

## Hampshire County Councillor Update 55

Dear All

Thank goodness January is over. Hopefully some end in sight not only to the dark mornings and evenings but also the seemingly endless rain!

The weather has of course impacted our roads. So, a bit of information this month about the work ongoing to repair the inevitable potholes caused at this time of year given the amount of water about.

Here's the latest update.

### Highways Information



#### Winter Weather and Our Roads

Since Christmas, the combination of freezing temperatures and relentless rain has taken a real toll on Hampshire's roads. The constant freeze-thaw cycle is exactly the kind of weather that accelerates potholes and surface deterioration, and we've seen a sharp rise in reports as a result.

Despite this, Hampshire's Highways Team has already repaired more than **62,000 defects** since the start of the financial year — an enormous effort given the conditions.

To keep pace with the extra demand, Highways have secured additional crews and machinery, even as councils across the country compete for the same resources. You'll now see more Jet/Dragon Patchers out on the network, extra patching gangs already working since early January, and further teams joining in the coming weeks.

Alongside pothole repairs, winter weather is also putting pressure on drainage systems. Extra jetting machines are now available to help manage localised flooding, and a dedicated team is responding to drainage issues as they arise. We've also added an extra white-lining crew to tackle worn markings at smaller sites.

Given the sheer volume of defects, some potholes will need temporary infill repairs to keep roads safe while permanent repairs are scheduled. It's not ideal, but it's the quickest way to manage safety risks during peak demand.



#### How you can help

The best and most effective way to report potholes or any highway issue is through the Hampshire County Council website or the *Our Hants* app. Clear locations and photos are helpful, but not essential. Reporting via email or social media can actually slow things down, as it bypasses the system our teams use to prioritise safety defects.

## **A27 Closure – Update - Start date delayed to 16th February**

Southern Water's works on the A27 between Shootash and Sherfield English have now been put back and will start on February 16th. They are due to run for approximately 3 months until May 13th. I know many residents are worried about the length of this closure and the impact it may have, and I've been working closely with both Southern Water and Hampshire Highways to minimise disruption wherever possible.

Utility companies have significant legal powers to carry out essential works, and the County Council has very limited ability to refuse or redesign them. I'll share a separate post this weekend explaining how this system works, as many people have asked.

### Information Session

Southern Water will be holding another drop-in session at Sherfield English Village Hall on Tuesday, 3:30pm–6:30pm, where you can speak directly to their team and ask questions.

### What's Now Agreed

#### ◆ Road closure only where absolutely necessary

Southern Water have confirmed that the full road closure will only apply on Dunns Wood Hill, where the road is too narrow for temporary traffic lights. This is the first section they will tackle. Once they move off the hill and begin working towards Embley, temporary lights will be used instead of a closure. This should mean the full closure is in place for roughly half the overall duration of the project.

They have also promised me a detailed schedule of works, which I will share as soon as it arrives.

#### ◆ Diversion routes and signage

Contractors have agreed to improve signage for the official diversion routes.

Signs will be placed at Mainstone and Brickworth, directing traffic to use the A36.

National Highways have confirmed there are no planned closures on the A36 during this period.

Additional signs will make clear that Newtown Road, Doctors Hill Embley Lane and The Frenches are not suitable diversion routes. Some local traffic will inevitably use them, but the main local alternatives remain via Awbridge, Carters Clay and Branches Lane, or via Timsbury and Windwhistle Road to the A36.

#### ◆ Incorrect closure shown on maps

Some maps currently show a closure between Branches Lane and Mill Lane. Southern Water have confirmed they are not working in that section and believe it was misidentified in their permit. They are working to have this corrected so it disappears from satnav and online maps.

## **Roadworks, disruption and why it matters for Hampshire**

The BBC has taken a deep dive today into the growing impact of roadworks across the country — and Hampshire features prominently.

I spoke to them about the reality we're facing: our roads need major investment, but councils like ours are working with budgets that simply don't match the scale of the challenge. In Hampshire alone, bringing every road up to scratch would cost around £600m, against an annual maintenance budget of about £70m.

I also raised a concern many of you share: the lack of control councils have over when utility companies dig up the roads. Too often, "emergency" works are declared with just six working hours' notice, leaving us little ability to coordinate diversions or minimise disruption for residents.

The full article is well worth a read — it captures the frustration many communities are feeling, including here in Clanfield, and why better coordination and fairer rules for utility companies are urgently needed.

