

## **NORTH DEVON COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL: 27 MARCH 2024**

### **LEADER'S REPORT**

#### **Leaders Report**

In collaboration with Torridge District Council, we've introduced the Northern Devon Flourishing Culture Participation Survey. We have invited residents to join us in shaping strategies to promote cultural engagement in the region by participating in this survey.

Following the development of a new strategy titled "Flourishing Culture: The Northern Devon Cultural Strategy," we are conducting this survey. This strategy articulates a vision for North Devon and Torridge by 2027, aiming to establish the region as a hub where creativity harmonises with its landscape and communities, recognised locally, nationally, and internationally. Crafted through collaboration with the community, cultural organisations, creative practitioners, and businesses, this strategy was officially adopted by both district councils in 2022.

Culture holds diverse significance for individuals, ranging from the intimacy of a local book club to the grandeur of an art gallery, from the excitement of a major festival to the camaraderie of a village sports team. I ask councillors to promote this survey to residents so they can add their own input and aid us in fostering a community brimming with lively cultural pursuits. Together, I hope we can forge a path towards a future where every resident can partake in and enrich the vibrant array of arts and culture flourishing in Northern Devon.

In my ward that I represent it is a fantastic pleasure to see that the council has completed a woodland expansion project by planting 24,000 trees, connecting three existing woodlands at Yeo Valley in Barnstaple. With support from the Forestry Commission, 920 school children, 300 community members, parks staff, and contractors participate in planting. The woodland grows by 15.5 hectares (37 acres), enhancing the area's beauty and biodiversity. The project is expected to remove 3,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over 100 years, supporting climate goals. Various tree species enrich the expanded woodland's ecology.

I would like to thank all involved in bringing this project to fruition, acknowledging the collaborative effort that has turned the vision of a thriving community woodland into a reality.

As discussed in prior council sessions, it's crucial to prioritise levelling up initiatives, particular in Ilfracombe, as current evidence indicates it really needs significant investment. This is partly due to the competitive nature of council bids for central government funds rather than an equitable allocation system. The council is urging for an "exceptional fund" of £24 million from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities for Ilfracombe. The proposal aims to expand key worker accommodation, bolster health initiatives to address inequalities, carry out public

realm enhancements (such as revitalising town areas), and invigorate the private sector rental market.

I can confirm that following input from members that North Devon Council have submitted our response to the Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal. We will now await the response from Devon County Council and Torbay to the consultation process.

Finally as Easter draws near, I extend warm wishes to everyone for a joyful Easter season.

Councillor Ian Roome

March 2024