

## Welcome to our April 2026 Newsletter

*Our village* community is blessed with lots of groups, societies and organisations that rely on the commitment and hard work of volunteers to keep them going. The fact that we have such volunteers is a sign of a healthy and caring community. Organisations like the Village Hall Trustees, Speedwatch, The PTFA, West Hill Wasps, the producers and distributors of The Messenger, the Parish Council and the posties who deliver this Newsletter as well as all those who keep the village societies going are making a great contribution to the wellbeing of our village.

There comes a time however when people who have been carrying out this valuable work need to stand down and seek like-minded people to replace them. We have been so fortunate to have had the benefit of their time and effort that we risk taking them for granted and we discover just how important it is to fill the void they leave.

In this edition of the newsletter, you will read about changes within the Village Hall Trustees. The core group of elected Trustees have been in office for many years and have done a magnificent job for the village in providing the wonderful facilities of the Village Hall that are widely used by the community. Those Trustees understandably have earned a rest from this and are seeking a new generation of Trustees to step forward and continue this valuable work. The Village Hall is so very important to this village and without the Trustees it simply could not continue to operate. If you are prepared to devote a little time and use your skills and knowledge for the benefit of the community please consider volunteering for this important role and make a big contribution to the well-being of our village.

*Cllr Francis Pullman*, Chairman

### *In this issue:*

- **Latest Parish Council news**
- **Road Safety news**
- **Design Codes for West Hill?**
- **West Hill Village Hall – the future?**
- **The mysterious case of the “litter” bins**

## West Hill Defibrillator Scheme

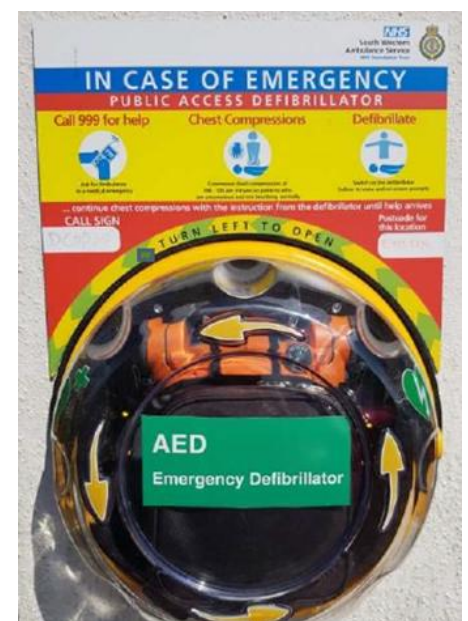
The Parish Council is pleased to announce the continued provision of **community public access defibrillators (defibs) in West Hill** for a further four years. The defibrillators are provided in conjunction with South West Ambulance Service Trust. The defibs are located at:

### **RBL Clubhouse, School Lane and 11 Eastfield**

The defibrillators are for public use. In the event of an emergency please arrange for someone to collect the device. There's no need to seek permission. If someone calls 999 for an ambulance and the call handler thinks that a defib could help and they may advise for someone to collect a defib.

There is also a defib at the Village Hall provided by the Village Hall Trustees.

On behalf of residents, we thank the West Hill Defib Guardians for their continued support.



## Parish Council News.....

**Recent changes to the Parish Council team:** West Hill Parish Council now has 5 Councillors (and two remaining vacancies). Cllrs Ben Jewell and Mike Owen have joined our team and will be working together as the Road Safety Working Group. Cllr Jewell is also taking the lead on Operation Christmas Tree 2026. Please check our website and on our noticeboard outside Morrisons for their contact details. The Council would like to thank Trevor Ingram who has resigned due to family commitments.

If you're interested in joining our Councillor team please contact our Parish Clerk or any Councillor for more information.



Cllr Ben Jewell



Cllr Mike Owen

Our **new pedestrian entrance** onto the Village Hall site has proved very popular. The Council's project has achieved its aims as journeys to school and the village hall are now shorter and safer for many residents. Plus, some residents have chosen to leave the car at home. Great news! We're also pleased to report that the final inspection of the changes to West Hill Road has been completed and Devon County Council will take ownership of the road markings and warning signs.



**Improved access to the children's playpark.** A new tarmac path now makes it easier for anyone pushing a child's buggy or with impaired mobility to get to the playpark. We hear that younger playpark users are having great fun opening the new gates!

**West Hill Children's Playpark** is a popular attraction for lots of our village children especially after school when it gets very busy. It's good to see children enjoying themselves in the fresh air and our playpark is a great way to achieve this.

But the playpark is not all fun and games – there is a serious side to it.

It is obviously important to keep a playpark well maintained and safe for the children to use. In order to ensure that this happens there is a strict inspection regime that involves our own Parish Council, East Devon District Council (monthly) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (annually). One of our Councillors – Cllr Ann Cooper has recently completed a detailed training course to become a fully qualified and certified Playpark Inspector. The weekly inspections are diligently carried out by WHPC and check the safety of the equipment. This includes measuring the amount of wear on the chains supporting the swings, checking for rust or rotting wood on the equipment and checking the whole area for potential hazards.

The inspections not only help to maintain high safety standards but they also provide valuable information to develop plans for replacement of equipment which may be coming to the end of its useful life. This in turn is helping to develop a strategy for the long term future of the area.

Parents watching their children play in the playpark can rest assured that behind the scenes there is a very serious and well-structured programme of inspection, maintenance and future planning to protect the children today and provide for further enjoyment into the future. Cllr Cooper with her well-earned qualification will be watching over it with an eagle eye!



## The Parish Council and Road Safety



Your responses to the 2025 Neighbourhood Plan community survey included a number of ideas, concerns and suggestions for improved road safety in the village. These issues are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan but are clearly of concern to residents. Many of the issues are long-standing concerns but residents also raised over the increasing development, primarily in Ottery St Mary, and the use of the village as a “rat run”. Your survey responses included .....

- In general terms the 20 MPH speed limit in the village was favoured; call for increased traffic calming on the B3180, Bendarroch and West Hill Roads; concerns road maintenance and overgrown hedges. Widespread support for car parking in the centre of the village most commonly used for the store, Village Hall and school; concern over the lack of connectivity, safe walking and safe cycling routes within the village and the need for a safe walking and cycle route to Ottery Saint Mary.
- There are clearly differing views over the need for increased street lighting and pavements. Some residents would like more for safety considerations whereas others wish to continue to keep the village character by avoiding excessive urbanisation such as traffic lights, excessive pavements and street lighting.

Since its creation in 2017 the Parish Council has sought to address road safety concerns:

- In 2019 the Council commissioned a Traffic Study for West Hill. This identified a number of traffic calming measures including traffic gateways, rumble strips and earlier notification of the 20 MPH signs. The theme of the report was to encourage drivers to drive more slowly and steadily within the village boundary. The scheme, chosen by the community, to create a pedestrian link between West Hill Road and the Village Hall/School was delivered by the Parish Council in 2025.
- Vehicle Activated Signs have been installed to remind speeding drivers of the speed limits and to collect data on the number of vehicles exceeding the limit.
- Ongoing liaison with Devon County Highways Officers regarding matters including traffic speeds, line markings, safety at junctions and (need we say) potholes!

One of the challenges which we have as a Council is to mount a compelling argument for significant traffic calming measures (with their accompanying cost) as a priority against other parts of Devon. Devon County Council (DCC) follows a set process to assess the relative priorities of the regular requests/complaints received. Their Speed Compliance Action Review Forum (SCARF) assessment makes use of the data collected by the Council/Police including collision data. Data published on the DCC website, for the five year period January 2020 to December 2024 shows relatively few accidents within the parish. Most of these have occurred on the B3180 with the intersection of Bendarroch and the B3180 being the most problematic. However, records show only two serious accidents and seven slight accidents during this period. Sadly, schemes for West Hill are unlikely to be assessed a priority.

