



## Board Meeting (Agenda Item 6)

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**Date:** 29 May 2026

**Title:** Slapton Minor Road Improvement Programme

**Director:** Sean Anstee, Director of Operations

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) and confirmation under the provisions of the Constitution, before taking effect.

In order for this matter to be agreed, it requires the **majority of Constituent Council members** of the DTCCA (or their substitutes) present and voting at the meeting to be favour, **including** both Lead Members for the constituent councils.

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### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the CCA board approve the construction of tranche one of the Slapton Minor Road Improvement Programme passing places at a cost of up to £1,240,000; and
- 1.2 Delegates authority to the DTCCA Director of Operations, in consultation with the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport at Devon County Council, to make minor amendments to the Slapton Minor Road Improvement Programme, as required.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This report seeks approval from the DTCCA board to progress tranche 1 of the Slapton Minor Road Improvements Programme to construction.
  - 2.2 This report outlines the background to the scheme, including the increased urgency of the project due to storm damage to the A379 in February 2026. It also sets out the strategy for the delivery of the full scheme, detailing how prioritisation of routes in future tranches will be established.
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### 3. Background

#### Damage to the A379 Slapton Line

3.1 The A379 coastal road in South Hams runs along a bar of shingle at Slapton Sands beach, separating the sea from Slapton Ley; this stretch is referred to as the Slapton Line, see Figure 1. Slapton Ley is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is a National Nature Reserve.



Figure 1: Map showing the location of the Slapton Line and surrounding settlements

3.2 Due to the exposed nature of the coastal road, it is vulnerable to sea damage during storm conditions. In recent years, the A379 Slapton Line has sustained significant storm damage on three separate occasions;

- In 2001, a storm resulted in a section of the road being washed away. The road was repaired within a year, with a 300m section of the road retreated 20m to protect it from additional damage.
- In March 2018, Storm Emma caused significant damage to the A379 Slapton Line. 700m of the road was retreated with additional resilience measures also installed. The road reopened in October 2018.
- In February 2026, winter storms caused significant damage to the A379 Slapton Line resulting in an ongoing closure of the road.

#### Adaptation Strategy

3.3 In response to damage from the 2001 storms, the Slapton Line Partnership (SLP) was formed to promote a coordinated policy for managing coastal change in the area. The

partnership has members from Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, Strete Parish Council, Slapton Parish Council, Stokenham Parish Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, South Devon National Landscape, Wild Planet Trust and the Field Studies Council.

- 3.4 In 2019, the SLP published a 'Strategy for Adaptation' recognising that the Slapton Line will soon reach the end of its life, with no viable options for long-term maintenance or relocation. Allowing the natural movement of the shingle bank is expected to provide the best protection to Slapton Ley, slowing any breach of the bank.
- 3.5 A key element of the strategy is improving the inland road network, which provides the most direct alternative route to the A379 between Strete and Torcross. These routes are currently narrow, single-track lanes with infrequent passing places, making them prone to blockages and delays, particularly during the peak summer tourist months. This report proposes improving the inland road network, including additional and upgraded passing places and junction improvements.
- 3.6 Whilst the long-term future of the A379 Slapton Line is uncertain, improvements to the inland roads are essential to maintain connectivity for local communities and accommodate additional seasonal traffic, including larger vehicles such as caravans. It is important to note that improvements to the inland road network do not preclude maintenance and protective work happening on the Slapton Line, which is subject to suitable funding being obtained by the Local Highway Authority.
- 3.7 The progression of the minor road improvement programme will enhance the overall resilience of the local transport network providing significant benefits to the local communities, with these benefits still being realised in the event of the Slapton Line undergoing repair.

### **Minor Road Improvement Programme**

- 3.8 Improvements to the inland road network were identified by key routes that connect settlements, including the main roads (A381 and A3122), and were broken into 10 sections (see Figure 2).

