



## Leader of the Council

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
 Secretary of State  
 Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
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 London  
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27<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing as the Leaders of Councils in Devon representing over 795,000 people and 37,000 businesses to thank you for your vital support in the fight against Covid-19 and draw urgent attention to an £85.7 million shortfall in funding which threatens not only the financial stability of our local authorities but also the delivery of essential public services.

We stand together as “Team Devon” with our colleagues in Health, business leaders, community and voluntary sectors to deliver three key tasks you set on behalf of the Government in March 2020. As “Team Devon” we have stepped up to meet those tasks:

1) Supporting Adult Social Care (including hospital discharge) by;

- *Ensuring over £8 million of additional Government funding is providing rapid support to our residential and domiciliary care sectors, meeting the additional costs of PPE, paying for vacancies, providing extra nursing and social care staff as part of a joint response team*
- *Successfully reducing Covid-19 infections in care homes – Devon and Torbay have the lowest proportion of care homes with outbreaks in the South West, itself the lowest region in England – whilst maintaining the highest occupancy levels.*
- *Helping our acute hospitals to maintain a high level of bed capacity – average 50% -- as the pandemic progressed to a peak.*

2) Supporting the vulnerable to stay at home by;

- *Supporting over 34,000 medically vulnerable to stay at home*
- *Providing over £300,000 in grants to over 400 community organisations*
- *Creating a hardship fund of £1 million for economically vulnerable people*
- *Taking 270 rough sleepers off the streets and supporting homeless people*

### 3) Supporting the economy by;

- *Paying £290 million in Government business rate grants to over 18,000 businesses*
- *Delivering a Covid-19 business advice and support service via the Growth Hub on behalf of the Heart of the South West LEP*
- *Running an online careers fair in partnership with the LEP.*
- *Creating a joint Business and Economy Recovery Task Group -- working with business leaders and Government departments to develop a plan for recovery based on the three pillars of Restart, Regrow and Reset.*
- *Providing economic impact analysis and recommendations for the Government's Local Economies Advisory Panel*

All of this is being achieved while still maintaining essential non-Covid services in local government and health.

As we move into the next phase of the Covid response the role of "Team Devon" – working together without boundaries -- becomes ever more important.

Thanks to excellent teamwork our county has so far seen one of the lowest incidences of Covid-19 infection and death in the country and given our demographic profile we share the Government's determination to avoid a resurgence of Covid-19 cases. As "Team Devon" we will support the new test and trace service and develop and action a local outbreak control plan which will help to achieve the joint aims of 'saving lives and saving livelihoods'.

Major bedrock industries, tourism and hospitality, have locked down since the end of March. Our evidence shows the loss of the summer season will result in a massive £1 billion cut to the Devon economy. Effective local management of testing and tracing will be key to enabling our tourism industry re-opening with confidence, not a day too late nor a day too soon.

The backdrop to this is the significant number of economically vulnerable Devon communities and corresponding high levels of demand for local government support. The impacts of Covid-19 have seen 100% rises in Universal Credit claimants. We estimate more than 120,000 people are on furlough with a loss of personal income of £36 million.

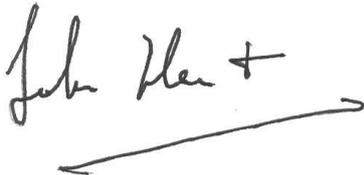
Devon has six local authority districts in the 25 areas of Britain that are most at risk according to RSA research while BEIS has also highlighted the Devon economy as 'red' rated in its own economic modelling. This picture serves to highlight the increased demand for our services and the vital role all tiers of local government (County, District, Town and Parish Councils) play in helping people and businesses to recover, at a time when council finances are fragile.

We have great opportunities that, with the right investment, can deliver a zero-carbon economy providing new, high value employment and give the Devon economy the best chance of bouncing back stronger.

To continue with this work, however, we need financial stability to overcome an £85.7 million shortfall across the County and District authorities. The financial sustainability of many core services provided by our districts and many of our larger town councils is reliant on fee income from, for example, car parking, licensing and planning which has been severely cut during the lockdown.

We therefore ask you to provide certainty that our shortfall in Devon will be met so that we can continue to protect lives, protect livelihoods and support the Government's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor John Hart**  
**Leader of Devon County Council**



**Councillor Ken Browne**  
**Chair of DALC**



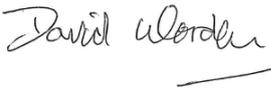
**Mark Williams**  
**Chief Executive of East Devon District Council**



**Councillor Phil Bialyk**  
**Leader of Exeter City Council**



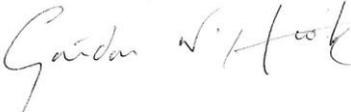
**Councillor Bob Deed**  
**Leader of Mid Devon District Council**



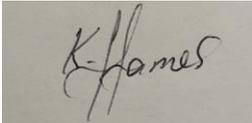
**Councillor David Worden**  
**Leader of North Devon District Council**



**Councillor Judy Pearce**  
**Leader of South Hams District Council**



**Councillor Gordon Hook**  
**Leader of Teignbridge District Council**



**Councillor Ken James**  
**Leader of Torridge District Council**



**Councillor Neil Jory**  
**Leader of West Devon Borough Council**