

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

**THIS MONTH'S TOPICS:-**

**South Hams residents given greater say in planning their community**

**Boost your mobile phone coverage**

**Jawbones Celebrates Historic and Community Planting**

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**Share your views on plans for climate change measures in all new development**

**South Hams and West Devon add their support to Ukrainians fleeing conflict**

**Step On Grant To Help South Hams Step Out Of Housing Crisis**

**Local Leisure Centres in a Fit Position to Support the Community**

**Your views on plans for climate change measures in all new development**

**South Hams Garden Waste Service Restarts**

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**THIS MONTH'S TOPICS IN MORE DETAIL:-**

**South Hams residents given greater say in planning their community**

JLP PlanningThe Joint Local Plan Team have successfully secured significant funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) PropTech Engagement Fund.

The funding will be used to develop an interactive mapping tool to explore how community infrastructure is being used by residents across Plymouth and South West Devon. This local intelligence will help us understand how our areas work especially as we come out of the pandemic and is the first step towards more digital engagement in planning.

More information is available here:

<https://plymswdevonplan.co.uk/news/residents-given-greater-say-in-planning-their-community>

New digital tools to help residents have their say on local developments - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

## **Boost your mobile phone coverage**

### Mobile Boost Scheme

Are you a business or household struggling with poor indoor mobile coverage? Connecting Devon and Somerset may be able to help. The Mobile Boost Scheme offers vouchers towards technology to upgrade indoor 4G coverage in “not-spot” areas.

Businesses and households can apply for a voucher of up to £1,200 towards the cost of one of a number of mobile signal booster options from a registered supplier.

The value of the voucher will be dependent on the type of technology most suitable for the premises. Suppliers will be able to advise on the most appropriate option. Businesses and residents will be required to make a contribution to cover the cost of installation.

For more information and to apply visit: [Mobile Boost Scheme - A Guide - Connecting Devon and Somerset](#)

If you have any questions, visit the [Mobile Boost Scheme FAQs](#) or send an email to [enquiries@connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk)

## **Jawbones Celebrates Historic and Community Planting**

Community and dignitaries alike joined forces at the weekend to plant 400 whips (young trees) at Jawbones field in Dartmouth to commemorate two special events; The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and 50 years of the Woodland Trust.

The 400 whips planted at the community tree planting was part of a series of events taking part over the past few months across the South Hams. By the end of the scheme, 4,000 trees in total, funded through the Woodland Trust’s Emergency Tree Fund (ETF) project, will have been planted by a partnership of local councils, community groups and schools.

At the Jawbones event the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Devon, The Hon Mrs Sarah Lopes DL came along and did not hesitate to pull on her welly boots and join in the fun to plant a Jubilee tree in celebration of Her Majesty The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebration, through the Queen’s Green Canopy.

The second celebration of the day in the South Hams was for the 50th anniversary of the Woodland Trust. The Trust was created 50 years ago by founder Ken Watkins, at his Devon home, when he and friends gathered to discuss the plight of ancient woodlands.

The 139 hectares of Avon Woods in Woodleigh became the Woodland Trust's first purchase in 1972. The woods are now thriving and brim with wildlife, wild flowers and a wide variety of tree species.

The Jawbones planting also included a wide variety of tree species with some flowering trees chosen for their abundance of nectar and pollen.

The District Council is dedicated to doing what it can to achieve its Climate Change and Biodiversity targets, working hand in hand with partners and the community towards a net-zero South Hams.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, Deputy Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "We are delighted to work in partnership as part of the Emergency Tree Fund to plant so many trees in the South Hams. The District is truly a beautiful place, made all the more special to be the very first place where 50 years ago the Woodland Trust saved its first wood.

"With the help of The Hon Mrs Sarah Lopes DL and the Trust, we were able to celebrate two special events at Jawbones. The planting of 400 trees will not only enhance the beauty of the area, but will also be one more step in doing our bit for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

"I look forward to watching the trees develop and grow on the landscape and will remember with fondness The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations."

Ross Kennerley, South West Regional Director for the Woodland Trust, said: "There has been a hive of activity as communities have come together to plant trees. The Woodland Trust is proud to have been part of the planting across South Hams.

"We want to thank all those who taken part. Together we are making a difference for our climate, nature and the local communities. It feels fitting to be planting here, as we celebrate The Woodland Trust's 50th birthday, in the county where the Woodland Trust started, as well as marking the Platinum Jubilee through the Queens Green Canopy."

ParkLife South West have this season co-ordinated the planting of all of the trees at 14 locations in South Devon, all of which are being recorded as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme through community environmental volunteering.

Keith Rennells, Director of ParkLife SW, said: "There have never been so many good reasons for planting trees. In terms of the natural world, we are replacing diseased ash trees, lost from our landscape, as well as enhancing biodiversity, creating new places for our precious wildlife. Tree planting also helps with mitigating the effects of climate change, and benefits us all in terms of our health and well-being, especially those who actively plant the trees.

"And to top it all off, we're planting trees to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. All the trees planted this season will be recorded towards the Queen's Green Canopy, and that will be more than 4,000 in the South Hams added to the national total."

Councillor Andrea Davis, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, said: "Almost 8,400 trees have been planted in Devon during this first year of the Emergency Tree Fund project, which is a great start. We're extremely grateful to the Woodland Trust for providing the funding to the County Council through the Emergency Tree Fund to help make this planting possible.

“South Hams District Council and the town and parish councils involved so far have helped kickstart our efforts and ParkLife South West has provided tremendous support in mobilising community engagement. We're now looking forward to fostering similar partnerships with other district, town and parish councils across Devon to accelerate the collective effort to establish more trees right across the county to help tackle the climate emergency.”

Devon County Council and the Woodland Trust are working closely together to support the Saving Devon’s Treescapes initiative. Run by the Devon Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Devon Ash Dieback Resilience Forum and with assistance from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this project is promoting community engagement in tree issues to help Devon’s landscapes to cope with the devastating loss of Ash trees through disease.

