

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

1. Decisions

Bus Service Improvement Plan: Tranche 1 capital schemes (October 2023 Cabinet and January 2024 Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny (CIRS))

Since approval, the detailed design and procurement process for a contractor has been completed for the New North Road, Exeter scheme and is scheduled to start construction in June 2024. Once completed, the scheme will provide a faster, more direct route to the city centre for approximately 200 buses daily, avoiding a more circuitous route on constrained, narrow residential roads.

The Roundswell, Barnstaple bus lane scheme traffic regulation orders are due to be advertised in May. Subject to the TRO process, works could commence in Autumn to ensure delivery before the March 2025 grant funding deadline.

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (October 2023 Cabinet)

The strategy work is progressing with the information gathering stage largely through ~ 25 contracts with local wildlife experts. This Summer and Autumn, workshops with stakeholders and delivery partners will be held to agree priorities and actions for wildlife and nature-based solutions, e.g. carbon sequestration, flood control, water quality and health. The aim is to achieve formal consultation with supporting authorities and the public from January 2025, with publication in late Spring/early Summer 2025.

Dinan Way, Exmouth (December 2023 Cabinet)

The Dinan Way scheme, which aims to reduce traffic volumes through the town centre and provide better connectivity to the A376 for the northern and eastern areas of Exmouth including the communities of Brixington and Littleham is currently in the late stages of detailed design. Subject to conclusion of land acquisition, works could commence in Autumn 2024.

Devon Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (January 2024 CIRS and Cabinet)

Since the adoption of the strategy, the County Council has successfully secured over £7m Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding (see section 5.1 for more details).

Local Transport Plan 2026-2040 (January 2024 CIRS Standing Overview Group)

A Standing Overview Group of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee was held on 31 January 2024. Headline elements of the emerging Local Transport Plan (LTP) were presented and discussed. Feedback from the meeting agreed several points to be incorporated into the draft LTP4 prior to public consultation, including the interdependency between the Local Transport Plan and the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, clarification of phrases such as 'active travel' and a specific focus on integrated travel.

M5 Junction 28 Strategic Outline Business Case (March 2024 Cabinet)

This was completed and submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in May. Typically, the DfT expects to provide a response within 3 months of receipt subject to Ministerial review and sign off.

Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy endorsement (March 2024 Cabinet)

The Climate Impacts Group meets monthly and is identifying priority funding opportunities to accelerate implementation. A set of shared messaging around regional climate adaptation is being developed with input from public health, South West Water, the Environment Agency and others. This messaging will be used by Devon Climate Emergency and other partners to shape their communications. There will be a particular focus on business preparedness, working in collaboration with strategic partners such as the South West Business Council, which will help establish a better understanding of businesses' climate preparedness to inform future business support programmes. This includes the level of uptake for severe weather and flood alerts, encouraging businesses to be adequately insured and have business continuity plans.

Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Infrastructure (April 2024 Cabinet)

Detailed design is at an advanced stage with tender documentation being prepared for the first section of Spine Road, which will unlock the outline Phase 1A Freeport development land with outline planning permission at Langage Business Park. A planning decision on the Spine Road is anticipated in early Summer, which if consented would allow works to follow in the Autumn and completion by the end of the financial year. Design to support a planning resubmission is continuing for the A38 pedestrian / cycle bridge which will improve access between Sherford and the Freeport / Langage development. Subject to the necessary approvals, the aim is to commence works early in 2025. Site investigations and scoping for planning are also continuing for the Phase 1B land spine road extension.

