

## **Update from Hampshire County Council – January 2025**

### **County Council to consider bidding to join the Government's 'fast-track' devolution programme**

Hampshire County Council could be one of the local authorities to apply for inclusion in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) – for the delegation of central Government decision making powers and additional funding to local councils to give them more local control over certain areas such as education, transportation, and health services

On the 9 and 10 January, the County Council and its Cabinet will decide whether or not to make a request to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme and be on the fast track to securing devolution for the area, with a view to unlocking the opportunities devolved powers would have as quickly as possible for the benefit of residents and communities across the region.

If it is agreed that a request for inclusion on the fast-track Programme should be made, this would be the first step towards creating a Strategic Authority across the wider region incorporating the local authority areas of Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council.

In addition to the creation of a new Strategic Authority, the Government is also expecting all areas across the country to produce local government re-organisation plans by Autumn 2025. This will create new large unitary authorities across the region, which for Hampshire will mean bringing together the County Council, 11 borough and district councils and small neighbouring unitary authorities into a number of new large unitary authorities.

To help areas develop and implement devolution proposals in the most ambitious timeframes, Government has been clear that they expect local authorities to postpone local council elections from May 2025 to May 2026. This will enable devolution proposals to progress at pace in 2025 and ensure the benefits for the area are realised as quickly as possible.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20241231Devolution>

### **Working together in Hampshire to tackle climate change: twelve months in focus**



Hampshire residents and communities are making a vital contribution to tackling climate change with over 550 householders investing in Hampshire County Council's third Solar Together scheme, generating their own green electricity and contributing to significant carbon reductions for the region

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This, combined with the previous two schemes, will contribute to a reduction of more than 59,000 tonnes of CO2 in the region (over the 25-year guaranteed lifetime of the systems installed), and, with more people seeking repairs for worn out or mechanically failing items through Hampshire's Repair Cafés, over 50 tonnes of CO2 have been saved.

Another key area of the County Council's climate change work, in collaboration with partners such as bus companies and Hampshire's district, borough and unitary councils, is reducing carbon emissions from transport through several ambitious programmes including:

- Helping to secure Government investment for 62 zero-emission (electric) buses operated by First Bus and serving bus passengers in Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth, helping to improve air quality.
- Improvements to 17 major bus services by funding the extension of services, with some now running 24 hours a day, and on Friday and Saturday evenings – reducing the number of car journeys and lowering carbon emissions.
- Construction of nine local walking and cycling routes in locations across the county, to enable people to walk, cycle or scoot for their local journeys instead of travelling by car.

Other positive climate change action over the past year has included planting many more trees through the [Hampshire Forest Partnership](#), bringing the total number of new carbon-absorbing trees planted in Hampshire to 41,000 since 2022.

To encourage and support younger residents to tackle climate change, the County Council has set up the [Go Green](#) challenge, spotlighting daily actions they can take, such as avoiding food waste or making a pledge to swap just one car journey for a greener alternative.

As part of finding ways to reduce carbon emissions across all County Council services, around 4,500 more people have been supported through Hampshire's Technology Enabled Care Programme, avoiding the need to travel to, or access, wider health services, and instead have received support at home, which significantly reduces carbon emissions.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20241210ClimateAR>

### **Hampshire leaders secure commitment from Southern Water to improve their response**

Hampshire County Council has hosted a meeting with Southern Water on the 19 December, bringing together Leaders of local councils and key partners, over concerns around its handling of the latest water supply incident impacting residents in parts of Southampton, Eastleigh, Romsey and the New Forest, and to find out what progress the company is making to improve its services, ensuring reliable water supplies for the county's residents in the longer term

County Council Leader, Councillor Nick Adams-King said: "We understand that problems can and do occur, and that the scale of this particular emergency was significant, but Southern Water must have much better planning for this kind of occurrence. They need a more resilient system of distributing water, be upfront with the public about the impact and what is actually happening on the ground and work with their partners to ensure residents and businesses are helped in a timely and efficient way. Despite our frustrations, I am encouraged at how seriously Southern Water responded to our concerns, accepting that they need to dramatically improve their response to future incidents. We continue to monitor this incident closely and to offer our active support to the company in relation to the current situation, and to help them better prepare in the future."

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20241219SWStatementLeader>

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