



Latest update on events from your County Councillor Tom FitzPatrick

Fakenham Town Council

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Roundabout on A148

The new roundabout on the A148 which has been built to enable the housing and other developments to the north of town has now been open for a number of weeks, with the two minor roads joining it opened more recently. It has also eased previous traffic queuing problems at the Cherry Trees junction onto the A148 for traffic travelling from Wells which can now route via the roundabout.

Wells Road Bus Stops

I raised the delay in affixing the required signs following contact from a number of residents and the matter then being raised at the Town Council. The signs are due to be installed very shortly.

Norfolk County Council updates

Local Government Reform – County Council preferred option

County Cabinet Members have backed a report which says replacing Norfolk's eight councils with one would save £36.2m per year and deliver the biggest benefits to residents.

A special meeting of Cabinet was held yesterday (23rd June 2025) and a single unitary council model was selected as the preferred option. This will now be developed into a detailed proposal and submitted to the Government in September.

The Government wants to replace existing county and district councils in England with fewer, unitary councils - which deliver all services in their area. It has asked all councils (district and county) to submit options.

Norfolk County Council has studied data and evidence on the pros and cons of one, two or three unitary councils and asked the public what mattered to them about local councils and services. It is proposing that its preferred option is one unitary council, covering the whole area.

Having one council would cut costs, join up services for residents and ensure strong financial foundations, according to the draft options appraisal report considered by the cabinet.

The county council's report says that the key benefits of one council for Norfolk are:

- A single council would mean consistent services, delivered across the whole of Norfolk, with equal levels of Council Tax, service quality and services available, wherever you live
- It would save £36.2m per year, by cutting duplication, reducing the number of chief officers and councillors and having economies of scale when purchasing services. Start-up costs would be repaid in a year
- It avoids the risks and costs of splitting up complex, county-wide services like adult social services, children's services and highways - which would incur extra costs of between £20.4m and £33.6m per year, if there were two or three unitary councils
- It recognises the role of greater Norwich as an economic centre of activity for the whole county and highlights the importance of not creating an artificial boundary around it, which would stifle growth

The report's conclusion says: "We have an opportunity to create a new council for Norfolk which can:

- Be a powerful advocate for Norfolk - speaking up and influencing as one voice for local communities, creating more impact, both with any Norfolk/Suffolk mayor and with the Government, businesses and investors
- Be accountable - our residents would know that one council was responsible for all of the services, removing confusion. There would be one set of locally elected councillors, with one set of elections
- Be efficient - removing duplication and bureaucracy and joining up services to deliver better value for money
- Enable devolution - through a single, clear and concise set of strategic priorities for Norfolk and simplifying decision-making
- Avoid the use of untested models for delivering critical services to children, families, older people and some of the most vulnerable of our residents"

Now that a preferred option has been selected, there will be further engagement. The preferred option will be developed into a detailed proposal, to be submitted to the Government by 26 September. Ministers will take the final decision on what council structure to adopt.

For further details, see www.norfolk.gov.uk/lgr.

Norfolk County Council ranked among best for climate action

Norfolk County Council has been recognised as one of the top-performing local authorities in the UK, according to the latest Climate Action Scorecards.

Published by Climate Emergency UK, the scorecard evaluates councils on key areas such as green energy, sustainable transport, and environmental stewardship.

Norfolk County Council has achieved third place among all county councils in the UK, cementing its position as a national leader in climate action. Its overall score has improved by 3 percentage points since 2023, making it the top-performing council in Norfolk.

The Climate Action Scorecards are an independent assessment of local authority climate action.

The full results can be found at <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/>

Find out more about Norfolk County Council's effort to tackle climate change on the County website at www.norfolk.gov.uk.

Work begins on new supported housing in Swaffham for adults and young people with additional needs

A special ground breaking ceremony took place this week to celebrate the start of building work at a new supported living housing scheme in Swaffham. Golden Lane Housing (GLH), a national supported housing provider with more than 25 years of experience, was joined by Norfolk County Council who provided £2.35m of capital funding, development partners HBV Group, design and build company ATEL Design and Build, support provider Avenues Group, and local stakeholders.

Golden Court, the name of the development comprises of 16 new homes in Swaffham and is designed for people of working age with care and support need. It is part of a series of new homes to increase the availability of high-quality supported housing across Norfolk.

