

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

THIS MONTH'S TOPICS:-

Ukraine Update

New car charging points in the South Hams

Councillors Agree Discretionary Council Tax Payment Scheme

Two Thirds of Ivybridge Residents Surveyed Support a New Store

Supporting our Ukrainian Guests Beyond Accommodation

Let's Talk Teenagers

District Council Announces New Civic Chairman

Ukraine Guests Update

Council Chairman Commemorates Queen's Jubilee

New fund looks to make the South Hams' infrastructure greener

New initiative for Landlord Rented Energy Efficient Homes

Ukraine Update

MUGA Makeover in Modbury

District Council Builds Houses for First Time in a Generation

* * * * *

THIS MONTH'S TOPICS IN MORE DETAIL:-

Ukraine Update

We are continuing to see new arrivals and the total in the South Hams is now 84 guests in 36 placements.

Some of our guests have now been in Devon for over a month and our work has naturally turned from visits for impending arrivals, to welcome visits, to see how our Ukrainian guests are settling in.

This week we agreed funding arrangements for both the CA and the CVS to support us provide wrap around support to our guests.

The CA will provide help with employment opportunities, navigating the benefit system, liaising with schools, support with healthcare access, assistance with grant applications and some first stage immigration advice.

They will also link in with the Community Groups to offer support and signpost to the CVS.

The CVS will offer advice and advocacy to the new groups setting up to meet the needs of our guests, with signposting, practical and emotional support, drop in support sessions for families with young children and other events and activities which may provide a welcome break for both hosts and guests.

We have looked to fund this for six months and will be meeting regularly to ensure the scheme meets the needs of those who need it the most.

Steve Daymond will remain the operational lead officer for the Council and any queries about any individuals should continue to come to him.

One of the issues that is starting to bite nationally, is the breakdown of placements. Some of our guests have been with their hosts for over a month now, and the realities of sharing your home with a stranger are starting to show effect.

With Team Devon we are developing a re-matching process with a number of hosts who have expressed interest in the scheme but not yet matched with anyone.

This will enable us to have a network of properties we may be able to offer when a placement breaks down.

The Council does have statutory homeless duties to the Ukrainian refugees and consequently if there is no other option we will arrange temporary accommodation. We are keen to avoid this and a network of ready to go hosts should negate the need.

New car charging points in the South Hams

The first electric charging points will be commissioned the week commencing 13 June at Mayors Avenue car park, Dartmouth as part of the Deletti project. This will provide two electric charging bays for the public to use.

Powered by the renewable energy through a green tariff, the charge points are compatible with all makes of EVs and will fully charge a 50 kWh battery in two to four hours, providing a range of up to 200 miles depending on vehicle specification.

The rate of charge is dictated by the vehicle's inverter however these chargers can deliver enough electricity for up to 88 miles of travel in one hour. This means the points are ideal for both shorter stops, such as shopping trips, and regular charges by residents.

As these points are for public use, they are also available for visitors of Devon wishing to charge their electric vehicle.

The cost to fully charge a 50 kWh battery, providing a range of up to 200 miles, would be in the region of £17.50.

For ease of use, drivers will be able to pay via Scottish Power's app, which is free to download, or through a scannable QR code which will be displayed on the charge point.

Scottish Power do not charge a subscription fee or a minimum vend. Users may need to purchase a parking ticket as normal, please check at each site.

These charging points are part of the larger DELETTI programme, a £1.3 million project which is being largely funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Scottish Power intend to carry out civil works to install the charging point at Creek car park, Salcombe the week commencing the 14 June followed by Western Power Distribution connection works the week commencing 21 June followed by commissioning for use the week commencing 11 July. These dates may be subject to change.

Press releases and social media coverage regarding the EV charging points will be carried out.

Councillors Agree Discretionary Council Tax Payment Scheme

Having already paid £3 million to 20,000 households as part of the £150 Council Tax Rebate Scheme over the past month, the Executive at South Hams District Council met today, Thursday 26 May, to approve an additional scheme to distribute a Discretionary Council Tax Rebate.

