



**Devon Communities Together**

helping communities help themselves



# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN DEVON TO REBUILD AND THRIVE

Devon Communities Together:  
Measuring Our Impact

April 2021-March 2022



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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

I am delighted to present our latest Annual Impact Report. The last 12 months have proved to be another extremely busy period for the charity and the communities and organisations we work alongside, as this report demonstrates. I would like to particularly thank our amazing staff team and our funders and partners on the impact we have been able to achieve together, outlined in this report.



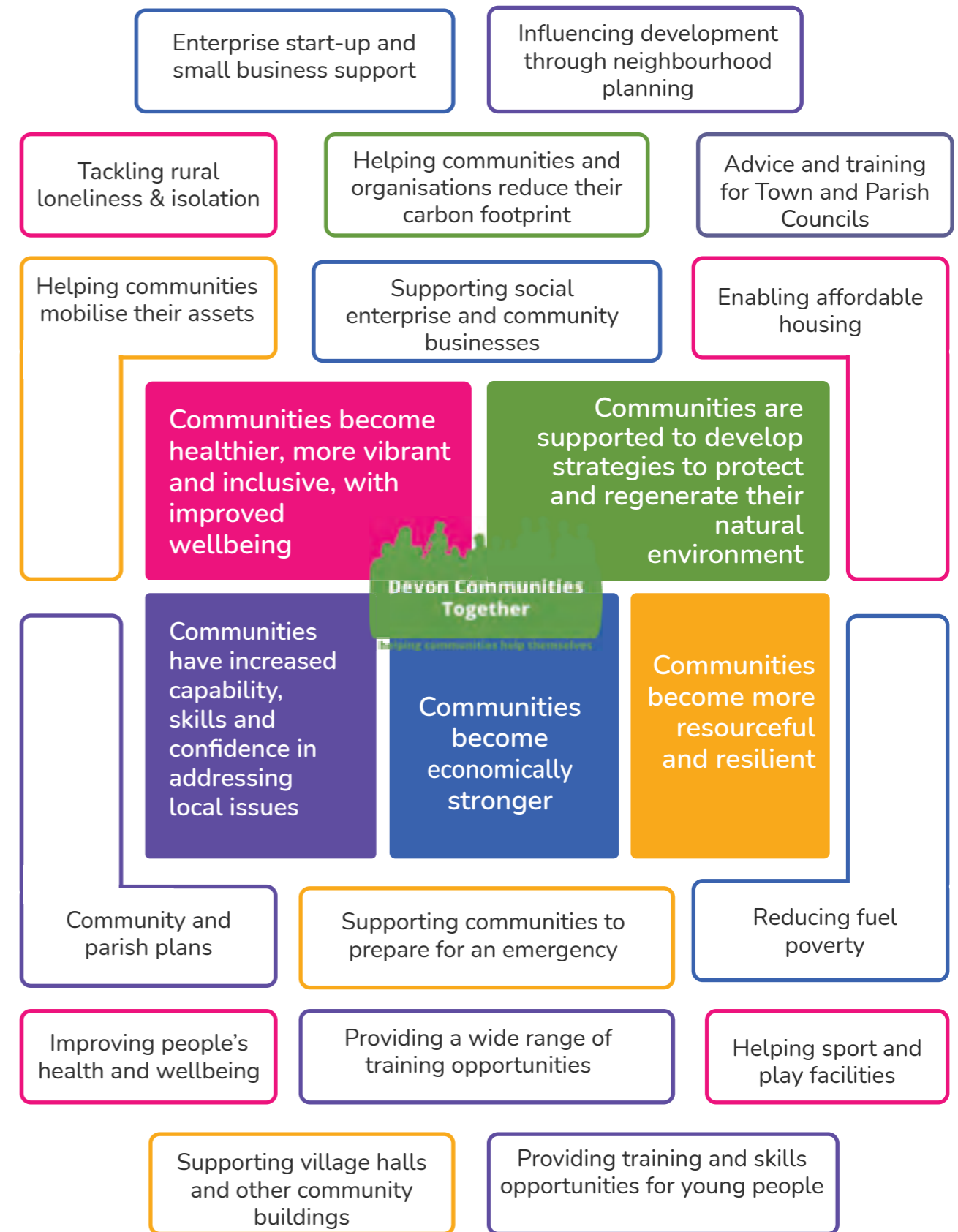
I am very proud to report that in our 60th anniversary year, our team of staff and trustees have successfully continued to support Devon's communities through the second year of a global pandemic, combined with the effects of a war in Europe and a looming cost of living crisis. Organisationally, we have navigated how we work in a hybrid way and completed an internal management restructure, whilst continuing to deliver excellent quality community engagement and development activities, and sustain the financial stability of the charity. We have also actively contributed to the collective development of the newly emergent VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) Assembly and to VCSE sector engagement in the formation of the new One Devon Integrated Care Partnership this year.

