

## **Report from Hilary Bastone – (My January notes for Parish Councils)**

### **South Hams District Council in District Councils' Top 20 for Climate Action Plans**

South Hams District Council (SHDC) is delighted to have scored within the top 20 nationally of all district councils for their Climate Change Action Plans, published yesterday by Climate Emergency UK.

The District Council has every right to hold their head high scoring a very highly regarded 66% compared to the average UK district council score of only 43%. As well as being ranked one of the top performers in the Measuring & Setting Emissions Targets category.

Climate Emergency UK, who carried out the ranking exercise, examined 28 comprehensive areas of the Plan. They also investigated whether plans went beyond cutting just a Council's own carbon footprint, but also included reducing that of the whole area through partnership working with communities.

Setting a strategy and an action plan is only the first step in acting on Climate Change. The scorecard provided will be useful as the District Council goes into a review stage of their Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy later this year to identify areas for improvement, alongside focusing their efforts on delivering solid action across the District.

The Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy only covers one aspect of climate action within the District. As proud partners of the Devon Climate Emergency, SHDC are working with partners across Devon (including Devon County Council) to create a carbon plan for the county that they will have a role in delivering. Some of the background work completed by the partnership provided much needed evidence and data for the District Council's own plan. SHDC's Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy will be reviewed once the Devon Carbon Plan is finalised to ensure all actions are consistent and aligned.

Over the next few months, a substantial schedule of tree planting will be progressed that involves 2,550 young new trees being established. This will help to offset the District's carbon footprint and to do something positive to combat the climate emergency, as well as increase biodiversity and habitats for animals. Not forgetting the positive benefits for health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

Cllr Tom Holway, South Hams District Council's Lead Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, said: "The recognition of the Climate Emergency UK organisation's ranking of our plan underlines the hard work our team have put in. Achieving a ranking within the top 20 in the district councils in the UK is fantastic news and shouldn't underestimate the work that has gone in to achieve that. The scoring helps us to keep track of the improvements we make in the coming years.

"It is really important that we lead by example to cut our carbon footprint to net zero by 2030 as an organisation and work with our communities to work together to cut the District's emissions by 2050. Let's not also forget about increasing our biodiversity by at the very least 10% by 2025, at the latest.

"It's really simple, if we don't all play our part to reduce the impact of climate change then the future for our children looks bleak.

“We know clearly what we need to do to succeed, and that has been confirmed by the national rankings. We have a solid and well-thought action plan in place despite stretched budgets but we’re doing what we can with what we have and it is starting to have an impact.

“We shouldn’t underestimate the scale of this challenge and we all have an important part to play. There’s still a lot of work to do and it will take time to implement.

“We have the first part of our tree planting programme now underway, and our rewilding scheme has had a very positive response and will be rolled out shortly. A series of electric charging points will be installed soon around the district, so things are happening, but it all takes time. We are all promoting electric vehicle ownership to our staff workforce and developing a strategy to convert our light vehicle fleet to electric. Government funding for green home grants for improvements to energy efficiency will also reduce the Districts’ carbon emissions.

“It will help if everyone plays their part to do what they can. Turn off lights when you leave a room, walk or cycle instead of driving, turn off taps rather than leaving them running. Insulate your home to save energy. We have various grants, which offer some savings so have a look at our website to see if they apply to you. If everyone does their bit, then together the South Hams can make a difference for our future and that of our children’s futures.”

You can find out more at the Climate Emergency UK’s Scorecard website here:

- <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk>

Visit the Council’s Climate Change and Biodiversity website and read their Action Plan for yourself, along with a whole host of other information.

- [www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk)
- [www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/climate-declaration](http://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/climate-declaration)

You can also find lots of helpful tips and hints on how to cut your carbon footprint and save money at the same time by doing your bit to cut CO2 in the District.

- [www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/doing-your-bit](http://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/doing-your-bit)

Do you want to keep in touch and find out what is new on a regular basis? Then sign up for regular e-bulletins straight to your email inbox.

- [www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/newsletters](http://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/newsletters)

Visit Devon Climate Emergency’s website for more information about what the county partnership team is doing to protect the climate.

- [www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk](http://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk)

## **2022/23 Budget Proposals - Have Your Say**

As part of the annual budget setting process, we would like to engage with businesses on our Budget Proposals for the next financial year. On Thursday 27 January the Executive

recommended the 2022/23 Budget Proposals to the next Full Council meeting, to be held on 10 February.

We would like to capture the views of businesses electronically (as we did last year) and we have designed a short questionnaire for this purpose.

We would be grateful if you could spare five minutes to share your thoughts. The survey will close on Wednesday 9 February and the results will be shared with all councillors.

