

South Hams District Council Report November 2024

Councillors Alison Nix and Julie Carson

Farming tax

The immediate withdrawal of the proposed family farm tax is being called for in an urgent motion to be debated by Devon County Council. In a Notice of Motion to be discussed by the council, it is said that the imposition of inheritance tax by the Labour Government is a threat to the existence of many family farms.

It will also jeopardise this country's food security, environmental safeguards and the rural way of life which depends on farming.

A briefing paper from the House of Commons library shows Devon has over eight thousand, five hundred agricultural holdings.

More than 1.2 million acres of Devon countryside is farmed. The highest figure is North Devon with 221,000 acres, West Devon with 209,000 acres and Torridge with 191,000. Nearly 20,000 people in Devon work on farms in either a full or part-time capacity.

Highways

Unfortunately last weeks Highways meeting was cancelled. Things on the agenda include utility re-directions, parking restrictions in Down Thomas, potholes and re-surfacing as well as proposed road closures in the New Year.

Rough Sleeping Snapshot

SHDC held our Rough Sleeping Snapshot count on the evening of the 11th November, into the morning of the 12th November.

The MHCLG had indicated they were expecting higher counts this year which was in line with our expectations. The number of rough sleepers identified in South Hams was seven, which is an increase from five last year.

Whilst we cannot make people access options and support from us, two people will be supported to access accommodation with a neighbouring authority where they have a local connection and referrals have been made already. We will continue to work with the other 5 to source accommodation options. Sadly two refused to engage, although the door remains firmly open.

If you would like any information on the count or have information you would like to share in relation to rough sleepers, please contact Steve Daymond and our housing options team.

Rural Local Authorities unite

Fifty-seven local authorities across England, including South Hams District Council, have united with the Rural Services Network (RSN) to address the unique financial challenges they face and to advocate for equitable funding in the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement.

In a joint letter rural councils have come together to emphasise the need for fair resource allocation to sustain essential services in sparsely populated regions and unlock growth and prosperity in rural communities.

The letter to the Minister states ‘ Over the years, rural councils have had to increase council tax to balance the books, resulting in council tax in rural areas now being on average 20% higher per head than in urban areas.

Read the full press release here: <https://rsnonline.org.uk/rural-local-authorities-unite-to-demand-fair-funding-in-upcoming-local-government-finance-settlement>

Planning applications

Several ongoing applications which I am sure will be discussed further later this evening

Funding Opportunities

Fisheries Improvement Programme

The Environment Agency is inviting applications from angling clubs and other organisations for funding to improve the sustainability of fishing habitats and improve access and facilities for anglers.

Grants will usually be for less than £5,000 and can be used for projects such as: coarse, trout and eel habitat/passage projects; water quality management; protecting fish stocks; providing new angling platforms; and improving accessibility to enable more people to enjoy angling.

Angling clubs, fisheries, NGOs, local authorities or other community organisations involved in angling can apply. You will need to provide match funding towards the costs of your project.

Projects must involve a form of angling covered by a valid Environment Agency non-migratory trout and coarse fishing licence. Projects only benefiting salmon or sea trout, and sea angling projects are not eligible.

Focus of fund/fund aims:

Small grants for sustainable and resilient fisheries and accessible angling

Application deadline:

31 January 2025

Fund description:

<https://anglingtrust.net/funding/fisheries-improvement-programme/>

Manchester Prize: Clean Energy Systems

Funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Manchester Prize rewards UK-led breakthroughs in artificial intelligence for public good. The winner of the £1 million grand prize for the first Manchester Prize will be announced in March 2025.

Applications can now be submitted for funding through Round 2 which is focusing on clean energy systems.

The second Manchester Prize will be awarded to the most innovative and impactful AI solution enabling the UK to accelerate progress towards a net-zero energy system. Solutions should demonstrate use of AI that delivers on at least one of the following:

- accelerates the UK's adoption of clean energy technologies at scale
- enables efficient or low-cost operations of clean energy systems
- significantly reduces energy demand, or optimises energy usage

Up to 10 of the most promising solutions will each be supported with £100,000 in seed funding, up to £60,000 of compute and additional non-financial support to develop products and services capable of winning the £1 million grand prize in spring 2026.

