

Communities urged to set up deal to improve broadband

COUNCILLORS are backing communities to get West Devon off the foot of the UK's Broadband table by setting up their own schemes.

West Devon and Torridge are languishing in 612th place from 650 parliamentary constituencies for Broadband connectivity — with Central Devon just two slots above them.

That means they are worse off than such isolated places as the High Peaks in Derbyshire and only 38 places higher than the constituency at the very bottom of the pile, the Okney Islands in Scotland.

Now West Devon Borough councillors are looking to help roll out schemes similar to one set up by residents of Sydenham Damerel, who brokered their own broadband-boosting

deal with BT Openreach. Director of customer service delivery Steve Mullineaux told the council's hub committee: 'The rationale is that effective Broadband is a factor that impacts all aspects of the borough.'

'For small start-up businesses it is a key avenue to market, for school children, a key educational tool, by enabling home working it can reduce commuting and have a positive impact on climate change and of course in the current pandemic for individuals and communities it can help reduce isolation and for some is a lifeline.'

'Therefore in conclusion, effective Broadband solutions impact on the economic prosperity and the health and well-being of our individuals and communities within the borough.'

Mr Mullineaux said



● Effective broadband has been essential through the pandemic.

Sydenham Damerel Community Fibre Partnership had been 'exemplary' in setting up their deal, which was close to seeing engineer-

ing work started, but effectively needed the council to underwrite it. That carried some risk, as the council may be liable if not enough money is

raised to fund it, although that was unlikely.

He said it was proposed to use Sydenham Damerel scheme as a template for other groups.

MP welcomes shop hours extension

Nativity festival

ST John's Church in Horrabridge will once again be putting on its Festival of Nativity Scenes — albeit in a slightly different way this