

DCC County Councillor update January 2020

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Happy New Year everyone. Wishing you peace, health, happiness and a vibrant & fun Tavistock & Gulworthy! 😊

Much of our work as councillors sees Community Groups seeking funding for their ideas, aims and ambitions. I do send information to various active groups in the hope that they might be successful in obtaining help. Please see below hopefully useful information.

The three new funding initiatives launched in May to replace the old Town & Parish funds are progressing:

The ***DCC Doing What Matters Community Grants Fund*** is on the DCC website at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/economy/business-support/doing-what-matters-communities-grants-fund/>

This scheme features an intervention rate of 75% (25% match required) – offering one-off grants of between £5k to £20k to successful community project applicants.

This grant is open to legally constituted and registered as not-for-profit organisations. This includes voluntary, community and social enterprises (vcse), town and parish councils, charities and businesses. Applications can also be made by a combination of these groups working together.

From a standing start we have received some 30 submissions with over £150k provisionally allocated, this goes alongside an additional £55k of matched funding from bidders; clearly assisting DCC funding to go further.

Crowdfund Devon (extra funding for Devon) – details are on the Crowdfunder website:

<https://welcome.crowdfunder.co.uk/crowdfund-devon/>

Set up to support community groups, start-up businesses, charities and individuals across the County to raise money from the crowd and unlock extra funding from our partners.

“If you have a project that makes an impact to your community, supports well-being, works towards a better environment, rewards innovation or supercharges business ideas, then we want to hear from you”

This leading pilot is growing and developing with Torbay Council recently requesting to join the six District Councils and D&C Police partners – for every DCC pound invested £6.13 has been added by the wider crowd – a 613% amplification!!

The third grant funding scheme is ***Making the Connection*** grant fund at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/communities/making-the-connection-grant>

The scheme provides small, one-off non-repeatable, grants of up to £300 to support community-led ideas and initiatives across Devon. Just over 50% of the fund has already been allocated to some 80 schemes covering a wide range of small community-led initiatives across the County.

Libraries

Jan Horral has been appointed as the new manager for our local library. I look forward to continuing working with the dynamic & innovative staff in our library. I am glad no library has closed in Devon over the past 10 years.

Community Transport

DCC continues to seek support for school transport & children with Special Educational Needs. Over **£20 Millions** are required annually. Rurality and changes to disability law / access to vehicles and the changes to vehicle driving licences being a key factor.

Multi-agencies continue looking into more joined up working. Health, Social Care and Education.

Highways

DCC engineering officers have been tasked to alleviate loose modules to 5 number pedestrian tables within **Duke Street, Drake Road and West Street**. There will be disruption to us all, pedestrians, motorists and visitors, however County is hoping to keep disruption to a minimum. These crossings have caused much dismay over the years, with residents who have been injured by tripping. I did ask if they could be tarmacked but was advised that was not being considered.

I have been asked to see if some crossings and barriers could be placed on **Drake Road / Butcher Park Hill**. I have asked highway officers to investigate this. The steep steps from the Embden Grange development have no lights and some newly moved in residents are concerned about this. My enquiries indicate that the developers have not requested DCC highways to take adopt these steps so the management company will be responsible. The development was refused as we all know by the WDBC planning department, but an appeal was lost & pedestrian access to the development is as it is! I don't want to sound glib, but walkers will need to use torches by the look of things. I am seeing what else I can find out & if there can be something done to help.

Brook Lane has had reports of flooding and pooling of water. West Devon Borough Council will be asked about the road sweeping and County Highway officers are hoping that there will be funds to do some improvements in the next financial year. I drove there during the deluge today (Monday 6th January) and it was very wet indeed.

The hedges have been cut back and gullies cleared. Much of the water pooling is as a result of the significant rainfall. Good job Tidy Tavy numbers are increasing, and litter is being collected now the leaves and undergrowth make visibility of litter easier. Lots of litter is a result of open residual waste blowing in the very high winds. It is hoped residents will secure their waste for collection.

Some councillors are looking into carrying out **Speed Watch** which I am happy to help with too. It appears that some drivers are driving faster, and I support an initiative to try and reduce this. Over the years I have requested speed checks over many areas of Tavistock, but although there were a very few speeders, most drivers were driving reasonably. Still worth keeping on top of this.

Westbridge Cottages, Drake Villas & the junction by the new Churchill retirement homes. I have received many positive comments about the changes to the road, the new crossing by the Texaco Garage and the additional lane by Drakes Statue. I know the Tavistock Town Council didn't support the car parking spaces by Drakes Villas, but the traffic flow is not compromised significantly, and the speed of traffic must slow up which is good considering the need to cross the road. Some residents requested a pelican on the Callington Road (lower area near the Spa Store area). This would have meant the loss of about 12 car parking spaces opposite the Catholic Church & this was not considered useful.

Health

I am happy that the nursing bursaries will be re-introduced and that there is a 6% pay increase for nurses. I have been lobbying our MP for many a moon over this issue! I am relieved too that **Tavistock Hospital MIU** is going to re-open on the 27th January (limited hours at first with a view to full time). I was happy to work with our MP with this too. With the increase in homes in Tavistock it is crucial we keep our hospital & the MIU. For the record I thank the CCG for keeping me posted.

Life in general

I've been meeting members of the **Tavistock Heritage Trust** looking towards finding initiatives to secure revenue. This should be an exciting venture once all the work on the Magistrate's building is completed. I look forward to the car parking area being completed as I have voiced my concerns about the safety of this area for years (having been almost knocked over & witnessing other pedestrians in similar situations!)

Children's overview and scrutiny at County Hall takes a key part of my day. Working for fairer school funding, encouraging people to foster or adopt children. Looking into reasons why some children's educational results are decreasing, and self-harm is increasing. Many children are acutely aware of the **environmental issues** and as councillors and adults we need to be really balanced in the way we support our young children. I remember the abject fear of nuclear war when I was little, being terrified of the Daleks and Cybermen. Fear is real and our young children are suffering fear, seeing the fires in Australia, Greta Thunberg's interpretation & presentation about Global Warming and Climate Change.

As West Devon Borough Councillor portfolio holder for homes, I have the pleasure of working with an excellent team of officers whose responsibility it is to secure **affordable homes, prevent rough sleeping give advice on financial support**. 95% of homeless residents are re-homed by council officers within 24 hours, the remaining 5% I am advised "sort out with family or friends". West Devon Borough Council has a good record for support, and I am still learning about this huge subject. I am happy that West Devon Borough Council is in the process of drawing up plans to re-develop Spring Hill for emergency accommodation. I am to liaise with setting up a meeting with providers & supporters against Domestic violence and abuse and WDDB's housing officers. Clearly much work is always going on, I am just more involved & working with residents who contact me about these issues. I have been on a tour with an officer looking at the affordable housing in our area ... new estates such as Embden Grange. For the record, the work "affordable" is one I don't like, as the cost of homes compared with West Devon wages and salaries don't compute in my mind! However, there are many schemes and it is great when I meet residents who have benefited from taking advice from our housing team.

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Here's to a positive 2020. Kind regards Debo