

Hampshire County Councillor Update 62

Dear All

I hope you have enjoyed your Summer. September is here and things are therefore returning to normality with a busy few months ahead.

The past few weeks have brought significant disruption across Hampshire, most notably the New Forest wildfire and the prolonged closure of the A31. I have tried to keep residents supplied with clear, practical information throughout, while continuing to focus on the issues that matter across Romsey Rural.

This update brings together the main matters I have reported since 9 August: roads and travel, devolution, support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, local planning, recycling safety and useful information for residents and businesses.

Highways Information

New Forest wildfire and the A31 closure

A vehicle fire near Poulner Hill on 9 August spread into the central reservation and surrounding New Forest heathland. The A31 was closed in both directions between the M27 and Ringwood while firefighters tackled the incident and National Highways assessed and repaired the road.



More than 120 firefighters were involved during the response. A five-mile water pipeline supplied around 1,300 litres of water a minute, while police drones helped crews monitor hotspots and flare-ups. Residents and motorists were repeatedly asked to keep access clear, avoid narrow Forest lanes and follow the official diversion via the A326, A35, A3060 and A338.

After almost two weeks, the A31 reopened. National Highways resurfaced the carriageway, installed 800 metres of new safety barrier and replaced 1,500 metres of boundary fencing. Temporary speed and lane restrictions remained while fire-damaged structures were protected and the emergency compound was cleared.

The reopening was a major relief for residents, businesses and motorists. My sincere thanks go to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, the crews who came from across the country, National Highways, Forestry England, the police, council teams, commoners, volunteers and everyone who supported the response. More than 100 hectares were affected, and the recovery of heathland, habitats and ancient trees will take many years.

A326 investment and pothole funding

There has been understandable debate about whether proposed investment in the A326 could instead be spent repairing Hampshire's roads. It is important to be clear that the two funding streams are not interchangeable.

The A326 opportunity comes through a Government programme for major road schemes. At the current estimated scheme cost of £187 million, the Department for Transport could contribute up to 85%, with the balance secured from local partners. If Hampshire does not secure and use that funding for the approved scheme, the money does not become available for potholes; the opportunity is lost to the county.

Potholes and the wider maintenance backlog matter enormously and must be tackled through the separate Government and council funding provided for highway maintenance. The design and merits of the A326 should be debated properly, but on an accurate understanding of the funding choices available.

Further reading: <https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/26493552.councillor-hits-back-calls-scrap-a326-fix-potholes/>

A3090 emergency water-main repairs

Southern Water began emergency repairs to a major 18-inch water main at Pouncefoot Hill. One lane of the A3090 dual carriageway towards Romsey was closed, with the work expected to last between seven and ten days depending on the road condition and reinstatement required.

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/broksigns>

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, please forward that message to me and I will chase it for you.

Hampshire and the Solent

Bringing more power and responsibility home

The Government has announced proposals for what it describes as the biggest transfer of power, funding and responsibility from Westminster in a generation. The direction is welcome: decisions should be made closer to the communities they affect, with local leaders given the flexibility to deliver rather than having to navigate repeated Whitehall approvals and short-term funding pots.

The proposals include:

- Mayors retaining a share of locally raised business rates from April 2027, followed by a share of income tax from 2028, with safeguards for areas with weaker tax bases.
- Greater local control over buses, integrated ticketing and commuter rail, with fewer Whitehall approvals for locally funded transport projects.
- Control over employment support and 16–19 skills funding so training can better reflect the needs of local employers and young people.
- More influence over housing, regeneration, affordable homes and development corporations.

- Greater coordination of health, policing, fire, education and support for young people, with more scope to pool budgets and invest in prevention.

The Government has also committed to improving council financial sustainability, including reform of the services placing the greatest pressure on local budgets: adult and children's social care, homelessness and SEND. A detailed public-service reform white paper and fiscal-devolution roadmap are expected alongside the Budget on 28 October.

Hampshire and the Solent's Combined County Authority already covers Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight and has secured a £1.3 billion investment fund. I believe the mayoral election should be brought forward from 2028 to 2027 so residents can choose a directly elected regional voice as these new powers begin to take effect.

Children and Young People

A new three-year plan for SEND support

Hampshire County Council and NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight have developed a new three-year plan with parent and carer forums, schools, education settings, health and social-care professionals and voluntary organisations. The aim is that every child receives the right support at the right time, wherever they live in Hampshire.

The plan includes:

- Earlier access to locally based specialists, including educational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and specialist teachers.
- More SEND provision in mainstream schools and greater consistency from early years through to age 25.
- Investment in local provision so more children can attend school in their own communities.
- A stronger voice for children, parents and carers in shaping services and resolving issues earlier.

Government funding of £9 million will help launch the new Experts at Hand service, giving education settings faster access to specialist support and advice. The plan is an important starting point, but success must be measured by the real experiences and outcomes of children and families.

Read more: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20260624sendreformplan>

Results-day support through Hampshire Futures

I wished everyone receiving A-level results well and shared Hampshire Futures advice for anyone whose results were not what they expected. A disappointing set of grades does not close off the future: careers advice, employment, apprenticeships and alternative routes remain available, and Plan B is still a plan.

Careers information: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/hampshirefutures>

Waste and Recycling Safety

Please recycle batteries and vapes safely

A recent fire in a Test Valley refuse-collection vehicle is believed to have been caused by a vape placed in household waste. Nobody was injured, but Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service had to attend. Lithium-ion batteries can ignite when crushed during collection, putting crews at risk and damaging vehicles.