How you can help .....



Information gathered by the **West Hill Community Speedwatch** is helpful but further volunteers are needed to gather the necessary data. Can you spare 1 hour a month? Please contact Andrew for more information: [REDACTED]



It is also important to report all accidents in order to mount a compelling argument to prioritise West Hill over other parishes in other parts of Devon. Accidents can be reported online at [police.uk](https://www.police.uk) or call the non-emergency number 101.

*Cllr Mike Owen*, Road Safety Working Group



## What Are Design Codes — And Why Do They Matter for Our Neighbourhood Plan?

If you've been following the progress of our Neighbourhood Plan, you may have heard the term **Design Codes** popping up more often. It sounds a bit technical — perhaps even a little bureaucratic — but the idea behind it is simple: Design Codes help us shape the look and feel of future development, so it reflects the character of our village.

Think of them as a shared recipe for good design. Not a rigid rulebook, but a set of ingredients and methods that help ensure new buildings, extensions, and public spaces feel like they belong here.

### Why are Design Codes becoming important?

Across the country, communities are using Design Codes to make sure development enhances local identity rather than erasing it. National planning policy now encourages neighbourhoods to set out clear expectations for design quality — and that's where our Neighbourhood Plan comes in.

By including Design Codes, we're taking an active role in shaping how our village evolves. Instead of reacting to planning applications one by one, we're setting out a positive vision for what "good" looks like.

### What do Design Codes actually cover?

A Design Code can include things like:

- **How new homes sit within their plots** and density of housing
- **Green spaces, hedgerows, and boundary treatments**
- **Trees** and how we can increase canopy cover and incorporate trees into public spaces
- **Footpaths, lighting, and street layouts**
- **Privacy, avoiding overlooking**
- **Parking standards**
- **Building types, building lines and building materials** that reflect local character
- **Sustainability features**, such as energy efficiency or biodiversity-friendly planting



It's not about forcing every building to look identical. It's about guiding development so it feels coherent, thoughtful, and rooted in place.

## How does this help us as a community?

Design Codes give residents, landowners, and developers a shared language. They:

- **Reduce uncertainty** — everyone knows what's expected
- **Improve design quality** — raising the bar for new proposals
- **Protect local character** — ensuring change enhances rather than detracts
- **Support sustainable growth** — encouraging greener, more resilient design

Most importantly, they help ensure that future development reflects the values and identity of the people who live here.



## What happens next?

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, we'll be gathering information on what makes our village special — the buildings, landscapes, materials, and quirks that give it its character. You may see some of us walking around the village to survey characteristic areas, including taking photos. These insights will feed directly into the Design Codes.

We are also hoping to get some aerial photos of West Hill, which will give a much better impression of the village character than we can get from ground-level pictures. So you may see a drone around the village – but be assured we will be following all the regulations and the operator will be fully certified.

When the draft codes are ready, they'll be shared for public consultation. This is your chance to help shape the future look and feel of our community.

## In short...

Design Codes are our opportunity to guide development with clarity and confidence. They help us protect what we love, improve what we can, and ensure that any new building feels like a natural part of the village we call home.

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## Your Services – Your Say - Local Government Reform

The proposed introduction of new Unitary Councils in **April 2028** to replace the existing structure of County, City, District Councils will establish how a range of services —including **education, transport, libraries, social services, planning applications, and waste collection**— will be delivered throughout Devon.



Five alternative proposals for Devon have been submitted and it is expected that the Government will announce its decision in December 2026.

The Parish Council is monitoring these proposed changes and how they may impact West Hill. Although Town and Parish Councils will remain unchanged for now, their responsibilities for service delivery and asset management may increase over time.

We would like to express our thanks to the residents who attended our recent drop-in session. Feedback from your comments influenced the Parish Council's response to the Government's proposed re-organisation in Devon, highlighting concerns about more remote decision making and a poor match with the proposed Exeter Unitary Council.