If you've been affected by long-running works or poorly timed closures, you're far from alone. I'll keep pushing for a system that puts residents first.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c23e3d1r17go?fbclid=IwY2xjawPtekVleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEe-V7Am1sgQICdzjvSKZlrNLI4aMjDjXjpvqJ29btQcRlouFZoMS\\_Pbbuuvb4\\_aem\\_96E9k07CgR2mQKNHfxQ25Q](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c23e3d1r17go?fbclid=IwY2xjawPtekVleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEe-V7Am1sgQICdzjvSKZlrNLI4aMjDjXjpvqJ29btQcRlouFZoMS_Pbbuuvb4_aem_96E9k07CgR2mQKNHfxQ25Q)

## **Utility works on the highway**

There is a huge amount of work being carried out by utility companies around Hampshire at the moment. Southern Water are renewing their mains, SSEN are upgrading their network and SGN are similarly undertaking gas main renewal. Add to that the work by super fast broadband providers and it seems there are roadworks constantly taking place.

All this has resulted in quite a number of questions about why and how Hampshire County Council allow utility companies, other public bodies and development companies to work on the roads.

So, I hope it's helpful to share this Q&A which helps explain the process for granting permission and what control Highways have over these type of roadworks:

### **Q: What is the HCC Highway's role?**

A: The Highways team is responsible for the coordination of all works and events on the public highway in order to minimise traffic disruption. The Streetworks team also monitors utility Co's activities on the public highway and checks active work sites and reinstatements for compliance with National specifications.

**Q: Can utility companies legally work on the public highway?**

A: Yes, they have legal duties and rights to install and maintain apparatus on the public highway. However, they have to comply with National Specifications and obtain a permit from the County Council for planned works.

Legislation gives them legal rights to install cabinets and masts (up to 15m high) on the public highway without planning permission.

**Q: Can HCC stop a utility company from working on the public highway?**

A: No, except under very specific circumstances, for example: where a utility company wants to install new apparatus on a highly important and strategic road that has been specifically designated, by law, as a protected street.

**Q: What conditions can be placed on works on the public highway?**

A: The County Council can place conditions on any permit application. Conditions are used to try to minimise traffic disruption. The conditions available as part of the permit scheme are not 'free form' and are restricted to controls over works timing, works area, traffic management type and stakeholder engagement. Conditions have to be reasonable and be able to be met by the works promoter.

**Q: Who decides what type of traffic management (TM) to use?**

A: The works promoter is entirely responsible for selecting the most appropriate type of TM. They are the experts in the works they are undertaking and what the risks are. In selecting the TM type they must consider the risks to the workforce, passing traffic (including pedestrians) and relevant legislation and Codes or Practice.

**Q: Who decides what diversion routes to use when road closures are needed?**

A: The works promoter is entirely responsible for selecting an appropriate diversion route. Best practice is to ensure that the diversion route uses similar roads to those closed. Unfortunately, the existing networks don't always permit this. Diversion routes are not enforceable.

**Q: Who is responsible for the information provided on the permit?**

A: The works promoter is ALWAYS responsible for the information they supply. The County Council must assume that it is correct when assessing the permit and determining what conditions to apply.

**Q: Does granting a permit mean that the County Council approves of the works/installation?**

A: No, the permit relates ONLY to the works and its impact on traffic. Approval for installing apparatus is given either by a utility company's legal rights or via the local Planning Authority.

**Q: I've seen a utility leave a blacktop reinstatement in a flagstone surface. Is this allowed?**

A: Yes, utility companies are allowed to use a temporary reinstatement in order to re-open a road quickly or to give them time to source specialist materials. Normally temporary reinstatements are allowed for up to 6 months, the utility company has to reinstate the original surface within that time.

**Q: How long is a utility company responsible for its reinstatement?**

A: Legislation states that a utility company is liable for any 'reasonable' repairs for two years.

**Q: How much notice does the County get for works?**

A: Legislation requires all works promoters to submit permit applications between 3 working days and 3 months ahead of works starting.

For 'Immediate works' (relating to safety or loss of service) there is no advance warning. Works are started and the County Council is alerted within 2 working hours.

**Q: Can penalties be applied for non-compliance?**

A: Yes. There are a range of penalties open to the County Council where works promoters do not comply with permit conditions.

**Q: How well do utility companies comply with specifications and permit conditions?**

A: Very well. In 2022 Over 95% of site signage and 96% of reinstatements complied with the National specifications. 97% of utility sites comply with permit conditions. 99% of utility sites were completed on time, or early.

**Q: How can I see what works are planned in the County?**

A: The County Council handles all permits via a National IT system. This system automatically publishes all permits on the <https://one.network> website

**Q: How many utility works are undertaken on the County's road network?**

A: In an average year we process around 52,000 permit applications/changes from utility companies which result in around 36,000 works being undertaken. The last couple of years have seen even higher numbers processed. When you take into account there are 5,500 miles of publicly maintained roads in Hampshire this equals 6.5 pieces or work per mile per year on our roads!

## Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues are here:

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/flooding>

Pavement problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving>

Broken or missing signs: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/brokensigns>

Faulty street lights: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/streetlight>

Faded or missing road markings: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/road-markings>

Problems with rights of way:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/reportaproblem>

**When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report. If you would like me to follow this up for you then do please forward that message to me and I will chase for you.**

## 2026 County Council Elections – going ahead

I was asked to write an article for ConservativeHome explaining my position. You can read it here: <https://conservativehome.com/.../nick-adams-king.../>

And copied below:

As Leader of Hampshire County Council, I have always believed that democratic accountability is not an inconvenience to be managed but a responsibility to be honoured. That principle has guided my approach throughout the ongoing discussions about local government reorganisation and the Government's suggestion that councils may request a postponement of the May 2026 local elections. Today, I want to set out clearly why I will not be asking for such a delay, why this matters for Hampshire, and how I have communicated this position publicly.

In recent weeks, the Government has written to 63 local authorities across England, including Hampshire, asking for their views on whether the 2026 elections should be deferred. The rationale offered is that councils undergoing potential structural reform may struggle to manage both reorganisation and the administration of elections simultaneously.

We should be clear. This is an attempt by a chaotic, unprincipled Government, running scared of the electorate to avoid a result they fear.

From the moment this proposal surfaced, my position has been unambiguous: Hampshire County Council should not seek to delay the 2026 elections.

I set out four reasons why this should be our position:

1. Democratic legitimacy cannot be put on hold

Elections are the mechanism through which residents choose who represents them. Delaying them — especially for administrative convenience — risks undermining public trust. Hampshire residents deserve the opportunity to have their say at the promised time, not later because it suits a bureaucratic timetable.

2. Hampshire has already experienced one postponement

The 2025 elections were postponed to allow the Government's fast-track devolution process to proceed. This process has now been substantially completed, bringing an investment pot of £1.4 billion to Hampshire and the Solent, £100 millions more in skills and employment funding and a range of powers for the Mayor once they are elected, despite their election also now being delayed to 2028.

Asking residents to accept a second delay would be unreasonable and, in my view, unjustifiable. Democracy should not be paused repeatedly while national policy shifts around us.

3. Hampshire can manage both reorganisation and elections

The suggestion that councils cannot handle both tasks underestimates the capability and professionalism of our officers. Hampshire has a long track record of delivering complex programmes while maintaining high-quality services. Preparing for elections is a statutory duty — and one we are fully capable of fulfilling.

4. Residents expect stability, not uncertainty

Local government reorganisation is already creating understandable concern among residents and staff. Delaying elections would add another layer of uncertainty. Holding elections on time provides continuity, clarity, and confidence.

The Government's consultation on delaying elections is part of a broader conversation about local government reorganisation. Ministers have argued that postponement may be necessary to allow councils to focus on structural reform. Their question has been whether delaying elections further would allow extra capacity to deliver reorganisation effectively and safely.

It's self-evident that choosing not to proceed with one task means there is more capacity to deal with another. Democracy should not and cannot be a binary choice. Capacity challenges are not a reason to delay elections, though they might be a reason to delay reorganisation.

That is the view I put forward in an Extraordinary Council meeting earlier this week where my view was supported by the overwhelming majority of my colleagues from all parties.

The reality is that reorganisation — if it proceeds — will take years, not months. Elections are not an obstacle to reform; they are an essential part of it. Any new structure must be built on a foundation of democratic legitimacy, not on the extension of existing mandates beyond their intended term.

Throughout this process, I have been clear that Hampshire residents deserve honesty and clarity. That is why I have spoken openly in the press, on social media, and in council discussions. Whatever the

Government ultimately decides, Hampshire's position is principled and consistent: we will not ask for a delay.

I love my role as Leader of Hampshire County Council. I believe it is genuinely one of the best jobs in local government. It may well be that the people of Hampshire do not love me and my colleagues, and they should be able to choose accordingly.

I also love being a county councillor, the electors of Romsey Rural may conclude they do not love me as their representative and choose to elect someone else. That is absolutely their right.

Democracy is rarely convenient, and it doesn't always deliver the outcome you hope for. But that is its strength, not its weakness. It ensures that power rests with the people, not with those in office. Especially in times of uncertainty or change, protecting the democratic process is non-negotiable. It is the foundation of trust, legitimacy, and accountability—and it must be respected, no matter the circumstances.

### **More Specialist SEND Places Agreed for Hampshire Schools**

Hampshire County Council has approved a major package of new investment to expand specialist support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the county.

The number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) continues to rise sharply, and around 40% need a specialist place. These decisions move us another step closer to our ambition of creating 1,000 new specialist places by 2030.