2. Meetings

REGIONAL / SUB NATIONAL MEETINGS		
held quarterly Oct / Dec / Mar	Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body (STB) Board meetings	Peninsula Transport Strategy, budget and technical work programme approvals and strategic road and rail liaison
28/02/24	National STB Conference	Presentation given to raise profile of the South West Rail Resilience programme, 10 years on from Dawlish seawall collapse
22/11/23	South West Infrastructure Partnership	Chairing panel session with stakeholders / decision makers from transport, waste, water, broadband, energy and civil engineering to share experiences and best practice
11/03/24	County Combined Authority (CCA) Devolution Consultation – Transport theme	Engagement meeting with key road, bus and rail stakeholders including the Sub National Transport Body to discuss and promote emerging proposals for the CCA and implications for Devon & Torbay CCA becoming the local transport authority instead of constituent councils.
BUS MEETINGS		
11/01/24	Devon BUS Forum (Bus Users and Stakeholders Forum)	The forum is in its 2nd year and discusses issues around bus services, and encouraging quality dialogue between key stakeholders, bus operators, Councillors and the transport authority
Held three times per year	Devon Bus Enhanced Partnership Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation of Bus Punctuality Group to bring together transport operations and highways - High level plan to refresh our 2024 Bus Services Improvement Plan in line with DfT Guidance. This will be published in June 2024. - Review of spending on bus support (revenue) including the continuation of successful routes – eg Rail Link Bus Services - Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme document was republished on 31.3.24, following minor amendments.
Held quarterly	Community Transport Network meetings	Feeding back on wider bus initiatives and understanding challenges and operational issues for CTAs
RAIL MEETINGS		
Held three times per year	Devon Rail Forum	This is an informal committee to encourage quality dialogue between key stakeholders, bus operators, Councillors and the transport authority
13/10/2023	Hosting Mark Hopwood (MD of GWR)	Capacity challenges on the North Devon Line
Various dates	GWR Stakeholder events	Stakeholder briefings between local authorities and senior rail industry officials to advocate for improvements on rail network or

		support development of projects, i.e. North Devon Line
15/03/24	Devon & Somerset Metro Board	Stakeholder meetings to support development of Cullompton and Wellington Rail Stations
HIGHWAYS / PLANNING		
Held quarterly	Culm Garden Village Delivery Board	Inputting to emerging Local Plan proposals for Garden Village and supporting on transport projects to support
ENVIRONMENT / HERITAGE		
Held three times per year	Restoring Stover Park Project	Inputting to funded projects to support enhancement of Stover Park
23/04/24	County Archaeologist / Historic Environment site visits	To gain stronger understanding of scope of technical work undertaken by the team
COMMUNITY FACING		
Various	Scheme related meetings with Town and Parish Councils	e.g. Supporting discussions around Levelling Up Fund schemes and other grant funded initiatives
MPs / ADVOCACY WORK		
Various Dates	South West MPs / Rail Minister / Secretary of State for Transport / Prime Minister meetings / events	Briefings and Advocacy work relating to: - Peninsula Transport Strategy briefings - A382 MRN Scheme - BSIP schemes - Rail Resilience matters - North Devon Line Connectivity - Tavistock to Plymouth line / Plymouth Metro

3. Service Issues and Forthcoming Activities

3.1 Projects and Programmes

Local Transport Plan Investment

October 2023 Cabinet approved an ambitious £154m Transport Capital Programme of investment in Devon's transport network covering April 2023 to March 2025. The County Council receives £3.6m per annum of core LTP integrated block budget from Government, which demonstrates the County's success in securing significant external sources of capital funding to support investment in transport and delivering economic, environmental and social benefits for Devon. This includes over £107m secured through grants including the Levelling Up Fund, Active Travel Fund and Bus Service Improvement Plan funding and nearly £7m from developer contributions. The next update to the Transport Capital Programme will be taken to Cabinet in Autumn 2024 and will include further grant funding successes, such as the Zero Emission Buses in Regional Areas and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure grants (see section 5).

BSIP Capital Schemes Update – part of £14.1m BSIP Grant programme

2024/25 is the final year of delivery Devon's Bus Service Improvement Plan revenue and capital grant programme.

The consultations on the remaining Exeter BSIP capital schemes (relating to Cowick Street, Heavitree Road and Pinhoe Road corridors) are now complete with feedback currently being reviewed. Cowick Street scheme has local HATOC approval and the Heavitree Road and Pinhoe Road Corridors are planned to go to Cabinet for approval in July. This report will also cover the Braunton Road bus priority scheme in Barnstaple and Newton Abbot proposals to improve priority and journey times for buses through technology upgrades to allow for more adaptive signal control.

