

This covers my May 2025 report.

It will be the West Devon AGM / Mayor Choosing day on the 20th. This is where we have a change of Mayors as well as a sort of shift round of members' responsibilities. I am not expecting much to change, but from previous years, you just can't tell.

New Planning regulations:

We are still awaiting a response from central government.

National Devolution:

Still no decision as to how this will go, and with the recent elections, the future could be even more uncertain.

New Police Inspector:

Inspector Daniel Jones is now in post, and we have had some one-to-one Teams meetings, and he would like to do this more often. I would suggest that a representative from your Parish Council contacts him to make sure your Parish is included, as he is very open to being contacted at any time.

Speed watch:

Following the serious road accident in Follygate, this may well be the time to push DCC for some speeding signs, along with a Speed watch group.

Fire risks:

There has been a warning about the very high risk of fires on the Moor as well as the general countryside. It may be a good idea to press this point through any of your local parish or any other magazines that you may know of.

Following on from my last report, the following covers one element of the Environmental Health Team.

Meet your Principal Environmental Health Officer Meet Sam Bartram

Samantha Bartram Principal Environmental Health Officer

What are you responsible for in your job?

I am responsible for leading a team of Environmental Health Officers and Business Support Officers to deliver the Food Safety Hygiene Program. This includes inspecting premises that produce food from a home caterer to the largest and most complex businesses like Ambrosia and Arla. I am also required to ensure we can respond to complaints, enquiries and to undertake a sampling program.

My team sign export certificates, almost every day, confirming that food produced or harvested in our districts is safe to be sent abroad. For the previous financial year that equated to over 15 million pounds worth of food.

In addition to food safety, I also lead the team to investigate external health and safety incidents, accidents and fatalities.

Me and my team are just at the end of the year for the food inspection program. There are always interesting premises and people in our districts and while we couldn't be happier leaving a premises that has improved

hugely, we also enjoy using our knowledge to work on and advise those more technical businesses.

We have recently completed a project that was required directly from government to visit funeral homes. This project was the result of problems found in the north east with a particular funeral home. It was comforting to establish that we found no issues in South Hams or West Devon, hopefully reassuring the public that the funeral homes sector is well regulated.

Every year we are required to monitor the shellfish beds around the South Hams. We are kindly helped by Localities to collect the samples and then my team monitor the results which determines the grading of the beds and directly affects the businesses. During the summer months when algal blooms are more prevalent, we are required to take extra samples. That season has just started!

I may sound a bit corny, but genuinely, the job is so varied. You literally couldn't dream up some of the things we deal with!

I guess a 'normal' day could be some food inspections or planned sampling but you have to be prepared as urgent reactive work could, and does, come in at any time. Usually the Friday before bank holiday!!

An outbreak, a declared major emergency, such as flooding or an unexploded war time bomb in Plymouth. A shellfish bed needs to be closed due to results, or a serious complaint has been received about a food business. A health and safety incident that needs to be investigated urgently to preserve the evidence. A notification from the Food Standards Agency of a food recall, or an alleged food crime in our area. The list really could go on and on. And yes, we do get called out for rats in kitchens. We have even been sent a video of one attacking a chef!!!

Of course, our job isn't all about dashing around the district, dealing with problems, we do also help and advise businesses. We also currently have three Primary Authority partnerships where we are their main point of contact for advice and help them to complete documentation or undertake inspections to help them prepare for becoming accredited or simply a critical friend.

Oh, and the thing you couldn't dream up... was some fox urine that was illegally imported!

Regards Cllr Tony Leech