



# LRA's Loughton News

19 January 2024

In this issue, read about [police events locally](#) including those coming up.

The [winners of the Christmas Window competition](#) have been announced, and we give an update on [the salt bins that have been taken away](#).

In the Forest, beware of the danger of [frozen ponds](#) and keep an eye out for [foxes chasing each other](#).

There are [the answers to LRA's Christmas Quiz](#), [can you help with Loughton Life](#) and, with elections in May, [would you consider being an LRA Cllr?](#)

You can always [contact us by email](#) to raise an issue, give your views, or offer help.

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## If you are reading this...

You will have an interest in our town and already support LRA by being a member.

### **How about taking that one step further and becoming an LRA Councillor?**

Elections for both Town and District Councils take place in May, so we look for some LRA members to join our team of Cllrs. Our Cllrs come from a wide cross-section of occupations and ages, with many new Cllrs learning and working alongside those with many years experience.

If you could be interested, or just want to know what is involved, please call Michael on 020 8508 4457 or Chris on 020 8508 2361, or [email us](#).

## LRA News

### Luctons Path Streetlights

A resident contacted LRA Cllr Caroline Pond to report that two of the streetlights on Luctons Path were not working. Caroline raised this with the County Council who advised there would be a delay fixing them, as they were due to be upgraded to LED lighting. The lights have now been replaced.

### Clays Lane Closure

When Thames Water closed the road on 15 January, they instituted a full closure along the whole lane, including the first hundred yards from the A121 to the entrance to Stanmore Road and the Goldings Manor Estate, meaning that a full circuit of the diversion was necessary. This was crass, and involved 150 households in huge wasted mileage. LRA Cllr Chris Pond contacted Essex Highways who sent an inspector. A more sensible closure has now been instigated.

This closure along the rest of the narrow lane will be annoying to many until 25 February, but at least it has been minimised.

### District Council Spending Cuts?

The District Council is currently completing its budget for 2024/25. In order to balance the budget, they need to identify £3.5 million in savings "*making this one of the most challenging of all budgets in recent years*".

The District Council is now considering recommendations to achieve this. [Here are the details](#) (p40-48). Of note are:

- Removal of the out of hours noise complaint service.
- 25% cut to funding for Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF).
- 25% cut to funding for Epping Forest Citizens Advice.
- Removal of the District Council's dedicated policing team.

LRA Cllr Chris Pond says that losing the dedicated policing team is especially concerning, and that the overall budget situation is a result of the central government continuing to underfund local government. The Treasury throttles councils by restricting Council Tax increases to 3%, by not adjusting Council Tax bands, and by not giving sufficient grants. Dire cuts are the inevitable result.

The budget is due to be finalised in February.

### Affordable Homes and Qualis

As we reported last month the District Council proposed reducing affordable housing at two Qualis Commercial housing sites in Epping, given they were deemed financially unviable in their current form.

This was subsequently considered at a the District Council full Council meeting on 19 December and approved by 32 votes to 10, with 4 abstentions.

LRA Cllr Chris Pond has previously said that LRA Plans Group will have to be very vigilant private developers do not try this in Loughton.

## **New Boundaries for County Council Divisions in Essex - Have Your Say**

The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) for England has reviewed the boundaries for County Council divisions in Essex, and have published their [draft recommendations](#), along with how you can comment. You can [comment](#) on the recommendations until February 19.

Loughton is currently divided into three divisions; one solely covering Loughton, one part joined with Chigwell and one part joined with Buckhurst Hill. The LGBC proposes two divisions to cover Loughton; one to cover the northern part of town including Debden, with the southern part (including areas around the High Road and Loughton Station) joined with part of Buckhurst Hill. Any changes would apply from the County Council elections in 2025.

***LRA Comment:** We have pointed out to the LGBC the central part of Loughton now falls in Loughton South and Buckhurst Hill West, and Loughton Central has none of the centre, and should in fact be renamed Loughton North.*

## **Can you help with Loughton Life, please?**

Very soon LRA's 100 or so volunteers will be delivering our Loughton Life newsletter to members.



We now need a new deliverer for Englands Lane. We also need someone to help distribute copies of Loughton Life to our deliverers in Roding ward. Can you help?

If you or someone you know can help in these areas, please [email Martine](#).

## **LRA's 2023 Christmas Quiz**

Thank you to all of you who sent in your entry for the Christmas quiz. The winner is Tom Cowhig, who wins a book token. [The answers are here](#).



*Has this email has been forwarded to you by an LRA member? Join LRA and [support us for just £5 a year](#) and get these emails sent direct to you every 3-4 weeks.*

***Planning and Licensing***

[Read more on our website](#) about Planning and Licensing, the role of the LRA Plans Group (LRAPG), how to get more information and how to comment to the Town Council and the District Council, and to the LRA Plans Group – please have your say.

### **Changes in Planning Policy**

The Government changed its national planning guidance last month with respect to house building and development. The new guidance clarifies that a significant increase in the average density of residential development in an existing urban area may be inappropriate if it will result in developments which are “wholly out of character with the existing area.”

