

Good evening.

This year's annual Farmwise event, organised by Devon County Council, drew around 1,500 children from across the county. This, the sixth year for the event, gave a warm welcome to 7 year old Riley Chidgey from Willand School, near Cullompton, who is the 25,000th child to enjoy the Farmwise experience.

Riley and class friends joined children from 35 schools to roll their sleeves up and see farm animals, including lambs, piglets, newly hatched chicks, cows, goats and more, up close. They made fresh fruit smoothies, and turned milk into butter. They saw cows being milked, and how wheat is milled and oil pressed. They learned about composting and most importantly, where good food comes from.

Split into 12 zones – dairy, fruit, vegetables and more – the knowledge and expertise is delivered by Devon County Council tenant farmers and partner agencies. The children get lots of opportunities to be hands on with the activities, and to see things up close that they wouldn't usually get chance to see. Our committee would like children to think a bit about the food they eat, and where it comes from - the journey from field to fork.

Care providers across Devon are currently short of at least 150 home care workers, particularly in Exeter and South Devon and with demand for support rising it is getting more and more difficult to arrange the right personal care packages for everyone in the county that needs one.

The County Council has been working closely with local care providers to boost recruitment including through its nationally acclaimed Proud to Care campaign which has been adopted across the South west region. It has increased the rates they pay home care providers and negotiated guaranteed working hours and payment for travel time for care workers. Additional money has also been put in to boost the pay, conditions and training for frontline care workers.

It is also trying to improve the wider public perception of care as a potential career option – encouraging people to see it as being worthwhile, highly valued, and with good prospects for progression; and is working with schools and colleges to encourage more students to take up courses in social care. The Council is now calling on its communities to help and is asking local town and parish councils, community and voluntary groups and local volunteers within communities to help them spread the word.

For the third year running, children from schools across Devon will be walking, cycling and scooting their way to Lapland. Sixteen schools have signed up for this year's two week challenge, more than double that of last year.

Starting today, over 4,500 school children will be collecting 'leg miles' for every non-motorised journey they make to and from school in a bid to be the first to travel the 2,100 miles from Devon to Lapland.

Helen Morse, the Sustrans Travel Officers in Devon, said: "We're really pleased with the number of schools who have taken up the challenge this year. Winter is usually a time when people use their cars more, so the challenge provides a fun way to encourage everyone to travel to school in an active way and helps to reduce congestion around the school gates." Schools can also earn extra miles by taking part in activities during the school day and many are busy coming up with creative ideas to clock up the miles.

26 Ash dieback infected trees will be removed from alongside stretches of the North Devon Link Road this week. The trees are being removed as a safety precaution from eight sections of the road – fortunately we have not seen it yet here in Teignbridge but Officers assure me it will be here soon.

Finally, the Recycle Devon webpage now has its own reuse section, this is where all the information on the local groups, activities and resources are kept. <http://soc.devon.cc/5Xax6>

Did you know that Devon has possibly the only Reuse it directory in the country? This is a searchable directory to help you find local repairers, menders and hire places. If you know a business that isn't on there but you think it should be just let us know and we will update the directory.

Are you interested in finding your local repair café? Finding out more about upcycling? Or discovering your local reuse organisation? Then there is a page that covers it.

Not only all that, but you can find out more about clothes swishing including how to borrow the kit for free, you can find out about your local reuse shop at your recycling centre and find out all the ways you can buy, sell or give to reduce waste. There is even an environmental impact calculator!