



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE IN DEVON

Devon Communities Together:
Measuring Our Impact

April 2022-March 2023



Devon Communities Together

Helping Communities Help themselves



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MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It's a pleasure to present our latest Annual Impact Report, covering the period from April 2022 to March 2023. There is no doubt that the past 12 months have been a challenge for everyone, with the Cost of Living Crisis affecting every element of life in Devon. I'm proud of the DCT team, our partners, the wider VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) sector and our communities for responding creatively and compassionately to support the people around them.



The work DCT does is broad and far reaching, and there have been many significant achievements this year that you will read about throughout the report.

However, what makes me most proud is reading the stories of the people and communities whose lives have been changed for the better as a result of programmes we have been involved in. I hope you are as inspired as I have been.

Nora Corkery, Chief Executive, Devon Communities Together

OUR SIX STRATEGIC AIMS ARE AT THE CENTRE OF ALL OUR ACTIVITIES. DCT WILL ...



WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY A PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDING...



MEASURING OUR SOCIAL VALUE

DCT has invested in gathering data from our projects, feedback from our partners, and stories from the people we work with to understand and measure our impact. We share lots of these findings in the following pages.

We are also able to translate this data into a social value figure, using metrics that measure how particular interventions actually impact on people's lives. Between April 2022 and March 2023 we're pleased to report that our activities created a total of £3.814 million in social value.

Looking forward, we are part of a new consortium including consultancy Rose Regeneration and other Rural Community Councils across England, that is investing in an exciting new social value measurement tool, the Social Value Engine. This will allow us to more accurately measure our impact and the social value we're creating here in Devon.

£3.814m
SOCIAL
VALUE



*We helped to fund 27 community wildlife projects, like this one in North Bovey (p.22)
Photo credit: North Bovey Parish Council*

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

There's no doubt that the Cost of Living Crisis has had a huge impact on people's lives. From individuals struggling to heat their homes to organisations and small businesses trying to stay afloat or grow, we've listened to the serious concerns of people across Devon. Through our own projects and our collaborations with other VCSE organisations we've been able to help people to navigate the Cost of Living Crisis in a number of ways.

We helped to promote and award £442,743 in grant funding to community groups (p.10, 20, 22, 25, 43)

We gave 566 new tools and techniques to improve their wellbeing as part of our Wellbeing Works project (p.36)

We helped 141 households to manage their energy bills through our Big Energy Saving Network project (p.23)

We supported 132 small businesses/ social enterprises/ community groups to develop as enterprises and grow their businesses p.34)

We supported 14 communities to develop or update their Community Emergency Plans to keep people and property safe (p.20)

We welcomed 25 Village Halls on to our Enterprising Halls programme, including support in how to establish Warm Hubs (p.34)

We supported the Community Fridges in Exeter and Okehampton and engaged with their visitors to understand their impact (p.23)

AIM

...champion diversity and inclusion, hear minority voices and respond to their needs



Evaluated **2** programmes, in Ilfracombe and North Dartmoor, to understand lived experiences of healthcare and reduce inequalities through social prescribing

Trained **63** people at **13** sessions on how to support people to use public transport with confidence



Contributed to the Devon Homes for Ukraine Partnership and created **1** website resource



Engaged with **35** young people and **9** youth services to discover their experiences with accessing rural services

Engaged with **70** people in Mid Devon and North Devon during a rural outreach initiative about barriers to taking the Covid-19 vaccine



Commissioned **1** accessibility audit of our own website and began the process to redevelop the site, making it more accessible and inclusive

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN DEVON?

Diversity of age, gender, culture, ethnicity, ability, religion or sexual orientation can all impact on people's experiences of living in Devon, as can lived experiences such as physical and mental health conditions.

Diverse, inclusive communities can only be achieved when ALL voices are heard and people aren't faced with barriers to accessing services because of who they are or where they live. Throughout the past year, DCT has engaged with a diverse range of people who are all facing different challenges.

1. WELCOMING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

DCT collaborated on the Devon Homes for Ukraine Partnership, providing infrastructure support for community groups engaged in supporting both refugees and host families through the process. We facilitated 'touchpoint' meetings for organisations to come together and coordinate their activities, and hosted a dedicated web resource for community groups to access.

OUTCOMES

All of the strong partnership work has meant that people from Ukraine have been welcomed with holistic support packages. They, and their new home communities, have been given the help they need to navigate this tumultuous time.

IMPACT

Ukrainian refugees have safe, welcoming homes.



2. INVESTIGATING AND UNDERSTANDING HEALTH EXPERIENCES FROM SELDOM HEARD VOICES

We've collaborated on a number of initiatives that are working towards more equal access to healthcare here in Devon.

BARRIERS TO COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

We spoke to 70 people in Mid and North Devon, especially those with seldom heard voices, to understand their experiences of the Covid-19 vaccination process and investigate the barriers to getting vaccinated. We reported our findings back to the NHS vaccination team to help them better understand the communities they work with.

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RURAL HEALTH INEQUALITIES

We also formed part of the NHS Core 20+5 Community Connectors programme, which recruited volunteer connectors in two areas identified as being amongst those with the highest rate of health inequalities in Devon – North Dartmoor and Ilfracombe. The aim was to bring to the fore people's lived experience of key health issues such as severe mental illness and hypertension. We have been evaluating the impact of the project, which has involved gathering rich data about people's experiences of healthcare. Here are some examples of what's been uncovered...

“...radiotherapy is now located in Exeter which is 66 miles away from where he lives, and because of the side effects of the radiotherapy, it means that he requires the use of the toilet frequently and without warning. Unfortunately, it was not a case of using the facilities at the next services because the side effects come on almost immediately and without warning. Mr O resorted to asking his taxi driver to stop and using a bush as a toilet.”

“A man new to the area unknowingly went to the local community hospital looking for A&E as his wife had cut her finger whilst gardening. Whilst they were there ringing bells trying to provoke a response, they were joined by a pair of frantic parents with a baby who had fallen and was in and out of consciousness. They had rung 999 but there were no ambulances available to help or even see them.

“There was no answer at the hospital as it ... doesn't operate on the weekends. They had nowhere locally to go to find help. A friend of the gentleman's was a surgeon and advised them all to go to A&E over 34 miles away...which turned into a 3.5 hour wait.

“Luckily both the man's wife and the baby were ok but he made the comment that 'surely with all the new houses being built there should be provisions in place for at least a minor injuries unit that operates for longer than the weekday times at present'.”

CASE STUDY

Meet Ildi, who is a carer for her daughter who has Down's Syndrome, as well as having her own health challenges. She talks about the benefits and challenges of accessing healthcare via video consultations during the pandemic. www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd-IMFct4OE



“[the distorted image due to digital backgrounds on video calls] ...could be really scary, especially for people who have got dementia, alzheimers, [or] any mental health issues ...”

OUTCOMES

The experiences of people with seldom heard voices are understood and shared with decision makers.

IMPACT

Future services and policies will be influenced by the very people they affect.



Diversity • Minority Voices • Inclusion

3. TACKLING LONELINESS WITH TRANSPORT

DCT is a delivery partner on the Department for Transport funded, Devon County Council-led, Connecting You' initiative. It aims to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation using transport to help people reach different places, access services and connect with people.

We deliver travel training to VCSE sector organisations, providing guidance and resources to help these organisations build people's confidence and experience in using public transport. We have so far held 13 sessions with 63 participants, all of whom are now equipped to support the people they work with to enjoy the benefits and freedom of travel. A DCT-designed and produced Travel Training Guide will remain available on our website for organisations to access after the project has ended.

We also helped to promote a grant scheme to enable other organisations to build on their own initiatives around reducing loneliness using transport. 14 grants were awarded, with a total value of £75,853.



We trained 63 people to help others become more confident using public transport

As the evaluation partner for Connecting You, we have been privileged to join many of the transport schemes that run within the Partnership, to engage with the participants and understand the impact these journeys have on their lives.

Among others, we've been delighted to join One Northern Devon on a minibus trip to the Valley of Rocks, tag along with Westbank on their 'Chatty Train' from Crediton to Barnstaple, ride the Tarka Line with the Tarka Line Creatives, enjoy crafty activities with Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership on a 'Creativitea' trip, and join a beach day with students of Petroc as they were taken to the coast by minibus for surfing sessions (the latter funded by the Connecting You grant fund).

All of the participants on these trips were at risk of isolation and loneliness for a variety of reasons, for example living in remote communities with poor transport links, health conditions, or age-related challenges.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/connecting-you

“ They told me about the importance of doing activities like the ones they do with Westbank – that activities keep them healthy instead of sitting inside and doing nothing.” DCT team member on the Chatty Train

“ Having been isolated for 2 and a half years and ... sometimes keeping myself shut in my room, today was the first time I have been in a group and it has been nice.” G, 69 on the Valley of the Rocks outing

“ You won't know how difficult it was for me to come here, I'm so glad I did.” Participant on the Tarka Lines Creatives trips



OUTCOMES

People and organisations have been supported, through grants and training, to encourage and help more people at risk of loneliness to explore new places and connect with others using public transport.

IMPACT

Loneliness and isolation is reduced, and wellbeing improved.

4. SUPPORTING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

DCT supported the Petroc-led Innovation for Youth and Community initiative, funded by the Community Renewal Fund, which aimed to support NEET young people and adults to return to work or education. We assisted with grant applications, engaged with young people about rural services and helped the partner organisations to develop best practice models and produce recommendations for new and improved service provision for young people and unemployed adults in Devon.

One of the topics we looked at was around housing, with young people like Kate, 19, sharing their experiences:

“ There are not many people my age now [in Dartmouth]; they are new families or old people ... Most young people move out to go and live in cities. I tried to move to a city but it was all so expensive, so my parents let me stay. It's difficult to find anywhere to live- the only possibilities at the moment are one-bedroom flats to rent and they are really expensive [comparable to] the prices it would have been to rent a house until recently.”

The insights and models are available to view here: <https://tinyurl.com/3fnvyxvv>

OUTCOMES

Best practice models for youth services have been developed with input from young people.

IMPACT

Young people will benefit from improved youth services in rural areas.

We are supporting and evaluating schemes to reduce loneliness in Devon by using transport



AIM

... identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing

Enabled **7** VCSE partners to provide non-clinical support to **13** virtual ward patients, supporting successful hospital at home experiences



Co-chaired **4** meetings of the One Devon NHS Integrated Care Service Digital Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group



Developed case studies on **7** community-based Public Health activities programmes



Facilitated **4** workshops at the Devon Health Inequalities Symposium

Complex Lives Clinic in Tiverton, the setting for one of our Public Health 'snapshots' (p.15)



HOW DO WE HELP TO REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN DEVON?

There are many factors that affect a person's - and indeed a community's - health and wellbeing. DCT has been working in innovative partnerships with other VCSE and public organisations to help ensure that people living in rural communities have better access to important health services.

1. UNIQUE COLLABORATIONS TO IMPROVE HEALTH SERVICES

VCSE VIRTUAL WARDS PILOT

DCT is part of a first-of-its-kind VCSE alliance formed to participate in the One Devon NHS Virtual Wards Development Programme. Virtual Wards allow people to receive healthcare at home while being remotely monitored by healthcare professionals. The VCSE alliance's role is to provide non-clinical support.

The pilot started in March 2023 and by the end of that month we had worked with seven partners to support 13 patients on virtual wards with the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. This has now risen to over 40 at the time of writing. Help has included digital technology support and travelling to and from hospitals to collect the devices. It is estimated that 90 minutes of appointments were saved in March, along with 57 nights in hospital.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/virtual-wards-acute-hospital-home

“Excellent. A few hiccups with the devices. Felt strange but it works! Felt was taking up a bed that someone else could be in. Wonderful service. Couldn't fault it. Made a huge difference being at home and being able to get on with things.” **Virtual Ward patient**

“The VCSE sector is... experienced in tailoring what it does for individuals and communities to minimise the impact of health inequalities and help people to regain or maintain their level of independence with dignity.

“Support can include practical and emotional support in the home, carer respite and support to be digitally enabled so that people can use their Virtual Ward technology with confidence. In turn, this enables patients, carers and clinicians to feel confident in embracing this model of care.” **Helen Siphthorp, Director – Health and Local Crisis Response, South and Channel Islands, British Red Cross**



We gained insights from community health settings, including the Buckland Hub, to help improve public health services

GAINING AN INSIGHT INTO HOW TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERIENCES

Funded by Devon Public Health, two DCT staff were embedded in the Devon Public Health Community Outreach Team during 2022-23, gathering community insight and intelligence from seven settings across Devon.

The research and evidence gives voice to people who may experience barriers to accessing appropriate healthcare, especially Inclusion Health Groups

such as people leading complex lives, refugees, and Gypsy, Roma and travelling communities.

We were able to draw out recommendations around delivering more public health services in community locations, moving towards a preventative model and working more collaboratively with VCSE organisations who are already working 'on the ground' and understand their clients. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-public-health-insights



CASE STUDY

BUCKLAND HUB

The Buckland Estate on the outskirts of Newton Abbot is among the 4% most deprived areas in Devon and top 20% in the country. The Public Health Outreach Team, along with the the charity Buckland Support, runs Buckland Hub - a Lottery-funded morning drop-in service where people can call in for a social cup of tea or to get help with issues such as benefits, debt, housing, loneliness and anxiety. So far, they have launched a successful holistic clinic to support Covid-19 vaccinations in a high infection area; bought the Together Drug and Alcohol Service to the Hub; and facilitated mental health training to upskill the community. From our 'snapshot' case study, we were able to demonstrate the value of bringing community health services into Buckland, rather than expecting vulnerable people to travel to Torbay, Exeter or Newton Abbot.

OUTCOMES

People are supported to receive, and organisations to improve, important health services in the community.

IMPACT

We have demonstrated the positive role that VCSE organisations can play in supporting health and wellbeing in communities.



2. INVESTIGATING RURAL INEQUALITIES AT A PLACE-BASED LEVEL

Thanks to Devon Public Health Contain Outbreak Management and DEFRA funding, we were able to work with the Mid Devon Medical Practice on a pilot study to explore whether bringing together a group of key stakeholders in a rural area with pockets of deprivation, can lead to improvements and benefits in the same way it has in urban communities.

Through facilitating workshops with primary care staff, VCSE representatives and people living and working in the area

covered by the practice, we identified that although there were some similar themes to those found in urban areas, there were also some challenges that were distinctly rural. For example, transport, loneliness, stigma, local services, particular workforce issues, delivery costs and issues for farming communities. The full report can be read here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing



We brought together key stakeholders around GP practices in rural Mid Devon to explore their challenges and those of their patients

OUTCOMES
 The pilot successfully built and strengthened relationships between stakeholders in the area around the GP Practice, and identified key factors in rural health inequalities.

IMPACT
 The pilot's success demonstrates the value of bringing together a diverse range of people in a particular place, to examine and address inequalities.

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3. INFLUENCING DECISIONS AND POLICY

At a strategic level our CEO, Nora Corkery, has co-chaired four Digital Inclusion Partnership Group meetings as part of the ONE Devon NHS Integrated Care Service Digital Inclusion Strategic Partnership, which is working to address access to digital healthcare across Devon. We also facilitated workshops at the Devon Health Inequalities Symposium in April 2022.

Through the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay VCSE Assembly (p.43) Health Inequalities Specialist Hub, which DCT co-chaired, we contributed to the One Devon NHS Health Inequalities Interim Integrated Care Strategy, ensuring that people living in rural communities and remote rural settlements with dispersed population are included as a priority health inequality category within the Equality and E-quality Impact Assessment. As members, we were also able to feed in information about rural health inequalities to the Integrated Care Partnership Population Health Management Steering Group.

Our CEO, Nora, visited the House of Lords in March 2023 as part of an ACRE (Action with Rural Communities in Rural England) delegation, to present evidence on rural health inequalities in Devon to the House of Lords Inquiry Committee on Integrated Care Systems and Primary and Community Healthcare.



We shared evidence of rural health inequalities in Devon with the House of Lords

OUTCOMES
 The experiences of people in rural communities, areas with high rates of deprivation and those with seldom heard voices are amplified, listened to and shared with decision makers so they can take action.

IMPACT
 Rural proofing of healthcare and accessing services is now on the agenda of the people planning and funding the services.



AIM

...work with communities to develop innovative ways to achieve community resilience and a positive impact for climate change and sustainability



Facilitated or contributed to **15** environmental/climate change events



Awarded **£17,023** in grants to fund community resilience initiatives

Engaged with **62** stakeholders



about nature-based flood resilience measures in their communities

Awarded **£44,867** Growing Communities grant funding was to **21** community groups

950 bookings for online Devon Community Resilience Forums



50 people attended place based resilience and flood warden training



Awarded, **27** community wildlife grants of up to **£500**, a total of **£5,000**



40 attendees at an event to listen to the community-produced vision of their future net zero community



Lead the evaluation of 2 Community Fridges in Exe and Okehampton, which redistributed the equivalent of **15,280** meals (6,417.5kg)



Supported **153** communities in relation to Community Emergency Planning, including assisting **14** communities to create new or redeveloped plans



Supported **141** households to manage their energy bills



HOW DO WE HELP TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES?

We work with communities on many aspects of sustainability, from planning for major emergencies e.g. flooding, to increasing biodiversity and looking at the future of Devon's land use. We are proud to be a part of Devon's Net Zero Task Force, contributing to the development of the Carbon Plan, as well as a South West lead in the National Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership and an active member of the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum.

1. FLOODING AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

DEVON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FORUM

As facilitators of the Devon Community Resilience Forum, DCT is committed to encouraging and supporting as many Devon communities as possible to develop their own Community Emergency Plan, that will help keep people and property safe in the event of an emergency, such as major flooding. We have been working hard to increase the number of opportunities for communities to get involved in Community Emergency Planning, hosting four events, including two district-level sessions and two

county-wide forums (online and in-person) to give people practical advice, recommendations and support to begin or update their plans. There were over 950 bookings for these presentations and workshops. This year, we have paid particular attention to those areas in Devon where we have identified that Community Emergency Plans are more sparse, to inspire and encourage more of those communities to start the process.

We have also awarded over £17,000 in community grants to local Emergency Groups, with the funding being spent on measures that will directly benefit the communities, for example flood barriers, an emergency generator and a natural flood management pilot scheme.



People of all ages have been engaged with flood prevention in their communities

NATURAL FLOOD PREVENTION

Devon Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP) is part of the Flood and Coastal Resilience Programme funded by DEFRA. The project focusses on predominantly rural areas, looking at how natural flood prevention measures could protect a community, along with tailored flood warning systems and Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures.

DCT's role is to manage stakeholder engagement for this project, that encompasses 35 pilot projects across the county. We've been busy engaging with partners, businesses and members of the public to encourage them to 'buy into' and feel ownership of the natural flood prevention measures in their own communities. We've attended public events, collated a range of engagement tools (including a 'Home and Dry' game, which everyone can play from children to adults) and even recommended a survey initiative to be rolled out twice per year to assess how well Parish Councils are receiving and understanding the natural flood prevention messages.

<https://tinyurl.com/2p87uud5>



DEVON RECOVERY CO-ORDINATION GROUP

As part of the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay VCSE Assembly (p.43), DCT co-led - with Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) - the development of a new version of the Community Support Plan as a tool to support VCSE mobilisation in cases of future emergency landscapes.

Following extensive research and engagement by DCT, DALC and Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA), we proposed a Devon Community Support Online Resource Toolkit, which we hope to take forward in 2023/4 to act as a central hub for communities.



CASE STUDY

TESTING IVYBRIDGE'S COMMUNITY PLAN

Ivybridge Town Council recently received a resilience grant with which it purchased a wide range of emergency equipment identified in their Community Emergency Plan.

They also created an opportunity to test their plan against a mystery incident scenario, supplied by the Environment Agency. The Community Response Team, plus a local Police Officer, progressed through the scenario based on a serious flood. Having uncovered some deficiencies in the plan, they have the opportunity to improve the plan, as well as assess the potential use of all the equipment. As a result, people and property in Ivybridge will be better protected in an emergency.



OUTCOMES

Communities have the knowledge, tools and equipment to prevent and react to serious threats like flooding.

IMPACT

People and property are better prepared and protected in an emergency.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum

2. ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN THEIR OWN SUSTAINABILITY

COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GRANTS

We promoted and administered a small grant scheme, which was set up to help communities across Devon to take action for wildlife as part of the Local Nature Partnership's Wild About Devon initiative and address the urgent need to tackle the ecological emergency.

£5,000 was awarded to community groups between April 22 and March 23, to fund a whole range of community wildlife initiatives, including restoration of neglected habitats and creation of new wildlife areas.

Thanks to the funds and the dedication of the community groups, over 204k sqm of land will be protected or restored, and 420 people in Devon have been engaged in protecting their local environments. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/wild-about-devon-community-wildlife-grant-scheme-2023

ENVISIONING A NET ZERO RATTERY



Along with the University of Plymouth, we worked on this exciting pilot project designed to engage a community in producing a vision for its own sustainable future.

After a summer spent gathering 'Visions of Rattery in 2035' from local people, they were professionally produced into a 20-minute tale of what Rattery could look and feel like in the near future, and how actions taken today would get us there. You can watch the vision here: <https://tinyurl.com/47dehw26>

The story was shared at the annual Harvest Supper event, where 40 people listened to the collaborative vision. A vision booklet and feedback survey was created and distributed to 200 households in the community. We look forward to watching what the community does next and looking at how we can translate this exciting visioning model to other places in Devon.



People in Rattery shared their visions for a more sustainable future

OUTCOMES

Communities are engaged to get involved in their surrounding environments. They are supported to take ownership and understand how their actions can help address the climate emergency.

IMPACT

Devon's communities contribute to a more sustainable Devon and help work towards our Net Zero target.

3. REDUCING ENERGY USAGE AND FOOD WASTE

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY FRIDGES IN DEVON

DCT engaged with organisers of, and visitors to, Oke Community Fridge and Exeter Community Fridge to investigate and evaluate how the fridges (funded by The National Lottery and delivered by Devon County Council) are working to help provide free food and reduce food waste. Key highlights include the equivalent of an estimated 15,280 meals redistributed and over £20k of waste savings. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-food-rescue



HELPING HOUSEHOLDS THROUGH THE ENERGY CRISIS

Energy bills have sky rocketed for everybody over the past year, playing a major role in the cost of living crisis and leaving many households in fuel poverty. As part of the Big Energy Saving Network, we used our reach into rural communities throughout the winter to deliver community presentations and 1-2-1 advice for people struggling with their energy bills. In total we supported 141 households, with information on reducing energy usage, energy debt, keeping homes warm and accessing financial help.

OUTCOMES

Households were supported to minimise the impact of rising energy bills and access food that would otherwise be wasted.

IMPACT

Energy and food waste is reduced and communities become more sustainable.