Here's what's been agreed:

- ◆ 157 new specialist school places across Hampshire
- ◆ A mix of new resourced provisions and refurbishments to support pupils with autism, SEMH needs, and other complex requirements
- ◆ Projects delivered in phases from September 2026 onwards, subject to planning and capital approvals

New or expanded SEND provision includes:

- Hamble School – new autism resourced provision (15 places)
- Wyvern College, Fair Oak – refurbished space for SEND support
- Wavell School, Farnborough – new SEMH resourced provision (15 places)
- Hamble Primary School – new autism provision (12 places)

We're also moving forward with statutory consultations on:

- Expanding The Waterloo School with a new satellite site in Gosport (70 SEMH places)
- New autism resourced provisions at Crofton Dale Junior, Fair Oak Infant, and Poulner Junior
- A new SEMH resourced provision at Hiltingbury Junior School

This is a significant step in making sure children get the right support, in the right place, as close to home as possible — reducing travel times, strengthening inclusion in mainstream schools where appropriate, and ensuring families can access the help they need.

## **A £633m Boost for Hampshire's Schools**

At a time when councils up and down the country are teetering on the brink, Hampshire is doing something rather extraordinary: investing hundreds of millions of pounds in the future of our children.

This week, Hampshire County Council approved a £633 million capital programme for new schools, better facilities, and vital improvements to children's services. Ten new schools — including two special schools — and hundreds of additional specialist SEND places will be delivered across the county.

And let's be absolutely clear: this is only possible because of the careful, responsible financial management we've maintained for years. While others have stumbled, Hampshire has kept its books balanced, protected taxpayers' money, and ensured we can still invest where it truly matters.

This programme will deliver:

- ◆ New mainstream and special schools in growing communities
- ◆ Over 390 new specialist SEND places
- ◆ Major upgrades to school buildings and early years settings
- ◆ Investment in Best Start Family Hubs
- ◆ Support for foster carers and adaptations for children with disabilities

This is long-term, serious investment — the kind that shapes a county for generations. And it's being delivered because this council has refused to take the easy way out, choosing instead to plan ahead, spend wisely, and protect Hampshire's future.

I'm proud of what we're achieving for our young people. This is what responsible leadership looks like — and Hampshire's families deserve nothing less.

## **Can you help a vulnerable Hampshire child this winter?**

This winter, we're asking Hampshire residents to consider something truly life-changing: opening your home — and your heart — to a vulnerable child.

Hampshire County Council has launched a new fostering campaign that shines a light on the difference fostering makes, not just for children in care but for the families who welcome them. One of the most powerful parts of the campaign is a new video told through the eyes of a foster carer's own child, showing the warmth, friendship and lasting bonds that fostering can bring.

As my brilliant colleague Cllr Roz Chadd puts it, every child deserves a safe and loving home. And right now in Hampshire, the number of children who need that stability is growing faster than the number of foster carers available. For every child we find a home for, others are still waiting.

We're looking for carers from all walks of life — LGBTQ+ carers, people of all faiths, single carers, and those from different ethnic backgrounds. You don't need to own your home or have previous childcare experience. What matters is compassion, stability, and the willingness to make a difference. In return, you'll receive excellent training, competitive allowances, and ongoing support from a dedicated social

worker and our Hampshire Hive network — a brilliant “extended family” of local foster carers supporting one another.

If you’ve ever wondered whether fostering could fit into your family life, now is the moment to explore it. You can find out more and take the first step here:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering>

New friendships. New futures. Happier hearts all round.

[https://youtu.be/5\\_1Socpqt1c](https://youtu.be/5_1Socpqt1c)

### **New National Road Safety Strategy Published — Consultations Now Live**

The Government has released its first Road Safety Strategy in more than a decade, setting out an ambitious plan to cut deaths and serious injuries on Britain’s roads by 65% by 2035 — and by 70% for children under 16.

A number of the proposals are now open for consultation, including:

- ◆ Mandatory eyesight testing for older drivers

**GOV.UK:** <https://www.gov.uk/.../introducing-mandatory-eyesight...>

- ◆ A minimum learning period for new drivers

**GOV.UK:** <https://www.gov.uk/.../introducing-a-minimum-learning...>

- ◆ Changes to penalties for motoring offences

**GOV.UK:** <https://www.gov.uk/.../proposed-changes-to-penalties-for...>

Other elements of the strategy include:

Tougher drink-drive rules, including a lower limit (especially for new drivers), preventative technology such as alcohol-interlock devices, and new powers to suspend licences for suspected drink or drug driving.

Work on potential cognitive testing for older drivers.

A new National Work-Related Road Safety Charter for anyone who drives or rides for work.

Updated national guidance on road safety education and training.