*Nora Corkery, Chief Executive, Devon Communities Together*

**£3.8m**

... that's the social value our activities created in communities across Devon from April 2021 - March 2022!

## OUR 5 SOCIAL OBJECTIVES ARE AT THE CENTRE OF ALL OUR ACTIVITIES ...



OBJECTIVE

Communities become healthier, more vibrant and inclusive, with improved wellbeing

81 patients engaged with about rural health challenges



Grants of £426,880 awarded to organisations providing CV-19 support



23 contacts with sports and play facilities to give advice



£331K Covid Contain Outbreak Management Funding secured for the VCSE sector to help people and communities to get through a challenging winter



140 calls & texts made to, and 36 online befriending sessions held for, lonely older people during the final 3 months of lockdown



100+ people supported with new digital skills and equipment

TACKLING LONELINESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Older people in rural communities have made new connections and friendships, tried new hobbies, become more confident with technology and feel less isolated.



Life in rural Devon can look idyllic - but it can also be lonely and isolating, especially during a pandemic. Our Devon Highlights project was originally established in 2019 to support people aged 55+ who may be experiencing isolation and loneliness - and the negative impacts on physical and mental health that this can bring. In April 2021 we were delighted to receive additional funding from Public Health Devon to continue our work until end of June 2021, when most lockdown restrictions were ending.

During the final three months of the project we hosted 31 online friendship sessions, attended by 15 regular participants, made 140 weekly befriending support telephone calls, and helped four new people to get to grips with Zoom.

Participants told us that lots of things had improved since they had joined Devon Highlights, including: confidence, empowerment in everyday life, feelings of life being worthwhile, feeling able to rely on others, and confidence making video calls. These are all things they can take forward into their post-lockdown lives to increase their connection with others.

We were privileged to get to know some wonderful participants over the course of this project, some of whom can be viewed in our short film here: <https://tinyurl.com/33wmxcxr>









“Due to lockdown the only social groups are Devon Highlights. Zoom meetings are the highlight of my week...”



The Devon Highlights project was supported by the National Lottery's Community Fund and HM Government - together forming the Building Connections Fund.

## HELPING PEOPLE THROUGH ANOTHER COVID WINTER

The winter of 2021-22 was a tough one for many; with Covid, rising energy prices and other global challenges impacting on daily lives. We were privileged to be able to award £165,000 in Covid-19 Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant funding to nine Devon-based community organisations to enable them to provide important support services to people from January-March 2022, and beyond. You can read our report here: <https://tinyurl.com/yycja9uc> 

<p><b>260+</b> people engaged with mental health events and support days</p>  <p><b>RITE TO FREEDOM</b></p>	<p><b>MID DEVON HOUSING</b></p> <p><b>150</b> people received financial advice and support in Mid Devon</p>  <p><b>ENCOMPASS HOUSING</b></p>	<p><b>500+</b> nights of emergency winter accommodation provided in Torridge</p> <p><b>ENCOMPASS HOUSING</b></p>
<p><b>AGE UK</b> A new Exeter service opened, engaging</p> <p><b>60</b> older people so far</p> 	<p><b>145+</b> food boxes and <b>200+</b> meals to people in food poverty</p> <p><b>PROJECT FOOD</b></p>	<p><b>DEVON LINK UP</b></p> <p><b>£19,810</b> invested in supporting families living with autism</p> 
<p><b>ACTION TO PREVENT SUICIDE</b></p> <p><b>1,000+</b> school children received suicide prevention workshops</p>	<p><b>RESILIENT LIVES - DOUGH BROS</b></p> <p><b>£13,250</b> invested in supporting men's mental health through wood fired pizza making</p> 	<p><b>100</b> families in Exeter supported by</p> <p><b>HOME START EXETER</b></p>

CASE STUDY

### TRACIE'S STORY

Thank you to Devon Link Up for sharing this amazing story, achievable in part thanks to COMF funding ...

Tracie struggles with depression and anxiety. She has a hearing impairment and learning difficulties, and lives alone. During the pandemic she needed assistance understanding the rules and also found new barriers to accessing services because of the increase in remote communication and mask wearing.

Tracie was supported to access Heathfield Farm, a local farm, accessible to people with learning disabilities and/or autism. While there she started to produce art and helped others to use the Internet. Her confidence grew and she established a strong social network.