The Manchester Prize is looking for teams of innovators, academics, scientists, engineers, start-ups and entrepreneurs to submit their solutions. Entries must come from incorporated organisations (eg. private limited companies, non-profits, charities, universities, research and technology organisations).

Focus of fund/fund aims:

A £1million challenge seeking innovative AI approaches to clean energy

Application deadline:

17 January 2025

Fund description:

<https://manchesterprize.org/about-manchester-prize-two-clean-energy-systems/>

Energy Resilience Fund

The Energy Resilience Fund (ERF) provides a blended funding package of loan and grant to help charities and social enterprises to reduce their carbon emissions and energy costs.

The funding can be used for:

- Installing energy-saving measures or generation technology to buildings or land (including new builds)
- Purchasing energy-efficient or environmentally-friendly vehicles or equipment

Funding of £25,000 to £250,000 is available via a blend of grants (40%) and loans (60%). The loan repayment term is one to ten years. Loans have a 2.5% arrangement fee and an interest rate of 8.5% fixed per annum. Loans will generally be provided unsecured.

Charities, Community Interest Companies and Community Benefit Societies can apply. [Refer to the website for further eligibility criteria.](#)

Focus of fund/fund aims:

A package of loan (60%) and grant (40%) to bolster the energy resilience of eligible charities and social enterprises

Application deadline:

Apply at any time

Fund description:

<https://www.sibgroup.org.uk/funds/energy-resilience-fund/>

Travel Safety

The winter months can be difficult for many of us, with the colder weather and shorter daylight hours affecting everything from our finances to our feelings.

We're putting together a series of special edition 'winter support and wellbeing' newsletters to share information and advice to help you and your family stay well, warm, happy and safe this winter.

This one is about travelling safely around the county when there is a risk of ice, snow, floods and fallen trees.

Be bright, be seen

We all need to take extra care over the winter months to ensure that everyone can travel safely on Devon's roads. With less daylight and greater chances of poor weather, conditions are more hazardous at this time of year.

Pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders can make themselves more visible to passing vehicles by wearing bright, fluorescent and reflective clothing.

Motorists can help by reducing their speed and only overtaking when it is safe to do so, passing slowly and allowing plenty of room.

Driving in winter

Winter weather can make roads treacherous and with over 90 per cent of all crashes attributed to human error, the real key to driving in winter is to drive with due care for the conditions.

It's important to make sure that your car is ready for winter. Well-maintained tyres are vital to give you traction and grip on icy, wet surfaces. Check your wiper blades and screen wash too as in winter your windscreen can get a very dirty from rain, snow, ice and road salt.

Before you set off, you'll need to make sure there's no mist, ice or snow obscuring your windscreen, windows and mirrors. Not doing so can impede your vision while driving, which means you will be driving illegally.

It can be difficult to see clearly when it's raining, snowing or foggy, so use dipped headlights and watch out for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. The low winter sun can also cause glare on the windscreen, so use sunglasses or your sun visor.

Many drivers underestimate the slipperiness of the road when wet. Research suggests braking distances can be doubled with rain and multiplied by 10 on snow or ice, so reduce your speed and leave more space between you and the vehicle in front.

Don't assume a road has been salted. Our primary salting network covers 20 per cent of Devon's roads, but this means that 80 per cent of roads are not routinely salted. Rain will wash salt off roads leaving them prone to ice, and in extreme cold even salting will not stop ice from forming.

Never drive through floodwater or swollen flowing water, you don't know how deep it is. Vehicles can become stuck and even swept away in just 30cm of flowing water. And if it is windy, beware of strong gusts and debris on the road.

If driving conditions are bad, allow extra time for your journey. Please also think about whether you really need to travel, and if you do, consider making your journey by rail or bus.

More information about how you can help keep Devon's roads safe in winter is available on the DCC website.

Cycling in winter

The colder, wetter weather can make cycling more challenging but that doesn't mean you need to put your bike away.

