

Sustainable Community Strategy for Mid Devon

2010 - 2015

Purpose of the Strategy

This Sustainable Community Strategy sets out our vision for Mid Devon for the next five years 2010 – 2015.

We want Mid Devon to be:

A district with vibrant and prosperous towns and sustainable rural communities, where the needs of all residents are met.

Our vision brings together the views of local people and local organisations. It has five key priorities:

- Meeting Housing Needs
- Building the Local Economy
- Supporting Stronger, Healthier & Safer Communities
- Improving Access to Local Services
- Protecting the Environment

These priorities will be delivered through the individual strategic documents of the partner organisations such as the District Council Corporate Plan and through the planning process as detailed in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Infrastructure Plan.



Shaping the Strategy

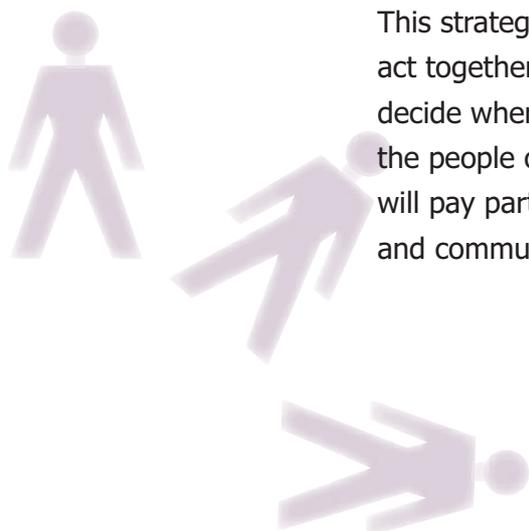
The strategy was produced by the Mid Devon Strategic Partnership. We are a group of local organisations representing the public, private and voluntary sectors who work together to plan and co-ordinate joint action to improve services across Mid Devon. We link to other groups looking at issues such as the needs of children, health and wellbeing, the economy, and crime and disorder.

Mid Devon Strategic Partnership is made up of following members:

Mid Devon District Council
Devon County Council
Devon & Cornwall Police
Devon NHS
Federation of Small Businesses
Town & Parish Councils
Devon Towns Forum – Mid Devon Representative
INVOLVE
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Age Concern
Tiverton & District Community
Transport Association

The strategy sets out our aims for the district based on the main challenges we face. These challenges have come from what residents have told us, evidence from published statistics and information from the organisations mentioned above. The strategy also takes account of national and regional priorities and plans that affect the area including the Devon Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and Local Development Framework.

This strategy includes an action plan which describes how we will act together to make improvements to local life. It will help us to decide where and how we should work together for the benefit of the people of Mid Devon. These actions will help everyone, but we will pay particular attention to helping those individuals, families and communities who are most vulnerable.



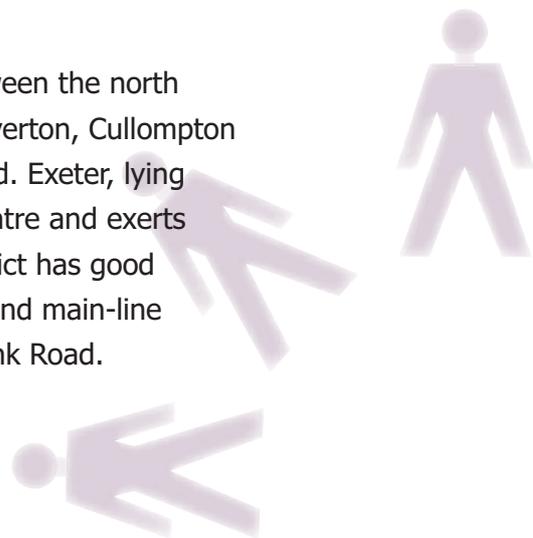
A Profile of Mid Devon

As a starting point for the strategy we have taken the most important facts about Mid Devon and produced this profile from which we can identify the issues and challenges facing Mid Devon.

Issues facing Mid Devon

- Mid Devon has a growing population with an increasingly aging profile.
- It is an area with low unemployment but also low average earnings and low skills levels. The recent recession has doubled the unemployment rate.
- The economy of Mid Devon is not doing well with low productivity and low business growth compared to neighbouring districts.
- Housing affordability remains a problem with high average house prices compared to wages. There is also a high level of poor housing stock.
- Mid Devon is an area with low crime but there are persistent concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.
- There is a high level of health for the majority of the population but pockets of deprivation with some areas doing significantly worse than the others.
- Mid Devon has a high quality natural and built environments, but faces increasing pressure on natural resources and the challenge of climate change on the horizon.

