

Bear Necessities

With News from Congleton Town Council & Community Groups

Winter 2025

A New Chapter for the Food and Drink Festival

The much-loved **Food & Drink Festival** will return on **Sunday 8 June, 10.30am-4.30pm** marking an exciting new chapter. Congleton Town Council is proud to take over the management of this flagship event, which was previously organised by the dedicated team at Congleton Community Projects under the leadership of Jo Money. The town council extends its gratitude to the team for their incredible efforts over the past 15 years, which have made the festival a standout success.

The bar has been set high, but the council is committed to delivering a gastronomic delight that will continue to shine on the foodie calendar. Visitors can look forward to a day filled with the finest local produce, mouthwatering street food, live music, and entertainment.

Stalls are filling up fast, and traders are encouraged to book their spaces soon to avoid disappointment. The team is also seeking enthusiastic volunteers to fill a variety of roles.

For more information, contact Rachel McCarthy at: Rachel.McCarthy@congleton-tc.gov.uk



A Musical Weekend to Remember!

Excitement is building as preparations for **Congleton Unplugged** are well underway. Bands are being booked, artwork is being created, and a host of activities are in progress to bring the festival to life. Organised by Congleton Live, the event will take place from **21-23 March**, offering a spectacular weekend filled with

music. The festival will feature over 40 gigs across some of the town's most vibrant venues, showcasing a diverse lineup of musical genres. From soulful jazz to electrifying blues, there's something for everyone to enjoy. All gigs during the main weekend are free to attend. Festival-goers can also enjoy popular ticketed performances before and after the main event. As part of the festival, the organisers are providing a free bus service running throughout the weekend.

For the latest updates and bus times follow **Congleton Unplugged's Facebook page** or visit: www.congletonjazzandblues.co.uk

Congleton Town Mayor's Spring Charity Ball

The countdown is on for the Charity Ball on **Friday 14 March, 6.30pm at the Town Hall**.

Hosted by the Town Mayor, Cllr Kay Wesley, the evening will feature a delicious three-course dinner, live music by The Sound Party, and an exciting raffle and auction with fantastic prizes to be won. This year's Ball supports the mayor's charities: myCWA, Ruby's and Congleton Pride.

A limited number of places are available to the public priced at £50 per person.

Tickets can be purchased online via: www.ticketsource.co.uk/congletontownmayor



A Day of Health and Wellness

Congleton Partnership is excited to host the eighth annual **Community Health and Wellbeing Fayre** on **Tuesday 18 March, 10am-3pm at the Town Hall**.

This free event features over 30 exhibitors showcasing services from fitness programmes to mental health support and community activities. The fayre includes interactive workshops with practical health tips, especially tailored for those aged 50 and over. Local organisations can still apply for a free stall by emailing: cathy.dean@congleton-tc.gov.uk



Scan the QR code on your mobile device to read this issue of Bear Necessities online.

Bear Necessities is produced by Congleton Town Council. The next newsletter will be delivered from **22 April**. All contributions to be sent by **31 March** to debbie.coxon@congleton-tc.gov.uk

Congleton Town Council - Congleton Town Hall, High Street, Congleton CW12 1BN.

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Congleton Town Council Approves Budget

The town council's approved budget for 2025-2026 will entail a precept rise of 23p per week or £11.92 per year for individuals residing in band D properties. Consequently, residents in band D properties will see their annual contribution to the town council increase to £117.41, reflecting a 11.3% rise. Like many others, the council faces operating cost increases, plus increases out of the council's control: Employers National Insurance increases and the requirement passed on from Cheshire East Council to pay for Town and Parish Council Elections. The council had careful and considered discussions regarding the budgets and any increase, during these discussions they agreed to use up to £128,000 of their reserves to cover some purchases and projects. Residents will soon receive their updated Council Tax bills from Cheshire East Council. These bills will encompass allocations for the town council, as well as contributions for essential services such as the Police, Fire, and Cheshire East Council.



News in Brief

Three-week bin collections: Cheshire East Council has approved three-weekly black bin collections from April 2026, a cut-back expected to save £1 million. This change will help fund the legal requirement to introduce weekly food waste pickups starting in the same year.

Garden Bin Reminder: Residents can join or renew Cheshire East Council's Garden Waste Recycling Scheme. Fees cost £59 per bin annually, with a 25% discount for residents on qualifying benefits. The price is the same if you join now or later in the year. Details at: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling

Winter Road Safety: Cheshire East Council prioritises key roads for gritting during icy weather. View gritting maps, updates, or report issues at: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways. For steep residential roads, salt bins are provided. Request restocking or repairs via 'Report it Online' at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk (search "Gritting").

News for All: Congleton Talking Newspaper offers a free weekly audio recording of local news, including the Congleton Chronicle and Bear Necessities, for print-disabled listeners. USB recordings are provided at no cost, and suitable playback equipment is available on loan. For more information, email: congletonalkingnewspaper@gmail.com or telephone: **07592 965600**.

Town Tidy Events!: Congleton in Bloom hosts town tidy events every first Saturday of the month from 10am-12pm. Activities include litter picking, planting, weeding, and more. Locations vary—check for updates on the Congleton in Bloom Facebook page or email: info@congleton-tc.gov.uk



Drive Your Business Forward

Local businesses have the opportunity to promote their brand through sponsorship signs displayed at prominent locations throughout Congleton. This initiative by the town council offers 24/7 visibility to residents, visitors, and other businesses all year round. The scheme encourages the community

to "Shop Local" and provides businesses with an excellent platform to enhance their presence in the town. Due to its popularity, it is a highly valuable investment. Interested sponsors can contact: Ruth.Burgess@congleton-tc.gov.uk or call **01260 270350 ext 3**.

Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Update

The consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan closed on 9 December 2024, receiving an impressive 530 responses that generated hundreds of thoughtful and detailed comments. Urban Imprint, our planning consultants, were highly impressed by both the volume and quality of the feedback provided.

A productive meeting with the Cheshire East planning team has also been held, during which constructive feedback was shared. Importantly, there are no conflicts with the Local Development Plan, marking a positive milestone for the project.

Next Steps in the Process: The next phase involves a detailed analysis of all feedback and a review of any amendments to the plan. This work will take place during February and March, led by Urban Imprint. Key upcoming milestones include:

- August/September: Submission to Inspector
- Autumn: Examination
- Late 2025: Referendum

Congleton Town Council would like to thank everyone who contributed to this consultation. The input provided is invaluable in shaping the future of Congleton.



**Congleton
Neighbourhood Plan**

Congleton Opposes Parking Charge Hike

Congleton Town Council, along with hundreds of residents, responded angrily to Cheshire East Council's consultation regarding the proposed increase in car parking charges. Despite the objections raised, Cheshire East Council proceeded with the new charges, implementing increases of between 150% and 169% in July 2024.

Additionally, charges were introduced for parking on Roe Street (Lawton House Surgery car park) for the first time, and the period of charged parking hours was extended to 8am -6pm. Following these changes, Cheshire East Council conducted another public consultation, which concluded on 9 October 2024, to consider the possibility of extending car parking charges to include Sundays and to extend charges to cover the period between 6pm-10pm every day.

At its meeting on 3 October 2024, the town council outlined its reasons for strongly opposing these new proposals. Cheshire East Council's Highways and Transport Committee is expected to review the findings from this latest public consultation in April 2025.

£5M Diagnostic Centre Breaks Ground in Congleton

Construction work is underway to make room for a new £5 million Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) at Congleton War Memorial Hospital expected to be completed by Summer 2025. This state-of-the-art facility managed by East Cheshire NHS Trust, will provide residents of Congleton and nearby areas with easier access to essential diagnostic tests and services, bringing advanced healthcare closer to home.

Funded by NHS England's Community Diagnostics Programme, the new centre will offer a range of services, including imaging, X-rays, Non-Obstetric Ultrasound (NOUS), and Cardio-Respiratory tests such as Electrocardiography (ECG), echocardiograms, and other physiological diagnostics. Patients are already benefiting from a new ophthalmology service introduced at the hospital in July as part of the broader CDC initiative. With 118 centres already operating across the UK, the new addition in Congleton will help ensure the hospital remains a vital part of local healthcare for generations to come.



Grant Opportunities for Community Projects in Congleton

Each year, the town council provides approximately £15,000 in grants to support community initiatives. Applications are reviewed at the Finance & Policy Committee meetings, held every 6–8 weeks. The next meeting on **27 March**, will allocate the remaining funds for the 2024/2025 financial year. Download the application form via: www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/your-council/grants or request a hard copy. Applications must be submitted by **17 March**.

If your project focuses on cultural, environmental, or educational initiatives, consider applying to the **Margaret Williamson Memorial Fund**.

Proposals can be submitted between **10 February- 10 March**. For further information visit: www.congletonpartnership.co.uk



Congleton Town Mayor's Civic Awards

To celebrate the outstanding volunteer efforts in the local community, the town council is launching a new annual awards initiative. Open to volunteers who live and work in Congleton, nominations can be made in categories such as Community Involvement, Young Volunteer, Environment, and Wellbeing Award. These awards recognise individuals who contribute to the community, whether through supporting charities, promoting sustainability, or improving public health.

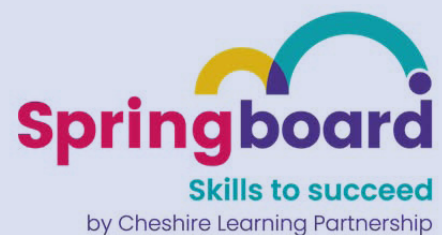
Nominations will be accepted via the town council's website and presented at the Annual Town Meeting on **15 May 2025**.

Upskill with Springboard – Congleton's Adult Education Provider

Looking to advance your career or learn something new? Are you a business owner looking to upskill your staff? Springboard, based at Riverside Congleton, is a supportive and friendly environment that is committed to providing the best adult learning opportunities through a range of high-quality, fully funded (free) courses.

Enrol now for a range of courses including Functional Skills Maths and/or English; digital skills qualifications; vocational learning; and distance and flexible learning opportunities.

Springboard's Work Hub runs at Congleton Riverside every Thursday; a free appointment-based service which supports adults aged 19+ looking to improve their work-based skills and employment opportunities. Call: **01260 290 682**, email: info@springboard.me.uk or visit: www.springboard.me.uk



New Partnership to Support Lunch Club

The Old Saw Mill are pleased to announce a new partnership to support the cherished Lunch Club. The collaboration with Mark Bailey of Mark's Events (who is also the town council's commercial partner) comes at a crucial time for The Old Saw Mill, following a challenging period. It will strengthen efforts to provide nutritious meals to those in the community who need them most. Volunteers will remain an essential part, delivering meals and maintaining the personal connections that are so vital to the Lunch Club's customers. If you or someone you know could benefit from the service, email: info@theoldsawmill.org

New Businesses Boosting the High Street

Joining the local scene are B Beauty Salon, Martins Court, Barking Mad, High Street, Crown Bank Dental, High Street, Feast relocated to High Street, Next Level Tattoo, now at Lawton Street, and Studio 5 Kitchens on Swan Bank. Look out for the launch of the town council's '**High Street Awards**', designed to recognise and reward businesses for their commitment to the town and community.

Understanding Your Local Councils: A Guide to Their Key Responsibilities and Services

Congleton Town Council

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Congleton
Town Council

Town Council Key Responsibilities



To support
Congleton and
its people



Provide events
and activities



Encourage
business
investment in
the town



Protect the local
environment and
heritage



Help people
access the
services they
need



Maintain
outdoor areas,
parks and green
spaces



Looking after
the town hall
and paddling
pool



Community
Grant Scheme

Who is on the council?

- 22 elected town councillors (unpaid) serving five wards
- Councillors are elected every 4 years
- They make decisions as a full council or in committee meetings
- 30 staff (paid)
- Town Mayor and Civic Team
- Full Council and 6 Committees
- 9 Working Groups (non decision making)

Streetscape

A service run by the town council to maintain some of the outside spaces in Congleton. This includes:

- Maintaining the grounds in parks, play areas and open spaces
- Street cleansing and general maintenance
- Grass & hedge cutting, minor tree maintenance
- Summer and winter planting in Congleton Park and Mountbatten Way
- Emptying more than 200 litter and dog bins each day
- Removal of fly-tips & litter picking

Promotion of Congleton

- Community events – Christmas Switch-On, Food & Drink Festival, Summer Play Days, Green Fayre, Remembrance and lots more!
- Supporting Congleton in Bloom
- Congleton Information Centre
- Campaigns and activities to promote the town

Book the Town Hall

An ideal venue for concerts, conferences, parties and more! Licensed for Weddings and Civil Services with a licensed bar. The Grand Hall, Bridestones Suite and the Spencer Suite are available to hire seven days a week at competitive rates.

New Emergency Contacts Page

The town council is developing a new contacts page to assist residents 24/7 during emergencies and out-of-hours situations - visit our website for full details.

Know Your Local Councillors

The public elected 22 councillors to serve on the town council until May 2027.

They have been elected into five wards.

Here are the pictures and names of your councillors.

More details can be found on the town council website.

Councillor emails are cilrfirstname.surname@congleton-tc.gov.uk

South East Ward

Mossley, High Town, Timbersbrook



David
Brown



Arabella
Holland



Sally Ann
Holland



Heather
Pearce



Kay
Wesley

MAJOR

North Ward

Lower Heath



Dawn
Allen



Russell
Chadwick



Emma
Hall

North East Ward

Bromley, Buglawton



Charles
Booth



Susan
Mead



Rob
Moreton



Shaun
Radcliffe



Glen
Williams

West Ward

Lower Heath



Suzie Akers
Smith



Robert
Brittain



Robert
Douglas

DEP. MAJOR

LD

Understanding Your Local Councils: A Guide to Their Key Responsibilities and Services

Cheshire East Council

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Bins, Waste and Recycling

Ext. 5011

- Recycling and Bin Collections
- Garden Bin Subscription
- Household Waste Recycling Centres
- Bulky waste collections
- Street cleansing, litter and fly tipping

Roads, parking and travel

Ext. 5020

- Roadworks & traffic disruption
- Report a pothole or other road condition
- Gritting & snow clearance
- Buses & public transport
- Car parks & parking

Planning and Building Control

Ext. 5014

- Planning Applications
- Building Regulations
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Flooding & Drainage
- Heritage and natural environment

Business and Consumer

- Business Rates
- Licensing
- Business Growth & Investment
- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards

Council Tax

Ext. 5013

- Pay Council Tax
- Manage your account online
- Council Tax Support
- Reporting change of circumstance

Every Day Support

- Benefits - Ext. 5013
- Housing - Ext. 5017
- Births, Deaths & Marriages - Ext. 5019
- Crematoriums
- Council & Democracy

Health and Social Care

Ext. 5010

- Health & Wellbeing
- Community activities
- Support for adults, children & carers
- Education, Employment & money matters
- 0-25 Local Offer for SEN & Disabilities

Schools and Learning

Ext. 5012

- School Admissions
- Free School Meals
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Nurseries & Childcare
- Child Protection & Safeguarding

Libraries and Leisure

- Maintaining Green Spaces
- Public Rights of Way
- Parks & Play Areas
- Markets
- Leisure centres, swimming pools and sports pitches

FixMyStreet

Report local issues such as graffiti, dog fouling, potholes, or broken street lights directly to Cheshire East through their dedicated online reporting platform.

www.fixmystreet.cheshireeast.gov.uk

In an Emergency

For emergencies outside of regular hours (5pm–9am, Monday to Friday, and weekends), contact:

0300 123 5025

Central Ward

Town Centre, Newcastle Rd



Amanda Martin



Mark Edwardson



Heather Seddon



Richard Walton



Liz Wardlaw

C = Conservative
 L = Labour
 I = Independent
 LD = Liberal Democrat
 EP = Equality Party



Suzy Firkin

Emergency Contacts:

National Grid Gas (Gas Leaks)	0800 11 1999
SP Energy Networks (Electricity)	0800 001 5400
United Utilities (Water Leaks)	0800 330033
United Utilities (Water Supply)	0345 672 3723
Environment Agency Floodline	0345 988 1188
Environment Incident Hotline	0800 80 70 60
Emergency Services	999
Non Emergency Service	101
NHS Direct	111

Hop into Easter Fun

On **Tuesday 8 April, 11am-2pm**, the town council will host '**Easter Treats Day**', a fun-filled event featuring Easter crafts, farm animals, seed planting, face painting, and more. If you're lucky, you might even spot Billy, the giant rabbit!

Don't miss the beloved '**Hop Around the Shops**' trail, running from **7-19 April**. This exciting activity invites families to explore local shops, hunt for clues, and enjoy an Easter treat at the end!

Trails will be available online or from the Congleton Information Centre prior to the event.



Evening of Clairvoyance

Join one of the UK's leading clairvoyants, Steven Holbrook, for a captivating evening of spiritual connection at Congleton Town Hall. Back by popular demand after last year's sold-out performance, Steven returns on **Tuesday 25 February, 7pm** for an unforgettable experience.

Tickets are available online or from the Congleton Information Centre.



Winter Walk at Astbury Mere

Join the Town Mayor and Ruby's for a fun-filled Winter Walk at Astbury Mere, supporting Ruby's vital work.

Taking place on **Tuesday 18 February, 11am-1pm**, the event is perfect for families. The walk will include stops at the Visitor Centre, where additional activities will be held, and Ruby's sensory bus will make a special appearance. This inclusive event ensures everyone can participate, with disabled parking available.

After the walk, continue the fun at Ruby's Café and soft play area. Enjoy the great outdoors supporting a great cause!

For more details or to donate online, scan the QR code.



A Day of Creativity, Craft and Celebration

Artisanship, a vibrant hub for local makers and artists at Glebe Farm, is excited to present '**Lacing Together**', a community art event celebrating Congleton's lacemaking heritage and creative spirit.

Taking place on **Saturday 9 March, 10.30am – 3.30 pm** at Congleton Town Hall, this event coincides with the Artisanship Spring Craft Fair, offering two free attractions under one roof. Congleton's iconic Bear will be transformed with a lace-inspired design, symbolising the town's history.

The fair will feature 30 craftspeople and live demos. For details on stalls, artwork submissions, sponsorships, or volunteering, contact Clare Watson or Jenny Drew at: info@artisanship.co.uk



Dates For Your Diary

Mark your calendars for a series of exciting events in Congleton! Some events are free, while others require tickets. Please note that all events may be subject to change, so be sure to check with the event organiser before attending.

March

14: Town Mayor's Charity Ball, Town Hall, 7pm

18: Health and Wellbeing Fayre, Town Hall, 10am-3pm

21-23: Congleton Unplugged, Town Centre Venues

19 & 22: Rotary Swimathon, Congleton Leisure Centre

April

8: Easter Treats Day, Town Centre, 11am-2pm

May

8: VE Day 80th Anniversary, Cenotaph, 11am

15: Annual Town Meeting, Town Hall, 7pm

22: Mayor Making, Town Hall, 7pm

24: Congleton Paddling Pool Opens

June

8: Food & Drink Festival, Town Centre, 10.30am-4.30pm

July

13: Congleton Lions Band Concert, Congleton Park, 2.30pm

19: Congleton Pride, Town Centre

August

23-24: Congleton Jazz and Blues, Town Centre Venues

September

27: Green Fayre, Town Centre, 10am-3pm

October

29: Witchy Wednesday, Town Hall

November

1: Rotary Bonfire Night, Congleton Park

9: Remembrance Sunday, Cenotaph, 11am

28: Christmas Lights Switch-On, Town Centre

29: Rotary Tree of Light, Community Garden, 4pm

December

18: Community Carol Service, St Peter's Church, 7.30pm

