

Devon County Council has successfully secured £140,000 of funding from the Department for Transport to provide Bikeability training for youngsters in the county by August. More than 7,400 children in Devon have taken part in Bikeability over the past year.

Since 2009, Devon County Council has successfully bid for more than £1.7 million to deliver cycle training in Devon. Schoolchildren who take part are given real cycling experience and skills to equip them to confidently deal with traffic on short journeys, such as cycling to school.

The County Council will be bidding to the DfT for over £1 million to deliver Bikeability from September 2016 to 2020. Devon will aim to train nearly 10,000 children in Devon in 2016/17.

Residents could win a cash prize by taking unwanted small electrical items like toasters and hairdryers to a recycling centre instead of throwing them away with their domestic waste. Just 30 per cent of all small electrical items in the UK are recycled. To enter all you have to do is take an unwanted item to the tip and you could be the lucky winner of one cash prize of £200 and five cash prizes of £25.

The prizes are sponsored by the Waste Electronic & Electrical Equipment (WEEE) Industry's Distributor Takeback Scheme. By keeping WEEE separate from other waste it can be treated, the hazardous substances can be removed and a large amount of waste can be recycled rather than sent for disposal.

Cabinet have now agreed its highway maintenance budgets for this financial year. The Council has received £38.785 million of funding from the Department for Transport for capital maintenance of its highway network – this is £22m less than last year!! The money will be used for structural repairs to road surfaces, retaining walls, bridges, and street lighting.

In addition, the separate revenue budget of £26.975 million was approved. The Highway Revenue Budget pays for reactive work like repairs to large potholes, winter and emergency events, cutting back vegetation, gully emptying and ditch cleaning.

Around £14.1 million is being invested in surface dressing and patching, £1 million for spray injection patching and £1.7 million is being allocated in pavement repairs, which includes a significant programme of slurry seal selected sites across the county

The new policy will now mean that lower classified roads - rural roads - will wait longer for potholes to be repaired. Currently, it should be 7 days now it will be 28 days. The definition of a defect is changing and the time allowed to carry out repairs on pavements is being stretched to 28 days, rather than the current limit of 7 days in most cases.

Of course, the impact on the NHS and care services of, for example, an elderly person tripping and falling and needing hospital care and support at home is not a factor that appears to have been taken into account.

Everyone who owns or looks after land of any size will be encouraged to sign a new Devon Pollinators' Pledge, being launched last week) by the Devon Local Nature Partnership. From window boxes, to gardens, allotments, orchards, parks and fields, the aim of the pledge is to encourage everyone to make practical changes where they can to enhance local biodiversity.

The Pledge will ask people to sign up to the following actions: to plant bee-friendly flowers that provide nectar and pollen throughout the year, to create and protect wild flower meadows, small or large, not to be too tidy and to let some areas grow wild, with dead wood and undisturbed structures

to provide shelters over winter and to avoid using pesticides wherever possible, or consider control methods and use pesticides only if absolutely necessary

As part of our concerns about pollinators a Lib Dem Motion was put to Council asking the Council to ban Neonicotoids on County land. I am pleased that the Cabinet have supported this and Thursday before last the farms Estate took the first steps in moves to ask tenants on our 10,000 acre estate to ban them as well.

Finally following the successes of the Council-supported FarmWise events at Westpoint, visitors to the County Show Children's Farm stand again had an opportunity to see where good food comes from.

Visitors to the stand, number 498 on the west side, were invited to roll their sleeves up and get stuck in to making butter and bread dough, milling wheat for flour, pressing apple juice and planting seeds. They'll see calves and lambs being fed, cows being milked, bread being baked, chicks hatching hopefully, ducklings and other chicks, as well as a special appearance from a farmer and his dog called Whisper.