

The South Devon Highway project is celebrating after winning a regional highways industry award. Devon County Council, Torbay Council and Galliford Try won the 'Large Transportation Project Award' at the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation awards held at the end of February.

The Awards – run by the UK's leading transportation professional institution - are intended to recognise the best projects in 2015. The projects were selected based on entrants having demonstrated excellence in the planning or engineering field within the highways and transportation industry.

The County Council has launched a £28.5 million scheme to widen and realign the road which connects Newton Abbot with the A38 at Drumbridges and is expected to go before the Development Management Committee later this year.

The improvements will support the housing and employment development included in Teignbridge District Council's adopted Local Plan, much of which will access the A382. The Jetty Marsh stage two link from the A382 to West Golds Way (near the Hospital), will be extended to reduce congestion at Churchill's roundabout. The plans also feature a shared pedestrian and cycle path, connecting to new facilities at Drumbridges and other routes into Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton, as well as a cycle/pedestrian bridge at Forches Cross.

The project will be delivered in three phases. The first phase includes new roundabouts at Forches Cross and Whitehills Cross, as well as widening of the route in between, the Jetty Marsh stage two link and associated pedestrian and cycle path improvements. Phase two would widen the road from Trago roundabout to Forches Cross, with footpath/cyclepath extending to Drumbridges, and a bridge across the A382 at Forches Cross. The final phase would widen the road south of Drumbridges and upgrade the Trago Mills roundabout.

Devon County Council is encouraging parents to take up the opportunity to have free child care for their two-year-olds. The Council provides funding to childcare and early years education providers for families in receipt of certain benefits so they can have a free place.

The Council says that many parents are unaware of the funding, or of the benefits that child care can provide, so the Council is writing to families who are eligible for the funding to offer them free childcare. 'Golden Tickets' are being posted to eligible parents next week, who can redeem their tickets in return for up to 15 hours a week child care during term time, or 570 hours free child care over the year, at approved day nurseries, school nurseries, child minders and pre-schools.

Devon County Council leader John Hart has "U" turned on plans to ask schools to pay for their own lollipop men and women after reviewing representations from across the county. The authority had planned to save £250,000 out of the service cost of £350,000 as part of its £26 million budget cuts for 2016/17. This meant that the patrols would go but the administrators who controlled them would stay!

Councillors were set to debate what measures could be put in place to improve road safety when the patrols were withdrawn at a scrutiny meeting two weeks ago, that was obviously dropped. However Lib Dems asked at Cabinet how Cllr Hart intends to pay for the service considering his comments that there was "simply no more money" only thirteen days previously – his answer was that it would come out of reserves! Considering the month ten budget figures that were considered later in the meeting where People Services were predicting an £8.8 million overspend those reserves will be pretty depleted by April. I also raised the issue that Place Services have a £1million underspend and yet our local engineers are constantly saying they have no more money for potholes, gully cleaning and more rural lengths.