

County Councillor 'Update' Holsworthy Rural (05 November 2019)

Dear Members and Officers,

The number of potholes on Devon's roads has dramatically reduced in the last 12 months. In 2018, the average number of recorded potholes for each month between April and August was 9,667, 6,284, 5,096, 5,021 and 4,385. However, the 2019 figures showed that the numbers of recorded potholes have more than halved, with 3,608, 3,089, 3,253, 2,260, and 1,826 potholes recorded respectively for each month. Whilst, the weather hasn't helped recently, it seems that we are beginning to see the benefits of the Public Interface Portal triage process that has been county wide since June. **Gangs are now fixing 97% of all the defects they attend first time, compared to a figure of 68%** recorded in June 2018.

You may have heard that there is a second Highways initiative in the "**Doing What Matters**" project being run at the moment - which is focusing on reactive works done on the network, alternative solutions, and trying to reduce the amount of defects out on the ground. Yet again, Holsworthy is at the front of innovation with an experiment in our ward with the 'Dragon Patcher' which uses flames to dry out surfaces prior to repair to see if we can use it in a truly reactive way.

The premise is this:

- Currently, we have the annual inspection of the 8-10 network being done by the inspectors.
- If they find more than 10 defects along a single road they can request that the Dragon Patcher attends. (Isolated potholes will continue to be repaired by the pothole gangs).
- Additionally, when a member of the public reports a defect and the triage inspector attends they, too, can request the Dragon Patcher.
- The Dragon Patcher will then tackle both the safety defects found by the inspector and any serviceability defects found. In theory this seals the road and will mean less potholes will develop in the future.

- The aim is to tackle the minor network with an engineering solution which is suitable, longer lasting and will result in less return visits.

I have met several times over the last fortnight with officers in Highways as well as with our maintenance contractors (Skanska) in relation to improving works on our rural roads and am very hopeful of matters being improved.

On the matter of **Waste - Devon has maintained its status as one of the top recycling counties in England, recycling 56% of household waste.**

Devon no longer sends any rubbish from kerbside collections to landfill. All residual waste now goes to Energy Recovery Facilities and is used to create heat and electricity.

The latest 2018/2019 draft figures show that the **recycling rate has increased by 2%** when compared to the previous year and over the same period the total quantity of residual black bag waste collected across Devon has gone down by 4.4%, meaning that people are throwing less into general 'non-recyclable' waste.

Of the eight Devon districts the highest rate was in East Devon – their recycling rate is at 59.1%. Torridge saw the biggest increase from 41.2% to 51.3%. This follows the introduction of a fortnightly residual waste collection from a weekly one and separate food waste and garden waste collection. This means that Devon residents are throwing away less waste – 'dustbin' waste is down by 6472 tonnes.

Some further good news is that Devon is among two regions in the county to have been awarded the highest rise in **school funding**. After years of local lobbying by councils and teachers for more cash, the government has announced the south west will get a **5% increase in per pupil funding** in the next financial year.

It means Devon schools will receive just over £19 million extra. That's £228 more for each pupil in a primary school and £184 for each secondary student. Along with the East Midlands, it is the highest percentage regional rise in the country and compares with London on 3.2% and the North West on 4.1%. The new figures mean Devon still lags

behind the national average with every pupil worth £263 less than their counterparts throughout the country. Devon will also get an **extra £6 million next year to help vulnerable children with special needs.**

One of the things I am particularly proud of at Devon County Council (DCC) is that of its work with **apprentices**, which is a part of my Cabinet Portfolio. Just over a month ago DCC won the Large Apprenticeship Employer of the Year Award for the South West Region at the National Apprenticeship Awards. We are very proud of our achievements and the support that Members, senior and local managers have given those already with us as well as joining us in opening up apprenticeship placement opportunities.

Finally, a public consultation has been launched by Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) ahead of undertaking a fresh procurement to find contractors to provide **superfast broadband.**

CDS, which is responsible for rolling out publicly-funded broadband across the two counties, is establishing the remaining area where there are no current or credible future plans to deliver Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband infrastructure capable of download speeds of at least 30Mbps.

Nearly one million homes and businesses in Devon and Somerset now have access to superfast broadband thanks to the Government supported CDS programme and stimulation of the commercial market which is an important element of CDS's role. Of these, over 300,000 homes and businesses have access to superfast broadband as a direct result of investment by CDS.

A link to the CDS news release can be seen at:

<https://www.devonnewscentre.info/superfast-broadband-public-consultation-launched/>

Please don't hesitate to get involved.

Every best wish,

Barry