

February 2026 newsletter from county councillor Henry Gent for parishes in the Broadclyst Division (Brampford Speke, Upton Pyne, Rewe, Stoke Canon, Poltimore, Broadclyst, Clyst Hydon, Clyst St Lawrence, Clyst Honiton, Bishops Clyst, Clyst St George, Faringdon, and Cranbrook)

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The government has now launched a Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon, with a deadline for feedback of midnight on 26th March. The Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG) is inviting residents, businesses, and local communities to respond via this website:

[Devon LGR](#)

My view is that a unitary authority should be more efficient. The relationship between the county council and the district councils can sometimes be a bit clunky. It ought to be possible to do better in a unified organisation. My concern is that the government is pushing it through without much time for reflection and without funding for the costs involved in reorganisation. DCC are arguing that the Devon Unitary option delivers the highest financial benefits, including annual recurring savings of £28.4 million, the lowest implementation costs, and a two -year payback period, meaning the benefits of a unitary model would be realised relatively swiftly. I think DCC's reasoning has merit and is set out in the link below.

[LGR hub - Home](#)

Whichever option the government chooses, there will be implementation costs to be funded by the new authority (or authorities). It looks like there will be no help from government and it has been argued that this government has already taken funding away from the rural shires. So there is a real risk that the process of becoming a unitary will be trigger a funding squeeze or even crisis as has happened in other counties that have gone unitary.

Normally government does not allow local government authorities to sell capital assets in order to fund a deficit in the revenue account, but in recent years the government has allowed the receipts from the sales of assets to be used for "transformation". This may be what happens if the process of becoming a unitary turns out to be expensive. My fear is that the new authorities will be looking for asset sales to fund the transformation process and first in the firing line will be the County Farms Estate.

Devon's County Farms Estate is one of the finest in the country. In this county we still have a fantastic farming community with great networks which support young people who want to get into farming. A key part of that is the County Farms Estate with over 60 farms let to new entrants into farming. The loss of these farms would significantly

narrow the range of opportunities for new entrants, and would be like a dull blow to Devon farming. I don't want to see further shrinkage of the network of family farms in Devon.

The saddest thing about a fire sale of the farms is that in the longer run the unitary authority would be better off to hold the land in hand, as tenancies, and sell off only land that is required for other uses, thereby capturing added value if it arises. I would guess that other counties which sold off their county farms decades ago, as many of them did, in one wholesale event, would have made more money in the long run if they had kept the farms, and only sold off bits and pieces for development over the succeeding years. A fire sale of their tenanted farms was probably forced by circumstances at the time but it was unfortunate in retrospect.

Over the course of the next month I will try and visit as many of the parish councils as I can to answer questions about my position on LGR.

With LGR due to lead to new elections in May 2027 for the new authority, the government decided to allow local government authorities to call off elections which were due in May 2026. This did not have any impact on DCC and EDDC, as no elections were due, but it allowed Exeter city council to call off their May 2026 elections.

Cranbrook Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool

With a proposed start of construction date of 2027, a consultation is now open, closing on 4th March at 10.00am. This is run by EDDC and I hope my EDDC friends will not mind me mentioning it.

[Share Your Views On Cranbrook Leisure Survey - Commonplace](#)

Boniface Trail

The creation of good quality cycle route from Crediton to Exeter would be a benefit for the residents all along the way, as well as a much wider benefit. As a result of dedicated lobbying over many years, this project is gradually moving up the agenda for DCC. At the present level of funding for cycle routes, it is likely to be years before construction will start but at least DCC have been working on the scheme and the Cabinet of DCC resolved to progress the scheme, albeit dependent on government funding. For residents in the Upton Pyne and Cowley parish, and Brampford Speke, this cycleway will be an important development, when – and if – it eventually comes. It may also be a political point of contention, as not all Councillors think it would be a good use of government funding. More details about the decision to progress are set out in

the link below. I have said that I would prefer DCC to “grasp the nettle” by starting at the Cowley Bridge end but I understand the reasons set out.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 14th January, 2026, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon](#)

[Minutes Template](#)

Storms

At the time of writing DCC had received reports of thousands of fresh potholes, and more than 80 properties with confirmed flooding across over 30 locations. Emergency closure of major roads included the A30 near Ottery, and the A3052. The Clyst St Mary and Sandygate roundabouts were affected by flooding.

Serious damage has been done to the A379 between Torcross and Slapton. The road will be closed for the foreseeable future.

In my opinion we are not thinking enough about adaptation to climate change, including sea level rise, more intense and more frequent storms, and heavier winter rainfall. Admitting that we have to adapt to climate change is painful, but failure to think about it could be worse.

Holiday Activities and Food for children

If a child aged 5 to 16 receives benefits-related Free School Meals, then they should be eligible for government-funded nutritious meals and fun activities during holidays. There’s going to be a pilot extension of this into the spring half-term between 14th and 22nd February, which can be booked online:

[*Eequ · After school. In place of school. Beyond school.*](#)

Devon has been delivering Holiday Activities and Food since 2018, and many families who do not meet the Free School Meals criteria have been able to access places through extended criteria. To learn more, visit

[*Information for parents and carers - Children, families and education*](#)

Or email haf@devon.gov.uk

Interested in Fostering?

For anyone interested, there is an “interactive” recruitment event showcasing the experiences of foster carers and care-experienced young people, at the Future Skills

Centre at Exeter Airport on 20th March. Please see the attached publicity or contact members.services@devon.gov.uk

[Hearts & Homes: A Fostering Devon Conference.](#)

Clyst Vale Community College is exploring joining Blackdown Education Partnership MAT (Multi Academy Trust)

On December 8th the principal, Sara Jacobs, wrote to parents and staff to confirm that the College is exploring this option.

Night Bus

We now have another Night Bus on Saturday nights in our area. The 4 bus service to Cranbrook via Tithebarn has now been added to the 1Bus to Cullompton via Broadclyst.

The service is part funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and runs from about midnight on Saturday to 4 am on Sunday.

[Night buses now all year round as new route for Cranbrook added - News](#)

Henry Gent 7th February 2026