

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT JANUARY 2024



E-Newsletter Issue 01/2024

Steve with Tessa Matthews

at

Brafield Christmas Bazaar

Brafield Memorial Hall

9 December 2023

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NEWS REPORT JANUARY 2024

Monthly Highlights

My update for this month is as follows:

The A428 Speed Reduction scheme is subject to a Traffic Order, which Highways were hoping to complete by the end of the month. This project has been 'work in progress' for the last two years and the implementation is now in its final stage. There has been some slippage due to the inclement weather and once I have further news I will be in touch.

WNC was unable to start the works on the drainage issues in Hartwell in December as previously advised owing to the unprecedented issues with the recent bad weather and anticipates starting the main works on Ashton Road on 22 January 2024. This will include both the works near the Allotments and outside Sunnyside. If there are any amendments to this date, I will advise you at the earliest opportunity. The cutting back of the vegetation is still to be completed within the next 28 days. The recent flooding in Swyncombe Green is related to Ashton Road and will be resolved when the main works are completed in January.

A range of consultation and engagement activities are currently taking place across West Northants. I have summarised the main consultations in my monthly report, but please remember you can check new consultations, have your say, and sign up to receive alerts and updates via our Consultation Hub.

The consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2025 is open. This survey closes midnight 31 December 2023.

WNC are seeking to introduce a new Environmental Policy for Northampton Town Centre. The consultation opens 30 November 2023, closing on 28 January 2024. and will seek public opinion to shape parts of the policy around waste from businesses in the town centre and help the Council to understand if there are any obstacles that businesses face in respect of their waste collections.

The WNC Draft Budget Consultation for 2024/2025 closes midnight Tuesday 23 January 2024.

The deadline for comments on public e-scooters is Thursday 11 January 2024.

The £25.5m VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme is now open to help voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in England improve their energy efficiency. The scheme will be delivered by a consortium of partners, led by Groundwork UK and supported by Energy Saving Trust, Centre for Sustainable Energy and will remain open until August 2024.

Struggling households in West Northamptonshire can seek help from the Household Support Fund (HSF) in a variety of ways including:

- Financial support for those on a low wage
- The provision of food for children eligible for benefits related free school meals during school holidays.
- Financial grants for charities to extend the offer of support to families and individuals that they are engaged with and working with

See my monthly report.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is progressing proposals to relocate the majority of its office workers to its base in One Angel Square (OAS), Northampton. The Council will also continue to enhance its locality hubs at The Abbey in Daventry and The Forum, Towcester whilst also building on the success of its recent Customer Service drop-in events for residents of Brackley.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) launched on Tuesday, 28 November the Stage One consultation for the Community Governance Review that will run until Wednesday, 31 January 2024.

Following Government discussions, planning fees nationally increased on 6 December 2023. The Government have said they expect the fee increase to result in increased investment in the planning service hopefully leading to improved services across the country. See my Monthly Report.

WNC has launched a new campaign to encourage residents across the area to recycle their electricals. The project will encourage residents to recycle small domestic electrical items, including toasters, kettles, sandwich makers, hairdryers, irons and other items alongside their household collections. Small items of waste electrical equipment, which will fit inside a carrier bag should be placed on top of your domestic waste bin. See my Monthly Report.

There will be a short break in garden waste collections from 23 December until 5 January and crews will collect real Christmas trees between 8 and 19 January. Residents do not need a garden waste subscription to take advantage of this. People are asked to ensure trees over 6ft tall are cut in half, so they fit in the lorries safely. They can also be taken to the nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).

The sessions to help you find a new job will take place every 2nd Wednesday of the month between 1pm and 3pm in the Watermeadows Room at Towcester Library and will run until 14 February 2024. Dates of the sessions are:

- 10 January 2024
- 14 February 2024

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations that operate within the geographical area of West Northamptonshire and the Town and Parish Councils within the area are invited to submit an expression of interest form for its Community Transport Funding Grant. The closing date is 8 January 2024. See my monthly Report.