We gave energy saving advice, including to children at Tedburn St Mary Primary School



CASE STUDY

CREATING FUTURE NATURE CUSTODIANS

Dara is a home-schooling group based near Totnes. The 16 children (aged 6-12) primarily learn outdoors, where they learn about nature and the natural habitat through experience and a hands-on investigatory approach. The group was awarded a total grant of £498 to purchase river monitoring kits, botany field guides and equipment, and small mammal traps to further deepen the children's exploration of two local rivers. Using the new equipment, they explored the two local rivers, The Harbourne River and The River Dart delving into the habitats, water quality, flora and fauna present there.



Stock image

“We've fed the information back to landowners with wildlife management plans in place and have created a small group of nature stewards thanks to Wild About Devon.”





4. GRANT FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Over the past year, DCT has assisted with the promotion and administration of more than £442,743 in community grants (also see p.20, 22, 43), helping to ensure that much needed money filters down to the organisations that can have a real impact at grass roots level.

We administered the Growing Communities grant fund (on behalf of Devon County Council), to help build capacity and resilience in communities. After engaging with rural community organisations across Devon to encourage applications, we awarded grants totalling over £44,000 to 21 organisations, funding initiatives including community warm hubs, a community cycle repair scheme, a community garden, a stroke survivors project, warm packs for households, improvements for a Village Hall to improve accessibility, encouraging diversity at a rugby club and many more.

Read all about the recipients here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/grant-funding

Key achievements from the Growing Communities Fund



CASE STUDY

TOTNES HOT POTATO CAFE

The Cost of Living Crisis has forced many local people to reduce their heating and also to cut back on good food. Totnes with Bridgetown Parochial Church Council identified the need for community hot meals through the Cost of Living Consortium in Totnes and requests from users of the weekly Community Café.

Having applied to the Growing Communities Fund, they were awarded funding for The Hot Potato Café, which was established at St. John's Church, Totnes. A commercial hot potato oven was purchased and basic food hygiene training was undertaken by 17 volunteers (between 18 and 89 years old), with all passing and seven now accredited, enhancing employability for some of the volunteers.

10 hot potato events were held, including five cafes, three open days and two working lunches. Over 300 meals were served, providing nutritious food and a warm, safe space for people to gather.



“Coming here gets me out of my house and into a warm and friendly space. The idea of hot potatoes was really good and I think they are also very tasty!” David, a regular aged 90

“It's lovely in here, and people are so friendly. I can stay as long as I like and there's always a friendly face. It can really help, especially with such bad weather.” Sarah



OUTCOMES

£442,743 is in the hands of community organisations that can make a direct difference to people's lives in the communities they work in.

IMPACT

Community resilience is increased, and the effects on people of the Cost of Living Crisis are reduced.

AIM

...develop community capacity building, through local facilities, spaces, services, people and their skills



Engaged **373** times with village halls to support them with specialist advice, including **124** pieces of funding advice

984 people contributed to their communities' Neighbourhood Plans



Neighbourhood Plans

174,316 litres of oil ordered by the **278** members of the Devon Oil Collective



Added **211** Village Halls to new Community Asset Map



Gave **4,973** households the opportunity to contribute to surveys about local housing need



Supported **294** DCT members, along with **849** community, voluntary and other organisations



Supported and advised **15** sports and play facilities



Supported **7** village halls to access **£46k** in funding from the Platinum Jubilee Fund



Enabled **230** stakeholders to contribute to the new Devon Land Use Framework

91 people shared their opinions about a potential community benefit fund in Rockbeare, Aylesbeare and Marsh Green



Facilities • People • Skills • Capacity Building

HOW DO WE HELP TO BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY?

At DCT we always work with an 'Asset Based Community Development' (ABCD) approach. In short, it means that we engage with communities to find out what great people, spaces and services they *already* have and work with them to find solutions to their challenges. This could be through supporting community buildings to develop their spaces and services, helping with community-led housing, or enabling and empowering communities to have a say in the future of their local areas.

1. VILLAGE HALLS: UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

COMMUNITY BUILDINGS ADVICE SERVICE

There are over 400 village halls and community buildings in Devon, which provide spaces for celebrations, learning, childcare, exercise, eating, socialising - even otherwise lost services such as post offices. Over the past year, DCT's expert team of Village Hall Advisors provided 373 pieces of advice, answering questions including how halls can secure funding for capital improvements, how they can bring on board new trustees, how to make their buildings more energy efficient and much more.

We also provided strategic fundraising support to Rose Ash Parish Council for a community benefit village car park, storage facility and additional event space, which will benefit everyone in this rural community.



We worked with seven halls on their applications to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee fund, so far helping attract over £46k funding to Devon

CREATING A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND COMMUNITY ASSET MAP

We know there are over 400 village halls and community buildings in Devon, which provide invaluable services to their communities. But what details do we know? What facilities do they each have? What aspirations do their committees have? What struggles are they facing? Could they do more within their communities, with the right support?

To answer all these questions and more, DCT, thanks to funding from Devon Public Health, started an ambitious project to visit as many of the halls as possible to conduct an audit of facilities and engage with the committees. The results of these visits are being fed into a first ever Community Asset Map of Devon's Village Halls, which will not only be a fantastic showcase and celebration for these wonderful spaces, but will provide evidence of what support (financial or otherwise) they may need to develop their services even further, for example as Community Health and Wellbeing Hubs that could bring health services into the heart of remote rural communities.

Up to March 2023 we had visited 211 halls (with many more having been visited since) and we are looking forward to continuing to grow the map.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/village-halls-community-buildings-audit



"We use our hall regularly as a mobility rehabilitation space, and we would love to do more of this."

"The pre audit questionnaire has helped us to challenge our thinking and we have been able to look at the opportunities for our hall in a different way."

"Communities need to get together more and talk. It would be good to have someone who could come in and offer a safe space, especially to talk about mental health."

"After taking part in the audit, we would love to set up a village buddies Facebook page, so that people can help each other out with things like

CELEBRATING VILLAGE HALLS WEEK

During Village Halls Week (23-29th January), we worked with South Pool Village Hall to arrange a community event, at which DCT staff were on hand to give wellbeing, energy saving and sustainability advice from our various projects.

As well as members of the public, representatives from other community buildings were also invited, with people from 10 other parishes attending. Following the pandemic, many halls are seeking new ways to engage with their communities, to include and encourage new hall users and volunteers. Inviting other village halls along was a great way to introduce everyone to meet each other, share ideas, and to plan for the future.



CASE STUDY

"It was great to see so many committee members from neighbouring parishes; everyone was keen to form a support hub or network. This will also facilitate linking communities in with each other more, so that people are encouraged to visit and feel welcome at other village halls, which helps people to get out and about, try different activities, and meet new people."

OUTCOMES

Hundreds of Village Halls are supported to maintain, develop and diversify the services they provide.

IMPACT

The capacity of Village Halls to support their communities has grown.

2. COMMUNITY LED HOUSING

DCT manages the Devon Community Housing Hub, which provides support to communities looking to establish new affordable housing for local people. Last year, we conducted seven housing needs surveys, which we sent to almost 5,000 households in rural parishes, giving them the opportunity to contribute to the picture of housing need in their area. Thanks to these surveys, a requirement for 74 new homes was identified, which will allow local people to stay in their communities without being priced out or having to move away to find appropriate housing.

www.devonhousinghub.org.uk



OUTCOMES

Communities have evidence of the need for new affordable homes, and can progress with their development.

IMPACT

Providing affordable homes for local people helps to keep people in the places they love and supports diverse, vibrant communities.

4. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

By engaging communities in plans for the places where they live and work, we can help them have a strong voice and an important say in their futures. During the past year we have helped to facilitate three community consultations. In Tavistock and Braunton we supported the Neighbourhood Planning teams to engage as many people as possible in contributing their opinions and ideas on the direction and content of the Neighbourhood Plans, which are formally adopted documents that set out the future of the area. We were able to support them with the design, production, promotion and distribution of digital and hard-copy surveys. In the case of Tavistock we also conducted in-depth interviews to gather qualitative research and analysed the results which presented the diversity of public voices that would go on to inform the content of the

Neighbourhood Plan. In total, 984 people shared their voices and had a say in the future of their communities.

Additionally, DCT was funded by Low Carbon Alliance to conduct an independent community consultation on a proposed community benefit fund as part of the proposed Ford Oaks Solar and Green Infrastructure Facility in Marsh Green, East Devon. We developed a survey and hosted three community focus groups, in total engaging with 101 individuals to seek their views, which included ideas around improving open spaces and looking at green energy.

OUTCOMES

1,085 people have contributed to consultations on issues that directly affect them and the future of their communities.

IMPACT

People are engaged in community matters and future plans are community-driven.

3. A NEW LAND USE FRAMEWORK FOR DEVON

Funded by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, the Devon Land Use Framework brings together a wide network to design, test, develop and review a Land Use Framework for Devon, including through pilot sites across the county. DCT has led engagement with key stakeholders, including land managers at the pilot sites and members of the public to get feedback on the Framework and its principles.

A hands-on activity at the Chagford Show proved a huge success with one young woman, who used the different materials we provided to lay out her 'ideal world' and explain why the landscape would bring a variety of benefits. You can watch her here on this video: <https://youtu.be/CzmZEMwpSsM>

Tim Youngs, Project Director of Connecting the Culm, a resilience project around the River Culm, emphasises the importance of testing the Land Use Framework:

“A Land Use Framework could help us better plan for and prioritise actions [including] nature-based solution interventions co-designed with land managers, in order to restore our landscapes and waterways in a way which meets the needs of local communities and helps deliver government ambition.”

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-land-use-framework



OUTCOMES

The Devon Land Use Framework has been piloted with the experiences of the public and other key stakeholders central to the process.

IMPACT

This inclusive, consultative process will help ensure the effectiveness of the Framework.



We engaged with over 800 people in Tavistock about what they want the future of their parish to look like

AIM

...support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building



Hosted **7** full-day bootcamps and **24** workshops to support Devon-based micro businesses and social enterprises

32 clients completed 12 hours' 1-2-1 coaching and group workshops



205 attendees at training and peer support events for enterprises



Welcomed **566** participants to **76** online Wellbeing Works workshops and held 1-2-1 wellbeing check-ins for **35** people



254 members of Devon Social Enterprise Network



25 participants on a new Enterprising Halls programme to support Village Halls as community enterprises



Facilitated **137** individual support consultations for small businesses/ social enterprises

Engaged with **117** employers to encourage and support inclusive employment



Engaged with **150** young people to build confidence and support their journeys towards employment.

Organised **10** confidence-building activity days for **18** young people



HOW DO WE HELP TO BUILD COMMUNITY WEALTH?

There are many ways in which our projects can help to support Devon's rural economy. Supporting young people into employment (pg.38), providing Affordability Training (pg.41) and helping people manage their energy bills (pg.23) can all help households and communities to increase or conserve their income but we also have a team that provides specialist enterprise support to entrepreneurs, small businesses and social enterprises who may be facing stumbling blocks to establishing

1. ENTERPRISE COACHING, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Thanks to funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund*, from April-June we were able to engage social enterprises, community groups and small businesses through fully funded 1-2-1 support sessions, networking events and training workshops. The focus was on helping people to access funding, finance and grants, develop innovative ideas and reduce carbon output.

We also continued with our New Start Devon (NSD), which receives funding from the European Regional Development Fund. Participants have received a

minimum of 12 hours' free coaching, training and enterprise support to give people skills and confidence to develop their enterprises or business ideas.

