

District Council Report October 2024

Cllr Christopher Oram – Bickleigh & Cornwood

Have your say on active travel

Would you like to cycle and walk more? What is stopping you from doing that right now?

We want to hear from you about cycling, wheeling and walking in the area.

As part of our commitment to support communities, improve wellbeing and fight climate change, we are developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

[Have your say online](#) until 11 October 2024.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax enquiries

On Tuesday 8 October 2024 the Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and general Council Tax enquiry phone lines will be closed due to staff training.

If you need to contact us please go online at www.southhams.gov.uk/benefits-and-support where you will be able to make a claim, report a change in your circumstances or view your entitlement letters.

Should you have a specific query, you can contact us at www.southhams.gov.uk/contact-us and the team will respond to your message on Wednesday 9 October 2024.

Cycling UK reports published

Cycling UK has released two new reports commissioned by South Hams and West Devon focusing on rural mobility. They highlight both resident views and strategic recommendations to promote walking, cycling and wheeling in rural communities.

The reports present new evidence on how residents in the South Hams and West Devon view and experience walking, cycling and wheeling, alongside strategies for how rural authorities can promote more active travel for local journeys.

The reports by Cycling UK have identified key priorities and strategies that suit the needs, opportunities and challenges faced by rural communities.

This project was delivered in partnership with the consultancy Phil Jones Associates, which is providing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the area. The plan will lay out the priorities for physical changes that can enable more people to walk, cycle and wheel (using wheelchairs or mobility scooters).

Cycling UK's work has focused on understanding the existing interest, needs and concerns of those living in rural towns and villages and identifying ways that local councils can act to encourage more walking, wheeling, and cycling ahead of, or alongside, improvements to infrastructure.

From more than 1,500 local responses, people living in South Hams and West Devon expressed clear priorities:

- 78% of respondents already walk or wheel for their local journeys, making walking and wheeling a well-accepted and welcomed choice in the community.
- Around 70% felt they lived within walking/wheeling distance of shops, public transport and green spaces, but only 51% could easily access friends or family.
- Safety concerns and limited transport options particularly affect the most vulnerable, reducing their mobility and quality of life.
- While most local residents do not currently cycle regularly, 84% agreed that cycling was good for health, and 81% felt positive or neutral about the idea of more people cycling in their area. 45% of people not currently cycling would consider cycling for local journeys

You can read the whole report <https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/rural-mobility-reports>

Is your home energy efficient?

As part of our work to improve the energy efficiency of homes and fight climate change, we are working with partners [South Dartmoor Community Energy](#) to help future-proof some of the most poorly performing energy rated properties in the South Hams.

You could save on your energy use and bills with a free energy efficiency upgrade to your property if you:

- Own your home
- Have heating that isn't main's gas
- Have an energy EPC rating of D, E, F, G
- Have a total household income of less than £36,000 per year

Find out more at southhams.gov.uk/hug2

Coming to a street near you

We're going to be out in the streets of the South Hams in the coming weeks with our new cleaning equipment to clear up chewing gum. Ahead of our first sessions in Ivybridge and Kingsbridge, our teams have been testing the equipment.

The cleaning equipment was bought with a grant from the Chewing Gum Task Force.

Find out more on our website

Be careful of parking scam

There is a Parking Charge Notice (PCN) scam text message going around which leads to a copycat government website.

Copycat websites aim to earn your trust by copying official organisations and known brands, often government bodies, transport companies or couriers.

Typically, these scams charge you a fee for something you can do for free or tell you you've done something wrong and need to pay a fine to avoid further payments or even legal action.

Please be advised that we do NOT notify residents of a PCN via text. A PCN will be either attached to your vehicle or sent to you via post. More information can be [found on our website](#).

For your safety, avoid clicking on any links from unknown numbers. If you are ever unsure if a text or letter thought to be from us is real, please [contact us](#) to check.

If you believe you have been a victim of this scam, report the matter to [Action Fraud](#) or call 0300 123 2040.