Tracie has also showed a keen interest in learning more about IT and has helped to develop web and social media content, and events, as well as creating accessible videos for YouTube.



Tracie

*“The funding has made a major change to the Charity and has enabled us to ... improve our social media content which enables more people to be involved and to get the help and support needed.”*

Jo Morgan, Chief Officer, Devon Link Up

### FUNDING TO HELP PEOPLE TO SELF-ISOLATE

It's estimated that **33,887** people were supported to self-isolate, keeping themselves and others safe.

DCT's Hannah Reynolds was seconded to Devon County Council to support the allocation of the Covid Outbreak Management Grant (Self-isolation). The fund allocated a fantastic £261,880 to 30 voluntary, community and social enterprise groups across Devon to provide help to their local communities.

Awards included ...

- £ Dartmoor Community Kitchen Hub - £20,000 to cook and distribute meals to those self-isolating and their families across Dartmoor, collaborating with Food Banks covering Dartmoor area.
- £ Blackdown Support Group - £5,000 for volunteer co-ordination and support, linked with a GP surgery.
- £ Barnstaple Town Council - £6,200 to support their volunteer mutual aid scheme.

## UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING PEOPLE'S DIGITAL CHALLENGES

As the world becomes increasingly more digital - accelerated in many ways by the pandemic - people who don't have the skills or equipment to use the Internet miss out on both important services and opportunities for social connections. Over the past year DCT worked with many partners to better understand the barriers to digital technology and help people to get online.

### CREATING DIGITAL BEFRIENDERS

100+ people have new skills and equipment to access important services and keep in touch with friends and family.

DCT was part of a partnership with Wellmoor Community Health (North Dartmoor), Teignbridge CVS and Netfriends to help a minimum of 100 people in Devon who didn't have the skills or equipment to use digital technology, become digitally included through developing a network of Digital Befrienders.

Thanks to Contain Outbreak Management Funding (pg.6), we ...

- helped over 100 previously digitally excluded people to learn how to use the Internet, including Roy\* below
- trained a network of 20 digital befrienders who can keep spreading digital skills into the future
- distributed 40 donations of new and reconditioned devices to people.

You can read our report here:

<https://tinyurl.com/yycja9uc>



## INVESTIGATING EXPERIENCES OF DIGITAL HEALTHCARE

Hundreds of people's voices and experiences around online healthcare have been shared with decision makers, providing the opportunity to make services more accessible.

“

*This contact was essential during the pandemic.”*

“

*...helps that people don't have to travel as [they] may be anxious beforehand and possibly emotional afterwards”*

What are people's experiences of digital healthcare? Has anything stopped them accessing it? These questions drove a 4-month research project, funded by NHS X and supported by Thrive by Design.

We engaged with 239 people - particularly those living more than 20 miles from their nearest acute hospital - through focus groups, workshops, conversations, emails and a questionnaire.

After listening to hundreds of people who may not have previously had a voice in this area, we identified some of the issues affecting people in rural areas when accessing healthcare online, including low levels of IT skills and concerns over confidentiality. We also found enthusiasm for accessing online healthcare in principle.



CASE STUDY

### ROY'S STORY

Roy\* was a client that DCT supported on three occasions, meeting at their local library.

They had a device but struggled to adapt to it after upgrading from an old one, as a lot of the functions were slightly different. We covered how to use the new device to achieve most of the things they were able to with their old one. We also spent some time with their phone, learning how to download and use apps to make daily life easier.



\*Not their real name. Stock photo.

“ I found the project a great confidence builder. What I learned with your guidance has enabled me to overcome my fear of new technology and make better use of my smartphone.”



The funding was jointly secured by DCT and Devon Integrated Care System, and we collaborated with community wellbeing charity Wellmoor on the delivery of the research.

You can read our report here: <https://tinyurl.com/4p49by52>

## GIVING USERS A VOICE IN MATERNITY CARE

New resources and insights have been developed with the experiences of users at the centre, leading to improved and more inclusive maternity care.



Devon Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is a group that gives parents and parents-to-be a voice in developing maternity care in Devon.

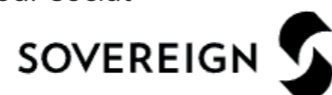
DCT has supported an amazing team of Chairs and Vice Chairs to work on lots of different initiatives to give parents and parents-to-be a voice in the future of maternity care in Devon. Highlights have included providing user-centered films about positive birth experiences, co-producing a Personalisation Journal for women and birthing people and improving the group's BAME engagement.