Voluntary and Community Sector organisations can apply for grants of up to £1,500 for projects which address a local community need while supporting the Council's vision. See my Monthly Report.

WNC has launched a Rural Business Grants programme to support businesses in the most rural parts of West Northants to diversify and grow. All projects and expenditure must be complete by 31 March 2025. See my Monthly Report.

Northamptonshire Police are recruiting Police community support officers. The application window opened 18 December 2023.

The Northampton Emergency Response Corps (NERC) are looking to recruit new volunteers. NERC brings together voluntary organisations and recruits individual volunteers from across the county to help where they can. NERC Reservists are called upon in times of need to assist in all kinds of ways. It could be a flood, a disruption in the energy supply, a health crisis or any other emergency.

I attended lots of events across the ward this month and I expect to attend even more in the lead up to Christmas. Please read about my activities in my Monthly Report.

There is a new Bike Scheme being piloted in a small number of schools initially, with the aim of rolling it out further if it proves a success. As part of the scheme, people with old bikes they no longer use are being asked to consider donating them by dropping them off at The Stable Block at Delapre Abbey. All bikes will be assessed to ensure they can be refurbished to a high standard and cost effectively before they are gifted to others. Not all bike donations may be accepted. We are particularly interested in XS adult bikes with 26" wheels and 24" wheeled children's bikes.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of my Monthly Report. Don't forget you can follow me on <https://www.facebook.com/stephen.clarke.31924>

And finally, "As we approach the end of another year, I would like to thank each of you for your support over the past twelve months. It is a great honour and privilege for me to work with all of you and I look forward to meeting many more community groups and businesses during 2024."

All the Best, Steve

The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 10 February 2024. In the meantime, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy 2024.



Well Done to Sarah Arrowsmith for organising 'An Advent Calendar Around Little Houghton 2023'. Each window will be lit up at 6.00pm each day in December, some residents are offering refreshments. The windows will then be on display for the rest of December. Maps are available in the Village magazine.

1. Park Cottage, 81 Bedford Road
2. The Old Vicarage, 5 Station Road – 6-6.30pm Mulled Wine
3. Church Farm, 5 Meadow Lane
4. 39 Lodge Road
5. The Nursery, 35 Bedford Road
6. 26 Meadow Lane - Chocolates for the children
7. The Beauty Whisperer, 1, Meadow Lane
8. The Malting House, 17 Station Road
9. Clifford Mill House and 2, Orchard Cottages (Wardle and Keach), Mill Lane -4.30-6pm Live Music at Clifford Mill House and a 'window' at no 2 Orchard Cottages
10. The Old Manor House, 25 Meadow Lane
11. Home Farm, 82, Bedford Road
12. The Old Woodyard, 39 Bedford Road
13. Stone Court, 34, Meadow Lane 7pm Mulled Wine during the Village Carol Singing
14. The Old Post Office, 54 Bedford Rd
15. The Old White Lion, 41, Bedford Road
16. 40 Lodge Road
17. 2, Nursery Close
18. The Post Office, 52 Bedford Road
19. 61 Lodge Road
20. 2 Lodge Road
21. 43, Meadow Lane
22. 3 Lodge Close Winter Solstice drinks 6pm
23. Grange Farm, 9 Station Road 6-6.30pm Mulled Wine
24. The Church Crib, Church opens all day, Crib Service 4pm

Piddington Tree Festival, 9 December 2023

On Saturday 9 December 2023, St John the Baptist Church, Piddington opened its doors for people to enjoy the Tree Festival. There were lots of Christmas trees filled with glittering lights and sparkly tinsel decorated by local groups, organisations, and individuals including schools. Mince pies & hot drinks were being served as I wandered around each of the displays. Father Christmas was ready to receive children's letters from 11 till 1pm on Saturday and each child was excited to see him.