Whilst this advice has arrived too late to stop the large development by Fairview Homes at Lucton’s Field, it gives hope that any further high density development can be resisted by the council. Whilst the planning inquiry regarding the development at 13-15A Alderton Hill has closed, the planning inspector will have to consider this new guidance before issuing his decision.

## ***Roads, Parking and Travel***

### **Planned Road Closures**

- Clays Lane - the road will be closed 15 January to 25 February while meter installation works are undertaken by Thames Water. [More](#)

Dates can change so [check here for the latest updates](#), and for other planned roadworks including ones that involve only temporary traffic lights.



### **Bus Route 804**

Local County Cllrs have been told school bus route 804 will likely be withdrawn after this school year. The route is now very little used, but the County Council will talk to Transport for London to see if one of their services could be slightly altered or diverted to compensate.



### **Central Line Improvement Programme**

Transport for London have provided [more information on the Central Line Improvement Programme](#) which is overhauling the existing trains.

Once testing of the first train to be overhauled has concluded, production will ramp up with the programme returning one train to service per

month once the work on it has been completed. Five trains will be taken out of service at a time to maximise production, with increasing numbers entering into passenger service over the next four years.

The impact on the service (especially during rush hour) when five trains are taken out of service remains to be seen, and recent (and regular) reports of severe delays due to lack of trains isn't a good sign. [TfL has been reported](#) as saying they "have experienced an abnormally high number of defective traction motors that has required us to take several trains out of service and implement an amended timetable".

### **Trains - Industrial Action**

There is industrial action planned for different train companies on different dates for five days after 30 January. [More](#)

## **Police, Fire and Crime**



### **More Police Events Planned**

Epping Forest Community Policing Team (CPT) kicked off the year with the first of their 2024 multi-agency public engagement events. The team were at St Mary's Church in Loughton with colleagues from Essex County Fire and Rescue, the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, Essex Watch, and the District Council's community safety team.

[More](#)

This year the team are planning quarterly engagement events in Loughton and at New City College in Debden.

### **Police Fraud Awareness**

The police and Barclays Bank will be at a fraud awareness event at the Methodist Church on the High Road on 29 January between 10am and 12pm. All are welcome.

### **Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Event**

Operation Minerva is a project led by Epping Forest District Council, aiming to reduce violence against women and girls. A stall will be on The Broadway on 22 January between 10:30am and 12:30pm featuring crime prevention advice, distribution of personal safety leaflets, and the provision of equipment such as personal attack alarms and drink spiking prevention tools. Additionally, free self-defence classes will be offered to interested community members. [More](#)



### **Remember to Report Thefts of Important Documents**

If important personal documents are stolen, it is important to report such thefts to the relevant agencies, such as HM Passport Office, DVLA, etc, as well as [Action Fraud](#), to prevent them being used to commit identity crime. Such documents can have all

the information that fraudsters need to steal your identity and start committing fraud in your name.



### More from the Police

[Read more](#) from the police for our local area including other news and crime statistics. The data is updated to November 2023.

### Essex Police Weekly Dispatch News Email

Some items we report on come from the Dispatch Newsletter from Essex Police. You can [subscribe here for free](#) (choose the Epping Forest edition)



## Council News

### Christmas Window Competition Winners

The Town Council has thanked all the Loughton businesses that decorated their windows and joined in the town's festive celebrations in last year's Christmas Window Competition. The winners were:

- Local Independent category - Elliott James, 165 High Road
- Multiple/Chain Store category - Madison Fox, 94 High Road
- Charity Shops category - Haven House Children's Hospice, 188 High Road
- Eateries - The Aviary Bar & Brasserie, 3 Centric Parade, 200 High Road

The charities chosen by the category winners will each receive a £75 donation from the Town Council and this year they are Cancer Research UK, Haven House Children's Hospice (two donations) and 3Food4U. [More](#)

### Salt Bins Removed

In late 2023 the County Council removed seven salt grit bins from around Loughton, without notifying the Town Council first. The County Council then said the bins were removed due to them being faulty. The Town Council has challenged this and are trying to get them reinstated.

The salt bins removed were purchased and installed between 2003 and 2009 and were positioned in the hillier parts of Loughton to assist the residents in cold snaps, where roads are not gritted by Essex Highways.

The Town Council does run a salt bag volunteer scheme, where individual residents can volunteer to collect a bag of salt and distribute it on their respective road. However the Council relies on a very limited supply of salt from the County Council and does not have the resources to administer salt for the whole of Loughton.

Unless you are already an existing volunteer, it is unlikely that the Town Council will be able to assist in the short term.

If you wish to be prepared, you can obtain your own salt bags locally. For example, large bags of salt can be bought from Wickes on Langston Road for around £9.

### **Loughton Citizenship Awards**

Do you know someone worthy of recognition for their community work or bravery?

