



University
of Exeter



Devon County Civic University Agreement 2023-26

Working together to make Devon a
thriving, sustainable and prosperous
place to live and work

AUGUST 2023

The Devon County Civic University Agreement recognises that the University is fundamentally linked to the place and people of Devon.

Being a civic university means being authentically linked to a place and a community, responsive to its needs and committed to its success.

The University of Exeter is a vibrant knowledge hub with global connections, a major regional employer and important contributor to the local economy. Working together, Devon County Council and the University of Exeter share a strong commitment to the economic growth and prosperity, health, social and environmental fabric of our County.

Working together as Devon partners through our Civic University Agreement, our ambition is to generate benefits for our County, its businesses, and its people. This Agreement builds on already strong partnership foundations, and a history of mutual engagement. It is an opportunity to advance and amplify the impact of our activities, strengths, and assets.

At the heart of this Agreement is a belief that partnership is the catalyst that sets progress in motion. Partnerships within our County are now more important than ever, as we seek to ensure a thriving yet sustainable economy, healthy and happy people, a vibrant culture, and a spirit that connects us all with a pride of place and a determination to keep moving forward together.

Our Missions and the Partnership Framework which sit at the heart of this Agreement, respond to an analysis of local needs and consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Signatories

Devon County Council and the University of Exeter, as signatories to this Civic University Agreement, are committed to working together to help overcome the major social, economic, and environmental challenges that we all face together for Devon. We are bound by the Partnership Framework set out in this document to seek to improve levels of prosperity, equal opportunity, sustainability, health and wellbeing for Devon's citizens, businesses, families, and communities. We will work together to make measurable progress on our Missions.



Professor Lisa Roberts
Vice Chancellor
University of Exeter

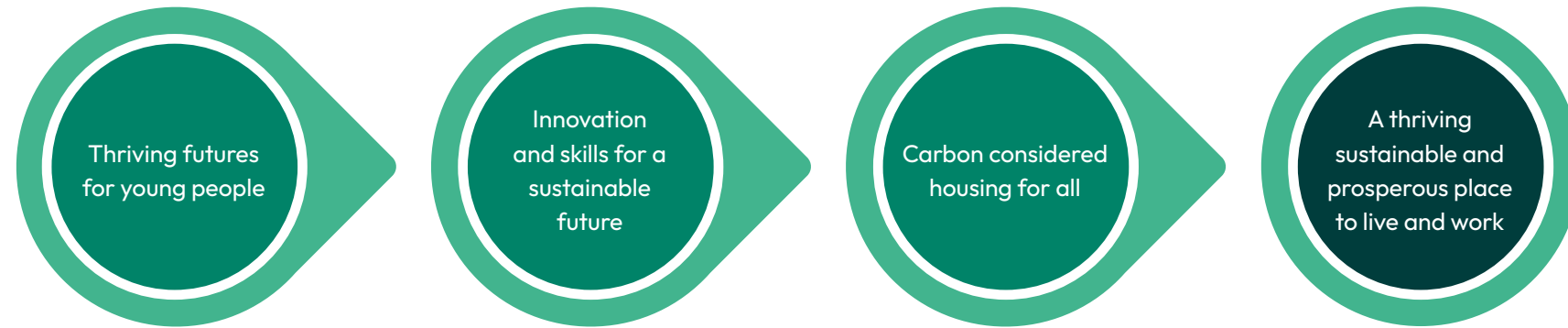


Councillor John Hart
Leader
Devon County Council



Our Missions

Our over-arching mission is to support Devon to be a thriving, sustainable and prosperous place to live and work. In so doing this agreement recognises that health, education, culture, environment, and economy are all intertwined. To begin with this agreement will focus on three specific areas that support this overarching mission: developing our civil society to be ambitious for each young person to thrive, to provide ample access to affordable, carbon considered housing and to develop a skills and innovation ecosystem to deliver sustainable futures.



As partners we will work collaboratively to deliver this positive change for Devon. The Devon County Civic University Agreement will enable us to work better together to coordinate and amplify the impact of our activities, strengths, and assets to generate greater benefits for Devon, its businesses, and its people.



Thriving Futures for our Young People

The future of Devon's children and young people is a clear priority.

Devon has deep and persistent inequalities in health and wealth. Around one in eight children live in poverty in Devon, with a large gap between the highest and lowest rates¹. It is currently one of the least socially mobile counties in the United Kingdom, with areas that have seen lower economic growth such as Torridge and North Devon having particularly low levels of social mobility.

Research by the University of Exeter's Centre for Social Mobility (2020) showed the South West has the worst educational outcomes for disadvantaged young people in the country and low social mobility compared with other areas². In particular:

- School attainment gaps between poorer pupils and the rest are the largest of all English regions at the end of both primary and secondary school;
- 40% of disadvantaged pupils attained a standard pass in GCSE English and Maths in 2019 compared with almost 60% in Inner London;
- 17% of disadvantaged students went on to university in 2018/19 – the lowest rate of all English regions – compared with 45% in London.