Following the Government's announcement for additional support for households in Council Tax Bands A to D, South Hams District Council were awarded £4,332,600. The Council were also awarded an additional £173,700 to support vulnerable households not eligible for the main £150 Council Tax Rebate scheme.

The Council has started to process over 1,200 applications that it has received from those households by those who have already applied online. However there are still 5,000 households that have not claimed, or do not know that they are eligible, including those who already receive reductions in their Council Tax.

The Council has been working on a voucher scheme that eligible households can cash their £150 directly at any Post Office. Households will receive a letter from the Council explaining more about how they will receive this money in the next few weeks.

While this scheme is being set up, the fastest way to get payment still continues to be by filling in a claim form on our website here: www.southhams.gov.uk/rebate-application

The discretionary scheme agreed today will mean that the Council will be able to give payments to residents who are not eligible for the main £150 Council Tax Rebate scheme.

The discretionary scheme will aim to support residents who meet the following criteria:

- Those that live in a Council Tax property band E-H and are currently being paid a Council Tax Reduction Scheme payment

- Those that live in a property where the owner or landlord is responsible for Council Tax, but the household or tenants are directly liable for the energy bills. This could include people living in a house of multiple occupation or someone under the age of 18.
- Those that live in a Council Tax property band E-H and not currently being paid a Council Tax Reduction Scheme payment, but have savings of no more than £6,000 and a weekly net income less than the following:
 - £250 for a single person
 - £320 for a couple
 - £400 for a family (lone parent or couple) with one dependent child
 - £500 for a family (lone parent or couple) with more than one dependent child

If the Council has any funding remaining, the Executive will discuss a further set of criteria in July.

Cllr Nicky Hopwood, Executive Member for Council Tax and Housing Benefits, said: “There are still over 5,000 households that have not yet claimed this rebate. Our team have been working on a scheme where residents can claim their £150 from the Post Office. This is another method to make it easier for our residents to cash their voucher at any Post Office. However, this will take a few weeks to set up, so residents can still choose to get their £150 by completing the claim form on our website.

"If our staff do need to contact you, they will not ask for your bank details, personal data or passwords over the telephone. If we need further information, you will be asked to provide it on our website www.southhams.gov.uk

“Please be careful and watch out for scammers who could try to cold call you to gain access to your bank account details. If you are in any doubt at all, please contact us directly. We would rather you check with us than be scammed.”

"If you don't qualify for these rebates, there is a range of other direct and indirect financial support available on our website through our Support Directory. This is a one-stop guide on where to go for help that we offer, and that provided from other organisations on a wide range of subjects.”

South Hams District Council's, Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, said: "Unlike the main fund where the Government allocate who gets what, this time we are able to clearly see where the discretionary money needs to go. We want to make sure that we help our most vulnerable residents who missed out on the main £150 payments.

“There is sometimes a misconception that because you live in a bigger house, that you don't need financial help, but that isn't always the case. There are many reasons why people struggle with energy bills, so it's important not to judge others.

“As always our aim is to get the money out of the door and into the pockets of the residents who need it as quickly as we can.

To find out about the range of support on offer, both from the Council and other organisations, please visit the Council's Support Directory here:

www.southhams.gov.uk/support-directory

Two Thirds of Ivybridge Residents Surveyed Support a New Store

Ahead of the planning decision expected in July for the District Council's Ivybridge Regeneration Project, there have been lots of questions and interest from the public.

South Hams District Council want to take the opportunity to explain the thinking behind the proposals. Here they answer some of the frequently asked questions.

Before starting this journey, the Council carried out a public consultation, which showed that 66% (of nearly 2,000) respondents felt a new supermarket would improve footfall into the town centre and supported the proposals.

As a result of public support, the Council took a decision to proceed in February 2021.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions to what will happen IF the planning application is approved and the project goes ahead.

What will happen to the car park during the construction phase?

During construction there will be some capacity challenges; however, the Council will put in place measures to limit the difficulties as far as possible.

These include:

A free park and ride shuttle bus service running throughout the day, from the train station car park to Leonard's Road car park, funded entirely by the District Council.

