

Axminster Division Report 13th March 2022

Ukraine

As we all look on in horror at the awful events unfolding in Ukraine, I am sure that you will all join me in sending our thoughts and prayers to all those in our communities who are personally affected by the escalating tensions in Europe, brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

I simply cannot imagine how terrifying and emotionally devastating the conflict must be for the people of Ukraine as hundreds of thousands flee their homes, families are torn apart, and civilians fight for their freedom and for their country.

Devon County Council stands alongside the people of Ukraine and our friends, Family and colleagues who have loved ones in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

The Council has pledged to work together to support Ukrainian refugees seeking sanctuary in the UK and have each condemned Russia's actions. Particular support will be given to families in Devon whose relatives in Ukraine are fleeing the conflict.

It has also taken steps to cut Russian links, such as through contracts for energy provision. Any few remaining investments within the Devon Pension Fund, linked to Russian assets, are being sold off quickly.

It is hard to know what we can do as individuals to help those people in the thick of the conflict and not everyone will want to make donations of food, clothes, toys etc. There are a number of charities appealing for donations towards their support for the people of Ukraine.

These include Save the Children <https://ukraine.savethechildren.net/> , The Red Cross <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-crisis-appeal> and UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/donate-now-to-protect-children-in-ukraine/> .

The Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator have urged the public to 'give safely' to registered charities helping and supporting those affected by the invasion of Ukraine.

People looking to donate to causes working in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, should make a few simple checks before giving:

- Check the charity's name and registration number at www.gov.uk/checkcharity
- Make sure the charity is genuine before giving any financial information

- Be careful when responding to emails or clicking on links within them
- Contact or find out more online about the charity that you're seeking to donate to or work with to understand how they are spending their funds
- Look out for the Fundraising Badge on charity fundraising materials, this is the logo which shows that a charity has committed to fundraise in line with the Code of Fundraising Practice

Managing Big problems in Small places

As we get wetter seasons both major and minor solutions need to be found to help all of our communities, most of which in Devon are rural in nature.

In the 2020 Budget, DEFRA announced a new programme of funding for innovative projects to help communities be more resilient to flooding and coastal change. The programme which is managed by the Environment Agency allocated £150 million to 25 partnership projects across England through a competitive process. DCC and our Partners have successfully been selected to develop a project which will increase flood resilience at a catchment level within communities in rapid response 'type' catchments where traditional flood defences are shown not to be appropriate or cost beneficial. This is an ambitious project which looks to achieve:

There needs to be a measurable reduction in potential flood damage and disruption in hard to help communities which will go beyond the properties directly at risk and extend to community assets, businesses, local infrastructure and communities 'downstream'.

Improved and more informed planning decisions in Rapid Response 'type' Catchment areas including future climate impacts considerations

An increased knowledge of the state of resilience of communities or catchments in Devon in order to better inform future flood resilience projects, and collaboration between Risk Management Authorities. Devon County Council as the lead partner of the project is delivering its functions in its statutory role as a Lead Local Flood Authority. The DCC Cabinet has now approved the delivery following approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) on March 9th 2022.

This project seeks to address several challenges and pre-existing barriers to delivering flood resilience in rapid response type catchments. These challenges and barriers are:

- The effects of climate change, where more intense rainfall events are a growing concern with increased risk of flooding.
- Lack of a single source of information on flood events and flood resilience.
- The current definition of a Rapid Response Catchment which does not pick up key Rapid Response Catchment communities, such as Modbury in July 2012.

- A large percentage of communities are relatively small in terms of property count and commercial businesses, compared to other more urban areas with larger cities. This combined with relatively high costs of delivering traditional flood defence schemes precludes value for money solutions.
- Community engagement in flood risk issues, with many still expecting authorities to act on their behalf.

The project objectives are: a) Empower local communities and stakeholders to participate in the development, delivery, monitoring, maintenance and ownership of flood resilience interventions by piloting a range of low-cost resilience actions including Nature Based Solutions.

- b) Promote and support the installation of Property Flood Resilience measures in community assets and with small businesses so that they can recover quicker from flooding.
- c) Enhance existing warning systems by developing local and tailored surface water flood warning tools so that communities are able to react in time.
- d) Identify & develop alternative funding models for communities to fund and maintain flood resilience measures.
- e) Develop new spatial planning tools and approaches which can support the delivery of flood resilience measures at a catchment scale in Rapid Response type Catchments. Also improve and embed flood resilience in planning and land use policies and decisions.
- f) Define, quantify and share levels of community resilience and potential for resilience gain within a catchment through the development of Flood Resilience Hub on the web.
- g) Deliver robust and replicable learning: Demonstrate how different actions work together at a catchment level; identify what level of protection can be afforded to a community; improve evidence on the costs and benefits of innovative resilience actions including co benefits (biodiversity, carbon, socio-economic and health).

There are eighteen partners in this major project including National Parks, District Councils, DCC, The Environment Agency, South West water, and a host of other organisations, where Town and Parish Council will be a key part of the project

Mental Health - Beyond Covid

The ending of all COVID-19 restrictions is a big change for many people and may bring up strong feelings for you: fear, worry, confusion, relief, or a mixture of different emotions. You might be glad to see some restrictions going but

worry it's too soon to end others, especially if you or your loved ones are more vulnerable to coronavirus. In fact, the end of all COVID-19 restrictions might be as hard for us as their introduction was almost two years ago.

Society has opened back up but you might not feel ready yet to get back to the things you once enjoyed, such as going to the cinema or pub, mixing in big groups or crowded spaces, or travelling by public transport. The end of restrictions might feel like extra pressure to join in, with the added worry that people no longer legally have to self-isolate if they have coronavirus.

These feelings are likely to pass with time as we get used to the "new normal" but it's important to do what we can to take care of our mental health. Just as it took us time to find ways to cope during lockdown, it will take time to find our way back and reconnect with life. Don't be hard on yourself if it's taking longer than you expected or if other people seem more confident or sociable than you.

There are lots of things that can help you to manage these feelings and make it easier to adjust. The Mental Health Foundation has lots of information about looking after your mental health as you adapt to the end of COVID-19 restrictions. NHS Every Mind Matters has tips for coping with anxiety about "getting back to normal".

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis, you can find an urgent local NHS mental health helpline to call for 24-hour advice and support, or visit the NHS Every Mind Matters urgent support webpage.

Links

The Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/end-of-covid-19-restrictions-tips-to-look-after-mental-health>

NHS, Every mind matters <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/coronavirus/tips-to-cope-with-anxiety-lockdown-lifting/>

Local NHS mental health helpline <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>

Every mind matters urgent support <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/urgent-support/>

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