Devon has a mix of rural, semi-rural and urban populations, all of which combine to create a complex education ecosystem. Health and wellbeing are intrinsically linked to factors such as housing, social and community bonds, participation in creative and physical activities, time spent outdoors in natural environments and inequalities in all their forms. Devon County Council and the University will work together with partners to bring their collective strengths to contribute to understanding and addressing these challenges.

A further shared focus is on continuing to support the development of diverse, safe communities. We will work together to identify cultural, civic and place-based opportunities which can benefit from the University's research and the County Council's partnerships with the community and voluntary sector, to respond to place-based priorities.

A South West Social Mobility Commission has been established, supported by the University of Exeter, its aim to transform life prospects for disadvantaged young people across the peninsula and help to influence decision-making by schools, local authorities and other organisations to improve social mobility.

Our Ambitions

- We will support the work of the Social Mobility Commission to deliver clear and actionable recommendations, to achieve enhanced social mobility within Devon, promoting successful practice to business, education, public services and the third sector service providers.
- Building on work started in Exeter, develop a Devon Education Alliance to ensure children throughout each Key Stage of the National Curriculum benefit from equal access to world-class pedagogy of teaching.
- Together we will seek to address the skills and recruitment gaps in key areas of public service, such as Health and Social Care, through new initiatives and new skills provision, including Degrees, Degree Apprenticeships, and Continuing Professional Development.
- We will widen Higher Education participation, helping more young people in Devon reach university, including the University of Exeter.
- Together we will explore how we can help support young people's mental health in Devon.



¹DCC Website accessed April 2023

²Sim, A. M., & Major, L. E. (2022). SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE SOUTH WEST

Innovation and Skills for a Sustainable Future

Devon has a large, diverse economy with a global reach. Businesses range from innovative, rapidly growing digital tech, advanced engineering, environmental science, specialised manufacturing, and marine industries through to sophisticated food, drink, and creative industries. There is a strong R&D base in the local universities and global strengths in environment.

Despite its considerable assets, Devon is a low wage economy, with a range of factors limiting economic dynamism. With few large employers, the economy is weighted towards the low-paid service sector, especially in coastal and rural areas. This has profound implications for people, in terms of low skills, low wages and lack of access to opportunities.

At the same time the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy provides significant opportunity where key sectors are interlinked with region's extensive land, coastal and marine environment. Alongside our neighbours in the Great South West, Devon has the opportunity to create world-leading growth in the green and blue

economies, whilst responding to the climate emergency and ecological crisis. Innovation and skills will lie at the heart of this effort. The University of Exeter is a leading university globally with 1500 researchers working on climate and nature, which can support Devon as it transitions to net zero.

As partners, Devon County Council and the University of Exeter already collaborate closely to ensure our citizens have access to the skills required for, and access to, a growing number of high-quality sustainable green jobs in exciting and innovating sectors. Working together we will seek to boost the skills needed by our employers to grow and drive innovation.



Our Ambitions

- Together we will target activity to support innovation in three key growth sectors for Devon, based on their potential for transformational impact:

- Environment (including Energy and Waste)
- Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (including Marine and Aerospace)
- Health, Care and Life Sciences

And a pervasive adoption of two cross cutting themes:

- Digital – Both as a core sector and a driver of transformation across the rest of the economy, with a focus on the enabling role digital plays in driving productivity and innovation.
- Net Zero – Working together in areas such as clean mobility, energy, and wider carbon reduction to meet the ambitions of the Devon Carbon Plan.

- We will work together to boost research and development investment to support levelling-up across Devon. This will include exploring models which ensure that the benefits of innovation and growth reach all parts of Devon. We will work together to extend innovation support with and through partners such as SETSquared, the Exeter Science Park, Innovation Zones, and other innovation-support services.
- We will work together to support the formation of a Devon Education and Skills Alliance, creating a regionally responsive education and skills ecosystem to test and trial novel approaches to support social mobility, address attainment gaps and boost skills supply.
- We will grow the number of Devon employers benefitting from University of Exeter placements, internships and work experience programmes, and boost graduate retention in the region.

Carbon Considered Housing for all

Devon's housing challenges and their solutions are complex, interconnected and vary across the county. In acknowledging the great and growing housing challenges, the eleven Devon local authorities established a Devon Housing Task Force. Work by the Task Force shows that demand has outstripped supply for many years leading to a cycle of decline in availability and affordability across the whole housing system.

Evidence shows a clear acceleration in the demand/supply pressures during the Covid pandemic. Whilst Devon has always been an attractive holiday destination due to its natural beauty, the sheer scale of changes alongside an already heavily constrained market mean any change in one part of the market will impact overall and the market is now in crisis³.

