

East Devon Councillor Report for March/April 2026.

Nature Recovery Plan Consultation

EDDC has opened a public consultation on its draft East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan, with residents, visitors and stakeholders invited to comment until 22 May at 5pm. The draft plan sets out priorities for habitat recovery across five key themes including wetlands, woodland, grassland and urban green spaces, helping shape future action on biodiversity, climate resilience, flood prevention and access to nature. This is particularly relevant to Seaton and the Axe Valley given our important natural environment, wetlands and coastal habitats. Feedback from the consultation will help inform the final plan and a detailed delivery programme with partners and funding priorities.

Consultation link:

<https://eastdevonlnrplan.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/edlnrquestions?step=step1>

Wild About Seaton – Heritage Lottery Bid

Cabinet has approved submission of a £1.92 million National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for the Wild About Seaton project, a major regeneration and nature-based tourism initiative centred on Seaton Wetlands and the town's wider natural heritage. The project would deliver new accessible paths, a visitor welcome hub, bird hide, habitat creation including the restoration of Sheep's Marsh saltmarsh and freshwater grazing marsh, alongside a new app-based discovery trail linking the wetlands, seafront, High Street, Tramway and Museum. It also includes support for Seaton Museum's natural history collection, community volunteering, education work with schools and marketing support for local businesses, helping strengthen Seaton's visitor economy while further connecting the wetlands directly to the town centre.

Marlcombe New Community

EDDC has reaffirmed its commitment to delivering the new community at Marlcombe, which is expected to grow to around 25,000 residents with homes, employment land and supporting services. Cabinet has endorsed new governance and partnership arrangements to keep the scheme moving forward, with the intention of establishing a locally led development corporation alongside Devon County Council to oversee delivery. The focus remains on an infrastructure-first approach, ensuring schools, transport, healthcare, green spaces and community facilities are planned from the

outset. While Marlcombe was not included in the Government's final seven priority locations under the New Towns Programme, it remains recognised as a credible development opportunity, and discussions on support continue. Further reports on governance and delivery arrangements are expected later this year.

Standards Committee Annual Report

The Standards Committee annual report for 2025/26 highlights continued progress in maintaining high standards of conduct across East Devon's councils. Encouragingly, Code of Conduct complaints have continued to fall year on year, with 8 complaints received in 2025 compared to 32 in 2022, and no cases requiring formal investigation for the third consecutive year. The report credits this to improved early intervention, training and informal resolution led by the Monitoring Officer and supporting team. Ongoing councillor training, support for town and parish councils, and potential future strengthening of sanctions through national legislative change remain key priorities.

Manor Pavilion Theatre Reopens

The Manor Pavilion Theatre in Sidmouth has reopened following a two-month refurbishment of its auditorium, including bespoke new seating and a refreshed art deco interior designed to enhance the audience experience while retaining the theatre's traditional charm. The venue reopened with a performance by the East Devon Dance Academy, with the 2026 programme also featuring *Evita*, comedy nights and the renowned Summer Play Season. Audience demand continues to grow strongly, with bookings already being taken as far ahead as 2028, underlining the theatre's importance as a major cultural asset for East Devon and the wider visitor economy.

Cllr Marcus Hartnell