In addition to around 25 extra parking spaces provided next to the leisure centre.

What will happen to the car park when the project is complete?

The capacity of the car park will be maintained offering a mix of free, short and long stay car parking options and prices. Permit holders will still be able to park within the car park as usual.

How will the development help with economic regeneration of the town?

An independent economic assessment commissioned by South Hams District Council called the CACI Report carried out at the same time as the residents' public survey in 2020 forecast that the new store would see 13,000 additional trips made to the high street boosting footfall within the town centre.

The report estimated that this would result in 16% more money and being spent in the high street. The economic study reported that residents were still shown to support their local independent shops through 'cross shopping'.

Why is the store in the centre of town and not on the outskirts?

The project was envisaged to meet the aims of the town's Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure retail growth within the town centre to increase the town's economy and anchor other retailers to the centre.

The Plan states that it wants to limit retail developments outside of the town centre to ensure shoppers remain on the high street.

What about the skate park?

The District Council has a strong track record of delivering parks and sports facilities for communities. In this instance, the planning permission will see the replacement of the existing skate park with a new facility close by.

A suitable site has been found alongside the river, at the back of the leisure centre and will be developed as part of the project.

A South Hams District Council's spokesperson, said: "It is important to remember what our residents were consulted upon in 2020 which resulted in strong public support for the project at that time.

"It is a live planning application and understandably this is attracting a lot of interest. We recognise the concerns raised and we continue to work hard to address these.

"The Council welcomes all feedback throughout the process and we hope that residents will take the time to submit their views through the planning portal."

To find out more about the Ivybridge Regeneration project and to have your say on the application, please go to:

www.engagement.southhams.gov.uk/ivybridge-regeneration-project

Supporting our Ukrainian Guests Beyond Accommodation

This week we've continued discussions with a number of partner agencies to ensure we develop a co-ordinated support package for Ukrainian guests.

One of the discussions we SH and WD held was with Public Health. From our initial discussions with guests, many have only had one Covid-19 vaccination, and the majority of children over 5 have had none.

Attached is a timetable of upcoming Covid-19 vaccination drop ins. Ukrainian guests will not need an NHS number in order to take up a vaccination.

Also attached to today's bulletin is a 'How the NHS Works' leaflet in both English and Ukrainian.

Please do share with any community groups or hosts you know that are supporting our Ukrainian guests.

Next week we'll give you the detail of the support that we've agreed with our CVS and Citizens Advice organisations.

Let's Talk Teenagers

After the success of the first Let's Talk Teenagers sessions piloted earlier this year, a second series of the online sessions will be held in June.

These sessions are an opportunity for parents and carers of teenagers to hear about the challenges young people are facing today whilst being offered tips, techniques and resources to explore for more help and support.

Funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Safer Devon Partnership, South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership and Teignbridge Council for Voluntary Service, these evening, 90 minute sessions will be running on consecutive Wednesdays at 7.00pm on 15, 22 and 29 June. Designed to empower parents and carers to support their teenagers through the challenges they are faced with daily, topics covered include:

substance misuse

exploitation

healthy relationships

safety online

social risks

Please feel free to promote the sessions by sharing information with your communities and partners.

District Council Announces New Civic Chairman

South Hams District Council has announced at its Annual Council Meeting that its new Chairman will be Cllr Lance Austen.

Cllr Austen, Ward Member for Ivybridge West, accepted the chain of office on Thursday 19 May, from the outgoing Chairman, Cllr Richard Foss.

A resident of Ivybridge for over 25 years, Cllr Austen previously worked in business before lecturing in accountancy. Cllr Austen is married with two daughters and in his spare time, he enjoys walking on Dartmoor.

This is the second time Cllr Austen has been a councillor for South Hams District Council. He was first elected for a four-year period from 1999 to 2003 and was again re-elected to the Council in May 2019.

Cllr Austen has a lot of political experience and over his time as a councillor, he has been a member of many Council Committees including Audit, Development Management (Planning) and Overview and Scrutiny. He has enjoyed the role of Vice Chairman of the Council since May 2021, supporting Cllr Foss in his position as Chairman.