## COLLABORATING WITH SOVEREIGN HOUSING

Young people, families and people in later life all benefitted from our collaboration with Sovereign. We were delighted to measure a fantastic £3.84m in social value.

During 2021-22 we collaborated with Sovereign Housing Association to measure and provide community development services that were beneficial to Sovereign residents across Devon.

We worked closely with Sovereign on several service deliveries, and also the co-creation of bespoke pilot projects for the residents. We also developed a new way of measuring our social value in monetary terms.



## RAISING AWARENESS OF HEALTH INEQUALITIES

A host of Devon organisations are armed with new knowledge, awareness and networks to help examine and address health inequalities in the county.

Did you know that the life expectancy difference in one of Devon's most affluent communities is more than 15 years longer than in one of our most deprived? Or that in one location, 33.3% children are living in poverty compared to 0.8% in another community?

DCT received Contain Outbreak Management Funding (p.6) to research and raise awareness of health inequalities across Devon, with the aim of understanding the picture better from the perspective of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and public sectors.

Through workshops and an online questionnaire, we examined different barriers to healthcare and how inequalities may be reduced in Devon. Thanks to the information shared, the attendees were able to build their teams' knowledge on health inequalities, frame the impact of their work, apply for funding, and inform decisions about future work. They were also keen to find new ways to collaborate in the future to address health inequalities.

These conversations and the data we collected have laid the foundation for a new Devon VCSE Assembly Specialist Working Group looking at health inequalities.

You can read the report here: <https://tinyurl.com/3ce7r9n2>



## WE ALSO ...

- ... helped the Exmouth Health and Social Care Team with a survey to better understand services that could boost health and wellbeing in the area of Littleham, Exmouth.
- ... evaluated the 'Young People's Voices' project which was delivered by four Youth Centres in West Devon. We engaged with the young people to help provide evidence for future funding.
- ...began initial work on evaluating the social impact of a community fridges scheme to support people in food poverty.
- ...launched Wellbeing Works in spring 2022, which is supporting people all over Devon to improve their wellbeing through free online workshops and 1-2-1 check-ins.

[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wellbeing-works](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wellbeing-works)



OBJECTIVE

# Communities have increased capability, skills and confidence in addressing local issues

1,072 people came along to our 74 training, learning and networking events



7,835 households given the opportunity to input into 13 housing needs surveys



2 communities supported on their Neighbourhood Plan journeys



400 on-site learning days provided to 16-18 year old construction students and 2 full time apprentices employed through our Constructing Futures Devon Ltd company

17 new affordable homes for local people



[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/courses](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/courses)

## OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAIN, NETWORK & CONNECT

Our training gives people all over Devon the opportunity to access knowledge, skills and peer support that helps them to go on and create positive change in their communities!

DCT continued to host and manage the Devon Community Learning

Academy online training and peer networking programme this year, welcoming 1,072 people to 74 events.

Particular highlights included a fully funded series of online training sessions with Citizens Advice Devon to look at all the ways that people could maximise their income throughout a hugely challenging winter. Also, our ever-popular Asset Based Community Development Training session helped people identify the existing asset in their community and how they can help to drive forward community projects.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN THE FUTURE OF THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Neighbourhood plans allow communities to feel engaged and come together to collectively influence the future of their neighbourhoods.

DCT has supported two communities in their Neighbourhood Planning journeys: Tavistock and Braunton.

Neighbourhood plans are formal documents that help determine how an area will develop in the future and it's crucial the community's many voices are represented.

[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/services/neighbourhood-planning](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/services/neighbourhood-planning)



## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

[www.devonhousinghub.org.uk](http://www.devonhousinghub.org.uk)



Communities have a new, accessible resource to support them to solve housing problems in their areas and help maintain multi-generational, thriving communities.

A lack of affordable housing means that people have to move away from the communities they love, having a knock-on impact on community diversity, facilities and services.

DCT led the development of the new Devon Community Housing Hub, which is packed with information and advice on rural and community-led housing, designed to support local councils, community groups and others to understand the routes to affordable local housing and progress schemes in their areas. It was co-designed by partners including local authorities, social housing providers and Housing Officers.

As well as the new Hub, DCT also supported 13 communities to survey the housing need in their areas to provide supporting evidence for the development of new housing.

## COLLABORATING TO LEARN FROM THE PANDEMIC

We have a shared picture of the impacts of Covid-19 on Devon's communities, giving the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector an opportunity to ensure the needs of our communities are represented at a strategic, decision-making level.

One thing we've learnt from the last two years is that the VCSE sector can achieve more when it comes together. The Devon Recovery Co-ordination Group (DRCG) brings together multi-

agency representatives from across Devon to work with communities to help reset, restart and regrow Devon. We reflect on what we have learnt together so we can reimagine and redesign public services against a backdrop of pandemic recovery and the climate emergency.

As part of the DRCG, DCT co-designed a series of eight cross-sector online workshops in spring/summer 2021 addressing themes including economy, housing and homelessness, and community wellbeing. We also co-produced a series of three cross-sector online "Creative Conversations" to explore and drive forward our learning from the Covid response and recovery.

In addition, DCT has played an active part in the development of the new Devon, Plymouth & Torbay VCSE Assembly model.

## BUILDING CONSTRUCTION CAREERS



*Constructing Futures is partly funded by £574,320 from the Heart of the South West LEP's Growth Deal funding. The Heart of the South West LEP's total Growth Deal is worth £598m; including £239m from Government and £359m match funding. Over the lifetime of the Growth Deal: 2015 - 2021; HotSW LEP estimates the investment will create up to 22,000 new jobs and 11,000 new homes.*

We're giving young learners the opportunity to learn valuable skills and experience for their future construction careers and bringing family homes back to life.

There's no substitute to learning from experience. That's why Constructing Futures Devon Ltd, DCT's subsidiary property company uses construction students from South Devon College to help us to redevelop dilapidated properties. They have the opportunity to work on real-life sites and see their hard work come to fruition in the form of new family homes.

We have so far renovated three homes and work continues on a fourth, with around 100 16-18 year old learners having the chance to develop their trades on our site over the past year - amassing around 400 learning hours. We've also taken on two apprentices who are playing an integral role in our renovations.

[South Devon College](http://www.southdevoncollege.ac.uk)

[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/constructing-futures](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/constructing-futures)



## WE ALSO ...



- ... worked with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue to engage with people with seldom heard voices to ensure that their experiences and thoughts were fed into the Community Risk Management Plan, making it more inclusive.
- ... helped Petroc College to evaluate a training pilot it delivered to the hospitality sector in North Devon, to help decide whether it was having the intended impact in supporting local businesses.



OBJECTIVE

Communities are supported to develop strategies to protect and regenerate their natural environment



10 environmental/ climate change events organised or contributed to



205 attendances at a climate change network for local councils



£500 community wildlife grant scheme launched

23 participants in online workshops to address carbon emissions in beef farming



At one of our Local Council Climate Network events we heard about an amazing initiative in Bigbury where 500 people gathered to send a message to COP26!



TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IN DEVON

Local councils, community groups, activists and businesses can learn from experts and each other, and make a real grass roots contribution to Devon's pledge to become Net Zero by 2050.

Local communities have an opportunity to be a real driving force in Devon's response to the climate emergency. We've been using our reach into Devon's rural communities to help connect people and organisations to contribute to the Net Zero target.

DCT established a dedicated climate network for Devon's local councils, which met quarterly to hear from experts and learn from each other about how they can make a difference in their communities.

“It is good to get the 'bigger picture' on these issues which are changing and developing all the time so that we can apply them locally.” Local Council Climate Network member

As a member of Devon's Net Zero Task Force we bought a rural perspective to

Devon's Climate Assembly, which was made up of 70 people to examine Devon's draft Carbon Plan to gather their opinions and ideas on topics including onshore wind, roads, retrofitting buildings and more.

The farming community can make a huge difference to Devon's carbon output and we were pleased to engage with 23 people involved in Ruby Country beef farming through a series of online seminars to answer: "How can Ruby Country beef farming best transition to net zero GHG emissions by 2050?", supporting people who couldn't access the Internet with training and equipment to ensure the Forum was inclusive.

“...thank you for all your work in the run-up to the Forum and over the past 6 weeks. We've got huge amounts of really valuable material.” Dr. Steven Guilbert, Devon County Council, Project Manager – Ruby Country Net Zero Farming Forum

WE ALSO ...



• ...began collaborating with the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and the Westcountry Rivers Trust in the co-production of a new Devon Land Use Framework, with workshops planned for summer 2022. [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-land-use-framework](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-land-use-framework)

• ...launched a new community wildlife grant scheme Wild About Devon in April 2022, with grants of up to £500 available. [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wild-about-devon-community-wildlife-grant-scheme](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wild-about-devon-community-wildlife-grant-scheme)



OBJECTIVE

# Communities become economically stronger

278 households supported to manage their energy bills



7 budding entrepreneurs engaged with 'technical finishing school' programme



47 new clients signed up for free enterprise coaching

500+ employers provided with inclusive employment information



250,970 discounted litres of oil ordered through the Devon Oil Collective



42 young people engaged with to support their journey to training or employment. 6 case studies produced.