Mid Devon is a rural district lying equidistant between the north and south coasts. It has three principle towns, Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, serving an extensive rural hinterland. Exeter, lying just to the south of the district, is the regional centre and exerts a considerable economic and social pull. The district has good transport links to the east and west with the M5 and main-line railway, and to the north with the North Devon Link Road.



Population

The population of Mid Devon, currently around 75,500, has grown by 20% over the last 20 years, and is expected to increase to over 89,700 by 2024. Much of this increase is due to inward migration from other parts of the UK. The largest increase is among those of retirement age. A significant proportion of young people move out of the area for education or work. The Black and Minority Ethnic population is estimated to be about 2 to 5% of the population with a significant number of migrant workers, mostly from Eastern Europe.

Challenge:

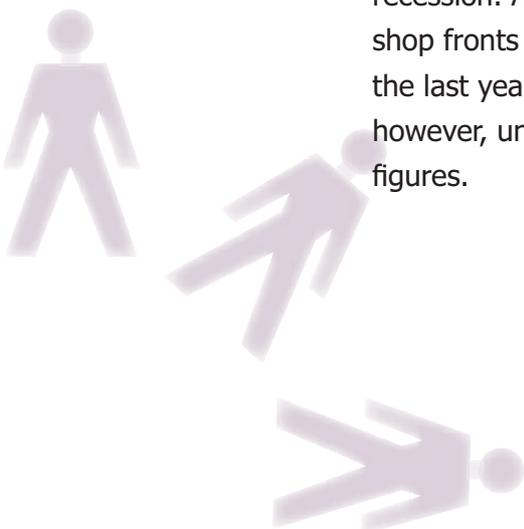


To meet the service needs of an increasing population with an aging profile.

The Economy

The economy of Mid Devon is dominated by retail and manufacturing businesses, mainly focused on the three market towns. However, these sectors are contracting with service industries, transport & distribution and web-based businesses being the growth areas. Agriculture is still a significant influence on the economy, particularly in rural areas, with food processing a major part of manufacturing. Farming and other land-based businesses predominate in the rural areas, together with tourism and newer web-based businesses, while distribution businesses have taken advantage of the good links along the M5 corridor. Mid Devon has a large number of small businesses with under 10 employees.

The district's three market towns have been hit by the recent recession. A number of retail businesses have failed, leaving empty shop fronts which detract from the look and feel of the towns. In the last year unemployment has also risen from 1.0% to 2.5%, however, unemployment still remains low compared to national figures.



Jobs in Mid Devon tend to be poorly paid and low skilled. Average earnings are almost 20% lower than the national average - £20,100 compared to £25,400 nationally - and this gap is increasing. Over a third of the resident population commutes out of the District for work, particularly from the Crediton and Cullompton areas. There are a high proportion of part-time and self-employed workers. There are also a growing number of older people who are dependent on benefits and pensions for their income.

Challenge:



To raise the earnings of people on median and low incomes by improving the skills base through training and education.



To encourage businesses to set up or locate in Mid Devon, by providing sufficient land and premises for business development.

The Environment

Mid Devon is a beautiful area with a high quality natural environment. The district borders Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the Blackdown Hills AONB. There are 13 internationally recognised Sites of Special Scientific Interest, over 200 county wildlife sites and two local nature reserves. The Grand Western Canal is an important local amenity. The quality of the natural environment is matched by the richness of its cultural heritage with many listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments within the district. However, there are small areas where the air quality is poor, specifically in the Exeter Road area of Crediton, and parts of Cullompton.

Challenge:



To balance development with the need to maintain and enhance the natural and built environment in Mid Devon, taking into account the changes necessary to adapt to climate change.



Housing

The high rate of inward migration - particularly from those parts of the country where house prices are significantly higher than in Mid Devon - has led to house price inflation. House prices have more than doubled in the last ten years, far outstripping local average wages. The average house price in March 2009 was £195,200, representing nearly 10 times the average full time wage. This situation is considerably worse in the rural areas of the District. There is also an increasingly aging population who require support to live in their own homes, and suitably adapted accommodation when they are unable to manage on their own.

Challenge:



To ensure there is sufficient decent housing for those local residents and key workers who cannot afford to pay market prices.



To provide adequate support so that people need to remain in their homes as they get older.