Working together to clear up our waters

With cleaner waters a hot topic, organisations have been coming together to see how our marine industry can do its bit to tackle air and water pollution across the South Hams.

As part of our promise to protect the environment and boost the local economy, we have been working with local marine businesses, harbour authorities and industry experts to help move away from fossil fuel to electric power on the water.

Sherford Country Park open

A huge new section of Sherford's Country Park has been created and is now open to the public. This extensive green space now covers over 92 acres of land and more than quadruples the size of Sherford's previous Country Park. With a stream running through it, plenty of fascinating features, and breathtaking views over the valley, the new park is a stunning slice of South Hams countryside that is free to visit and open to all.

Pension credit

Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs. Anyone over State Pension age may be eligible to claim Pension Credit, even if they own their home or have savings. People can check their eligibility at gov.uk/pension-credit or by calling 0800 99 1234.

People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- [Housing Benefit](#) if they rent the property they live in
- [Winter Fuel Payment](#)
- [Support for Mortgage Interest](#) if they own the property they live in
- a [Council Tax discount](#)
- a [free TV licence](#) if aged 75 or over
- help with [NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs](#) for hospital appointments, if you get a certain type of Pension Credit
- help with heating costs through the [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#)
- a discount on the [Royal Mail redirection service](#) if moving house

If you'd like to find out more about pension credit, you can come and meet our staff at:

- Totnes Library on 29 October, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Kingsbridge Library on 20 November, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

It's Care Leavers' Week

We're doing all we can to support young people in the South Hams who are leaving care so they can thrive.

In 2023, we started offering people up to the age of 25 who had left the care system:

- A Council Tax discount.
- Free local leisure passes to support their health and wellbeing.
- Support with their housing needs, by working with our partners.

For many care leavers, the prospect of getting a job, or even applying for one, can be overwhelming without the support in place. Our 'Care Leavers Employment Policy' helps remove the barriers care leavers face by offering work placements, a guaranteed interview scheme, the ring-fencing of entry-level apprenticeships, and mentoring to help care leavers adapt to the working environment and secure permanent jobs.

Find out more about the [support we offer](#).

Are you a care leaver who needs some help? [Get in touch!](#)

How are you recycling your pumpkin?

We hope you had fun this Halloween!

Have you carved a Jack O'Lantern? They're great fun, but make sure you don't waste the pumpkin by just throwing it away.

- You can cook and eat the flesh and seeds - Pumpkin pie is a great autumn treat!
- Remember to put any pumpkin offcuts you have in your food caddy -just remove the candles first!

Find out more about your waste and recycling service [here](#).

Sparkle safely this Fireworks Night

Looking forward to some fireworks next week?

It's always safer to attend a professionally run firework display, instead of one at somebody else's or your own home. Most firework-related injuries happen when people are using fireworks in their gardens.

If you *are* enjoying fireworks at home, check out the below safety advice from [our firework safety page](#).

- Only buy fireworks with a CE mark.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box.
- Follow the instructions on each firework.
- Light them at arm's length, using a taper.
- Stand well back.
- Always supervise children around fireworks.
- Keep pets indoors.

Make sure you:

- Don't drink alcohol.
- Don't go near a firework that has been lit - even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode.
- Don't put fireworks in your pocket or throw them.
- Don't let off fireworks after 11pm.
- Don't use fireworks near thatched properties or crops, especially during periods of dry weather.

Get more advice [on our website](#).

Change NHS

Supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents is one of our priorities as a Council - and now you can have your say on your healthcare needs.

It doesn't matter whether you have a lot or a little to say. Your views, experiences and ideas will shape a new 10 Year Health Plan for England.

If you are a member of the public or someone who works in health and care in England, [have your say on how the NHS needs to change](#).

The conversation portal will be live until the start of next year, and is also available via the NHS App.

People who visit the website can:

- give their views on the NHS and health and care
- tell the government what they feel is working well and what needs improving
- share their experiences
- post their ideas for improving health and care in the future

Make sure to [have your say!](#)