

Hampshire County Councillor Update 46

Dear All

Another apology about a late report, sorry. Excuse this time is our being away at the beginning of the month, so sorry for the tardiness.

Here's my latest County Councillor update:

Highways Information

Utility works on the highway

The disruption caused by the SGN roadworks by the Plaza and those caused by developers on Sandy Lane have 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 the 2021/2022 financial year we processed 52,000 permit applications/changes from utility companies which resulted in 36,000 works being undertaken. The last couple of years have seen even higher numbers processed.

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.

Future Structure of Councils Across Hampshire and the Solent Area

Work has begun on the future structure of councils across Hampshire and the Solent area, with early ideas for local government reorganisation now submitted to the Government.

As the provider of 85% of council services in Hampshire, the County Council emphasizes the importance of financial strength and resilience for councils to be effective, deliver high-quality services, and provide the best possible quality of life for residents.

Key Points:

The region's 15 councils will collaborate on a final proposal for submission to the Government this autumn.

Financial strength and resilience are crucial for councils to deliver high-quality services and shape places that people can be proud to call home.

I've created this short video setting out what comes next:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvshRKOTJ7w>

Planning changes

I'm grateful to the [Hampshire Chronicle](#) for highlighting my comments about the changes to the planning system.

You can read the story here: <https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/.../25002952.../>

I've talked before about the impact of the Government's planning reforms on our area.

Key Concerns:

- Immediate Effect: The new rules lack any transitional arrangement, meaning developers can apply for any site, and even if the local council turns it down, the Planning Inspectorate might approve it on appeal.
- Housing Land Supply: Many Hampshire councils can't meet the new 5-year housing land supply target, which has increased even further since July.
- Local Input Ignored: The Government is pushing through powers for housing developments and energy infrastructure, including solar farms and onshore wind farms, sidelining local input via council planning committees.

Angela Rayner's rush to meet her self-imposed housing target has stolen our ability to take local factors into account, ensure sufficient infrastructure by developers, and create cohesive, well-designed communities.

The evidence of this is already clear to see in new developments around Romsey, the Ganger Farm southern extension and the proposals for development behind Halterworth School.

The unplanned nature of these developments inevitably results in even further pressure on our infrastructure and the investment obtained through S106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy is nowhere near enough to compensate for their impact.

So, the fears I raised at the end of last year when these changes were announced are already coming to fruition. It's bad news for us all and for the entire county.

Stubbington Study Centre Saved

My colleagues and I who form Hampshire County Council's Conservative Cabinet have turned down the proposal to close Stubbington Study Centre to make way for a new specialist secure welfare children's home.

After a detailed discussion and considering public feedback, the unanimous decision reflects the extensive support for retaining the Study Centre.

The Cabinet have taken note of the overwhelming consultation response and the very strong representations from local County Councillors, Pal Hayre, Graham Burgess, Joanne Burton and Mike

Ford. All have lobbied tirelessly for the centre and have engaged positively with conversations about alternative locations for the very much needed children's home.

Key Points:

The proposal was scrutinized by the Hampshire 2050 Select Committee and included presentations from members of the public and local County Councillors.

We have expressed gratitude for the feedback and emphasised the importance of consulting on the proposal. As I explained in my remarks, the point of consultation is to hear people's views and take them into account, we then need to weigh that opinion against other options - there is a process through which we must go to get to that point, and that is what has happened today.

The pressing need for more specialist residential care for vulnerable children remains a priority, and further work will be done to find a suitable location for the new home.

The Government has offered capital funding to replace the ageing specialist home at Swanwick Lodge, subject to confirmation of a suitable location by the end of March 2025. Council officers will ask for extra time to explore new potential sites and approach local district and borough councils for land availability.

Avian Influenza Alert

You might have seen signs warning of you entering an Animal Disease Control Zone around Awbridge and Sherfield English.

The Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) near Romsey, Test Valley, Hampshire. As a result, Protection and Surveillance Zones have been established to control the outbreak. These are shown in the map below.



Protection Zone: 3 km radius from the outbreak centre.



Surveillance Zone: 10 km radius from the outbreak centre.

