



# South Hams District Council Annual Report 2021/2022



# 2021/22 Annual Report



**Councillor Judy Pearce**  
**Leader South Hams District Council**

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Welcome to our 2021/2022 Annual Report which demonstrates the past year's achievements and outlines our priorities for the coming year.

One of the significant achievements this year has been the development and adoption of our Better Lives for All Strategy which sets clear and measurable actions that the Council will take over the next few years. This report includes many examples of actions we have delivered through the strategy that will make a positive impact on lives across the District.

We have continued to be on the forefront of offering vital support to businesses impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with a total of £85m in grants processed to date. This is an incredible achievement by the team.

In February, we once again set a balanced budget for the Council, ensuring that we can continue to deliver much needed services to our residents and businesses. We continue to hope that in the coming year we are offered greater longer-term certainty on our budgets from Government.

As we ended the year, the Council was once again called upon by Government to support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme – something that will undoubtedly be a focus for us in the coming year.

Looking ahead, our focus is on ensuring that we continue to deliver on our strategic priorities, making a positive impact for communities across the South Hams.

*Cllr Judy Pearce*

**Andy Bates**  
**Chief Executive**

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I have been incredibly impressed by the efforts of staff across the Council to support our residents and communities.

I've been really pleased that as restrictions have lifted, I've been able to get out and about, visiting communities across South Hams and seeing first hand some of the excellent projects being delivered.

Of course the year has not been without its challenges. We know that the ongoing issues with our Waste and Recycling service continue to be a significant cause of frustration for residents across the District but continue to work with the contractor to try to restore an acceptable level of service.

We have also, like many organisations, experienced challenges in recruiting staff to our services. This is no doubt in part due to the changes to ways of working, with local people now able to work remotely for organisations from across the UK. We will be working on plans to address this in the coming months.

While our staff have continued to work from home throughout the pandemic, as we end the year we have started to see a return to a form of normality, bringing our office staff together and working face to face. I have to say, personally it has been fantastic to begin meeting colleagues in the office for the first time in over two years!

*Andy*

## Action Across South Hams



4 Community Composting Groups supported – and we've agreed to support more in the future with a £200,000 investment



Freeport bid submitted in a bid to enable 3,500 jobs in the area



6 Neighbourhood Plans Made helping to shape the future of the District



£243k investment in community and business schemes developing future employment opportunities



New tree planting sites commenced delivery with a total 5380 young trees planted



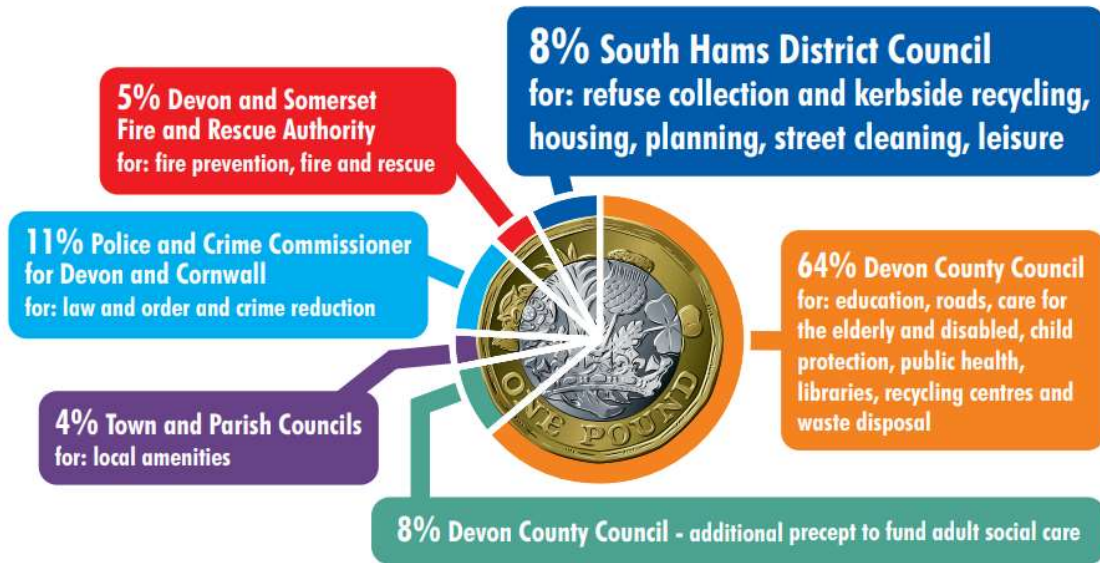
£60,000 funding awarded to enable new community led projects supporting health and wellbeing of residents



Invested £143k in a marketing campaign and town beautification activities with our key towns to help the recovery from Covid-19



## Where your money goes



Of every £1 in council tax paid, only 8 pence goes to South Hams District Council to pay for the services that it provides. Therefore £175.42 of your overall council tax bill in 2021/22 went to South Hams District Council (for a Band D household). The rest of your Council Tax bill funds other public services delivered by Devon County Council, Police, Fire and Town and Parish Councils.

The share of the Council Tax set by South Hams District Council (£175.42 for 2021/22) pays for services such as local planning, housing, environmental health, waste collection and recycling, street cleansing, providing recreational facilities, tourism and economic development. As well as being responsible for collecting the Council Tax, South Hams District Council also collects Business Rates and administers housing benefits.

Whilst we are still in the process of closing the 2021/22 accounts, at the point of preparing this report, due to prudent financial management of our budgets, our latest forecast is for a small surplus of £90,000 against the Council's total net Budget of £9.7 million.



# Taking action on Climate

Back in 2019, we declared a Climate and Biodiversity Crisis in response to global warming and a decline in biodiversity. During the past year we have continued to make good progress in delivering against our climate and biodiversity action plan, District wide tree planting schemes are underway, we've had almost unanimous support from the public for our plans to increase biodiversity on Council land and had our progress recognised at a national level.

## The Arboretum is **Abuzz**

210 trees for bees were planted at Follaton Arboretum in Totnes by Parklife on behalf of the Council as the first stage of a total 1,450 young trees being planted in the coming years.



## A **Diverse** South Hams

In September we asked our residents for their thoughts on plans to relax grass-cutting and to increase wildflowers on Council owned land.

Over 1,000 residents responded, almost all replying positively to our plans and so the Executive agreed to take steps to implement.

# £27k

Awarded to community groups for climate action

# 97%

Of 1,000 responses in support of our plans to increase biodiversity on council land

# 222tonnes

Co2 saved by reducing staff travel





## 5,380

Young trees planted across the District through the Emergency Tree Fund

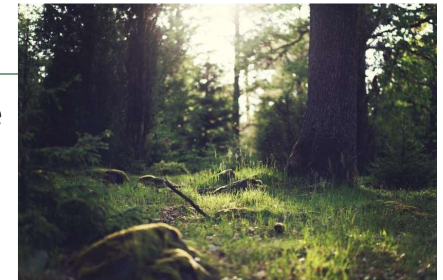


## Composting collaboration

Community Composting Groups have been springing up across the District in recent years and this year we've extended support to enable more to get off the ground while supporting existing schemes - £200,000 was approved to support up to 6 new schemes a year – building on the 4 schemes we already support

## Action in the Community

We know that the Council cannot tackle the climate crisis alone. During this year we've made available £200,000 of funds to enable our communities and businesses to play their part too through schemes that contribute to our climate ambitions



## 10

Grants awarded under the Green Homes Grant Scheme – enabling energy saving measures for eligible households



## Top 20 nationally

This year we were recognised as one of the top 20 District Councils nationally for our Climate Change Action Plan by Climate Emergency UK – independent validation that we're taking the crisis seriously

Area of woodland planting

equal to  
20 tennis  
courts

(0.53 ha)

14

sites planted covering  
Dartmouth, Ivybridge,  
Totnes and Wembury

5 schools

1 nursery, 2 primary and  
3 colleges

With  
help  
from

4 Deputy  
Lieutenants  
2 Women's  
Institutes  
1 Allotment group  
1 Devon County  
Council  
Work Group

574

volunteers

219 Adults,  
45 Teenagers  
and 310 Children

Tree  
planting  
in the  
South Hams

Emergency Tree Fund  
Projects

24  
different  
native  
species of  
tree planted

5380  
whips

(young trees)  
planted

370M

length of hedge planted

Supported by Devon County Council and  
the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund

Devon  
County Council



South Hams  
District Council



WOODLAND  
TRUST

Creating havens for wildlife and locking up carbon



## Better Homes, Better Lives

We know that having a decent, safe home is essential for the wellbeing of all residents. This year we've taken the step of declaring a Housing Crisis in South Hams to highlight the significant shortage of homes within the District

### Ethical Lettings

A win –win for landlords and tenants

During 2022 we launched a new ethical lettings website Seamoor Lettings. It offers a professional management service for landlords with a very low monthly fee – meaning more affordable rents for tenants



### Time to Step On

During the year we designed and approved a new scheme (called 'Step On') offering grants of up to £5,000 to help with a deposit for a shared ownership property. This means more of our residents are able to purchase a new home quicker than before.

# 139

Affordable Homes delivered and occupied including

# 11

Supported properties in Dartington for people with Disabilities enabling the first step toward independent living

# 12

Number of days on average to process a new Housing Benefit Claim (well below the national target of 17 days)





## 150

Landlords supported to bring their properties up to the required energy standard



## Action on the crisis!

In September the Council declared a Housing Crisis within the District, and quickly took steps to develop a detailed action plan in response. We know it will take time but we have a clear way forward in tackling the issues.

## £5.8m

In Council Tax support awarded – helping households under financial pressure

## Preventing homelessness

During the year we developed a new 5 year homelessness strategy and In January we commenced a public consultation on it. The Strategy will be considered for adoption in April 2022



## 177

Households supported to prevent them becoming homeless



## Best Use of Properties

In March we promoted Empty Homes week and encouraged homeowners to look at Lendology – an ethical lender supporting homeowners make improvements to bring homes in to use.





*Sherford (our newest and developing town) seen from above and the host of this years opening of the Tour of Britain second stage*



# Planning for our Future and Celebrating our past

During the year we have taken many steps to ensure that our built and natural environment is protected, conserved and enhanced. We've simplified our planning process and supported neighbourhoods to shape their own futures through neighbourhood plans.

## Planning made simpler

Following a 6 week consultation, in March we adopted a Local Validation Checklist – taking the frustration out of the process for applicants as they'll know exactly what to submit and when! It will also capture information about how applicants are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint and increase biodiversity.



## Your future neighbourhood

During the year the Council made 6 neighbourhood plans including South Huish, Ringmore and Aveton Gifford. Neighbourhood plans form a statutory part in influencing local development.

# 6

Neighbourhood Plans made

# 85

Broadband Community Champions recruited

# 30

Sites will see tree planting as a result of our successful bid to Urban Tree Fund







## 1,622

Planning Applications  
Received

## 1,512

Votes cast in  
Neighbourhood  
Planning referendums



## Together for **Trees**

In November we were informed that together with Kingsbridge Town Council, our funding bid for 600 urban trees was successful. In total this will see the trees planted across 30 sites.

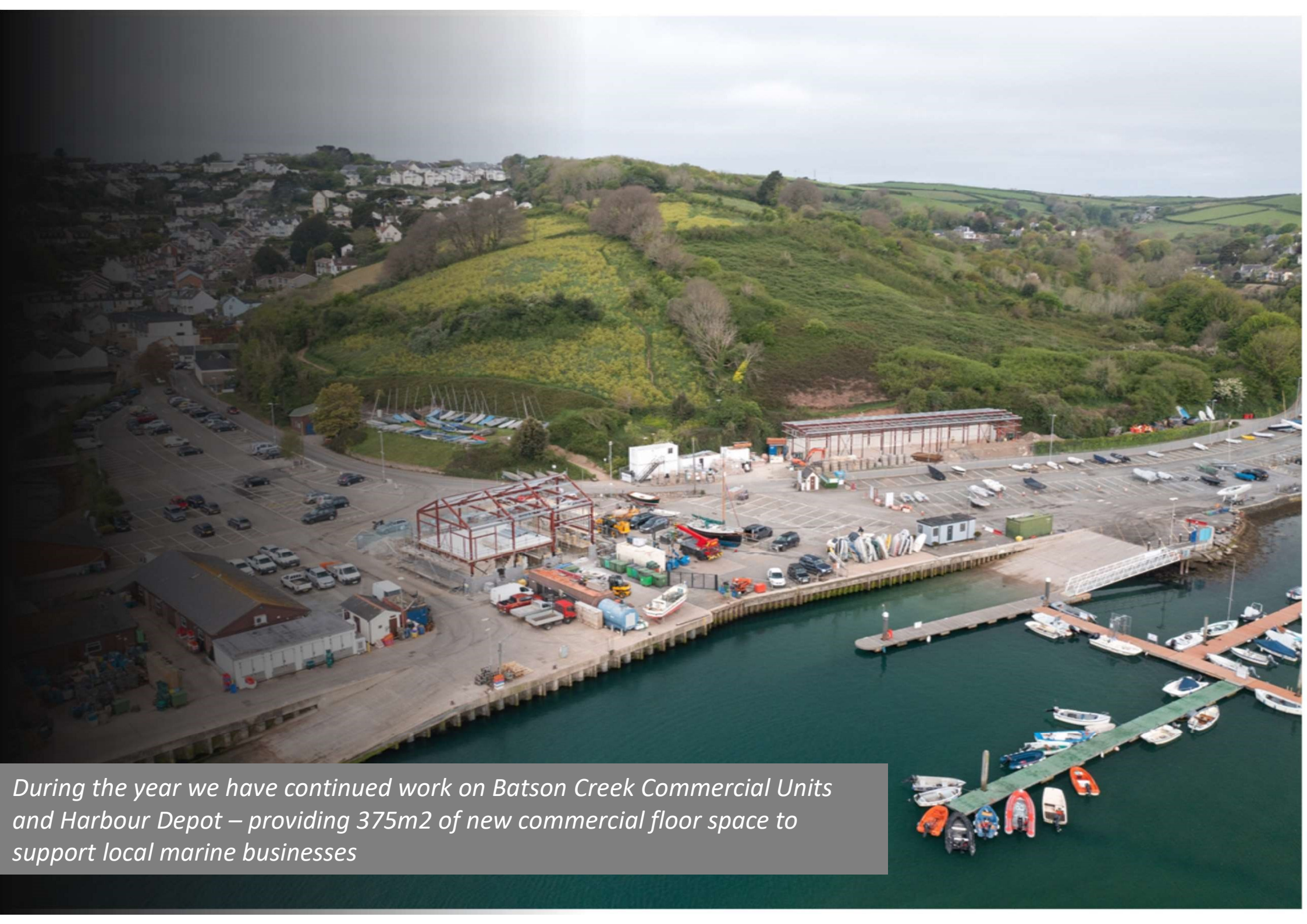
## Planning **Pathfinder**

In June we, along with our partners West Devon and Plymouth City Council, were selected to be a pathfinder by the Department for Levelling Up. The pathfinder is about helping other Councils to standardise key information in local plans – in a digital way.



## Protecting our **Marine** spaces

Significant progress has been made through the year with construction well underway of a new purpose built Harbour Depot at Batson Creek. In addition we're also developing 375m2 of commercial space for marine businesses in the area.

An aerial photograph of a harbor depot and commercial units under construction. The scene is set on a hillside overlooking a harbor. In the foreground, a large paved area contains several buildings, including a prominent one with a red steel frame. A long pier extends into the water, with numerous small boats and kayaks moored along its length. A white ramp connects the pier to the shore. In the background, a residential area is visible on the left, and rolling green hills are on the right. The sky is overcast.

*During the year we have continued work on Batson Creek Commercial Units and Harbour Depot – providing 375m<sup>2</sup> of new commercial floor space to support local marine businesses*



## Stimulating a thriving economy

2021/22 continued to see sectors within our economy impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but we've taken positive steps to support South Hams businesses into the future.

# £85m

In Covid Business Support Grants processed in the last two years providing a vital lifeline across sectors.



## Welcome Back to our highstreets

During the year, we supported our High Streets to recover from the impacts of Covid-19 by accessing EU and Government Funding. This enabled us to deliver a series of marketing campaigns for the area, fund additional street cleansing services through the summer and deliver a number of schemes to Towns to enhance the street scene. In total the investment for the year was in excess of £140,000. We were also able to employ two business advice officers helping businesses adapt to the 'new normal'



## Freeport: a boost for the future

Working with Plymouth City Council and Devon County Council we have progressed plans for the Freeport – a scheme which would result in the creation of 3,500 jobs and over £280m investment to the areas. The business case has been submitted to Government and we will hear more in 2022/23.



# 18

Programmes delivered to support our highstreets recover from Covid-19 using £143k of EU funds.



## 31

businesses supported to develop schemes that would support the wider community with a total £243k investment



### Cycle South Hams

In September Sherford hosted the kick-off of the second stage of the Tour of Britain, the event also acted as a brilliant showcase to the nation of just how stunning our area is and of course promotes cycling and active travel – a key aspect of our Better Lives for All Strategy. Around 200,000 spectators watched the 115-mile route between Sherford to Exeter – bringing more than £4.2m to the local economy according to the Tour report.

### Supporting a community wide recovery

During the year we offered community groups and businesses that were looking to grow their offering to bid for funds from the Government business grants scheme. In total, 31 schemes were supported with an investment of £243k. Schemes supported include the development of Heritage Board Games based on South Hams, investment to turn a shop into a café (rather than it becoming an empty shop on a highstreet) and a Farm to Table food scheme.

Another example of a scheme supported is Ambios Ltd, a training company which specialises in conservation and nature courses, based at Sharpham Farm near Totnes. They applied to the Community Recovery Grant scheme for support to improve the power supply to their isolated premises. The awarded grant has been matched by their own financial contribution and will enable the business to expand their educational activities and install renewable technologies. This will help them to transition towards decarbonising their business activities.

### Growing our economy

Businesses offered 120 hours total business start-up and growth advice during the year through our contract with BIP. Their specialist advisors have spent time working from within our local business communities, making it as easy as possible for businesses to access the support they need.



*We've really focused on supporting the South Hams recover from Covid-19 during the year, with a range of measures from local and national advertising, empty-shop window dressing and making minor, but effective improvements to town centres.*

## Working with our communities

From awarding funding to support community schemes to ensuring we've continued to deliver leisure facilities within the district.

### Open spaces, welcome places

During the year, we've spent £557,077 on 36 space, sport and recreation projects and allocated a further £441,077 via grant offer letters for future projects. Projects include resurfacing of Blackawton tennis court, resurfacing a much-used footpath through Bridgetown Green Corridor (Totnes), Improvements to Stoke Gabriel scout hut, cricket club and play area among others.



### Fit for the future

In April, our Leisure Centres in Kingsbridge, Totnes, Ivybridge and Dartmouth were able to reopen following lockdowns and we've worked closely with our provider, Fusion, to encourage people to take up activities. Throughout the year total levels of participation were 270,483 – which of course included a three-month period of being closed!



# 5,100

Households supported through Council Tax reduction scheme

# £43k

Awarded to 84 community schemes through our Councillor Locality Funds

# 270,483

Total active participation in sport and leisure at our leisure centres  
*Jan 21- Dec 21*





## £557k

Of section 106 funding provided to deliver 36 schemes in communities

## 4,704

Residents supported with financial, housing and employment advice through our key partner, Citizens Advice South Hams

## £975,000

grants allocated to support 100 adults with disabilities to adapt their homes

## Supporting Local

Each year our Councillors have a budget to award to schemes within their locality. This year over £43,000 was awarded in support of 84 community schemes – from purchasing vital life saving equipment through to enhancing the appearance of community spaces with planting and signage and mental health workshops for children – all activities that will contribute to proud communities in South Hams.

## Partnerships that make a difference



We cannot deliver on our ambitions for the area alone. Through the year we've supported key partner organisations with funding of almost £100,000 to enable them to support residents with their health and wellbeing, from offering financial, housing and employment advice, supporting frontline community groups with training and fundraising and providing transport for residents to medical and other essential appointments where they're not able to get there themselves. In the coming 12 months we'll be looking at how we can continue to support these vital services.

## Health and Wellbeing

Empowering our communities to make a positive difference

We know that community groups have been at the forefront of supporting our residents wellbeing throughout the pandemic and that the impacts on both Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing are continuing to be felt. To support the amazing work happening in our communities we supported 23 community led schemes with almost £60,000 to deliver wellbeing activities in the coming 12 months.





*The opening of Modbury Play Park on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – Just one of the schemes supported through Section 106 contributions this year*

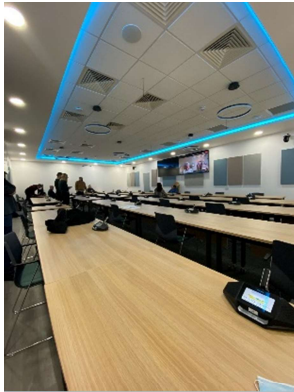


## Delivering Quality Council Services

2021/22 has been another incredibly busy year for our core services. As Councillors we were able to return to our Chamber for the first time in over two years, our achievements on customer focused processes were recognised nationally and we continued to process a range of support packages for businesses and residents impacted by Covid-19. We of course know that one service that we have not delivered to the required standard has been our waste contract. Resolving this has been a top priority for the past year and will continue to be in the coming months.

### Back to the Chamber

For the first time in over two years, In February our Councillors were able to meet in the Follaton House Council Chamber having met at other venues while the Chamber was being modernised to enable better Covid-19 measures and also to replace aged furniture and sound systems. This means that we'll now be able to provide better, clearer streaming of meetings for the public and a space for our communities to rent for meetings.



# £450k

Saved in 12 months by implementing easier to use, customer friendly software

# 624

Fly-Tips responded to across the district

### Customer Achievements recognised

In March we won a gold award in respect of our customer facing IT transformation programme. User-friendly software has enabled three quarters (75%) of residents to benefit from self-service functionality to date. By freeing up teams from the burden of navigating broken processes and siloed data, jointly with West Devon Borough Council, we've saved an impressive £450,000 over 12 months.



# 7,500

Staff commute miles saved per day by working from home and utilising technology





## 1,117,546

Visits to our website during the year – with an average time on the site of just over 2 minutes

## 1,942

Planning Application Notices put up to notify residents of potential developments near them

## 427

Play Park inspections undertaken – ensuring our young people are safe when enjoying facilities



## Balancing the Budget

As set out earlier in the report, we receive 8% of your total Council Tax bill which pays for a whole host of services – so its important we plan well and spend it on the right things. In December we were hoping for longer term certainty on funding from Government but that didn't come – but in February we still set a balanced budget – credit to prudent financial management of our teams.