BSIP-funded schemes are also continuing to improve upgrades to bus stop infrastructure, which includes a bus shelter replacement programme, a refresh of the electronic real time information system (including increasing the number of electronic signs across the county) as well as improvements to timetable displays and bus stop information.

Other customer experience improvements are planned at local transport interchanges including Barnstaple, Tavistock and Tiverton Bus Stations and a multi-modal interchange at A38 Drumbridges junction near Heathfield. Works to improve the safety of passengers have included enhanced street lighting at bus stop locations, and increased CCTV at Exeter Bus Station.

This Summer, and as a condition of receiving the Year 3 allocation of our BSIP funding, the DfT have requested all local authorities to refresh their plans, including a summary of what has been delivered so far and identifying future plans for improving bus service provision. The recent additional ZEBRA funding announcement for electric buses (see section 5) provides a further strong platform for this refresh.

North Devon Link Road - £67.6m (£60m Large Local Majors Grant)

Progress on this vitally important scheme for improving Northern Devon connectivity is going well and people driving the route will soon see completed sections of the enhanced A39/A361 corridor. The scheme is progressing on time and to budget with the aim of being completed by Summer 2024.

West Devon Transport Hub, Okehampton – £14.55m (£13.5m Levelling Up Fund)

Network Rail have appointed a contractor to progress detailed design of the station, its car park and bus facilities over the Summer / Autumn months. Planning consent utilising Network Rail's permitted development rights is anticipated in mid to late Summer, which will enable the ecological licences to be secured in the Autumn and works to commence towards the end of the calendar year. Separate to the station and car park works led by Network Rail, Devon County Council is progressing design of wider cycle infrastructure,

including improved crossings to enable convenient active travel access from the neighbouring development on the east of the town.

Tavistock to Plymouth Railway Reinstatement

In October 2023, the Government made a Network North announcement to reallocate HS2 funding to several projects, including the Tavistock to Plymouth railway reopening. The Rail Minister stated that it will be funded to delivery, subject to future updates to the project business case. This follows Devon County Council's business case submission in Autumn 2022, which was funded by the Government's Restoring Your Railway programme. The project has been passed to Network Rail to lead as this is a significant rail infrastructure scheme and a further submission to Government is expected this Summer to enable draw down of the development funding to enable preparation of an Outline Business Case for the scheme.

Devon Retrofit Guide launch

In March the Energy Saving Devon domestic energy advice service and retrofit guide was launched. This provides a 'one stop shop' telephone advice service and online portal to support building trades and DIYers to incorporate energy efficiency upgrades into renovation projects. The aim of this initiative is to improve the quality and speed of retrofitting homes needed to eliminate carbon emissions by 2050, lowering energy bills and creating comfortable, healthy homes.

Renewable Energy Opportunities

A review of opportunities on DCC's land assets has identified 40MW (enough to power 14,500 homes). Detailed business cases on the top three will be progressed in 2024/25.

Monument Management Scheme

Over 150 volunteers have been re-engaged with on the conservation of at-risk Scheduled Ancient Monuments including Hembury Hillfort, Dunkeswell Abbey and Woodbury Castle. Volunteers also took part in archaeological investigations at Gallantry Bower Enclosure on the North Devon coast and at Cullompton Roman Fort. The Roman Festival Day linked to the Roman Fort investigations attracted over 1500 visitors.

3.2 Policy and Strategies

Local Transport Plan 2026-2040

Work has been continuing to develop the Local Transport Plan 2026-2040 (LTP) for Devon and Torbay. This builds on the Vision work undertaken in 2023 and incorporates feedback from the Standing Overview Group in January 2024. A report is due to Cabinet seeking approval to consult on the

draft Local Transport Plan in July 2024. Subject to Cabinet approval, public consultation will then take place and include opportunities for the public to engage with the project team. In line with Devolution plans for the County Combined Authority, a provisional LTP for Devon and Torbay is expected to be in place by March 2025. The final strategy will be formally adopted by the CCA with endorsement from the Constituent Councils.