Crime

Mid Devon is an area of low crime. The incidence of all major crime (theft, burglary, violent crime) is well below national averages. The rate of domestic burglary was 4.6 in 2006/7 compared to 10.6 nationally, while 60% of residents say they feel safe when outside after dark. However, concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour remain high.

Challenge:



To maintain the low level of crime while addressing people's concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.



Education

Most Mid Devon schools perform well against national averages, but there are concerns about the aspirations of young people in certain areas. 63.8% of 16-year old pupils achieve 5 GCSE or equivalent at grades A* - C in 2008 compared to 65.6% nationally. However the proportion of people of working age who lack any qualifications is higher than the Devon average.

Challenge:



To provide children and young people good quality education and the leisure facilities and activities they hope for.



To increase opportunities for children and young people to thrive locally, so that more children keep positively engaged with their communities and eventually stay to live and work in the district.

Access

In a rural district such as this, access to vital services can be a significant problem for some people, particularly those on low income. Some 62% of the district falls into the bottom quartile of deprivation for 'Access to Housing and Services'. Over half of rural parishes do not have a post office, and access to scheduled public transport is a problem for many areas, including the edges of market towns. Broadband speeds remain low in many rural areas limiting the growth of home –based businesses and increasing the digital divide.

Challenge:



To ensure that people have access to the facilities and services they need, particularly those on low incomes and those who are sick or disabled.



To provide people with easy access to information about services at the right time and in the right place whether that is by telephone, website or face to face.



Health

The residents of Mid Devon are generally healthier than the rest of the population in the UK. Life expectancy is higher than the national average both for men and women, and mortality rates for all major diseases are lower. However, there are pockets where life expectancy and mortality rates are considerably lower than would be expected. There is also a growing proportion of over 75s who will put increasing demands on health and social care services.

Challenge:



To continue to provide good quality health care while reducing health inequalities and reducing preventable diseases, for example by tackling obesity, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, improving sexual health and improving mental health and well-being.

Providing Equal Opportunities

Although Mid Devon generally rates very well in national statistics, small parts of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton do disproportionately badly for income, education, skills and training when compared to other areas nationally. As noted above, 62% of the District experiences rural access problems.

Equally, some people in Mid Devon, because of their condition or their circumstances are more vulnerable than the rest of the population. A variety of organisations support these individuals, families and neighbourhoods and in so doing ensure they are able to access the opportunities they need to do well in life. Such organisations include education and training providers, health and social care agencies, employers the Department for Work and Pensions, and voluntary sector organisations.

Challenge:



To provide the right level of support to vulnerable individuals and to neighbourhoods showing high level of deprivation. To continue to support voluntary sector organizations that provide vital services to the most vulnerable groups.

A Story of Place

Over half the population of Mid Devon live in the rural villages. A number of villages close to the M5 or within the Exeter sphere of influence have expanded greatly over the last twenty years, while many in more remote parts of the district are showing signs of rural decline.

The natural beauty and cultural heritage of Mid Devon villages makes them very attractive places to live, particularly for those who can afford the higher property prices and extra travel costs. However, rural deprivation is an increasing, but statistically hidden, problem. High property prices relative to income, and the lack of affordable housing options, are pricing young people and families on low income out of rural areas. Poor public transport, declining rural services, and limited opportunities for employment can make it particularly difficult for people on low incomes or with limited mobility, such as the unemployed, the housebound, migrant workers and travellers.

Outside the main towns Willand and Bampton are the largest settlements. Willand has expanded greatly in recent years because of its proximity to the motorway, but has few services. Bampton is a historic market town on the fringes of Exmoor with tourism an important part of the local economy. It is the only settlement outside the three main towns set to expand under the Local Development Framework.

Crediton (population 7,500) is a historic market town, the birthplace of St. Boniface, patron saint of Germany. Its main shopping street retains many independent retailers but these are under pressure from the big national supermarkets. The A377, connecting Exeter to parts of North Devon, runs through the town, while the 'Tarka' railway forms an alternative link. The ease of access to Exeter has led to a sharp rise in commuting to the city for work over recent decades. Major infrastructure issues for the town include a relief road to reduce traffic congestion and the creation of a single site for the secondary school. The many small villages in the Crediton hinterland are amongst the most isolated in the district.



Cullompton, with a population of 8,500, lies on the main transport corridor through Devon, with the M5 & mainline railway running close to the town. Its good road links makes it attractive to commuters and the base for a number of distribution businesses. However, to fully benefit from its strategic position the motorway junction needs to be improved and a mainline station reinstated. There has been considerable housing development over the last few years but without a corresponding improvement to infrastructure and community facilities. It has a historic centre with a number of notable buildings but the main shopping street has been particularly affected by the recent downturn in the economy.

