

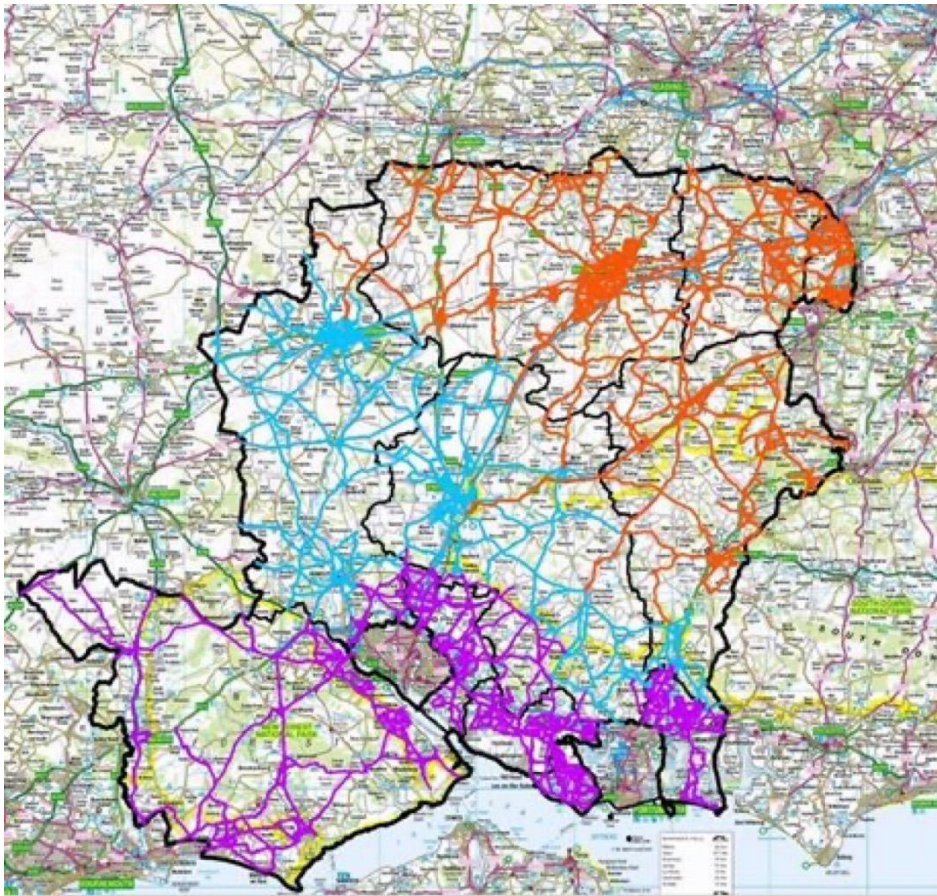
Hampshire County Council Report January 2025

Cllr Jan Warwick

Highways Information: Winter Salting routes

When Hampshire County Council report winter salting updates they sometimes also mention domains (North, Central, and South). HCC may salt in one, two or all of the domains, and may also go out at different times.

Below is a map of the domains, as you can see Winchester is in the central area.



Salt Bins

The county's network of blue and yellow community salt bins has been refilled ready for the coming months, making salt freely available for anyone to spread on local roads and pavements – useful to 'join up' with the salting on main roads by our gritters.

A little salt goes a long way, you'll only need one tablespoon to treat up to a square metre of road or pavement.

If you're able to, salting your local area when it's forecast to be icy can be a big help for your community, reducing the risk of incident and injury, especially for those who are less mobile. You can report salt bins needing re-filling, those that are damaged or request one for your area here: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem>

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

There has been much discussion recently about the prospect of devolution for, and local government reorganisation in, Hampshire. Our goal is a Hampshire & Solent where decisions, big and small, are made close to the people they affect; where less bureaucracy means quicker, simpler processes; and where councils can deliver even better value for money to residents and businesses.

Devolution is likely to be a beneficial move for Hampshire as Devolution means moving powers, and the money to enact them, from Central Government to a more local level. These powers would be devolved to a Combined Authority, in our case covering Hampshire and the Solent (including Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight), and overseen by an elected mayor. The new government wants us to be one of their priority areas, targeting implementation by May 2026.

Whilst we have been discussing devolution for some time there are concerns about Local Government Reorganisation, which the Labour Government is closely linking to the devolution process.

This journey is one the Labour Government is requiring Hampshire to take so it is crucial for the County Council to have a strong voice in these discussions to represent our residents' interests. A Full County Council meeting on the 9th January agreed we will request to be part of the priority list, the government will determine by late January whether the 2025 County elections will be postponed.

Why would elections be postponed? The Government must carry out a full consultation on their devolution proposals. They aim to complete this and conclude any negotiations the summer. The uncertainty of an election, and the inability to complete a consultation during the pre-election period, would disrupt the consultation and negotiation process too greatly. Hence, the Government expects those on the Priority Programme to request their elections be postponed.

If Hampshire is accepted as a priority area, we will need to submit our proposals for new Council areas by the autumn. If we do not enter the priority programme, then the Government expects proposals for new Councils to be submitted by May.

