

District Councillor Chris Wheatley Report to Merton Parish Council 12th January 2026

I would like to start with wishing everybody in our ward a Happy New Year! The third Taw and Torridge River Champions (TTRC) meeting took place on Saturday 10th January from 10am at the Lib Dem office at Chigwell Street where we undertook our next dipping session at Kenwith Stream. Phosphates, Turbidity (measure of cloudiness in water), and water Temperature were taken and recorded on our database. Our Plan is to make the water quality test results more available to the public.

Those people interested in taking part please contact us via our website on Facebook at (Taw and Torridge River Champions) or join us at our next meeting in February. We are now a formally constituted group working with the North Devon Biosphere to connect communities' streams and tributaries across the Taw and Torridge catchment area. I have also been appointed as part of the Scrutiny Committee. A few of us me included have been trained up to perform water quality tests. Its envisaged that Katy Lee from Biosphere Communities shall visit some of the Parishes in Shebbear and Langtree Ward to provide a presentation about our activities and objectives moving forward!

Another ongoing issue which has been ongoing for a long time now is recycle vehicle spillages. This has continued to happen around some of the lanes particularly along hedge and roadsides in Petrockstowe, Newton St Petrock and Merton. I am pleased to announce with the advent of the new Operation Centre will be delivered and completed by the end of this month which certainly will improve the working conditions for the Waste and Recycling Team and we are continuing to monitor the situation too see improvements and please contact me if there are future spillages. Merton is being monitored so please get back to me with any recent spillages.

Torridge District Council Projects

Moving forward to the New Year and even allowing for LGR (Local Government Reorganisation) there is much to do in Torridge! There are many positive projects ongoing including the AIC (Appledore Innovation Centre) with the prospect of bringing jobs and investment by the end of this year. The Community Regeneration Fund Projects which Torridge Council is the delivery agent for Hatchmoor Industrial Estate in Torrington due for completion in March 2027. The Pannier Market in Bideford and Westward Housing Improvements are ongoing with the Council acting as a facilitator. Holsworthy Agri-Cultural-Business Centre now with Councils go ahead with a target completion date of March 2028, and the land surrounding the cattle Market in Holsworthy.

Full Council in December 2025

TTVS (Taw and Torridge Voluntary Service) requested a one of payment of £33,000 to tie them and it was decided by Council members to refer this to MBWG (Members Budget Working Group) to decide to recommend the payment or not. Many councillors have already supported TTVS and realise the great work they do for the community.

Council received an update reference the Brunswick Wharf Development in Bideford East of the Water from Simon Friend - Developer and said there has been much preparation work ongoing including the temporary flood defence in last two weeks. Main contract is due to start not until Autumn 2027 for phase 1. The delay is caused by Planning section 73 for minor amendments.

North Devon Place Story was presented to Council and to be adopted evoking a narrative on the culture, history, challenges, and aspirations for our area working with North Devon Futures Partnership, North Devon Councils and Torridge to help potential opportunities and the areas' identity. It was highlighted in Novembers council meeting that agriculture has an important role to play in our Place Story.

Other Agenda items:-

Appointment of a new Lead Member

Appointment of Chief Officer

Review of Treasury Management

Report on Council Tax Bands