Decarbonising the domestic housing stock remains a barrier to achieving Net Zero. The 2023 GemServ report summarised that at current deployment rates it will take 600 years to deploy enough solid wall insulation and 200 years to deploy enough air-source heat pumps to reach Net Zero⁴. We recognise that Housing is intertwined with creating sustainable futures, innovation and skills, and that a vital role is developing a retrofit strategy for social housing, low-income households and the able to pay market.

To fully understand the nature of the problem and the potential solutions, Devon local authorities and the University of Exeter are collaborating in the development and delivery of a Housing Commission. The Commission will undertake in-depth socio-economic and demographic analysis and community and stakeholder engagement to develop a clear picture of the problems across local housing markets and tenure types across geographic Devon.



Our Ambitions

- Working with the Devon local authorities, the University will establish and support an independent county-wide Housing Commission. With an independent chair and commissioners the Commission will hear evidence academics, experts, and key stakeholders to produce a report with recommendations.
- Through the work of the Commission, we will:
 - Develop a clear picture of the problems across local housing markets and tenure types across geographic Devon with a wide-range of engagement from communities, experts and partner agencies.
 - Develop an understanding of the future need for housing supply, tenure types and use that will aid the wider outcomes of prosperity, economic growth and social mobility.
 - Provide some practical recommendations that help to deliver on an improvement in use, supply and tenure type including improving the quality of the private rented stock in line with carbon plan objectives.
 - Make recommendations for new policy and powers to overcome barriers to local housing affordability and supply.
 - Seek to influence significant housing and social policy change and practical solutions that will start to address the broken local housing markets across the county. Working together we will identify where new ways of working could be trialled in the County.

³ Devon Housing Task Force, Proposal for a Devon Housing Commission 2022
⁴ Heart of the South west Local Enterprise Low Carbon Skills Report, GemServ 2023

Guiding Principles

The Partnership Framework aims to:

- Enable better communication between the partners and the community, setting out a clear mechanism for day to day working;
- Harness research expertise to address Devon's challenges, supporting priority setting and co-production of solutions, providing a clear route to local impact;
- Be dynamic and organic – adapting to circumstance;
- Provide routes to global engagement;
- Actively engage students in the public and community realm, matching student interest to community need and supporting engaged learning;
- Embed collaborative public engagement based on the principle of reciprocity, involving the flow of knowledge, information and benefits between the parties;
- Embed clear evaluation and review processes;
- Be transparent and accountable.



The Partnership Framework

Governance Structure	<p>The Devon Civic University Agreement will be overseen by a Civic University Partnership Board comprising senior representatives from each institution which will meet annually.</p> <p>Designated leads from each institution will comprise the coordinating team, with quarterly meetings at which lead members from each institution can bring issues/concerns to the table and/or share their current activity.</p>
Missions	<p>Our Missions will be jointly owned and agreed by our partners and align with our regional priorities.</p>
Agenda Setting	<p>The partners will identify areas of “common ground” where it is expected that joint working will add value to the mission of each institution. Initially these will focus on the Missions identified within the initial Agreement.</p> <p>The agenda will be shaped by participants on an ongoing basis, and everyone commits to attending and listening respectfully to partners when they bring issues and ideas to the group.</p>
Brokerage	<p>Partners will identify lead connectors in each organisation that can broker wider relationships and be a point of contact between the partners, connecting them to wider networks. Over time we expect to have a visible and transparent set of institutional networks that will facilitate the sharing of knowledge.</p>
Sharing Intelligence and Horizon Scanning	<p>An annual Conference/Workshop will allow each institution to widen its engagement across their workforces, identifying critical issues, sharing intelligence, and identifying the potential for a collective response.</p>



Co-creation	<p>As partners we will embrace a ‘social enquiry’ approach to working on identified issues or challenges. We will collate information, research best practice, identify practical solutions, test them, and develop policy proposals for action. We will, through our vehicles for delivery, engage with the wider community and stakeholders in the region.</p>
Responding to opportunities	<p>The partnership should have provision to develop Task and Finish Groups or Mission Groups to enable the development of action plans and rapid responses from the partnership.</p>
Community and stakeholder engagement	<p>The partnership will adopt ways of working that support effective community and stakeholder engagement.</p>
Resourcing	<p>The Agreement will need limited administrative support, associated process, and provisioning. Partners will identify internal coordination support and Mission-specific support.</p> <p>As the partnership develops and identifies new initiatives and projects, there will need to be agreement on how this is resourced, including provision for joint bids for funding.</p>
Communications	<p>The partnership will adopt clear guidelines for promoting the partnership and its work and managing communication protocols.</p>
Annual Planning Cycle	<p>The Agreement will be accompanied by an annual planning cycle which enables progress to be monitored, new issues and challenges to emerge and the Agreement will be subject to formal review.</p>



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