

Report From Councillor Mark Barry for Littleham and Landcross Parsh Council

Meeting to be held 03.07.2025

As the end of June approaches Devon County Council debt increased to over £500 million. There are many factors in this but the biggest contribution was the massive overspend on SEND of over £50 million. The importance of SEND was highlighted when the SEND conference held at Sandy Park in Exeter had a record breaking attendance that included delegates, exhibitors and speakers. At the All Member Development day held at Stover on 26.06.2025 this debt was of major concern to all parties. It was decided that SEND would receive an increased budget, as the original was so far off the mark, which means the DCC debt will also increase to about £560 million by June 2026. Interest payments are currently £59,000 per day and this will increase to £73,000 per day by next year. Clearly, this cannot continue so cuts will be made in other areas to accommodate the debt and sources of income, parking for example, may have to rise to bring in extra funds. The plan is then to start in 2027 to decrease the debt as this obviously isn't sustainable. This will include the sale of assets valued at £13 million and budget cuts over 9 years of £50 million. The next full DCC meeting to discuss the debt and the solutions will be held on September 4th although this date may change.

Xlinks

Xlinks has also had some new developments. On Thursday 26th June the Government issued a statement in which they said....

The Government have concluded that it is not in the UK national interest at this time to continue further consideration of support for the Morocco-UK power project.

The Government have concluded the project does not clearly align strategically with the Government's mission to build home-grown power here in the UK.

This would be a first-of-a-kind mega-project with a high level of inherent, cumulative risk—delivery, operational, and security). We acknowledge Xlinks' excellent work in trying to mitigate these risks where possible but, nevertheless, this remains a factor in decision making.

It has not yet been confirmed what this means for the Development Consent Order application currently with the Planning Inspectorate (whether the applicant continues to pursue the application or withdraws it). It is expected to be announced sometime next week hopefully before the next Parish meeting.

20 is Plenty

This is to be discussed at the DCC Cabinet meeting in July as they need to prepare a proposal that can be brought in front of the full DCC in September. The proposal will then be heard and a vote will take place. It is highly likely to pass. It's a good idea but it needs teeth. In its present form it is largely unenforceable.

Roads

During campaigning, and afterward, the number one complaint that was brought up was the state of the roads. DCC recognise this and Julian Brazil, Cabinet Chair, has stated that the roads throughout Devon will become a priority.

An £83 million road maintenance programme includes trials of filling in potholes in an entire area rather than dealing with safety defects. At present, there is a repair backlog of £390 million so DCC is looking to increase the Highways budget to £102 million a year so it can gradually clear the backlog.
End of Report Mark Barry,

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