The Town Council is looking to celebrate those special individuals in our town who go the extra mile for their fellow citizens. This may be through long service for a voluntary organisation or local charity, good neighbourliness, running a campaign to improve community facilities or cohesion, or by an act of courage or bravery.

Any Loughton resident or a Loughton employer, educational institution, group or society may submit a nomination but please do not let the nominee know at this stage. The closing date for nominations is 31 January. [More](#) and [Nomination Forms](#) (Word document).

### **Excavation Work**

In November Essex and Suffolk Water (ESW) found it necessary to dig a hole some 20 feet below ground on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground close to the Greensted Road entrance to find the source of a water leak.

There was an absence of any known records of historic drainage assets at such a depth in the area, and based on the clay pipework configuration that had exposed, it was concluded that the pipework had existed as a form of temporary de-watering from the time of the trunk mains installation around 1963. The excavation had produced an obvious free-flowing exit route for groundwater in the vicinity, not helped by the low-lying nature of the area and its designation as a functional flood plain associated with the nearby River Roding.

Consequently it was agreed with ESW that reinstatement works were required. The area has now been predominantly returned to its former state. Some seeding work will be completed in the spring.

### **Additional Funding for Road Maintenance**

The County Council has announced that the County is to receive £121 million of funding for road repairs and resurfacing between now and 2034, which has been reallocated from the HS2 rail scheme. [More](#)

This is welcome locally, however does need to be put into context.

That additional funding over 10 years is on average £12.1 million per year which would be on top of the current year's allocation of £34.6 million. However as [we reported in April last year](#) Essex Highways has said it needed £77.7m each year and has [stated that county roads are in managed decline](#). The additional funding will help but not fill the gap. It is not known if any of it will be spent on Loughton's roads.

### **What's On in Epping Forest?**

The District Council has published details of all activities, events, exhibitions and workshops from the Community Development and Wellbeing team. There's



something for everyone, from a Winter Bird Walk at Roding Valley Meadows to Easter Play in the Park. [More](#) (PDF)

## Local News

### Warm Places over Winter

Warm places are again opening up across the district, with some venues offering refreshments, activities such as board games and free WiFi. [More](#)



Venues locally are (opening days and times vary):

- Debden Library
- Epping Forest Campus, New City College
- Loughton Library
- Oakwood Hill Community Centre
- St Mary's Church.

### School Funding

White Bridge Primary School has received funding of £57,123 and Alderton Infant School has received funding of £80,520 to create new early years and childcare places.

### New Wellness Centre

With construction of the new flats and houses on what was Lucton's Field on Borders Lane, the new facilities for sport, fitness and wellbeing have now opened.

There is an official opening on Saturday 20 January from 12pm where you can visit for free and tour the facilities. [More](#)

## Health and Wellbeing

### St Margaret's Hospital, Epping

It is planned that there will be extended opening times and additional equipment at the St Margaret's Hospital to support a new Community Diagnostic Centre CDC from summer next year with:

- Two additional computerised tomography (CT) scanners
- Extended hours for X-rays
- New ultrasound equipment
- New cardiology equipment



- New respiratory equipment
- Relocated MRI scanner
- More phlebotomists to be recruited – increasing the number of blood tests that can be carried out.

[More](#) (PDF)

## *Epping Forest*

### **Green Team Volunteers Needed**

The Epping Forest Heritage Trust Green Team has been running since 1982 and is one of our longest-running conservation programmes, delivered by dedicated volunteers. They meet every Thursday to carry out practical habitat management in Epping Forest, usually in the Loughton/Woodford/Chingford area, and are looking for more volunteers to help.

If you are interested in nature and would like to have a go at practical habitat management, [here's more and how to join](#).

### **Pond Danger**

When ponds in the Forest freeze over, they can be dangerous as you can fall through the ice if stepped on. Please keep off of the ice and ensure dogs and children do not step onto frozen ponds. Dogs should be on leads whilst near the ice.

### **Chasing Foxes**

Mating season for foxes runs from January into early February. If you spot one fox, a second one is often not far behind as they chase each other around, oblivious to any dangers. Be aware especially on Forest roads and at night.

### **Forest Focus - December 2023**

Some items here come from Forest Focus. The edition for [December](#) has lots more interesting articles. You can [subscribe here for free](#).



## *And More*

### **Broadband and Mobile Phone Contract Price Increases**

Soon, many broadband and mobile phone companies will start confirming the cost increases from April. [More](#)

If you find the price increases unacceptable [Which?](#) has provided [guidance on how to switch your broadband provider](#). Switching to a new provider can save money, but if you're happy with your service you may hesitate to do so. It's understandable to be nervous about trying that and [here's some tips to help you](#).

A survey by Which? of people whose contract had ended in the past month found that around half had negotiated with providers to get a better deal.

Thank you for supporting LRA. Our next Loughton News email is due to be issued Friday 9 February, although that date could change.

## Get more from LRA and keep up with what's happening between issues of Loughton News

For all our Tweets, past issues of Loughton News and Loughton Life, and more



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