## SUPPORTING PEOPLE THROUGH THE ENERGY CRISIS

People in, or at risk of, fuel poverty in Devon were supported to alleviate the pressures on their household bills.

Each year, DCT works through the autumn and winter to help people manage their energy bills. This year, with rising energy costs and the affects of the pandemic still evident, our work was more important than ever.

We worked on two initiatives: sharing energy saving and financial support information at community presentations with Big Energy Saving Network; and tailored, 1-2-1 advice and home visits thanks to funding from Western Power Distribution.

Overall, we supported over 270 households with advice including looking at ways to save energy, financial assistance that they could apply for and signposting to other agenices that could offer support.

CASE STUDY



### MARY'S\* STORY

A member of a local church referred Mary to us as she was in 'fuel poverty'. We spoke to her on the phone and listened to her concerns over lack of heating, future electricity demand and health issues, and arranged a visit.

Mary was wearing a dressing gown over her day clothes when we visited, although the weather was mild.

We were able to speak with Mary's supplier to request a smart meter and arrange a bill based on actual not estimated usage. We assisted her to complete an Attendance Allowance application and advised her about the benefits of maintaining connections with others and activities, as well as taking measures to reduce energy consumption and retain heat.

We estimate that Mary will receive c.£3,000 in Attendance Allowance and will save c.£300 on her bill.

\*not their real name



“Mary was wearing a dressing gown over her day clothes when we visited, although the weather was mild.”



## CELEBRATING YOUNG PEOPLES' VALUE IN THE WORKPLACE

We are helping to open up opportunities for young people to volunteer, intern or work with the businesses that understand the value of inclusive employment.

Everyone has the potential to offer something special to an employer, but some people face issues such as low confidence, a lack of experience or few or no qualifications.


We co-created [www.explore-experienceworks.com](http://www.explore-experienceworks.com), with local young people, packed with resources to help with understanding their value to employers and support with the process of finding employment.

DCT has had the pleasure of meeting with and interviewing several young

people as part of our Empowering Enterprise\* and Experience Works\*\* projects, to listen to their stories and understand their journeys to finding this potential.

These young people are all engaged in working with our project partners to address the barriers and challenges to accessing work or learning, and to pursue opportunities to achieve their ambitions and contribute to their communities and local economies. You can watch the short films that DCT produced here:

<https://tinyurl.com/27xmpzd6> 

We are passionate about encouraging more employers in Devon to become more inclusive. We've shared helpful information with over 500 local employers and recently began a series of monthly online workshops to help employers understand the benefits of giving these talented young people a chance. Our workshops can be booked here: <https://tinyurl.com/2tbasabh> 

## HELPING LOCAL ENTERPRISES TO THRIVE

Starting or growing a small business or social enterprise is hard! Over the past year we've helped hundreds of entrepreneurs with skills, tools and confidence to start or develop their businesses.

### FREE COACHING FOR DEVON START-UPS!

Entrepreneurs and small businesses have new skills to grow and develop, not only boosting their local economies but - by the nature of many of the enterprises we work with - bringing valuable new services to their communities.

Our New Start Devon programme receives funding from the European Regional Development Fund to provide 12 hours' fully funded enterprise coaching to people in Devon who want to get an idea off the ground or develop their business..

We've so far worked with 107 rural entrepreneurs (including 47 new clients last year alone). Five brand new enterprises have been set up, creating the equivalent of 6.5 full time jobs - and that's despite the huge challenges that the pandemic has bought to Devon's small businesses.

We've also run a series of free online workshops on funding and governance. One attendee reported to us that they have since raised £13,000 for setting up workshops for businesses in North Devon to raise awareness of the benefits of giving opportunities for work experience and employment to adults and young people with autism.



[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/enterprise-coaching-new-start-devon](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/enterprise-coaching-new-start-devon)

“Thanks so much Hannah. Just so you know, I always feel positive and upbeat after speaking with you.”


“...I am much better placed to move on towards success... With a strong base in place, I have the confidence to play around with different ideas and give things the time and space they need to unfold.”

### HATTIE'S STORY



CASE STUDY

22 year-old Hattie was keen to get a job but didn't feel confident enough to start looking. She worked with our Empowering Enterprise partner, Young Devon, and her mentor, Bob, to build her confidence and undertake employability skills modules. She completed workshops such as CV writing and gradually built her confidence.