## Please Support your Community - West Hill Organisations needs your help

### What if West Hill didn't have a Village Hall?

West Hill residents have enjoyed use of the Village Hall since 1986. Originally run by a hall committee, in later years West Hill Village Hall became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation [CIO] with Charities Commission registration number 1160370, so it is now run by Trustees. The 'Objects' set down by the Charity Commission was for West Hill Village Hall (WHVH) to provide facilities for the advancement of education, recreation and other leisure time activities with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of West Hill.



Currently there are 8 Trustees, 4 are elected and 4 are appointed by their user group to represent the group's interest in the hall. Additionally, there are 2 part time employees, a Village Hall Manager and a Finance and Administration Officer. The Elected Trustees are the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Minutes Secretary and Legal representative who are all in their late 70s and have served collectively for 68 years, so WHVH feels it's necessary to secure some new younger volunteers.

At the hall's AGM in July, the Elected Trustees can put themselves forward for re-election if they wish to serve for a further year. All Elected Trustees have however indicated their desire to step down, either at the AGM or by the end of 2026. This situation could leave West Hill Village Hall with no elected trustees to run the hall.

WHVH has tried for the last 2 years to find new Trustees who are prepared to provide their time and effort to ensure the Village Hall facility remains viable. If WHVH is unable to obtain this interest from local residents then the future of the hall will be in doubt. 28 organisations currently use the hall including West Hill Primary School and West Hill Preschool so many parents and members of the other 26 organisations have a vested interest in ensuring the future of the hall.

If you have an interest in the continued running of the hall and are willing to serve as an Elected Trustee please contact me, *Colin Veale*, Chairman Tel: 01404 813830 / 07988 514538, or e-mail: [colinveale@btinternet.com](mailto:colinveale@btinternet.com)



### West Hill Summer Fete, Saturday 27th June 2026

***The fete is open to everyone, and this year we're hoping to make it bigger and better than ever!***

The West Hill Primary School PTFA are delighted to announce that this year's much-loved Summer Fete will take place on Saturday 27th June 2026, on the school field. This fantastic community event raises vital funds to support the learning and development of the 216 children at the school. Thanks to the generosity of supporters and attendees, the PTFA recently funded a brand-new school library—something that simply wouldn't have been possible without events like the Summer Fete.

**We're especially keen to hear from local people, groups and businesses who would like to get involved by: Running a stall, Performing on the day, Sponsoring the event, Volunteering to help**

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, we'd love to hear from you at:

[ptfawh@west-hill-primary.devon.sch.uk](mailto:ptfawh@west-hill-primary.devon.sch.uk)

It promises to be a wonderful day for the whole community—definitely not one to miss!

More details coming soon—we look forward to seeing you there!

*Nik Nash*, Secretary of the West Hill Primary School PTFA



## West Hill Emergency Plan – Progress Update

I expect most people will be aware that we have been working to develop an Emergency Plan for West Hill. The worst case that we are planning for is a widespread major storm which brings down trees blocking roads in, out and through the village which in turn bring down power and telephone lines. This could mean that people cannot get in or out of the village and we have no power, telephone or internet service and, quite probably, no mobile telephone coverage. If this is widespread the Emergency Services and utility companies will be thinly stretched and we may have to manage for a few days without external support before things return to normal.

To provide assistance in such a situation we have a number of village residents who have volunteered as Village Responders. Each Responder is allocated a specific area of the village and will be aware of the vulnerable people who may need assistance. The work of the Responders will be co-ordinated from a Village Hub. The RBL have kindly offered the use of the RBL Clubhouse as the Village Hub and also as a place of refuge for people who may need to leave their homes.

We cannot and we will not attempt to be a substitute for the professional Emergency Services. We are however trying to provide a “self help” service in the eventuality of the Emergency services being unable to attend as rapidly as normal due either to access problems or the fact that they are so thinly stretched dealing with widespread disruption across the county.

