

Rangers at Devon County Council's county parks are celebrating after receiving top awards. Visitors to the Grand Western Canal Park in Mid Devon and Stover Country Park have heaped praise on the countryside attractions, earning them both a Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor.

Stover Country Park is rated the number one place to visit in Newton Abbot, with nearly 200 visitors rating it as excellent or very good. Recent reviews have described the park, which is managed by Devon County Council, as "a hidden gem", with an "interesting visitors centre for young and old."

The Certificate of Excellence accounts for the quality, quantity and recency of reviews submitted by travellers on TripAdvisor over a 12-month period. To qualify, a business must maintain an overall TripAdvisor bubble rating of at least four out of five, have a minimum number of reviews and must have been listed on TripAdvisor for at least 12 months.

We have just held the third annual Community Transport Awareness Week across Devon. Community Transport group members, who are supported by the County Council, co-ordinated events for the awareness week which ran until Sunday 12 June. Newton Abbot Community Transport showcased the services they provide at Newton Abbot Clock Tower.

Following the allocation of a government grant proposals to carry out £1.9 million of work to prevent potholes on Devon's roads have been drawn up.

Devon County Council is preparing a programme of repairs using funding awarded from the Government's Pothole Action Fund earlier this year.

The allocation for Teignbridge South is £29,000 and I have already asked how this figure has been allocated when other areas such as Bovey Tracey have been allocated £39,000 and Bideford and Honiton each allocated over £90,000.

County Hall has invited Local members to discuss repair site proposals with their local highways officer and they will have the opportunity to propose alternative schemes within the allocated budget – sadly though last Friday no one has told our local engineers this good news!

You may think that much of our time is taken up with committees but the reality is that Task Groups are where our time goes – in-depth looks at particular aspects of the County Councils operations.

A report on School Exclusions has recently been published that I have been heavily involved with. It found that disadvantaged pupils, such as those from low income families or with Special Educational Needs and Disability, are over-represented among those excluded from schools. The reports wants to encourage schools to share good practice about ways to prevent exclusion as much as possible, including by providing better pastoral support systems and a more inclusive curriculum.

In preparing the report we spoke to both teachers and pupils in schools across Devon. Our report made a series of recommendations that have been accepted by the Council's Cabinet. Sadly though we were well aware that the responsibility for exclusions rests solely with the school Head Teacher. Children in Care are not included in this report because we specifically do not allow schools to exclude them.