Please click on the link below to complete the survey.

### Key Points on 22/23 Budget Proposals

We are currently forecasting a £0.44m budget gap by 2023/24.

In line with this year, we will receive no Revenue Support Grant (Government grant) in 2022/23 and we will need to be self-sufficient. Since 2009/10 our core government funding has reduced by £4 million.

Councillors have developed the Budget Proposals for 2022-23 and below you can find a link to the Executive Report.

Agenda Item 7 – Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2022/23.

### **Business Grant Information**

We know many businesses are waiting to hear about grants, so please read on for more information on each of our current schemes.

#### Omicron Business Support Grants

We currently have two business support grants available for businesses that have been impacted by the winter 2021 Omicron COVID-19 variant.

#### Additional Restrictions Grant Omicron (ARGO)

#### Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG)

Applications for either grant must be submitted by 18 March 2022 - we cannot accept any applications submitted after this date.

All payments for these schemes will be made by 31 March 2022.

These deadlines are compulsory, set by Government as a condition of the funding received. Local authorities do not have any discretion in this matter.

If you are contacted for further information about your grant application, please make sure to provide it as soon as possible. You risk missing out on payment if you do not.

You can also read about our business support grant schemes and how to apply for them using the following links to our website.

More Information about the Additional Restrictions Grant Omicron (ARGO)

The ARGO is a brand new support grant for businesses specifically impacted by the Omicron COVID-19 variant in late 2021.

Your business may qualify for this grant if:

It had to close as a result of the Omicron variant

It experienced supply chain issues as a result of the Omicron variant

It suffered cancellations as a result of the Omicron variant

It was impacted by Omicron but is not eligible for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

For more information about eligibility, and to apply online:

More Information about the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG)

Reminder invitations, including instructions on how to apply, were sent to a number of businesses on 21 January 2022. Please check email spam filters if you think you may be eligible and have not yet been invited to apply.

If you have already applied but not yet been contacted about the outcome, please add our case management email address [info.h1@forms.swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:info.h1@forms.swdevon.gov.uk) to your safe senders email list, to make sure you receive any information we send about your case.

If we request further information, it is important you provide this as soon as possible so our team can assess your application promptly.

If you are still waiting to hear from us, please do not reapply. Duplicates cause delays to processing and payments.

Our payments system will send you a confirmation email as soon as your payment is processed. The payment will appear in your bank account within five working days from the processing date, though it is usually much faster.

Update for Community Recovery Grant Applicants

Pending fraud checks, we aim to have payments on this scheme finalised and sent to successful organisations by 5pm on 31 January 2022.

If your project is successful we will send two emails. The first is an approval email to say the project was successful.

The second is an automated email from our payments system to say funds have been processed and released to your bank account. The money will be available in the account within five working days, but will usually be much sooner.

Our small team is unable to provide detailed feedback on projects that have not been approved.

We know some projects will be disappointed, but we received an extremely high volume of applications for the limited funds available.

**Survey finds Sherford is a top choice for families**

Four years since the first house was completed, a survey has found the South Hams' newest town continues to appeal to younger families.

Families make up the majority of the town:

65% of Sherford residents who took part stated they are a family

Nearly half (43%) have children of primary school age

Residents say the community, location and homes make Sherford a great place to live.

In Summer 2021, South Hams District Council carried out a survey in partnership with the Sherford Consortium, and Devon County and Plymouth City Councils. This was the second of the two-yearly Sherford Community surveys capturing a snapshot of who lives in Sherford and what life is like there. 33% of the 526 households in the town occupied at the time of the survey responded. The answers will be used to help develop future services to better meet local needs.

The average household size in Sherford is 3.3 people. The community continues to be predominantly made up of people local to the area. 77% of residents moved to Sherford from within 10 miles, continuing the trend from the 2019 survey.

When asked why they moved to Sherford, the most popular reasons were the location and to be nearer family and friends, which each accounted for 16% of responses. These were closely followed by 14% of people answering that they moved to have the chance to have a brand new home.

89.5% of people who completed the survey said they enjoyed living in Sherford. The main reasons given for why they enjoy it were the community (40%), the location (19%) and the homes and architecture (19%).

Some of the comments about what people like include:

"I love the area, how quiet it is and the houses are beautiful. It is exciting to be part of a growing community."

"It's a good community, and well planned with lots of open spaces."

As well as the overwhelmingly positive response to the question of whether people enjoy living in Sherford, the survey also gave the opportunity for residents to say where they would like to see improvements. For example, 34% of residents are waiting for the arrival of amenities/shops and 16% highlighted parking and traffic as an area for improvement.