The Responders have met for an initial induction and training session and more sessions are planned for the coming weeks. We have also tested some hand held radios to find a suitable piece of equipment that can cope with the distances and topography of West Hill. The draft plan has been checked by the Resilience Team at Devon Communities Together and they are supportive and complimentary about the plan so things are coming together. It may appear to be taking a long time but it is quite a complex matter to address all the details and we are also trying to achieve this with volunteers who all lead busy lives. We have also had to start from scratch but we are now well along the path of having a workable plan.

The storms of recent weeks have shown just how much people can be affected by significant weather events. Although our worst case scenario for planning purposes may appear far fetched we have seen already this year how some communities in Devon have been seriously affected by the storms. There is an old maxim about emergency planning that we should prepare for the worst and hope for the best. We will continue to plan for the worst and we will all hope that we never have to implement the plan but we will make sure that we are fully prepared – just in case.....!

*Cllr Francis Pullman, Emergency Plan Working Group*

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## West Hill Annual Parish (Community) Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026

It was lovely to meet village residents at the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting.

During the evening community groups and organisations gave an update on their plans and activities. There was particular interest in the Village Hall Chairman’s report on the future of the Village Hall. and also development of the Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council also gave a brief overview of another busy Council year.

WHPC hopes this event will continue to develop in future years. It’s a great opportunity for everyone in the village to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns. There are few other occasions where the West Hill community can get together. We hope more residents will join us next year!



*County Councillor Jess Bailey gave a report to her meeting*

*Cllr Francis Pullman, Parish Council Chairman*

## The Curious Case Of The “Litter” Bins

Have you noticed that the two litter bins, one by the bus stop on Bendarroch Road and one near the War Memorial have an occasional alarming tendency to fill up all of a sudden? When they do suddenly fill up it is not with general litter but with dog poo bags – in industrial quantities. It leads to the suspicion that either we have a very well subscribed night time dog walking club in West Hill or someone is abusing the system.

When this first happened I started to take photographs of the bins daily to see just when the deluge of poo bags took place.



Having collected many days worth of photographs I was no further forward as, during this period, the dumping of bags ceased. I have to say that people were very polite and said nothing when they saw this elderly gentleman taking photographs of litter bins, clearly just assuming that it was an eccentric hobby. When I stopped my new hobby all of a sudden the deluge of dog poo bags



*This curious matter is clearly a case for Holmes and Watson – or maybe Inspector Clouseau!*

*How you can help.....*

Firstly some practicalities. These litter bins are provided by East Devon Council. To report a full litter bin

1.

- this can be done on the East Devon District Council website. On the Home page scroll down to the A-Z list of services and within the section on Environmental Maintenance is an opportunity to report a full litter bin. [www.eastdevon.gov.uk/environmental-maintenance/litter/report-a-full-litter-bin/](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/environmental-maintenance/litter/report-a-full-litter-bin/). If possible please use the [What3Words](#) to give a precise location.
- or call 01395 571515 for EDDC recycling and waste.

2.

Secondly, if anyone has further information on this please let us know because it is a bit antisocial to bin dog poo bags in these quantities in a public litter bin. The atmosphere by the bus stop or War Memorial on a hot summer's day doesn't bear thinking about. These general purpose bins are not designed for dog waste as they do not have a lid. EDDC has made clear that they will not install additional dog waste bins.

3.

Thirdly, if the culprit is reading this please spare a thought for your fellow villagers and be more reasonable in the way that you dispose of these little packages. I am a regular dog walker and we have a special bin at home with a secure lid where we store them until we put them in a tightly tied bin bag in the black wheelie bin on the morning of collection.

*Meanwhile the investigation into this curious matter continues..... Cllr Francis Pullman*

### Contact Us:

West Hill Parish Council welcomes your comments. Please contact our Parish Clerk, preferably by email [clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk). Do you want to join our **mailing list**? We use this to send you updates such as meeting agendas. Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website.

*Thank you for your support!*