

## **October 2021 notes for Parish Councils**

### **Mobile Booster Voucher Scheme**

Connecting Devon and Somerset

Do you live in a rural community? Do you have poor indoor mobile coverage? If so, then this voucher scheme may be of interest to you.

Connecting Devon and Somerset have a scheme, funded through the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's (HotSWLEP) Growth Deal, which allows businesses and households to apply for an £800 voucher which can be used to buy a mobile signal booster from a registered scheme supplier. The booster will in turn help to improve indoor mobile coverage for the premises in question by improving 4G coverage.

It is up to the applicant to research which of the suppliers can install in their area and which one is best to go with for their specific needs. Getting in touch with the supplier directly to redeem the voucher and have the equipment installed at the premises.

To find out more from the Connecting Devon and Somerset website and to apply using their application form.

### **Get together to grow our local economy**

Do you have an idea for collab with another local business? Have you considered organising a community activity or event but need money to turn your idea into a reality? If so, we want to hear from you.

We have government funding available for organisations across the South Hams and West Devon that want to do something that will benefit others in our community and help to grow the local economy.

What business ideas can the funding support?

Your plans need to make a positive difference to your local community or at least one other local business.

This is a brand new initiative and we're looking forward to hearing the creative and new ideas from local organisations that want to take this opportunity for financial help to get together with others.

However, here's an example to get you started thinking about how this could work. For example, a local drinks producer links up with a local artisan bottle producer to create a limited edition range and collaborates with a local artist for a series of new labels.

As well as funding collaborations, we also want to help businesses to set up activities that have an impact on their local community too. Using the drinks producer example again, the business could apply for a grant to help them to link up with local food and entertainment suppliers to stage a festival for local people, which results in a community wellbeing benefit.

Organisations can also profit from these activities – for example, they could sell tickets – the idea is that we are dropping this money into the economy but want to see it grow and help even more people locally rather than just one business.

How much could I get?

It is anticipated that the majority of grants to be awarded will be valued between £2,000 and £10,000. However grants up to £30,000 will be considered for exceptional and innovative schemes that can show a wide range of benefits for the local economy and community.

How to apply

From 1 November 2021, eligible organisations with a relevant project can fill out the application form on our website.

Please note, the application form will not be available to complete until 1 November 2021. You'll need to give us the following information:

Details about your organisation

A summary project proposal in less than 200 words describing the project and the intended benefits to the local economy and communities

Total project cost

Amount of award requested from the Community Recovery Grant

Up to 100 words on the expected outcomes and how you will demonstrate meeting these.

Applications close on 30 November 2021. A thorough application with clear benefits for the community will be more likely to receive funding than one submitted quickly.

### **Council Reluctantly Suspend Garden Waste Collection Until Spring**

To avoid further significant disruption to South Hams District Council's refuse and recycling service, the Executive Committee have today reluctantly agreed to continue the suspension of the garden waste collections until spring 2022.

Council officers have explored a wide range of options to find possible ways to restore the garden waste service to all residents. Unfortunately, due to driver shortages, the Council and their contractor, FCC Environment, are unable to reinstate the service until Spring 2022; otherwise, this could significantly impact the waste, recycling and clinical collections that the Council legally has to provide.

Officers have also approached other organisations to help with a one-off collection ahead of the winter but this has not been possible because of the operational challenges others are also facing as well as the national driver shortages.

The Council are extremely regretful that the suspension at short notice caused disruption for their residents who may have had outstanding green waste to be collected. A shortage of drivers in August due to the national HGV driver issues and staff sickness meant the Council,

together with FCC Environment, had to make the tough decision to prioritise the general refuse and recycling and clinical collections.

South Hams is not alone with experiencing significant delays due to the HGV driver shortages, experienced both nationally and across all business sectors. Locally, there have been challenges, which were highlighted by FCC Environment to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 13 October.