A refreshed Setting Local Speed Limits guide and updated guidance on speed and red-light cameras.

An updated Manual for Streets, to be embedded in planning policy.

Feedback on introducing penalty points for not wearing a seatbelt.

Measures to tackle illegal number plates, uninsured vehicles and those without a valid MOT.

Mandating 18 new vehicle safety features, including autonomous emergency braking and lane-keeping assistance.

Oversight will sit with a new Road Safety Board, supported by experts from local authorities, emergency services, active travel groups and road safety organisations.

## IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR RESIDENTS CONNECTED TO ASTER SEWERAGE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

I've been contacted by a number of residents today who have received their 2024/25 sewerage bills from Aster — and what I'm seeing is deeply concerning.

Across multiple sites, the bills arriving today are almost double the amounts Aster estimated at the start of the year. Because residents have been paying by monthly standing order based on those estimates, Aster has now issued additional invoices — in some cases larger than the original annual estimate itself.

To give you a sense of the scale:

One site with an estimated annual cost of £786.12 has now been billed £1,593.24.  
Another site, originally estimated at £427.80, has received an invoice for £4,308.84.  
Yes — more than ten times the estimate.  
It is, frankly, madness.

These sudden, unexplained increases are completely unacceptable. No justification or breakdown of costs has been provided to residents.

### ◆ What I've done today

I have written to Aster demanding full, detailed accounts for every affected site in Hampshire, including:

Green Pond Lane, Ampfield  
Lymer Villas, Upton  
Cowleas Cottages, Awbridge  
Carters Clay Road, Lockerley  
Oval Road / Butlers Close, Lockerley  
East Dean Road, Lockerley  
Glebe Meadow, East Dean  
Manor Road, East Tytherley  
Aylwards Way, Nether Wallop  
Stevens Drove, Houghton  
Red Lane, West Tytherley  
Verlynch Cottages, Longstock  
The Close, Hatherden

Aster has acknowledged previous issues raised in November but has still not provided answers. I will continue to chase them until they do.

### ◆ What you should do now

If you have received a bill or additional invoice from Aster:

Email them immediately requesting a full breakdown of costs.

You can use this wording:

“Thank you for your invoice and statement of account. Please provide me with the full, detailed breakdown of cost associated with my account. This should be accompanied by copy invoices from your suppliers detailing the charges leading to the amount you are claiming.”

Forward any response you receive to me as soon as it arrives.

If you haven't yet received your bill, please keep an eye out — and check the figures carefully when it arrives.

I will not let this rest

Residents deserve transparency, accuracy, and fairness — not shock invoices and unexplained charges. I will continue pressing Aster until we have full answers and a fair resolution.

If you need help or further advice, please get in touch.

### **Tackling Problem Pavement Parking in Hampshire**

Pavement parking is one of the issues I hear about regularly — and for good reason. When cars block pavements, it isn't just inconvenient. It can be dangerous and deeply unfair to people who rely on clear, safe routes: wheelchair users, those with sight loss, older residents, and parents with buggies and prams. It also damages our verges and leaves some communities looking uncared for.

The Government has now confirmed that new legislation is on the way to give councils like Hampshire County Council far greater control over pavement parking. This is something I've long argued for, and I welcome the change.

Under the new proposals:

- Local transport authorities will be able to prohibit pavement parking across their areas, rather than dealing with it street by street.
- A new regulatory framework will allow councils to tailor solutions to local needs, including accessibility and disabled parking.

From 2026, councils will also be able to enforce against unnecessary obstruction of pavements as an interim step, giving us more ability to act where parking is clearly causing problems.

Most drivers are considerate, but the small minority who park without thinking create real barriers for others. These new powers will help us protect vulnerable residents, keep pavements clear, and prevent the sort of verge damage that blights too many neighbourhoods.

I'll be working with colleagues to make sure Hampshire uses these powers sensibly, fairly and in a way that genuinely improves everyday life for our communities.

## Romsey South of Town Centre – The Journey So Far, and What Happens Next

Over the past decade, one of the biggest conversations we've had as a community is about the future of the area south of Romsey town centre – the space around Crosfield Hall, the bus station and Broadwater Road. It's a part of town that everyone agrees could be so much better: a proper gateway to our historic market town, a place that supports local businesses, and somewhere that works for residents now and in the future.

### How We Got Here

This project didn't appear overnight. It began back in 2013, when the first Romsey Future consultation identified the area as a priority for regeneration. Since then, the process has been long, detailed, and shaped by thousands of local voices.

Here's what has happened so far:

#### ◆ 2018 – Stage 1 Consultation & Baseline Evidence

Romsey Future, working with Nexus Planning and Perkins & Will, carried out a wide-ranging consultation and produced the first Baseline Evidence Report. This set out the challenges and opportunities for the area.