Receiving his chain of office, Cllr Austen said: "Can I start by saying that it is a real honour to be Chairman of South Hams District Council.

“The last time I drove from Ivybridge to a Full Annual Council meeting that was held in this Chamber was on 16 May 2019, three years ago. In the last three years, the Council has been through what can only be described as the most extraordinary time and there are members of the Council that I would like to thank in particular for their work during this time.

“Cllr Rosemary Rowe was Chair of the Council in March 2020 when the Prime Minister announced that, “now is the time for everyone to stop non-essential contact and travel”. She chaired the Council through Full Council, Zoom calls that had never been undertaken before. She then passed on the position to Cllr Richard Foss who has been an outstanding Chairman over this last year.

“One year ago at the Full Council Annual Meeting, we were in Kilworthy Park in Tavistock with plastic screens covering the room. That is not an easy situation to chair a Full Council meeting in. It is a great credit to Cllr Foss and to Cllr Rowe that our meetings have run so well throughout this challenging time.

“Follaton House was used as a vaccination centre during the pandemic and this Council Chamber has been transformed in the last few years. My own view is that the Council Chamber is a now much better and more reflective of the modern council that South Hams is.

“The District Council has administered 12 different business grant schemes on behalf of the Government over the last few years, paying out a total of £85.9million to businesses in the area. I know from my own ward in Ivybridge that these grants have been a lifeline for residents and businesses and have made a huge impact on the lives of many.

“Almost 20,000 individual grant awards were made to businesses across the various schemes. This has been an enormous undertaking by the Council and its officers. At the start of the pandemic, we had no idea we would be asked to undertake this mammoth task and I would like to thank the officers on the Council for their hard work and flexibility in adapting to that challenge.

“Finally, I would like to mention our current guests coming to the District from Ukraine. To date the Council has supported guests and hosts with welcome payments, support in applying for welfare benefits, national insurance assistance and help getting school places. We are providing free membership to our leisure centres and I am sure that over the next year we will see the demand for this assistance rise. With that in mind, I have decided to make the Chairman’s charity this year the British Red Cross, Ukraine Crisis Appeal.

“I am looking forward to representing the Council in the position of Chairman over the coming year and would like to thank you again for this opportunity.”

Cllr Bernard Taylor, Ward Member for Charterlands was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

The following committee positions were confirmed during the Council meeting.

Audit Committee

Cllr Lance Austen - Chairman

Cllr Barrie Spencer – Vice Chairman

Development Management Committee

Cllr Richard Foss – Chairman

Cllr Rosemary Rowe – Vice Chairman

Licensing Committee

Cllr Daniel Brown – Chairman

Cllr Rosemary Rowe – Vice Chairman

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Dan Thomas – Chairman

Cllr Peter Smerdon – Vice Chairman

Salcombe Harbour Board

Cllr Julian Brazil – Chairman

Council Tax Setting

Cllr Judy Pearce - Leader

Retiring from his position of Chairman, Cllr Richard Foss, said: “I have thoroughly enjoyed my year, in particular the debates at the Council meetings which have been challenging due to the pandemic causing many issues.

“I thoroughly recommend anyone to take the chair if given the opportunity. I would like to thank the officers who have supported me and in particular the Chief Executive, and Leader, when at times matters raised have not been easy to resolve.

“On the civic side there have been a few functions that I have attended and again thoroughly enjoyed although tinged with a little sadness that my wife and long term sole mate was not by my side, the invite to the Lord High Admiral’s divisions at the Dartmouth Royal Naval College was the highlight of the year.

“I would like to thank all those who have contributed to my charities the Devon Air Ambulance and Cancer research raising £1603.00. I would like to dedicate this amount to my wife Judy, who in the past has raised many tens of thousand pounds for these charities.

“Finally, I hope that Cllr Lance Austen enjoys his year as much as I have.”

To watch the Annual Council and to see other appointments to committees made during this meeting, go to: www.youtube.com/user/SouthHamsCouncil

Ukraine Guests Update

We have received some updated information in relation to the guests we can expect in South Hams.

