

West Devon Borough Council Report

Prepared by Cllr. Ursula Mann, Tavistock North
October 2024

West Devon's Civic Service was held at Tavistock's St. Eustachius on Sunday 13th October. It was a very positively received with many young people from the WDBC Mayor Debo Sellis' charity the Scouts attending and presenting at the service.

WDBC officers and the Tavistock Town Council works team successfully worked together over the Goose Fair with a positive impact on the delivery of the event which reflects well on both councils.

Recent News

Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan:

- Tavistock's Neighbourhood Plan consultation will have ended on October 25th prior to this report. All being well, the plan examiner will begin their examination of the plan in November.

Housing:

- A member briefing with the Devon Housing Commission report was held identifying policies that WDBC could bring forward to help with the housing crisis.
- 16 lower cost homes are being brought forward in Lifton in 2025, with 10 at affordable rent, 6 shared ownership.
- From April 2025 WDBC will be charging a 100% council tax second homes premium. Liable parties have been sent a letter asking them to complete an online form confirming that the property is a second home and follow up will happen on properties where no answer is received.
- The JLP team and WDBC are in discussion about the changes to NPPF and updates will be coming forward sooner rather than later.

Climate:

- The new climate change pages on the website have been created to centralise relevant policies and the council plan in this area:
 - <https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/climate-change>
- Wildlife Warden scheme launched successfully to encourage and support community action to increase biodiversity across West Devon. Email address is wildlifewardens@swdevon.gov.uk
- The event was focused on Tavistock and generated a number of opportunities, some of which have been sent to the General Manager and the Works Manager regarding Flood Control at Bannawell Park.
- Green Space Management, the hub and full council considered a report including information about Green Space Management at WDBC which includes managing land

for biodiversity. Further communication about this policy is being considered, including improvements to the website.

- Active Travel:
 - WDBC LCWIP Consultation is closed and a report will be brought to HUB to identify routes/locations that will be supported for intervention work. There is £450k remaining to be spent.
 - DCC LCWIP WDBC has responded on this consultation on the routes that fall within the district, of particular relevance to Tavistock is that DCC have failed to promote a direct cycle commuting route from Yelverton to Plymouth.
- The SWW Task Group has been meeting with representatives of SWW to look at water quality issues rivers as well as infrastructure improvement across the district.

Communication/Telephones:

- BT's Copper phone networks are being switched off by January 2027 and this means that everyone will need to be moved to digital technology.
- This may effect those with poor mobile signal or broadband.
- BT is running a series of drop-in events this year:
 - Tavistock **13th November**, 10am to 1pm
 - Tavistock Library, The Quay, Plymouth Rd, Tavistock PL19 8AB

Community:

- A new community focused team at the borough has formed and will be consulting with parish councils about health and wellbeing services throughout the district.
- Overview and Scrutiny received a presentation from Citizens Advice TNMWD at it's October 15th meeting which showed that needs and services are higher in the last year than in previous years and that there is unmet demand of about 60% additional demand turned away.
- Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Allowance – A motion was passed expressing the council's disappointment with the new government's Winter Fuel Allowance means testing and encouraging it to look again to expand the eligibility criteria for this key benefit for those pensioners on a lower fixed income greater than the upper limit of pension credit.
- The new bubblegum cleaning equipment has been purchased and training is commencing. I have suggested to the Waste team that the machines be tested on Tavistock's high streets to see if they will remove the unsightly remains of the historic stickers which were used during covid on the pavements around the town and the officers have agreed to try this.

There's a lot of other work that happens across the council so it's difficult to capture – please do get in touch if you have a specific query!