

South Hams District Council Report to Ivybridge Town Council 18th September – 30th October

Tree Management along the Erme River

With a new arboriculturist, all our asset sites, including open spaces, car parks and residential areas are to be completely re-assessed in respect of hazards and risk of failure. This will inevitably create a significant amount of remedial tree works and will include the car parks. As soon as any tree works are identified, these will be sent out to tree contractors for action. The previous two dry summers and one reasonably dry winter have put trees under enormous pressure in attaining sufficient water to store during these prolonged dry periods. However, some trees can withstand drought conditions; yet it generally takes several years/ growing seasons for them to fully recover.

The District is intending to respond to calls from SHDC Cllrs, members of the public, and the Ivybridge Heritage & Archives Group to give the riverside stretch due attention.

The adopted Ivybridge Neighbourhood Plan includes very clear local aspirations and objectives.

- On Shopping and the Town Centre, “Open up the River Erme to view and enhance safer access along the river corridor including bridges, riverside paths and open spaces, seating and lighting, cafes and restaurants”.
- New or improved bridges across the River Erme to provide good, safe access and movement for all around the town centre, and improved maintenance of the banks of the River Erme within the town centre. Residents of and visitors to the town should be able to see and enjoy the river safely.
- **What will be the main changes in the town centre? ... 5 bullet points including, “More open and better riverside access”.**

In respect of the riverside trees, some of the proposed works are for the removal of dead and dying Ash trees already infected with Ash Die Back. Several Ash trees have been categorised as being in stages 2 to 4 of the disease cycle which in general terms means that the crown dieback is between 25% and 75%. The trees within stages 3-4 will need removing this winter as they are within a high target area and are more liable to fail fully or in part over a public open space. These trees will be a priority as well as any other species identified as being an unacceptable risk to the public. As responsible landowners, we have a duty of care to assess, maintain and replant trees where reasonably practicable to do so, and as such, tree works will be taking place this winter as well as tree planting to increase biodiversity and as replacement trees following tree felling.

The section of works between New Bridge (i.e. the one at the War Memorial) and the Ivy Bridge will be a priority and initially to involve the removal of the Laurel vegetation along the left bank (the SHDC owned and maintained section (which will open the views of the Ivy Bridge considerably)). The Laurel growth is highly invasive and has a higher potential to cause ground level degradation as well as underlying structural damage to the riverside cliffs and supporting structures. These proposed works would be under routine maintenance. Additional tree works on the opposite side of the river/ the right bank would be fewer due to the nature of the species which means the overall green visual appearance can be maintained albeit slightly reduced in the lateral growth of branches.

SHDC will improve its husbandry – gradually and sensitively. To summarise, we will address:

- **dead and dangerous trees as we must as responsible landowners, and**
- **the rampant growth of the highly invasive Laurel – Laurel itself doing nothing positive for biodiversity.**

Both elements of this work are long overdue.

Maintenance at the Riverside Seating Area (The Eye)

Timbers will be replaced and the seating improved. Treated timbers will have to be disposed of carefully.

Consultations

The consultation on our **Corporate Strategy**, laying out our aims and ambitions for the South Hams, has been extended until 30 November: <https://ourcorporatestrategy.commonplace.is/>

The consultation on the **proposed changes to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme** for 2024/2025 is open until 28 November: <https://counciltaxreductionsouthhams.commonplace.is/>

We are proposing two changes to our Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2024/25:

- The removal of Minimum Income Floor for self-employed earnings;
- To disregard the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit.

These changes aim to support:

- Self-employed residents who are trying to grow their own business.
- Residents with a disability or illness which limits the amount they can work.

Control of dogs within the South Hams - includes where they are allowed to go, where they need to be on a lead, beach access and restrictions, and of dog fouling.

Open until 14 November online at <https://shdc-dogcontrol.commonplace.is/>

Updated SHDC Website - <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/>

The Council's new website went live on Wednesday 4 October. **The new website is based on Gov.UK design principles, meeting all web accessibility standards and will make it easier for residents to get things done quickly and efficiently.**

How is the site organised?

The first thing you'll see on the homepage are the six action buttons. These are the six most commonly carried out activities on our website. 58% of visitors do one of those six things and leave.

The rest of the site is split into Your Council, Service Areas and four 'subsites.'

Under Your Council is everything to do with the Council. Again this is ordered by current 'hits' with the most viewed areas at the top.

Then the Service Areas are organised by the number of 'hits' they each get annually, followed by a link box for partners.

Below that on the homepage is the Communications section, comprising of a newsroom, a subscriber panel and a social media box.

