

## **Axminster Division Report October 2024**

### **Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority:**

A Combined County Authority has been given the green light by the new government, where a decision by the previous Government, to establish the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA). It was deferred in June because of the July General Election.

Establishing the CCA is legally required to assume responsibility for new funds and powers transferred by Government from Whitehall to Devon and Torbay. The CCA will deliver the devolution deal, with a whole raft of powers, responsibilities, and funding, devolved to Devon and Torbay from Whitehall. This will enable important decisions to be made locally on local priorities such as jobs and skills, housing, and the environment.

With potential for the range of devolved powers to expand, the current proposals would see the new body having direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030.

The Government has confirmed the transfer of £16 million capital funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy, capitalising on the area's world-leading expertise in green science and technology.

The Government is offering a stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

### **Question for residents of the Axminster Division - are you or your family and friends eligible for Pension Credit and not receiving it?**

**The Government is encouraging pensioners to check if they qualify for pension credit and if so, to apply for it as soon as possible, in order to receive the winter fuel payment.**

If you get Pension Credit, you can also get other help, including:

- [Housing Benefit](#) if you rent the property you live in
- [Winter Fuel Payment](#)
- [Support for Mortgage Interest](#) if you own the property you live in
- [Council Tax discount](#)

- [free TV licence](#) if you're aged 75 years old or over
- Help with [NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs](#) for hospital appointments, if you get a certain type of Pension Credit
- Help with your heating costs through the [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#)
- a discount on the [Royal Mail redirection service](#) if you're moving house
- Pension Credit tops up your weekly income to £218.15 if you are single; or your joint weekly income to £332.95 if you have a partner.

You could get additional benefits depending on your circumstances.

You can apply for Pension Credit up to four months before you reach State Pension age. You can also apply any time after you reach State Pension age, but your application can only be backdated by three months.

The government's new pension credit awareness drive will help identify households not claiming the benefit and encourage them to apply by the 21st December. That is the final date for making a backdated claim for pension credit, in order to receive the winter fuel payment.

You can apply online, over the telephone, or by post.

Currently, only 63 per cent of people who are eligible nationwide for Pension Credit are receiving it. That is nearly four in every 10 pensioners who are entitled to Pension Credit, because of their low income, are not claiming it.

To [find out if you are eligible for Pension Credit, visit the Government's website at https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit) .

## **Key Stage 2 test results better than national average**

New figures published by the Department for Education show that many Devon pupils with additional needs who sat their Key Stage 2 (KS2) tests this summer have performed better than the national average.

Results for this summer's KS2 pupils in Devon with special educational needs (SEN) who are receiving additional support in the classroom show an improvement on last year's results (2022/23) in science; grammar, punctuation, and spelling; maths; and reading.

Fifty-eight per cent of Devon pupils with SEN, who are receiving additional support, were assessed as having met the standard expected of all KS2 pupils for science, compared to a national average of 54 per cent.

Fifty-two per cent of pupils in Devon with SEN support met the expected standard in reading, compared to 48 per cent national average.

Many pupils with Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) also performed better than the national average.

The tests, known as SATs, alongside teacher assessments, are to make sure that individual pupils have the support they need as they move into secondary school.

### **Finally.....more rain.**

Recent torrential rain, high winds and flooding made it a busy time for Devon County Council's highways teams clearing up across the County, which takes teams away from repairing and keeping Highways in good order. It is a growing issue because our weather is changing with more rainfall and seemingly longer winters and the rain becoming much more intense making it a constant challenge to keep ahead of issues before they arise.

At the last meeting of Devon County Council there were some very positive statistics presented on how extra money put into the budget for this financial year has been used, with a few key headlines below.

- An increase of 51 per cent in the number of emergency potholes we have repaired in the first four months of this financial year compared to the same period in 2023.
- In the past four months, DCC Highways has already completed 80 per cent of the patching repairs that we were able to achieve in the whole of the last financial year.
- Patching repairs target sections of road, which are deteriorating, laying patches over extensive areas before potholes or other defects form.
- Since April, we have patched more than 18,000 square metres of road in over 350 locations across the county.
- Extensive work is being carried out on all categories of roads right across the county and, while we will not be able to get to every road in need of repair, we are ensuring our extra investment goes as far as possible.

These are very pleasing results, but there is still far more to do with a road maintenance backlog of around £200 million across our county, combined with occasional, damaging freezing conditions and an unprecedented number of violent storms, resulting in the worst possible combination for road surfaces.

DCC are also working with town and parish councils to share information and gather local intelligence so we can respond more effectively.