The Woodland Trust is currently forming the ‘Trees for Devon’ group, linked to the Devon Local Nature Partnership, to produce a Trees Strategy for Devon and co-ordinate tree planting.

- For a one stop shop information point for trees from South Hams District Council, go to: [www.southhams.gov.uk/landscapes-trees-and-hedges](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/landscapes-trees-and-hedges)
- If you are interested in joining in with tree planting projects, please email [parklifew@gmail.com](mailto:parklifew@gmail.com) or message ParkLife through their Facebook page.
- To find out more about what the Woodlands Trust has to offer, and to support them, go to: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

To find out more about the Devon Local Nature Partnership and to get involved, go to: [www.devonlnp.org.uk](http://www.devonlnp.org.uk)

### **Freeport - South Hams Executive set to consider the full business case**

Investment worth £100 million in the first two years, 3,500 jobs and putting over £400 million GVA into Plymouth and South Devon's economy - that's what the Freeport is expected to bring.

The only Freeport in the South West is moving closer to existence with the three councils Plymouth, Devon and South Hams District Council set to consider the full business case ahead of its submission to HM Government in April.

Leader of Plymouth City Council, Councillor Nick Kelly said: "We are only one of eight areas to get Freeport status and we see this as a brilliant catalyst to build back better and drive economic growth.

"It's also a chance to showcase our strengths in the marine and defence sectors to the rest of the country, the world, and to support the growing space sector. We have the commitment of some of our largest local employers, including Babcock and Princess Yachts, as key partners in the Freeport.

"Additionally, the Freeport is also about the long term prospects for up-skilling our future workers, making sure there are great job prospects for tomorrow's workforce."

Public and private sector organisations including Babcock International, Princess Yachts, Langage Energy Park Ltd, the Heart of the South West LEP, the Universities of Plymouth and Exeter, the Ministry of Defence and port operators, have worked closely together to finalise the full business case.

It outlines a comprehensive package of measures, comprising tax reliefs, customs advantages, business rates retention, planning, regeneration, innovation and trade and investment support.

Three key sites in and around Plymouth will form part of the Freeport making over 130 hectares of land available. They are:

South Yard - in addition to the existing Oceansgate complex, this area will be further developed as a tax site and will include a new innovation centre, a mobility hub and new factory developments

Langage - developed as a tax site with a customs zone within it and space for light industrial units for high-value engineering and manufacturing. The main focus will be marine, defence and space. The site also includes proposals for a green hydrogen electrolyser plant.

Sherford - developed as a logistics hub with a tax and customs boundary with warehousing storage and engineering space.

The Freeport is set to provide thousands of direct jobs across Plymouth, Devon and the South Hams. It will bring on suitable land for development which might have taken years longer, welcome new businesses to the area and attract foreign direct investment opportunities. By securing significant investment in innovation, skills, research and development, it will enable Plymouth to develop a global reach, whilst supporting its commitment to clean growth and carbon net zero.

The Freeport is expected to see

- 3,584 direct jobs created with an average wage of at least £13.92 per hour
- 10 per cent of jobs created to be filled by inactive claimants and registered unemployed
- 3,000 m2 of skills infrastructure
- 2,400 m2 of new innovation space
- 137.9 hectares of land developed
- 5 new businesses each year
- 2 to 3 new foreign direct investment each year
- 40 business/higher education collaborations a year from 2022
- £4m a year in private investment in research and development
- 10 new products developed for market

Councillor Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: "The Freeport is an excellent example of local authorities working together without borders to provide long term benefits for the whole region. Together we aim to secure the Freeport to provide more jobs, opportunities, skills where it is needed, foster innovation and capitalise on our strengths.

Ensuring that current and future generations of the work force can secure prosperous careers has never been as important."

Existing local businesses can apply if they can show that locating within the Freeport would help their business to grow and generate new economic growth provided that their plans cannot be accommodated at their existing location. They can also expect to benefit from growth in local demand for services and supplies generated by the Freeport.

Total capital investment in the Freeport is predicted to reach £311 million. This is made up of £25m in Government seed capital grant and matched locally with £29m. A further £10m will be raised through Levelling Up grant income and it is anticipated that total private sector investment will be close to £247 million.

Plymouth's Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to give final approval to the Full Business Case. On successful submission to Government in April, it is expected that the Freeport will become operational in summer 2022.

### **Council Raised Flag in Solidarity**

A Ukrainian National Flag has been raised at Follaton House in South Hams, with Councillors and Officers wanting to send a message of solidarity to the besieged cities of Ukraine and to all of those affected across Europe.

Last week Councillors added their support to the joint statement issued by Devon County Council on behalf of all Local Authorities in Devon. All Devon authorities pledged to work together to support Ukrainian refugees seeking sanctuary in the UK, and condemned Russia's actions. All have agreed to give particular support to families in Devon whose relatives in Ukraine are fleeing the conflict.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: "Among the loss of life and the destruction that we have seen in Ukraine, there have also been some truly inspiring stories of defiance, strength and courage from a nation under fire.

"It is admirable to see so many people in the UK now offering up their homes to those people fleeing the conflict. In the South Hams there are many homes which stand vacant for large parts of the year, it would be encouraging if their owners could make them available for the refugees who desperately need our help.

"You can now do this through the Government's Homes for Ukraine campaign and if you can offer accommodation to a Ukrainian household you can now register on the Government's website.

"As a Council, we are still waiting for further guidance as to what role we will play in facilitating this scheme. But like many others, we want to do what we can to help now.

"In fact at the next meeting of our full council I will be asking Councillors to agree to give the Disasters Emergency Committee a grant from our reserves. Financial support is one of the biggest ways that you can help the organisations that are providing aid. "

With so many people across Europe wanting to provide aid and support to the people of Ukraine, it is important that we send our donations to those people who are experts in providing humanitarian aid.

Cllr Judy Pearce added: “Each day we pray that this conflict comes to an end quickly and that the people of Ukraine can begin rebuilding their lives. Until that time comes, we want you to know that your plight has touched us all deeply and South Hams will do what we can to offer support.”

How you can support

The fastest way to help is to donate to a DEC appeal by donating online. Visit <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal> Alternatively you can call 01204 770822

Sponsor (provide a home) for someone to live in the UK a minimum expectation of 6 months. <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>

To make a donation towards the UN's humanitarian work, please visit Ukrainian Humanitarian Fund UN Crisis Relief

You can also make a donation via the Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal

There are many other charities collecting donations, both financial and supplies such as food and clothing – the Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator have urged the public to ‘give safely’ to registered charities helping and supporting those affected by the invasion of Ukraine. Please contact your local community groups to see who’s collecting

Further Information

If you are a resident with friends and family in Ukraine and need information or support about what is happening please contact the Ukrainian Embassy

For information on travel advice to and from Ukraine visit UK

Find immigration advice on temporary concessions for Ukrainian nationals applying to join a family route at UK and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-support-for-ukrainians-fleeing-russia-invasion>

### **Talking Climate Change – Spectacular Puppet Show**

Council supports and applauds a wonderfully creative project called Talking Forest – which enabled 70 children from the South Hams to express how they feel about Climate Change and bio-diversity loss. They then produced a bright and engaging play that we can all learn from.

This amazingly visual and creative project was led by a South Hams based creative charity called Creative Myth Puppets, which specialises in allowing children to express themselves through the creation of puppets and storytelling.

Tony Gee Artistic Director at Creative Myth Puppets, said: “For this project we wanted to create a piece of work that would make the issues of climate change and biodiversity more accessible to those people who are not as engaged with subject. We hope that these people

might be more receptive to the subject if they can hear about it through the voices of the children.

Over 4 days, 70 local children took part in workshops in Kingsbridge and Totnes, where they were encouraged to express how they feel about the climate crisis. Between them they built just shy of 100 puppets and created 4 separate plays.

These plays were then put together to create one story – the story of the Talking Forest, which was performed as a play to over 150 people in the Civic Hall Totnes.

Cllr Tom Holway South Hams District Councillor for Climate Change and Biodiversity said: “What a truly inspiring way to help young people understand some of the issues facing the world today. I am pleased that as a Council we were able to support this through some of the local members locality funding. It is so important for us to create spaces like this for children to be able to express how they feel and to bring these issues to new audiences.

“I was one of the lucky people to attend the Grand Finale and the atmosphere was absolutely buzzing. The children were totally immersed in the spirit of the production and it was clear that the adults got the message.”.

Cllr John Birch, South Hams District Council’s Ward Councillor for Totnes said: “What a simply marvellous performance.....Eight South Hams District councillors were delighted to put some of their locality money towards the creation of this project which will help to bring climate change and biodiversity discussion to life in a new way”.

Each Councillor in South Hams has a Climate Change and Biodiversity Locality budget of £3,000 until March 2022. They can use this money to help not for profit groups or organizations deliver community projects that helps them support the Council’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations.

By putting funds towards the Talking Forest project the Councillors are providing education and awareness of the Climate and Ecological emergency through direct engagement with hard to reach groups and individuals.

South Hams Councillors who supported this project included: Cllrs O’Callaghan, Cllr Jackson, Cllr Brazil, Cllr Hodgson, Cllr Rose and Cllr Sweett, Cllr Birch and Cllr Holway. This project was also supported by Totnes Town Council.

Catherine Marlton, Town Clerk, Totnes Town Council said: “This was a brilliant event which we were proud to support. It truly showcased the creativity and passion of the people of Totnes whilst highlighting the urgency of tackling climate change and supporting improved biodiversity. Hearing the positive comments from participants of all ages, it is clear what an inspiring day this was for all.”

A film of the full play is being produced and the creative team hope to be able to bring the messages within it to a much wider audience. Here is a short teaser of the wonderful creations as the children were workshopping their stories.

Tony Added: “In their story the children created creatures from all over the world ranging from penguins to giraffes and orang-utans to the dodo.

“The magnificence of the modern environmental tale that the children constructed and created was reflected in the huge standing ovation they received from an audience of over 150 people.

“For my part, it was just as magical as when we first made a huge show at the Civic back in 1989. It was simply blooming marvellous!”

<https://vimeo.com/680643623/457cbc5343>

## **Gold For South Hams and West Devon**

South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council have won Gold at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2022.

iESE is an organisation created by local authorities as a shared resource to bring transformation and service improvements to local authorities across the UK.

This year at iESE’s annual award ceremony, which is judged by an international team and compared to public sector initiatives around the world, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council were the winners of the Gold award for their Big Picture Transformation.

This award was for a specific innovative technology project which the Councils had undertaken. The project created not just financial savings for the Councils, but has also enabled the Councils to respond to the needs of the customer like never before.

The project involved installing a piece of software, called Liberty Create, produced by a company called Netcall. The software enables the Councils to produce web forms, processes, and back office systems very quickly without the need for experienced software engineers to write detailed code.

For example, during the pandemic, when the Councils had to quickly set up an online system for businesses to apply for emergency grants, this was used to process them with a third of the effort it would have needed previously.

When the first grants were announced on 1 May 2020, the Councils’ digital team were able to build a system that was easy for staff and customers to use in just three days.

The Councils received around £500, 000 of funding to help them set up the many COVID grants schemes. Thanks to the Liberty Create software and the team’s innovative approach, South Hams and West Devon only spent £100,000 on processing the grants, which meant that £400,000 of the funding could be used elsewhere to support the COVID response.

Cllr Chris Edmonds, West Devon Borough Councils Lead Member for Resource and Performance said: “The platform enabled the Council to respond immediately when we were required to issue much needed grants to local businesses during the pandemic. There is no doubt that it saved us time and money, but also helped us to respond to the needs of the business community when they needed us most.

“Liberty Create underpins our digital ambitions to deliver more services entirely electronically and we are really impressed with the improvements we have made.”

Cllr Nicky Hopwood, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Delivering Council Services said: "One of the reasons that this project was such a success is because the project team engaged the whole Council, all of the staff and elected members in this project from day one. We were involved in the procurement of the new system and it was important to the project team to take the staff on the journey with them once they began rolling it out across all service areas.

"Other Councils are now using this software, but I am proud that we were one of the first to really capitalise on its potential with more benefits to come. This is down to the drive of our digital project team. Well done – this is an excellent example of our digital team leading the way."

In total the Councils' has now built over 90 processes within the Liberty Create platform, which collectively have been started over 100,000 times. Over 75% of customers can self-serve and over 25,000 requests have been handled through the new software in the last year rather than over the phone.

This includes interactions such as reporting Fly-tipping, general enquiries, paying for parking permits, applying for household support and temporary event notices.

Council staff who are using the new system have also expressed how it is making their work easier as well, they said :

"The old system was very frustrating to use. Working smart was hard and being efficient at my tasks was difficult. That's all changed now" "I really like that I can see the whole email trail and respond to this. It helps me to do my work" and "It's so easy to learn how to use it as much of it is intuitive and I don't have to refer to manuals"

Jim Davis, the Council's Customer Improvement Manager said: "It is lovely to have our achievements' recognised, but for me this is just the beginning of what is possible. We have big plans for the future to do some truly unique work to benefit our residents and with the support of our elected members we will continue to strive for better digital connectivity with our customers, so that we can continue to improve how we work and improve the services we provide."

There is no doubt that the Liberty Create software is making communication between the Council and the customer much smoother, but it also enables the Council to get instant feedback and deal with issues as they arise.

So far about 25% of the customers who have used the new system have said that they would give the process 4 or 5 stars.

However, where the Council receives negative feedback the team are able to instantly investigate, learn from the comments and make adjustments. Improving the system is constant, and feedback enables the team to act quickly to issues based on the evidence that they have received from the customer.

Moving forward the project team are now looking to expand the project and use the system in other areas of council work.

The Councils' digital ambition is that staff are able to concentrate on their role in delivering good quality services to customers, rather than being hindered by broken processes, outdated

or slow technology. This in turn will provide customers with much better service, enabling those who can self-serve through the website to do so quickly and effectively and releasing staff to help those who are less digitally able.

### **Come and see the Ivybridge Regeneration Plans**

South Hams District Council and the project team behind plans to regenerate the centre of Ivybridge and build a discount food store at Leonards Road carpark, will be holding an opening evening on 23 March for local people to come and take their first look at the planning application.

After many years of discussion and consultation, the local people in Ivybridge are invited to get their first look at plans that include a food store to be operated by Aldi, a new tiered car park and other improvements.

Once the plans are uploaded to the Council's website, which should happen before the end of March, all residents will be able to go online to look in detail at the submission and to make their comments or representations.

However, to enable residents to get a closer look at the plans, the project team will be at the Bridge Café (formerly the youth centre) from 1pm to 8pm on Wednesday 23 March.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Economy said "We know that there are a lot of opinions about these plan locally, both from those people who are excited by the development and those people who are against it.

"Therefore it is important for local people to know that the open evening on the 23 is not a formal consultation. We will be gathering opinions at the event and they will be considered as part of the application but the main opportunity for residents to have their say on the plans is when the application goes live on the Council's website.

"We expect this to happen by the end of the month, once the plans have been verified by the planning department.

"The open evening is a great opportunity for local people to take a look at the plans in a large format and to ask questions of the project team."

The public open day to be held on the 23 March is a drop in event so there will not be a set presentation, please feel free to drop by any time between 1 and 8 pm. Present at the event will be representatives from the Council, from the project development partner Kier and the discount food store's proposed operator Aldi, who will all be there to answer your questions about the application.

**Keep Up to Date with the Project:**

You can sign up for regular project updates here:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSWDEVON/subscriber/new>

You can see the latest information on our project website page here:

[www.engagement.southhams.gov.uk/ivybridge-regeneration-project](http://www.engagement.southhams.gov.uk/ivybridge-regeneration-project)

Here is a link to the planning portal for when the application goes live:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/planning-comment](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/planning-comment)

## **Help is at hand for South Hams home owners feeling the pinch**

A Council-backed low interest-rate lending scheme can help local home owners to make essential repairs and efficiency improvements to their home.

Food and energy bill price rises are hitting people's wallets even harder on wallets this year. South Hams District Council is reminding residents of a local scheme to help with the cost of fixing your home and avoid falling into the trap of expensive short-term borrowing.

In the last two years, over £77,000 has been lent to people in the South Hams via Lendology, an ethical loan agency that is supported by the Council.

Lendology provides a variety of loan products and schemes designed to meet the wide ranging financial and housing needs of the communities they serve. Owner occupiers, private sector landlords, empty property owners, first time buyers and park homes owners can apply for a home improvement loan fixed at 4% interest. Every year the Council supports the scheme with a £30,000 payment to ensure local residents can access affordable loans.

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, South Hams Executive Member for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing said: "Money worries can stop people from carrying out essential repairs and that can have a big impact on health and wellbeing. By working with Lendology we can make sure people can access fair lending so they can afford to make repairs or efficiency improvements without falling into a debt trap. The service is open to all – you don't need to be in receipt of benefits to use it - as loans are approved based on affordability. If you would like to find out more, please go to <https://www.lendology.org.uk/>"

### **Case Study:**

Mrs H contacted South Hams District Council to find out if there was any financial support available for roof repairs. Mrs H got a local contractor to give her a quote for fixing the roof which she was worried may collapse, she quickly learnt that the whole roof needed to be replaced. The council were able to support the client with a grant towards the roof and she borrowed the remaining funds from Lendology.