#### ◆ 2020 – Stage 2 Consultation & Publication of the Masterplan

A second major consultation followed, again involving residents, local organisations, and experts. The Masterplan was published in 2020, setting out:

- \* Short-term public realm improvements
- \* Medium-term mixed-use development
- \* A new community and leisure facility
- \* A new transport hub
- \* Long-term relocation of Aldi to unlock further employment and leisure space

#### ◆ A Groundbreaking Local Democratic Process

Across the whole journey, we've had:

- \* Three formal consultations
- \* Two Citizens' Assemblies
- \* Market stalls and pop-up events
- \* Public exhibitions and walking tours
- \* Radio and TV coverage
- \* Extensive local press reporting

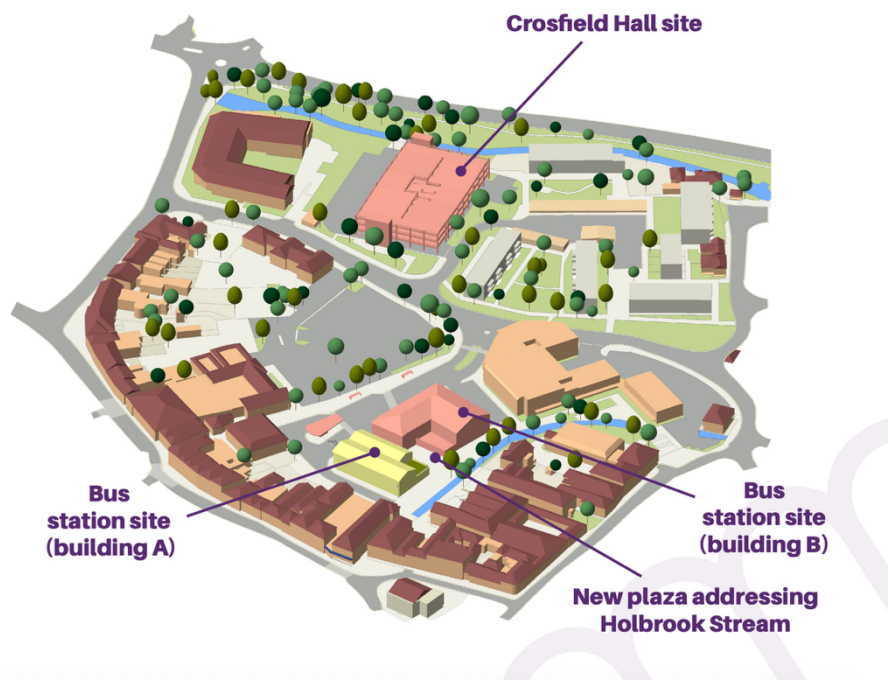
Every time, the plans were adjusted to reflect what residents told us. People have been listened to – even when views differed sharply.

## ◆ December Council Debate

### – A Decision at Last

At the council meeting on 3 December, held at Crosfield Hall, the preferred option was unanimously approved by councillors from all parties.

During the debate, I made clear that after seven years of listening, a decision was now essential. With Local Government Reorganisation coming next year, councils will temporarily lose the ability to spend money. If we delayed again, the funding set aside for this project could simply disappear.



Some alternative visions were put forward – including a much larger cultural centre and a car-free plaza – but these were not financially achievable within the constraints we face. The plan we approved is the best compromise that reflects the feedback we've received and remains deliverable.

## Why This Matters

Romsey is thriving, but it is also gridlocked at times. One of the reasons is that we simply do not have enough parking capacity. Without addressing this, the town centre will struggle, and local businesses will feel the impact.

## This plan delivers:

- \* A new, modern community facility
- \* Improved public realm
- \* A better transport hub
- \* Additional parking
- \* New homes and commercial space
- \* A more attractive gateway into town

It isn't perfect – few compromises ever are – but it is the best achievable outcome after years of engagement, and it allows us to move forward before the window to act closes.

## FAQ

### ◆ Why isn't the Crosfield Hall fit for purpose?

The Crosfield Hall is ageing, inefficient, and expensive to maintain. It was never designed as a modern community venue and cannot meet the accessibility, flexibility, or environmental standards expected today. The Masterplan process consistently highlighted the need for a new, purpose-built facility.

### ◆ Why do we need extra parking?

Romsey's congestion is partly caused by insufficient parking capacity. Visitors circulate looking for spaces, clogging key junctions. Without additional parking, footfall will fall and the town centre will suffer. The Masterplan includes a new multi-storey car park to meet current and future demand.

◆ Isn't Crosfield Hall "owned by the people of Romsey"?

