

Postwick Park & Ride

The Park & Ride is open but so far the passenger numbers are below what is needed to continue to make it viable. But there's still time to get those numbers up so it does remain open beyond the trial period ending after Christmas. Anything the Parish Council can do to help publicise it alongside the work being done by the County Council would be appreciated.

Norwich Western Link update

On 13 October 2023 the government approved the Outline Business Case for Norfolk County Council's Norwich Western Link project for a new 3.9 mile dual carriageway road to be built to the west of Norwich.

The proposed Norwich Western Link will connect the Broadland Northway (formerly known as the Northern Distributor Road) between the A1067 and the A47 in the west of Norwich.

It will complete a fully-dualled orbital route around Norwich, together with National Highways' project to dual the A47 between North Tuddenham and Easton.

Once built, the new road will reduce journey times, improve road safety, support economic growth, improve air quality in residential areas and support walking, cycling and public transport use by removing traffic from local roads and through the introduction of complementary measures.

In addition to reducing existing traffic congestion on local roads and in communities to the west of Norwich, the Norwich Western Link will also prevent congestion from worsening due to the planned housing and employment growth in and around the city.

The new road will also provide a free-flowing, reliable route for traffic seeking to get to and from the north of the city and improve access to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, Norwich Airport and the Food Enterprise Park at Easton.

Household Support Fund winter support

Earlier this year, Norfolk County Council announced it would receive further funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to run the Household Support Fund until 31 March 2024.

The council is receiving £13.4m from central government and adding an additional £400,000 to make the total programme of support worth £13.8m. It is working closely with district, borough, and city councils, VCSE and public sector partners to identify and implement a range of support measures to meet the needs of vulnerable households.

Since the fund began (October 2021) the impact on Norfolk communities of the fund so far has been significant:

- Supported over 130,000 households throughout the life of the fund.
- Continue to provide food vouchers for over 30,000 eligible school children.
- Provided over 17,000 awards through our application-based Client Hardship Service (formally the Norfolk Assistance Scheme) ranging from food support through to providing white goods and winter essentials.
- Support has also been provided through our libraries (grab and go bags), the Nourishing Norfolk food hubs (store credit), our district council partners with a

range of both proactive and reactive support and by working with our local VCSE community to directly support the most vulnerable Norfolk families.

As part of the Household Support Fund, all 47 of Norfolk's libraries will be offering free winter support items until the end of March 2024 (while stocks last).

Budget Consultation

As in previous years NCC will be consulting Norfolk residents and stakeholders on council tax and budget proposals as part of the council's budget setting process. Norfolk County Council will set a new budget on 20 February 2024. Ahead of this, we will be asking for views on our proposed council tax level for 2024-25, including a proposal for the Adult Social Care precept.

To help deal with our cost pressures and invest in vital services our current budget planning is based on an assumption to raise general council tax by 2.99% and 2% for the adult social care precept (a total of 4.99%) in 2024-25.

The consultation started on 20 October and runs to 1 December 2023.

How can local people find out about the consultation and have their say?

- The consultation is published on social media, such as Facebook and X, previously known as Twitter and in the local media.
- People will be able to read the proposals online at www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget and feed back their views using the online consultation.
- We will encourage members of the Norfolk Residents' Panel to participate in the consultation. The Panel currently comprises over 900 Norfolk residents.

Using our online feedback form ensures we have a clear record of people's response and that their views are accurately recorded. We will provide copies online of PDF documents so that people can download these themselves if they want a hard copy. There will also be Easy Read and large print versions available for download and people who are unable to respond online can give their views in writing to: Freepost Plus RTCLXSTT-JZSK Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

Residents can request the budget consultation in other formats, including paper form, by calling 0844 800 8020 or emailing HaveYourSay@norfolk.gov.uk. This will include Braille, audio etc.

There will be a meeting held in conjunction with the Norfolk Association of Local Councils when Councillor Andrew Jaimeson present the budget proposals to representatives of Norfolk Parish Councils during the consultation period.

Working Well Norfolk employment programme launched

Working Well Norfolk, a £2.7M scheme funded by the Department for Work & Pensions to help Norfolk residents with long-term health conditions or physical

impairments get into work and to stay in work, was officially launched on 12 October 2023.

The scheme is managed by Norfolk County Council and run by delivery partners Seetec Pluss and Standguide Ltd. It aims to provide free personalised 1:1 support to people who have physical disabilities or who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, and to people who are experiencing other long-term sickness or disabilities that impact their daily activities.

Participants can be unemployed or currently in work and can self-refer.

Participants are also likely to be referred to the scheme by a range of stakeholders including GPs and healthcare professionals, community health services, social care, voluntary community and social enterprise organisations, and Job Centre Plus.