During the autumn, we diversified to create a bespoke programme for village halls and community buildings. The 'Enterprising Halls' programme provided the same support structure as the main New Start Devon programme but the content was tailored specifically to helping halls to develop as social enterprises, for example creating new income, adjusting their legal structures and looking at major capital projects.

www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/enterprise-coaching-new-start-devon

CASE STUDY

NEW SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR WELLBEING

OutPour is a new social enterprise based in Newton Abbot, which encourages people to create and co-create stories, poems, and song lyrics for wellbeing, to facilitate personal growth, mindfulness, and greater self-awareness.

Founder Debbie Jeffery took part in our New Start Devon programme, working with our enterprise coach, Hannah, who helped her to develop her idea into a social enterprise, looking at the structures that sit behind it and how they could work for OutPour.

OutPour has since been selected for financial support from Devon Mental Health Alliance's Innovation Fund, which will pay for a new website, leaflets, and other marketing tools, helping Debbie to build her business further. She is also planning some free taster sessions.

From the recognition of need and a creative idea, a new social enterprise has been created!



OUTCOMES

People have the skills, knowledge and advice to develop and grow their ideas, leading to new enterprises, more effectively run businesses, new career paths and new income streams.

IMPACT

Rural economy of Devon is strengthened by supporting rural businesses.

We've hosted networking sessions for social enterprises



We've been helping Village Halls to develop new income streams



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

2. WELLBEING IN AND OUT OF WORK

DCT delivered the innovative Devon County Council-funded Wellbeing Works programme, which provided 76 wellbeing workshops to 556 attendees, including people from 134 SMEs and larger organisations. These interactive workshops covered a wide range of themes, from 'Wellbeing at Work' to 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' and even inspirational sessions such as 'Photography for Wellbeing' and 'Cold Water Swimming'. We even facilitated 26 bespoke sessions for local organisations, to support team wellbeing, connectivity and productivity.

We also conducted 1-2-1 wellbeing check-ins with 35 people, taking a deeper dive into their lives and how they could move forward positively.

Read the final report here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing

OUTCOMES

More than 550 people have new tools and advice to work on their wellbeing and self-care. 82% of people said they found the sessions valuable and helpful, with more than 76% saying they planned to take positive action.

IMPACT

Wellbeing is improved, benefitting people, teams and organisations.

We hosted 76 free wellbeing workshops



“Victoria was great at leading the session and tailoring it to what the group needed. I particularly appreciated that the techniques spoken about can be done throughout the day and built into my normal day, so is easier to implement lifestyle changes.”

“I am taking a 20 mins walk at lunchtime. I have become a member of a local gym.”

“It was really positive, and nice to provide the space to check in with my own wellbeing. The facilitator was marvellous.”

Visit www.devoncommunities.org.uk/news/wellbeing-resources for some useful wellbeing links.

3. SUPPORTING FREE CAREER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

DCT was commissioned to conduct the evaluation for the SMART SKILLS initiative, which offered fully funded training to businesses in Devon to help them upskill their workforce. The training offered had 'no-strings attached' and was completely free of charge to those taking part thanks to £3.5million of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF).

As well as promoting the opportunity throughout our networks, we evaluated the impact of the project, developing an interim report, with a final report to follow. read the interim report here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/supporting-enterprise-and-business



OUTCOMES

Some of the key achievements of the training so far are shared below.

IMPACT

Our evaluation and impact measurement helps demonstrate the value of the training to businesses across Devon.

Key Achievements

421

businesses supported

2199

individuals helped

80%

of business supported have been SME's



78

different courses available



117,500

total number of households informed about SMART SKILLS



£3.5M

of EU funding to support skills in Devon



“Completing the CMI L3 Award in Project Management has been of real benefit to me and my organisation. My new skills have allowed me to work more effectively; the theory based and best practice models will support me when managing projects in the future and have given me the confidence to manage larger scale projects.” Devon & Somerset Fire Service Employee

4. SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR JOURNEYS TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

It is not always easy for young people in Devon to access employment opportunities - especially when they may be working through additional challenges such as transport, access to local skills opportunities, housing, transport and mental health. .

BUILDING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Managed by Petroc, Empowering Enterprise is a Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund. Experience Works is funded by the European Social Fund. Both of these projects are Managed by Petroc and delivered by a partnership of organisations, including DCT, with a wide range of expertise and experience in working with young people across the South West. They engaged with 150 young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) to help support their journeys to employment. We've created short videos to share their stories, many of which can be viewed here:



Young people gained new experiences and skills at Dartmoor Zoo

www.youtube.com/channel/UCdEhJapqQnrZaQNudwiGxQ / www.youtube.com/@experienceworks4864

We've also organised experience days with local organisations for the young people to help build social confidence and employability skills. They've enjoyed a virtual reality and video skills day with Cosmic, tree planting with the National Trust, sourdough baking with Appledore Bakery, and two days at Dartmoor Zoo developing animal and customer service skills.

ENCOURAGING INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

We've worked with 117 Devon employers to explore ways in which they can make their workplaces and employment opportunities more accessible and inclusive. We've developed resources and inspired them to think more openly about the contributions these young people could make to their organisations.

Find out more about these two projects here: www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/building-better-opportunities-empowering-enterprise / www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/experience-works-0

CONSTRUCTION TRAINING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Did you know that DCT also operates a wholly owned subsidiary, Constructing Futures Devon Ltd (CFDL)? CFDL* is a company that purchases dilapidated properties and renovates them with the help of local construction learners.

By working on 'real' sites instead of classrooms, the students have the opportunity to put their learning into practice on a real site, increasing their practical and employability skills. Since we established CFDL in 2018, we have worked with over 170 16-18 year olds to complete six 'real' construction projects, including four complete home renovations, one new build and a Housing Association void. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/constructing-futures

OUTCOMES

Young people have greater confidence, experience and skills to prepare them for their future careers and employers are more aware of the benefits of inclusive employment.

IMPACT

There are better opportunities for young people to gain employment.