No. Crosfield Hall was not gifted to the people of Romsey. It was given to the Romsey Urban District Council, a predecessor of Test Valley Borough Council, for use as council offices. Only when that use was rejected did the council of the day convert it into the hall we know today.

◆ Why must we proceed before Local Government Reorganisation?

Because next autumn, Parliament will introduce a statutory freeze on council spending as part of the reorganisation process. If we haven't committed the funds by then, the money allocated for this project could be lost entirely. After seven years of work, that would be a huge setback for Romsey.

◆ Can't we build a new Crosfield Hall or car park on the Romsey Brewery Site?

The Brewery site simply isn't suitable for a new Crosfield Hall or a multi-storey car park. The land is privately owned, tightly constrained, and earmarked for housing under long-standing planning policies. Even if the owners were willing to sell, (or be forced to do so by compulsory purchase) the site's size, access, and heritage considerations make it impractical for large public buildings or significant parking infrastructure. The valuation of the land would also be predicated on its value as a housing site, far more than the land value for parking or a hall. That's why the council is focusing on locations that are actually deliverable, affordable, and capable of meeting Romsey's long-term needs.

## Nominate Someone Extraordinary for a New Year 2027 Honour

Every year, people across the country are recognised in the New Year Honours for the incredible things they do for their communities. The next round is now open — and this is your chance to put forward someone in Hampshire whose dedication, kindness, or service deserves national recognition.

Whether it's a tireless volunteer, a community champion, someone who goes above and beyond in their profession, or a quiet hero who never seeks the spotlight, your nomination could help them receive the honour they deserve.



### How to nominate

Nominations for the New Year 2027 Honours must be submitted by midnight on Friday 6 March 2026.

Use the official online nomination form: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx...>

Each nomination needs at least two letters of support

After submitting the form, reply to the acknowledgement email with your letters attached

If you don't receive an acknowledgement, you can email the letters to [honours@communities.gov.uk](mailto:honours@communities.gov.uk), clearly stating which nomination they relate to



### Helpful resources

The Cabinet Office has a useful guide on how to make a strong nomination: How to nominate – <https://honours.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/how-to-nominate/>

A PDF version of the full nomination form is also available to help you prepare your answers before submitting online.



### Need help?

If you have questions or run into any technical issues, the MHCLG Honours Team are happy to assist at [honours@communities.gov.uk](mailto:honours@communities.gov.uk).



Please share

MHCLG are keen to ensure nominations reflect the full diversity of our communities — in background, contribution, and location. If you know colleagues, groups, or networks who might want to put someone forward, please pass this on.

Let's make sure the remarkable people who make Hampshire such a special place get the recognition they've earned.

### **Free Support helping community buildings become more energy efficient**

Test Valley Borough Council is still offering a free support service to help community organisations make their buildings more energy-efficient — which can also mean lower energy bills in the long run.

Arthian, who are delivering the service, will guide groups through four simple steps:

- A quick initial chat (by phone or Teams) to understand what support is needed
- A site visit to look at the building
- A tailored report setting out what improvements could make the biggest difference
- A follow-up conversation to talk through the findings and next steps

The service is available until mid-March 2026. If you're involved with a community organisation — or know one that might benefit — you can get in touch at: [climatechange@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@testvalley.gov.uk)

Always good to see practical support like this helping our local groups thrive.

### **County Councillor Grants**

The County Councillor Grant scheme is operating once more, with a lesser amount of £5,000 and new criteria as follows:

#### **Hampshire County Councillor Grants – Updated Criteria (September 2025)**

Following a comprehensive review, Hampshire County Council has revised its County Councillor Grants Scheme to reflect budget constraints and improve effectiveness. Key changes include:

- **Reduced Allocation:** Each County Councillor now has an annual grant budget of **£5,000**, down from £8,000.
- 
- **Eligibility Restrictions:**
  - Grants are only available to **organisations**, not individuals.
  - Organisations **cannot apply for the same project** in consecutive years.
  - Applications must demonstrate **community benefit**, especially if from religious or statutory bodies.
- **Funding Limits:**
  - A **maximum of £1,000 per project** is now in place.

- Grants for **seasonal or time-specific events** must be awarded **before the event date**.
- **Transparency and Branding:**
  - All funded projects must **acknowledge County Council support** in promotional materials.
- **Application Assessment:**
  - Previous grant awards (from the last two years) will be considered during evaluation.
  - Preference may be given to organisations without access to other funding sources.

These changes aim to ensure the scheme remains fair, transparent, and aligned with the Council's strategic priorities while managing financial pressures.

Grants already made to Sherfield English Netball club and Wellow Lunch Club, there is still funding available though so do please get in touch if I can help.