We have been notified of 61 host properties that will be occupied by 184 Ukrainian guests. This will be 98 adults and 86 children.

We have currently been notified of 60 guest arrivals in our area. These number grow every week with new information being made available from Devon County.

Some of our guests have been resident for over a month now, so the first monthly arrears 'Thank You' payments will be made to hosts from next week.

To date we have been supporting guests and hosts with welcome payments, support in applying for welfare benefits, national insurance numbers and school places to name a few.

We have also supported 19 guests in receiving free membership to Fusion. However, the official welcome visits will commence next week following procedural agreement with Team Devon colleagues.

Many of the Team Devon discussions continue to be focused on how the funding allocations will work. As Members will know, for each guest arriving through the scheme, the government will provide funding to Councils of £10,500. It is still unclear exactly how this funding will be split.

This afternoon discussions are taking with the CVS about the role they will play in supporting our Ukrainian guests and with Public Health about how we can support Ukrainians with getting access to Covid-19 vaccinations – as we know that many of the guests have only had one vaccination to date. More on this next week.

Council Chairman Commemorates Queen's Jubilee

Cllr Richard Foss, Chairman of South Hams District Council has planted a tree at Follaton Arboretum, Totnes, to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

This is the final tree to be planted within a series of projects, to have taken place across the South Hams during the planting season.

The tree planted is part of The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. The initiative has invited people from across the United Kingdom to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".

The Jubilee celebrations take place on the Bank Holiday weekend from Thursday 2 until Sunday 5 June.

Cllr Foss planted a wild cherry tree to commemorate The Queen's historic 70 years on the throne. At 4m in height, it was a beautiful example of the species. Famed for its pretty, white blossom and abundance of bright red fruits, the native wild cherry, is popular with wildlife.

South Hams District Council's Chairman, Cllr Richard Foss, said: "It really is an honour to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting this lovely wild cherry tree. She has dedicated her life to the service of the country and the tree I've planted today, like the ones that have been planted across the United Kingdom, will honour her dedication.

"Of course as always, any trees we plant, even one, can only do good to combat climate change."

For more information on Her Majesty The Queen's Jubilee events near you, or to host your own event for, go to: <https://platinumjubilee.gov.uk/events/>

To find out what is going on locally, watch the Council's social media and website where events will be updated. www.southhams.gov.uk/my-place

New fund looks to make the South Hams' infrastructure greener

South Hams District Council is launching a new fund to support and boost green infrastructure in the area – and is inviting applications from the community.

The new Climate Infrastructure Fund has been created to invest in the development of infrastructure related projects to help the South Hams reduce its carbon emissions. Organisations applying can ask for between £1,000 and £25,000 to support their projects.

Cllr Tom Holway, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, said: "As a Council we're delighted to be able to deliver this fund that can support key infrastructure projects that will have great long-term benefits for the environment and the South Hams community.

"Everyone needs to work together to tackle climate change and engaging with community groups and organisations is a great way to make that happen. The sort of projects that this fund can support will all play a profound part in making the South Hams reduce its carbon footprint."

The Council is looking to support projects through the fund that add to or improve communities and help people transition to more sustainable ways of living. These could include proposals like increasing the availability of private transport alternatives like car clubs, bike hire, volunteer transport or new cycle routes to list a few. Projects with match funding or that lever in additional funds will be looked upon favourably.

Applications are welcomed from constituted groups or clubs, voluntary and community organisations, registered charities, CICs and CIOs, not-for-profit companies, schools, colleges, universities, statutory bodies and community benefit societies.

The funding can be used for a wide range of activities relating to these projects, including (but not limited to):

Producing feasibility studies, proof of concept and market assessments

Construction and installation of fixed structures such as bike racks, community owned car charging points or cycle routes

Events and activity costs

Capital costs as part of a wider project

If you'd like to apply, you can check that your organisation is eligible and complete the expression of interest application form on our website:

<https://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/climate-infrastructure-fund>

Send your application form and any relevant materials to climatechange@swdevon.gov.uk

The window for applications closes on 9 June.