During winter months, we are de-icing cycling paths in the county's biggest city to support active travel. We first began a trial of gritting Exeter's main cycle routes in winter 2021, and have since extended the scheme to over 14 miles of trails across the city where more than 1,000 daily trips take place as well as areas that have connectivity with roads.

Light levels are lower during the day in the winter months, so wearing bright, light coloured, or hi-vis clothing means you're more likely to be seen by other road users. When cycling at night you're legally required to have a white front light and a red rear light which must be clean and working properly. Reflectors should also be fitted to pedals and the rear of your bike.

Icy or slushy conditions can be dangerous, so if you slow down, you'll be more able to see and avoid any patches more easily. Like cars, stopping distances on a bike increase when its wet or icy, so apply both brakes smoothly to avoid locking the wheels, and make sure you've done all of your braking before you start cornering.

Remember, if rain is heavy, the wind is howling, the roads are icy, or you just don't fancy cycling, then travel another way. The most important thing is for you to be safe and feel happy!

Whether you're a first-time rider or a regular cyclist looking to improve your skills, we have free cycle training sessions on offer for children and adults in Devon.

Public transport

If you are worried about driving during winter weather, public transport can help you get where you need to go.

Our primary salting network includes the bus loop of Park and Ride sites and bus routes with a service interval of at least 15 minutes within any one hour of the day, in one direction of travel or where a combination of multiple bus services meets this criteria.

Where problems have been identified on routes with a service interval of at least 30 minutes within any one hour of the day, we include them on our secondary salting network.

DCC also grit main highway access to mainline and branch line railway stations.

Grit bins

We provide 3,500 grit bins at known trouble-spots such as steep hills and frost hollows on roads that are not normally treated by our gritters. It is so that communities can help keep roads and pavements in their area free from ice.

The grit in these bins must only be used to treat public roads and pavements, not private property, such as driveways.

Careful consideration has been given to where these bins are located, including the proximity to major routes, traffic speed and volumes and the particular gradient or bends of the road.

We refill them when we are made aware that they are empty, so please report an empty bin to us via our website. You can also report a damaged bin or a bin with contents that are unusable. Alternatively, you can contact the Roads and Transport team on 0345 155 1004. You will need to provide the location and, if there is a label inside the bin lid, please also provide the reference number.

Snow Wardens

Our snow warden scheme continues to provide additional support for communities as part of our winter self-help scheme.

The 325 volunteer snow wardens across the county treat their priority routes during prolonged spells of severe weather.

Find out more about Devon's snow warden scheme on our communities webpages or contact Parish Council representatives who can liaise with their local Neighbourhood Highway Officer.

Ready, spready, go!

Ahead of winter our gritting depots across the county are fully stocked with around 24,000 tonnes of salt ready for our fleet of 37 frontline gritters. We also have 10 reserve gritters and other various equipment for snow clearance.

When we salt

Salting is usually carried out when roads are forecast to be at, or below, freezing temperature, or when snow is forecast.

The decision to call our gritters into action is based on road temperatures, not air temperatures, and our Network Operations Control Centre (NOCC), which runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, is fully equipped to monitor the effects of winter weather on our roads. Radar and satellite images are used to track rain and cloud cover across the county, and we have close links with our specialised weather forecasters.

The systems at the control centre also link to our network of 38 roadside ice detectors, at strategic locations across the county, which provide live information that helps us predict when ice and snow may occur. This means that we can quickly identify and treat major roads on our salting routes that are freezing and direct gritters to the worst affected areas.

Where we salt

We can't salt all roads in Devon as this would be an enormous and costly task.

Motorway and trunk roads are the responsibility of National Highways, so we don't salt those either.

But we do salt the 2,650 kilometres (1,650 miles) of major routes where the majority of vehicles travel, as well as access points to emergency services such as hospitals and fire stations, railways, airports and secondary schools. This is known as our primary salting network, and covers 20 per cent of Devon's roads.

We are also continuing a trial to treat some of Exeter's busiest cycle routes to help people to use active travel all year round.

However, please don't presume a road has been treated, even if it's on a salting route. Rain may occasionally delay treatment leaving roads liable to freezing until they are salted. And in the case of snow, it takes time and traffic for salt to melt it.

