

## **Axminster Division Report January 2025**

As the New Year has arrived let us all hope that the poor weather we are having currently improves quickly and that 2025 is a better one than 2024 for all of us. Something of a mixed bag in this month's articles and as always please feel free to share them with your network of contacts.

### **Highways News**

The subject of roads, drains and ditches is a very frequent topic in correspondence and correspondence with constituents where lack of adequate funding makes it nigh on impossible to maintain the largest highways network in England at over 8,000 miles to an acceptable standard. In large part this is because most of DCC's funding goes on Adult and Children's Services operations, much of it legally required, where demand has increased massively without being followed by extra funding to cover the rising demand.

It was possible to put an extra £12m into pothole repair and patching which has had a positive impact on the network. Just before Christmas, we received good news that Devon has been allocated £83.6m from the government funding for repairs fund, more than any other council in the U.K. This is broken down as £61.7m in 2025/26 and £22.5m in 2026/27.

This will have a significant impact on the quality of the highways network but is subject to certain criteria being met including highways, bridges, cycle ways etc and not just fixing potholes. In coming weeks and months, plans will be drawn up as to how this large amount of funding, using local knowledge, circumstances and priorities to maximise best use of the funding.

### **Stop Smoking**

The DCC Public Health Team is promoting the 'Stop smoking, Stop for Life' campaign. Devon's free Stop Smoking Service can help people to achieve a smoke free journey in 2025.

The friendly team of expert coaches guide you through a personalised 12-week programme of behaviour change of behaviour change coaching, practical tools and NRT support. They will make quitting easier and more achievable than ever.

Quitting smoking is one of the best decisions you can make for your health and well-being. Here are some of the top benefits:

· **Improved Health:** Your body starts to heal almost immediately. Within 20 minutes, your heart rate and blood pressure drop, and after just 72 hours, your breathing becomes easier. Long-term, you will reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer.

- **Better Breathing:** Your lung capacity improves, making it easier to stay active and enjoy daily activities.
- **More Energy:** With better circulation and oxygen levels, you will feel more energetic and less fatigued.
- **Enhanced Senses:** Your sense of taste and smell return, letting you fully enjoy your favourite foods.
- **Healthier Skin:** Stopping smoking improves blood flow, giving your skin a more radiant, youthful appearance.
- **Financial Savings:** Cutting out cigarettes saves you hundreds or even thousands of pounds a year.
- **Protecting Loved Ones:** Quitting reduces second-hand smoke exposure, creating a healthier environment for family and friends.
- **Everyday smoke-free is a step towards a longer, healthier life!**

**Start your smoke free journey today:** · <https://stopforlifedevon.org/get-started/>

· 0800 122 3866 · For general queries: [info@stopforlifedevon.org](mailto:info@stopforlifedevon.org) For referrals: [stopforlife.devon@nhs.net](mailto:stopforlife.devon@nhs.net)

## **Cold Weather and Health**

Whilst somewhat stating the obvious for much of this and circumstances clearly vary for a variety of reasons, but nonetheless worth repeating. Exposure to cold weather can affect anyone, some people are particularly at risk. These include:

- Older people (aged 65 years and over)
- People with long-term health conditions such as cardiovascular or respiratory disease, or a mental health condition
- Pregnant women
- Young children (particularly those aged 5 and under)
- People with learning disabilities
- People at risk of falls
- People who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves.
- People who are housebound or have low mobility.
- People living in deprived circumstances.

## **Keep your Home Warm**

You should heat your home to a temperature that is comfortable for you. Low indoor temperatures can have a serious impact on your health, especially if you have medical conditions or are older.

Simple changes can help to keep you and your home warm. These include:

- Try to heat rooms you spend a lot of time in, such as the living room or bedroom, to at least 18°C
- Try to reduce draughts; you can fit draft excluders around doors cheaply.
- Keep your bedroom windows closed at night.
- Wear several layers of thinner clothing; this could keep you warmer than one thicker layer.

## **Seek Financial Support**

People in financial difficulty may find it more difficult to heat their homes sufficiently. This increases the risk of becoming unwell due to cold exposure. There are grants, benefits and sources of advice available to help you make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help manage energy bills. There are also support measures in place to help with the cost of living, especially for those on low incomes. For example, if you claim certain benefits or tax credits, you may be eligible for an extra payment from the government to help with the cost of living. The government has published energy saving tips to help save money on bills.

Look after yourself and others.

There are other things you can do to reduce risks from cold exposure to yourself and others around you.

You can get vaccinated to help reduce risk from respiratory illnesses during the winter. This is particularly important if you have certain long-term health conditions that mean you are more vulnerable to the effects of cold weather. You can check your eligibility for a flu vaccination or COVID-19 booster online. Contact your pharmacist or GP or visit the NHS England website to learn more.

You should treat minor winter ailments like colds or sore throats promptly. NHS England provides information on steps you can take to manage colds or sore throats yourself, and when it may be appropriate to visit your local pharmacist for further advice and treatment.

If you are worried about your health or feeling down, contact your local pharmacist, NHS 111 or your GP, who will all be able to offer advice and support. In an emergency, dial 999.

When you are indoors, there are things you can do that will help to keep you warm and reduce the risk of developing medical problems, for example:

- Try not to sit still for more than an hour or so.
- If you find it difficult to move about, stretching your arms and legs can also help keep you warm · if you have visitors, it can help stop the spread of germs to ventilate the room for a few minutes before and after they arrive; you might be more comfortable leaving the window open during their visit, if it's not too cold

When out and about, wear shoes with good grip to avoid slips and falls on slippery or icy surfaces. If bad weather is forecast, plan ahead and check that you've got enough medication and food in case it's harder to leave the house. If you cannot leave the house, try to identify others who might be able to help pick up food and medication on your behalf.

Other people around you, particularly older neighbours, family friends and neighbours, may need extra support during cold weather. To support others, you can:

- Keep in touch with them and ask whether they are feeling unwell, or whether they need any practical help · if bad weather is forecast, see if they need any help stocking up on food and medication!
- If you are worried about someone else's health, contact your local pharmacist, your GP or NHS 111, who will all be able to offer advice and support · if you think they may have hypothermia, contact NHS 111 for further assessment, and in an emergency dial 999; typical signs that someone may be suffering from hypothermia include shivering, slow breathing, tiredness or confusion, and pale, cold skin.