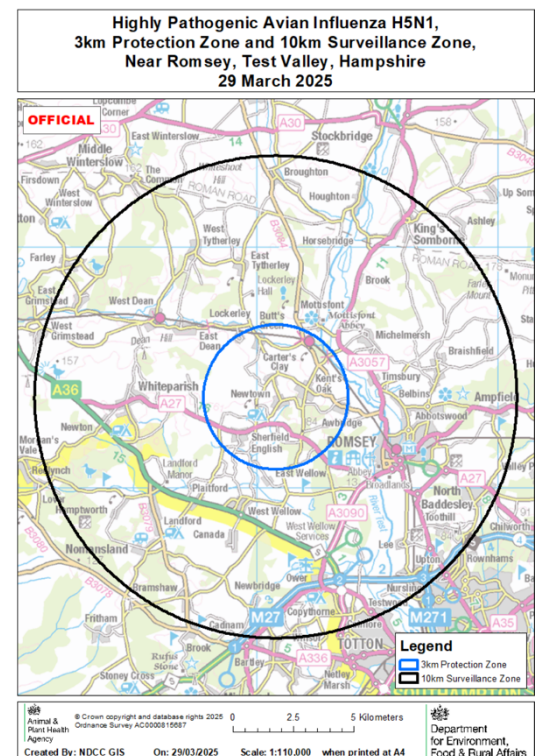
Protection Zone Measures:

- Record Keeping: Maintain records of all visitors and poultry movements.
- Movement Restrictions: Limit the transport of poultry, eggs, and other related products within the zone.
- Biosecurity: Implement strict biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Monitoring: Regularly monitor poultry for signs of avian influenza.
- Notification: Report any suspected cases of avian influenza to the authorities immediately.

Surveillance Zone Measures:

- Record Keeping: Maintain records of all visitors and poultry movements.
- Movement Restrictions: Limit the transport of poultry, eggs, and other related products within the zone.
- Biosecurity: Implement strict biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Monitoring: Regularly monitor poultry for signs of avian influenza.
- Notification: Report any suspected cases of avian influenza to the authorities immediately.

While the measures in both zones are quite similar, the Protection Zone typically involves more stringent controls and closer monitoring due to its proximity to the outbreak centre. The Surveillance Zone covers a larger area and focuses on preventing the spread of the virus beyond the immediate vicinity.



The full information can be viewed here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/.../Protection...>

These measures are effective from 17:00 on 29 March 2025 until further notice. Stay informed and comply with the regulations to help prevent the spread of avian influenza.

Have Your Say on the Future of Local Services in Hampshire!

Hampshire County Council is running a public consultation to gather views on options to change and reduce some local services to address a budget shortfall of at least £97.6 million for 2025/26. Your feedback is crucial in helping us prioritize vital public services for those most in need.

Proposed Service Changes:

Planned Highway Maintenance
Older Adults Day Services
Post-16 Transport
School Transport

We invite residents to share their views on these proposed changes, their potential impacts, and any other ways savings might be made. Your input will help shape the future of local services in Hampshire.

Consultation Details: Visit our website to read more about the proposed changes and have your say:
Future Services Consultation - Spring 2025
Closing date is 7th May 2025.

78 New SEND Places Approved Across Hampshire Schools

Exciting news for Hampshire! Approval has been granted to create 78 additional special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places across six schools starting this September. This expansion is crucial to meet the growing demand driven by an increase in education, health, and care plans (EHCPs).

Key Facts:

Over 17,700 pupils in Hampshire have EHCPs, with 40% needing specialist school places. Hampshire County Council aims to create 166 new places this year to meet rising demand, forecasted to reach 28,000 by 2030.

The lack of sufficient provision has led to increased placements in independent and non-maintained sector (INMSS), costing an estimated £5.5m for the same number of places.

Schools Joining the SEND Expansion Programme:

Bartley Junior School, New Forest
Crookhorn College, Havant
Fleet Infant School, Fleet
Velmead Junior School, Fleet
Hollywater School, Bordon
Maple Ridge School, Basingstoke

These proposals are part of our ambitions to meet more pupils' needs closer to home, reduce our reliance on independent schools, and cut down on transport costs.

Council Tax for 2025/26: What You Need to Know

Wondering how much Council Tax you'll be paying for 2025/26? The amount depends on your property's band and location. For a Band D property, the total bill will be £2,142.04 (excluding parish or town council charges).

Breakdown of Charges:

Hampshire County Council: £1,609.83 (5.0% increase)
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire: £275.46 (5.4% increase)
Test Valley Borough Council: £168.91 (3.1% increase)
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service: £87.84 (6.0% increase)

Council Tax helps fund essential local services, including support for the homeless, waste and recycling collections, town centre regeneration, housing advice, and more.

