

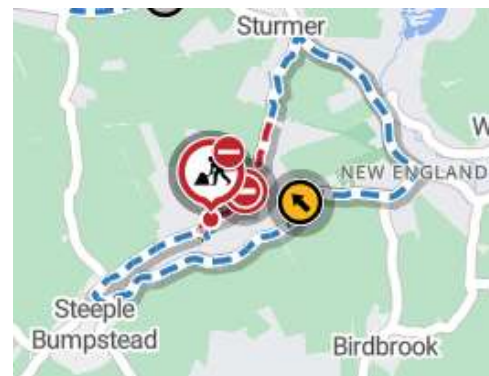
District Councillor's Report to Parish Councils January 2026

Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward

Scheduled Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders & Roadworks

Works at New England, Sturmer Road. Ongoing for Utility Asset Works. Anglian Water. Project: SEW-12079 - Stambourne Pump Away Scheme. Installing underground storm water storage pipes. E: onealliancecustomers@anglianwater.co.uk T: 03457 145 145.

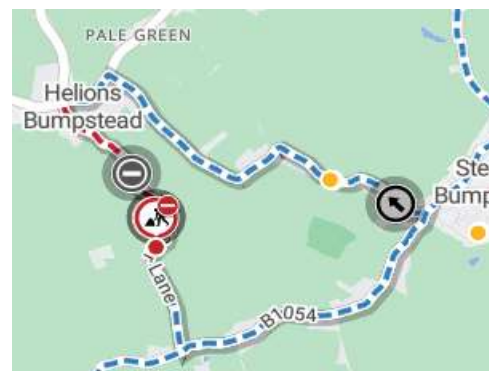
Intended closure of Sturmer Road and Maltings Lane, Steeple Bumpstead due to commence 5th to 13th January 2026 while patching takes place to repair the road surface. It involves removing a part of the surface around a pothole and placing a new patch of road surface. Ref: EP201EH2390016-02. See map.



Intended closure of Mill Road, Ridgewell due to commence on 7th January 2026 for 2 nights (20:00 - 05:00). The closure is required while Anglian Water undertakes remedial works.

Link: <https://one.network/?tm=GB146219565>

Water Lane, Helions Bumpstead; carriageway patching due to take place between 19th and 27th January 2026. Partial closure with emergency access. Ref: EP201EH2391302. Little information available on one.network website at this time. See map 2.



Local Government in Greater Essex

This is the last chance for you to have your say on the future of local government in Greater Essex. There are four proposals on the table - one for 15 councils to become three, two proposals for councils to become four, and one for five. The Government want fewer councils. The consultation is open until Sunday 11th January 2026. The decision is expected in Spring 2026.

Mayoral Elections Delayed to 2028

We had previously been advised that Mayoral Elections would take place in May 2026. However, it was announced on 04/12/2025 in the House of Commons that these elections will now take place in May 2028. The Government has said that it needs more time to reorganise local government.

Cllr. G Butland, Leader of BDC explained: It was confirmed by Government that whilst the Mayoral Elections had been delayed, the Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA) would still be created in 2026. Devolution of responsibilities in the areas of transport and infrastructure, skills and employment, planning for housing, economic development and regeneration, environment and net zero, health and wellbeing, public sector reform and public safety would therefore still occur in 2026. Although it was likely that the powers, responsibilities and funding in relation to these functions would be less in the first two years of the GECCA, it was still expected that the Combined Authority (CA) and general devolution would have a powerful and influential impact on Greater Essex. The statutory instrument which would provide the legislative basis for establishing the CA had been expected in November 2025 but had not yet been released by Government. It was therefore expected that further details would be provided soon on the exact powers and responsibilities which would be available to the CA once established in 2026.

Alongside the announcement of the delay, the Government had also confirmed the allocation of investment funding that would be made available to the GECCA. The annual allocation which would be made once the CA had become the full Mayoral Strategic Authority in 2028 would be £41.5million. For the first two years of the CA, the allocation would be £13.8million. The allocation of the funding was in

addition to any government departmental funding to be devolved to the CA which showcased the importance of engaging with the new strategic authority at the earliest opportunity. To that end, the Leader and Chief Executive met with other Essex Leaders and Chief Executives of Essex on 5th December to discuss how Districts would be represented on the CA once it was formally constituted. It had therefore been agreed that the 12 Districts of Essex would be allocated two 'District' seats on the strategic board, of which would be non-voting positions alongside the current upper-tier authorities of Essex, Southend and Thurrock. Monitoring Officers were working to establish effective governance routes to nominate representatives to the two District seats. To ensure that the needs of Braintree's communities and businesses were represented within the CA's developing plans, positive working relationships would be fostered with the two District representatives.

Free Business Briefing

BDC's Economic Development Team have organised a free business briefing about leadership and team development for local business owners based in the Braintree District. Taking place at Hedingham Castle on 13th January 2026 10am-12pm. See: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-briefing-leadership-and-team-development-tickets-1562568106269>

Local Plan Sub-Committee Meeting 11th December 2025

It was reported that the Government's Standard Housing Methodology calculation had identified a significant increase in the number of houses required in the District and that as part of the site reassessment process land should be identified for approximately 1100 additional houses for inclusion in the Local Plan Review. The sites which the Sub-Committee was asked to re-assess had been selected based on specific criteria. These were, that Officers considered them to be the best available sites which had not yet been included as a draft allocations within the Review Plan; sites within the Northern part of the District; sites which were subject to speculative applications for development; sites where more information had been provided by the promoter; and sites which were likely to be considered favourable based on planned changes to national policy.

