# 261201 – Item 13 – Correspondence

**13.1 Correspondence received 02/11/26**

**Background**

In July 2026, the Council considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding the management of St Andrew's Churchyard. Following consideration, the Council reaffirmed the management approach adopted through the Open Spaces Committee's review of the churchyard maintenance contract.

The Council advised that the churchyard is managed using a zoned approach to balance accessibility, safety, respect for those buried there, biodiversity, and cost-effectiveness.

The Council noted that the existing wildflower area had not flourished as intended and invited practical advice and assistance to improve its biodiversity value. The Council also confirmed support for retaining naturally occurring wildflowers, such as ox-eye daisies, within regularly maintained areas where practical. The member of the public subsequently thanked the Council for considering their comments and indicated they would consider how they might assist with biodiversity improvements.

**November 2026 Correspondence**

Thanks for the email.

In response to the PC's request for help regarding the wildflower section in St. Andrews churchyard, I'm writing on behalf of the Wildlife Wardens.

We propose that the existing wildflower meadow area:

1) Is reinforced with a wider range of appropriate species, supplied as small plug plants.
2) Has broken up plywood removed.
3) Has strimmed / windblown plastic flowers and other debris removed.
4) Is managed to favour  flowering and seed release.
5) Is checked for compaction - moss is visible on the surface.
6) Is managed, a.k.a. strimmed, strictly at the appropriate time, a high cut made and all arisings removed to enforce the reduced fertility status of the patch.

With the exception of 6), all proposals would be carried out by the wildlife wardens, covering any expenses in the process.

In the light of the recent vote by the PC to encourage biodiversity in the churchyard, would the PC be interested in giving their backing to a survey of visitors to the churchyard regarding the management of the site as a wildlife haven? It would be useful to gauge opinion on the subject.

An additional proposal to increase biodiversity in the churchyard could be via the cultivation of flowering plants at the BACK of (older) headstones - not on graves. This would necessitate an enforced instruction to the contractors to leave a 30cm strip un-strimmed at the back of each headstone. Suggested plants would range from bulbs such as native daffodils, to wildlife-friendly herbaceous plants such as harebell, to dwarf shrubs. All would be of an upright non-spreading habit so as not to impede access.

The intention would be to dramatically increase the range of flower types and flowering times, to attract a wider range of butterflies and bees, to turn the churchyard into a place of beauty and to consolidate headstones, preventing their (further) movement. All plants would be provided by the wildlife wardens who would also manage the plants. We suggest a trial area to start with, perhaps zones A and B, which would be most enjoyed by visitors.

This could be an exciting first for such situations: a semi-natural garden, allowing the continued cutting and strimming regime. Should it not succeed, for whatever reason, simply allowing complete strimming again would remedy the situation.

**13.2 Correspondence received 04/11/26**

Could your Council help us?

I am writing to introduce Devon Digital Cafes, a new county-wide initiative dedicated to tackling digital exclusion.

As you may be aware, digital exclusion in Devon is currently higher than the national average, leaving many of our residents unable to access essential online services, healthcare, and social connections. We are reaching out to request your Council's support in helping us change this.

Devon Digital Cafes is inspired by the highly successful network of digital drop-in centres and digital cafes promoted by Spark IT in Somerset. To bring this vital service to our county, we have secured sponsorship from Webcliq in Okehampton and are proud to have the active support of the VCSE Assembly for Plymouth, Torbay and Devon, as well as community voluntary service organisations across the county. We are also working closely alongside Devon Communities Together, and Tech4Good South West to ensure this initiative reaches those who need it most.

**How Devon Digital Cafes Works**

Devon Digital Cafes acts as the central coordinating hub for all participating locations. By centralising our resources, we allow local volunteers to focus entirely on helping people. Our hub provides:

- Funding & Finance: Finding finance, raising money for local centres through grants and donations, and managing cooperative marketing and publicity.
- Technology & Equipment: Collecting, recycling, and refurbishing redundant IT equipment—including laptops and desktop PCs—to supply our centres.
- Operational Support: Operating a case management system for centres that need it, providing ongoing technical support, and liaising with the commercial sector via the Devon Chamber of Commerce.
- Training & Development: Organising training courses, managing a centralised learning management system, and recruiting and training volunteers.

To make this vision a reality, we are actively looking for volunteers to set up and run drop-in centres and digital cafes throughout Devon.

This is where we need your help. We are asking your Council to assist us in promoting a digital cafe or drop-in centre within your specific area. Most importantly, we need your help to

identify and connect with local volunteers who possess IT and smartphone knowledge to operate these instances and guide residents through their digital journeys.

By working together, we can bridge the digital divide, empower our communities, and ensure no resident in Devon is left offline.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you or a relevant member of your team. Please let me know if you would be available for a brief meeting or call in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to the residents of Devon.

Warm regards,

Volunteer Coordinator for Devon Digital Cafes

**13.3 Correspondence received 14/11/26**

Dear Parish Council Chair and Members,

I hope you will not mind me contacting you.

I am writing on behalf of the group working to secure the future of **Old Forde House** in Newton Abbot as a community-owned heritage asset. We believe this remarkable historic building presents a unique opportunity to create a sustainable centre for heritage, arts, culture, education and community activity that can serve the people of Teignbridge for generations to come.

