

September 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, Farringdon, and Cranbrook Town)

New Neighbourhood Highways Officer

I am sorry that Ricky Cowtan is moving to a new post at DCC but pleased to be able to report that a replacement has been appointed and will take over soon, with no gap.

Local Government Reorganisation

Map of the 4 proposed unitary authorities covering historic Devon:



Proposals for electing councillors to the new Exeter (unitary authority) Council have now been published. These are transitional arrangements and it is anticipated that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will review the ward boundaries in years to come. So these proposals are interim warding arrangements for the 2027 to 2031 term. The numbers of councillors for the area currently covered by the Broadclyst Division of DCC are set out below and each Ward will be the same as the current district council ward, and have the same number of councillors as EDDC.

Councillors on new Exe/Exeter unitary council

Ward	number of councillors
Broadclyst	3

Clyst	
Valley	1
Cranbrook	3
Exe Valley	1

The total number of councillors on the new Exeter Unitary will be 86. Please note that the name “Exeter” is provisional. Personally I think the name “Exe” should be considered, a name which takes in places around the valley and the estuary, as well as the city itself. If you agree with me that we should ask for the new council to be called “Exe”, please debate as a parish, and let me know.

The Cabinet of DCC are making a legal challenge to government’s decision on LGR so there is just a chance that it will all be cancelled. If the challenge fails, it is expected that elections will be held in May 2027 for these new unitary authorities which will initially exist as “shadow” authorities alongside the existing county and district councils. In the months that follow they will gradually build staff, policies, etc and from May 2028 (“vesting day”) the old councils will cease to exist and the new councils will be in charge.

Damage to local lanes caused by construction of solar farms and battery sites

Further to the damage to the lanes during the current construction of the new solar farm around Marsh Green known as Ford Oaks, this is a reminder to all parish councils to make sure that a proper survey of the lanes is done before construction begins.

My activities on Devon County Council

County Farms Estate. Since re-election in May 2025, I have been chairing the Committee of the County Farms Estate, which lets 64 farms as Starter Farms and Progression Farms. At this time of year we visit new and often young farmers who are just one or two years into their tenancy, and also we hold viewing days at farms that are about to be relet. Since May 2025 I have visited about 25-30 farms, all over Devon, and interviewed quite a lot of applicants for new tenancies. I feel lucky to have this experience which is a vivid reminder of the enthusiasm and energy of the farming community, and that there are plenty of young people who want to farm. The County Farms Estate provides a key element of the farming community which is – in my opinion – important. We do wonder what will happen to the county farms under LGR, and we will do all that we can to safeguard it.

I do have another concern which is that very little of the 9,500 acres of the County Farms Estate is growing food that we can actually eat, in other words plant-based food.

All 64 farms are growing animal feed almost exclusively. This reflects the trend in the county as a whole, or just in Broadclyst. When I was teenager our farm was one of at least a dozen in the parish which were producing commercial tonnages of plant based food such as potatoes, swedes, malting barley, milling wheat, apples, vegetables, all for human consumption. Over the decades the markets have changed, and less of these are produced in Broadclyst, and in our county.

Investments and Pensions Committee. Since re-election in May 2025, I have been vice-chair of this committee. Devon County Council is the administering authority for the Devon Pension Fund which provides pensions for parish, town, and district councils, schools, and others, as well as the county council itself. There are over 100,000 people who have a pension in this fund which currently totals over £6 billion. Government has recently reorganised the way that Devon Pension Fund pools together with others and we, together with the other County council pension funds in the south west, have recently joined a pool called LPPI, based in London. Again, we are wondering what will happen under LGR !

I have engaged with the campaign to disinvest from genocide related investments. There is not room here to explore this debate but I am happy to discuss with residents.

A Tourist Tax for Devon?

The government are going to allow Mayoral Strategic Authorities in England to introduce an Overnight Visitor levy. We don't yet have agreement on a proposal for an elected mayor, and the area that would be covered (all 4 unitaries in historic Devon?). So we can't have a Tourism Tax. Nevertheless people are already taking sides on this issue. Cornwall Council has voted in favour of the concept, even though they also don't have an elected mayor. At the forthcoming meeting of DCC on 3rd September there is a motion(item 17) to rule out the idea. I would prefer to keep the option open. This is a tax which would mostly come from overnight stays in private accommodation let through online agencies such as Airbnb, and could provide much needed funding for the services which support visitors, as well as residents, not least quality tourism.

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Council, 03/09/2026 11:00](#)

Big Conversation on Care

The conversation forms part of the work of the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care, known as the Casey Commission. It aims to hear from people across England about their experiences, ideas and priorities for care and support in the future.

At the heart of the conversation is one question:

When we are old or disabled, or have a serious illness, who should support us and how?