Comments include:

"We really love Sherford - is a great place to live but it would be great if the amenities started to happen."

"We need shops, cafes, bars etc to allow people to shop local and not have to travel to access these things."

South Hams District Council's Ward Member for Brixton and Wembury, Cllr Dan Brown, said: "Thanks so much to everyone who took the time to fill in the survey to give us this up-to-date insight into who lives here and what matters most to you. With plenty of open space

and a strong community spirit, it is little wonder families continue to want to call Sherford home.

“Whilst the vast majority of people are happy, we know there are still things to do that will make Sherford even better. Since the first survey was undertaken in 2019, Sherford now has its first coffee shop and community hub – both places where people can get together. There’s also more to do for younger people as the skate park, play areas, and tennis courts have now opened. We are continuing to listen to what people say about the other areas where people would like to see improvements. We look forward to the developer submitting their design and application for the first local centre later this year. When the local centre is completed, it will provide facilities such as local shop, something residents have said they really need.

“Our survey is not the only way residents can have their say. We also hold regular councillor surgeries to give people the chance to ask questions and share their views. I welcome residents to the next councillor surgery on 28 January 2022. For further details and how to join please visit the community trust website [www.sherfordtrust.org.uk](http://www.sherfordtrust.org.uk).”

Devon County Council Leader John Hart said: "It's great to see so many local families moving to Sherford and saying how much they enjoy living there. You can sense that it's more than just a new town that's developing – it really is a new community, and the community spirit was certainly there for all to see at the start of the Devon Stage of the Tour of Britain last summer. These surveys provide useful feedback from residents to help shape improvements in Sherford, which is vitally important as more facilities open."

Peter Sadler, Managing Director of Vistry Partnerships South West, part of the Sherford Consortium, said: “Sherford is a growing and thriving new town with a huge amount going for it, even at this early stage. The resident survey shows how much the people of Sherford love their homes, its stunning and convenient location, access to abundant green space, and close-knit community.

“We are thrilled with the continued positive sentiment since the last survey in 2019, despite a challenging couple of years in between. With so much more planned for Sherford, we look forward to delivering more amenities, more open space, and more reasons to move to this vibrant new town.”

More results from the survey can be seen in the Quick Stats leaflet, available at [www.sherfordtrust.org.uk](http://www.sherfordtrust.org.uk) For those who would like a paper copy, these are available in the town’s community hub. The full survey report and forward actions to outline how resident’s feedback will be used, and issues raised will be addressed, is currently being developed. This should be ready in the spring, and once released, will also be available to view at [www.sherfordtrust.org.uk](http://www.sherfordtrust.org.uk)

## **Omicron Hospitality and Leisure (OHL) Grant Government Guidance**

Beer Hospitality The Government has issued two new main changes to how we administer the OHL Business Grants.

Firstly the deadline for grant applications from businesses has been extended from 28 February to 18 March 2022.

This will help both our businesses in giving them more time to apply and it will also help our team in administering the grants.

All business grant payments have to be made by 31 March 2022.

Holiday letting businesses

The Government guidance has been further tightened around holiday letting businesses being eligible for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants.

It has been confirmed by BEIS that self catering holiday lets are entitled to receive the OHL Grant, as long as they can evidence that they were trading and they must be a business registered on the Council's business rates rating list on 30 December 2021.

In light of the new guidance, we are contacting all of the businesses who are holiday letting businesses to ask for the following further evidence for their grant to be processed:

Evidence that the business has a trade waste contract (e.g. a recent invoice for trade waste)

Evidence that the business is publically available to let such as

Active website listings on holiday let websites and social media

Evidence of bookings dated within the past 6 months

Contracts with lettings agents

Full transaction history showing evidence of trading

Where holiday letting businesses cannot demonstrate any income generated from the let of the premises under consideration over a given period (e.g. the last 6-months) this could justify a judgement that the business is not trading and therefore the business is ineligible to receive the OHL Grant (it is a criteria of the OHL grant that a business is trading).

The Government has stated that this is consistent with steps announced on 14 January 2022, which mean that owners of second homes who abuse a tax loophole by claiming their often-empty properties are holiday lets will be forced to pay their fair share of tax under tough new measures due to be introduced from April 2023.

The Government guidance has also been clarified that Parish and Town Councils are not able to receive an OHL Grant.

## **Community Funding News**

£20 notes - moneyI thought it would be worth reminding Members that Devon Funding News is a great place to go to see what new grant funding schemes are available to our communities – as many of you will be involved with community groups.

The website is updated regularly and some of the new schemes added in January include:

Up to £5,000 for the repair or improvement of community buildings Screwfix Foundation

Up to £10,000 for community groups and artists planning activities focusing on art, creativity and culture in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee Devon CF Notes for Applicants

Just a couple of the schemes that may be of interest to our communities.