How to Pay:

Direct debit
Debit card
Telephone banking or standing order
By post via cheque

At a post office or pay point outlet

For more details on payment options, visit: [Test Valley Council Tax Payment Options](#)

Go Paperless: Receive your Council Tax bills by email and manage your account online. Register with your account reference and online key from your latest bill.

Need Support? From 1 April 2025, a new council tax support scheme will help working-age households with lower incomes. Most households will receive the same or more support, and a discretionary fund is available for those experiencing exceptional financial hardship.

For more information, visit: [Test Valley Borough Council/Council Tax Support](#)

£12.5M Cost of Living Support for Hampshire Households

Hampshire households facing financial difficulties will continue to receive significant support for the next 12 months. The County Council has secured a new allocation of £12,556,062.75 to sustain its Household Support Fund (HSF) programme. This national programme provides relief to those struggling to afford essential items like food, warm bedding, and household bills.

Key Points:

The HSF enables Hampshire County Council to work with local charities, education providers, community groups, and councils to provide much-needed relief.

We are delighted to have confirmation that the Household Support Fund will be extended for another full year. This will allow us to strengthen partnerships and provide essential support to those who need it most.

Next Steps:

Over the coming weeks, plans will be refined to invest this funding into programmes that deliver sustainable benefits to working families facing rising food and energy costs.

Proposals will be considered by my brilliant colleague Cllr Roz Chadd at her Decision Day in June.

For more information and support, visit our [connect4communities](#) web pages.

£13 Million Boost for Hampshire's Bus Services

Exciting news for Hampshire! Improvements worth £13,049,411 will be made to local bus services and infrastructure in 2025/26, thanks to a grant from the Department for Transport. This funding will help make bus journeys faster, more frequent, reliable, and greener.

Key Improvements:

- More frequent bus services, including early morning and evening routes
- Bus priority measures to reduce delays from traffic congestion
- De-carbonising Hampshire's bus fleet

- Developing more Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes
- Upgraded bus stations and better waiting environments at bus stops
- Innovative solutions for rural public transport needs

Our ambition is to have a high-quality, efficient, and dependable network of bus services across the county. Government funding, developer contributions, and investment by bus operators are crucial to linking communities and improving connections to essential services. We can only do this though if bus services become sustainable through regular local use.

Specific Projects for 2025/26:

- Bus priority scheme on Bishopstoke Road, Eastleigh
- Infrastructure improvements at Sixth Form Colleges
- Safety and security upgrades in bus shelters
- Real-time and on-bus passenger information enhancements
- Fund for rural bus shelters
- Community self-help schemes
- Support for commercial bus services and service enhancements
- Initiatives for disability access

Increasing bus use will help tackle climate change, boost the local economy, and improve access to education, training, and employment opportunities.

Preserving England's Past, Building Its Future

Communities across England can now apply for a share of £20 million to protect and revive cherished historic sites. From theatres to parks, this funding breathes new life into spaces that matter most.

Heritage Revival Fund: £4.85M to rescue and repurpose historic buildings like department stores & banks. Transform these spaces into vibrant community hubs!

Heritage at Risk Capital Fund: £15M for repairing and enhancing heritage buildings in deprived areas, supporting everything from town halls to local pubs.

Historic sites tell our shared story—let's keep it alive and thriving for generations to come! Apply now and make a difference.

Full guidance on eligibility and how to apply at: Architectural Heritage Fund (<https://ahfund.org.uk>) & Historic England (<https://historicengland.org.uk>).

County Councillor Grants

The County Councillor Grant scheme is being reviewed, as it usually is every four years, so the new grant scheme will likely open later in the Summer.

Las Year's Grants awarded include:

Baby Necessities, Romsey Extra – baby bank items
The Romsey Show – community area at the show
Winchester and Eastleigh Diabetes Support – garden grant
Lockerley Parish Council – speed indicator device
Sherfield English Bowls Club – new mower
Romsey Town Council – Christmas lights
Sherfield English and District Association – magazine costs
West Tytherley Parish Council – speed indicator device
Chilworth Village Hall – roof mounted solar panels
Michelmersh and Timsbury PC – plans for a new pavilion

Getting About

Last month I attended Wellow, East Tytherley, Lockerley and Michelmersh & Timsbury parish councils and spoke at public meetings in Alton, Rowland's Castle and Stockbridge. I also presented to the Romsey Older People's Forum.

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

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Caring for Romsey Rural

