

# The Council Plan 2024-2028



South Hams  
District Council



# Introduction from the Leader

The South Hams is a unique and glorious place to live. It has a landscape second to none and vibrant towns and local communities that make it very special.

However, dig below the surface and there are worrying underlying trends and sources of concern. The serious lack of affordable housing and soaring rents are causing real hardship as well as damaging the local economy.

We have an ageing population with all the care and support needs that implies. There are pockets of real deprivation as well as issues of rural isolation and loneliness.

Our local infrastructure is inadequate and not serving the needs of communities or the local economy. The effects of climate change and biodiversity loss are already knocking at our door.



**Cllr Julian Brazil**

Leader  
South Hams District Council

I am pleased to be able to set out our plan for how we intend to deal with these fundamental issues and urgently work toward a realistic vision of the South Hams as a place with the best environment for people and for nature and which is resilient in the face of an increasingly uncertain future.

To deliver on our ambition, we have developed four key policy areas. These policy areas are not independent but, are designed to form part of a coherent programme and each policy will contribute to our climate change and biodiversity loss agenda. They will aid the building of sustainable, resilient communities across the South Hams.

We must be ambitious and driven. Rather than settle for being part of the pack, we should lead the pack; developing positive and ambitious policies that others can follow.

Of course, none of this can be achieved on our own. At the heart of The Council Plan, is the need to work in partnership with communities and to involve them in all aspects of the work of the Council and the journey ahead.



# Our priorities

We have four key focus areas for the next four years, with our ambitions around Climate and Biodiversity being a consideration through everything we do.

We also know that we cannot achieve these aims alone. Working with our communities, and where possible, supporting them to achieve their own local ambitions will also be an important consideration for the Council.







Working together to support the best environment for people, business and nature.



**Cllr John McKay**

Executive Member  
for Climate & Biodiversity

## Why Act?

**July 2023 – highest global air temperature since records began.**

**2020 Greenhouse Gas Emissions across South Hams – 745 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e.**

**15% of species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain.**



# Climate & Biodiversity

## Our Ambition

**There is a Climate Emergency** and while the South Hams contributes an insignificant amount to global warming, and the diffuse nature of local biodiversity loss will mean it has a very small overall effect, we have a duty to contribute to the huge challenge of Global Climate Change and to take real action now. There is an opportunity to show what can be done and have a much wider effect. The South Hams can, and should, strive to become an exemplar for what can be achieved.

Beyond doing what we can to drive down emissions, we must accept that climate change is already happening and we need to have in place a quantified strategy for adapting to changing conditions.

The Council is already starting to do a great deal with the funding it has received through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, including supporting agricultural diversification and schemes to adapt the marine economy and we need to build on this. There is however a desperate need for further help from central government in terms of both funding and legislation. We will use our influence to lobby central government directly, working with other Local Authorities and organisations such as the Local Government Association to address this.

**Where possible, aligning objectives with other organisations, such as the South Devon National Landscape, the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Devon Carbon Emergency Response team and others, we will be able to amplify the effectiveness of the funding available.**

## Our Key Partners and networks



Sustainable South Hams

Climate Experts Panel

Community energy groups

South Devon National Landscape

Businesses

## Our Primary Aims

1. Striving to achieve the necessary 12% per year reduction in eCO2 emissions across the South Hams with a 40% reduction in 4 years.
2. Target a 5.5% per year increase in biodiversity in the South Hams with a 20% increase in 4 years.
3. To form an adaption plan for the South Hams so there is a pathway to deal with the consequences of climate change.
4. To make the South Hams an exemplar for other local authority areas by showing what can be achieved.

## Our Initial Actions

- Form a Climate & Biodiversity Experts' Advisory Panel.
- Implement Project Assessment tool to consider environmental and social impacts.
- Continue to fund Sustainable South Hams.
- Launch a thermal imaging camera lending scheme.
- Hold a Climate & Biodiversity Assembly.
- Promote the action taken across the South Hams to tackle the climate emergency – tell the story.
- Carry out feasibility studies on viable council car parks for solar canopies.
- Increase tree planting in urban areas, extend and improve our woodland and protect wildlife habitats.
- Set up a Councillor Environmental Fund to support community action.
- Work with a community energy group to increase availability of community owned energy within the District.
- Deliver schemes to reduce the impact of our ferry and harbour operations.



**Cllr Denise O'Callaghan**

Executive Member  
for Housing

## Why Act?

**Average House Price  
12.8 x Average Income.**

**3,895 second homes.**

**1,585 applicants on  
housing waiting list.**



## Housing

### Our Ambition

Providing good quality, genuinely affordable housing is a top priority for the Council. We understand the challenges for our residents languishing on housing waiting lists because of high demand and high prices. There are plenty of houses being built across the District, but not enough of them that locals can afford.

We'll be looking to make the best use of existing housing. Through grants, we have already begun upgrading the energy efficiency in homes for people on low incomes, and helped long-term landlords improve insulation and draught proofing – but we can, and will, do more. In one of the richest countries in the world, people should have a basic right to damp and mould-free homes, in reasonable repair, and the right to redress if they don't.

