

Leader's Statement

25 February 2025

Devolution announcement

We have now heard from Government that Leicestershire has not been accepted on to the priority programme for devolution, as requested by Leicestershire County Council.

This is good news for us and the other Districts and Boroughs, as it allows us more time to consider the best solution for local government in our area.

However, our timeline is still tight with interim proposals having to be submitted by 21 March 2025. We then have some months to formulate full proposals which we expect will need to be submitted in November 2025.

The indication is the Government expects reorganisation to have happened and new structures to be in place in our area by April 2028.

Chief Executive Julia Smith and I will continue to meet with the other Districts and Boroughs each week to pull together a joint proposal which best protects the interests of our residents.

This announcement also means of course that the County Council elections will go ahead in May as planned.

Flooding support for residents

Recognising the ordeal many of our residents went through during January's deluge we are taking action to help those worst affected by internal flooding. In partnership with the Environment Agency, Leicestershire County Council and flood and resilience experts RAB Consultants, we are offering households a free flood survey.

Officers are contacting residents to offer the survey, funded through our UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This will assess flood risks and identify suitable defence and resilience measures.

We hope this will provide residents with tailored advice and practical solutions to improve property protection and reduce the impact of any future flooding. Surveys will be completed by 31 March.

HNRFI protest letter

As we learned in September 2024 the then Secretary of State delayed making a decision on the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, despite the recommendation from the Planning Inspectorate's Examination Authority that the scheme should be rejected.

She then offered the developer a second bite of the cherry to remedy what we believe are fundamental issues that compromise the scheme itself. Since the submission of additional information the Council along with other interested parties have been working doggedly to robustly defend our position which remains unchanged. The project would destroy the rural nature of our District forever and must be turned down once and for all without further delay. With the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Transport, Councillor Ben Taylor and I felt we should again raise concerns about the effect of the Hinckley National Rail Interchange on our District.

We wrote to Heidi Alexander, MP, the new Minister, urging her to make an early decision to reject this monstrous scheme. We have lived under the threat of this warehousing and rail hub for far too long and need the Secretary of State to see sense and veto the project and bring this uncertainty to an end once and for all.

Community Awards

I was delighted and honoured to once again be the compere for our annual Community Awards ceremony. To say this is one of the highlights of my year is an understatement. Being in the presence of so many local residents who are dedicated to making a difference within their communities is truly humbling.

It's always a challenging task for our panel to choose outright winners as everyone's efforts are special. I think it's wonderful that we can showcase those efforts and reward those people who spend their time helping others. They are all winners in my eyes.

Blaby District – Carbon Neutral by 2050

Going green at the depot

We're thrilled to announce the completion of our solar panel installation at our Whetstone depot. Contractors started in the New Year and last week finished installing 287 panels across the roofs of our three buildings.

And we are already seeing results. In just one week we've used 100% of the energy we have harnessed from the sun, saving 68kg of CO2 emissions – equivalent to planting four trees!

We're already seeing the benefits of measuring our consumption and as daylight hours increase, we'll enjoy even more renewable energy. During the work week, we'll use what we generate and on weekends we'll charge our electric van, compact sweeper and our latest addition – the repowered electric bin lorry which has just joined our fleet. Here's to a greener future!



Big Community Switch

As rises in energy costs have been making the headlines yet again it's timely that we have recently launched our latest Big Community Switch campaign,

Partnering with collective energy switching experts iChoosr, the initiative encourages residents to sign up to a reverse auction. The more people who register their interest in the auction, the better the deal energy suppliers may offer.

Offers come from reputable, trusted suppliers and are 100% renewable energy tariffs, helping households go green and potentially save money in the process. It's a win for residents and also for us as a Council, helping us achieve our ambition of being a net zero District by 2050.