FCC Environment explained that they currently have 27% of unfilled HGV/LGV vacancies, which continue to affect refuse and recycling collections. Council officers are looking at greener ways to support residents to recycle their garden waste and will report back to Executive in December.

South Hams District Council remains the only council in Devon to provide a completely free of charge. The collection of garden waste is a non-statutory service, which means it is not one that the Council has to provide.

Cllr Keith Baldry, Executive Member for Environment, said: “We haven’t had a great set of options available to choose from, and we have chosen the best of the group.

“I greatly regret that we have to suspend the garden waste service but the alternatives available would mean further disruption for our communities with impacts to their waste and recycling collections, which we’re doing our very best to improve upon.

“Officers have worked tirelessly, doing everything in their power to try and find a resolution and I’d like to thank and congratulate them for their hard work. They’ve been contacting neighbouring local authorities and private waste companies to see if they can provide us with help to collect a one-off garden waste collection. Unfortunately, all came back with a resounding no, due to their own driver shortages and backlogs.

“I regret that we did not have time to write to all residents in August when we first suspended our service. We learnt from our mistake and this time, we will be writing a letter to every resident explaining the situation and offering our apologies.

“I’d like to thank you, our residents, for your continued patience, we know it has been difficult, but please bear with us. I am proud of the relatively high recycling rates in South Hams and I want them to get better, not worse. In the meantime, please continue to home compost or take your garden waste to recycling centres.”

So, how do you get rid of your green waste?

Compost your garden waste - here are some [www.recycledevon.org/in-the-garden/how-to-compost](http://www.recycledevon.org/in-the-garden/how-to-compost) tips. Please don’t put garden waste in the grey waste bin.

Use recycle centres - All three recycling centres located in the South Hams are operated by Devon County Council and take garden waste. Full details, including opening hours, can be found at: [www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/centre](http://www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/centre)

Use a licensed waste collector who will responsibly take away your garden, or household, waste items. Please check first with the Environment Agency to see if they are registered: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>

Please do not burn your garden waste. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service firmly advises against having bonfires, given the risks of fires spreading, the likely nuisance for neighbours and the potential diversion of emergency services. You can find out more here: [www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/Bonfires](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/Bonfires)

You can find out more from the Executive meeting here: [www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive)

## **Housing Support Fund**

Members will have seen announcement this week of new funding for household support.

The DWP has released draft documentation regarding the fund:

Funding is going to upper tier and unitary authorities

Devon County Council is receiving around £5-million

Authorities are able to add their own funding or partner contributions from local organisations on top of the grant, including seeking match funding from local community foundations.

Upper tier authorities are encouraged to work collaboratively with districts and other organisations to identify a broad range of vulnerable households across their local area, including working closely with professionals who work directly with vulnerable households such as Social Workers and Supporting Families advisers.

Scheme runs from 6 October to 31 March 2022

DCC is expected to provide DWP with a summary of how they are planning to spend the HSF by 29 October 2021.

Minimum of 50% of fund to be used for families with children, but can not be limited to just them

Expectation is that the Fund should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills.

It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs

In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need

In exceptional circumstances, it can be used for rent arrears accrued prior to eligibility to HB or UC housing costs element, but this should not be a priority of the scheme

Grant payments will be made to authorities in arrears on receipt of a fully completed and verified MI return, therefore after 21 January 2022 and 22 April 2022.

Primary purposes defined but details up to individual authorities to decide:

Food (primary purpose)

Energy & water (primary purpose)

Essentials linked to energy & water (can be used for)

Wider essentials (can be used for)

Housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where other support e.g. HB, UCHC, DHP not available)

Not to be used for debt advice

A portion of funding (not defined) can be used for admin costs

Not to be used for mortgage costs

Not to be tied to employment status

Not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits (but DWP will be providing relevant UC data and access to Searchlight to enable this if needed. Relevant UC data is UC claimants in the area of the Authority whose income is below the Free School Meal and Free Prescription thresholds, and those with a Limited Capability for Work indicator, for both individuals and at summary level by Ward.)

