

Councillor Richard Keeling’s Report February 2026, to Chudleigh, Hennock, Ashton, Bridford, Christow, Doddiscomleigh, Dunsford, Mortonhampstead, Tedburn St Mary & Trusham.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to all the Councillors I have spoken to over the last month with their concerns in their areas. Devon county Council has been dealing with severer weather conditions of two storms affecting our area so I have included in my report more about DCC’s reaction to this.

This month I will be attending Tedburn St Mary & Chudleigh Knighton Parish meetings

Briefing Note

February 2026

Update on Recent Weather Conditions and Devon’s Carriageways

Purpose

This note provides Elected Members with an update on the impact of the recent weather patterns on the condition of Devon’s fragile road network and steps the Service is taking in response.

Background

- Through November and December, Devon has continued to experience a pattern of freezing road conditions followed by a significant thaw and heavy rainfall. At the time of writing this has occurred 11 times.
- This weather pattern is incredibly damaging for the carriageways and has led to a significant increase in pothole numbers.

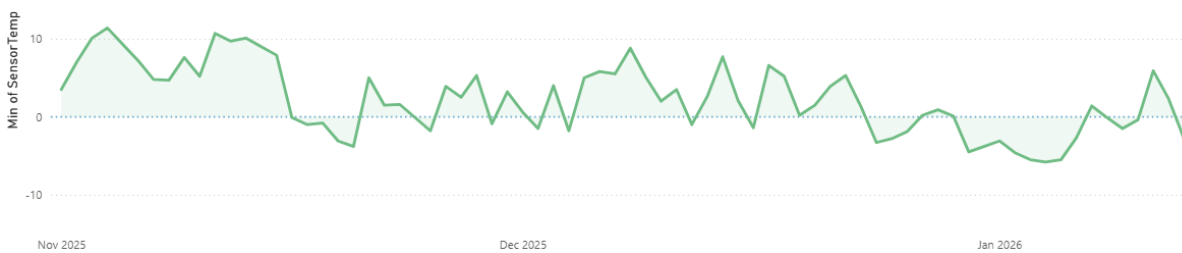


Figure 1 Minimum Road Surface Temperatures Nov 25 to Jan 26

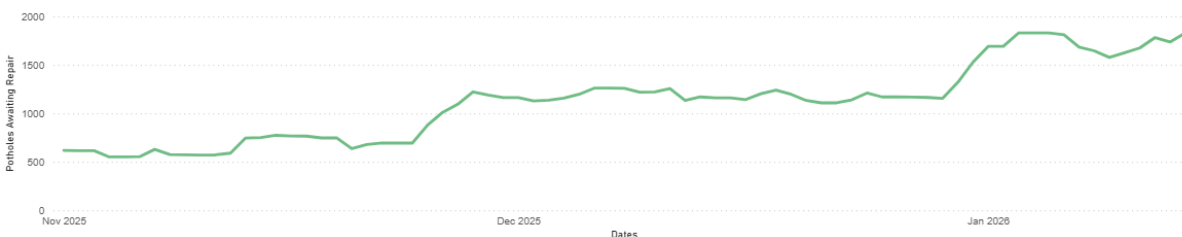


Figure 2 2 Daily Number of Potholes Awaiting Repair Nov 25 to Jan 26

The two graphs above show the close relationship between the freezing conditions and increase in potholes. In addition, since early December the Service has regularly received in excess of 250 public reports a day with 387 received on 11th January. Since 1st November the Service has responded to over 10,500 public reports. 2,300 (22%) of these are duplicate reports that effectively slow down our inspectors, highlighting the importance of adding your details to an existing report rather than raising a new enquiry.

Response

In response to the increase in pothole numbers all non-safety (serviceability) works were suspended in early December to focus resources on safety defect potholes. In addition, some planned maintenance works were suspended before Christmas and resources allocated to safety defect potholes.

A number of M Group gangs worked through the Christmas period, repairing more than 100 potholes with Highway Safety Inspectors triaging over 750 public reports between Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Devon Highways are currently operating with over 30 gangs across the network and continue to monitor the backlog and number of public reports daily. Many of these teams continue to work additional hours on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the network as safe as possible.

Other Impacts

As anticipated in December, the increase in reactive safety repairs has already begun to divert resources away from planned maintenance schemes. The team are looking at programme priorities when deciding schemes to be deferred.

With the cold weather comes increased gritting. This season has already seen more than 1,000 gritting runs spread approximately 4,800t of salt across the network. The gritter drivers are the same operatives that are fixing defects and carrying out planned works, further impacting our programmes.

As well as the high demand from potholes the same teams have also been a critical part of Devon Highways' response to a host of recent weather warnings, including the highly impactful Storm Goretti.

Other Sources of Information

[Highway Maintenance Transparency Report](#)

[Annual Capital Report 25/26](#)

[Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan](#)

Please find below letter sent to Minister of State re LGR

Re: Proposal to Cancel the May 2026 Elections due to Local Government Reorganisation Preparations

Dear Secretary of State,

I write as Leader of Teignbridge District Council to express serious concern regarding the proposal to cancel the May 2026 local elections on the grounds of ongoing preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In our view, cancelling scheduled elections for this reason would be a mistaken course of action and would carry significant democratic, legal and practical risks.

Local elections are a fundamental expression of democratic accountability. The electorate has a legitimate expectation that elections will take place as scheduled, and postponement or cancellation, unless in truly exceptional circumstances, risks undermining public confidence in local democratic institutions. Administrative complexity or transitional pressures should not, in themselves, override this core democratic principle.

Local government has historically demonstrated its ability to deliver elections successfully alongside periods of significant structural change. While we recognise that preparation for LGR is complex and resource-intensive, it does not make running elections unworkable. On the contrary, holding elections during a period of reform can provide renewed democratic legitimacy at a time when major decisions are being taken.