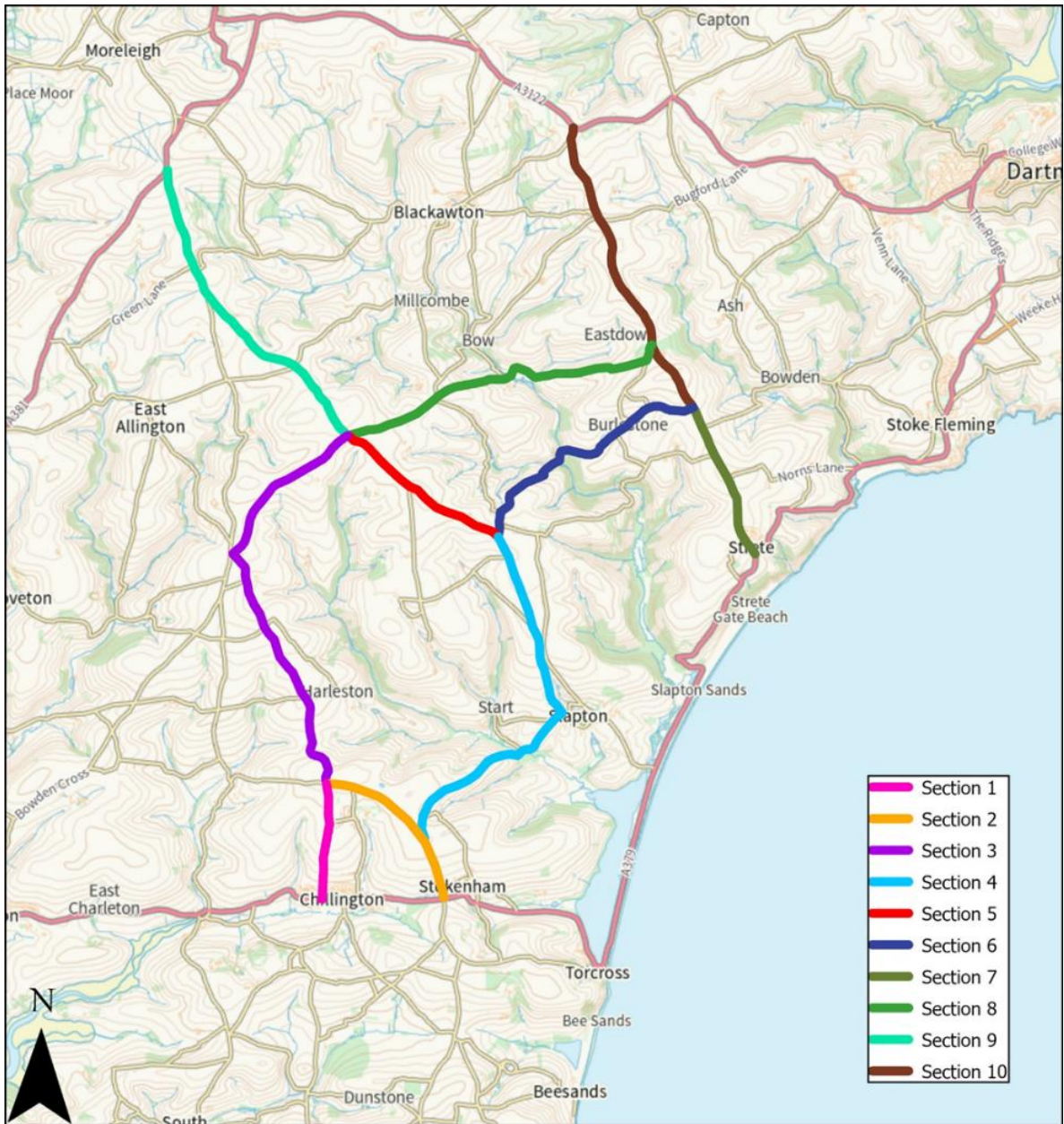


Figure 1: Map showing the 10 sections identified for improvement

3.9 Initial investigative work of all 10 sections identified locations where additional passing places could be provided based on road width, visibility and distance between existing passing places. 214 potential new passing places were identified, as shown in Figure 3.

