



# Local Elections Guide 2021

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## We want leaders that stand up for nature!

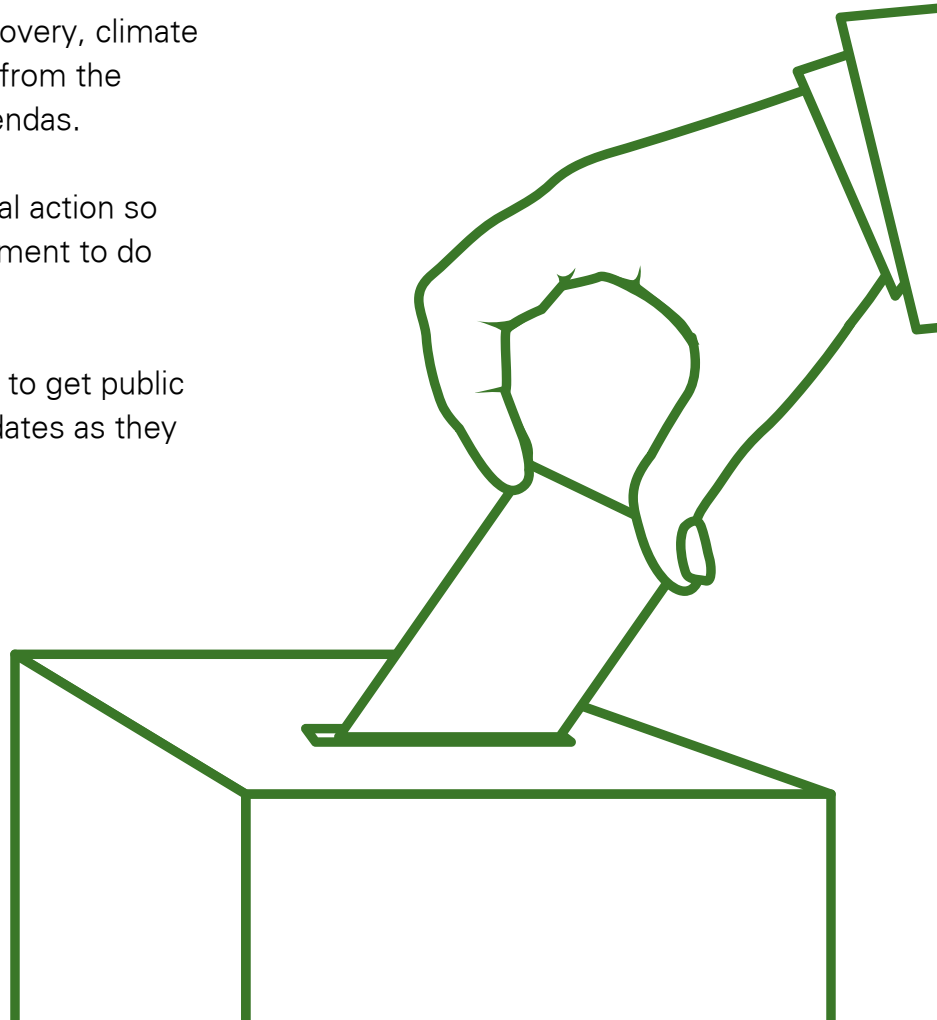
On the 6th May 2021, people across England will head to the polls to vote for their local representatives in the biggest ever series of local elections in England. The local elections are a great opportunity for people to ensure their future local representatives take the climate and ecological emergencies seriously.

Your councillors, the people you are voting for, have the power to help local people and enable nature's recovery. They make many decisions that impact your community and wildlife locally, including, having a say in what will be built and where, how to control air pollution, how to improve access to green spaces and they will play a key role in developing a Nature Recovery Network.

Yet despite their importance, around 65% of people do not vote in the local elections, meaning they have no say on who will be representing their community in their local council(s).

## Why do local elections matter?

- Whoever is elected will make key decisions for your local area.
- We need to ensure that nature's recovery, climate action and a green and fair recovery from the pandemic are on the councillor's agendas.
- Councils must lead the way with local action so pressure mounts on national government to do the same.
- Local elections are good opportunity to get public commitments from councillor candidates as they are competing for your vote.



## Let's make the ecological emergency a key issue at the local elections

We are facing two inextricably linked crises, accelerating climate change and huge declines in wildlife and nature. We cannot solve one crisis without tackling the other – nature's recovery is vital for tackling climate change, and climate change accelerates nature's decline.

Wildlife is disappearing at an alarming rate and the UK has become one of the most nature depleted nations in the world, with over 15% of species at risk of extinction. Here in Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight, wildlife is faring no better than the rest of the country. Almost half of Hampshire's most notable species are in decline, and in particular we have seen a sharp decline in many farmland bird species which are hovering on the brink of extinction.

2021 marks the start of the most important decade in a generation – the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. We need to turn things around for wildlife and the climate. We need a decade of action and a decade of strong and bold leadership from our political representatives.

That is why we are calling on councils across the two counties to declare an ecological emergency and take urgent action to reverse declines in wildlife and restore the natural ecosystems on which we all depend.

Many councils have declared a climate emergency, recognising one of the crises we are facing. Now, we need councils to declare an ecological emergency too, kickstarting urgent action for nature's recovery. By recognising we are in a crisis and committing to create a strategy, set targets and take action, councils can be part of the change to halt and reverse declines in wildlife and restore a healthy natural environment for people and wildlife.



## About your local councils

Local governments in England operate under either a one tier system, where unitary authorities and combined authorities manage all the services, or a two-tier system, where county and district councils divide up the local services.

Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight operate as one-tier unitary authorities, meaning Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and Isle of Wight Council are responsible for all services in their local area.

The rest of Hampshire operates a two-tier system. Hampshire County Council covers the whole of the county and provide many of the public services in the area, including education, transport, waste disposal, public health and social services.

Hampshire is then divided into several districts – each district council, which may also be called borough council or city council, cover much smaller areas and provide local services, including managing parks, waste collection and recycling, housing, planning applications and creating local plans.

In Hampshire, the local district councils which operate in a two-tier system with Hampshire County Council are:

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Hart District Council
- Havant Borough Council
- New Forest District Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council

To find out which council(s) represent you and an overview of the services they provide, enter your postcode into the local government search tool:

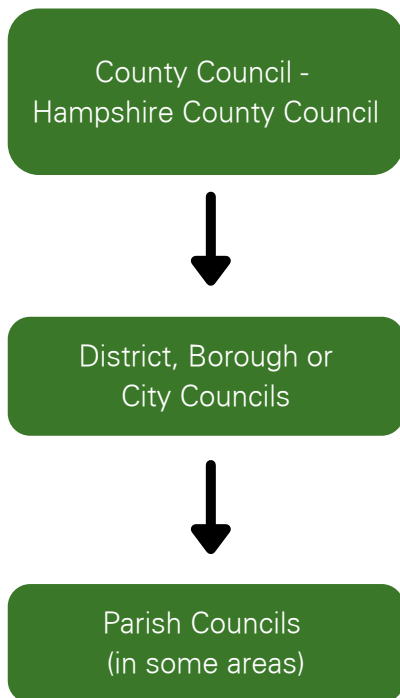
<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>



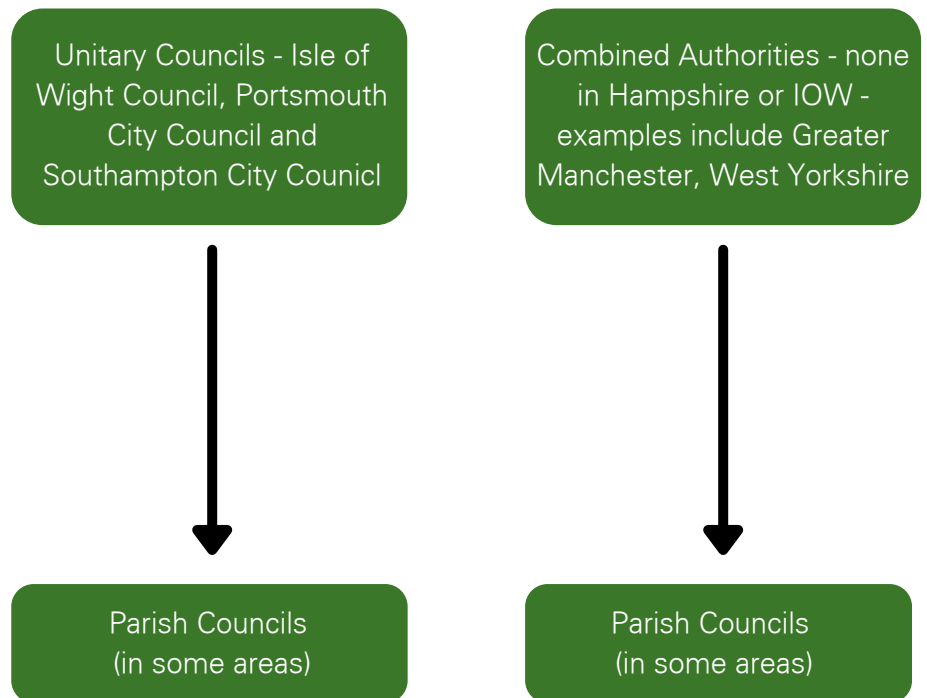


# Councils in Hampshire

## Two tier structure



## Single tier structure



## Who can I vote for in the upcoming local elections?

The local elections on May the 6th will elect the councillors who will represent your area for the next four years in your local council. However, due to COVID-19, the 2020 elections have also been combined into the 2021 elections, making this year the largest series of local elections ever.

If you are in an area covered by Hampshire County Council and a district council, you will be voting for the councillors that will represent you and your division (broad area) at Hampshire County Council and for the councillors who represent your ward (local area) at your District Council. If you are in Southampton, Portsmouth or Isle of Wight, you will just be voting for your local councillors to represent your local ward.

To find out what elections are happening near you and a candidate list, you can use the Democracy Club's online tool and type in your postcode: <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/>

The official full candidate lists should be published on your District, City or County Council websites from the 9th of April 2021





# Ecological Emergency Cheat Sheet

Quick and easy facts to get you started on talking about the ecological emergency locally. Knowing facts and stats about the decline of nature locally and nationally can help you build confidence when speaking with a local councillor and help to back up the issues you are trying to raise with evidence.

## Nature is in crisis

- The UK has become one of the most nature depleted nations in the world, with over 15% of species now at risk of extinction.<sup>1</sup>
- Nationally, since 1970 more than 41% of species have decreased in population.<sup>1</sup>
- 48% of Hampshire's 50 most 'notable species' are in decline such as Nightingales, Turtle Doves, Great Crested Newts and Duke of Burgundy Butterflies.<sup>2</sup>
- 20% of Hampshire's insect and pollinator species are classed as rare, threatened or declining.<sup>2</sup>
- 19 of the 46 butterfly species found in Hampshire are declining.<sup>2</sup>
- Nightingale populations have declined by 78% in Hampshire and 33% on the Isle of Wight since 2012.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 1986 and 2012 we have seen significant declines in many farmland bird species in Hampshire<sup>2</sup> including, Skylark (-14%), Starling (-19%), Linnet (-21%), Yellowhammer (-27%), Bunting (-36%), Lapwing (-47%), Turtle Dove (-75%), Grey Partridge (-79%), Corn Bunting (-80%), Tree Sparrow (-100%) and Yellow Wagtail (-100%).

## What is causing the ecological crisis?

- The main causes of biodiversity loss in the UK are: agricultural management, climate change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management, fisheries, invasive and non-native species and freshwater management.<sup>1</sup>
- In Hampshire, decades of nitrate pollution from wastewater, urban runoff and agricultural discharges have caused the Solent to reach crisis point. The high input levels of nitrogen and phosphorus to the Solent's water environment are causing eutrophication.
- Nature's recovery is vital for tackling climate change, research suggests that nature-based solutions such as rewilding and restoring damaged ecosystems, can provide over one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 under the Paris Agreement.<sup>4</sup>



1. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/>

2. <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/hampshire2050/StateofNaturalEnvironmentReport.pdf>

3. <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/news/nightingale-survey-shows-continuing-decline-numbers#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20our%202018,in%20the%20Isle%20of%20Wight>

4. <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645>



## Nature, health and wellbeing

- Portsmouth and Southampton are both high on the green space deprivation index. In Southampton, 14 of the 32 neighbourhoods are rated as 'E' - the category most lacking in green space. While Portsmouth has a similar proportion, 12 out of 25 neighbourhoods.<sup>5</sup>
- A BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) person is more than twice as likely as a white person to live within an area deprived of green space (rated E).<sup>5</sup>
- For every £1 spent on green spaces in England an estimated £7 in additional value for health and wellbeing and the environment is generated.<sup>6</sup>
- Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing.<sup>7</sup>

5. [https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2020-09/Green\\_space\\_gap\\_full\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2020-09/Green_space_gap_full_report_0.pdf)

6. <https://www.theparksalliance.org/making-parks-count-the-case-for-parks/#:~:text=For%20every%20%C2%A31%20spent,parks%20are%20a%20smart%20investment.>

7. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>





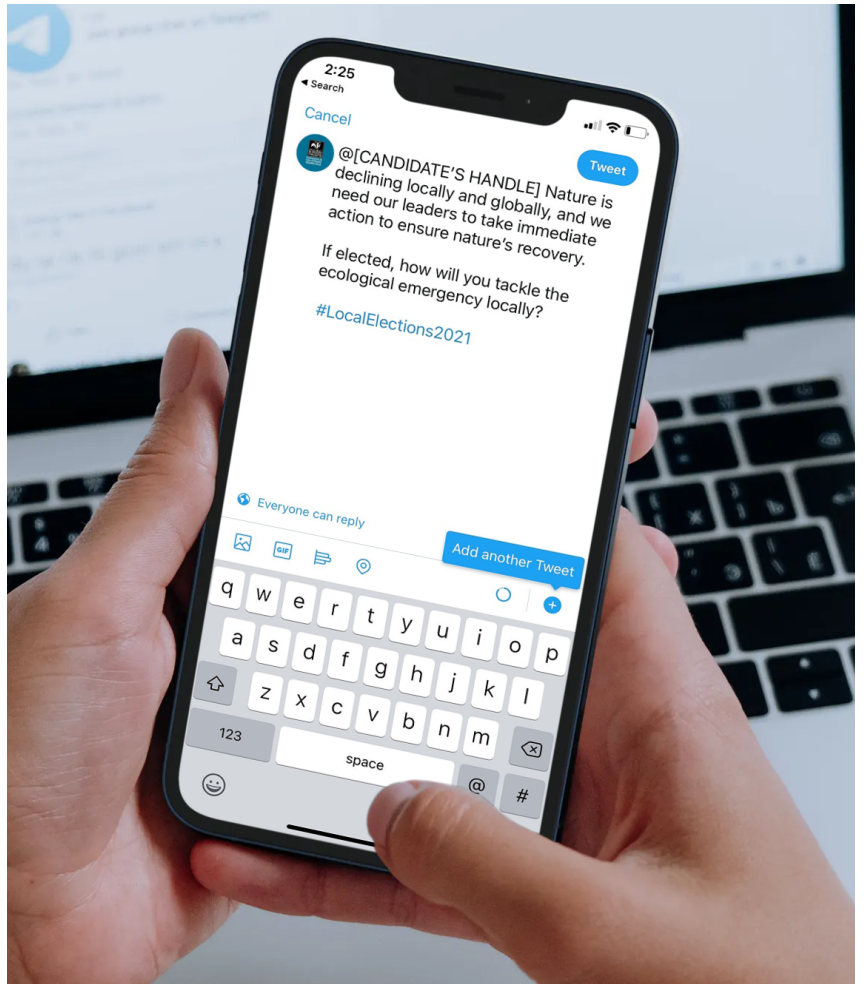
# How can I make sure nature has a voice in the local elections?

## 1. Tweet your council candidates

Many local councillor candidates will be campaigning on Twitter, so why not ask them directly how they intend to tackle the ecological emergency?

Don't worry if your local councillor candidates are not on Twitter, there are plenty more actions you can take below!

@[CANDIDATE'S HANDLE]  
Nature is declining locally and globally, and we need our leaders to take immediate action to ensure nature's recovery. If elected, how will you tackle the ecological emergency locally?  
#LocalElections2021



## 2. Write to your local councillor candidates

Writing to your local councillor candidates is a good way of communicating your priorities as a community member, and a voter, to ensure the matters you care about are taken seriously by your local candidates.

You can use our template below to write to your local council candidates to ask them how they will tackle the ecological emergency and, if elected, whether they pledge to put forward a motion for the council to declare an ecological emergency.



Dear [INSERT CANDIDATES NAME HERE],

As you are a candidate in the upcoming local elections, I am writing to you today to ask how you plan to tackle the ecological emergency and support nature's recovery in my local area if elected as a councillor.

We are facing an ecological and climate emergency and, in the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, we need to see our political leaders take urgent action to ensure nature's recovery locally and globally. Our leaders have a responsibility to help join up fragmented habitats and create a thriving nature recovery network.

I am greatly concerned about the decline of nature in my community, and the large numbers of people deprived of accessible green and wild spaces. [INSERT WHY NATURE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU OR COPY THE FOLLOWING... For me, nature has never been more important. We have relied on greenspaces that are rich in wildlife for our physical and mental health during a difficult time for everyone.]

We know that nature's recovery is also vital for tackling the climate crisis and that nature underpins a healthy and thriving society and economy. Thriving habitats can safely lock up vast amounts of carbon, while providing other vital benefits that help us adapt, such as flood prevention, clean water and improved health and wellbeing.

If elected as a local councillor you will play a vital role in restoring nature and tackling the climate crisis locally. As a constituent, I am clear that these are key issues when considering who to vote for in the upcoming local elections.

Therefore, I am writing to ask what are your plans to tackle the ecological emergency and put nature into recovery in our local community?

I am also asking that you pledge to put forward a motion for the council to declare an ecological emergency if you are elected. Through declaring an ecological emergency and putting a strategy, targets and an action plan in place, councils can be part of the change to reverse declines in wildlife and restore a healthy natural environment for people and wildlife.

Kind regards,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]

[INSERT ADDRESS AND POSTCODE]





### 3. Meet your local council candidates

Meeting your local council candidates is a good way to understand their priorities and identify how committed they are to acting on the climate and ecological emergency.

We recommend contacting a councillor candidate from each major political party who is standing your ward and asking them for an online meeting. Many candidates will also be going door to door to get support, you could also use this as an opportunity to ask some questions.

Spend a bit of time researching the candidate online to understand more about who they are and what they stand for, and think through how you might tailor the conversation to the candidate's interests.

If you would like to meet with your local candidates, you can use the letter template above and insert the following:

I would like the opportunity to hear how you intend to prioritise action for nature's recovery as a councillor and discuss how we can tackle the ecological emergency locally.

I'd be grateful if you would please advise me of your availability for a meeting.

Questions you can ask your candidates:

- What are your plans to reverse the decline of nature in my local community?
- If elected, how will you tackle the ecological emergency?
- If elected, will you pledge to table a motion for council to declare an ecological emergency, setting out a clear strategy, targets and an action plan for nature's recovery locally?
- Lockdown has shown us the value of greenspaces near to where we live, how will you support and increase access to nature-rich green spaces in our local area?
- We know that we need to join up fragmented habitats into a 'Nature Recovery Network', how will you work to put this into place?
- How will you support the local community to take action for nature locally?

### Do you live in or near Portsmouth?

If you are a Portsmouth resident, we would also like you to ask local councillor candidates to object to the Tipner West 'Lennox Point' super-peninsula proposals which will concrete over and build 3,500 houses on legally protected intertidal mudflats. If this proposal goes ahead, it will set a dangerous precedent for building over protected sites to build houses.

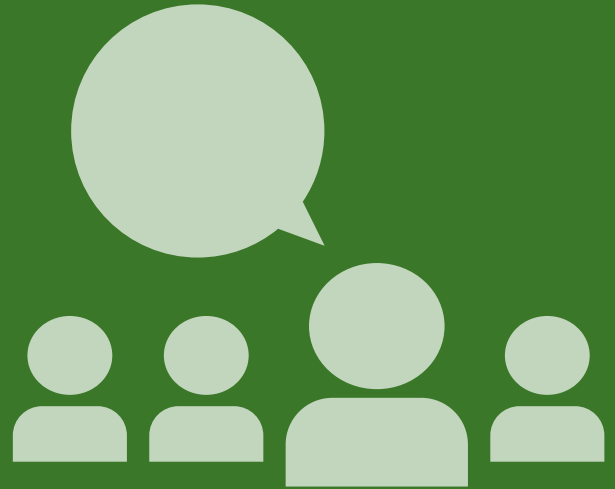
**For more information about the Tipner West proposals, please visit: [www.hiwwt.org.uk/tipner](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/tipner)**



## 4. Ask a question at a Hustings or organise a hustings

A hustings is a nonpartisan event bringing together electoral candidates in the run up to an election. It's an opportunity for voters to hear the views of candidates on a range of issues and in turn, voters can raise issues that matter to them by asking questions during the event.

They usually feature candidates from all major parties, are most frequently organised by local organisations or community groups and held in the ward where the candidates are standing for election. However, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, hustings will need to be held online this year.



### How to find a hustings near you?

Some places where you can find where hustings will be advertised include:

- Local hustings may be registered with Democracy Club: <https://democracyclub.org.uk/>
- Council website
- Local newspaper and newspaper website
- Library
- Social media pages and websites of the candidates
- Ask people on a local social media group if they know of any hustings
- Search online the words "hustings" and the name of your ward

### Ask a question at a local hustings

Once you have found a hustings near you, you can submit a question to ask the candidates. We have a few suggested questions below, but you can ask a question to the candidates about any issues that affect you locally.

Suggested questions:

- If elected, how will you tackle the ecological emergency?
- What are your plans to recover nature in my local community?
- We know that we need to join up fragmented habitats into a 'Nature Recovery Network', how will you work to put this into place?
- If elected, will you pledge to table a motion for council to declare an ecological emergency, setting out a clear strategy, targets and an action plan for nature's recovery locally?
- Lockdown has shown us the value of greenspaces near to where we live, how will you support and increase access to greenspaces in our local area?
- How will you support the local community to take action for nature locally?



## 5. Organise a hustings

Can't find a Hustings near you? Why not organise one?

Hustings can cover a whole range of topics or be specific about a particular issue e.g. the climate and ecological crisis. All Hustings will need to be held online this year.

If you are interested in hosting a hustings, Friends of the Earth and The Electoral Commission have useful online guides for organising hustings during local elections and how to ensure it is nonpartisan and fair event for all candidates.

## 6. Vote for the candidates that stand up for nature

On Thursday the 6th May 2021, you can vote for the councillors who will represent you at your council(s). Your polling station address should be printed on your polling card, which is delivered by post before an election.



**Remember, the deadline to register to vote in the local elections is the 19th  
April 2021: [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)**



**Hampshire &  
Isle of Wight  
Wildlife Trust**



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