New initiative for Landlord Rented Energy Efficient Homes

South Hams District Council has outlined how a package of support for landlords with long-term lets will make properties warmer and cheaper for local tenants.

The health and wellbeing of residents in rented accommodation is being addressed within South Hams' homes with the launch of an initiative to help longer-term let landlords meet the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).

The support package on offer from the District Council includes grants to help landlords improve the energy efficiency of their property. This includes ways to improve the energy efficiency of homes such as, roof and wall insulation, replacement heating systems or draught proofing.

The Council is working in partnership with Tamar Energy Community to help landlords meet these standards and will be investigating properties that do not. Over the coming weeks they will be contacting households and landlords who live in, or rent, these properties.

If the necessary improvements are not carried out, or there is not a valid exemption, it may lead to landlords being issued with a penalty. If landlords are concerned about the energy rating in their property, there are options available to help them achieve the best energy ratings possible.

The Government expect that all domestic properties should be aiming to achieve at least a C rating by 2030 to reach climate targets. Landlords should also expect that minimum energy efficiency standards will become higher than the current minimum standard.

To further support landlords, the Council runs an ethical lettings service called SeaMoor Lettings. SeaMoor Lettings offers lower charges to landlords than standard lettings agents with the aim to offer lower, more affordable rental costs to local families.

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, said: "Our goal is to support landlords to provide their tenants with a safe, warm and quality home to live in.

"The funding we've managed to secure from the Government will help us to fund local landlords in meeting these standards. As costs rise, tenants obviously, and rightly, want to live in houses that are comfortable and efficient to run.

"If landlords need help with money to improve the heating efficiency or the insulation for instance, then we want them to get in touch with us as soon as possible. We hope by helping them to fund these improvements might tempt more landlords back to offer much needed longer-term rentals to the market.

"We have identified 1,000 properties in South Hams so far, which may not be meeting the standard. Together with Tamar Energy Community, we'll be talking to landlords about the standards and what we can do to help them to improve.

“If you’re a landlord with a long-term rental in the South Hams, or are thinking of becoming one, please do get in touch with us. You’ve got nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations set a minimum energy efficiency level for domestic private rented properties. Since 1 April 2020, landlords can no longer let or continue to let properties covered by the MEES Regulations if they have an EPC rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption in place.

If a landlord is currently letting a property or planning on letting with an EPC rating of F or G, and has not already taken action, they must improve the property’s rating to E immediately, or register an exemption.

Kate Royston, Tamar Energy Community’s Director and Energy Advisor, said: "We welcome the partnership with South Hams District Council. The opportunity to work with landlords and their tenants in this way, and support the measures needed to deliver warmer, healthier, more energy efficient homes, will benefit landlords, tenants, and the planet!"

Go to the Council’s website for more information:
www.southhams.gov.uk/RentalHousingStandards

Ukraine Update

We now have 51 Ukrainian guests registered in our area (and 49 in West Devon).

This week we have:

Updated our website with Frequently Asked Questions from visits and communications with our hosts and guests. It now contains details and links to claiming income related benefits, registering arrivals, applying for schools, applying for national insurance numbers and support networks.

Gone live with our online host form which advises us of arrivals and enables hosts to register for the £350 monthly arrears thank you payment.

We have worked with our leisure provider Fusion to offer 6 months free membership, which guests are already using.

We would also like to share a snapshot of some of the situations that we are supporting:

A Ukrainian refugee in a camp in Poland was granted a VISA to travel to the UK but then ceased communication with the host for 16 days. Contact was re-established and it turned out she had returned to her hometown to support her parents following Russian bombing.

We supported the very concerned host with communication through Devon County and checks with the home office and the host looks forwards to welcoming this person very soon.

We are supporting a host that has sponsored a mother and her young baby. The baby was born just before the conflict commenced and in the ensuing days as fighting intensified there was no time to register the baby this means that the Mum will need to travel to Poland to register the child and obtain paperwork to be able to apply for a VISA. This is before they are able to travel and join their host here in Devon.