Biodiversity Net Gain / Habitat Bank

The team have been establishing processes to meet the requirements of new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) planning laws as part of the Environment Act. The Act requires all qualifying planning permissions to demonstrate that development of a site will achieve a net gain in biodiversity of more than 10% compared with beforehand.

In March, Devon County Council and Exeter City Council, working with BioGains Limited, registered the first 'habitat bank' in the country at the 3.2 ha Duryard Valley Park. This means that if developers are unable to deliver habitat enhancements 'on-site' due to spatial constraints, they can either choose to undertake the work elsewhere or they can purchase them from the Exeter 'bank', which will be enhanced into lowland meadow.

Tree and Woodland Strategy for Devon

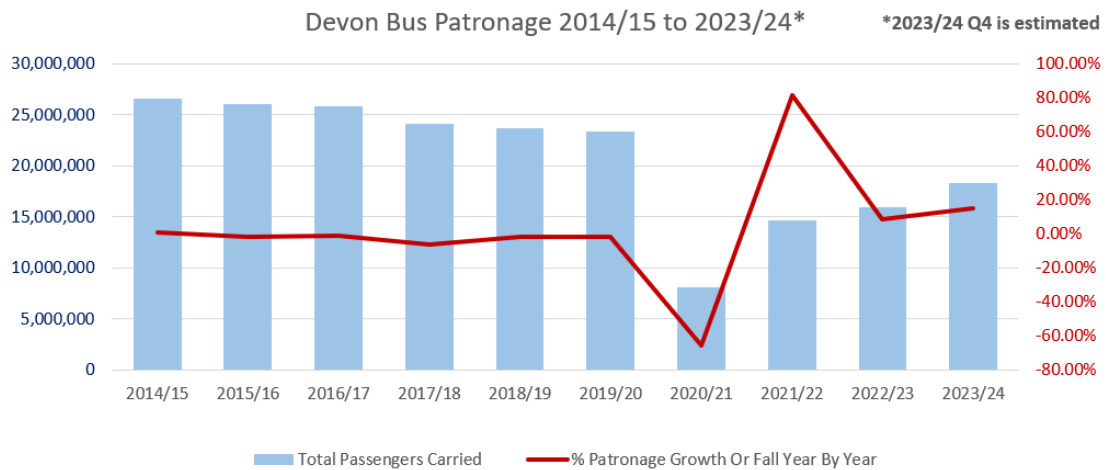
The Local Nature Partnership, facilitated by Devon County Council, has endorsed the first ever Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy. It sets out a plan for delivery of an additional 3000ha of woodland and trees in Devon by 2030, to help achieve an increase in the county's tree cover from 14% to 16.5% by 2050.

4. Performance and Partnerships

4.1 Enhanced Bus Partnership

The Devon Bus Enhanced Partnership and Devon BUS Forum are now well established and provide a useful platform to work with key stakeholders to improve bus services across the county. Should emerging Devolution plans for a County Combined Authority proceed, there is a commitment to include Torbay Council in a single Enhanced Partnership.

The Enhanced Partnership sets direction for the BSIP strategy and future initiatives, but it also reviews performance. As the graph demonstrates, the impact of COVID significantly reduced patronage; however, there has been gradual recovery. The introduction of the £2 Fare has been accredited for patronage increases of around 6%.