In the private rental market, prices are soaring, exacerbated by rising mortgage rates, with this shortage made worse by landlords switching to more lucrative short term holiday lets.

There are already 3,895 second homes in the District and only 3,450 units of social housing – this in itself tells a story of the challenges being faced.

**We will work with our Registered Provider partners and communities to get genuinely affordable housing built while supporting our most vulnerable residents find a home they can call their own, and wherever possible prevent homelessness.**





## Our Key Partners and networks

Registered Providers  
i.e. LiveWest etc.

Private Landlords

Devon County Council

## Our Primary Aims

1. Take action to ensure a good mix of the right houses, in the right places to meet the needs of residents, with a focus on affordable social housing.
2. Tackle damp and disrepair in rented properties.
3. Make sure that all new housing developments are carbon neutral as far as possible.
4. Support the housing needs of our most vulnerable residents

## Our Initial Actions

- Support communities, and encourage Town and Parish Councils and landowners (such as farmers) to bring forward affordable housing schemes through Community Land Trusts and partnerships with other providers or charities.
- Review existing capital programme to ensure construction or purchase of council owned or housing association homes is a key part of capital spending.
- Invest in suitable property in our towns and villages to provide affordable and social rented accommodation.
- Mandate affordable and social housing as a high proportion of all new developments (Joint Local Plan (JLP) review process) and for all new homes to be primary residence only.
- Delivery of specialist accommodation and adaptations for older / or disabled residents to remain in their communities.
- Explore options for all new developments to be connected to nearest town or village by cycle routes or other means of carbon efficient transport.
- Implement holiday and second home double Council Tax as soon as we can.
- Deliver good quality temporary accommodation by accessing opportunities for grant funding (such as Local Authority Housing Fund).



**Cllr John Birch**  
Executive Member  
for Economy & Jobs

## Why Act?

**Supporting our 8,000 local businesses to flourish will help our residents to meet their career aspirations.**

**Our innovative businesses can lead the UK on crucial developments in decarbonisation, food resilience and the future of eco-tourism.**

## Economy and Jobs

### Our Ambition

We are fortunate to have five vibrant towns in the South Hams along with a number of smaller but equally important community centres such as Modbury and South Brent.

Our ambition is to transform the South Hams economy into one which leads the way in business decarbonisation, the development of future green energy solutions, and where clean business growth is nurtured and supported. Our business community will play a significant role in meeting future food resilience in the UK, and growth within key sectors including marine, hospitality and agriculture will have a positive impact on local ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change.

We will work with the existing Plymouth and South Devon Freeport to ensure that it delivers inward investment, business growth and high-quality job opportunities to the benefit of South Hams' residents.

We will create a collaborative environment with our business community, empowering them to shape local economic policies, and Council activities including business grants and support programmes.

The Council is delivering a number of projects that directly support the economy; our UK Shared Prosperity Programme will provide targeted support for a number of important sectors including agricultural schemes such as regenerative farming, local food and drink distribution projects and a greener marine economy.

**We aim, with businesses and partner organisations, to support a thriving, resilient economy that will lead on innovative solutions to national issues and provide residents with the opportunities to meet their aspirations.**

## Our Key Partners and networks



Devon County, Plymouth City and the Town and Parish Councils

Local Chambers of Commerce and other business led groups

Specialist business support providers

## Our Primary Aims

1. Support our high streets and businesses to adapt for future demands.
2. Create an environment in which businesses in all sectors can innovate.
3. Champion for local infrastructure (including broadband) to support economic growth.
4. Further develop our active travel network to sustainably connect our communities.
5. Leverage the strength of partner organisations to develop the skills of our residents.
6. Maximise the opportunities of the Freeport and the business it brings to our area.

## Our Initial Actions

- Help to transform the South Hams into an exemplar green sustainable economy.
- Develop a South Hams business forum, and support local business partnerships to strengthen the Council's understanding of local business needs through continued engagement.
- Ensure that the Council's capital programme and investment strategies focus on investment in local community projects and business opportunities.
- Bring additional funding into the area to increase support and deliver crucial infrastructure.
- Provide bespoke support to business start-ups, growing businesses and inward investors.
- Continue to operate and increase our portfolio of business units.
- Deliver our programme of UK Shared Prosperity activities including -
  - Regenerative Farming Project;
  - Decarbonisation Plans;
  - Agri-Tech Adoption Project;
  - Food and Drink Distribution Projects;
  - Marine Economy schemes.



**Cllr Victor Abbott**  
Executive Member  
for Community Services

## What we deliver

### Community Services include:-

- Public Spaces
- Waste and Recycling
- Grounds Maintenance
- Tree inspections
- Leisure Centres
- Car Parks
- Public Toilets

and many more!



## Community Services

### Our Ambition

There are many frontline council services which improve the lives of our residents and enhance public spaces. We will make sure we have the right staff, with the right tools and skills to deliver frontline services that our residents will value.