Before Christmas local leaders met with Local Government Minister Baroness Taylor and several important principles were clarified:

- The size of new Unitary authorities: populations of at least 500,000 but less than 1.2 million: Hampshire is too large to become a single unitary authority.
- Southampton and Portsmouth must expand and cannot remain unchanged.
- Existing district and borough boundaries should be retained as much as possible when creating new Unitary Councils.
- A decision on the proposed way forward must be submitted to the Government by January 10, 2025.

As this situation evolves, the focus must be on ensuring reforms deliver benefits such as:

- efficient services for residents,
- service protection and simplification, and

- safeguarding frontline staff.

Councils across Hampshire employ thousands of staff and contract with thousands more partners and businesses, all of whom rely on us for their livelihoods. More importantly, tens of thousands of people rely on their local Council for support and assistance. These people must be at the forefront of our decision-making.

While devolution presents a promising path forward for Hampshire, it's essential to navigate the associated local government reforms carefully, ensuring they truly benefit the residents and communities they aim to serve.

Southern Water outage in December

In the midst of the Southern Water outage to many homes in December 2024, I attended a meeting with senior representatives from Southern Water including their Chief Executive.

The team from Southern Water were left in no doubt of the anger and frustration of those attending over the events of the last 48 hours.

Southern Water's communication has been poor, their organisation of emergency water supplies chaotic, uncoordinated and beset by problems and it was clear there had been no learning whatsoever from the three similar events over the last two years.

This problem has been caused by works they had planned. Southern Water should have been prepared for the risk that their supply would not return as they planned after they had re-started the Testwood water supply plant after remedial works.

We dealt with a number of individual issues:

- The inability of those on foot to access water collection sites
- The inability of those living in park homes to access the priority list
- The failure to deliver water to those on the priority list
- The failure of those delivering water to vulnerable people on the priority list to notify them that water had been left for them

We also discussed how offers of help with water distribution and the identification of sites from which Southern Water could have operated collection sites had been rejected by SW. No learning, contact or forward thinking had been undertaken since the last outages one year ago.

We also addressed compensation, which SW confirmed would be forthcoming to all those effected. We questioned whether a stock of water should be lodged locally for easy distribution should this re-occur.

Southern Water need to rebuild their preparedness for these events. Hampshire County Council and our partners stand ready to do all we can to support SW with this.

Hampshire County Council Enhances School Meal Provision

You might have read some scaremongering from opposition parties about Hampshire County Council cutting the provision of school meals.

The truth is quite the opposite, HCC is set to improve the quality and efficiency of school meals by transitioning to a new managed outsource arrangement by March 2026. This move will see meals sourced from alternative providers, potentially lowering costs for schools and families amidst ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

Key Highlights:

- **Cost Savings:** Schools and families may benefit from lower meal prices.
- **Continued Access:** School meals will remain available to all children, including those eligible for free meals.
- **Positive Feedback:** 73% of consulted schools and nurseries are interested in this new arrangement.
- **Support for Schools:** The Council will manage meal supply, easing the burden on schools.
- This change aims to provide a more sustainable and affordable solution for school meals.

Expanding Special Educational Need provision in Hampshire

The number of children identified as having Special Educational Needs in Hampshire has been rising steadily in the last few years. The County Council is receiving on average 200 new Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) applications every month. Meeting this growing need is therefore a priority for us.

So, Hampshire County Council is proposing to expand specialist school places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at two mainstream schools in the New Forest and Havant.

Following initial consultations with parents, residents, and stakeholders, we're moving to a formal consultation on these proposals, which will be published on our website in late December.

By the end of this decade, the number of children in Hampshire with Education, Health, and Care Plans could increase by over 11,000, reaching around 28,000. Every new specialist school place we create is crucial.

Hampshire County Council is making incredible strides in improving our environment and the fight against climate change!

Last month HCC's Cabinet heard about some of the initiatives and achievements that are helping to create a greener, more sustainable future for all.

Here are some highlights:



****Solar Together Scheme**:** Over 550 households have joined our third Solar Together scheme, generating their own green electricity. Combined with previous schemes, this will reduce CO2 emissions by more than 59,000 tonnes over the next 25 years!



****Repair Cafés**:** By repairing worn-out or mechanically failing items, our community has saved over 50 tonnes of CO2. Every repair counts towards a healthier planet.



****Climate Change Annual Progress Report**:** Our latest report showcases the collective efforts of Hampshire residents and community groups in reaching net zero. It's inspiring to see so many people taking action!



****Transport Initiatives****: We've secured government investment for 62 zero-emission buses, improving air quality in Fareham, Gosport, and Portsmouth. Plus, we've extended 17 major bus services, some now running 24/7, and built nine new walking and cycling routes to reduce car journeys and lower carbon emissions.



****Tree Planting****: Through the Hampshire Forest Partnership, we've planted 41,000 new carbon-absorbing trees since 2022. Every tree makes a difference!



****Go Green Challenge****: We're encouraging younger residents to tackle climate change with daily actions like avoiding food waste and choosing greener travel options.



****Technology Enabled Care Programme****: Supporting 4,500 people at home has significantly reduced the need for travel and associated carbon emissions.



****Green Library****: Bridgemary Library in Gosport has become Hampshire's first 'Green Library,' achieving a 70% reduction in energy usage through renewable energy installations.

Cllr Jan Warwick
Deputy Leader
Hampshire County Council
Jan.warwick@hants.gov.uk
07717 104236