

The data centre: what the Council knew, and when

When the Devon Data Campus proposals reached residents in June 2026 they were presented as new. The information in this sheet comes from emails, meeting logs and pre-application papers released by Torridge District Council under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations, together with the developer's own briefing to the Council. Those records show that the Council had been in discussion with the developer about the Valeon data centre for around fifteen months before residents were told, had written in support of it in April 2025, and held a submission date well in advance. This sheet sets out that sequence, date by date, from the records themselves. It covers the data centre only. Names and roles in the released material was redacted.

Date	What the records show	How we know
25 March 2025	Earliest dated contact on record between the Council and the developer. A meeting is logged under "Data Centres/BESS". Its content and attendees have not been released.	Council meeting log
10 April 2025	The Council issues the developer a letter of in-principle support for the data centre, before any Environmental Statement existed and before any public consultation. The letter itself has been requested and not yet released.	Developer's April 2026 briefing to the Council
15 May 2025	The Council holds a briefing for councillors on the proposal, which the developer later describes as having received a "positive reception". Attendees and slides not yet released.	Developer's April 2026 briefing to the Council
4 July and 28 August 2025	Further meetings logged. At the 28 August meeting, at the Council offices, the developer's consultants said they intended to submit an EIA Scoping Report "around Halloween" 2025.	Council meeting log; Council email correspondence
24 September 2025	Meeting with Xlinks logged. Content and attendees not released.	Council log of meeting dates with Xlinks
6 to 9 October 2025	The developer's consultants tell the Council the Scoping Report has slipped to January 2026 and ask about roadworks and highway contacts. A Devon County Council highways officer passes the query to a colleague because the site is "too close to where I live to offer a neutral response".	Council email correspondence
13 to 22 October 2025	The consultants send the councils a desktop Access Strategy for construction and operational traffic. Devon County Council asks whether the scheme will be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project or a normal planning application, and raises road widths and "a load of big sheds".	Council email correspondence
6 November 2025	A Council officer files a copy of the Council's own pre-application advice letter for the data centre (ref FPEM/0140/2025) on its internal records system.	Council email correspondence
16 to 23 December 2025	In-person meeting between the Council, the developer and Xlinks, followed by a detailed Council email on matters "outside the Planning process itself": training and skills (colleges and head teachers to be briefed before any public communications), transport (an "ebus" to Tiverton), and a communications and stakeholder engagement plan. The developer names leads for each workstream.	Council meeting log; Council email correspondence
26 January 2026	The consultants say scoping has been brought forward "due to grid connection deadlines" and they will move straight to EIA. The Council replies that there has been "limited engagement recently" and that a Planning Performance Agreement is now required before further meetings.	Council email correspondence
31 March 2026	The Council sets its Planning Performance Agreement fees and confirms one "is appropriate for this proposal". The consultants re-engage Devon County Council on traffic surveys and arrange a progress meeting for 20 April.	Council email correspondence
13 April 2026	Devon County Council's highways review records road widths of 2.0 to 5.5 metres, HGV swept path concerns and a Section 50 licence requirement, and references LTN1/20 and rural road design criteria.	Council email correspondence

Date	What the records show	How we know
16 to 22 April 2026	Updated project information circulated ahead of the 20 April meeting. A Council officer records internally that the developer has “advised for submission in March 2027” .	Council email correspondence
20 April 2026	Meeting between the Council planning team and the project team on the evolving layout, application strategy and EIA requirements.	Council meeting log; Council email correspondence
21 to 30 April 2026	The consultants ask for a landscape site visit. Offered dates in late May, Xlinks presses that “this is quite a wait, and will impact the programme” and asks the Council to “get another Landscape specialist”. The consultants send Zone of Theoretical Visibility drawings (dated 18 November 2024, showing named data centre buildings up to 40 metres tall) on 23 April; within three hours the Council forwards them to an external landscape architect. The visit takes place on 30 April. The Council twice asks for written confirmation that its costs are recoverable “given that no PPA has yet been agreed”; Xlinks confirms on 29 April. No PPA is signed.	Council email correspondence
15 May to 12 June 2026	Meetings with Xlinks logged on 15 May, 22 May and 12 June. On 21 May Xlinks asks for a meeting on 22 June, before a councillors’ briefing, to discuss “community benefit for Valeon”; the Council offers the week of 15 June instead, citing officer leave.	Council log of meeting dates with Xlinks; Council email correspondence
19 June 2026	Xlinks circulates its “Devon Data Campus” newsletter to the Council for distribution to homes within two miles of the site. This is the point at which the proposals were presented to residents as new.	Council email correspondence; Council log of meeting dates with Xlinks
1 July 2026	Meeting with Xlinks logged. Latest date on record. Content not released.	Council log of meeting dates with Xlinks

What the records show

- The Council and the developer were in contact from at least **25 March 2025**, some fifteen months before residents were told. A letter of in-principle support followed within a fortnight, and councillors were briefed within two months, all before any environmental assessment or public consultation.
- The Council’s own written pre-application advice on the data centre was on file by **6 November 2025**. The developer’s visibility drawings, showing named buildings up to 40 metres tall, are dated **18 November 2024**, nineteen months before the public launch.
- The Council received and commented on an access strategy, a traffic survey scoping note and visibility drawings, and held a submission date of **March 2027**, well before any of this was shared with residents.
- In December 2025 the Council and the developer were working together on training, transport and a communications plan, expressly “outside the Planning process itself”, five weeks before the Council described engagement as “limited”.
- A Devon County Council officer stood aside in October 2025 because the site was too close to home. The released records show no equivalent step at Torridge District Council.
- The Council moved within hours when the developer pressed on the landscape visit in April 2026. It has not yet released the 10 April 2025 support letter, the May 2025 briefing papers, or minutes of any of the meetings logged.

Key point: By the time residents first heard of the Devon Data Campus in June 2026, Torridge District Council had been in discussion with the developer for over a year, had written in support of the data centre, had briefed its councillors, had received drawings and traffic material, had given its own written pre-application advice, and knew the intended submission date. None of this was shared with the public.

Sources: Torridge District Council Data Centres/BESS meeting log, email correspondence between the developer, its consultants, Torridge District Council and Devon County Council (October 2025 to June 2026), and the pre-application advice letter for the data centre (FPEM/0140/2025), all released by Torridge District Council under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (ref #11154, response dated 18 August 2026); Torridge District Council log of meeting dates with Xlinks (FOI ref FS Case 852629324); developer’s briefing to Torridge District Council, 13 April 2026 (Document Ref 319327-REP-LPA-001). Names and roles in the released material have been redacted. The 10 April 2025 letter and 15 May 2025 briefing papers have been requested (ref DDC/EIR/001) and are awaited.