Tiverton is the largest town in the district with a population of around 22,000, lying on the major North Devon link road and with good access to the M5. A historic market town it has a tradition of textile manufacturing. The town is the local service centre for a large rural area, particularly to the west and north, with a small hospital and FE college. The main shopping area has a range of shops including national and independent retailers, with banking and other services. Major employers include Mid Devon District Council, NHS Devon, Heathcoat's Factory with substantial employment with the educational establishments in the town, including Tiverton High School, Petroc College and Blundells School. Tiverton has a business park where a range of small and medium sized business are located. The town is earmarked for substantial expansion in the Local Plan (to 2026) with a proposed eastern extension which may see its population rise to around 40,000. Historically there has been a large concentration of social housing in the town, and there is a legacy of social need in some neighbourhoods.

Challenge:



To tackle issues related to the isolation of small rural communities, particularly transport issues and declining rural services.



To tackle issues of regeneration and development in the three market towns sensitively and proportionately

What you have told us



In developing this strategy we have asked residents to help us identify the main priorities for action. We used a range of consultation methods to reach as wide an audience as possible, including consultation events in village settings, street surveys in the main towns, household surveys and electronic online surveys. Specific consultations were done with the voluntary and community sector, young people and migrant workers to make sure their views were included. In total 1120 people took part in the consultation.

You told us that the themes you think are most important are:

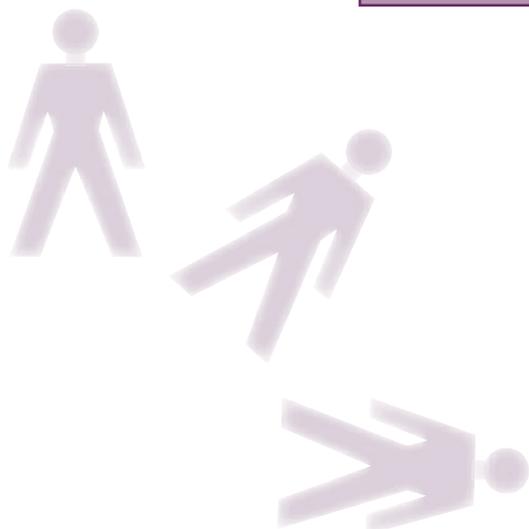
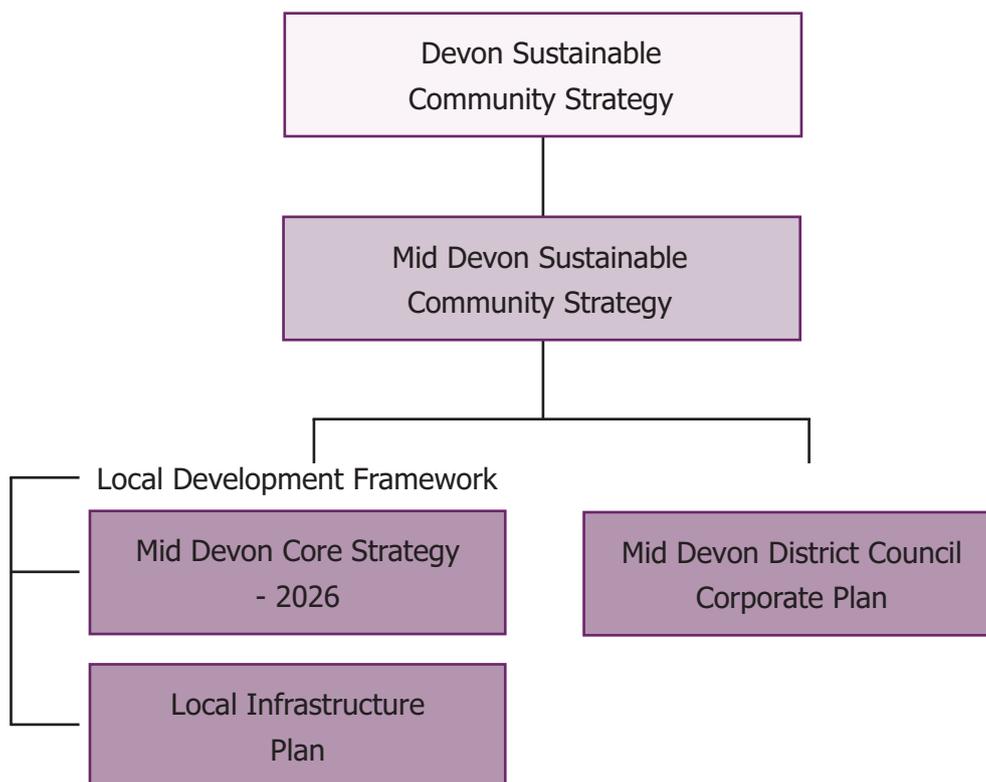
- Providing support so that older people can continue to live in their own homes
- Raising income levels
- Reducing the number of empty shops in our market towns
- Improving job opportunities & supporting young people into work
- Reducing the amount of household waste and increasing recycling
- Increasing the amount of affordable housing
- Responding to peoples' concern about anti-social behaviour
- Improving transport options in rural areas
- Improving services for children, young people and families (e.g. children's centres, schools services, youth services)
- Making sure there is enough supported housing for vulnerable people
- Providing positive activities for young people to do



