

Parish report from your District Councillors

09 April

Peer Review

South Hams and West Devon Councils were visited by a team of Officers and Members from other local authorities in England in March to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge - or Peer Review.

The feedback from the peer team has been extremely positive about how we work together as a single organisation to support both councils to deliver for our communities. The team were extremely impressed with the speed with which the new political administrations

have formed; the collaborative way in which members work with each other and the very constructive member and officer relations; our overall financial management and resources; the way in which we have developed our new Council Plans; performance management and governance arrangements; and most important of all the quality of the services we are delivering to our residents.

The team also identified areas where they think we can build on our strong base to go further, including, to further embed our plans for community development; build upon our already strong place-leadership role to ensure we are fit for the future and can influence the Devon-wide partnerships including being clear about our strategic objectives for the economy; enhance our engagement and influence on health partners; and importantly to tell our story better to our communities.

The full feedback from the peer team can be viewed here

<https://youtu.be/HRKp76tubSs?si=oEIS2nEL8W-HubDU>

The next step will be to receive the full report back from the LGA, which will be reported to the Executive/ Hub Committee in due course.



Devolution

At our March meeting the Council voted to express concerns over the proposed Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal (creating a new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority). These include:

- The proposal risks making local government more complex by adding a layer of bureaucracy
- The proposed £16m capital funding was only for the next two years
- The fact that spending plans must be signed-off by central government disqualifies the plan from being true devolution of powers
- The proposed combined authority's remoteness and lack of democratic accountability, including the lack of voting rights for District Councils, further disqualifies it from being described as "devolution"

- The government's document indicates that this is the first step in the reorganisation of local government in Devon and Torbay. We are concerned that the intention as stated threatens the existence of district councils, the loss of effective local governance and may establish rule by a body that is remote and out of touch.
- The cost and additional layer of local government will in itself hamper any improvement in the local services it is intended to improve and may result in their decline.

The Council called for the process to be postponed pending the outcome of the forthcoming General Election and 2025 County Council elections.

If and when the devolution deal proceeds the council proposes that an element of the Small Sites Green Investment programme be allocated to support community-led housing developments to improve energy efficiency, reduce embedded carbon and improve biodiversity.

Hunting

At the same meeting Council voted to not allow meetings of hunts on land it owns. Among the reasons were concern over public safety from gatherings of horses and hounds.

Sustainable South Hams events

We're excited to share our latest events with you and ask that you spread the word amongst your respective communities:

Our next assembly ***Taking Action Together*** on 20 April 2024 is at Kingsbridge Community College.

The event is all about inspiring climate and nature collaboration for our children's futures.

Anyone from community groups, schools or educational organisations who believes we can make more impact by working together is warmly invited.

The speaker and exhibitor line is impressive and guaranteed to inspire.

Space is limited and offered on a first come, first served basis.

Go to the SSH website to book a ticket.



Our Community Compost Masterclass takes place on 27 and 28 April at Old School Community Centre, South Brent. For all our communities thinking about composting, this two day course is a must!

'Dr Compost', Nicky Scott and SusSH compost mentor Ben Bryant will guide participants through the nuts and bolts of community composting. [Click here](#) to find out more and book your ticket. Jane Nicholls, SSH

South Dartmoor Community Energy

South Hams residents could save themselves money, energy and reduce carbon emissions by contacting South Dartmoor Community Energy.



Set up in 2016, SDCE is a not-for-profit community interest company working to reduce fuel poverty, increase the energy efficiency of homes and buildings in the South Hams, and offering free and impartial energy advice to people living in the District.

They offer community drop-in sessions, where people can get advice on steps they can take to lower their carbon footprint, or access support with energy costs. They can also arrange a home visit, where a Home Energy Advisor can give specialist guidance on how to make a home more energy efficient and cheaper to run.

We've supported the work of SDCE with £50,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding. You can [watch our YouTube video](#) to find out more about the work of SDCE.

To find out more about SDCE, visit www.sdce.org.uk

PCC elections - deadline to vote

The Police and Crime Commissioner elections are approaching fast - as is the deadline for registering to vote.

Voters must register by Tuesday 16 April if they intend to vote in the PCC elections - [people can register online](#).