I understand that Exeter City Council have debated this matter and concluded that they are requesting a postponement of the May 2026 elections on the basis of a lack of capacity. We have offered to the Leader at the City Council a commitment to provide resources and capacity from our Democratic Services to support the elections to go ahead, and understand that similar offers of support and capacity from Devon County and District Councils may be forthcoming too. We make this offer in light of the City Council's decision and following the serious and significant concerns raised at our own Council debate over the postponement of the elections. We are confident that we can assist and remove this burden and support the Leader of the City Council hold to his original intent that elections should proceed in 2026.

Teignbridge District Council continues to work constructively with MHCLG officials and local partners. We await the Government's decision on the submitted business cases and will continue to support residents, businesses and staff through this significant period of change.

For all these reasons, we strongly believe that the May 2026 elections should proceed as planned. Doing so would reinforce democratic legitimacy, maintain public trust and demonstrate confidence in local government at a time of transformation.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss these issues further and to explore how the Government and local authorities can work together to deliver reorganisation in a way that is democratic, sustainable and focused on improving outcomes for communities.

Kind regards

Councillor Richard Keeling

Leader of Teignbridge District Council

Executive Summary – Integrated Adult Social Care

Executive Summary – Integrated Adult Social Care Cllr Richard Keeling

The 2026/27 draft budget for Integrated Adult Social Care (IASC) totals £395.9m, an increase of £9.9m (2.6%) compared to 2025/26. The budget reflects significant demographic pressures, increasing complexity of need, national reforms, and a continuing focus on prevention, early intervention, and maximising independence.

Key pressures include £15.2m in demand growth and £15.8m from inflation and National Living Wage increases. To balance the budget, the service must deliver £21.1m in savings, alongside alternative funding and income. The ‘Living Well in Devon’ transformation programme—supported by a three-year £10.9m capital investment—underpins the savings strategy, focusing on strengths-based practice, improved workflow, and modernisation of care pathways.

National changes such as immigration reform, NHS reorganisation, CQC’s new inspection regime, and rising complexity among working-age adults and older people significantly impact financial and operational resilience. Workforce shortages, particularly in specialist dementia, autism, and complex behaviour support, remain acute risks both for the Council and the wider independent care market.

Locally, demand continues to rise due to projected increases in dementia and learning disability prevalence. Hospital discharge pathways remain too reliant on bed-based care; system partners are collaborating to redesign this model to improve independence and reduce costs.

The Better Care Fund remains central, with approximately £137m expected for Devon in 2026/27, including £58.7m directly supporting social care functions. However, NHS financial instability presents a material risk to joint arrangements and cost-shunting.

Major risks include market sufficiency, workforce capacity, volatile unit costs, demand uncertainty, and partnership instability. Mitigations include strengthened commissioning, upskilling staff, enhanced triage for safeguarding and DoLS, and strategic engagement with NHS partners. Delivery of the savings programme, alongside transformation, is critical to the long-term sustainability of adult social care in Devon.

Storm Damage Update

I have written to the MP on Support needed in General.

Councillor Richard Keeling

Leader of Teignbridge District Council Forde House Newton Abbot TQ12 4XX

28th January 2026

Martin Wrigley MP House of Commons London SW1A 0AA Delivered by Email Re:

Immediate Need for Government Intervention on Storm Resilience Across Teignbridge

Dear Martin,

I am writing with deep concern and a sense of urgency following the severe impacts of Storm Chandra and Storm Ingrid on Teignbridge. These storms have once again exposed the fragility of our coastal and inland infrastructure, and the situation is now critical. Overnight and throughout the morning, Teignbridge teams have been stationed in multi-agency tactical coordination groups responding to rapidly developing emergencies across the district. We are already facing significant flooding in Bovey Tracey, Teigngrace, Kingsteignton and Dawlish, with further damage continuing to emerge in Teignmouth and Dawlish, where clean-up operations are still underway. The situation along the coast is particularly precarious. The seawall footpath at Sprey Point between Teignmouth and Holcombe is being closed to allow emergency repairs after storm damage, highlighting yet again how exposed this vital stretch of infrastructure has become. The River Teign is exceptionally high, floodwaters continue to threaten communities, and further incidents cannot be ruled out. These events are no longer isolated weather incidents — they represent a pattern of escalating climate-driven threats that local authorities cannot continue to absorb without decisive national intervention. Our teams are stretched, our resources are strained, and the frequency of these storms means we are constantly reacting rather than able to build long-term resilience. Urgent Action Required Given the scale and immediacy of the risks, I am asking for your active support in pressing the Government to:

1. Release emergency and long-term funding for reinforced coastal and flood-defence infrastructure along the East Coast of Teignbridge.
2. Prioritise Teignbridge within national climate-resilience strategies.
3. Expand national multi-agency resilience support.
4. Accelerate investment in preventative climate adaptation work.

Without immediate and meaningful Government action, we face the growing risk of infrastructure failure, economic disruption, and severe impacts on residents' safety and wellbeing. The situation is becoming untenable for our communities and for the teams responding on the ground. I would welcome the opportunity to meet urgently to discuss how we can work together to secure the support Teignbridge now critically needs.

Yours sincerely, Councillor Richard Keeling Leader, Teignbridge District Council

Potholes

Please note that you can report online and track your issue quickly, link here [Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Please contact me if you have any questions on Devon County Council or Teignbridge District Council.

Kind regards

Richard

Councillor Richard Keeling, MIO

Cabinet Member for Adults Services

Devon County Councillor for Chudleigh & Teign Valley

Member of Dartmoor National Park Authority

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