### **Role of AONBs could be expanded**

South Devon AONB Plans to safeguard England's protected landscapes for future generations and to boost nature recovery have been set out by Environment Secretary George Eustice.

Proposals to strengthen England's protected landscapes were announced on Saturday 15th January 2022 when the Government published their response to the Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs. Strengthened AONBs are central to the response that seeks to strengthen purposes, powers and resources for AONBs.

The proposals, which are subject to consultation, are set out in the Government's response to Julian Glover's independent Landscapes Review (known as the 'Glover Review') which looked at whether the protections for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are still fit for purpose.

The Government's response sets out ambitious changes to increase access to nature and ensure protected landscapes can deliver more for climate, nature, people and place for the next 70 years and beyond, as we build back greener from the pandemic and level up all parts of the country.

The 12-week consultation also asks for views on proposals to drive nature recovery within our landscapes and support for the communities that live and work within them, such as the design and delivery of new agri-environment schemes and an ambitious management plan for each area.

The South Devon AONB Team will be working with the National Association for AONBs to develop a detailed response during the consultation period on behalf of the network of 46 AONBs across the UK and the S Devon AONB Partnership will also prepare a locally-focused response. Check our social media for updates.

Roger English, South Devon AONB Team Manager, welcomed the publication of the response and is pleased to see that protected landscapes are recognised and valued: "This response to the Glover Review provides a once in a generation opportunity to set the future approach to Protected Landscapes and their management and enable us to address tough challenges, particularly around nature and climate. The vision outlined by Julian Glover and his panel in the Landscapes Review was far reaching, and this response represents good progress in realising that vision. Any expansion of our role would need to be met with an appropriate increase in capacity. There is still lots of detail to work up and we look forward to helping Defra with that during the coming months to ensure that meaningful transformational action is taken at pace."

The full Government response and details on how to respond to consultation (which ends on 9th April 2022) can be found here: [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website

### **Addressing homelessness in the South Hams is more than helping people who are sleeping rough**

Local views on plans to prevent and relieve homelessness may be sought if South Hams District Council Executive Committee agree proposals for a public consultation. The need to update the District's Homeless Strategy will be discussed when the Executive Committee meet on 27 January 2022 to debate the latest update report on the Housing Crisis. The report highlights that single and couples households, families, and people with additional needs are all at high risk of homelessness and must be prioritised alongside rough sleepers.

The Council's current Homeless Strategy is now due for review. A preliminary consultation with councillors took place at the start of 2022 to discuss ways to effectively prevent and relieve homelessness in the area. This includes working with partners to ensure support is in place to help residents to keep a tenancy once they get one. It also focuses on making sure there is enough of the right sort of homes available to meet the diverse needs of people at risk of homelessness.

If agreed at the Executive meeting, the Homeless Strategy public consultation will give local people the opportunity to share their views. This will mean the Council can be confident the proposed plans cover the right priorities and will meet the needs of everyone in the community.

Cllr Judy Pearce, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Housing said: "When you hear the word homeless, automatically you think about people sleeping rough in our towns. Our team work extensively with this group to provide support and housing options. Working with multiple agencies, this approach finds a suitable long-term home for someone who is homeless. It also significantly increases their chances of keeping the accommodation and making positive life choices. While not everyone chooses to take up this offer, the mix of intensive support, outreach work and open offer of accommodation has resulted in low numbers of people sleeping rough in the District. At our last rough sleeper count in November, we found two rough sleepers, a reduction from the seven counted three years ago.

"However, this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the issue of homelessness in the South Hams. There is a large number of people in our District who do not have a home but are not sleeping rough – for example, sofa-surfers who are relying on friends and family to get by. As a Council, we're working to increase the number of properties locally available at below market rate to ease this issue. We're also making sure that the needs of this group of people are highlighted in our Homeless Strategy so they remain in focus. Whether you have been homeless, at risk of homelessness or have concerns for friends or family who may be at risk, please do spend a few minutes to share your views in our consultation. We want to make sure every view is heard and represented so our plans meet local needs and so no one finds themselves without a roof over their heads."

In the Housing Crisis update report, the Committee will read that 47 new homes were completed last quarter and are now available for local families at a below-market rate. This includes five affordable rented and four shared ownership homes at Applegate Park, Kingsbridge. This scheme, a partnership between local independent house builder Devonshire Homes, social housing provider LiveWest and South Hams District Council, is now home to Gemma Marshall and her family.

