

19/12/2024 NCC Update.

Norfolk County Council updates

Public Health campaign to launch on 30 December

Members are asked to support and promote Public Health's annual Ready to Change campaign that will launch on 30 December.

The campaign aims to encourage Norfolk residents to sign up to improve a health behaviour of their choice through the 30-day health challenge and to boost awareness of Norfolk county council's [Ready to Change](#) web pages.

Ready to Change is a simple online self-help tool using behaviour change science to support improvements to health.

It can help with:

1. Maintaining a healthy weight
2. Eating healthily
3. Being more active
4. Drinking less
5. Quitting smoking

Residents can choose one of the five behaviours and sign up to the challenge for 30 days. During this time, they will receive regular email updates full of expert advice, guidance and support to help them reach their health goal. Once they have completed their challenge, it is hoped they will continue to maintain the healthy lifestyle choice after 30 days. The tool is available throughout the year.

Members are encouraged to promote the campaign and the call to action: Ready for a new you in 2025? Sign up to the 30-day health challenge at www.readytochange.co.uk.

Big Norfolk Holiday Fun scheme

Bookings for the festive Big Norfolk Holiday Fun (BNHF) programme are now open.

Children across Norfolk can participate in a range of activities from 30 December to 3 January (excluding bank holidays) as part of the school Holiday Activities and Food scheme.

The programme provides free holiday activities for children and young people aged five to 16 and a healthy lunch for children eligible for means-tested free school meals.

Paid for spots also available for those not eligible for free school meals.

The scheme is delivered by Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Active Norfolk, and is funded by the Department for Education.

For more information and to register for the winter programme, visit the [Every Move activity finder](#).

Norfolk Fire and Rescue fleet

Four additional tactical response vehicles have rolled into Norfolk as the latest additions as part of a multi-million-pound investment by Norfolk County Council to modernise the fire and rescue fleet.

The four Toyota Hilux 4x4s enable firefighters to quickly attend isolated locations and deal with emergencies in spate weather conditions.

Further details are available [here](#).

Norfolk Devolution Update

On Monday, 16 December, the Government published their awaited [devolution white paper](#), setting out their proposals for devolving power to local authorities and for local government reform.

County council leader Councillor Kay Mason Billig said: "I agree with the Government that we need to look at the structure of councils and ensure we have a system that delivers the most efficient and effective services that are fit for the future.

"I am also prepared to support devolution and a Norfolk and Suffolk mayor, if that is the only way to get additional powers and funding to improve lives here.

"I am keen to engage with the Government and our district councils to consider what the future shape of local government in Norfolk should look like. Let's put the people before politics and attempt to design something that is the right shape and size to deliver efficient, accountable services to our residents."

National updates

Bird Flu (avian influenza) government update, new cases in Norfolk

The [latest government update on 17 December](#) has confirmed two further cases of bird flu in Norfolk.

Guidance on how to prevent bird flu and stop it spreading is available [here](#).

Provisional local government financial settlement

The government has announced their [provisional Local Government Finance Settlement](#) which they say will provide £69 billion for councils across the country.

In the provisional settlement the Government says that Councils in England will see on average a 3.5% real-terms increase in Core Spending Power with £2 billion additional grant funding for 25/26, including a £700m top up and more funding for social care.

The Government also says it will maintain the previous government's referendum threshold for council tax, at 3% with an additional 2% for the adult social care precept.

Full details and implications of the settlement for Norfolk are currently being assessed. The government is not expected to confirm the final settlement until early next year.

[The County Counties network \(CCN\)](#) say that whilst they welcome the further funding for social care, member councils are worse off than before Autumn Budget because the additional funding for councils is outweighed by additional costs.

[Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the LGA, said](#) councils of all types will continue to struggle to balance their budgets next year.

Devolution white paper

The Government has [published its anticipated English Devolution White Paper](#), which sets out their proposals for devolving power to local authorities and intention for all of the country to be covered with devolution arrangements. Headlines include plans to extend devolution to all parts of England, the creation of regional strategic authorities with additional powers and funding flexibility for mayors, and the replacement of two-tier local government with unitary authorities.

The White Paper also sets out some ground rules for local government reorganisation. These include the Government's wish for unitary authorities to be created in areas of 500,000 population or over.

Office for Local Government to be closed

The Government has decided to close the recently created Office for Local Government (Oflog) that was set up under the previous government.

The Minister for Local Government set out his decision in a letter to the Chief Executive of Oflog which was released at the same time as the announcement on the Government's English Devolution White Paper.

Clean power

The government has unveiled what it calls 'the most ambitious reforms to the country's energy system in generations' in its plan [Clean Power 2030](#). Their plan is intended to provide the foundation for the UK to achieve the target of clean power by 2030 that they say will create thousands of skilled jobs across the country, result in lower energy bills and greater insulation from fluctuating oil and gas prices, as well as playing a potentially significant role in climate action and efforts to achieve the UK's net zero ambitions.

Environment Agency update to national flood and coastal erosion risk assessment

The Environment Agency has published a research and analysis report [National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024](#) with new data showing 6.3 million properties across England are based in areas at risk of flooding from one or a combination of rivers, the sea and surface water.

Alongside this, the Agency has updated the National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM) for the first time since 2017. This provides the most up to date national picture of the current and future coastal erosion risk for England, using the best available evidence from the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

The proposed [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was introduced to parliament](#) on 17 December 2024.

The bill will introduce new registers to identify children who are not in school. With better knowledge of where children are, councils can potentially more easily deliver the support that's needed and ensure a high-quality education is being provided.

The bill will also pave the way for a unique identifier number for children across services – like the national insurance number works for adults.

Parents will no longer have an automatic right to educate their children at home if their child is subject to a child protection investigation or under a child protection plan. If a child's home environment is assessed as unsuitable or unsafe, local authorities will also have the power to intervene and require school attendance for any child.

Further information is set out in the [government's policy summary](#) which contains information on the measures within the bill.