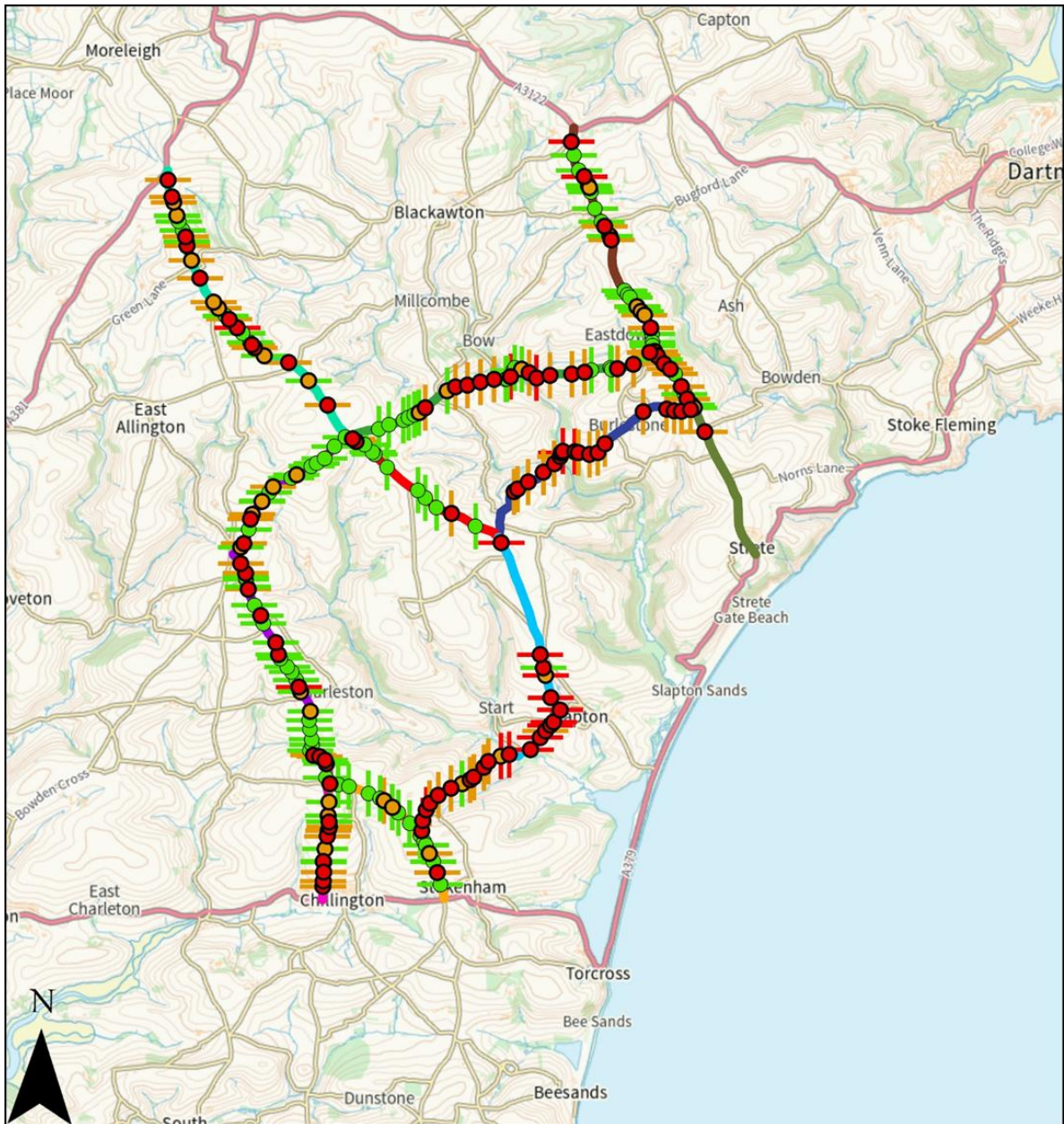


Figure 3: Map showing the location of potential additional passing places, including a priority and buildability rating

3.10 Each passing place in Figure 3 has been categorised by road width and the buildability of the passing place.

3.11 Road widths (coloured dots):

- Red – less than 4.9m wide and two vehicles cannot pass;
- Amber –less than 4.9m wide with hedgebank overrun;
- Green – narrow, but vehicles can pass with care.

3.12 Buildability rating (coloured bars):

- Red –significant challenges or risks (e.g. structural works required);
- Amber –some challenges or risks (e.g. ecological constraints, hedgerow relocation, utilities, land);
- Green – minimal constraints; unlikely to require major works.

3.13 Not all 214 potential passing places will be built, as there would be significant overlap between sites therefore reducing the benefits of each. Sites will be appraised by the design team, and the SLP working group will be consulted to identify the optimal locations, which will then be designed and progressed to construction, accounting for land and ecological constraints.

### Strategy for delivery of the Minor Road Improvement Programme

3.14 In collaboration with the SLP Inland Road working group (representatives from Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, and the parish councils), priority was given to the north-south routes linking Stokenham, Slapton and Strete to the A381. Therefore, sections 1, 3, 5, 9 and 10 form Tranche 1, as shown on Figure 4. The east-to-west routes would be a later priority.