Gemma, who works in the pastoral support team at a local school, and David Marshall and their two children – Jacob, 10, and Phoebe, 7 – have twice been forced to move by private landlords after the homes they were living in were put up for sale.

With rental prices spiralling, the family found themselves homeless and were forced to move in with Gemma's parents.

Fearing they would have to leave Kingsbridge – the town in which Gemma went to school, having grown up in Salcombe – the couple contemplated the daunting prospect of leaving the area and finding new schools for their children. However, at the end of 2021, the family was able to secure one of the newly built affordable rental homes at Applegate Park.

Gemma, 38, said: "We have been privately renting since we both left university and in the last four years have been forced to move twice after the landlords served us section 21 notices.

"The last one came just before Christmas last year and we weren't able to find anywhere that was affordable. The competition was intense, and the rents being charged were incredibly high.

"It was a really difficult time for us not having anywhere to live and the only accommodation we were being offered was a hotel room in Plymouth.

"So the only option we had was to move in with my parents and we used that time to bid on countless homes on the Devon Homechoice register in the hope we could find somewhere suitable.

"Then came the best news we could have ever imagined. We were accepted for one of LiveWest's affordable rental homes on a new development in Kingsbridge. It was beyond our wildest dreams."

The three-bedroom home means Jacob and Phoebe have their own bedrooms and will be able to remain at their current schools.

Gemma added: "I still can't believe it. I am still pinching myself.

"It really does feel like the dawn of a new era for our family.

"We have now got a stable home and don't have to live in fear of being asked to leave.

"The children absolutely love having their own bedrooms as they have been sharing rooms for the past year.

"The home is amazing. The finish is really good, they are really warm and the insulation is fantastic. The high-end finish really caps it off and we have got lovely views across open countryside.

"I grew up in Salcombe, but I gave up hope of ever being able to afford a home there a long time ago.

"A lot of people in this area work in shops and businesses associated with tourism and so the wages aren't enough to access the housing market.

Cllr Judy Pearce, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Housing added: "Hearing Gemma's story really brings to life what we are striving to achieve – we are working hard with our partners to make sure more local people can afford to live in the communities they love.

"When we hear words like this it really brings home what a difference we can make for local people. We'll carry on looking at every option to make living in the South Hams more affordable for more people and hope we'll hear even more stories like that of the Marshall family."

James Reseigh, Director of Neighbourhoods for LiveWest, said: "As an organisation with a real focus on providing much-needed affordable homes, it has been fantastic to hear Gemma's story.

"Applegate Park in Kingsbridge is a perfect example of where we have been able to work in partnership to rent homes at below market levels and help families get access to safe, good quality, affordable homes in a location they love to live in. We wish the family all the very best for the future."

If agreed at the Executive meeting, the Homeless Strategy public consultation will start in February 2022.

It is anticipated that a final draft of the strategy will be presented in Early Spring, with formal adoption from April 2022.

### **New jobs and prosperity on the horizon**

Councillors will discuss the progress of the proposed Plymouth and South Devon Freeport when South Hams District Council Executive Committee meet on 27 January 2022. Outline proposals, which could mean 3,500 new jobs for the region and a new cycle link, have now been shared with central government. The Full Business Case (FBC) is due for submission in April.

A formal decision by the Council to proceed with the project is required by 13 April 2022, when the FBC must be submitted. The project is being put forward in partnership with Plymouth City Council (PCC) and Devon County Council (DCC). Both PCC and DCC will also be taking formal decisions on the Freeport ahead of the FBC submission. A positive decision is required by all three Councils for the Freeport plans to proceed.

As well as tax and customs incentives to boost the economy and deliver jobs, there are a number of infrastructure improvements proposed. This includes a plan to enhance green links by building a dedicated pedestrian and cycle bridge across the A38 at Deep Lane Junction.

If the proposed Freeport gets the go-ahead it will deliver £25m in seed funding from central government to provide the required infrastructure to create the conditions for success. It is a condition of the seed funding that it is matched by public or private investment. The proposals being discussed show that South Hams District Council could commit £5m funding towards essential land assembly, with the remaining match funding for infrastructure coming from Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council. The SHDC investment would be paid back through business rates generated from the Langage and Sherford zones.

The project is a major scheme in the Council's corporate strategy to deliver Better Lives for All. For the South Hams, it promises to revitalise Langage industrial area and boost Sherford. Thousands of new jobs are anticipated to be created in the Freezone's first few years of operation across a range of skills, trades and professions including science, engineering and logistics.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council Executive Member for Economy said: "The Freeport will layer on tax and customs incentives for Sherford and Langage as well as South Yard in Plymouth. These incentives, together with public and private sector investment in infrastructure, will create the conditions for the Freeport to thrive directly benefiting local businesses and residents. In short those conditions turbocharge the market, deliver growth, jobs and infrastructure. It is however, still ultimately driven by market forces, which will dictate the pace of uptake.

