

Inwardleigh Parish Council
George Dexter: 21st May 2025 Report

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The programme for the delivery of the 2025/26 fund was agreed.

West Devon has been allocated £259,000 for 2025/26. In 2024/25 the council used UKSPF funds for a range of purposes. These included: the implementation of decarbonisation plans for local businesses and community groups; securing baseline evidence for active travel through a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan; and training more than 60 agricultural workers and farm owners to implement regenerative farming practices.

For 2025/26 it is proposed that the following projects be continued as well as one new project to support the visitor economy

- **Agri-Innovation programme** to pilot new technologies and processes on local farms.
- **Regenerative Farming** and agricultural land consultancy. It has seen agricultural workers learn how to transform farms into regenerative farms, and has started dozens of farms on the journey to becoming regenerative farms. The project won an NFU award for its innovative approach to transforming the agricultural sector.
- **Decarbonisation plans** This project has seen more than 50 local businesses and community groups develop decarbonisation plans (which set out the actions required to mitigate their carbon footprint). 14 of these businesses successfully accessed grant funding for the implementation of decarbonisation measures.
- **Community energy group support** – this project has seen our community energy groups expand their activities, develop and deliver new local projects focused on retrofitting of insulation, and the delivery of renewable technology measures on homes. The objectives delivered through this project have been additional to those delivered through other funded projects such as the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG).
- **Construction sector support.** This project has seen a report pulled together detailing the capabilities of the local construction sector
- **Sustain the visitor economy** and provide bespoke support to help sustain the sector. (The exact detail of the project and the delivery partners is yet to be determined).

Private Sector Housing Update

The WDBC Private Sector Housing team continues to respond to tenants concerns regarding defective properties and work with social and private landlords to provide the highest standard of housing possible in the area. The Council has successfully applied for funding for the next version of the HUG scheme which is called 'Warmer Homes'; Local Grant. WDBC has been allocated a minimum of £1,657,660. The new scheme will run for three years increasing the opportunity reach those eligible and ensure there is time to deliver the complex interventions. Properties that are eligible for the current HUG will be transferred into this scheme after March 2025

The Renters (Reform) Bill is currently going through parliament and is expected to be enacted in the summer. This will give extra regulatory responsibilities to the council. It will include;

- Abolition of section 21 (no fault) evictions,
- Introduce more comprehensive possession grounds,
- Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction

Inwardleigh Parish Council
George Dexter: 21st May 2025 Report

- Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman
- Create a Privately Rented Property Portal
- Give tenants the right to request a pet in the property,
- Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector, and
- Strengthen local councils' enforcement powers

This will generate additional work for the council, but it remains to be seen whether this additional resource will be sufficient to provide a good service to our residents.

Councillor Advocates

I attended one of the police drop-in sessions on 23rd April, as well as the West Devon Matters meeting with the police on 14th May. We discussed the current 3 policing priorities of anti-social behaviour, drugs and road safety. Inspector Jones also informed us that National Highways would be extending its coverage from the M5 to A30 during the summer holiday season. This will be a great help to the police since the A30 normally takes up 80% of their resource during this period.

At the in person meeting on the 14th we agreed to Inspector Jones' proposal of introducing a fourth priority of 'rural crime'. There is already a small police resource dedicated to combatting rural crime, but the inclusion of this as a priority hopefully will provide greater emphasis on the issue.