E-mail Bulletins

Every week we send out a Council News e-mail bulletin to residents, full of updates and useful information. We also send out periodical e-mail updates on planning decisions, waste and other areas. **You can sign up for our bulletins at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSWDEVON/subscriber/new>**

Waste Container Rollout

The waste container rollout and delivery of new recycling and waste containers to 8,000 homes in the South Hams has been completed.

News of the roll-out of the new service across the District is imminent.

Support for Care Leavers

In September, we agreed to give a **Council Tax discount to young people who have left the care system up to the age of 25**. The move is designed to help care leavers make the transition to adulthood, offering a form of financial assistance that other young people may get through help from their parents.

Other support includes:

A programme to help **support care leavers into employment**. This includes offering a two to four-week paid work experience placement, reserving some apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and offering guaranteed interviews for those meeting minimum requirements, with support available from workplace mentors.

A leisure pass that offers **free access to the district's four council-owned leisure centres** at Totnes, Kingsbridge, Ivybridge and Dartmouth. These passes are being offered in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle.

A new **collaborative approach to housing**. For most young people leaving care, the pathway is straightforward, well planned and supported.

We have supported a small cohort of care leavers to retain accommodation and enabled access to services to meet their support needs. This has involved a strong commitment to multi agency work, delivering housing services in a trauma informed way and demonstrating a higher level of flexibility and tolerance to meet individual need.

Housing

An example of a new approach to housing: Work is expected to begin this autumn on a new award-winning housing scheme at 'Collaton Cross' near Yealmpton, with **all 125 properties excluded from being used as holiday lets or second homes**.

We are supporting the project by working closely with developers Pillar Land Securities to offer **57 affordable homes, including 18 social rent properties** for the Newton and Noss Community Land Trust.

This project is an example of some of the ways we are helping to tackle the housing crisis here in South Hams.

Electoral Registration Canvassing

We will be sending out canvassers to all properties within the Council area who are required, but have not yet returned, a Canvass Form relating to electoral registration.

This is an annual process. The canvassers will be trying to make contact with those households who have not supplied information that we have requested under electoral registration legislation. The canvassers will be carrying ID and will be delivering forms and not taking information at the doorstep, unless it is offered to them.

This statutory process needs to be completed in advance of publishing the new Electoral Register on 1 December. We will also carry out some social media to inform residents.

Freeport

Victor sourced and provided some answers in response to questions from Cllr Rea. On his Question No. 5, the question and first response was:

5. Does SHDC now embrace the Government's Freeport initiative and have assurances been sought re tax avoidance and the protection of worker rights within the Freeport?

SHDC is committed to the Freeport by its earlier decision under the previous administration. We are very worried about the possible deleterious effects upon tax and rights. Ivybridge Town Council was invited to a presentation on Thursday 19 October at noon at Follaton. The presentation was also streamed over Teams.

The Freeport is going ahead and to leave now would invoke charges if not fines for breach of contract. Our responsibility will be both financial and enabling but the growth will come from private enterprise. The freeport webpage is live at

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/ferry-and-harbour/plymouth-and-south-devon-freeport>

On Question No. 6:

6. How will SHDC bring additional funding into the area and the local economy?

We have a representative (Cllr Yardy (Dartmouth)) on the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee. We are working for Ivybridge through the Town Centres & Economy/ Ivybridge Economic Strategy. We are expecting there to be some positive outcome from the Freeport. We're hoping there will be a spin-off from the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

There has been a working group on an Ivybridge Economic Plan and it will go out to consultation at the start of November, running for 3 months. For items ready to go in the more immediate term, it would be good if Town Councillors and residents can feed them into the consultation on the Corporate Strategy.

Following the briefing by Cllr Birch and officers, we add the following:

#5

- There is a Net Zero Plan;
- There is a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework;
- There is an Assurance Framework and publications scheme setting out how the Nolan Standards will be embedded and how the Freeport will be accountable;
- There is an Freedom of Information Policy, Feedback Policy and Data Protection Policies.

#6

- Include £29m investment from LAs and leverage £250m of private sector investment;
- The LAs will be responsible for delivering the capital works;
- SHDC has a plan to borrow up to £5.5m from the Public Works Loan Board as and when required, with repayments through the additional business rates generated by the Freeport. The Freeport is to be self-financing.

Armed Forces Covenant Support

SHDC Councillor and military veteran Cllr Alison Dewynter has been appointed to serve as the Council's Armed Forces Covenant Champion for the duration of this Council administration.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives. The Covenant Legal Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies, including local authorities, governing bodies of certain state schools, various NHS bodies, and other organisations. It is an obligation to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when carrying out certain functions in healthcare, education and housing.