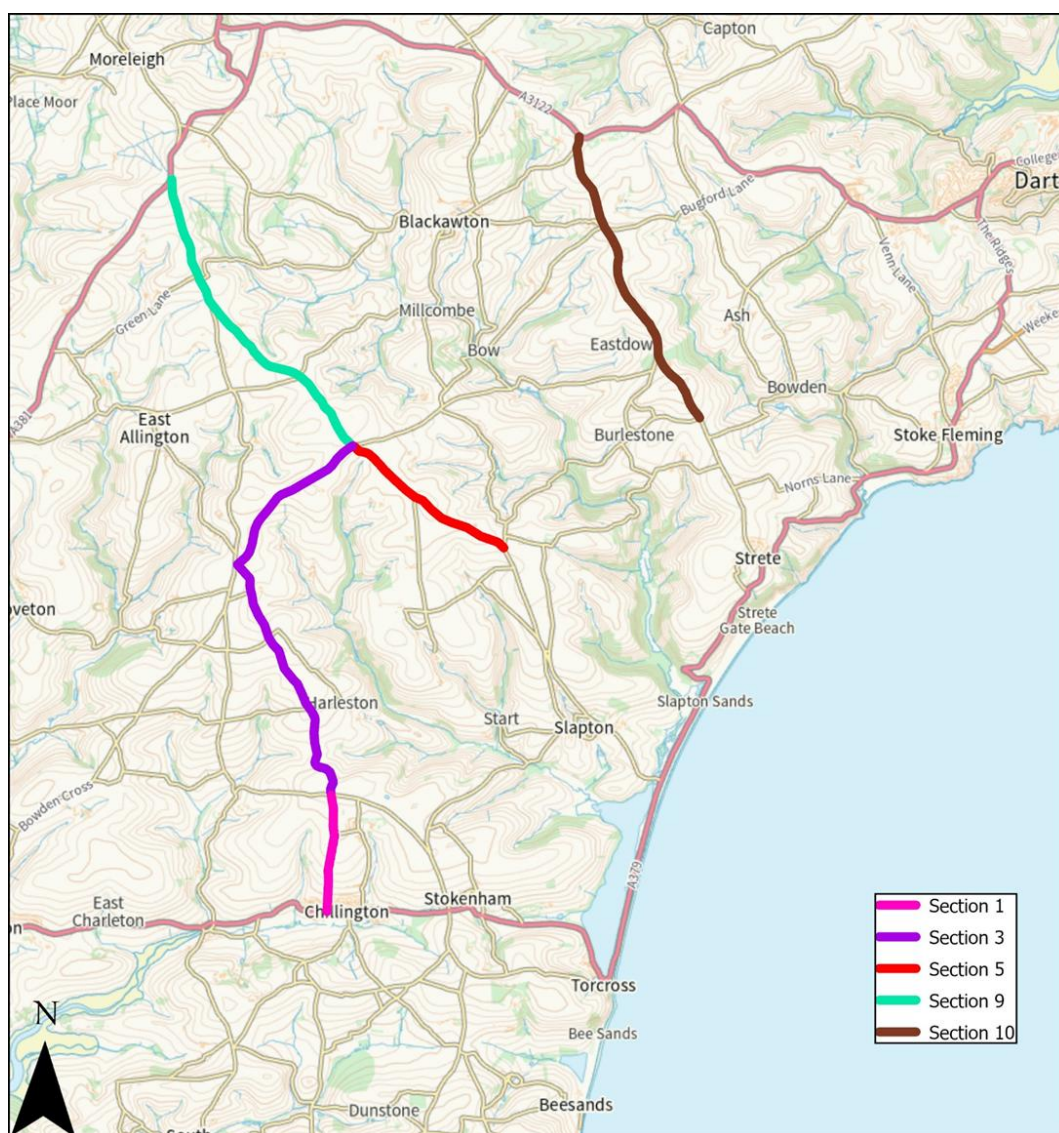


Figure 4: Sections within Tranche 1.

3.15 Figure 4 shows Tranche 1 having better road widths and buildability than the east-west routes. Targeting pinch points on the Tranche 1 routes will require fewer new passing places, enabling quicker, short term improvements.

- 3.16 It is anticipated that at least 30 new passing places will be created in the Tranche 1 works. The flexible approach to determining the exact location of the new passing places helps make best use of the available budget.
- 3.17 In parallel, DCC Highways have been asked to install additional signage, extending to the A381 north of Slapton, to direct traffic, especially large or towing vehicles, onto longer, A-road routes and away from the minor roads.
- 3.18 As road closures will be required to construct passing places, works will be delivered section by section under a single road closure to maximise efficiency.
- 3.19 More difficult sections will be completed in future tranches of the scheme, with priorities determined through the SLP Inland Road Working Group. The estimated cost of future tranches will be better understood following completion of tranche 1 works.