There was a remembrance tree for people to hang cards on with the names of loved ones they wanted to remember. The Hackleton Preschool had a fine display of festive snowmen

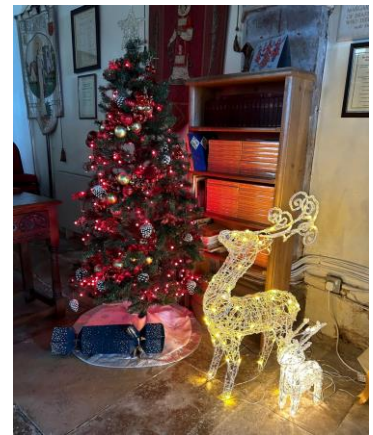


and reindeers. The Brownies and Rainbows had a film theme. The 'More than a Christmas Carol' tree with its J John Leaflets based on a tale by Charles Dickens December 1843 was an interesting addition. We had a Grinch and Frozen themed tree together with the 'Pine Cracker Hotel'. Then there was the Knitted Nativity Scene and the WI tree with its hand-made decorations of elves, lanterns and all that is festive. Hackleton CEVA Primary School had a tree entitled 'ELF'. Movie Night presented a Disney Theme. The Tuesday Club was all about 'The Snowman'. Merry Grinchmas with its sweet Candle sticks from the Webb family and finally Father Christmas complete with presents and a post box. What an impressive display! Well done to everyone who came together to make this event possible.

Brafield on the Green Tree Festival & Christmas Bazaar 9 December 2023



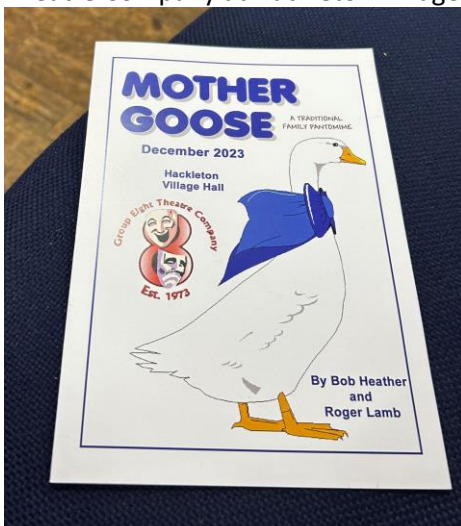
On Saturday 9 December 2023, I joined others at the St Lawrence Church Christmas Tree Festival before going to the Christmas Bazaar in the Sargeant Memorial Hall, Brafield on the Green afterwards. It was lovely to see so many folks out and about after visiting the wonderful display of



Christmas trees in the church. We had the St Peter's Church Cogenhoe, Prayer Tree, Woodford Family Tree, Little Houghton Playgroup with their craft kits to take home and many other entries. There were refreshments in the Hall with various stalls including Tombola, Raffle, Cake Stall, Jewellery and 'Bric a Brac'. This is an annual Christmas event raising funds to support the church whilst also providing an opportunity to get people in the festive spirit. We enjoyed the atmosphere as well as meeting those we hadn't seen for a little while. Besides buying enough cakes to add inches to my waistline, it provided me with the opportunity to try a game of 'Play Your Cards Right' with Tessa Matthews who I hadn't seen since last year at this time. Well done to everyone who worked so hard to make it a success.

Mother Goose Pantomime Hackleton 9 December 2023

On 9 December 2023, I attended the pantomime 'Mother Goose' which was performed by the Group 8 Theatre Company at Hackleton Village Hall.



Mother Goose is possibly the oldest story to be turned into a pantomime. It tells the story of Mother Goose and her magical Goose, Candy, who embark on an adventure filled with laughter, love and valuable life lessons. With an enchanted goose that lays golden eggs, Mother Goose has everything she could possibly wish for in Gooseberry Grove, except the one thing she really wants, to be beautiful. When she makes a deal with Vanity a little 'fowl' play means she gets a lot more than she bargained for. Panto is wonderful in that it rarely ever changes. Panto is Audience Participation, with phrases like "He's behind you!" and "Oh no he isn't!" "Oh yes he is!" shouted out with great regularity throughout the show. Then there is the absolute necessity of booing and hissing at the villain, in this case Vanity whenever she entered the stage. It was no different in Hackleton on 9 December 2023. Thank you to everyone who made the Panto a success and kept us

entertained from start to finish.