Grants for community tree projects

Norfolk County Council in partnership with Busseys has launched a grant scheme to help local communities plant new trees and create greener and cleaner areas to live. The scheme is part of the council's one million trees initiative and aims to support tree planting projects across the county and contribute to ambitious net-zero targets.

The Busseys Community Tree Grant has made £10,000 (maximum of £2,500 per application) available to community organisations in Norfolk who are passionate about tree planting.

Further details and how to apply for the community tree grant are available on the county council website [here](#).

New partnership service will help people recover at home

People needing help when they leave hospital are set to benefit from a new community service, to help them recover at home. The Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service (NWCSS), will be led by Voluntary Norfolk, the British Red Cross and Age UK Norwich and is funded by Norfolk County Council, NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board and Suffolk County Council.

The service is aimed at helping people with everyday tasks, like shopping, walking the dog or making phone calls and supports people to live independently whilst they recover. It supports people leaving hospital and those with short-term needs in the community.

Further information can be found [here](#).

Have your say on our walking, wheeling and cycling strategy for Norfolk

Norfolk County Council has opened a public consultation on a draft walking, wheeling and cycling strategy for the county. The strategy is an updated version of the previous walking and cycling strategy which was published in 2017. Since then, there has been a step change in national and local policy which has placed walking, wheeling and cycling at the heart of decision making.

The proposed new strategy brings together Norfolk's local transport, environmental and public health ambitions and aims to make walking, wheeling or cycling the natural choice for both travelling from A to B and for leisure.

The draft strategy has been created following policy reviews, evidence collation and engagement with district councils and Active Norfolk. Now the county council wants

to hear from residents, stakeholders and organisations to get their thoughts on the proposed strategy.

The scale and pace of delivering the strategy will be dependent on the level of funding the County Council can secure. Having this strategy alongside our already approved local cycling and walking infrastructure plans for Norfolk helps us to present our ambition to central Government and give us more likelihood of securing funding in the future.

[The consultation is available online and will be open until Friday 24 November.](#)

For anybody unable to complete the consultation online paper copies can be requested by contacting haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk or customer services on 0344 800 8020.

Bus service improvements

A number of bus services operated by First Eastern Counties will run more often thanks to money that Norfolk County Council secured from the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve bus services across the County. Further information on the changes to timetables, which started on Sunday 29 October, can be found [here](#).

Regional innovation hubs

[Eight innovation launchpads have been announced](#) throughout the country and granted a share of £75 million funding to boost local research, businesses, and economies.

The East of England has been selected for an innovation launchpad in the agri-bio tech space, with a focus to drive innovation in food production and sustainability and will have access to £7.5m in funding. The bid was coordinated by the New Anglia LEP in association with Innovate UK, and seeks to build on the strengths of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge in this area.

The funding will go towards further funding “competitions”, where organisations and businesses can bid up to £300,000 with a focus on collaborative research and help with project costs.

50% boost to heat pump grants

A government grant to help households install an air source heat pump [has increased by 50% to £7,500](#). The scheme has also been extended by 3 years to 2028, giving people more time to take advantage of the opportunity.

Children's social care reform

Recognising the vital role social workers play in supporting some of the most vulnerable children and families, local authorities will be allocated a share of £11.7 million to hire up to 461 extra social work apprentices, as part of government plans to build a social worker workforce fit for the future.

Home Office to exit first 50 asylum hotels by the end of January

The Home Office has notified local authorities, MPs and the accommodation providers, informing them that the first 50 hotels temporarily accommodating asylum seekers will be exited as part of the move to return hotels to their proper use by communities. Initial efforts will focus on hotels that can be exited quickly. The Home

Office has not yet published a list of the 50 hotels that are due to stop hosting asylum seekers before the end of January.

Earlier mental health support

The Department of Health and Social Care has [published](#) a press release on nationwide 'Early Support Hubs' to deliver mental health support for children and young people.

The drop-in centres will offer mental health support and advice to local young people who won't need a referral by a doctor or school. They will not need an appointment, and services will include group work, counselling, psychological therapies, specialist advice, and signposting to information and other services. The hubs are open to those aged 11-25 years old and available to those who may not necessarily meet the threshold for NHS support.

The £4.92m of funding will enable ten existing hubs to expand their current services locally and employ new staff like counsellors or youth workers. The ten hubs benefitting from the funding will be announced in due course.

Dentistry in England

The King's Fund, an independent charitable organisation, has recently published an explainer about dentistry. This was commissioned by NHS England but was independently developed, researched and written by the authors, so all views are from the authors.

It provides information about NHS dentistry services, how they fit with the NHS system and how they work. It also outlines current challenges including the issues around access to services and the wide geographical disparity of availability of dental practices providing NHS services.

They say that 7 of 42 integrated care boards (ICB's) reported that they had no dental practices taking on new adult NHS patients. (Norfolk and Waveney ICB is one of these). This is a big issue for the NHS and an area where urgent improvements are needed for Norfolk.