Welcome to my September update. There has been a great deal going on across the district over the past few weeks and I have tried to highlight the items most likely to be of interest to parish councils, together with opportunities to get involved and have your say on future plans for Mid Devon.

This report isn't just about what's happening in our own parish. Increasingly, we're being encouraged to work together across Mid Devon, share ideas and learn from what's happening elsewhere. Some of the items included may not affect us directly today, but they could well do in the future, and there is often value in seeing how other communities are tackling similar challenges and making the most of new opportunities.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mid Devon District Council has welcomed the Government's decision to pause and review proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon. The review follows updated legal advice and will consider how local government reform fits with the Government's wider plans for devolution.

The District Council had previously raised concerns with the Secretary of State about the speed of the process and the limited opportunity for meaningful local involvement in decisions that could significantly affect community representation. Particular concern was expressed about protecting community identity and ensuring that rural areas continue to have a strong voice in local decision-making.

Council Leader David Wulff welcomed the pause, describing it as an opportunity to reassess the best way forward for Devon. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that any future arrangements preserve local democracy, provide sustainable funding for councils, and allow all communities, including rural areas, to benefit from future investment and economic growth.

The Council has indicated that it will continue to work with Government and local partners as discussions on devolution and local government reform develop.

National Planning Policy Framework Update

The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 17 August 2026, which will have a significant influence on how councils prepare Local Plans and determine planning applications. The changes place a stronger emphasis on plan-making, strategic planning across wider areas, housing delivery, economic growth, and action on both the climate and ecological emergencies

One important change is the introduction of national development management policies, which are expected to carry considerable weight in planning decisions. The new framework also reinforces the need for councils to adopt up-to-date Local Plans more quickly and sets out a greater role for Strategic Development Strategies to help coordinate growth, infrastructure and long-term planning across larger areas.

Of particular interest to Mid Devon is the continued focus on tackling climate change. The framework supports stronger policies on climate mitigation and adaptation, and there are opportunities through the new Local Plan to consider measures such as higher energy efficiency standards, net zero development, renewable energy generation and improved resilience to climate impacts.

You can read the revised NPPF here National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK

Plan Mid Devon Update

Work is underway on **Plan Mid Devon**, the new Local Plan that will guide future development across the district. Information is available on the Council website and the Let's Talk Mid Devon engagement hub.

The Council is working to the Government's new 30-month plan-making timetable, with **adoption currently scheduled for April 2029**. Key milestones include:

- **October 2026**: Publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment.
- **January to March 2027**: Consultation on proposed plan content and supporting evidence.
- **January to March 2028**: Consultation on the draft Local Plan.
- **September 2028**: Submission of the plan for independent examination.
- **April 2029**: Planned adoption of Plan Mid Devon.

There will be several opportunities for residents, businesses and parish councils to comment as the plan develops, and I would encourage anyone with an interest in Mid Devon's future to take part in the consultations.

Local Green Space Consultation – Opportunity for Parish Councils

You will find attached the **Plan Mid Devon Local Green Space Parish Consultation Package**, which has now been issued as part of the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, the new Local Plan covering 2026 to 2046.

This is an opportunity for parish and town councils to nominate additional green spaces that are particularly important to their communities for consideration as **Local Green Space** designation. The designation can provide additional protection for sites that are demonstrably special to local people.

A few key points:

- This is aimed at identifying **new Local Green Space nominations**. Existing designated Local Green Spaces do not need to be re-submitted.
- Not every valued open space will qualify. Sites must meet the national criteria and be shown to be significant to the local community.
- For each nomination, councils will need to provide a map showing the site boundary and supporting evidence explaining why the space is special and locally significant.

- The Council will assess all nominations before deciding whether any should be taken forward through the Local Plan process.

I understand that the consultation period has been extended, with the current closing date expected to be **7 January 2027**, giving parish and town councils additional time to consider potential nominations and gather supporting information.

If you are aware of green spaces that play an important role in the life of your community, I would encourage you to review the attached information and consider whether a nomination may be appropriate.

New Business Rates Relief for EV Charging Points

Businesses operating eligible electric vehicle (EV) charging point sites may be able to benefit from a new Government-funded Business Rates Relief scheme. The scheme offers **100% business rates relief until 31 March 2036**, with the possibility of relief being backdated to **1 April 2023** where qualifying conditions are met

The relief is intended to encourage investment in public EV charging infrastructure as part of the transition to lower-emission transport. Not every charging point will qualify. The scheme is generally aimed at dedicated EV charging sites that have their own Business Rates assessment and are operational and open to customers.

Mid Devon District Council is currently updating its arrangements for administering the scheme. Businesses seeking further information can contact the Council's Revenues team at **revenues@middevon.gov.uk** or speak to the Council for

Business rates: Electric Vehicle Charging Points Relief – local authority guidance - GOV.UK

Creative Communities Grants Now Available

Community groups, charities, businesses, event organisers, and town and parish councils are being encouraged to apply for funding through Mid Devon District Council's Creative Communities Grant Scheme.

The scheme offers grants of up to £5,000 for partnership projects and up to £1,000 for individual organisations to support tourism, arts, culture and heritage initiatives across Mid Devon. The aim is to help bring new life to towns and villages, celebrate local heritage, encourage visitors, and strengthen community connections.

Projects might include heritage events and trails, music and arts festivals, cultural celebrations, seasonal events, food festivals, or other creative activities that benefit the local community. Priority will be given to projects that can be delivered by 31 March 2027 and demonstrate a positive local impact.

The funding provides a valuable opportunity for local organisations to bring creative ideas to life while boosting community pride and attracting visitors.

Further details and application forms are available through Mid Devon District Council's Love Your Town Centre funding programme. Interested organisations can also contact funding@middevon.gov.uk for more information.

Free expert support for Devon businesses

On 14 September 2026, Devon County Council announced the launch of a new programme offering **free business support, mentoring and advice** to businesses, entrepreneurs and young people across Devon.

For businesses in Mid Devon, support is being delivered through the **Devon Business Support Programme**, which provides access to experienced business advisers and one-to-one guidance. Support is available for both start-ups and established businesses and can cover:

- Business growth and development
- Starting a business
- Funding and finance management
- Digital tools and productivity
- Marketing and sales
- Leadership and people management
- Sustainability and net zero initiatives

The programme is intended to help improve business growth, productivity and innovation across the county. Businesses from any sector, including farming and agricultural enterprises, are eligible to seek support.

The announcement also highlighted the **Festival of Business**, hosted by Devon County Council and the Federation of Small Businesses, bringing together more than 100 local businesses, speakers and support organisations to share advice and opportunities for growth.

As always, if there is anything in this report you would like to discuss, or if there are issues affecting your community that you feel I should be aware of, please do get in touch. I value hearing directly from parish councils, clerks and residents.

Cllr Gwen DuChesne
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