We will directly support our communities by carrying out playground checks, taking steps to discourage littering and fly-tips and carrying out environmental health checks. Our Grounds Maintenance and Property Services Teams will make sure that the parks, open spaces and buildings we own or look after, are maintained to a high standard. We'll also offer our services to our town and parish councils to do the same. At the same time, we will inspect, manage and protect more trees.

Our car parks are important for residents and visitors, from shopping in our town centres, to leisure visits to the coast. We'll work with town and parish councils to make sure we strike the right balance of cost to park while ensuring we can invest in improvements.

We know that our residents are concerned about the environment. Through our own frontline services we will make sure we do all we can to respond to these concerns including taking action to protect trees in our area. We'll also contribute to our efforts on mitigating climate change by exploring from above-car park solar panels and working with our leisure facilities provider (Fusion) to address energy use while also forming a part of our multi-faceted approach to better living.

**By delivering effective frontline services, we will take steps to address our climate impact while also enhancing the wellbeing of communities across the District.**





## Our Key Partners and networks

Town and Parish Councils

Fusion Leisure

Voluntary sector organisations

## Our Primary Aims

1. Provide good quality responsive frontline services that represent good value for money for our communities.
2. Take steps to safeguard community assets for the people of South Hams.
3. Support local leisure and community facilities and promote the development of cycle routes and open spaces.

## Our Initial Actions

- Review our resident-facing frontline services to make sure they are aligned to our priorities for the District.
- Support our communities to maintain and where possible enhance the everyday facilities within the community.
- Refresh our Equality Impact Assessments when making decisions about community facilities, making sure all policies and processes are fair and do not present barriers, particularly to those with access challenges
- Develop a plan to safeguard community assets for the future.
- Work with our leisure centre provider and community groups to promote active involvement in outdoor spaces.
- Enhance our green spaces and improve street sweeping and litter picking.
- Roll out the full Kerbside recycling and food waste service across the District so that all 45,000 households in the District can reduce their non-recyclable waste and increase recycling.



**Cllr Dan Thomas**

Deputy Leader & Lead Member for  
Planning and Enforcement Services



**Cllr Jacqi Hodgson**

Executive Member for  
Community Composting and  
Chair of Waste Working Group



**Cllr Nicky Hopwood**

Executive Member for  
Customer Experience  
and Information  
Technology



## Good Quality Core Services

### Our Ambition

As well as delivering our ambitions around climate, housing, economy, and frontline community services, we need to ensure that all our services, in particular those that are delivered to all households and every community, are delivered efficiently and to a good standard.

Our waste and recycling service is one which must be delivered well, and we are committed to making sure this happens. But we want to go further by taking a lead in encouraging residents to use less in the first place, and by supporting community compost schemes and other initiatives which support recycling and biodiversity, and divert waste from incineration at the energy from waste plant.

Our planning and enforcement service is incredibly important to protecting the character of the District but also enabling delivery of homes that are energy efficient and meet the needs of our residents. So, we will drive forward our plans to speed up and improve the planning process.

**We will also continue to focus on improving customer access across our services, from enhancing and simplifying our online access while also making sure that those residents who cannot do it online are able to get the bespoke support they need.**

## Our Primary Aims

1. Make sure all residents can access the services they need easily, however they chose to do so.
2. To get things right the first time and respond.
3. To enhance services such as planning, enforcement and waste & recycling (including support for community composting).

## Our Initial Actions

- Improve communication with applicants and the overall speed of planning decisions, supported by the delivery of a new online planning system.
- Develop plans to increase responsiveness of enforcement action to provide better outcomes for communities.
- Deliver on our organisational development plan which focuses on making sure we have the right skills, tools and organisational culture to meet the needs of our residents.
- Review all customer contact routes to guarantee consistency for our customers including delivery of new website.
- Make sure that our communications are clear and that residents are kept informed of important information and proposed changes that could impact them.
- Plan how we can assess the impact that our service and policy decisions have on the environment and on our communities.
- Promote community composting to communities as a way of encouraging local action in response of the Climate and Biodiversity crisis and increasing volunteering across the District.



## ... underpinned by

### **Financial Sustainability**

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Our financial sustainability is important to ensuring that we can deliver our priorities and good quality services to our residents. For many years local councils have received single year finance settlements. We will continue to lobby government for longer term certainty of our budgets, allowing us to make longer term plans.

### **Good Governance**

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We will make sure that we have a robust governance framework, improve scrutiny of council decision making, and that we shape our policies and strategies in consultation with our communities and key stakeholders – including transparency.

### **Community Development**

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We know that we cannot deliver a better future for South Hams alone. Our communities and the voluntary sector play a critical part in this. We will work with them and where we can, support them to deliver projects and schemes that will enhance the area for us all. We will also ensure that we invest in our own staff, making sure that they are equipped with the right skills and tools to provide responsive services.



# Our contribution to a global blueprint

Adopted by the United Nations Members States in 2015, the sustainable development goals provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and into the future.

They are an urgent call to action by all countries, recognising that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. This plan directly contributes to 11 of the 17 goals as highlighted throughout the document.



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**

South Hams District Council supports the Sustainable Development Goals

**Want to know more?**  
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



South Hams  
District Council

[www.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.southhams.gov.uk)