

District Councillor Wheatley Report

Torrridge District Council - Councillors attended a Member Briefing Meeting with XLinks recently on 22nd June 2026 where we first became aware of XLinks proposed Torrington AI Data Centre/Campus and storage.

In Torrington we received an update letter from XLinks regarding the AI Data Centre/Campus. XLinks have stated that the consultation has been extended however no new dates for the drop-in days yet. A petition has gained 24.500+ signatures already. The PIDS (Public Information days) has been put back to allow more time. It is envisaged that XLinks are to submit their Planning Applications in the New Year for the data centre and battery BESS storage. The potential sheer size is huge, and it could mean that it would be the tenth largest Bess Project in the World and the largest in Europe using 1.8GW with 2700 containers of batteries.

BESS - 47 football pitches in size

Data Centre - 235 football pitches in size

Productive Farmland and an ecological paradise lost.

There are many more questions to be answered along with details regarding the Data Centre and Storage. The potential sheer size and other factors are of concern including excessive water usage, noise, light, security, electric/energy consumption, environmental and fire risks.

The Devon Parish Pothole Handbook from Devon County Council has just become available and will bring with me your handbooks tomorrow evening. I would like to ask the Parish to consider and subscribe to the DCC Road Warden Scheme to equip, train and insure small volunteer teams. The Pothole Handbook is comprehensive and covers other areas including reporting issues with Grit bins, overgrown vegetation, public rights of way, Broken inspection covers, Debris or obstructions, Bridges and retaining walls, Flooding, drainage issues. There are QR Codes in the handbook with quick access to the topic you require i.e. using a smart phone.

Reporting Potholes is categorised as **Defect Potholes** - Highways FIX THESE minimum 40 mm deep and minimum 300mm in length with a vertical edge after being reported where each report is allocated a reference number and an Inspector is sent to the location and determine its one for DCC to fix it and the speed of the fix is determined by the safety risk of causing an immediate accident. Add your name to the defective Pothole and don't report it again as this will generate a new reference number and confuse the process. See page 2 in handbook.

Non-defect Potholes - should be reported to your Parish Council and the Clerk records the Reports on the Parish and full Agenda item and used to update the Parish Priorities List. Road Warden minimum 40mm and minimum of 400mm in length with a sloping edge. This could be a pin board inviting Parishioners to locate potholes on a map- DCC.

The Parish Road Wardens will undergo training and provided with necessary materials. Parish Road Wardens may not carry out the work yet is responsible for coordinating the works that take place. and can have a small team of volunteers who carry out the Works who also must undergo training and qualification requirements.

See also enhanced Road Warden Scheme, Paid Parish Lengthman and Pothole Ninjas.

There are many Parishes in Devon already have a Road Warden Scheme.

EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

I recently attended the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting where we discussed the Chairman's Report regarding reinstating of the Bideford to railway link to Exeter and beyond via Barnstaple. It was agreed and voted for the following will be presented to Full Council to take the following steps.

1 - TDC should concentrate efforts to improve connectivity by looking at cheaper and more immediate measures such as a fast coach service linking Bedford and Tiverton Parkway railway station and/or London as proposed with the Bideford Regeneration Plan

2- TDC should develop a comprehensive more Active Travel network providing greater opportunities for cyclists and walkers to access the centre of Bideford from the various new developments around the Town and surrounding communities such as Northam and Westward Ho.

3 -TDC should prioritise looking to improve public transport links between Bideford and other Towns, villages, and rural communities within the District.

4- Although rails travel is greener than car travel to Exeter improving facilities locally would be better for the environment and local economy.

Water Safety - We received a Presentation from Mike Day Northam Burrows Manager and Lead Ranger and Matt Whitley Lead Lifeguard Supervisor North Devon and Somerset. With the unfortunate loss of lives mostly younger people recently in drowning incidents this was particularly prevalent at this time. We discussed and learnt about Active Torridge currently have 20 schools get delivered the Swim England Swimming Program that currently helps primary children. There is also an Ocean Academy Learn to Swim programme where water safety is embedded across each stage of swimming lessons and Active Torridge ensures every swimmer develops confidence and practical safety.

Active Torridge also delivers a Rookie Lifeguard programme offering an introduction to lifesaving and rescue techniques.

Active Torridge currently has 2 employees at Torrington swimming pool who have completed both full Ocean Academy learn to swim programme and Rookie Lifeguard programme and have up skilled to now become fully qualified Lifeguards for Active Torridge.