"We forecast the Freeport could deliver 3,500 jobs across a range of skills and professions, including science and engineering. This forecast does not include the number of other local jobs that can be safeguarded by this investment – the local businesses that will thrive thanks to new opportunities to sell their products and services."

The project is being backed by businesses with key anchor tenants having committed to investing in the Freeport and a strong pipeline of interest in the opportunity having been established.

South Hams District Council Executive Committee meet at 10am on 27 January 2022. You can watch the meeting live here: [www.youtube.com/user/SouthHamsCouncil](https://www.youtube.com/user/SouthHamsCouncil)

### **Popular Rewilding Proposals Progress to Executive**

Proposals are being taken to South Hams District Councils' Executive Committee, on Thursday 27 January, to endorse new cutting schedules, leaving pollinator rich long grass areas as well as introducing wildflower and tree planting.

In March last year, the Council launched a consultation to find out what the public thought about rewilding on 50 hectares (ha) of Council green spaces.

The public responded overwhelmingly in favour of plans to increase biodiversity and wildlife value. One of the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity objectives is to increase biodiversity by at least 10% on council-owned land by 2025 and if approved, these proposals, based on the responses from the consultation, could exceed that target.

In the report going to Executive, proposals outline that Council-owned amenity land would continue to be cut fortnightly to enable sports to continue uninterrupted. While a new recommendation proposes seeding 2.5 ha of new wildflower areas of local provenance, in addition to 2.2 ha of trees to be planted across the District.

If agreed, some green spaces and verges would have areas of longer grass that would be cut and collected on an annual or biannual basis. Initially there may be more regular cut and collects to reduce the fertility of the grass and to create better conditions for wildflowers that may exist in the grass to re-establish and grow.

To deliver the proposed greener approach to grounds maintenance, new equipment including a tractor mounted stone burier, a cut and collect flail for compact tractor and a tipping dump trailer will be essential to prepare the sites and to collect and transport cuttings. Funding for mechanical equipment to manage the greenspaces in a more biodiverse manner is being requested of £36,000 from the already earmarked Climate Change and Biodiversity reserve.

The Council recognises that some members of our community may be concerned about uncut grasses looking untidy or neglected and that is why proposals have been removed where the local parish council are not supportive of the scheme. A small number of Parish Councils are yet to respond with views on the proposal, so there may be some further amendments according to their views.

If agreed, the areas agreed for rewilding would be skilfully managed, with cut grass framing areas, paths winding through longer grass and signs highlighting which grassed areas are part of the scheme. These areas would be rich habitats, which could support pollinators, as well as wildlife such as reptiles, small mammals, amphibians, birds and even bats.

Cllr Tom Holway, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Climate Change, said: "We made a commitment in 2019 to proactively do things that could stop the growth of climate change and biodiversity loss and we are doing everything we can to do just that.

"The public response to our consultation showed that most people want the same thing we do. These proposals are based on what our residents have said. We've listened to what they and our towns and parishes want and we've responded accordingly. Rewilding is going to make a big difference to increasing natural habitats and gaining biodiversity value.

"If the Executive agree these proposals then we will gradually see a lot more colour within our green spaces over the coming years and richer wildlife for us to enjoy, it's going to look and sound great.

"Our officers have been working exceptionally hard to secure funding for a number of tree schemes across the South Hams and that will pay dividends for not only the wildlife but also for Climate Change and for our health and wellbeing. It's truly a win-win."

In other biodiversity news, the Council has secured funding for various tree schemes across the South Hams. A £250,000 bid granted from the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund, will result in planting at over 30 urban parks, green spaces and verges across the District. The funds will see over 600 substantial trees planted from now up until 2023.

Another district-wide scheme to plant 1450 whips (young trees) across five sites through a Devon County Council Emergency Tree Fund has been made possible from funding secured from The Woodland Trust.

A small amount of planting will take place along the edge of woodland in Woolwell under the umbrella of the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest.

Further opportunities for tree planting on Council green spaces will be investigated in the coming years. These include the Emergency Tree Fund, Community Forest, and other grant schemes. Council officers are encouraging communities to help them to identify further planting sites on Council green spaces.

## **District Council Supports Communities and Businesses to Reduce Carbon Footprint**

South Hams District Council has created online information pages to support local communities and businesses to help reduce their carbon footprints and to improve biodiversity across the District.

This is part of the District Council's ongoing commitment to reduce the District's carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 at the latest.

