

## February County Councillor Report for Parish Councils

Cllr Jan Warwick

### Highways and Winter Road Conditions

The combination of freezing temperatures and prolonged rainfall since Christmas has significantly accelerated wear on Hampshire's roads, particularly through freeze-thaw damage. As a result, reports of potholes and surface defects have risen sharply.

Despite these challenging conditions, Hampshire Highways has repaired **over 62,000 defects** since the start of the financial year. To manage demand, additional patching gangs, Jet/Dragon patchers and machinery have been secured, with further crews joining the network in coming weeks.

Drainage systems have also been under pressure. Extra jetting units are now deployed to tackle localised flooding, supported by a dedicated drainage response team. An additional white-lining crew has been introduced to address worn road markings, particularly at smaller sites.

Given the volume of defects, some repairs will initially be **temporary infills** to ensure roads are made safe quickly, with permanent repairs scheduled as soon as possible.

#### Reporting highway issues:

Parish councils are encouraged to remind residents that all highway issues should be reported via the Hampshire County Council website or via the *Our Hants* app.

### Roadworks and Utility Works

Hampshire is currently experiencing an unusually high level of utility activity, including water, electricity, gas and broadband infrastructure upgrades. While disruptive, these works are largely unavoidable and carried out under statutory powers.

Hampshire County Council's role is to **coordinate works, apply permit conditions, and monitor compliance**, but the County Council cannot generally prevent utility companies from working on the highway. Utility companies are responsible for traffic management, diversion routes and reinstatements.

All planned works are published on the national **one.network** system.

Concerns remain nationally about the short notice allowed for "emergency" works, which can limit coordination and increase disruption. This issue will be addressed in Hampshire under our proposed new disruption charging scheme this year.

### Education and SEND Provision

The County Council has approved major investment to expand specialist SEND provision across Hampshire, supporting the rising number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans.

- **157 new specialist places** approved in the latest phase
- Part of a wider ambition to deliver **1,000 new specialist places by 2030**

This sits alongside a **£633m capital programme** for schools and children's services, including new schools, SEND facilities, early years provision and family hubs.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20260121SEND>

### **Fostering in Hampshire**

Parish councils are asked to help promote Hampshire's fostering campaign. Carers are needed from all backgrounds, with full training, allowances and professional support provided. More information is available via the County Council fostering service.

### **Road Safety and Pavement Parking**

The Government has published a new National Road Safety Strategy, with consultations open on measures including driver eyesight testing, learning periods for new drivers and changes to penalties.

New legislation will also give councils greater powers over **pavement parking**, allowing clearer enforcement to protect accessibility for disabled residents, parents and older people. Interim enforcement powers will be available from 2026.

You can read more or respond to the strategy consultation here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-safety-strategy>

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