

### **Cllr Mason Billig updates full council on Norwich Western Link**

The Leader, Cllr Mason Billig, has updated full council on significant news regarding the Norwich Western Link.

Her speech covered the latest progress on the project, including a change in Natural England's guidance concerning barbastelle bats, which would mean Norfolk County Council would be unsuccessful in obtaining a license necessary to proceed the Norwich Western Link.

She highlighted that Norfolk County Council officers have been engaging with Natural England for over a year to seek their input on the scheme, and were confident that the relevant license could be secured before the change was issued. NCC's cabinet will be challenging this recent change of guidance.

Cllr Mason Billig's full update and FAQs can [be viewed here](#).

### **New national guidance set to improve the safety of people with care needs**

New fire standard guidance launched this week thanks to innovative work by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is set to improve the safety of people living at home with care needs.

The new guidance for the technology enabled care sector (TEC) focuses on improving the standards of community alarm provision for people who rely on it to live safely and independently at home.

It aims to ensure not only that people have a community alarm linked to a smoke detector fitted in their homes to protect them against fire risk, but that crucially the alarm is also monitored by an alarm receiving centre whose staff are trained to deal with calls and work with fire and rescue service first responders correctly.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service's Prevention team has been at the forefront of a national special interest group which developed the new guidance. More information [can be found here](#).

### **Special offer marks four years of Beryl in Norwich**

The UK's leading micromobility provider, Beryl, along with scheme partners Norfolk County Council and National Grid, are celebrating the fourth anniversary of their popular bike, e-bike and e-scooter share scheme with a special weekend offer for riders.

On Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 March, riders across all modes will automatically get their unlock fee waived and their first ten minutes free (one per user) as a thank you for helping to make the scheme a major success. This is for current users as well as new users who may wish to give them a try for the first time.

The scheme has had a significant impact in breaking down the barriers to active travel for people. It has, so far, amassed more than 1,328,000 journeys across nearly 3,885,000km -

the equivalent of nearly 100 trips around the Earth. More information on the scheme and offer [can be found here](#).

## **Improved bus services**

### **£1.50 fare caps in Great Yarmouth**

Residents in Great Yarmouth are set to benefit from a new capped fare on buses within the Yarmouth town zone thanks to money that Norfolk County Council secured from the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve bus services across the County.

The new capped fare which starts on Sunday 31 March will mean any single journey that starts and finishes within the designated zone will cost just £1.50. The zone covers all of Caister, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston, Bradwell, Belton and Burgh Castle and all three operators that serve the town, First, Sanders and BorderBus, have signed up to the scheme.

### **Improved services for Rackheath**

At the same time, residents living or working between Rackheath and Norwich are the latest to benefit from enhanced bus services thanks to money received from the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve bus services across the County.

From Monday 15 April, Konectbus will launch its 'City 5' route which will run between Rackheath and Norwich City Centre via Salhouse Road as an enhancement to their current 5B service. This will provide Rackheath with an improved overall service, serving new housing developments in Rackheath and along Salhouse Road as well as parts of Rackheath village currently unserved. More information on the service [can be found here](#).

### **Timetable changes mean better connectivity to National Trust attractions**

Following a regular review of bus services two popular National Trust sites in Norfolk will now receive a direct bus service.

These services come following our partnership with national organisation 'Good Journey' last year to promote car-free days out across the county.

Visitors will be able to get to the Blickling Estate on a Monday and Friday on a bus direct from Aylsham Market Place. The Sunbeam service 1A will depart Aylsham at 10:10 and 11:40am. The return journey will depart from the roadside in front of the hall at 11:50am, 1:28pm and 4:08pm.

Meanwhile Felbrigg Hall, Gardens and Estate will get a direct service from Sheringham (four buses per day) and Cromer (two buses per day) running Monday to Friday. These services are operated by Sanders as part of its scenic Coasthopper routes, using fully accessible 18-seat vehicles and travelling through the Felbrigg Estate itself. More information of the [new routes is available here](#).

## **Government updates**

### **Rural community green spaces to be rejuvenated through new government fund**

Grants of up to £75,000 will be provided to help communities to plant fruits, vegetables and trees, creating orchards and kitchen gardens for all to access and enjoy. Landscaping

projects could also create raised beds and improve areas to plant different flowers around village hall facilities and other community green spaces, making space for pollinators and nature to thrive.

Funding will also be awarded to support the expansion of natural play facilities which encourage children to spend more time outdoors, in addition to projects which focus on improving access to green spaces such as new paths and seating. To make the spaces more accessible to disabled people, funding will also be available for the creation of disabled parking spaces.

Defra is working with Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) to scope the Community Green Spaces Fund with applications expected to open in early summer.

The full Government press release can be [viewed here](#).

### **Museums and libraries receive £33m uplift through Cultural Investment Fund**

Nearly 70 museums and libraries across England are to receive £33m in the latest round of the Government's Cultural Investment Fund.

The funding will go to 26 museums and 43 library services to support upgrades, such as vital repairs, renovations and the development of digital infrastructure.

[Full details](#) and a breakdown of the funding [can be found here](#).

### **Councils get £295m boost for food waste collections**

Councils in England will be supported with up to £295 million in funding to introduce weekly food waste collections by 31 March 2026, Recycling Minister Robbie Moore announced today (Monday 25 March).

The new funding will cover new food waste containers for homes and specialist collection vehicles, targeted at local authorities that have yet to fully put food waste service in place.

The full Government announcement can be [viewed here](#).

### **£101 million investment to boost cycling and walking nationwide**

Communities across England will benefit from [£101 million of government funding](#) for high-quality walking and cycling routes, improving the quality of local public engagement for new walking and cycling schemes, free e-cycle loans, expanding trials of side road zebra crossings and developing new active travel routes in National Parks, government agency Active Travel England (ATE) announced on Saturday (23 March 2024).

Norfolk County Council has received £1.04m in capital funding as part of the Active Travel Fund 4 extension, and £656,244 in revenue funding as part of the annual capability fund.

More detail on the funding [can be found here](#).

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

Kind regards

james