She is now working as an Office Junior at a local firm, Devon Surface Care, enjoying her role and learning new skills. Hattie has come a long way and it was wonderful to document her story! Watch here: <https://tinyurl.com/3v4a7bt5> 



\* Managed by Petroc, Empowering Enterprise is delivered by a partnership of organisations with a wide range of expertise and experience in working with young people across the South West. This is a Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund. \*\*Managed by Petroc, Experience Works is delivered by a partnership of organisations with a wide range of expertise and experience in working with young people across the South West. This project is funded by the European Social Fund.



## SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO 'DO BUSINESS DIFFERENTLY'

Devon's economy is boosted by a thriving social economy made up of greener, community focused businesses that are supported to grow.

Social enterprises and community businesses not only create jobs and contribute to the economy - they provide a host of wider benefits to their local community and beyond, which is why DCT is committed to supporting them to

bounce back from the pandemic.

Last year we welcomed 70 new members to the Devon Social Enterprise Network, including lots of former members of the Exeter based network, Essence, increasing the diversity and collaborative potential of the network.

Thanks to UK Community Renewal Funding, in March we were able to launch a host of free networking, training and 1-2-1 consultations for members and other businesses, enterprises and groups all over Devon. We helped them a business, from finding finance to decarbonisation and more. [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/enterprise-and-business-support](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/enterprise-and-business-support)



### Devon Social Entrepreneurs Programme



*Devon Social Entrepreneurs Programme is led by the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) in partnership with Devon Communities Together, Stir to Action and New Prosperity Devon. It is funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund, which is managed by Devon County Council within the Devon area.*

## WE ALSO ...

- ... helped 7 entrepreneurs through a pilot 'finishing school' programme to help people develop their start-up ideas
- ...started working with Petroc to encourage and support applicants to apply for grants for activities which support unemployed people to make their next steps towards work or education, or to engage with the benefits system

[www.petroc.ac.uk/employers/partnership-opportunities/community-renewal-fund/iyc/iyc-employability-grants-devon/](http://www.petroc.ac.uk/employers/partnership-opportunities/community-renewal-fund/iyc/iyc-employability-grants-devon/)



...running a social enterprise feels less scary now that I have some tools to help develop, manage and promote the project."



## OBJECTIVE

# Communities become more resourceful and resilient



**£5,796** in grants awarded to fund community resilience initiatives



**23** new/updated Community Emergency Plans published

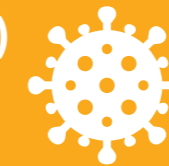


**487** contacts with village halls to support them with specialist advice, including **114** pieces of funding advice



**77** communities represented at Community Resilience training and networking events

**195** calls/emails to our Covid-19 helpline responded to (Apr-Jul 2021)



**151** people supported with flooding advice and information



**2** surveys to find out how we can support community groups and shops emerge from the pandemic



## EMERGING FROM COVID-19 AND BUILDING ON THE POSITIVES OF COMMUNITY ACTION...

“ I have just seen that your Covid-19 updates are coming to an end and I wanted to convey what a fantastic job these have done throughout the pandemic. Here at Knowle Village Hall (Budleigh Salterton) your support has been invaluable!”

Community groups and organisations were able to safely navigate their way towards the end of the Covid roadmap and beyond, with the help of specialist support from DCT. Vulnerable people were kept safe, businesses and organisations fully re-opened and community life finally got back to some sort of 'normality'.

Thanks to funding from Devon County Council we were able to extend our communities Covid-19 helpline, which began at the start of lockdown in 2020, to July 2021 to co-incide with the end of most restrictions.

We handled 195 calls and emails in this period alone, with organisations such as Parish Councils and Community Buildings benefitting from our time spent digesting and distilling the complex Government guidelines so that we could save them time and worry - and ensure they have the most up-to-date information to keep their communities safe and resilient.

The fantastic community action from the pandemic - whether through local businesses, voluntary or mutual aid groups - continues to build momentum beyond lockdowns, building the resilience of our communities.



Town centre teams came together In June 2021 at our two 'Build Back Better' online workshops for Bideford and Hatherleigh. We helped them set actions towards strengthening their local high street economies in a post-Covid world, including looking at potential funding opportunities.

Thanks to Contain Outbreak Management Funding (pg.6) we also connected

with 57 small, community groups, volunteer-led rural mutual aid groups and community shops, which had been so amazing during the pandemic. Through surveys, focus groups and in-depth conversations we learned about the impact of the pandemic and how we can support them to continue their hugely valuable work into the future. You can read our report here: <https://tinyurl.com/3a86rvcu>



CASE STUDY

## EAST BUDLEIGH COMMUNITY SHOP

East Budleigh Community Shop is a well-established Community Shop in East Devon with paid staff and around 40 volunteers.