People can share their ideas online, respond to suggestions from others and contribute to a nationwide discussion that will help inform the Commission's work. The initiative is open to everyone, whether they have direct experience of care and support or simply want to help shape services for future generations.

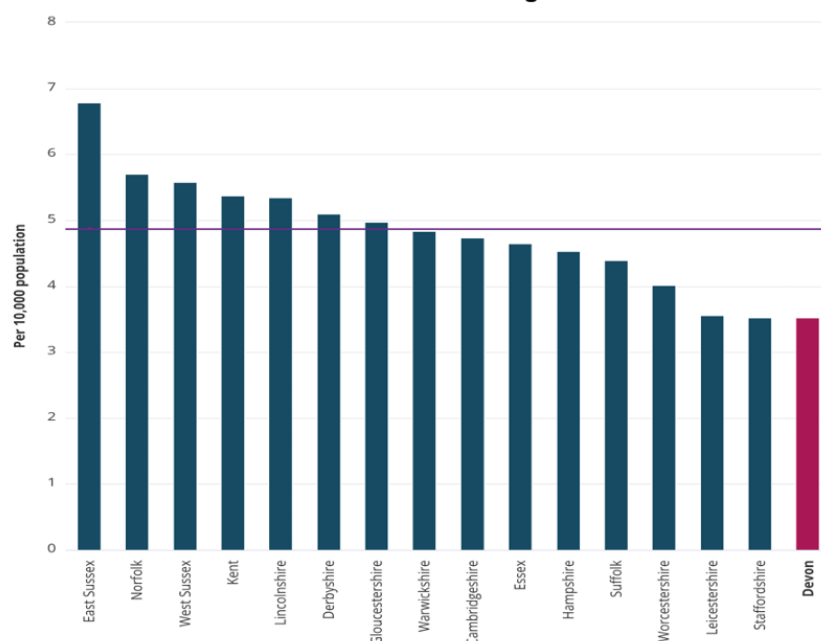
Adult social care touches many lives, and this is an opportunity to make sure the experiences and perspectives of people in Devon are part of that national conversation.

[Find out more and take part in the Big Conversation on Care.](#)

Road Safety in Devon

Some good news: In 2025, there has been a very positive 20% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Devon's roads. This achievement is even more significant when compared with the national picture, which saw a 4% increase in KSIs over the same period. . Devon is currently ranked joint first for KSI performance across comparable highways authorities:

People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents per 10,000 population (3-year average) (2023-25) for Devon & Local Outcomes Framework Statistical Neighbours



Source:
Department for Transport

I think this is important for us to take on board in our area because I often share with parish councils a sense that DCC highways does not care enough about safety. I am coming to realise that officers do prioritise safety, as for example the recent decision to reduce the speed limit on the A376 Exmouth Road between Clyst St George and Clyst St Mary, a stretch of road where a number of casualty collisions had taken place, including one fatality.

Highways activity around Cullompton

3 different projects are going on or in the news in the area of Cullompton, which is a bit confusing for those who just drive through:

1. **Baulk Bridge.** Baulk Bridge is a failing bridge on the road to Cullompton. The Engineering Design Group is currently managing a contract for the replacement of this bridge and a realignment of the highway. The Contract is 4 months into a 19 month programme and is heavily constrained in terms of environmental and Network Rail. The scheme will build a new bridge offline from the live carriageway, utilising the old bridge meaning there is less impact on passing traffic.
2. **Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road.** The County Council has been delivering the Relief Road project in Cullompton on behalf of Mid Devon District Council who successfully attracted £33.5m of funding from Homes England. Advance works have been continuing from early in the year with improvements to the existing junctions as well as the relocation of the local cricket club to a new site to the east of Cullompton and re positioning the football club and bowls club. The main project commenced in mid August and to programmed for completion before the end of March 2028.
3. **M5 junction 28 scheme.** in July, the Department for Transport confirmed its approval of the Strategic Outline Case for the M5 Junction 28 scheme and has awarded £1.3m funding to further develop the design and development of the business case which will be required to draw down future funding to construct the scheme.

POTHOLES

Highways are expanding the trial that empowers our contractor's teams to repair potholes that don't meet intervention criteria when visiting public reports of potholes, allowing the reduction in repeat visits. But not in our area yet.....meanwhile...

Community Self Help and Road Warden Scheme DCC has renewed its commitment to this with a refreshed website and training and promotion.

Please accept my apology

I will be on holiday and not on email from 7th September to the 27th . After my return to duties on the 28th I will be around until – probably – a medical procedure prevents me from getting around for a while. So looking forward to seeing some of you again but maybe not until after that, later in the year.

HATOC Date

East Devon HATOC will be 10.30 on 17th November and Broadclyst parish council in particular may like to note that the Langaton-Westclyst link will probably be on the agenda.

Henry Gent 27/08/2026