Details of our salting routes can be found on our website.

Flooding

It's a good idea to think about what actions you can take to protect yourself from flooding as it can happen very quickly and the effects can be devastating.

Visit the Government's website to check for the risk of flood in your area. If your home or business is at risk of flooding, you can sign up for free flood warnings from the Environment Agency.

In the event of flooding, you can speak to specially trained Flood Support Officers 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. They can offer you immediate advice on flood risk, and what to do before, during and after a flood.

Reporting problems

The best way to report any problems on our roads is through our website. You will be given a reference number so you can track the progress of the problem you report.

Our 'report a problem' webpage

If you are reporting an emergency on the highway that requires immediate attention (something that is very likely to present an imminent threat to life or serious injury or serious damage to property), please call us on 0345 155 1004.

National Highways look after the M5 motorway and trunk roads in Devon – they can be contacted on 0300 123 5000.

Staying up to date

Our Network Operations Control Centre (NOCC) team regularly post updates on social media with the latest travel information and advice. You can follow Devon Alert on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Instagram.

School closure information is available on our website, but please also refer to your school's website for further details on individual school arrangements.

More from our winter support and wellbeing series

As part of our 'winter support and wellbeing' series, we sent subscribers a special edition newsletter about the things you can do to look after your physical and mental health during the colder months. If you missed it in your inbox you can read it online [here](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDEVONCC/bulletins/3bae9c0).

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDEVONCC/bulletins/3bae9c0>

Keeping Healthy

The winter months can be difficult for many of us, with the colder weather and shorter daylight hours affecting everything from our finances to our feelings.

Stay warm

One of the best ways to keep yourself well during winter is to stay warm, as this can help to prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

With the high cost of living at the moment, it's tempting to try and ride out the cold weather to avoid spending too much on heating. But being cold can have a serious impact on your health, particularly if you're older or have a pre-existing condition.

If you can't heat your whole home, it's important to try to heat the rooms you spend the most time in (for example, the living room during the day and the bedroom just before going to sleep) to at least 18°C.

Simple, low-cost changes can also help to keep you and your home warm, such as fitting draught excluders to doors, keeping windows closed, wearing several thin layers of clothing rather than one thick one, having hot food and drinks and moving around often rather than sitting still.

Heating your home safely

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service want to make sure that you heat your home safely this winter.

They're asking everyone to make sure that they have a working smoke alarm on every level of their property so you're alerted quickly in the event of a fire. They also recommend having a carbon monoxide alarm in any room where fuel is burnt as there's a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. So that's rooms with boilers, cookers, ovens, open fires and wood burners for example.

If you're using a portable heater, they recommend an oil-filled one rather than anything with a visible heating element. Choose a heater with a trip switch (this means it will switch off if knocked over), and make sure it's always on a flat surface, at least one metre away from anything flammable.

If you have an open fire or log burner, get your chimney swept by a professional chimney sweep before you start using it as dirty chimneys can lead to chimney fires. It's also important to make sure you're burning the correct fuel. Some types of wood can be highly toxic when burned, so you can't just burn anything. You must burn seasoned (specially dried) wood, smokeless fuels or coal.

Visit the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service website for more advice about staying warm safely this winter.

Winter vaccinations

The risk from viruses is greater during winter when they circulate most as people spend more time indoors, so it's important to take up the NHS vaccination offer if you're eligible. Vaccines provide vital protection to keep people from developing serious illnesses and ending up in hospital during busy winter months.

Many people get seriously ill from flu, including having complications like

bronchitis or pneumonia, and every winter thousands of people die. COVID-19 can also still make people seriously ill. Getting vaccinated every year against flu and COVID-19 will top up your protection and reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms. Even if you have had previous flu and COVID-19 vaccinations or have had one of the viruses, get vaccinated as protection will fade and both viruses can change over time. Visit the NHS website to find out more about who is eligible for winter vaccinations, and how to book your jab.

The NHS also offers vaccines for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a common cause of coughs and colds which can be dangerous to older people and young children. The jab is available to those aged 75 to 79 years old, and offered to pregnant women from 28 weeks, to protect their child, along with the whopping cough vaccine after 16 weeks of pregnancy.

