

New highways contracts to focus on value, apprenticeships and carbon reductions

The council is consulting major contractors about potential twelve-year contracts for highway maintenance and associated professional services and for traffic signal maintenance contracts.

Contracts will be focusing on value for money, apprenticeship opportunities for local people, and reducing the carbon footprint from highway maintenance.

The council plans to invite tenders later this year for the new contracts, which take effect from April 2026.

The contracts will be used mainly for highway maintenance and highway schemes, but the council will have the option under the contracts to buy other civil engineering work such as recycling centre construction and flood defences.

Social Workers Celebrated

Social workers across Norfolk are being celebrated this week as part of World Social Work Day and Social Work Week. The celebration has highlighted the critical role social workers play in our community, supporting individuals and families through challenges and making a significant difference in their lives.

Following a social work career provides an opportunity to make a real difference to children, young people and adults in Norfolk.

There are a number of routes into the social work profession, both for those interested in qualifying and for those who are thinking about returning to practice after a career break. The council also offers a variety of apprenticeships and training opportunities for adult social care careers. [Find out more here.](#)

Social Work England have also been hosting a programme throughout the week and their website has more information about social work [here](#).

Norfolk Libraries

Big Indie Read has started

The Big Indie Read at Norfolk libraries aims to celebrate exceptional writing from independent publishers. The read runs for two months and features 26 publishers, almost 200 books and 17 author chats.

Further information about Big Indie events at Norfolk libraries is available [here](#).

Browse the full list of Big Indie Read books [here](#).

Autism Acceptance Week (2-8 April)

Norfolk Libraries have selected some books from their catalogue to create an Autism Acceptance Week 2024 booklist. There are books suitable for children and adults, including stories and information books.

Browse the booklist [here](#).

There are also autism friendly sessions running in some of our libraries, find out more [here](#).

Public Information: Next of Kin appeal

The Norfolk Coroner's Service are appealing for help to trace the family of a man who died at his home address. 67-year-old Ian Trueman who lived at an address in Lakenfields, Norwich died on 18 March 2024.

There were no suspicious circumstances and despite carrying out extensive enquiries no next-of-kin have been identified.

Anyone with information relating to Ian should contact the Coroner's office in Norwich on 01603 774773 or email coroner.referral@norfolk.gov.uk

Government updates

Public Accounts Committee report on reforming Adult Care

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published its report on reforming adult social care in England. The report outlines the urgency of need for reform in the adult social care sector, citing long-standing issues such as workforce challenges, funding uncertainty, and the need for systemic change.

They call for stronger leadership, long-term financial support, and a clear workforce strategy to address key shortfalls in the adult social care sector. They also say that demand for adult social care services in rural areas is of particular concern, as it is set to rise against a backdrop of chronic understaffing in these communities.

The full report and recommendations are available [here](#).

Government review of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's)

The government have published a research report into LTNS' as part of DfT's review of LTN schemes.

The report presents findings of research carried out as part of a review of low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) schemes introduced in areas across England since March 2020.

LTN schemes seek to remove or substantially reduce through motor traffic from an area or neighbourhood.

The research focuses on how LTN schemes were introduced, the views of local communities affected and emerging evidence of impacts.

Conclusions include:

- While the review of existing evidence showed that LTN schemes have had several positive impacts, this remains largely unrecognised by stakeholders or residents.
- Low awareness of the schemes among residents and uncertainty about benefits, does not automatically translate into widespread opposition. Stakeholders struggled to point to tangible, positive impacts but expected benefits such as greater sustainable transport use and improved air quality to be realised with more time.
- The survey of authorities showed multiple engagement activities had been undertaken but stakeholders identified inadequate engagement and communication with residents and affected groups as an important issue.
- Being able to demonstrate positive impacts ought to improve the reputation of LTNs, as would improvements to community engagement, awareness and understanding.

The full research report can be read [here](#).

Department for Education

Applications for the second phase of the expansion of free childcare now open

The DfE has announced that applications for the second phase of the expansion of free childcare in England's will open on 12 May 2024.

From 12 May, eligible working parents of children from 9 months old will be able to register to access 15 hours of government-funded childcare a week, with the offer beginning from September 2024.

Childminder recruitment and retention consultation

The DfE has launched a consultation on childminder recruitment and retention. They are consulting on new proposals and gathering evidence to improve the recruitment and retention of childminders and to support the role of childminder agencies in the sector.

The consultation is open to all. The closing date for responses is 10 May 2024.

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

New registration requirements for all bird keepers

New measures to better protect the poultry sector from future avian influenza outbreaks have been set out by the government.

Under the changes announced there will be new requirements for all bird keepers to officially register their birds. Currently only those who keep 50 or more poultry must do so, limiting the effectiveness of national disease control measures.

By registering their birds, keepers will ensure they receive important updates relevant to them, such as on any local avian disease outbreaks and information on biosecurity rules to help protect their flocks. This will help to manage potential disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease, and limit any spread.

The new rules cover owners of backyard flocks, birds of prey and pigeon fanciers, but do not affect caged pet birds (excluding any poultry species) kept entirely inside a domestic dwelling.

The requirements will be set out in legislation shortly and keepers will also be legally required to update their information on an annual basis.

In England and Wales keepers are encouraged to register their birds ahead of the legal deadline on 1 October 2024.

Further details available [here](#).

Government funding and grants for EV chargepoints

Launched in March 2023, the £381m LEVI Fund provides support for local authorities to increase public EV charge points, particularly for residents who don't have off-street parking available. The government [has announced](#) that 44 more local authorities have been approved to help residents charge their vehicles. Specific detail on which authorities have been approved have not yet been released.

Additionally, to further support electric vehicle (EV) drivers and families looking to switch to electric, the government is ensuring households without driveways or dedicated parking spaces can access the [electric vehicle chargepoint grant](#). The £350 grant has been widened to those who own or rent and have access to adequate street parking.

The grant funding will drive down the cost of EV ownership by providing up to 75% off the cost of purchasing and installing a chargepoint, and applicants must also have permission from their council to install a cross-pavement charging solution. Further details and how to apply online are available [here](#).

Boiler Upgrade Scheme Update

The Government has said heat pumps will be cheaper and easier for families to install as part of changes to the government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

They say that homeowners will have more choice in how they improve their home and will no longer have to install cavity wall or loft insulation to use the scheme, which offers grants of £7,500 off the cost of heat pump installation.

The updated information is available on the [governments energy efficient home website](#) which provides further information about actions that could make homes more energy efficient.

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

Kind regards

James