

[8<sup>th</sup> February 2024](#)

## **Norfolk County Council updates**

### **Norfolk Flood Protection – delegation to Westminster**

The threat posed by flooding and coastal erosion in Norfolk was laid out for MPs when Norfolk County Council took their case for change to the heart of Westminster.

The delegation from Norfolk, led by the Norfolk County Council Leader and the Chair of the [Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance \(NSFA\)](#), recently met with MPs to explain the risks Norfolk faces and how those risks could be addressed.

Norfolk faces regular risks of flooding and is ranked tenth most at risk of surface water flooding out of 149 local authority areas. Additionally, the county's position on the North Sea exposes it to tidal threats as well as significant coastal erosion.

Norfolk's delegation to Westminster made the case for MPs to:

- Push for legislative permission to build reservoirs designed to capture excess water in times of flood, for use in times of drought
- Advocate for Property Flood Protection measures to be granted directly to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for faster allocation for those who need it
- Reduce bureaucracy by granting greater autonomy in funding allocation for surface water flood mitigation schemes
- Combine enforcement and maintenance powers and responsibilities for LLFA's
- Support the creation of a dedicated Minister for the Coast

### **New Grant Scheme for Fathers in Norfolk**

Norfolk County Council has launched a new grant scheme offering up to £10,000 to fund local groups supporting new fathers and fathers to be. The grants will help new fathers to access more support in their communities to help boost their mental health and wellbeing.

The funding is being provided through Norfolk's Start for Life and family hubs programme and will be administered by Norfolk Community Foundation.

The grants can cover things such as developing social spaces and peer support networks, father specific antenatal care groups e.g. support with feeding and routines or opportunities for fathers and their infants to engage in activities that strengthen their relationships amongst many others.

Funding will be available to registered charities and constituted voluntary and community organisations that are clearly based or operating in Norfolk.

An application process has been put in place to guarantee that the grants are given to suitable organisations which support a geographical spread of activity across Norfolk.

The deadline for applications is 8 February 2024 .

Further details and how to apply for a grant available [here](#).

### **Digifest at Norfolk libraries**

Digifest, which aims to inspire the next generation of coders and creators, is back for 2024. Digifest forms part of Norfolk County Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy. It helps children and young people (CYP) with the use of creative digital technologies, aiming to inspire them to pursue a future career in a digital industry.

Throughout February, there will be a huge variety of free events and workshops taking place across Norfolk's libraries for CYP aged four to 14. They are being encouraged to try their hand at stop-motion animation, learn basic coding skills with different robots, create with 3D pens and more.

Norfolk libraries also offer a wide range of digital support and initiatives such as laptops for loan, access to digital resources, and a team of digital champions to help people to improve computer skills.

More information about events taking place across Norfolk's libraries throughout Digifest is available [here](#).

More information about NCC's Digital Inclusion strategy available [here](#)

## **National Apprenticeship Week**

National Apprenticeship Week takes place from 5 to 11 February. This year's theme is Skills for Life and it's the 17th annual celebration of apprenticeships.

With over 400 apprentices, Norfolk County Council is advocating the benefits that apprenticeships can bring to individuals, teams and services.

More information about apprenticeships in Norfolk, including how to find an apprenticeship in Norfolk and how to employ an apprentice in Norfolk is available on the County Council webpages [here](#).

## **Transport**

### **Consultation on proposals for a busy Norwich Junction**

Plans to improve the Dereham Road junction with Grapes Hill in Norwich are now open for consultation, with the aim of delivering better journey times for all road users and helping to improve reliability for bus services.

The proposed changes are to help create more space for buses and general traffic on the approach to the junction to help relieve congestion, which is currently causing delays for those passing through.

The project is part of a series of improvements aimed at improving bus journey times and reliability of services. The council is using funding awarded by the Department for Transport for their Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The deadline for comments is 22 February 2024.

Find out more about the proposals and to take part in the consultation [here](#).

More details about the Bus Service Improvement Plan are available on the county council website [here](#).

## **Herring Bridge Update**

Hundreds of residents joined local dignitaries and special guests to assist the grand opening of Herring Bridge in Great Yarmouth on 1 February. Free printed copies of the souvenir programme are available from Great Yarmouth Town Hall.

Herring Bridge is the town's third crossing over the River Yare. The name was chosen by the public and celebrates the local fishing industry.

The bridge links the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout to the port and the enterprise zone via South Denes Road on the other side of the River Yare.

It will ease traffic congestion on the town's roads, shortening journey times and improving journey reliability, as well as support wider plans and work to maximise investment, regeneration and economic growth opportunities in the town and wider borough.

## **Government updates**

### **New dental recovery plan announced NHS dentistry services**

The plan sets out a national programme of actions for the recovery and reform of NHS dentistry services in England.

It aims to prevent poor oral health, boost access and activity, support and develop the whole dental workforce. The government says the plan could see up to 2.5 million additional NHS dental appointments delivered for patients over the next 12 months, including up to 1.5 million extra treatments being delivered.

The aim to increase dental training places has given fresh hope to calls to government, (backed by all Norfolk MP's) for an undergraduate dental school at the University of East Anglia to be established.

A link to the government's dental recovery plan is available [here](#).

### **New Disability Action Plan**

The Government has launched a new Disability Action Plan outlining 32 practical measures it is taking that they say will make the UK the most accessible place in the world for disabled people to live, work and thrive.

Measures include helping disabled people who want to be elected to public office, protecting people with guide dogs from being illegally refused entry to businesses, online resources for making accessible playgrounds, and to explore hosting the 2031 Special Olympics World Summer Games.

Further details and a link to the report available [here](#).

### **Electric Vehicles (EV's)**

#### **Electric Vehicle Strategy – House of Lords Committee report**

The House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee has published its report 'EV strategy: rapid recharge needed'. The Committee is calling on the Government to:

- Tackle the disparity in upfront costs between electric and petrol and diesel cars, by introducing targeted grants to support consumers buying affordable models.
- Turbo-charge the charging infrastructure rollout by reviewing outdated and disproportionate planning regulations, and by tackling delays in the rollout of key public funding programmes.
- Ensure charging is reasonably priced, convenient, and reliable by equalising VAT rates for domestic and public charging.
- Invest in UK recycling to ensure that recycling is undertaken by responsible operators, and that the UK is able to recoup as many of the critical materials contained in EV batteries as possible for its own domestic production.

Further details and a link to the report available [here](#).

### **Electric Vehicle Guidance**

The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles have published new guidance providing information on EVs and EV charging infrastructure.

The guidance provides a list of common questions and answers on topics such as buying an EV, battery range, safety, charging information, EV lifecycle emissions, battery replacement and recycling, and the weight of EVs.

A link to the new guidance is available [here](#).

### **Government grant for state schools to purchase and install EV chargepoints**

The government has publicised a grant for state-funded schools and education institutions to install electric vehicle charge point sockets at their site(s).

Paid for by the Department for Transport, the grant forms part of the Workplace Charging Scheme and is available for state-funded schools, colleges, nurseries and academies to boost the charge point facilities for staff and visitors. This could also help schools to generate revenue by making their chargepoints available to the public.

The grant can enable 75% off the cost to buy and install chargepoints. Successful applicants will receive a voucher that is valid for 180 days from the date of issue.

The closing date for applications is 31 March 2025.

Further details and how schools can apply are available [here](#).

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

james