To end on a positive, a recently arrived family who are settling well, having completed all the official processes reported to us was that their son, who in Ukraine was a youth football academy player for a professional team, didn't have any boots. Through a community sports club we have provided boots, kit and a ball to enable him to play the sport he loves.

MUGA Makeover in Modbury

Modbury's sporting facilities have been getting a major facelift thanks to money from South Hams District Council.

The Council has given £197,500 towards recent improvement projects at Modbury's Recreation Ground. Phase One of field improvements at the recreation ground, including a refurbishment on the town's Multi-Use Games Area and cricket nets, vehicle access and improved lighting on the training pitch, have recently been completed.

The second phase, which will improve primary and secondary drainage, is scheduled for April and May.

A further £19,944 is going towards essential machinery which will be used to maintain the facility.

Cllr Bernard Taylor, Ward Councillor for Charterlands, said: "I'm delighted to see the Modbury Recreation Ground be transformed by this money, generated through Section 106 agreements.

"Sport and outdoor activity is hugely important to any community and Modbury can be proud of the facilities that it has. These works ensure that a range of sports are catered for, for years to come."

The money for the projects has come from Section 106 agreements related to Phases 1 and 2 of the Palm Cross development.

The recreation ground has been a big beneficiary of S106 money in recent years; £51,893 was given in 2019 to go towards an extension of the sports pavilion, providing essential storage space and allowing changing rooms to be returned for their original use. This work was completed in 2019.

A further sum of £19,969 was given in 2020 to resurface and paint Modbury's two tennis courts.

This brings the total given towards projects at the recreation ground over the last four years to £289,306. In addition, £54,944 of S106 funds from the Palm Cross development were used towards a revamp of the Memorial Hall play area last year.

Cllr Pete Watts, chairman of Modbury Parish Council and chairman of Modbury Association for Recreation and Sports, said: "This long awaited improvement work for Modbury Recreation Ground is the culmination of years of hard work within the Modbury community and some hugely appreciated support and cooperation from South Hams District Council.

“It allows us to make the very best use of this precious outdoor sport and recreation resource, increasing availability to our growing community and supporting a wider range of exciting organised activities and sports in which people can participate.”

District Council Builds Houses for First Time in a Generation

For the first time in a generation, South Hams District Council is building its own affordable homes for local people. This is another step in the plan to tackle the housing crisis facing its residents in the South Hams.

To mark the start of the building works, Councillors attended the official turf cutting event in St Ann’s Chapel, near Bigbury, where the homes will be built.

The severe shortage of affordable rented and shared ownership accommodation, particularly in coastal areas like St Ann’s Chapel, resulted in the Council declaring a housing crisis.

Eight affordable homes will be built at St Ann’s Chapel. They will be high quality, energy efficient homes and will be low cost to heat and run. Air source heat pumps and low water use fittings form part of the design, along with electric car charging points. With the current energy crisis, this will be great news for future tenants to keep their bills low and manageable.

The development will be funded by the sale of three open market houses at the development, Section 106 contributions, Affordable Housing Earmark Reserve funds, Homes England grant funding and Public Works Loan Board borrowing.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: “We’re thrilled that for the first time in a generation, we can deliver our own affordable housing for local people. These eight environmentally friendly homes are being built to help our residents who are struggling to get much-needed homes. The homes are energy efficient and economical to run, which is of course important in terms of both running costs and the environment.

“This is just one of the avenues we are following in the direct action we promised to tackle the housing crisis. We know there is much still to do and we are committed to finding ways to help to reduce this issue for our residents.

“The success of these schemes is helped enormously by the great working partnerships with local community groups. By working together we can develop much needed homes which match local housing needs.”

When the properties are completed, they will be advertised through Devon Home Choice; if you are a local resident and interested in the properties, please register at: www.devonhomechoice.com

Classic Builders are the contractors employed to build the houses.

Giles Staines, Contracts Manager at Classic Builders, said: “As a company, we are extremely excited to be constructing the first new affordable housing in many years for South Hams District Council. We’re delighted to be working closely with the Council and cannot wait to deliver these houses for the people of the South Hams.”