The Council want to create an environment where people and nature thrive together, and to do this everyone needs to work towards the same goal of reducing their carbon footprint.

As part of their existing Climate Change and Biodiversity website, there are now new pages with a range of helpful advice information. Including what exactly a carbon footprint is, along with an easy to use calculator for both individuals and whole communities. Partners offer information on how to save money on home, shopping and energy bills. The website is also now home to a brand new net zero guide for Town and Parish Councils.

There are many helpful tips including how to stay warm and to shop locally. There are also various providers detailed who offer free and fair energy advice, offering home visits, or calls, to help residents reduce energy bills and to keep homes warm. This could be installing draught-proofing, energy saving bulbs, a better energy tariff or many other cost-saving benefits. There is also information specifically for businesses with a free business guide to cut energy, and resources on how to make travel more sustainable through active travel or lift sharing.

It is always important to remember that shopping local not only reduces the District's carbon footprint, but crucially supports the local economy, particularly during these tough Covid times. Therefore, a link to the South West Food Hub and Totnes Market is helpful to show where residents can access locally sourced, good quality food from the local area.

Let us not forget top tips on how to improve biodiversity with wildlife tips from the Wildlife Trust's website for inspiration on what can be carried out simply to increase nature in everyone's life as well as sources for funding for tree planting. There really is something there for everyone!

South Hams District Council's, Cllr Tom Holway, Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, said: "We want to support our District to become carbon neutral as soon as we possibly can. By working together, we can make a difference so this new information is a way to help individuals, businesses and communities access the crucial information they need to make changes. Changes to the way they live and work, while saving money and the planet too.

"We know that if CO2 emissions continue the way they're going, our weather will get more extreme by the end of the century. So let's all play our part now."

Details of the Council's three current funding opportunities are also on the website that will help the District become carbon neutral and improve its biodiversity.

To find out more about how to do your bit for Climate Change and get tips on how to reduce your energy bills, go to, Advice and Help, at:

## **Second home tax benefit loophole removed**

Following prolonged campaigning by this Council, Cllr Judy Pearce and Anthony Mangnall MP, we're delighted to hear that the Government has announced it's planning to remove a loophole that offers tax breaks to second home owners who dishonestly claim their properties are being used as holiday lets.

As it stands, people who own second homes in England can avoid paying council tax and access small business rates relief by simply declaring an intention to let the property out to holidaymakers.

The change will see second homeowners forced to pay council tax if they cannot show they are genuinely renting out their properties on a commercial basis.

It's been a long and arduous fight, but it should mean that second home owners should pay fairly towards local services in the future and is hopefully an important step towards solving our housing crisis while protecting genuine holiday lets.

South Hams District Council has fought a long and arduous campaign, to urge the Government to close a tax loophole which allows second home owners to avoid paying any business rates or council tax on their properties. Today, 14 January 2022, the Government announced changes that close this loophole whilst protecting genuine holiday lets and benefitting popular holiday destinations such as the South Hams.

Currently, people who own second homes in England can avoid paying council tax and access small business rates relief by declaring an intention to let the property out to holidaymakers. The change, which will come into effect from April 2023, will see second homeowners forced to pay council tax if they cannot show they are genuinely renting out their properties on a commercial basis.

The Council is thrilled that the Government has listened to its concerns. In 2020, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Judy Pearce, gave evidence to the Treasury Select Committee on this issue. The Council's local MP, Anthony Mangnall MP, strongly supported the Council's campaign and raised the issue direct with the Government.

The announcement today from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Rt Hon Michael Gove, comes on the back of South Hams District Council declaring a housing crisis in September 2021. This was backed by a 12 point action plan, with closing the business rates loophole being one of those areas to address. As well as ensuring that second home owners pay fairly for services, it is hoped that the new change may also see more short-term holiday let properties switch to long-term rental. This would help to ease the chronic shortage of long-term rental accommodation at an affordable rate, making it easier for local families to remain in the communities they love.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: "This is excellent news as a result of a sustained campaign by South Hams District Council, Anthony Mangnall MP, and

myself to get this loophole in the business rates system closed. This is important for community cohesion.

“Second home owners should be paying into the local community unless they are genuinely running a letting business. Services such as highways, the fire service and the police, which can equally well be used or needed by holiday makers, will benefit, as will the general income of the District and County Councils. We welcome all visitors, but hard-pressed local residents should not have to subsidise services for them.”

Under the new rules, holiday lets must be rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to qualify for business rates. Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts. Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

The Council currently has just under 1,800 business rated properties that are self-catering holiday lets.