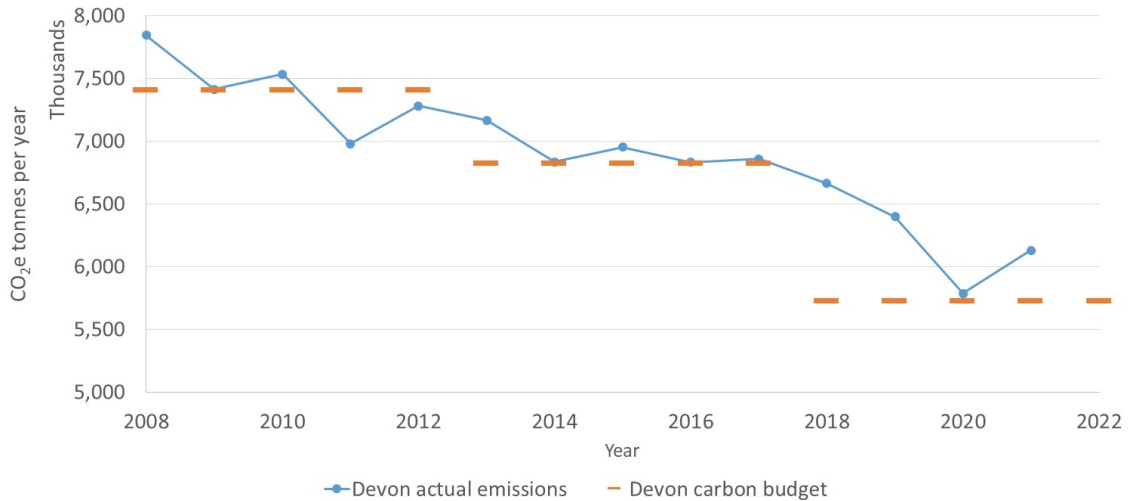


At the County Show in May, the County Council partnered with Stagecoach to promote and celebrate the work of the Devon Bus Enhanced Partnership. The new Devon Bus livery was also launched at the show.

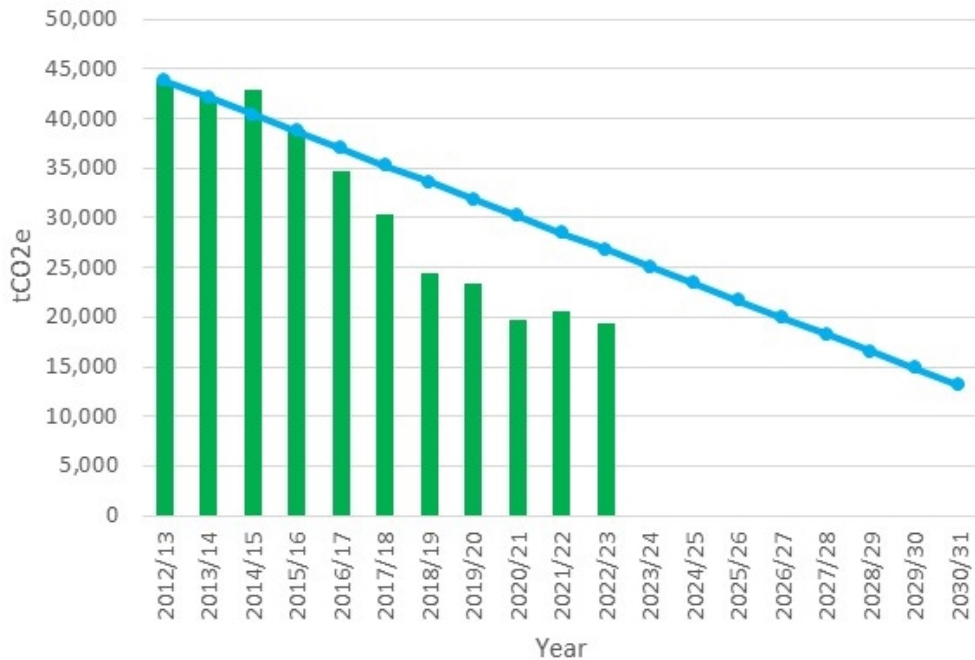
4.2 Devon Climate Emergency Partnership

The partnership, led by Devon County Council, continues to meet monthly to oversee the implementation of the Devon Carbon Plan and the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy. The newly-established Climate Task Force, offering independent challenge from businesses, community, academia and third-sector representatives, is meeting quarterly and has established a work programme to review performance of the actions from each section of both documents.

The chart shows Devon’s 5-year ‘carbon budgets’ overlaid with the latest actual emissions data (note this includes Plymouth and Torbay). The carbon budgets indicate the necessary, average level of emissions over the 5-year period to achieve the target of a 45% reduction from 2010 levels by 2030. In 2021, emissions were 21% below 2010 levels. The first two budget periods performed well and the overall reduction has been positive. The latest budget (2018 – 2022) is 87% spent. With one year remaining this means the 2022 emissions are likely to exceed the budget by about 9%. This exceedance will be carried forward as a debit into the next budget period. This highlights the need for accelerated action on emissions reduction, facilitated by anchor institutions Devon-wide to provide the infrastructure and support for people to live well and contribute to community and environmental resilience.