Site STUR2293 land south of Haverhill was brought back to the committee for reconsideration, I attended the meeting and spoke about a number of issues, predominantly that the land is situated on a high plateau overlooking Haverhill's chemical and biological industry and the proposed development would sit higher than the Culina distribution centre building. The site was not included by the committee at this time.

Site FINC2138 – Land North of B1053, Finchingfield was not allocated for residential development by the committee at this time.

It was reported that the buffer required and the latest trajectory for the provision of new houses across the District. Highways modelling work had also been progressed with Essex County Council and Members were being asked to re-assess sites to provide an additional 1100 houses. Completion of this work would enable a number of evidence-based documents to be completed including the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Water Cycle Study and the Sustainability Appraisal. Members were reminded that the housing target was now a minimum expectation within national planning policy and there was no maximum limit. It was reported that the standard housing method was reviewed on a six-monthly basis and that it could increase if housing affordability rates worsened. Legal advice had been received from Counsel and from DAC Planning that a minimum 10% buffer to housing land supply would be required to avoid the risk of the Local Plan being found unsound. In terms of the trajectory, it was acknowledged that larger allocated development sites were unlikely to begin delivering homes until 2031/32 as planning permission and comprehensive master plans would be required. However, it was proposed that the windfall allowance should remain at 75 homes per year.

Government Consultation for Use of Facial Recognition

The government is launching a consultation to help develop a new legal framework for the use of facial recognition and similar technologies by law enforcement.

This consultation closes at **11:59pm on 12 February 2026**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/legal-framework-for-using-facial-recognition-in-law-enforcement>

Grants

Small grants for village halls – Defra and ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural Areas)

Grants up to £5,000 are available to help make modest improvements to rural community buildings in England such as boiler replacements, insulation, toilet upgrades and new kitchens.

Awards can be made to cover 20% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum amount of £5,000. The balance of funding for the works proposed must be in place or at least confirmed within 6 weeks of making an application to the small grants fund. Project expenditure must take place before 31 March 2026.

<https://acre.org.uk/village-halls-small-grants-fund/>

Engagement grants – National Archives

The Engagement Grants Programme offers grants of up to £3,000 for organisations to conduct outreach and engagement projects that will connect archives with their communities in places across England and Wales. Engagement grants are often responsive to cultural events and days of national importance.

The theme for the current application round is 'Belonging'. The funder states: "By collecting records relating to our shared past and present, archives play an important role in helping people feel a sense of belonging." The closing date for applications is 19 January 2026.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/grants-and-funding/engagement-grants/about-these-grants/>

Awards for All, and Reaching Communities – The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF)

Awards for All:

TNLCF offer funding from £300 to £20,000 and can support your project for up to two years. You can apply for funding to deliver a new or existing activity or to support your organisation to change and adapt to new and future challenges.

They can fund projects that'll do at least one of these things:

- bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage
- support people, communities and organisations facing more demands and challenges because of the cost-of-living crisis.

Reaching Communities England:

With this funding, TNLCF want to help strengthen communities and improve lives across England. Their funding is available to all communities, but their priority is the places, people and communities that need it most.

When they say 'community', they mean people who live in the same area. Or people with similar interests or life experiences, even if they do not live in the same area.

They offer funding that starts at £20,001. Your project must help achieve one of these missions. Which are to support communities to:

- come together through inclusive places, spaces and activities (either physical or virtual), especially for communities where people are least able to come together
- help children and young people thrive by developing positive social and emotional skills
- be healthier by addressing health inequalities and helping prevent poor health

- be environmentally sustainable by engaging with climate issues, having a positive environmental impact, and improving access to quality natural spaces

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes?country=england&status=open>

National Lottery Awards for All England – Environment

This fund is available to community-led projects that improve the environment and help people connect with and enjoy nature where they live.

You can use the funding to:

- start a new activity or continue an existing one
- help your organisation adapt to new challenges
- run one-off events that have a clear environmental benefit.

They're looking to fund projects that:

- help people connect with and care for nature in their area
- make a positive difference to the environment

Funding from £300 up to £20,000 is available.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-england-environment>

Woodland Creation Planning Grants – Forestry Commission

The Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG) offers funding of up to £30,500 for the production of a UKFS-compliant woodland creation design plan. Landowners, land managers and public bodies can apply? WCPG is open for applications year-round. 31 March 2027 is the period WCPG funding is currently confirmed until.

You can apply for £1,500 to complete Stage 1 of the WCPG application. This is for a desk-based exercise to identify the constraints and opportunities affecting the proposed planting. If there's potential for woodland creation to take place on the site, then you will be offered a stage 2 payment.

<https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/trees-woodlands-and-forestry---woodland-creation-planning-grant-1#summary>

Heritage Revival Fund – the Architectural Heritage Fund

The Heritage Revival Fund has been created to help communities across England rescue and repurpose neglected historic buildings. It will do this by supporting community organisations to take ownership of, adapt and reuse the local heritage assets that matter to them, transforming them into thriving spaces that meet their needs. This new programme is being delivered by the Architectural Heritage Fund in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Historic England. Three types of grant are available:

- Project Viability Grants. These grants, up to £15,000, should help you to establish whether a project is viable. Work will probably focus on understanding the condition of the building, how it might be used, and whether that intended use is appropriate for the building and likely to be sustainable.
- Project Development Grants. These grants, up to £100,000, aim to support development work on historic building projects. Project Development Grants can contribute towards the costs of developing and co-ordinating your project and taking it towards the start of work on site. To qualify, an organisation must have established that the end use of the project is likely to be viable and have decided to take the project forward.

The next deadline for Project Development Grant applications is 19 January 2026.

<https://ahfund.org.uk/grants/england/>

Cllr. Diana Garrod

Braintree District Councillor - Bumpstead Ward