At a time when there are severe funding problems with all tiers of Local Government (particularly adult social care) and our emergency services are under increasing pressures, South Hams District Council spearheaded a campaign to make the point that the current system is fundamentally unfair. Small business rate relief was implemented to support our small business, village halls and local shops. The rules have been taken advantage of, to allow people to not pay for the local services they are using.

Anthony Mangnall MP added: “After two years of campaigning with Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, it is welcome news that the Government has taken this step. South Devon has one of the highest concentration of second homes in the country. This announced change will help to stop people utilising an unforeseen loophole while also ensuring that they pay their fair share. Both the Chancellor and Michael Gove have listened carefully to our needs and I hope this will be the first step of many to help improve accommodation issues in the South West and beyond.”

### **AONB Secures National Lottery Funding**

The South Devon AONB Unit is delighted to announce that it has been awarded a £220,900 development grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund as initial support\* for its multi partner ‘Life on the Edge’ programme to help restore thriving populations of some of the UK’s rarest insects living along the South Devon Coast between Berry Head and Wembury.

The award to the partnership led by the AONB together with Buglife, The National Trust and Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust has been made possible by National Lottery players.

It will work with residents, parish councils, schools and landowners to protect and restore precious coastal wildlife and connect communities with nature.

The development phase of the project commencing in April 2022 will provide habitat management advice to farmers in the key biodiversity hotspots ensuring these are sustained in the long term and it will pilot the development of Parish Pollinator Plans.

The development funding will enable the project plans to be progressed and an application for a full National Lottery grant to be made at a later date.

Five project hotspots will include Wembury, The Erme Mothecome-Holbeton, Bolt Head to Bolt Tail, Prawle Point to Start Point, and Brownstone to Berry Head.

Life on the Edge will support and engage the whole community, farmers, parish councils and school children, providing opportunities for everyone to get involved and make a real difference for these extraordinary and highly vulnerable species.

By restoring habitat at a landscape scale Life on the Edge will provide a sustainable home for rare insects such as the Six-banded nomad bee (*Nomada sexfaciata*), Long-horned bee (*Eucera longicornis*) and Short-necked oil beetle (*Meloe brevicollis*).

Further information about the project is available at:  
<https://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/projects/life-on-the-edge/>

Roger English, AONB Manager

### **Torbay Local Plan – Housing Growth Options**

Torbay Council is undertaking a partial review of the Torbay Local Plan to update its housing supply policies. The Torbay Local Plan Housing Update Growth Options was published on Monday 10 January for a seven week consultation period that closes on Monday 28 February. Five broad options have been set out:

Option 1: No further greenfield allocation beyond already allocated or approved sites.

Option 2: Limited further greenfield development.

Option 3: One or two further urban extensions.

Option 4: All sites that have not been ruled out in principle.

Option 5: Meeting full needs (as required by Government).

Opinions are also being sought on whether there is scope for a hybrid option that would allow a minimum housing requirement to be set, but also have a more ambitious target for urban regeneration sites.

The responses to the consultation will be considered by Torbay Council in developing a “Preferred Option”.

This will include proposed updated policies, site allocations, and headline growth rates. It is anticipated that this Preferred Option will be published later in 2022 for further public consultation, before the Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

Under the Duty to Co-operate, Torbay Council has arranged a meeting with other local authorities on 20 January.

The Council will be represented at this meeting, following which a draft response to the consultation will be prepared.

Members will be consulted on this before it is submitted to Torbay Council.

The consultation documents, background information and questionnaire are available online:  
[www.torbay.gov.uk/local-plan-update](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/local-plan-update)

Graham Swiss – Strategic Planning Specialist (Place Making)

### **Town and Parish Council Guide to Net-Zero**

Some Parish and Town Councils have reached out to us over the past year looking for advice on tackling the Climate Emergency. Over the past few months we have been working on pulling together some resources and tips on what Town and Parish Councils can do.

The guide isn't intended to be prescriptive but rather offer to some help or inspiration to Town and Parish Councils looking tackle to the Climate Emergency. The guide is web based and intended for all audiences, whether they have yet to declare a Climate Emergency or simply looking for action ideas or tools and resources to help them along the way.

The guide will be published on 18 January 2022 on our Climate Change website

### **Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant**

In December, the government announced a one-off grant payment for hospitality and leisure businesses including restaurants and pubs. It is worth up to £6,000 and is designed to help those who have struggled in what should have been the most profitable time of the year.

We are administering the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant; the Council has now directly contacted local businesses by email, which, based on previous grant applications, might be eligible for this financial help.

The Council is urging local hospitality and leisure businesses that meet the criteria to check their email and junk mail folders and follow the instructions to claim the government grant.

The Council is also urging businesses to contact them via their website - <https://southhams.gov.uk/businesscovid19> - if they think their business is eligible.