National and Regional Priorities

This strategy also has to reflect the national and regional priorities set for us by central and local government. These are set out in a series of strategic documents. The key priorities that we are all meant to be working towards include improving the local economy, providing more homes, encouraging healthier lifestyles and reducing the carbon released into the air.

Key Strategic Documents



What we are going to do about it

Based on what you have told us, and taking into account the priorities we receive from local and central government, we see there are five key priorities for Mid Devon:

- Meeting Housing Needs
- Building the Local Economy
- Supporting Stronger, Healthier & Safer Communities
- Improving Access to Local Services
- Protecting the Environment.

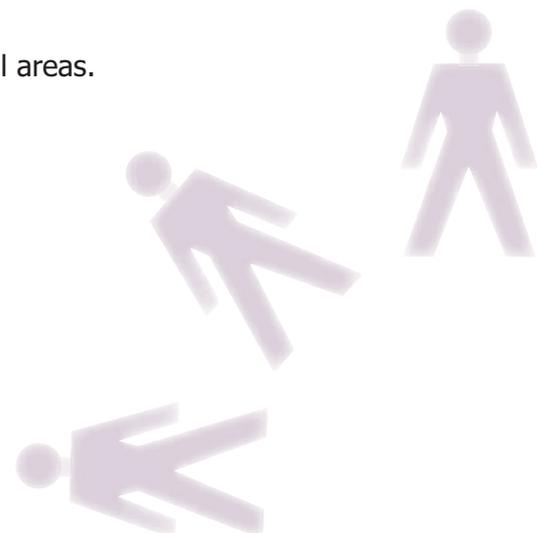
Each of these priorities has more specific objectives which give a clearer indication of what we want to achieve over the next five years:

Meeting Housing Needs:

- Increase the number of affordable housing units,
- Review the housing support needs of older people and develop an older people's strategy to meet those needs.

Building the Local Economy

- Increase the amount of land available for business development
- Work with local businesses to reduce the number of empty shops in our market towns,
- Improve training opportunities and support young people into work
- Increase broadband speeds in rural areas.



Supporting Stronger, Healthier and Safer Communities

- Respond to people's concerns about anti-social behaviour,
- Provide positive activities for young people,
- Support vulnerable communities through community-owned action plans,
- Increase emotional health, wellbeing and confidence to improve the quality of life for both older and younger people.

Improving Access to Local Services

- Support the development of key community facilities,
- Bring information about services to local areas,
- Improve community transport options for people in rural areas.

Protecting the Environment

- Reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill,
- Improve air quality in Cullompton & Crediton.

Underpinning these overall priorities, we will have special regard for the more vulnerable members of the community and in particular we will look to address the needs of

- older people
- rural communities
- priority neighbourhoods

The objectives above have been developed into an action plan with firm targets which shows what we will do to meet these objectives over the coming year. This rolling plan will be revised annually to make sure we are on target to meet our overall objectives

Some of these actions will be delivered through the planning process as detailed in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Infrastructure Plan. Others are detailed in the individual strategic documents of the partner organisations such as the District Council Corporate Plan.

Monitoring and Review

The Local Strategic Partnership will regularly monitor progress towards the targets set in the annual Action Plan at its quarterly meetings, to make sure partners are meeting their shared objectives. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually in July, and adjusted according to changing needs to keep them on track to meeting the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy. At the end of the five year cycle the Community Strategy will be completely revised to reflect new priorities.



