draw up their Emergency Plans to include the Flood Risk Management plans.

If your plan is more than 5 years old, it is out of date.

Useful info here:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/drip/>

Locality Funds

Please get in touch if you have a local project which brings people together and needs some funding. Louise4Devon@gmail.com