Authorities can request applications for support or proactively identify households who may benefit, or a mixture of both

No requirement to undertake a means test or benefit check

Scheme can be delivered through a variety of routes e.g. vouchers, direct provision of food, grants to third parties

Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area

Rules given by DWP:

a) the Authority must ensure that:

i) at least 50% of the grant is allocated to support households that include:

- a person who will be under the age of 19 as at 31st March 2022, or
- a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit is paid or free school meals are provided during the Grant Period, and

ii) up to 50% of the grant is used to assist other households, and

b) the Authority is to ensure that the grant is primarily allocated to support with the costs of food, energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the Scheme guidance.

c) in exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency, the Authority may allocate grant funds to support with housing costs as set out in the Scheme guidance.

Next steps:

Devon County Council is to host an initial discussion meeting next week.

DWP have arranged a LA Conference call on 11 October 2021 at 2pm.

We will provide Members with additional detail next week.

### **Market Traders update**

Apply now to receive up to £1,000.

If you run a stall at markets held in either the South Hams or West Devon, you could now receive up to £1,000.

It's quick and simple to apply online:

Please apply as soon as you have collected any evidence required as this scheme will close on 31 October 2021.

Who can get the grant?

Stall holders who regularly attend markets in towns including Tavistock, Okehampton, Hatherleigh, Ivybridge, Totnes, Kingsbridge and Dartmouth will all be eligible for this one-off payment.

The grant does not apply to those who only trade at occasional markets, such as craft and food fairs or seasonal markets, or to new traders starting since April 2021.

How much can I get?

The amount you'll receive will depend on how often you trade in the South Hams or West Devon and your usual monthly costs.

If your application is successful, you will receive either £500 or £1,000. You will be notified of the amount you will receive in the email we will send to you after your application has been reviewed.

How do I apply?

Go to our website.

West Devon market traders [click here](#).

South Hams market traders [click here](#).

Here you can find more information and can fill in our quick and easy form.

We'll need some basic information from you including:

Your trading frequency and any market locations you trade from.

Your average monthly business expenses.

Bank details and a bank statement with transaction history for three months.

We will begin assessing applications on 1 November 2021, and we will send you an email letting you know the outcome of your application.

We expect payments on all approved market trader grant applications to be completed by 1 December 2021.

Why is this money being given out?

We've allocated money for our market trader support scheme from the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme. This grant is designed to help all businesses who were impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that many of our market traders were able to get financial support through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). This grant is being offered in addition to that to provide an extra boost.

### **Overwhelming Public Support for Council's Rewilding Plans**

A recent consultation held by South Hams District Council, has had overwhelming public support for its plans to increase biodiversity and wildlife value by at least 10%. The proposals to rewild some of the 50 hectares (Ha) of council-owned land are part of the Council's commitment to stop biodiversity loss.

A report of the findings will be heard at Executive on Thursday 14 October.

The Council had a huge response to the consultation with over 1,000 respondents, with almost all replying positively (97%) in favour of improving biodiversity in the District.

A large proportion of replies (90%) were also happy with proposals to relax grass-cutting regimes, leaving areas of long grass along the verges and edges of parks, as well as introducing planting of new areas of wildflowers.

These proposals would mean 10Ha land of wilder green space, 3.5Ha of wildflower areas and 3.5Ha of new tree planting. These small rewilding areas could support pollinators, along with a range of diverse wildlife such as reptiles, amphibians, birds, small mammals, and bats.

There was also a range of varied and excellent suggestions from the public to incorporate into proposals as they evolve.

Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, Cllr Tom Holway, said: "I'm delighted that so many people have engaged with this consultation because it's such an important issue. Rewilding is a great way to make a big difference to biodiversity at a local level, even with the small amount of land that we're talking about.

"There is still lots to plan and put into place, but with public support, we're well on our way. It's very exciting to think how these habitats will change and grow for the benefit of numerous types of wildlife.