## 4. Options and alternatives

- 4.1 **Do nothing:** Not progressing the Slapton Minor Road Improvement scheme would further isolate already poorly connected communities. The ongoing closure of the A379 due to storm damage, and its uncertain future means that minor road network improvements are essential to avoid increased congestion and delays.
- 4.2 **Revised delivery strategy:** An alternative approach would prioritise the east-west routes, providing a more direct alternative to the closed section of the A379 (Section 4). However constraints along these sections require more passing places, many of which are rated 'red' for buildability and would increase the lead in time for construction. Individual passing places would deliver limited benefit, delaying overall improvements for the local community.

## 5. Financial considerations

- 5.1 The cost of work to develop the proposals in previous financial years totalled £68,482, which has been funded by Devon County Council.
- 5.2 The minor road improvement scheme has been allocated £1,000,000 in the FY2026/27 transport capital programme, funded using the DTCCA Local Transport Consolidated Funding Settlement. There is a requirement that this funding is spent before the end of the 2026/27 financial year.
- 5.3 Additionally, £240,000 of Devon County Council Corporate budget has been made available for the scheme. This funding does not have a spend deadline attached to it and so can be rolled into future financial years if required.
- 5.4 The cost of each passing place will be established during the detailed design stage. The number delivered in tranche 1 will then be determined accordingly, ensuring that the budget is not exceeded.

## 6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 To facilitate the construction of many of the new passing places, additional land will be required beyond the existing highway boundary. Negotiations with relevant land owners will

be undertaken on a case-by-case basis and is likely to seek extension of the existing highway boundary. In the event land cannot be acquired by negotiation, compulsory purchase powers may be utilised to secure the land required.

- 6.2 Where an Acquiring Authority is seeking to acquire land under the threat of compulsory purchase, then whether land is acquired by negotiation or through reliance on compulsory purchase powers, the Compulsory Purchase Compensation Framework applies. This is a detailed framework, and ensures affected landowners are fairly compensated with reference to market value, together with any other heads of claim that may be applicable, such as injurious affection. This ensures affected landowners are placed in an equal position as they would have been in if the scheme had not taken place.
- 6.3 A number of ecological laws and regulations are in place to protect local habitats in this area. The necessary ecological advice and surveys will be sought to ensure adherence to these regulations.

## **7. Environmental impact considerations**

- 7.1 Many proposed passing places will require cutting, removal and relocation of hedgerows to achieve sufficient road width. To mitigate impacts, ecology surveys are being undertaken at both sectional and site-specific levels, with findings informing detailed design and construction.
- 7.2 The passing places are expected to reduce tailpipe emissions by improving traffic flow and reducing idling and frequent reversing.

## **8. Equality considerations**

- 8.1 Where relevant, in coming to a decision the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
  - advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
  - foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding
- 8.2 in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). This Council also treats care experience as if it were a protected characteristic.
- 8.3 A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.
- 8.4 In progressing this particular scheme, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Board Members and also is available on Devon County Council's website at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/published>
- 8.5 Members will need to consider the Impact Assessment for the purposes of this item.

## 9. Engagement and consultation

- 9.1 Engagement is ongoing with the SLP and the Inland Road working group, along with the local Devon County Council Councillor. Discussions with the groups have enabled a prioritisation strategy to be developed.
- 9.2 This engagement will continue through regular meetings to ensure local priorities inform detailed design, construction phases, and future scheme sections.

## 10. Associated risks

- 10.1 The £1,000,000 allocated for inland road improvements must be spent by the end of the current financial year. The DfT may recover unspent Local Transport Consolidated Funding Settlement (LTCFS) funding, so failure to approve the recommendations would potentially limit the scheme's benefits.
- 10.2 Ecological constraint risks, particularly the likely requirement to relocate hedgerows, are being mitigated through early engagement with an ecology team.
- 10.3 Some additional passing places will also require land beyond the existing highway boundary, dependent on successful acquisition of third-party land.

## 11. Conclusion

- 11.1 This report seeks approval from the CCA board to progress Tranche 1 of the Slapton Minor Road Improvements Programme to construction.
- 11.2 With the Slapton Line closed and its future uncertain, improvements to the minor road network is essential to maintain connectivity for local communities and support the local economy. Significant investment in FY2026/2027 alongside a phased approach, will deliver early benefits for residents and visitors.
- 11.3 The programme demonstrates proactive collaboration with the local community to address connectivity challenges in this uncertain context.

### Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

None

### Contact for enquiries:

Name: Lewis Kiely, Transportation Planning Officer (DCC)

Email: [lewis.kiely@devon.gov.uk](mailto:lewis.kiely@devon.gov.uk)