## Carbon Literate organisation

We've been accredited as a Carbon Literate Organisation – with our key officer decision makers all undertaking Carbon Literacy Training to ensure they put the impact on our carbon footprint at the heart of policy and service decisions.



## Investing in our future

During the year we've ensured our colleagues are well placed to provide quality Council Services. We've successfully secured two places on a highly sought after District Councils Network future leaders programme and supported 5 apprenticeships in subjects such as Town Planning, Business Administration and Supervisory Skills. We also offered 5 young people work placements through the Government Kickstart programme – with one of them securing a permanent post with us at the end of the scheme.



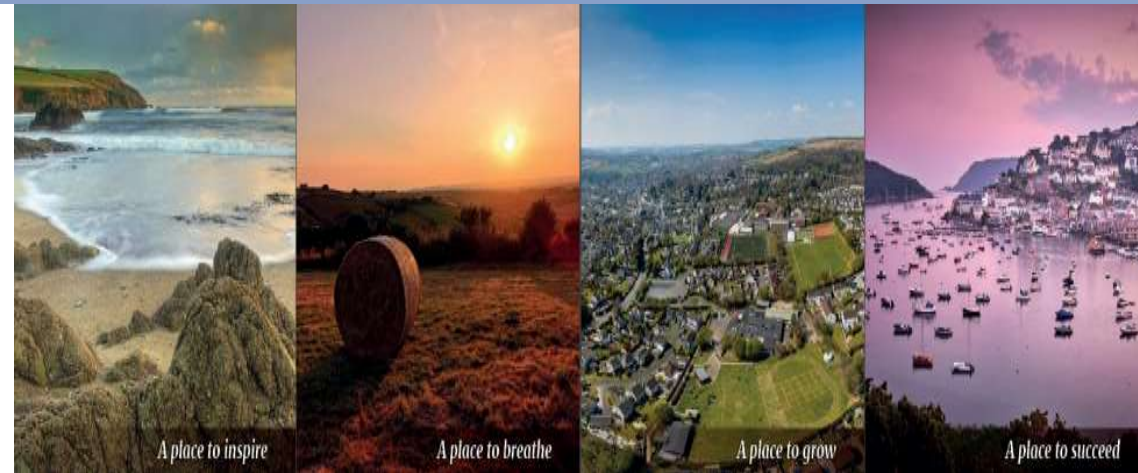




# Better Lives for All

We know that the year ahead will be challenging for many across the District as the cost of living continues to provide day to day challenges. We will of course do all we can to support our residents to ensure Better Lives for All. Some of the key activities from our strategy for the coming year include:-

- Taking steps to implement a rural poverty scheme by working with communities and partners
- Delivering on our commitment to replace our diesel fleet with electric
- Continue with plans for delivering new affordable homes within the district
- Launch a new, easier to navigate website – making it easier for you to access services online.



## Housing Crisis

A significant focus for us during 2022/23 will be on delivering our action plan to address the Housing Crisis in South Hams.

## Climate Emergency

This year we will be in the second year of delivery of our Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Action Plan. We will be continuing to deliver on those actions including ensuring the Council delivers on commitments including progressing plans for an electric fleet and continuing with our rewilding on Council land.

## Homes for Ukraine

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, we will be ensuring that the District Council develops a package of support for our Ukrainian guests and those residents stepping up to offer them a safe space to live. We'll be working closely with the voluntary sector to ensure wrap-around support and to ensure that as many host/sponsor placements as possible are maintained as they come towards the end of the minimum term.

## Waste & Recycling

We know that 2021/22 continued to be a real cause of frustration for our residents when it comes to ensuring that their waste and recycling was collected on time. As we ended 2021/22, Garden waste collections recommenced but nowhere near to the satisfaction of the Council and you our residents. You have our absolute commitment that sorting this out will remain at the top of our agenda in 2022/23 and we will continue to meet with our contractor on a daily basis.