Wash your hands please

Cases of infectious illnesses can increase over winter, including highly contagious infections such as flu and norovirus, also called the 'winter vomiting bug'. These can make all of us unwell and can be especially serious for those of us who are more vulnerable, like the elderly and those people with certain health conditions.

Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others from catching these viruses and help reduce the pressures on healthcare services. Washing your hands properly removes dirt, viruses and bacteria to stop them spreading to other people and objects and can help stop the spread of common winter infections. If you do not have immediate access to soap and water, then use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Keeping your kids healthy this school year

The Government's UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is reminding parents of the simple steps they can take to reduce the spread of stomach bugs and winter illnesses to ensure that their family stays healthy.

Regularly washing your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser, is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of germs. The UKHSA's e-bug resources can help you to explain and discuss hygiene habits and their importance, to your child or teenager.

Stomach bugs spread easily in schools and nurseries, so it's important not to return to school, nursery or work until 48 hours after diarrhoea and vomiting symptoms have stopped. Visit the NHS website for more guidance about managing winter illness at home. Children aged two and three years old and all primary school and secondary school aged children up to Year 11 are eligible for the flu vaccine. It's also important to ensure your children are up-to-date with their routine vaccinations, which protect against diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria and polio.

Don't forget to download the HANDi app for up-to-date advice about common childhood illnesses and how to treat them. Parents answer a series of questions about the symptoms their child is

experiencing. The app then advises on the best course of action, whether that's to treat at home, to make a GP appointment, or to head to A&E.

Get advice if you feel unwell

It is important to get medical help as soon as you feel unwell, particularly if more vulnerable to the effects of cold weather.

You can get help and advice from:

a pharmacy – pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor

your GP – you may be able to speak to a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to

NHS 111 – go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111 if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do

The sooner you get advice, the sooner you're likely to get better.

In an emergency, go to A&E immediately or call 999.

Look out for other people

Remember that other people, such as older neighbours, friends and family members, may need a bit of extra help over the winter, so keep in touch with them regularly and ask if they need any practical help, or if they're feeling under the weather.

Icy pavements and roads can be very slippery, and cold weather can stop people from getting out and about. Make sure they're stocked up with enough food supplies for a few days, in case they can't go out. If they do need to go out in the cold, encourage them to wear shoes with a good grip and a scarf around the mouth to protect them from the cold air, and to reduce their risk of chest infections.

If they need help when the GP practice or pharmacy is closed or they're not sure what to do, NHS 111 can help. The service is available online at 111.nhs.uk and also by phone. By answering questions about their health problem they will be told what to do and where to go.

Prescriptions

Make sure you get your prescription medicines in good time and before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for the festive holidays.

You can order prescriptions via GP or pharmacy websites, by calling them, or through NHS-approved apps.

If you can't get out, ask a friend, relative or volunteer to collect medicines for you.

You can also order your repeat prescriptions through the NHS App, as well as make GP appointments and access a range of other online NHS services.

Supporting children to eat well this winter

Having a well balanced diet all year round is important, but eating healthily in winter is crucial for supporting your immune system, which defends the body against common viruses such as colds and flu, which are more likely to circulate during the winter.

But this can be expensive, and many families in Devon who are struggling financially are worrying about how to afford household essentials. We want to make sure that no child in Devon goes hungry in the school holidays, so we are supporting low-income families to help put food on the table this winter.

Supermarket vouchers worth £45 will be sent to each child currently eligible for free school meals during term time, to spend during the Christmas holiday and February half-term break to replace the meals they would have had at school during the day. More detailed information about our free school meals holiday voucher scheme is available on our website.

You can apply for free school meals for your child on our website, and you'll get an instant decision. Or you can call our education helpline on 0345 155 1019. If you have applied unsuccessfully before and your financial circumstances have since changed, please apply again.