CASE STUDY

CHRIS' STORY

Chris, an Experience Works participant, found social, training, volunteering and employment opportunities lacking in his small rural community. With dreams of working with animals he attended a farming college but his real ambition is to work with domestic animals. Chris moved to Plymouth and, working with mentor organisation Battling On, he gained confidence to go out and make new friends, as well as work towards getting his dream job.



"I was pretty uncomfortable and there wasn't many places I could actually to go to meet people..."

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWDEmtEsz6o



*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.

AIM

...flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders



2,220 people booked on to our 180 training, learning and networking events



Engaged with 360 people at summer shows

Assisted with awarding £300,000 Cost of Living Grants to grass roots VCSE organisations



Attended 3 national conferences to develop our sector knowledge and skills



Launched 1 new custom built Customer Relationship Management digital system



Learning • Responsive

HOW DO WE ENSURE DCT AND OTHERS ARE BEST PLACED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES?

It's important for us at DCT that we develop through training, wellbeing initiatives and resources - and support others to do so - so that we're functioning at our very best and able to support the people and organisations we work with. It's also vital that we regularly get out and about into our communities, finding out what people need and letting them know how we can help.

1. IMPROVING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

DCT's culture as a learning organisation is reflected in our focus on our external and internal training.

ACCESSIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



Over the past year, we have provided 2,220 people with the opportunity to benefit from 180 training, workshops and networking events

(online and in-person) through the Devon Community Learning Academy.

As well as many events facilitated through our projects, for example Wellbeing Works (p.30) and Devon Community Resilience Forum (p.20) we worked with Citizens Advice Devon to train local VCSE organisations in how to better support their clients to navigate the complex benefits system and maximise the income of vulnerable households.

All of our learning events are designed to upskill and strengthen people's knowledge in key areas that will have a positive impact in their communities. www.devoncommunities.org.uk/courses



Our AGM in November included presentations on some of our projects

UPSKILLING OUR STAFF TEAM

As well as specific training for each person's ongoing professional development, DCT also regularly facilitates training sessions for the whole team. Topics covered over the past year have included Mental Health Awareness, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Developing Video Case Studies and Design Led Thinking.

DCT was represented at three national conferences: the ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) National Annual Conference, the Rural Health and Care Conference and the National Village Halls Adviser Conference. We hosted our own Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2022.

OUTCOMES

The DCT team and other organisations are upskilled, inspired and resourced to best respond to the needs of communities.

IMPACT

Community action, projects and services continue to improve.

2. MEETING PEOPLE AT SUMMER SHOWS

We exhibited at the Mid Devon, Okehampton and Chagford Shows last summer. In total, we engaged with over 360 people, chatting about their communities, what they need and want, and how DCT may be able to help.



OUTCOMES

We have connected with hundreds of new people in Devon.

IMPACT

Awareness of DCT has been raised and people better understand how we could support their community in the future.

3. LOOKING AFTER STAFF WELLBEING

With our Wellbeing Works project (p.30) in full swing last year, we took the opportunity to build regular staff wellbeing sessions into our schedules. For example, our summer 2022 session was based on 'Connection', which is one of the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. We have also had Fika sessions, which have allowed us to get to know our colleagues better and connect with those we don't work with closely in our regular work.

We enjoyed several team get togethers, wellbeing sessions and socials!



OUTCOMES

Our staff team has connected more frequently and learned new wellbeing techniques.

IMPACT

All of these wellbeing activities have allowed us to pause, take stock and build our sense of 'team'.

4. WORKING WITH THE DEVON, PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY VCSE ASSEMBLY

DCT has been involved in developing the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay VCSE Assembly throughout 2022-23. The Assembly brings together independent charities and community-led organisations across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, to support, complement and add value to local VCSE networks and partnerships, including Local Care Partnerships. We sit on the Leadership Group, providing communications support and co-chair the Health Inequalities Specialist Hub. Examples of our work in health (p.17) and resilience (p.21) can be found in this report.

As part of the Assembly, we responded to the Cost of Living Crisis by assisting with the management and administration of a £300,000 NHS Cost of Living Community Grant Scheme. We used our reach into rural communities to encourage applications from grass roots VCSE groups for initiatives that helped people in their communities navigate the Cost of Living crisis.

OUTCOMES

The Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Assembly has been launched and is already carrying out collaborative work in a range of areas.

IMPACT

DCT and other Assembly members have opportunities to make stronger connections with the VCSE sector, share best practice and learn from our peers, as well as collaborate on important initiatives to add value.

5. A NEW DIGITAL SYSTEM FOR DCT

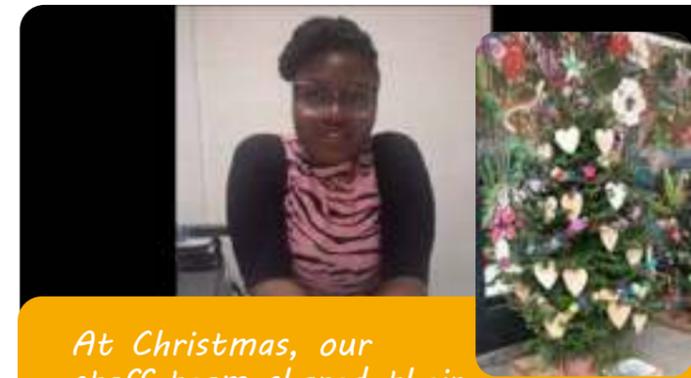
A major focus for DCT during the past year has been working with specialists to develop and launch our new customer relationship management system (CRM), that draws our huge amounts of data and insights into one digital space.

OUTCOMES

Thousands of pieces of data have been migrated into our new digital system, which launched in autumn 2022.

IMPACT

This allows more effective organisation and project management, as well as facilitating data sharing within and outside of DCT, to provide greater learning and collaboration opportunities.



At Christmas, our staff team shared their favourite moments from 2022. Take a look here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlJS1t_iLzA&t=28s

We also created a Christmas Tree for Exeter's charity display, with all our decorations made from recycled or reused materials!

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...

