

Axminster Division Report November 2022

Growing Communities fund

The DCC Growing Communities Fund (GCF) is making a real difference, giving a helping hand to local communities during the cost-of-living crisis. So far £250,000 has been awarded to local projects across the County, many of which are helping communities cope with the sharp increase in food prices and heating bills.

We have committed a further £200,000 and we are inviting applications for projects that support communities and help them to become more resilient. This is in response to the fastest rise in the cost of living for 40 years; the cost of food increased by 14.6 per cent in the year to September, reaching its highest level since 1980.

Projects supported include those that offer local people a warm safe haven, produce food, distribute surplus food and essentials, food banks and classes showing communities how to cook nutritious meals on a budget. See [Growing Communities Fund - Communities \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/growing-communities-fund) for further information.

Free holiday activities with hot meals now available for children during the Christmas 2022 holidays

School holidays can be particularly difficult for some families because of increased costs, such as food, especially now, when costs of living are so high, and rising.

DCC have arranged a programme of funded holiday-time activities, with hot meals, to run for up to four days over the Christmas 2022 school holiday.

To see the full programme of available activities, and to book a place through our providers at [HAF providers – Christmas 2022 – Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/haf-providers-christmas-2022-education-and-families) where there are number of options available in Honiton, Axminster, Seaton, Sidmouth and Honiton

Digital support for small businesses

New online support is now available to help small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) to be savvier with their digital skills. As part of the Digital Enablement for SMEs (DESME) project, DCC is delivering in partnership with YTKO and Cosmic, an online self-assessment tool, called

the Digital Maturity Index, has been launched, see [Sign-up - Devon County Council's Digital Maturity Index Tool \(benchmarkindex.net\)](#).

It has been devised to enable businesses to gain an understanding of their digital strengths and weaknesses. It also offers insights into digital tools that may help their business develop and grow.

This self-assessment tool is designed to be completed by business managers on behalf of their business. Once they have completed this assessment and downloaded their report, they will have targeted information that can guide them to access funded digital training courses and resources or further advice from one of the project's expert digital advisors. The DESME project, which is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), offers bespoke training to enable businesses to make the most of readily available digital tools. The aim is to improve the management of their business, increase efficiency and help them to grow their reach. The project also offers the Digital Course Finder, an extensive online database of digital skills training courses delivered by training providers across the county, as well as online digital skills courses. See <https://digitalcoursefinder.org.uk/> for details of 202 courses!

This website is the first of its kind in Devon and is aimed at adults of all ages who are looking to learn new skills, as well as businesses looking for Digital Skills training for their employees. Users can search for digital courses based on a variety of factors such as subject, location, course length or format.

Training providers can create their own accounts which will enable them to add courses and events as well as maintain and update their courses.

Police news

DCC members in the Eastern part of Devon will receive a monthly 'trends' update for the area and the first below from the 8th of November is interesting, if not specific, where the news that surgeries are back a positive step in the right direction, towards the reopening of the front desk at Honiton Police station.

Over the last 28 days for the Rural East Devon Sector, we have seen very steady crime statistics. Most crime offences across the sector are about where they are for the same 28-day period in 2021. The only notable increase relates to vehicle offences. There have been a disproportionate number of thefts from motor vehicles across the whole sector, the majority of which relate to thefts of catalytic converters. These have predominantly

taken place across Axminster and Seaton patches, which of course includes the rural aspects of these towns.

Police are working hard 'across the board' in order to combat this issue. A force wide operation has been instigated and actions are being taken. These include a number of overt tactical options. There will be an increase in patrols in the area over evening times in order to locate any offenders of these crimes. Police from the local area are also linking in with our colleagues in Dorset and Avon and Somerset in order to coordinate joint days of action. This is a rapidly evolving crime series. Advice has been put out by police on social media channels, with the hope of increasing awareness locally. There is a trend of Honda Jazz vehicles and Toyota Auris vehicles being targeted, and so owners of these vehicles should be particularly mindful of this issue and establish any steps that they can take on an individual basis in order to safeguard their property where possible.

There are no other crime trends that require attention. Rural East Devon remains a safe place to live, and crime statistics in the area are pleasing.

In some good news, Axminster and Honiton have recently enjoyed their town carnivals. Both events were well attended by the public, they were pleasant events to police and no known issues have occurred during either events.

Police in all 4 towns are looking at bringing back Police Surgeries, where the public can meet face to face with a local police officer to discuss any local concerns. Details of these will be published on our website in due course as and when they have been set up. This will be an opportunity for some positive engagement between the local police and the communities we serve.

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