### **Getting About**

January saw Parish Council meetings getting back to normal, I've been to Wellow (twice, including the meeting about the Pottery Farm planning application), Awbridge, Sherfield English, Lockerley, West Tytherley, Nursling and Rownhams and Michelmersh & Timsbury Parish Councils. I was also pleased to support the Michelmersh and Timsbury Village Shop Project information evening and the Action Hampshire awards in Winchester.

### **Contact**

Do please get in touch if I can ever be of any help. For those of you using social media, I post very regular updates on many local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: [facebook.com/nickadamsking](https://facebook.com/nickadamsking)

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Contact me:  
t: 07771 727402  
e: [Nick.Adams-King@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Nick.Adams-King@hants.gov.uk)  
 [facebook.com/nickadamsking](https://facebook.com/nickadamsking)

**CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING**  
Caring for Romsey Rural



## **General Updates from HCC:**

### **Hampshire County Council confirms M27 will reopen 24 hours ahead of schedule after successful completion of major engineering operation**

The M27 between Junctions 9 and 11 will fully reopen 24 hours ahead of schedule at 4am on Saturday 3 January, following the successful completion of a major engineering scheme to deliver a new underpass beneath the motorway

[Hampshire County Council confirms M27 will reopen 24 hours ahead of schedule after successful completion of major engineering operation | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Advice for staying safe and well during the cold snap**

The UK Health Security Agency has extended the amber alert for cold, with overnight temperatures as low as minus six degrees Celsius, expected from 8PM on 2 January until 10AM on 9 January across the South East. This period of cold weather has the potential to affect anyone, not just those who may be more at risk due to health or other vulnerabilities.

[Advice for staying safe and well during the cold snap | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire County Council to consider response to Government on election delay**

Hampshire County Council will soon consider its response to central Government's invitation to comment on whether elections in 2026 should be postponed in parts of the country where councils are set to be reorganised.

[Hampshire County Council to consider response to Government on election delay | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire urges people to quit smoking for a healthier, happier life**

A new campaign, 'Stop Smoking, Feel Happier', is launching across Hampshire to challenge the common myth that smoking helps relieve stress

[Hampshire urges people to quit smoking for a healthier, happier life | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire helps thousands of adults to live safely at home**

As 2026 begins, tens of thousands of Hampshire residents are starting the year where they most want to be, at home – feeling safe, supported, and living independently

[Hampshire helps thousands of adults to live safely at home | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Get winter savvy with help and advice at your local library**

With temperatures dropping and budgets stretched following the recent festive period, Hampshire County Council's libraries remain on hand to provide helpful advice about energy bills and the cost of living

[Get winter savvy with help and advice at your local library | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire County Council tells Government: 'Elections should go ahead this May'**

Hampshire County Council has underlined the importance of democracy this week, telling central Government that elections should still go ahead as planned in the county this spring

[Hampshire County Council tells Government: 'Elections should go ahead this May' | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Connect To Work - A Chance for Employers to Drive Local Growth and Opportunity**

Hampshire is set to benefit from a £18.7million boost to the local economy by helping thousands of people into meaningful employment

[Connect To Work - A Chance for Employers to Drive Local Growth and Opportunity | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire County Council outlines congestion-reducing 'lane rental' proposal in submission to Government**

Proposals that could lead to the introduction of a new lane rental scheme aimed at reducing delays on 500 of Hampshire's busiest main roads during peak times, are being submitted to Government

[Hampshire County Council outlines congestion-reducing 'lane rental' proposal in submission to Government | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Renewed multi year funding secures long term future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme in Hampshire**

Hampshire County Council has welcomed the Department for Education's recent announcement confirming three years of continued national funding for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

[Renewed multi year funding secures long term future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **New schools and Family Hubs included in multi-million programme of investment**

Ten new schools, including two special schools, are planned to open in Hampshire over the next three years, as part of a £633 million investment in the county's education estate.

[New schools and Family Hubs included in multi-million programme of investment | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Seal of approval for brand new primary school in Fleet**

Plans for a brand-new primary school to the east of Fleet have taken a further step forward today

[Seal of approval for brand new primary school in Fleet | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire County Council progresses plans for 157 new school SEND places**

Hampshire County Council has agreed a wide-ranging package of measures to significantly expand specialist support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the county

[Hampshire County Council progresses plans for 157 new school SEND places | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Hampshire County Council gives green light to major scheme to improve cycling and walking in Basingstoke**

People travelling in Basingstoke are set to benefit from a major scheme to make cycling and walking easier following the go-ahead from Hampshire County Council for a range of improvements centred around the A30 Winchester Road and Winchester Roundabout

[Hampshire County Council gives green light to major scheme to improve cycling and walking in Basingstoke | Hampshire County Council](#)