Chairperson's report to the Annual General Meeting July 2026

First of all, thank you to all Core Group members, who have attended our regular monthly meetings at the Teignmouth Inn, contributed and helped plan and run Sustainable Dawlish Events during 2025- 2026. Also to wider members who join in to support us in the running of specific events in which they share an interest.

My thanks go to Ian Shields for using his networking abilities to good effect, making bookings and using his financial acumen to support our organisation as Treasurer;

to Laura Mattison who has managed our Social Media presence and designed publicity posters and flyers for our Events;

to David Bailey, who has been working steadily towards the reinstatement of the Dawlish Produce Market;

to Scott Williams, who has shared his knowledge and enabled links with other organisations to remain strong as an ACT Wildlife Warden, a member of the Dawlish Town Council, and founder of WADE seeking to ensure the health of our rivers and sea, the rewilding of the Brook, and organiser of the annual Turn the Tide Festival in partnership with Dawlish Town Council.

to Laura Mattison and Melinda MacDougall, who have shared in the production of Core group minutes in the absence of the Secretary role being filled;

to Sue Brader, who has continued to update the Sustainable Dawlish website in the background.

Climate and Nature Action taken in 2025-2026

We have continued our Clean Sea to Swim, Clean River for Fish Campaign:

During the past year, Dawlish has had a period of upheaval during the South West Water works to install storm water collection tanks beneath Teignbridge Council owned areas under the Lawn, at Sandy Lane car park, and a wet well chamber and pump chamber under the Crazy Golf and Viaduct area, in order to separate storm water from the Sewage system and stop outflow overwhelm into the sea. A Transition (lottery funded) Our Green Futures grant from Sustainable Dawlish and Turn the Tide partnership during 2024 enabled WADE citizen science monitoring of pollution levels has after storm events, during the 2025 Autumn, Winter and Spring 2026 periods when the Environment Agency are not funded to monitor pollution incidents. This has revealed that the Brook is subject not only to road run off pollution but also agricultural run off pollution and waste water from business entering the Brook and affecting it as a habitat too. A Community grant is being investigated to support further work in this area.

Meanwhile South West Water have continued to discharge sewage into the sea from their combined Sewer outflows in the area and the Viaduct outflow, alone, released waste water onto the Town Beach area for 1229.62 hours over the last year including a flushing out release which lasted from the 31st March until 21st May 2026. (Surfers Against Sewage data). Were local swimmers made aware of this at the time?

'Top of the Poops' website has publicised that there were 392 sewage dumps in Dawlish by SWW in 2025, lasting for 1465 hours, an increase of 432 hours over 2024. Worse dumping behaviour…

Sustainable Dawlish hosted the 'Jo in the Water' Film supported by CAG Devon, at The Strand Centre, to raise awareness of the issue; including the class action that is taking place which was started in Exmouth across the Exe Estuary. Thank you to Ian for coordinating, and inviting a panel of experts to answer audience questions within a lively discussion afterwards. The film was very well attended including regular Coryton Cove sea swimmers.

Plans for an 'incredible edible' growing area in central Dawlish:

South West Water used the York Gardens area of the Lawn for their Plant site area, and at the 2025 AGM, we were approached on behalf of Rachel Hardy and Jane Thomas to support the SWW reinstatement of the flowerbed area with a design which included incredible edible style beds that could be maintained by local residents. There were a few different designs submitted to Teignbridge including one from Toby Buckland, similar to the planting that existed before. The decision was made by Teignbridge Green Spaces Manager to disregard resident cared for growing beds in the final planting decision. Instead, the Strand Centre has been allotted a bedding area on the Lawn to extend their growing area from outside the Community Centre.

This is a shame because yet again there is no growing area in Central Dawlish for people who would like to raise fruit and vegetables but have no garden. As a result, I have revived the conversation with Devon Estates to find out if we can get permission to plant a Community Orchard, and perhaps growing beds on an area of DCC land at Westcliff Road. There has been little progress: in April I was able to verify the site with them but there has been no response since.

Reduce, Re- Use and Recycle

With the support of a grant from Recycle Devon, we hosted a Household Items Swap during Reuse Week on 24th August at The Riverside Centre. This was the first time we have tried this 'give and take' idea. It was free to take part and we publicised it widely. It was not as well attended as we would have hoped but enabled green focused conversations to take place and we were pleased to welcome Susan Lang as a Core Group member, following this event.

On the Re-Use theme and to seek to extend our Clothes Swaps- save energy, Co2 emissions and unwanted items from landfill, we applied for a small CAG Devon grant to be able to extend our activity to North East Dawlish, whilst continuing to hold regular swaps in Central Dawlish:

People buy beyond their needs and throw away up to 49% of used textiles annually as black bin waste and general waste at Recycling Centres. (WRAP 2024)

Moreover, a Guardian investigation has concluded that only 10 to 30% of clothing items donated to Charity Shops are sold there- the rest will be redistributed to rag merchants who pay a low price per tonne for open loop recycling (469 tonnes) ; or sent for incineration and energy recovery (638 tonnes), or exported to poorer countries (421 tonnes), who are then left with the problem of disposal of mixed fibre fast fashion items that are very difficult to recycle and will pollute the environment as landfill in their own Countries, and can also affect their own cultural heritage production of clothing adversely.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has stated that only 1% of fibres are reclaimed to create new clothing (34 tonnes in comparison).

The new garment industry contributes 10% to global emissions, and 60% fibres produced annually originate from fossil fuels. Within the UK sector alone, there is a significant carbon footprint and high water use.

https://www.alderbioinsights.co.uk/news-and-insights/insights/textile-waste-and-recycling-challenges-and-opportunities

The CAG Devon grant supported our Autumn /Winter Clothes Swap at The Methodist Church Hall in central Dawlish and had 35 attendees, and 79 swaps took place, with 7kg saved as a starter pack and 2kg donated to Charity.

The Spring 2026 Swap took place in N.E. Dawlish with a different clientele following the Ladies Breakfast at The Hope Centre. The Event encouraged 29 attendees with 61 items swapped and 10 kg saved for the next one. However we were left with a lot of donated items and took 22kg to a Charity Shop afterwards.

We also ran a Summer Clothes Swap in June, again at The Methodist Church, however disappointingly the attendance was very low, only 13 people came, due to high winds and heavy rain. There were 25 swaps, 10 kg saved for the next one and over 7.5 kg donated to Charity.

Our next Clothes Swap is booked to take place at The Hope Centre, in October 2026, following the Ladies Breakfast again. We'll find out then how successful the first one held there has been in encouraging more people to swap than buy new, or throw away.

A funding application has been made to support future Clothes Swap Events, with reimbursed funds available in 2027.

After Christmas, we decided we would have another go at 'Give and Take'… A Household Item and Toy Swap was organised and run at The Strand Community Centre in January 2026 where people were invited to bring along household items and toys they no longer use or require to swap for items that they could make use of. The aim of the event was to save useable unwanted items from the dustbin and ultimately landfill.

The Core group organisers were hoping that in staging the event at a central location, well used by the local Community, that it would encourage lots of participation.

The hire charge for the Event was kindly waived by the Strand Centre Manager and the Event was promoted widely throughout the Town and to local Primary Schools. It was supported by our members and a good number of swaps took place despite low participation considering our publicity drive. However, we were left with a lot of items at the end – bric a brac items were donated to The Strand Centre for their funds, and toys to The Red Cross Charity shop.

Climate and Nature Crisis

A much better attended Event at The Strand Centre hosted by Sustainable Dawlish was an evening showing of The People's Emergency Briefing (2026) in with leading climate scientists sharing their knowledge to ensure that people are fully informed about the Climate and Nature crisis and what the implications are for our health, food systems, national security and economy.The Hall was full and a facilitated discussion took place after the film. It was a salutary watch given how long Climate and Nature breakdown has been unfolding and how little has been done to turn matters around by succeeding Governments, and how little the public have been made aware of the issues. People were asked to sign a petition calling for the film to be broadcast nationally. Thank you to Ian for organising the Event.

Many groups are hosting the film across the Country and since then over 2 thousand screenings have taken place there are linked zoom meetings taking place so that more groups can get involved. I sent the link to leader of Schools in Dawlish and local area so that they could watch and decide whether to organise a screening for their Staff Teams and Communities.

Turn The Tide Festival

During Summer 2026 we took part in the Turn the Tide Festival, at Dawlish School. The theme this year was 'Keeping Dawlish Cool' and Laura and I made a flag to fit in with the theme to be displayed at the Festival and used at future Events, with the message 'Plant More Trees'.

Flag created using donated fabric from Exeter Scrapstore

I propose that we save and pot on any tree seedlings we find that have germinated and are growing on our land / gardens to hold a tree seedling give away in late November 2026. There are usually Devon Wildlife Trust Events where more free tree giveaways can be picked up and so we may be able to host an event based around planting more trees.

We decided to have the theme of endangered garden birds on our Turn the Tide Stand and created a display to give visitors to our Stand more information, and also to create a hanging bird craft activity for families to take part in.

Our Stand was also pleased to host the Democracy Meter.

Altogether it was a very successful day, and pleasant being situated outside. Thanks to Scott and organisers for the provision of the Gazebo for the day.

Sustainable Dawlish Turn the Tide Festival Display

Devon Open Home Event

We have registered to take part in the Open Home Event to enable people to find out more about the benefits of Renewable energy systems, retrofit and rewilding during the first two weekend of October 2026. We have two homes taking part so far and one possible in Dawlish itself, and are working with Fuad of ACT to join the directory. It would be great to include more so it would be good to have a call out on social media to be able to include any other possible homes who could be involved.

Carolyn Ballard

Chairperson

Sustainable Dawlish 2025-2026