The corporate Environmental Performance Board has met quarterly to ensure continued progress with initiatives to reduce energy consumption and corporate carbon emissions as well as broader environmental issues such as an update to the Corporate Reuse Policy and Action Plan, and the Coast, Countryside and Heritage Action Plan. The chart below demonstrates that emissions are 56% below 2012 levels and currently well-ahead of the target to reduce absolute emissions by 70% by 2030 (with the remaining 30% offset).



5. Celebrating Success

5.1 Grant Funding Announcements

Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) - £5.3m Grant

Devon County Council were successful in their bid for this funding pot. We received £5.3M to work with Stagecoach to electrify several bus routes in Exeter, Barnstaple and North Devon.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) - £7m Grant

Complementing the adoption of the Devon EV Strategy, over £7m has been secured to delivery of 2,000 more charging points across Devon by 2030. Delivery is expected to begin in 2025 and will expand the growing network with a particular focus on charging points on residential streets in rural and remote areas with electric grid constraints; where higher uptake of Electric Vehicles are forecast, and in communities without or with limited access to off-street parking.

5.2 Transport Industry Award Nominations

At the annual Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) South West Awards ceremony on 23rd May 2024, Devon County Council have been shortlisted for several awards. Just to be shortlisted for these awards should be celebrated for the significant effort and technical excellence of the staff across the Climate Change, Environment and Transport Directorate and supporting teams, including our framework partner consultants.

CIHT Award category:	Awarded for:	DCC Nominations:
Project of the Year Award	Outstanding example of transportation or highway project	- Queen St, Exeter* (with WSP) - Magdalen Rd, Exeter* (with WSP) - Marsh Barton Rail Station (with Graham Construction & Network Rail)
Sustainability Award	Contributing to sustainable development and environmental benefits	- Queen St, Exeter* (with WSP) - Magdalen Rd, Exeter* (with WSP)
Collaboration Award	Dedication to working in collaboration and importance of effective relationships to deliver solutions	- 'Rail Link' bus services (with GWR and local bus companies)
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Award	Implementing an EDI initiative of merit or establishing themselves as a positive role model for the industry	- Safety Inclusion Assessment* (with WSP & Exeter City Council) - Jamie Hulland – Deputy Director of CCET
Peter Swain Emerging Professional of the Year Award	Making a valuable contribution to highways or transportation and establishing themselves as a positive role model for the industry	Lauren Allington – Graduate Transport Planning Officer

South West Emerging Professionals Presentation Competition Final	Presenting effectively, engaging the audience and fielding challenging, technical questions	Chelsea Randall – Assistant Transport Planning Officer
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** these nominees fall under Councillor Stuart Hughes' Portfolio*

6. Conclusion

This report highlights the breadth of activity happening across the Climate Change, Environment and Transport portfolio, including strategy development and adoption, partnerships, advocacy work with Ministers and continued success with business cases for grant funding bids. Using modest sums of Local Transport Plan, developer contributions and Corporate funding as match, this has helped leverage over £107m external grant funding into the transport capital programme for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This has recently been boosted further by the combined £12.3m announcements for the successful ZEBRA and LEVI grant bids.

Such capital investment is helping contribute to several of Devon's Strategic Plan goals. Improving travel choices for people working, learning and pursuing leisure or retail opportunities in Devon **helps people feel safe and better connected**. It also helps **support economic recovery** - keeping the network moving; mitigating the impacts of housing and jobs growth, and delivering a resilient road and rail network to boost connectivity with the rest of the country. Encouraging mode shift and reducing carbon emissions from vehicles supports Devon's **response to the climate emergency** and offering a variety of sustainable travel improvements can also **improve health and wellbeing** with even public transport journeys often starting and ending with a walk or a cycle.

Councillor Andrea Davis
Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport