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## County Councillor Philippa Williamson

### Lancashire County Council

**Lancaster Rural North** - Arkholme, Borwick, Capernwray, Carnforth, Docker, Millhead, the Kelleys, Priest Hutton, Silverdale, Warton, the Yealands.

**E:** [Phillippa.Williamson@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Phillippa.Williamson@lancashire.gov.uk)

**F:** [www.facebook.com/PhillippaWilliamsonLancasterRuralNorth](https://www.facebook.com/PhillippaWilliamsonLancasterRuralNorth)

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Hello!

Here is my first update of 2023. If you would like to hear more about anything covered here or to receive a copy directly please let me know.

**County Council Budget 2023/24** - The county council debated the 2023/24 budget on 9 February. A net budget of just over £1bn for the coming year was agreed, with the largest amounts in the coming year set to be spent on adult services at £445m, children's social care at £194m and a further £163m on highways, transport and 'active travel' (walking and cycling).

An extra £1.8m will fund a new bespoke Lancashire Investment Fund, to help business grow and encourage local employment. This is in addition to £2.2m to go on direct support to businesses through the council's business growth hub. In addition, the council's local member grants scheme, which helps each councillor support vital grass roots voluntary, community and faith sector groups across Lancashire, will also to be increased from £2,000 to £2,500 each to mark the coronation of King Charles III.

Over the last year the council has been impacted by rising costs like the rest of the county. Work has been underway to address these pressures whilst continuing to deliver the full range of services and value for money for residents and businesses.

It has been necessary to increase Council Tax by 1.99%, with a further 2%, ring-fenced to be spent on adult social care. This means that the level of increase is frozen at 3.99%, the same as last year. In comparison, around 80% of county councils across the country are intending to raise the full 4.99% on council tax that they levy without having to ask their residents permission to do so in a referendum.

However, by ensuring the council's finances are stable and that balanced budgets are delivered for 22/23 and for the coming 4 years, the council is able to deliver all the vital services residents expect and need whilst ensuring the council's financial reserves remain intact.

**Children's services in Lancashire are rated 'good' across the board by Ofsted** - Following a 3 week inspection of the County Council's Children's Services by Ofsted in December 2022, all aspects of the service are rated as good.

Ofsted endorsed the County Council's passion and commitment to children, young people and families across Lancashire and the focus on continuously developing the services. Ofsted also recognised the huge improvements and financial investment the council has made.



The assessment reflected the positive impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families and the significant investment and support that had been given to the service.

The positive experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers was noted as a strength along with the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection.

As well as the overall effectiveness of the service being rated as good, it was recognised that the council was focused on further improvement in its aspiration to achieve consistently high standards for children across Lancashire.



**Levelling Up Fund 2** - A total of £200m has been awarded to projects in Lancashire from the second round of the government's Levelling Up Fund.

£50m for an ambitious bid for East Lancashire to develop a range of complementary public transport, walking and cycling projects that will significantly improve travel opportunities for people across East Lancashire, making them safer and greener. There were also successful bids for Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn and Preston.

And of course £50m has been awarded towards the new Eden Project Morecambe creating around 300 high-quality green jobs, with more than 1,000 additional new jobs supported in the region.

The £50m investment is half of the £100m needed to build the coastal-themed project. So, the funding allows the project to move into its next phase and begin the process of finalising the remaining £50m from private and philanthropic sources identified as part of the bidding process.

It was a great to be part of the announcement in Morecambe and to promote the benefits this project will bring to the area. Annual visitor numbers are projected to be 740,000 and extra revenue for local businesses is set to exceed the £50m Government investment within months of the project opening.



Now that the Levelling Up Fund 2 process has concluded the hard work begins. Preparation for the construction of all these projects is underway as they are scheduled for completion in 2025/26 with Eden North due to open to visitors by 2026.



### **Great value bus fares on most Lancashire bus services for evening and weekend travel -**

Passengers can now benefit from reduced fares including single ticket bus journeys for just £1, after 7pm, 7 days a week.

Also, for travel at the weekend, Lancashire residents can get a new Weekender ticket i.e. buy on Saturday and get Sunday free.

This initiative is funded by the government in support of the County Council's £34.1m Bus Service Improvement Plan. Find out more about the discounted tickets at [Bus service changes - Lancashire County Council](#)

**Proposed work to the A601M has changed** - The County Council received £9.245m from the government to carry out vital repairs to the A601(M). It was originally proposed to remove the bridge carrying North Road (Netherbeck) over the A601(M) and to replace it with a new junction onto the dual carriageway as this was marginally beneficial in terms of the long-term cost. However, the cost of replacing the bridge with a junction has increased significantly and retaining the bridge is now the most cost-effective proposal.

As part of the plan the county council has asked the government to remove the road's motorway status so a safer 50mph speed limit can be introduced and the hard shoulder replaced by grass verges.

All this work is due to start in Summer 2023 with repairs to bridges and structures and improvements to surfacing, drainage, and landscaping completed by December 2024.



**Report highways faults via our app** - The type of faults you can report has been extended - so whether it's a pothole; grit bin; flooding or a problem with weeds. You can report it via the app.

Downloading the Love Clean Streets app. is quick and easy to do. You can attach a photo, pinpoint the exact location and track the progress of your report via the app.

To find out more, visit: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/.../report-it-on-the-go/>

**Elections Act 2022** - Changes are underway which will apply to all UK Parliamentary elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, and in English local government polls. For our district these changes will be in place for the May 2023 local elections.

Of most importance is that voters will be required to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued. Acceptable photo id includes:

- Passport
- Driving licence (incl. provisional license)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

If you don't already have one of these forms of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a 'Voter Authority Certificate'. You can apply for this at [voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk](https://voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk)

If you need any help with applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, or to ask for an application form, email [elections@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:elections@lancaster.gov.uk). You can also contact the electoral commission on [electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID) or call their helpline on 0800 328 0280.



**Postal Voting** - Postal voting is a great alternative to voting at a polling station, especially if you think you may be unavailable on the day of any election.

If you want to apply for a postal vote just email [elections@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:elections@lancaster.gov.uk) or telephone 01524 582905 and they will send you an application form.

**Lancashire Volunteer Partnership (LVP)** - Established in 2016 the partnership's aim is to make volunteering rewarding and to provide opportunities for people to make a real difference in their local communities.

There are so many opportunities to get involved - visiting people who may be feeling lonely or supporting those who are struggling to get out and about independently, giving a carer some respite, volunteering alongside the neighbourhood policing teams as a Special Constable, at a children's centre or as a cadet group leader; being a digital champion or supporting visitors in our libraries; helping out in our museums and much, much more! The LVP volunteers are truly amazing.



If you are interested in knowing more about the many volunteering opportunities in our area, you can get more information by calling 01772 416417 or at: <https://lancsvp.org.uk/opportunities/>



**'Choose Health' free NHS Health Checks** - The NHS Health Check is a free health check-up for adults aged 40 to 74 that you can have once every 5 years.

Even if you're feeling great, the check may help you find ways to lower your risk of getting heart disease, kidney disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, or dementia.

The NHS Health Check takes around 25 minutes and when completed, you will be given a risk score and any appropriate lifestyle advice.

'Choose Health' is delivering the NHS Health Check across Lancashire. Dates are continually being added to their schedule and you can find out more here: <https://choosehealth.org.uk/>

**Lancashire Environmental Fund (LEF)** - The LEF distributes contributions under the Landfill Communities Fund scheme to projects across Lancashire. LEF has been operating for 24 years and in the last 12 months the Fund has made new grants to the value of £1.33M to 68 projects across Lancashire including:

Carnforth Free Methodist Church	£25,600
Crag Bank Park, Carnforth	£30,000
Nether Kellet Village Play Area	£30,000
Borwick & Priest Hutton War Memorial Hall	£30,000
Challan Hall Allotment and Warton Crag	£30,000
Carnforth Community Swimming Pool	£9,250

**LANCASHIRE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
FUND**

So, if you know of any project that might benefit from this funding, you can learn more from the LEF website at [www.lancsenvfund.org.uk](http://www.lancsenvfund.org.uk) The LEF has also produced a highlights video showing some of the projects funded recently: [Project Videos 2021/22 - YouTube](#)

You can also contact the fund on 01772 317247 or by email to [general@lancsenvfund.org.uk](mailto:general@lancsenvfund.org.uk). It is worth bearing in mind that the next Expressions of Interest deadline for grants is Thursday 11 May with dates for future funding rounds listed on the fund's website.



**Small Grants for Community Projects** - As your County Councillor I have a small grant to fund grass roots projects that will directly benefit the community in our area, from gardening workshops and knit and natter sessions, to sports activities to help young people stay active. In this coronation year I am particularly keen to support community plans to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

Voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) groups can apply and the process is very straightforward. So, if you are involved in a community group and you have a project planned that would benefit from a small amount of funding, please get in touch. More information about the scheme can be found at: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/grants/local-member-grants-scheme>

And don't forget the **Parish Champion Grant** - Parish and town councils can bid for a grant from the County Council's Parish Champion to support projects and initiatives in their area. Each year the Parish Champion has a budget of £10,000 for such activities and has previously supported a range of community assets including a defibrillator, a life belt, picnic tables, playground equipment and memorial stones. If you would like to apply for a grant email [parishcouncils@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:parishcouncils@lancashire.gov.uk) for an application form.

**Turkey/Syria Earthquake Relief Effort** - Many thousands of people have been killed and thousands more injured following the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Unfortunately, the death toll is likely to rise.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue have sent a team to support the relief effort and the County Council is donating £285,000s worth of spare Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to go straight to the emergency aid operation in the disaster zone.



These urgently needed supplies are making up just a small part of a 60-vehicle convoy which will be making its way to Turkey and Syria next week.

You can find out more about the rapid response appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and donate, by visiting [DEC Turkey-Syria earthquake appeal | British Red Cross](#).

**And finally** - As ever please keep in touch, and if I can help just let me know.

**Phillippa Williamson**  
February 2023