The 12 apartments and four bungalows were designed with accessibility, sustainability and independence in mind. The homes will provide safe, modern living

environments that empower people with additional needs to live more independently and be part of their communities.

The development is part of a wider initiative to expand supported housing across Norfolk. A similar scheme on Mousehold Lane in Norwich, launched earlier this year, is already progressing well and will serve as a benchmark for future projects.

Tenants will receive dedicated support from Avenues Group, a trusted specialist provider of services for autistic people, people with a learning disability or those with acquired brain injury.

Norfolk's market towns invited to apply for grants to attract more visitors

Projects that are aimed at increasing sales and footfall in market towns will be able to apply for grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 through an initiative being rolled out across the whole of Norfolk and meetings have already taken place in Fakenham.

Organisations and businesses are being invited to apply for the Love Your Market Town fund's Pride of Place grants to fund ideas designed to encourage people to visit and shop in their local towns more frequently. The scheme is supported by Norfolk County Council and the district councils and applicants have until 31 August to submit their ideas.

A diverse range of projects have already been supported through the pilot version of the fund. Florist Lydia Bustin will hold an exhibition at St Mary's Church in Attleborough later this month with five large-scale floral installations each depicting a significant era in the town's history.

Once ideas have been submitted, they will be reviewed by an independent panel and applicants notified of the outcome by Tuesday 30 September.

Applications are welcome from any local groups or business, but any activity must be a brand-new idea and should support multiple areas or services within a Norfolk market town. There is no limit to the kind of activities that can be funded but the idea must have a link to creating interest or increasing footfall in town centres.

More information can be found at - <https://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/love-your-market-town-pride-of-place-funding/>

More than £3.8m pledged to support apprenticeships through the Norfolk levy scheme

A supermarket assistant turned arborist and a retail worker who now works at a kindergarten are just two of the apprentices supported by a Norfolk scheme that makes use of businesses' unspent levy.

Over £3.8m has been pledged by over 30 donating companies in the first two financial years of Apprenticeships Norfolk's Levy Support Scheme, and more than £3.2m has now been transferred to more than 160 businesses - triple the original £1m target.

This has directly supported almost 300 apprentices from Level 2 through to Level 7 and equates to around £130k for receiving businesses in cost savings. A detailed impact report published this week estimates the economic return of supported apprenticeships to Norfolk to be a staggering £47m.

The aim of the Levy Support Scheme is to connect businesses to share unspent apprenticeship levy funds through levy transfers, and to offer a bespoke matching service and wraparound support to Norfolk employers.

Donating businesses have included Amazon, RWE, and Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, while Flagship, Norwich School of Hair & Beauty and Sheringham Little Theatre have been among those which have received funds.

The top three sectors by volume of transfers and apprenticeship starts in Norfolk are Health, Public Services & Care, Business Administration and Engineering & Manufacturing, with over £1m of funding supporting 'Health, Public Services & Care'. This includes employers in Primary Care, Secondary Care and Social Care in Norfolk.

Learn more about this scheme at - <https://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/love-your-market-town-pride-of-place-funding/>

National Updates

Future water shortage warning from the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has warned that England faces a five billion litre water shortage for public supplies by 2055 unless the Government takes urgent action. A further one billion litres per day will also be needed to generate energy, grow food, and power emerging technologies.

Climate change, population growth, and environmental pressures are all cited as contributory factors, with increased energy and food usage also requiring more water than is currently available. The Guardian suggests that the AI boom could also be

responsible, with significant uncertainties as to the scale since data centres do not currently have to report how much they are using to cool their servers.

Funding for flood defence projects

The Government is [launching](#) its largest ever flood defence initiative, committing £7.9 billion over the next decade to protect hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses across the country from increasing flood risks. The programme will combine traditional flood barriers with nature-based solutions, such as wetland restoration, with officials estimating that every £1 invested will prevent approximately £8 in economic damage to public services and infrastructure.

The investment forms part of the Government's broader Infrastructure Strategy and Plan for Change, addressing what Environment Secretary Steve Reed described as a "crumbling flood defence" that is in the "worst condition on record".

The government is also running a [consultation](#) on new proposals to introduce a simplified bidding process for flood defence funding, which runs until 29th July 2025.

Tom FitzPatrick

Chairman of Norfolk County Council

County Councillor for the Fakenham Division

(Dunton, Fakenham, Helhoughton, Hempton with Pudding Norton and Testerton, Raynham & Tattersett)