I attach a recent press release outlining our vision and the progress made to date.

As a Parish Council, you play an important role in representing the interests, aspirations and wellbeing of your local community. We would be very interested to hear your thoughts on how Old Forde House might best support residents, community organisations and local initiatives across Teignbridge in the years ahead.

Our ambition is not simply to preserve an important historic building, but to bring it to life as a vibrant, accessible and sustainable community resource. We envisage Old Forde House providing opportunities for exhibitions, educational activities, heritage projects, community meetings, local events, volunteer initiatives, performances, talks and a wide range of activities that strengthen community life and celebrate the rich history and culture of our area.

We would be particularly grateful if you could share the attached information through your council's communication channels, including council meetings, newsletters, websites and social media platforms where appropriate. The website referred to in the press release provides several opportunities for individuals, community groups and organisations to register their interest, offer support and help shape the future use of the building.

Demonstrating strong and widespread community support is an essential part of building the case for community ownership. Every expression of interest helps demonstrate that Old Forde House has the potential to become a valuable asset for the whole district, providing social, educational, cultural and economic benefits while safeguarding an important part of our shared heritage.

I have observed that strong communities are built when local people are empowered to participate in shaping the places and institutions that matter to them. We believe Old Forde House has the potential to become exactly that kind of community-focused asset: a place that reflects local priorities, supports community activity and creates opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

We would welcome the opportunity to hear your views and explore how Parish Councils and local communities might contribute to developing a sustainable and inclusive future for Old Forde House.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation and for the important contribution your Council makes to community life across Teignbridge.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Stokes-Smith
Chair
Old Forde House Trust *(charity registration application in progress)*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE TO THE PRESS**

**13 November 26**

**K Stokes-Smith**

**office@wickestate.co.uk**

**Community Invited to Help Secure the Future of Old Forde House**

Residents of Newton Abbot and the surrounding area are being invited to play a part in securing the future of one of the town's most important historic buildings.

The Newton Abbot & District Civic Society has launched a new website for the proposed '**Friends of Old Forde House Preservation Trust'**, through which members of the public can register their interest in supporting the Trust should its bid to acquire Old Forde House from Teignbridge District Council prove successful.

The Society believes Old Forde House represents a unique opportunity to create a thriving centre for heritage, education, culture, wellbeing and community activity, ensuring that this important landmark remains at the heart of Newton Abbot life for generations to come.

The Society's President said:

*"We are making good progress with our bid and are encouraged by the level of interest we have received so far. Old Forde House is a remarkable historic asset, and we believe it has enormous potential to serve the community in new and exciting ways."*

*"Should our bid be successful, the Trust will need strong local support. We are therefore encouraging people to register their interest now. Whether as a volunteer, member, sponsor, patron, committee participant or simply as someone who wishes to enjoy and benefit from the activities and services offered, there will be opportunities for everyone to become involved."*

The proposed Trust anticipates developing a wide range of community-focused activities, helping to preserve the building's heritage while expanding its role as a centre for learning, creativity, community engagement and wellbeing.

The new website provides further information about the vision for Old Forde House and the various ways individuals, organisations and businesses may be able to help.

Anyone wishing to support the initiative is encouraged to visit:

**www.oldfordehouse.org**

*"This is a rare opportunity for local people to help shape the future of one of Newton Abbot's most treasured buildings. By registering your interest today, you can help demonstrate the strength of community support and contribute to a vision that will benefit future generations."*

**13.4 Correspondence received 17/11/2026**

Myself and many Dartmoor residents are very, very concerned, anxious and worried about Dartmoor being built on and developed.

Please, we sincerely DO NOT want this to happen at all, in any way.

I am asking you to please NOT support any development and building of Dartmoor.

My wife and I have recently moved to Dartmoor, our kids go to school on Dartmoor.

We specifically moved away from Exeter because the city has been utterly ruined.

Every single scrap of green area has been built on, housing estates everywhere.

Please, do not make this same mistake they have made in Exeter.

Maintaining our countryside spaces is much more important than any amount of money that can be gained in the short term by selling out to development projects.

**13.5 Correspondence received 18/11/26**

Dear Parish Clerk,

As part of our 75th anniversary of Dartmoor's designation as a National Park, we are looking to replace the forlorn wooden and plastic signpost at Cossick Cross, creating a new 'old-style' cast iron sign in its place, including Bridford and Blackingstone Rock as locations on the sign. I attach a photo of a signpost we recently restored in Peter Tavy Parish. If we are successful with our funding application in a few weeks, the new sign would be installed before April, contain the historic crossroad name and be more robust. It would be a unique landmark on the B3212 transmoor road. This is the location in question, as there are two signs at Cossick: B3212 – Google Maps.

It is also proposed to repair the signpost for Hingston Rock, which is missing its top finger.

It would be wonderful if the Parish Council could provide an email of support for this highway heritage initiative.

**Best wishes,**

Max Piper

**Recreation & Access Support Officer**

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Further Info: the deadline to have all the supporting documentation is 2nd December. Your email is great for us to have on record.

If you'd be happy to mention the project at the next Parish Council meeting, it may be worth asking councillors if they'd prefer one of the following for Cossick:

- Painting the post raven grey.
- Painting the post black and white stripe.







Raven grey is planned for other signs along the B3212, so it would fit with the theme.