- Never put batteries, vapes, mobile phones, laptops or other electrical items in household bins.
- Recycle batteries at participating supermarkets, retailers or Household Waste Recycling Centres.

- Take vapes to participating retailers or Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- Take phones, laptops and other electrical items to a Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Find local recycling options: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling>

Romsey Rural: Planning and Development

Choice Plants site, Timsbury – decision deferred

Test Valley Borough Council's Southern Area Planning Committee deferred its decision on the application for 44 homes at the former Choice Plants site in Timsbury. I am grateful to committee members for listening carefully and recognising that further information is needed before the application can properly be considered.

My objection was not about opposing new homes in principle. It was about ensuring that a significant development is safe, deliverable and supported by adequate infrastructure. The site has a history of surface-water flooding, and there is uncertainty about surface-water management, sewer capacity and the possible effect on neighbouring properties.

Detailed surface-water and foul-water drainage schemes must be produced and accepted by the relevant authorities, including the Lead Local Flood Authority and Southern Water. Deferral does not determine the application; it ensures that the missing reports and technical information are considered before a decision is made. That is the sensible and responsible outcome.

Have your say on Romsey's Neighbourhood Plan

The consultation on the draft Romsey Neighbourhood Plan opens on 1 September and runs until 13 October. A strong plan cannot change the overall number of homes imposed on the area, but it can influence where and how development happens, the infrastructure developers must provide, the character and design of communities, and the green spaces that should be protected.

Once adopted, the plan will form part of the statutory development plan and carry real weight when planning applications are decided. It will only be credible if it reflects the views of residents, businesses and community groups, so please read the draft and complete the questionnaire.

Community consultation sessions will be held at:

- Abbotswood Community Centre – Friday 4 September, 10am–7pm.
- Romsey Town Hall – Thursday 10 September, 9.30am–7pm.
- Woodley Village Hall – Sunday 13 September, 10am–5pm.

A drop-in display will also be available at Romsey Town Hall from 14 to 18 September, 9am–5pm.

Draft plan and questionnaire: <https://www.romsey-tc.gov.uk/rnp.html>

Local Services and Business

Business-rates relief for pubs and live music venues

Eligible pubs and live music venues can receive 15% business-rates relief from 1 April 2026. Test Valley Borough Council has tried to identify and apply the relief automatically, but any business that believes it qualifies and cannot see the relief on its bill should check the criteria and apply. The Government has also announced 20% relief from 1 April 2027, with detailed eligibility expected in the next Budget.

Check eligibility and apply: <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/business/land/business-rates/reliefs/pubs-and-live-music-venues-relief>

County Councillor Grants

The new year of the County Councillor grant scheme is now open once again. As always, do please let me know if you or an organisation in your community could benefit from support. £5,000 is available in grants of up to £1,000 per organisation.

Getting About

As usual, August was in large part an 'off' month for parish councils, so no attendance from at meetings this month.

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 local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: facebook.com/nickadamsking

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CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING
Caring for Romsey Rural



General Updates from HCC:

Explore the best of Hampshire on board the bus this summer with free travel for 5–15-year-olds

Children aged 5-15 travelling on local bus services can travel free throughout August, making it easier and more affordable for families to enjoy days out in Hampshire, visit friends and relatives, or simply get around during the summer holidays

[Explore the best of Hampshire on board the bus this summer with free travel for 5–15-year-olds | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire students receiving exam results offered free advice and support on next steps

Our level 2 and 3 exam results helpline is ready to take calls

[Hampshire students receiving exam results offered free advice and support on next steps | Hampshire County Council](#)

Help available for Hampshire households facing urgent costs

Hampshire residents who are struggling with urgent household costs are being encouraged to check what support may be available through the Crisis and Resilience Fund

[Help available for Hampshire households facing urgent costs | Hampshire County Council](#)

Heading to Boomtown? Stay safe in the heat and look out for each other

Festival-goers attending Boomtown this week (12-16 August 2026) are being encouraged to take extra care in the hot weather and look out for friends, family and fellow event attendees

[Heading to Boomtown? Stay safe in the heat and look out for each other | Hampshire County Council](#)

Queen Elizabeth Country Park celebrates 50 years with summer festivities

Queen Elizabeth Country Park near Petersfield is marking its 50th anniversary with an exciting programme of events this summer, including the opening of a brand-new children's play area

[Queen Elizabeth Country Park celebrates 50 years with summer festivities | Hampshire County Council](#)

Vote for Royal Victoria Chapel to become an 'Everyday History Hero'

The Royal Victoria Chapel in Netley is in the running for a prestigious national heritage award, and local people are being encouraged to cast their vote to help secure funding for future community activities

[Vote for Royal Victoria Chapel to become an 'Everyday History Hero' | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire students congratulated on Level 3 results as free careers helpline opens

Students across Hampshire receiving their A-level, T-level and vocational qualification results are being congratulated on their achievements, as support remains available for anyone considering their next steps

[Hampshire students congratulated on Level 3 results as free careers helpline opens | Hampshire County Council](#)

Funding available for local organisations helping Hampshire residents with money worries

Community and voluntary organisations across Hampshire are being encouraged to apply for funding to help residents build financial resilience and reduce the risk of future crisis

[Funding available for local organisations helping Hampshire residents with money worries | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire GCSE students praised for their achievements as results day support continues

Students across Hampshire receiving their GCSE results are being congratulated for their hard work and determination, as Hampshire County Council continues to offer free advice and support to help young people plan their next steps

[Hampshire GCSE students praised for their achievements as results day support continues | Hampshire County Council](#)