Mrs H told us "Before the roof was collapsing and there was water pouring in the house the electrics stopped working and it was dangerous." Now that the works are done, Mrs H said "I am really pleased with the work that has been done."

When asked what she would say to other homeowners considering a loan with Lendology for home improvements she said "Most definitely consider applying with Lendology, they really helped me. I don't think I would have got a loan from anywhere else."

To find out more about whether a loan from Lendology is right for you, please go to <https://www.lendology.org.uk/>

## **Step On Grant To Help South Hams Step Out Of Housing Crisis**

An innovative new pilot scheme to help local people to get on the housing ladder and boost the number of homes available at an affordable rent will launch on 1 April 2022.

With house prices rocketing and the number of rental properties hitting rock bottom, South Hams District Council has looked beyond traditional solutions to pull the district out of the current housing crisis.

Now, with the launch of the Step On grant, up to £5,000 will be given to anyone who is currently renting a social housing property to help them purchase a shared ownership home. As well as giving practical support to help more local people step on the housing ladder, it will also free up more homes for rent at an affordable price. It's believed this pioneering grant scheme is the first of its kind in the UK and it is part of a suite of initiatives planned by the Council to tackle the housing situation.

The Step On scheme has been specifically designed to help local people who aspire to own their own home but struggle to save the deposit necessary. It will give an extra helping hand towards the purchase of a shared ownership home, funding up to 100% of the deposit required to purchase up to 30% of a shared ownership home (to a maximum value of £5,000).

Initially £60,000 has been allocated to the scheme, funded through the government's New Homes Bonus Grant. It sits as a sister scheme to the downsizing Tenant Incentive Scheme, which is for anyone who is currently over occupying a Housing Association property and who moves to a smaller home. Earlier this year, the Council made changes to this scheme to increase the cash payment to maximum of £5,000 and has since received a positive amount of interest.

There are currently over 170 new shared ownership homes of various sizes in the pipeline for communities across the South Hams. This includes new homes in Dartmouth, Woolwell and Chillington, offering choice for local people who want to remain in the area they love, close to friends, family and support networks.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: "We all know that steep house prices and a shortage of homes for rent mean many local people are struggling to find a home. We have shared ownership homes being built around the district to meet local needs. However, with house prices and the cost of living going up, we know that finding the money for a deposit is keeping this just out of reach for some.

"We need bold, innovative solutions if we are going to make a positive difference. With this scheme we're looking to give practical help to those people who would like to buy their own home but have not been able to save the deposit. By providing up to £5,000, which will not need to be paid back, we can give local residents a helping hand to step on the housing ladder. This in turn, would allow their homes to become available for re-let to a household on the housing register, helping us to help even more people."

The new pilot Step On scheme is part of a comprehensive strategy to address the housing crisis, which the Council declared in September 2021. 12 action points have been identified as key to tackle the problem which sees more and more local people and families facing homelessness or having to leave the district.

It will launch at the same time as a number of national changes that aim to make shared ownership more affordable for more people. From April 1, the new Homes England shared ownership funding scheme will allow buyers to start purchasing shares from 10% (currently 25-30%). There will also be a change to responsibility for repairs and maintenance of the

home. From April 1, these costs will be covered by the Housing Provider for the first 10 years, so new owners won't need to worry about finding additional funds if something needs repairing.

However, it is worth noting all sites with shared ownership elements currently under construction in the South Hams have been funded by the previous funding mechanism. This means that people purchasing a shared ownership home will not benefit from these national changes in the immediate future.

How does Shared Ownership work?

Shared ownership is a scheme that enables households to buy a share in a property (currently usually between 20% and 75% of the home's value). A subsidised rent is payable on the remaining share, which held by the Registered Provider (normally a housing association). You'll also have the ability to purchase additional shares in the future if you want.

Is it affordable and am I eligible?

The combined monthly cost of your mortgage and rent will normally be less than if purchasing a property outright. Shared ownership also gives you the chance to get on the property ladder with a lower mortgage.

To be eligible for a shared ownership property, the annual household income can be no more than £80,000.

For more information, take a look at: [www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership/](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership/)

Read these frequently asked questions about shared ownership:  
[www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership-faqs/](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership-faqs/)

Take a look at this shared ownership mortgage calculator:  
[www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/mortgage-calculator/](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/mortgage-calculator/)

Find out more

Watch the video:

[https://youtu.be/wGE9\\_2GDndI](https://youtu.be/wGE9_2GDndI)

You can find out more about shared ownership, and other affordable housing options, at the Council's new dedicated website at [www.seamoorhomes.co.uk](http://www.seamoorhomes.co.uk)

### **Planning for a Simpler Application!**

The Planning Service's Improvement Plan Update Report met with approval at South Hams District Council yesterday. The Executive approved the adoption of a Local Validation Checklist and a Planning Charter that shows how the Council will improve performance and responsiveness for applicants involved within the Planning process.

The Council's recent Planning Improvement Plan, part of the Corporate Strategy, 'Better Lives for All' aims to improve the service and applicants' expectations.

To kick-start the plans following a helpful six-week public consultation in September 2021, a Local Validation List has been updated which will make the service much easier for applicants.

Now those applying for planning applications, will follow a simple checklist to find out which application forms, and supporting documents, they need to submit for the work they want to carry out and when they need to submit them. Easy!

Not only will this take some of the frustration out of the planning process and make sure that applications are accepted first time, it will also make the service much faster and reduce delays when additional information has to be requested.

The Planning Team are also very keen to promote the use of their pre-application advice service, which can provide applicants with certainty over which information they need to provide in advance of applications being submitted.