If you're more than ten weeks pregnant or have a child under four-years-old, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food, such as fresh, frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried, and tinned pulses and cows milk. If you're eligible, you'll be sent a Healthy Start card with money added to it every four weeks. You can also use your card for infant formula milk based on cow's milk and to collect vitamins for you and vitamin drops for babies and young children. To find out more, visit the NHS website.

Festive fun with the Holiday Activities and Food programme

Winter brings shorter, wetter, colder days which means children often spend much more time indoors and might not be able to get together with their friends as often.

The school holidays can be particularly difficult, especially for low-income families who may not be able to afford to take part in lots of activities. So we've teamed up with over 60 different providers across Devon to offer a great range of free indoor and outdoor activities to children aged five to 16-years-old, who receive benefit-related free school meals.

They will have the opportunity to develop new skills or knowledge and try out new experiences in a safe and sociable environment. This could include physical activities such as football, table tennis or cricket; creative activities, for example, arts and crafts or drumming workshops or other experiences like a nature walk or visiting a farm. They'll also get to enjoy a healthy meal.

Bookings will open on Monday 25 November, and details of activities can be found on our interactive map. If your child is eligible to access the programme, simply search for a provider in your area, have a look at their listing to see what they're offering, then when you're ready, book a place with them directly.

Blue winter?

For some people, the dark days and cold weather of winter can have a negative impact on their motivation, mood and productivity, leaving them feeling sluggish, tired and struggling to do the things we normally enjoy.

The lack of sunlight during winter is a big factor in this, so getting outside for just 10 minutes a day if you can is really helpful. If you can't get outside, then open your blinds and curtains and sit by the window.

It's also easy to become isolated over the winter months, but too much time alone can lead to feelings of loneliness. Try to catch up regularly with friends and family, either in person or by phone. And if you want to meet new people, volunteering is a great way to do this and give back to your local community at the same time.

Looking after your physical health can make a difference to how you feel emotionally. If you can, try and do some regular physical activity during the winter. Physical activity can be very effective in lifting mood and increasing energy levels. It doesn't have to be anything too strenuous. It could be yoga or walking, or even activities like housework or gardening get your moving.

Cold days, warm libraries

Libraries across Devon are continuing to throw their doors open to help communities find warmth and stay well this winter.

Staff and volunteers are pulling out all the stops to make sure people feel welcomed and supported with a range of activities and offers such as community events, free hot drinks and rails full of warm coats for anyone who needs one.

Library teams will be devising their own programmes of services for individual communities, considering customer need for their particular location. To find out what Libraries Unlimited are planning as part of their Cold Days, Warm Libraries campaign, keep an eye on their website or visit your nearest library's website. You can join any of the Devon libraries for free by visiting Libraries Unlimited's Devon website.

The Minister for water and flooding Emma Hardy has announced "the tax payer funded contribution to water and sewage bills of SWW (South West Water) household customers will end after 31st March 2025. Inevitably this will lead to higher household bills.

Government advice for producers and farmers storing sludge on a farm.

You must design and build the sludge storage unit so that:

- 1/. It is secure from public access
- 2/. Doesn't cause public nuisance from odour
- 3/. Doesn't leak and cause pollution.

www.gov.uk

Sherford

There will be a Heritage evening 4th December at 6pm in Sherford Vale School, all welcome.

We are currently working with the consortium on getting various items of street furniture.

We are working hard with the NHS to get a doctors surgery, this is an ongoing discussion.

There are concerns still regarding speeding and pavement parking. We are working with the consortium and the police to try and rectify these issues. The deputy police constable has offered to come and discuss issues residents may have if a date could be agreed.

We have been dealing with a few residents who have been over enthusiastic with their Christmas decorations spilling out onto the pavement, light disturbance and constant pump noises disturbing the neighbours.

Brixton

We have been assisting a couple of residents who live in Venn Court try and get relocated due to ongoing issues.

Carroll Island

We have been contacted by a number of residents to get dog poo bins installed. Currently in discussion with ManCo (management company) in regard to litter bins and collections.

Finally Citizens advice have detailed the help they have given to Brixton and Wembury ward.

They helped 89 clients with 660 issues.

Income gain for those clients £63,922

Debts written off £29,000

They did say that 2023/24 has been the busiest on record.