Action Plan 2010 - 2011

Meeting Housing Needs Partner Organisations

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1.1 Deliver 90 units of affordable housing by 31st March 2011 | MDDC, RSLs |
| 1.2 Undertake a survey of the support needs for older people by Sept 2010 which will identify gaps in services and promote independence. | Age Concern, MDDC, RSLs, DCC, NHS Devon |

Building the Local Economy

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|---|--|
| 2.1 Increase the supply of industrial development land by 14,700 m ³ | MDDC, DCC |
| 2.2 Reduce the number of empty shops in Cullompton and Tiverton by 3% by March 2011 | MDDC, Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses |
| 2.3 Improve rural broadband speeds in pilot areas by February 2011 | RDPE, DDC, MDDC, Private Sector |

Supporting Stronger, Healthier and Safer Communities

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|--|--|
| 3.1 Develop a Local Action Plan for Cowley Moor, Tiverton to meet residents needs by Sept 2010 | MDDC, NHS Devon, DDC, D&C Police |
| 3.2 Provide positive activities for young people by developing a BMX track in Uffculme, and holiday playscheme in Tiverton | MDDC, DCC, Youth Service, D&C Police, TAPA |
| 3.3 Reduce violent and acquisitive crime by 5% by March 2011 ¹ | CDRP |
| 3.4 Reduce incidents of rowdy, inconsiderate or nuisance behaviour by 5% and offences of criminal damage by 3% by March 2011 | CDRP |

Improving Access to Local Services

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4.1 Provide a new library and community hub for Cullompton | DCC, Cullompton TC, MDDC |
| 4.2 Deliver 6 rural outreach events through Mid Devon Connect by March 2011 | MDDC, DCC, NHS Devon, D&C Police, Age Concern |
| 4.3 To research and pilot more integrated community transport options in the Cullompton area by March 2011 | CDCTA, Age Concern, DCC, INVOLVE |

Protecting the Environment

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 5.1 Reduce the amount of household waste going to landfill by 9% over five years | MDDC, DCC |
| 5.2 Improve air quality in Cullompton and Culliton through Air Quality Management Area action plans | MDDC |

- CDRP
Crime & Disorder
Reduction Partnership

D&C Police
Devon and Cornwall Police

DCC
Devon County Council

MDDC
Mid Devon District Council

NHS Devon
National Health
Service Devon

RDPE
Rural Development
Programme for England

RSL
Registered Social Landlord

TAPA
Tiverton Adventure
Playground Association

TC
Town Council

¹ Reduce by 5% offences of violence in a public place
 Reduce by 5% minor assault offences, namely common assault and assaults occasioning actual bodily harm
 Reduce by 3% offences of burglary dwelling
 Reduce by 5% offences of theft from motor vehicle

Local Projects

A number of communities in Mid Devon have produced parish² or market town plans³ which identify the local priorities for that community. The major projects from these plans have been listed below, together with the infrastructure projects identified in the Mid Devon Infrastructure Plan. These projects are listed to show the full range of initiatives being developed by partners in Mid Devon. They do not form part of the Sustainable Community Strategy and are being progressed by separate processes or groups. The list will be added to as part of the regular revision of the strategy to make sure the partners are aware of the number of community project being developed across the district.

	Lead Organisation	Timescale
Tiverton		
Eastern Urban Extension	MDDC	Medium
Grand Western Canal Visitor Centre	DCC	Short
Amory Park Improvements	MDDC	Short
Relocation of Clare House Doctors Surgery	NHS	
Cullompton		
Town Centre Enhancement	MDDC	Short
New Library and Community Hub	DCC	Short
New Community Hall at St. Andrews	St Andrews' Church	Short
Enhancing the historic centre of Cullompton (Walronds)		Short
Cullompton Relief Road	MDDC	Medium
Improvements to J28 M5 Cullompton		
Crediton		
Link Road		Short
QE New School		Medium
Bampton		
New Community Hall		
Millennium Green Ball Court		
Bradninch		
New Space for Young People	Bradninch TC	
Copplestone		
Sports Pavilion and Playing Field	Copplestone PC	
Kentisbeare		
New Playing Fields	Kentisbeare PC	
Uffculme		
BMX Track		

Key
Short Term - (2010 - 2014)
Medium Term - (2015 - 2020)
Long Term - (2021 - 2026)

² Including Bradninch, Burlescombe, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Culmstock, Halberton, Lapford, Newton St. Cyres, Oakford, Poughill, Sampford Peverell, Sandford, Stoodleigh, Thorverton and Willand.

³ Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton.