The checklist will also help the Planning team to gain information from applicants about how they are reducing their carbon footprint, achieving a 10% biodiversity net gain, better provision of open spaces, sport and recreation and protecting the countryside and heritage assets. It will also go towards meeting the Council's goal for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

Along with the Local Validation List, the newly approved Planning Charter sets out how the Planning Service will work with developers and the community on applications.

The Charter makes clear what those using the service can expect to receive from their service. What their vision is with respect to customer service and realistic expectations for timescales, but also what is at the heart of the service the Planning Team provide.

In return, they also ask for some commitments of their own. They ask for consideration of their staff, for developed quality and sustainable designs and that applicants follow policies and guidance.

The full charter will be available for public viewing from Friday 1 April.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "This is a positive step forward in making the planning process a simpler process for everyone. The improved performance will mean better clarity, accuracy and responsiveness from householders asking for a one-time application, small business applicants, right up to large-scale house builders and developers.

"We know there is much we have to do to ensure we get it right and we are working hard on our improvements to do just that. However, the Charter is a joint agreement between both sides so everyone can do the best they can for each other. For that to happen, we need applicants to play their part too, to make sure that the process runs smoothly."

To read the Executive report, go to: [www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive)

**Share your views on plans for climate change measures in all new development**

Developers planning to build new homes or any development in the South Hams, West Devon and Plymouth will have to incorporate measures that will help owners tackle climate change as soon as they move in.

Features such as solar panels, ground or air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging facilities will be fitted as standard on all new homes and commercial buildings under proposals being put forward in the draft Plymouth and South West Devon Climate Emergency Planning Policy and Guidance.

Other measures will see more habitat and green space designed into developments, which increases biodiversity and brings health and wellbeing benefits to residents. These measures will also go some way to mitigate against rising global temperatures.

A consultation has launched today (3 March) to get the views of residents, campaigners and developers across the area about the proposals, which if approved, could come into effect as early as June.

The proposals would apply to all new planning applications for all new buildings, including some extensions across the Joint Local Plan area – an area covering 2,126 square kilometres, with a population of 401,567.

Since 2014, across the area, around 10,000 new homes have been built and around 14,700 have planning consent with 1,474 currently under construction. The new measures, if they get the green light, would apply to new planning applications only.

Judy Pearce, Chair of the JLP Partnership Board and Leader of South Hams District Council said: “We believe this is the first time this has been tried across the country so we are leading the charge in changing how we want homes to be built for the future.

“We know this is a huge change for developers but at the moment developers and the planning system allow properties to be built that are obsolete before they are even completed. This can’t carry on. It is doing no one any favours.

“What we are asking is for the developers to pay the costs for energy efficient measures as part of the build rather than put the burden on the homeowner a year or two down the line.”

Most of these measures will soon be a requirement under the Government’s new building regulations, and will have to be included in new development. This means the costs will soon be non-negotiable and all three councils are keen to ensure that affordable homes in particular have these features fitted as standard.

Councillor Patrick Nicholson, Deputy Leader of Plymouth City Council said: “If we are serious about tackling climate change, we need to look at these features as standard in all our new build properties, not as nice-to-haves way off in the future.

“Planning policy - local and national – is simply not in step with the climate emergency and we want to change that.”

Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon already work closely together through the Joint Local Plan and councillors across each of the local authorities have signed up to this new policy proposal.

Caroline Mott, Lead Member for the Joint Local Plan for West Devon District Council, added: “You only have to see what’s happening in the energy market right now to know how important energy efficient homes are becoming.

“If anything, this will make affordable homes a much more attractive option as energy bills will be considerably lower.

“We would like to start this as soon as possible but we realise development companies who want to submit planning applications would have already had their projects costed and budgeted for. However we would strongly urge them to review their plans through this climate emergency lens.”

### **South Hams and West Devon add their support to Ukrainians fleeing conflict**

South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council fully support this statement which has been issued by Devon County Council on behalf of the Local Authorities in Devon.

Local authority leaders across Devon have spoken out in concern for the people of Ukraine and their families, following the Russian invasion.

Team Devon authorities, including Devon County and District Councils and the Devon Association of Local Councils, have pledged to work together to support Ukrainian refugees seeking sanctuary in the UK, and have each condemned Russia's actions.

They have agreed to give particular support to families in Devon whose relatives in Ukraine are fleeing the conflict.

Individually, councils have also taken steps to cut Russian links, such as through contracts for energy provision. And any few remaining investments within the Devon Pension Fund, linked to Russian assets, are being sold off quickly.

Devon councils have long worked together, alongside health and voluntary sector partners and local communities, to provide safe sanctuary and resettlement for refugees, most recently Syrian families and those fleeing conflict in Afghanistan.

The Leader of Devon County Council and Chair of the Team Devon partnership of authorities, Cllr John Hart said: "We are deeply concerned for those desperate people escaping conflict in Ukraine in huge numbers. We agreed that we have a duty to do what we can in Devon to support families fleeing Ukraine to join their family members here in the UK."

The government has outlined support for up to 200,000 Ukrainian refugees under 'temporary visa concessions'. And further visas are being granted to those currently within the UK, including specific groups of workers, students and other visitors.

Already Devon District Councils are receiving offers of accommodation from Devon residents, for Ukrainian families.

Cllr Bob Deed, Chair of the Devon Districts Forum and Leader of Mid Devon District Council, said: “Our communities across Devon have already shown a willingness to help the

people of Ukraine and I am glad that our councils can work together, in the coming days and months, to offer assistance to people whose lives have been changed immeasurably by this war. While details of local support are being drawn up I would encourage anyone who wishes to help to donate to the UK's emergency fund.”

And today, the UK Disasters Emergency Committee has launched its Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, drawing together funding and action across major charities and Non-Governmental Organisations to support people displaced through the conflict. The government has pledged to match up to £20 million of any donations from the public.

