

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO ALL PARISH COUNCILS IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS

2 JANUARY 2026

Happy New Year to you. I hope you all had a joyous and restful Christmas.

1. Government currently consulting on May 2026 elections.

The Labour Government has invited Hampshire County Council to make formal representations regarding the capacity constraints which the May 2026 elections could create, and the potential impact of those constraints on the progress of local government reform in Hampshire.

My view and the view of the Leader of HCC is that democracy is far more important than administrative convenience, so elections should go ahead this May. A Full Council meeting and a Cabinet meeting has been hastily scheduled for the next two weeks to debate and agree our position. Our general view is that the Government has created this problematic situation, and so Ministers themselves should take a decision about the elections.

In any case, Councillors are inherently conflicted when it comes to any decision to extend their current term. I note that the Electoral Commission agrees with this point. I thought this was rather a good statement from their Chief Executive:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/electoral-commission-responds-potential-election-postponements>

Finally a reminder that the deadline for the Government's LGR consultation is 11 January. If you have not already done so, please take 15 minutes to respond to the consultation at this link: [Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#)

2. Enhancement to Connect to Support website

To meet our statutory duties, the County Council provides information and advice for families, young people, and those with special needs. This advice has hitherto included the Families Information and Services Hub (FISH) and the Local Offer. In order to streamline our web presence for the benefit of residents, I would like to let you know that both FISH and the Local Offer have now moved to the Connect to Support Hampshire (CTSH) website.

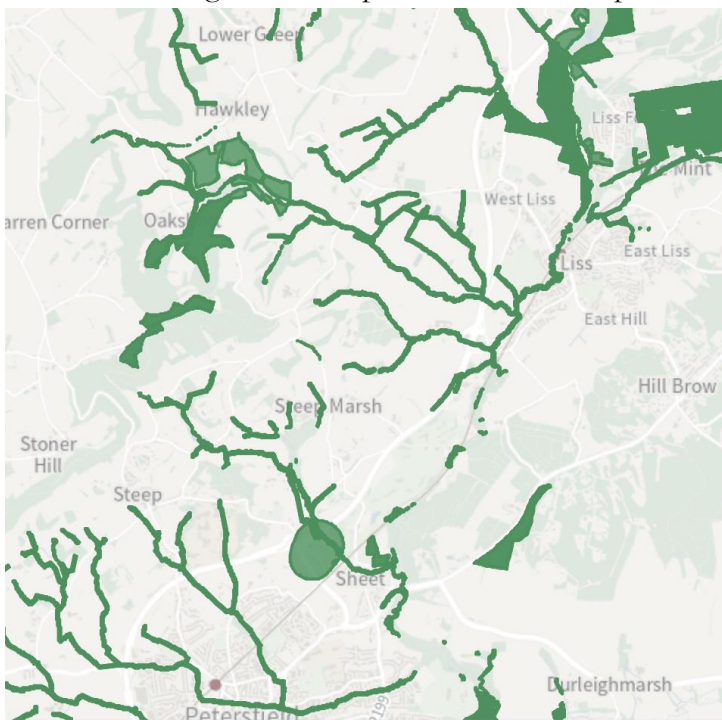
The website is managed by HCC to meet statutory requirements under the Care Act 2014 and will now serve as an **all-age information hub** for care and support, offering one website for residents and professionals to access information regardless of age, rather than different locations as previously. You can access the website via this link: [Connect to Support Hampshire](#).

3. Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire published

You may recall that HCC consulted on its Nature Recovery Strategy last year. On 8 December 2025, HCC published its final Strategy. The plan aims to restore nature, protect precious habitats, and create more opportunities for people to connect with the outdoors. This new strategy brings together expertise from organisations and authorities across the region and sets out practical steps for how Hampshire can ensure a minimum of 30% of land and sea is secured for biodiversity by 2030.

To achieve these shared goals, everyone needs to keep playing their part in nature recovery. This strategy sets out how, together, we can protect and enhance our natural environment. The strategy has been designed to help guide land use choices, inform planning decisions, and encourage investment in nature-based solutions to wider environmental challenges such as climate change and flooding.

The Strategy introduces a new acronym of “ACB’s”, which stands for: **Areas that Could Become** of Particular Importance for Biodiversity. We seem to have quite a lot of ACBs in Petersfield Hangers. I have pasted the ACB map for our area below.



The full strategy is available to read here:

[Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

4. Update: Love Lane Space for Nature

You may have noticed this attractive natural bench which is now installed at the Love Lane space for Nature. This bench was donated by a resident of Love Lane who was selling her house and no longer needed the carved oak bench. The carved wooden bench is incredibly heavy; I actually did not think that the Hampshire Monday Group would be able to get it across the road and up onto the bank. But somehow they managed it – there is seemingly no challenge they cannot meet.



I continue to chase Hampshire Highways regarding the pile of rubble. I have been promised that it will be cleared several times. I will keep chasing until it is gone.

Following the clearing of laurel and scrub, the copse is going to take some time to re-establish. I have sprinkled some wildflower seeds around the steep areas where people cannot easily walk, so there is chance of them sprouting. It will be interesting to see what comes up in the Spring.



RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers