

WINTER 2025 | #DISTRICTNEWS

DN

MAGAZINE

In this issue:

Nearly £500,000 awarded to community projects
Double win at global environment awards

NEWS FROM ACROSS
THE LEWES DISTRICT



Lewes District Council

Hello

Welcome to the
December 2025 edition
of DN, brought to you by
Lewes District Council

At the time of writing this, we are waiting to hear back from government about the future shape of your councils in East Sussex.

The government told us we needed to look at changing the size and structure of local government —it wasn't something we chose to do. But we took this duty seriously and worked incredibly hard to make sure the One East Sussex proposal we put forward is the most responsible choice for everyone who lives here.

The One East Sussex plan is the result of councils across East Sussex working together. It recommends replacing the county's six current councils with just one single council. The evidence is clear: our model is the strongest and most sensible financially. It gives taxpayers the best value compared to any other idea we looked at.

One East Sussex is focused on the best interests of local people and was shaped by huge public engagement, including feedback from 14,000 residents who overwhelmingly said they were against changing the East Sussex boundary, which was contrary to Brighton & Hove City Council's proposals.

We expect the government to run a consultation before they decide on a final option for Sussex in spring 2026. I look forward to sharing more news as soon as we get it.

Meanwhile, this edition of DN is packed with information about council initiatives, community projects, improvement schemes, essential support for vulnerable people and all that we do to help ensure that Lewes district continues to be a great place for everyone to live.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.



Councillor Zoe Nicholson
Leader of Lewes District Council

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Get in touch

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Council scoops two awards for environmental excellence

Newhaven Fort courtyard

Lewes District Council has won two International Green Apple Environment Awards for Newhaven Fort and Stowe Place housing development.

The awards, which reward and promote environmental best practice, position the council as a leader in sustainability and environmental excellence. Both projects were selected as winners from more than 700 entries across the world.

Historic Newhaven Fort, operated by Wave Active, was recognised in the Beautiful Buildings category, following a successful £7.5 million conservation project that was driven by a sensitive heritage approach, improving drainage and ventilation. The scheme also prioritised sustainability with electrical upgrades, energy efficient lighting and biodiversity

“Winning not one, but two International Green Apple Awards is a brilliant achievement and a tremendous endorsement of our commitment to both environmental best practice and the very best new council housing. It’s fantastic to see both Stowe Place and Newhaven Fort receive this prestigious international recognition.”

Councillor Emily O’Brien, Cabinet Member for Climate, Nature and Food Systems



enhancements like creating new habitats for bats. Additionally, an adventure playground was built to broaden the fort’s appeal to a younger audience.

Stowe Place, a development of high-quality, affordable homes which opened on the site of a former police station in Newhaven last year, was successful in the Environmental Best Practice Awards category. Each of the 21 homes at Stowe Place benefit from full electric heating, reducing carbon emissions; hot water is provided by either air source heat pumps or air-to-water heat pumps; PV solar panels on the roof generate renewable energy; mechanical ventilation with heat recovery is installed and the lighting is low energy. Nature is encouraged with bee bricks and a swift box.

The International Green Apple Awards are run by The Green Organisation, an independent, non-profit group founded in 1994 to recognise, reward and promote environmental excellence worldwide.

Council funds broad mix of community projects

Local groups and organisations have been given a major boost thanks to nearly £483,000 of funding awarded through the latest round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

The money will support a diverse range of projects that enhance accessibility, improve community spaces, and promote wellbeing across the district.

Among the allocations, families in Peacehaven will benefit from £126,960 allocated to Wave Active for the installation of soft play equipment designed for younger children, creating a safe and engaging environment for active play. Newhaven Cricket Club is receiving £131,500 for renovations aimed at improving both facilities and accessibility, ensuring the club remains a welcoming space for all. And The Hillcrest Centre in Newhaven has been awarded £150,000 to carry out extensive

upgrades, including heating replacement, new toilets and replacement flooring. Smaller but equally impactful grants have also been awarded



to support accessibility improvements at village halls, new equipment for community groups, and infrastructure enhancements for local sports clubs. At Ringmer Village Hall, heating is to be installed in one room and sound proofing between two others.

The Community Infrastructure Levy is a planning charge that enables local authorities to invest in the infrastructure needed to support growth and improve the quality of life for residents.

Following on from this very successful round of bids into the CIL Community Pot, the council will soon be opening the CIL Strategic Pot, which enables strategic infrastructure to be delivered across the district.

For information visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy-cil

“This game-changing funding reflects our deep commitment to supporting the spaces and organisations that bring our communities together.

“Whether it’s creating soft play areas for children or upgrading essential facilities at a community hub, this investment is about improving daily life for our residents. It’s a real privilege to help make these projects happen.”

Councillor Laurence O’Connor, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure

Peacehaven and Telscombe set for major park improvements



Peacehaven’s Centenary Park and Telscombe Playing Fields are set to receive significant upgrades to boost sports and recreational opportunities for local people.

Next year, the current multi-use games area (MUGA) at Centenary Park will be transformed into a fantastic multi-sports space which will include a new anti-slip surface and new fencing.

A key feature will be a designated community netball court for the growing Peacehaven Netball Club, enabling it to host league matches and training sessions. The area will have improved basketball facilities and provision for both kick-around and five-a-side football.

In addition, a new pump track will be built at Centenary Park next year. Lewes District Council is currently in the tendering process and a consultation on the design of the new track will soon

be held with young people and other park users. Meanwhile, the council is addressing the need for better basketball facilities at Telscombe Playing Fields.

Consultations are underway with Basketball Sussex and local teams over designs for a new basketball court which will be built next year, to replace the existing hard-standing one.

Also at Telscombe Playing Fields, new chalk banks will be created for butterflies, moths and bees. These banks will increase biodiversity and provide valuable habitats for pollinating insects. They will be planted with native chalk and downland flower species and will establish over several years, naturally becoming a valuable habitat for beneficial downland insects.

Additionally, the council is working with the South Downs National Park to improve access – including for people using mobility scooters – to Telscombe Tye. The plan includes providing a new path to the Tye from the A259 pedestrian crossing to the east, along with new hydraulic gates and bigger turning spaces. The council will work with Telscombe Town Council to deliver this project.



“As a Peacehaven councillor and resident, I’m thrilled to see these significant investments to expand sporting and recreational choices for the benefit of local people.”

**Councillor Chris Collier,
Cabinet Member for Innovation, Delivery and People**

Alternate weekly waste collections set to boost recycling rates



Lewes District Council will introduce alternate weekly collections for household waste and recycling in February, to increase the district’s recycling rate.

The new system will see residual refuse (black sack waste) collected fortnightly, while recycling collections will also remain fortnightly, alternating with the refuse collection day. Crucially, weekly food waste collections will continue, along with weekly collections for non-infectious medical waste, such as nappies, for those who register.

Evidence from neighbouring councils and authorities nationally indicates that alternate weekly refuse and dry recycling collections, while keeping food waste weekly, encourages more people to recycle more. It also reduces the amount of good quality recyclable materials from being incinerated, drives up the number of households using the food waste service and reduces the council’s carbon footprint by having fewer collection vehicles on the roads.

The move to alternate weekly collections follows an engagement exercise which indicated that many residents were happy to embrace a two-weekly refuse collection,

provided the food waste service stayed weekly. Some 97% of the 2,150 respondents to an online survey thought it was important or very important to recycle from home. Furthermore, 71% of respondents currently put out a refuse bin each week that is not full. The engagement exercise (full report at lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/AWC) included 11 face-to-face events over the summer with councillors and council officers.

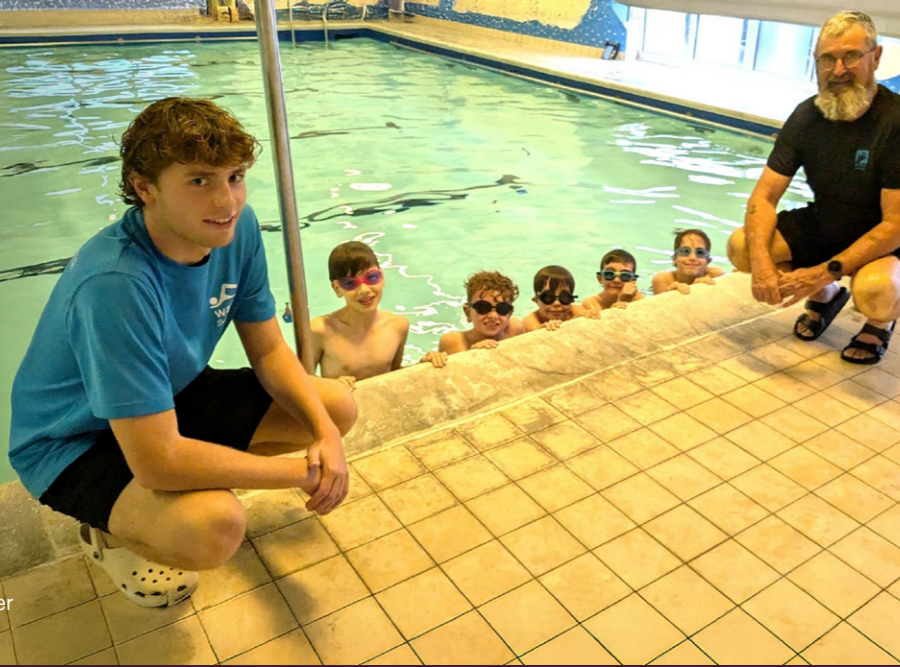
For concerns about pests, residents are reminded to put the food waste caddy handle all the way forward to ‘lock’ the lid shut. To get started with food waste collections, visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/foodwaste Collection days will change for most residents and new collection calendars will be issued in January 2026.



“It was great to meet people at events over the summer, and to hear how much people appreciate the hard work of our waste collection crews. The online survey and conversations at these events show that the vast majority of residents are keen to recycle more, including taking up our food waste collections offer. This positive feedback provides a solid foundation for a more sustainable collection system in Lewes, aligning with most councils in England, including all our neighbours in East Sussex.”

Councillor Wendy Maples, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Wellbeing

Ringmer Pool celebrates eagerly anticipated return of swim lessons



Teachers Ben Lawrence (left) and Tony Miller (right) with Wave Swim School students

Swimming lessons have resumed at Ringmer Pool after a gap of five years in a move that has been warmly welcomed by the local community.

The Wave Swim School programme started in October, completing the return of Ringmer Pool to full community use.

Ringmer Pool reopened in June this year thanks to a collaborative effort between Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council and Wave Active after being closed since September 2020.

To get the pool fully operational, Lewes District Council invested £100,000 towards replacing vital pool

machinery, ensuring the infrastructure was fit for the future. A new lease transferred its operation from East Sussex County Council to Lewes District Council, and Wave Active now manages the pool day-to-day.

Ringmer Pool was built in 1981 as a community initiative, thanks to the hard work and tireless fundraising efforts of local people.

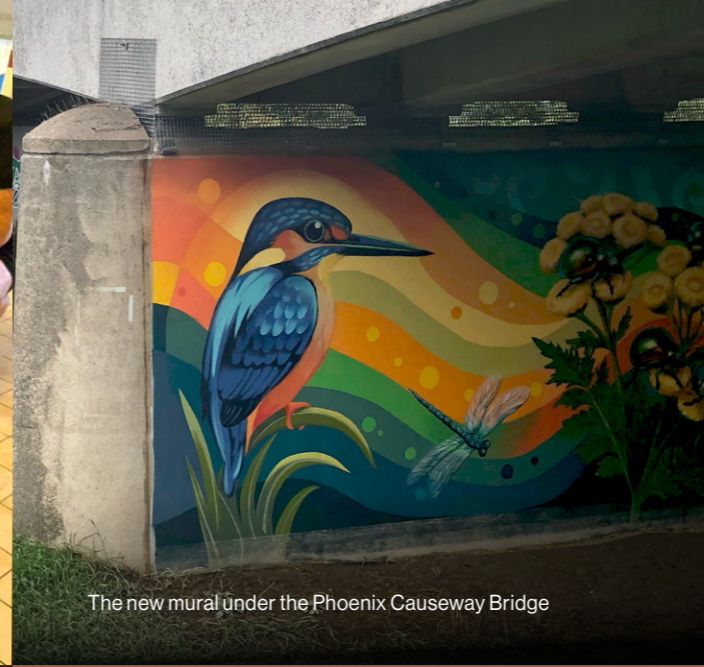
Duncan Kerr, CEO of Wave Active, said: "Providing swimming lessons is a key part of what defines a community pool, and we are delighted this is now on offer at Ringmer. We've got two fantastic teachers, Ben Lawrence and Tony Miller, delivering the lessons and supporting people of all ages and abilities to gain confidence in the water and progress their swimming skills. If you are interested in learning to swim, please do get in touch."

"The return of swimming lessons is the final piece of the jigsaw for Ringmer Pool. It's exciting to see it back to full operation, supporting the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of local families once again."

Councillor Johnny Denis,
Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture, Tourism and Leisure



For more information or to book, visit waveactive.org/activities/swimming/wave-swim-school or phone 01273 087115.



The new mural under the Phoenix Causeway Bridge

Community art transforms Lewes underpass

The Phoenix Causeway Bridge underpass is the third mural project undertaken by Street Art Initiative Lewes (SAIL), marking a significant step in the community-led effort to transform graffitied areas.

SAIL is a local partnership initiative set up to remove graffiti and replace it with street art murals, supported by active participation from the local community.

A multi-agency partnership – including Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council and Lewes Town Councils, local businesses, councillors, the MP, police, schools, college headteachers, charities, local street artists and Lewes residents – was convened to plan and agree the SAIL project strategy.

The Phoenix Causeway Bridge underpass project was made possible with funding from the Chalk Cliff Trust and the National Lottery. This follows two previous successful murals – the first at the local skatepark in memory of a young skateboarder, and the second on garages at the Convent Field which celebrates Lewes Priory's history and local heritage.



Essential sea defence repairs made in Peacehaven

Lewes District Council has been carrying out essential repair and maintenance works on the sea wall in Peacehaven.

These vital repairs are crucial for maintaining the sea defences that protect the Peacehaven coastline.

The sea wall is around 50 years old, making the seals between the blocks of concrete more susceptible to the impact of winter storms.

The works, funded by Lewes District Council, were undertaken by Thorne Civil Engineers during the autumn. Repairs were completed as quickly as possible to minimise disruption to people living along the coast.

Lewes District Council is responsible for maintenance of the sea defences in Peacehaven, which includes the cliff-foot structures and coastal protection.

District appeal to fight hunger this winter

An appeal has been launched to provide vital funds to community food projects supporting around 700 households in Lewes district each week.

The Lewes District Emergency Food Network (EFN) is a network of projects helping people to access food across the district, including food banks, community supermarkets and food waste hubs that work directly with households experiencing food insecurity in Newhaven, Lewes, Peacehaven, Seaford and rural areas.

Working with Lewes District Council and other community organisations, the EFN seeks to address the ongoing cost-of-living crisis to coordinate and improve the support available to local people. This goes beyond food provision: it provides community cafés and safe spaces, and signposting and advice services to those struggling with multiple, overlapping issues such as isolation, financial insecurity and mental health challenges.

“It is deeply concerning that around 700 households each week rely on support from community food projects.

“These local food projects are under immense pressure, and I encourage people to donate to this appeal if they can – even a little will go a long way.”

Councillor Christine Robinson, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing



Since 2021, EFN projects have experienced ever-greater numbers of local people coming through their doors. The increase in demand, soaring food prices and a decrease in donations have left many projects struggling to make ends meet. Some projects, which are largely run by volunteers, are having to find almost £1,000 each week to serve their members.

With the additional challenging conditions that winter brings, EFN is asking for donations that will support people in our communities to put food on the table. Lewes District Council will be match-funding donations up to £5,000.

To donate, or for more information, please visit crowdfunder.co.uk/p/support-local-emergency-food-projects-this-winter

For a full list of food banks and community food hubs in Lewes district visit: lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org and click on Emergency Food Network.

Progress on projects to enhance biodiversity

Councillor Emily O'Brien with Alistair Whitby, of Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust

The first phase of a project to restore the wetland habitats of Landport Brooks in Lewes has been completed.

Lewes District Council and the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust carried out initial site maintenance works in the autumn to reinstate historical ditch features as part of a phased project that will restore Landport Brooks to a floodplain meadow and grazing habitat.

Landport Brooks was once known for having the largest breeding population of common toads in Sussex, but their population has declined over the past 20 years. This project aims to improve the toads' habitat in the hope that the population can start to recover.

Over the next 16 months, the Landport Brooks Restoration Project will restore historical ditches and enhance the marsh landscape by creating scrapes - shallow pools that store rainwater. This will help hold water on the site during the late spring and summer, which will benefit a variety of wildlife and restore much-needed habitats for amphibians. Alongside this, there will be a focus on restoring the Paper Mill Cut, a small chalk stream that runs through the site.

This phase of the project was made possible thanks to funding from Lewes District Council and a grant from the South Downs National Park's Community Infrastructure Levy.

Conservation grazing with cows is also part of the restoration effort and cattle will be present over the summer and into the autumn.

Meanwhile, in Hoath Wood near Newhaven, Lewes District Council, in partnership with the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust, has implemented a series of natural flood management measures.

The collaborative project has introduced leaky dams and enhanced scrapes throughout Hoath Wood. These natural interventions are designed to slow the flow of water and reduce surface water runoff. Leaky dams, constructed from branches and twigs strategically placed across channels and flow paths, help retain water in the landscape, mimicking natural processes to mitigate flood risk.

Earlier this year, Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust led a successful volunteer day in Hoath Wood to maintain existing leaky dams and install new ones across identified flow paths.

Help for people on low incomes



One of the ways Lewes District Council continues to support the most vulnerable residents in the district is through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which has given financial assistance to around 3,500 of the most disadvantaged working-age residents. The scheme has allowed about 2,000 of those experiencing the greatest hardship not to pay any council tax at all. For more details, or to find out if you are also eligible for housing benefit, visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/ctr

If you are having difficulty paying your rent and you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, you can apply for a discretionary housing payment. Visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/DHP

The government has extended the Household Support Fund for 2025/26. This fund is available

“Many families are still facing significant financial strain so it’s vital people know where to turn for help. Our focus, for some time, has been on helping to alleviate hardship for those who are worst off. If you are finding it difficult to make ends meet, then please don’t hesitate to make use of the practical and financial support available.”

Councillor Mark Slater, Cabinet Member for Tenants and Those in Housing Need



up to March 31, 2026, but it may close sooner depending on how many applications are received. For more details and to check whether you can apply, visit lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/HSF

If there is a risk your power will be cut off, you are advised to seek help as soon as possible. Citizens Advice has set up an Extra Help Unit for people who are vulnerable or at risk of being disconnected by their energy provider. Referral is needed through the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**. For information, visit ehu.org.uk or contact your Citizens Advice office.

Welcome Spaces

The council works with voluntary sector partners to support a network of community spaces across the district. For a full directory of welcome spaces, visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/welcome-spaces

Council leads the way in community wealth building



Since making a commitment to community wealth building and the creation of a fairer and more inclusive local economy, the council has made significant progress in reshaping how wealth is retained within the district.

Key developments include the formation of a cross-sector community wealth building working group, increased collaboration with businesses and other organisations, and the integration of wealth building principles into planning and regeneration strategies.

One of the standout achievements has been the work to align procurement practices with community wealth building values, meaning local

suppliers and social enterprises are prioritised by Lewes District Council.

Consequently, council spending with local suppliers in Sussex is 64% of its total spend and has more than doubled over the last five years, from £11 million in 2020-21 to £24 million in 2024-25.

Fair employment is a key pillar of community wealth building because it raises wages and standards of living for people working in the region.

The council will be applying to the Living Wage Foundation for accreditation, not only for the benefit of staff, but also to encourage other local employers to also pay the Real Living Wage to their employees.



“This policy sets out a whole new way of thinking. We want to make sure the council’s spending decisions are guided by what opportunities we can create locally.

“From buying local to making sure our hiring is fair for everyone, this approach is helping to keep our money here in the district and supporting businesses in the district.

“It all comes down to sharing power, creating good, stable jobs, and making sure every council pound gives the biggest possible boost to our communities.”

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council



Making every drop count

The Friends of Sutton Downs have introduced an innovative rain garden at Downs Leisure Centre in Seaford, which demonstrates how buildings can conserve and sustainably use rainwater.

The project is a key part of The Growing Project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund through Ouse Valley Climate Action.

The rain garden system captures rain from two large roof sections of the leisure centre via downpipes, diverting it into water storage tanks and three rain planters. Overflow water then flows through a pipe beneath the tarmac into a soak-away rain garden, which features a specially selected plant habitat.

The group is focused on restoring natural habitats. Activities so far have included planting a variety of trees including a community orchard, native fruiting hedgerows, herb and butterfly borders, making and installing bird boxes and renewing wildflower areas. The Friends plan to expand the rain garden outside Wave Café as well as introducing new signs, benches and a water refill station. Their aim is to transform the site by creating sanctuaries for nature that everyone who uses the leisure centre and grounds can enjoy.

Work underway at Fort Road Recreation Ground

The £3.4 million transformation of Fort Road Recreation Ground in Newhaven is progressing well.

Work on the project, which is funded by UK Government as part of the Re-imagining Newhaven programme, started in September.

Completion is expected in summer 2026 with the park boasting a new play area, outdoor gym, and an artificial cricket wicket. Existing buildings are being refurbished, and the entire site is undergoing landscaping to boost biodiversity, including a community orchard. Other key features include new circular footpaths, modernised public toilets, and improved links to Castle Hill Nature Reserve.

Once building work is completed, an operator for a new café will be sought.

Local groups continue to be involved, with a new Friends of Fort Road Recreation Ground group being formed to support the park's future.

For more information visit fortroadnewhaven.org

citizens advice

Lewes District

Lewes District Citizens Advice is a local charity that provides free, confidential and impartial advice to anyone living, studying or working within Lewes District. They provide information and advice which will help people resolve problems in areas such as:

- **Benefits – help with all benefits and it has a team of specialist benefit caseworkers**
- **Work – help with redundancy, unfair dismissal, grievances, flexible working and more**
- **Consumer – problems with your fuel bills, disputes with tradespeople**
- **Relationships – divorce, relationship breakdown, powers of attorney**
- **Housing – homelessness, eviction and tenancy problems**
- **Cost-of-living crisis – food bank referrals, emergency fuel vouchers, tailored household support grant advice**
- **Specialist advice for autistic adults**

For information and to contact Lewes District Citizens Advice visit lewesdistrictca.org.uk

Local freephone Advice line on **0808 278 7892** (lines are open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10am-3pm).

Opening hours

Prior appointments only following consultation at a drop-in session or by telephone. Call **0808 278 7892** or request a call back lewesdistrictca.org.uk/contact-us

Monday	Seaford 37 Church Street BN25 1HG	10am - 3.30pm
Tuesday	Newhaven 15-19 Chapel Street BN9 9PN	10am - 3.30pm
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday	Lewes 6 High Street	10am - 3.30pm

Out-of-hours advice options:

Website: lewesdistrictca.org.uk

Self-help website: citizensadvice.org.uk

Drop-in advice sessions

No appointment necessary. Every Wednesday at Peacehaven Meridian Centre BN10 8BL. 10am - 12pm and 1pm - 3pm

Rural outreach

At venues across Lewes district, including Ringmer, Chailey, Bishopstone and Newick. Visit lewesdistrictca.org.uk/community-outreach for more information.

Lewes District Citizens Advice work in partnership with Lewes District Council | Charity registration number: 1068146

Christmas tree recycling

If you have our garden waste service, you can recycle your real tree by cutting it up and putting it in your garden waste bin. Uncut trees, without any decorations, should be left beside garden waste bins. Collections will resume after the festive break.

Alternatively, you can drop off your real tree at one of our dedicated collection points until Sunday 25 January 2026. These are located at:

- Lewes: Brook Street Car Park
- Newhaven: Bay Vue Car Park
- Peacehaven: Piddinghoe Avenue Car Park
- Seaford: Richmond Road and The Buckle Car Parks

Please ensure all tinsel, baubles, and decorations are completely removed before recycling.

Food waste recycling

All your food scraps – from eggshells and peelings to cooked food and leftovers, including bones and meat carcasses – can go into your food waste recycling bin.

To join the thousands of households already recycling their food waste, or to find out where to pick up a free roll of caddy liners, visit: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/foodwaste

Garden waste service

Our garden waste collections will pause for the Christmas and New Year break from Monday 22 December 2025 to Friday 16 January 2026.

The service runs from April to March each year. Renewals for the coming year will open on 7 January 2026.