The fastest way to donate to a DEC appeal is by donating online. Visit <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

Alternatively you can call 01204 770822, or use other ways to donate. <https://dechelp.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/200731191-Donations-Gift-Aid>

Or visit your local Council's website:

South Hams District Council: <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/stand-with-ukraine>

West Devon Borough Council: <https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/stand-with-ukraine>

### **Step On Grant To Help South Hams Step Out Of Housing Crisis**

An innovative new pilot scheme to help local people to get on the housing ladder and boost the number of homes available at an affordable rent will launch on 1 April 2022.

With house prices rocketing and the number of rental properties hitting rock bottom, South Hams District Council has looked beyond traditional solutions to pull the district out of the current housing crisis.

Now, with the launch of the Step On grant, up to £5,000 will be given to anyone who is currently renting a social housing property to help them purchase a shared ownership home. As well as giving practical support to help more local people step on the housing ladder, it will also free up more homes for rent at an affordable price. It's believed this pioneering grant scheme is the first of its kind in the UK and it is part of a suite of initiatives planned by the Council to tackle the housing situation.

The Step On scheme has been specifically designed to help local people who aspire to own their own home but struggle to save the deposit necessary. It will give an extra helping hand towards the purchase of a shared ownership home, funding up to 100% of the deposit required to purchase up to 30% of a shared ownership home (to a maximum value of £5,000).

Initially £60,000 has been allocated to the scheme, funded through the government's New Homes Bonus Grant. It sits as a sister scheme to the downsizing Tenant Incentive Scheme, which is for anyone who is currently over occupying a Housing Association property and who moves to a smaller home. Earlier this year, the Council made changes to this scheme to increase the cash payment to maximum of £5,000 and has since received a positive amount of interest.

There are currently over 170 new shared ownership homes of various sizes in the pipeline for communities across the South Hams. This includes new homes in Dartmouth, Woolwell and Chillington, offering choice for local people who want to remain in the area they love, close to friends, family and support networks.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: “We all know that steep house prices and a shortage of homes for rent mean many local people are struggling to find a home. We have shared ownership homes being built around the district to meet local needs. However, with house prices and the cost of living going up, we know that finding the money for a deposit is keeping this just out of reach for some.

“We need bold, innovative solutions if we are going to make a positive difference. With this scheme we’re looking to give practical help to those people who would like to buy their own home but have not been able to save the deposit. By providing up to £5,000, which will not need to be paid back, we can give local residents a helping hand to step on the housing ladder. This in turn, would allow their homes to become available for re-let to a household on the housing register, helping us to help even more people.”

The new pilot Step On scheme is part of a comprehensive strategy to address the housing crisis, which the Council declared in September 2021. 12 action points have been identified as key to tackle the problem which sees more and more local people and families facing homelessness or having to leave the district.

It will launch at the same time as a number of national changes that aim to make shared ownership more affordable for more people. From April 1, the new Homes England shared ownership funding scheme will allow buyers to start purchasing shares from 10% (currently 25-30%). There will also be a change to responsibility for repairs and maintenance of the home. From April 1, these costs will be covered by the Housing Provider for the first 10 years, so new owners won’t need to worry about finding additional funds if something needs repairing.

However, it is worth noting all sites with shared ownership elements currently under construction in the South Hams have been funded by the previous funding mechanism. This means that people purchasing a shared ownership home will not benefit from these national changes in the immediate future.

How does shared ownership work?

Shared ownership is a scheme that enables households to buy a share in a property (currently usually between 20% and 75% of the home’s value). A subsidised rent is payable on the remaining share, which held by the Registered Provider (normally a housing association). You’ll also have the ability to purchase additional shares in the future if you want.

Is it affordable?

The combined monthly cost of your mortgage and rent will normally be less than if purchasing a property outright. Shared ownership also gives you the chance to get on the property ladder with a lower mortgage.

Am I eligible for shared ownership?

To be eligible for a shared ownership property, the annual household income can be no more than £80,000.

For more information, take a look at [www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership/](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/shared-ownership/)

Read these frequently asked questions about shared ownership  
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How much could you borrow? Take a look at this shared ownership mortgage calculator  
[www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/mortgage-calculator/](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/help-to-buy-schemes/mortgage-calculator/)

Watch the video:

[https://youtu.be/wGE9\\_2GDndI](https://youtu.be/wGE9_2GDndI)

You can find out more about shared ownership, and other affordable housing options, at the Council's new dedicated website at [www.seamoorhomes.co.uk](http://www.seamoorhomes.co.uk)

### **Local Leisure Centres in a Fit Position to Support the Community**

The role of our leisure centres in supporting community wellbeing was highlighted by South Hams District Council's Executive Committee when they met on 3 March. At the meeting, councillors discussed a report regarding Fusion Lifestyle, the charity that manages Quayside, The Pavilions, Dartmouth and Ivybridge leisure centres. It examined how Fusion has juggled the challenges of essential closures and social distancing whilst still serving this vital role within our communities.

The committee agreed to continue to support Fusion in the short term as it works hard to encourage more people back through their doors. It will do this by lowering the management fee in the short-term up to 2024. From 2024 the fee will be increased above what was originally outlined when the contract was awarded in 2016. As a result, the total amount that will be paid over the 25-year contract period will remain the same.

We all know that good access to local leisure and sporting facilities can help to improve mental wellbeing and physical health. As well as providing expertise and equipment to get people active, the Fusion team work with local organisations and host events including local youth nights. The local leisure centres also serve as a hub within their community for people to meet up. However, the pandemic has resulted in big challenges for public sport and leisure services. For example, they have been hit by both long closure periods and higher running costs.

Some people are still nervous to return to enjoying the facilities at their local leisure centre. The report shows that participation across all the Fusion leisure centres in the South Hams is now back to 76% of pre-pandemic levels (looking at December 2021 figures compared to March 2020)

These local figures are in line with the national trend for leisure centres following COVID. National research reveals that while public leisure centres have shown a steady rate of

recovery since reopening in March, there are still former participants that have not returned, with recovery rates settling at just above 70%.