"It would be wonderful if residents also embraced the rewilding idea in parts of their gardens too to really make the biggest possible impact to the District. We can all do our bit if we ensure less frequent grass cutting, more wildflower planting and, where we can, allocate some space to pond areas in our gardens, this will all help to support insect populations and absorb carbon from the air."

Now that the consultation has returned a favourable response to the idea of rewilding, a proposals green 'grass' site map will be created using the Council's Interactive Map feature. Further consulting with councillors, Town and Parish Councils over the specific detail of

proposals will then take place to ensure the approach fits with the aspirations of local residents and to assess their impact within each community.

The full report can be found here: [www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive)

A further report will come back to committee in January with the next steps.

To read more about South Hams District Council's Climate Change Declaration, visit: [www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk)

### **Council Puts Housing Motions in Action**

Just two weeks after declaring a housing crisis, and agreeing 12 actions for tackling the issues, South Hams District Council's Leader, Cllr Judy Pearce, as promised, is taking immediate action to tackle the housing crisis and putting her agreed motions into action.

When the Executive committee meet on 14 October, Cllr Pearce will be asking them to consider in more detail the first steps she wants to take in her plan to tackle the housing crisis, they include:

Changing a policy to further incentivise people to downsize, in order to free up larger homes for larger families

Consider changes to the way affordable housing contributions are spent to make the best use of available funds

Agreeing to form a Community Benefit Society – a company so that the Council can own and manage a stock of rented homes

Agreeing the content of a letter to Michael Gove MP

Exploring building modular low carbon homes that would be owned by the Council

Cllr Judy Pearce said: "I said at the meeting of our Full Council that we needed to take action now and this is exactly why I have brought this paper to my Executive Committee so quickly.

"I said that we would lobby Government and when the Executive meet next week, I will be asking them to approve the content of my letter to Michael Gove MP. Many of the issues we face cannot be solved at a local level, and we need the Government to step in and also take action.

"If Mr Gove can take the four actions we are asking of him, it would have a significant, timely and targeting positive impact for our residents."

The four issues that Cllr Pearce will be asking Mr Gove to tackle are:

- 1) the problems of developers sat on planning permissions that are not being built
- 2) closing the current business rates loophole on second homes; and
- 3) addressing the problems of the local housing allowance being too low
- 4) To lobby Government to allow local councils to be able to charge up to 200% Council Tax on second / holiday homes as they do in Wales

Since 2018 there has been a significant increase in the number of people on the Housing waiting list, plus a significant decrease in the number of new rental properties available.

Since 2002, the ratio of the average house price to average earnings has increased from 6.8 to over 10. The average salary in the South Hams last year was recorded as £31k, while the average house price was £310k.

A typical mortgage would therefore require a deposit of £170.5k, which is beyond the means of the vast majority of local people to save.

There are currently 70 households registered on Devon Home Choice who would like to downsize. The Council already has a policy of providing one off payments to encourage downsizing, but the new policy being brought forward by Cllr Pearce could see that payment is increased to £1000 plus £500 per bedroom to up to £5000 in areas of high demand.

The full report detailing these initial steps and the recommendations Cllr Pearce will be asking of her Executive on the 14 October can be found here:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/Executive)

Or you can watch the meeting live here: [www.youtube.com/user/SouthHamsCouncil](http://www.youtube.com/user/SouthHamsCouncil)

Cllr Pearce added: “I am especially keen that our officers start to respond to the actions I laid out at Full Council and I am pleased to bring forward this new policy that will incentivise people to downsize.”

“Furthermore I will be asking the Executive to give Delegated Authority to Mr Brook, our Director of Place and Enterprise, to take all of the necessary steps to set up a Community Benefit Society. By giving Mr Brook, this authority, he can crack on and get the job done.

“This is what we need now, direct action and this is just the start of the work we will action to tackle this crisis.”