During the early days of the pandemic they closed, maintaining a delivery service, but later re-opened. Initially there was a large uplift in turnover which demonstrates the value of community shops during challenging times, and although this has reduced somewhat, loyalty has remained high. The increased sales have allowed for salary increases for the paid staff.

East Budleigh is currently in the process of buying their pub, The Sir Walter Raleigh, to become another community-owned asset.

This is a fantastic example of the type of community organisation that we can nurture and support as we emerge from the pandemic.



“ My priority was keeping the staff safe and keeping the shop open for the community.”

Shop Manager



## SAFEGUARDING VILLAGE HALLS' FUTURES

Our advice, training and support allows village halls to operate safely and compliantly, helping them to thrive and provide vital spaces and services to their communities.

Without village halls, many of our rural communities would be without a community space for socialising, enjoying hobbies or accessing vital services. DCT provides a specialist support service to Devon's approximately 400 community buildings. In total we handled 487 enquiries across the year!

We supported hundreds of halls with funding advice, Covid-19 restrictions, help with their governance and, in particular, safeguarding policies.

The Charity Commission expects safeguarding to be a key priority for village hall committees. We promoted a national initiative to improve safeguarding to all our member halls and supported some 80 halls with advice and a model safeguarding policy. Safeguarding is now embedded in our Hallmark quality assurance scheme and is part of our governance training for village hall trustees.

[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/services/community-buildings](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/services/community-buildings)





[www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum)

## PREPARING FOR COMMUNITY EMERGENCIES

Communities and emergency services have the tools and knowledge to respond safely and efficiently in the event of an emergency, protecting people and property.

As well as the pandemic, last year bought us a fuel crisis and weather emergencies - to name a few. Never has it been more important that communities continue to build their resilience to keep people safe during emergency situations.

Through our work with Devon Community Resilience Forum during 2021-22, we helped 23 communities to

publish new or updated versions of their Community Emergency Plans, including adding sections to cover future pandemics. These plans help the emergency services and community leaders co-ordinate their response and keep people safe in emergencies; flooding, fires and road traffic accidents, for example.

“

We used our plan to co-ordinate a response to a 48hr power outage to a neighbourhood already identified as vulnerable in our plan. [We] opened a place of safety at the village hall to provide a place for them to have a warm place to stay, hot drinks and, if required, hot food.”

DCT engaged with over 200 people to boost awareness and uptake of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures as one of the key partners in the Pathfinder PFR project. We collaborated on workshops, community engagement events and a new website: [www.befloodready.uk](http://www.befloodready.uk), as well as the original Aardman animation, Missy's Tale - all to help people understand the importance of protecting their property from flooding.



In the spring of 2022 we began planning how we will engage the community in low cost, local flood prevention measures as a key partner in the Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme. [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme-fcrip-managing-big-problems-small-places](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme-fcrip-managing-big-problems-small-places)

## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS!

2021 marked Devon Communities Together's 60th anniversary. Our 'Devon Diamonds' campaign raised awareness of our work across Devon and we were delighted to be able to get out and about to 'real life' events again. We've included some key highlights from our 60th year below ...

Nora Corkery, our CEO, and Nicola Gurr, our Chair of Trustees, were invited to The Prince's Countryside Fund's Celebration of Rural Communities where they met HRH The Prince of Wales



### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: 60TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN



**400,000+**

opportunities to see/hear about DCT's anniversary via press coverage incl. Devon Live, Crediton Courier, Exeter Living, East Devon Radio & more ...



**145K+**

website views from Jan '21 - Mar '22, incl.

**4K+** page views for anniversary content

13 anniversary related emails to DCT's databases were opened **5,850** times



**244**

pieces of social media content published across 4 platforms

**101%**

increase in social media followers from Jan '21 - Mar '22



**£3,067**

raised for DCT by our London Marathon runners



**32**

Devon Diamonds published on website and social media

**68**

favourite Devon Memories collected for Community Chronicles



**65**

local school children entered our art competition



We celebrated with cake at our 60th anniversary AGM!

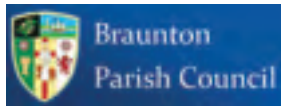


We welcomed special visitors, including our new President, HM Lord Lieutenant of Devon, David Fursdon and his guests to our stand at the Devon County Show



We were pleased to meet lots of people at the Crediton Diversity Festival!

# THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund



European Union  
European  
Social Fund