Throughout the pandemic, South Hams District Council provided a financial lifeline for many local organisations, allocating government grants to ensure they could survive the lockdowns. Fusion Lifestyle, received £435,000 from this Council to enable the leisure centres to re-open and the service to be maintained during 2020/21. As well Fusion received from the Council its share of the National Leisure Recovery Fund for £160,000 last March.

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, South Hams District Council Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing said: “Our leisure centres are more than just a place to get active – they’re a place to get together with others. This not only benefits our physical health but also to our mental health too. Investing and supporting public leisure facilities is an investment in ill-health prevention. Our financial support to Fusion during the pandemic meant that when things did open up, our leisure centres were still there for local people to use. Now we are reviewing what plans the centres have moving forward and what further support we can give as a Council to secure these most important facilities for local people.

“It has been a very challenging time for many businesses, including the leisure industry. It’s good news that the number of people using our local centres is creeping back up. However, if even more residents support the centres in their town we can offer more activities for the benefit of everyone in the community. I hope that the programme of activities planned by the team at Fusion will see more local people using the excellent facilities that we have available in the South Hams.”

Quayside, Pavilions, Dartmouth and Ivybridge leisure centres were able to re-open as planned on 12 April 2021 following the last national lockdown.

Throughout the pandemic and since re-opening, Fusion has offered members and local people a variety of incentives to get together to get active. This includes online classes, free gym and swim passes for local residents, and a ‘mid-week mile challenge’ on National Fitness Day. In February 2022 the centres opened their doors for open day events. Lots of local people took the opportunity to enjoy the free activities and taster sessions, which had to be booked in advance.

In 2016, the Council signed a Design Build Maintain and Operate contract with Fusion for the two leisure centres in West Devon. The contract is for 25 years and allows the Council to bring in expertise and experience in managing a discretionary service for public leisure centres. In the recently adopted ‘Better Lives For All’ strategic plan for the South Hams, ‘improving open space, sport and recreation’ is a core focus area. A key action within the Thematic Delivery Plan is to secure the provision of high quality and accessible leisure services. This includes a £1.5m investment in Totnes leisure centre.

### **Your views on plans for climate change measures in all new development**

Developers planning to build new homes or any development in Plymouth, the South Hams and West Devon will have to incorporate measures that will help owners tackle climate change as soon as they move in.

Features such as solar panels, ground or air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging facilities will be fitted as standard on all new homes and commercial buildings under proposals being put forward in the draft Plymouth and South West Devon Climate Emergency Planning Policy and Guidance.

Other measures will see more habitat and green space designed into developments, which increases biodiversity and brings health and wellbeing benefits to residents. These measures will also go some way to mitigate against rising global temperatures.

We've launched a consultation to get the views of residents, campaigners and developers across the area about the proposals, which if approved, could come into effect as early as June.

The proposals would apply to all new planning applications for all new buildings, including some extensions across the Joint Local Plan area – an area covering 2,126 square kilometres, with a population of 401,567.

Since 2014, across the area, around 10,000 new homes have been built and around 14,700 have planning consent with 1,474 currently under construction. The new measures, if they get the green light, would apply to new planning applications only.

Most of these measures will soon be a requirement under the Government's new building regulations, and will have to be included in new development. This means the costs will soon be non-negotiable and all three councils are keen to ensure that affordable homes in particular have these features fitted as standard.

Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon already work closely together through the Joint Local Plan and councillors across each of the local authorities have signed up to this new policy proposal.

The climate emergency planning policy and guidance consultation will run for seven weeks from midday on Thursday 3 March 2022 until Thursday 21 April 2022.

Get involved in the climate conversation and visit [www.plymouth.gov.uk/climate-planning](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/climate-planning) by 21 April 2022 to let us have your views.

### **South Hams Garden Waste Service Restarts**

South Hams District Council's contracted garden waste service is restarting in the spring, just in time for residents to make the most of the growing season by recycling their garden waste.

FCC Environment Ltd, who operate the service on behalf of the District Council, will begin collections once again from the week beginning Monday 28 March.

The fortnightly service was reluctantly, and temporarily, suspended in August 2021 due to the severe national driver shortages, which caused issues for all business sectors across the country, to lessen the impacts to the waste, recycling and clinical collections. Since then, a recruitment campaign has managed to recruit more drivers and loaders allowing the garden waste collections to restart.

As usual your garden waste bin will be emptied the opposite week to your grey bin. From the 25 March you can double check when your next collection day will be through the Council's website.

To make sure as many bins as possible can be emptied quickly and efficiently, please make sure bins are not too heavy for staff to collect safely. There are weight restrictions on the bin lifts and compacted garden waste can become heavy when it starts breaking down.

If a bin is too heavy, it is at risk of being rejected. Therefore, please remove some of the garden waste before collection is due and save this for the next collection date. Only one brown bin will be collected so crews can get around as many properties as possible, as quickly as they possibly can.

Cllr Keith Baldry, Executive Member for South Hams District Council, said: "I'm delighted to announce that as promised, the garden waste service is restarting this spring. Residents will have this service back at the kerbside at the end of March in time for spring for the gardening season. This will make gardening tasks easier and more enjoyable by having their bin collected from the kerbside."

"We are reinstating the fortnightly service exactly as it was before, this means that one week your garden waste bin will be emptied and the following week your grey bin will be emptied. If you are unsure when your first garden waste collection will take place, you will be able to check it on the Council's website from Friday 25 March".

The Council is asking that residents put their bin out by 7am at their collection points on their scheduled day.

There is also helpful advice and information of what can go into the brown bin, along with some frequently asked questions.

[www.southhams.gov.uk/garden-waste-restart](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/garden-waste-restart)

Don't forget the service will continue as it has in the past with collections of brown bins being made once a fortnight. Information on Garden Waste Collection dates can be found on the Council's website from Friday 25 March.