Piddington Carol Service, 10 December 2023

Residents of Hackleton, Horton and Piddington came together on Sunday 10th December at 6pm to fill St John the Baptist Church with the sound of Christmas. There were readings, carols, and seasonal music led by the Church Choir and 'Just Sing'. Following the Christmas tradition, the Carol Service comprised nine lessons and carols.

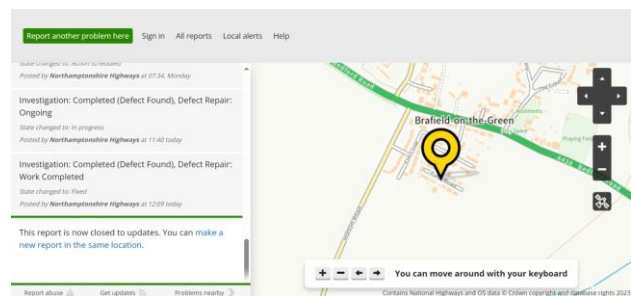
The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, which is loved by millions around the world, signals the true start of Christmas. It has been sustained for the last 95 years following the BBC's decision to begin broadcasting the service in 1928. Christmas Services started in Piddington on Sunday with nine lessons read by individuals representing different groups, including: The Church Choir, Hackleton CofE Primary School, 1st Piddington Brownies, Salcey Forest Lodge, Hackleton Parish Council, Just Sing Choirs, Group 8 Theatre Company, Hackleton & District WI and Rev Mark Hurley. They were interspersed with an eclectic mix of carols and seasonal music to suit old and young alike. A special thank you to Rev Mark Hurley, the Church Wardens and the Organist for their contribution and everyone who made the evening a success.



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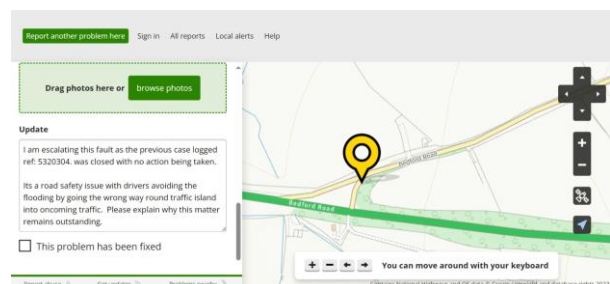
Furze Road, Brafield on the Green, Footpath Fixed 13 December 2023

I have just received a new update on the completely overgrown footpath in Furze Road, Brafield as the work has finally been completed.



Little Houghton Fix My Street 530512 escalated 14 December 2023

On 14 December 2023, I escalated this fault as the previous case logged ref 530512 was closed with no action being taken. It's a road safety issue with drivers avoiding the flooding by going the wrong way round a traffic island into oncoming traffic. After a second escalation, I managed to get this matter resolved.



Carols by Candlelight, Whiston 14 December 2023

On Thursday 14 December 2023 we attended the Carols by Candlelight at the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Whiston. This fine church is visible for miles around, set on top of a hill, in the middle of fields. It is illuminated at night with gorgeous views, but you can't get near with your car. You need to park in the village at the bottom of the hill and walk up the path stopping to catch your breath. But the struggle to get there was worth it.

It is a remarkably fine perpendicular church built to the orders of one man, Anthony Catesby (1500 – 1554) of the significant Northamptonshire Catholic family whose main seat was at Ashby St Ledger (and later “famous” for their involvement in the Gun Powder Plot). Anthony Catesby himself owned the Manor at Whiston and he built his new church adjacent to his house at the top of the hill (it can only be reached



up the steep path on foot). The most striking element is perhaps the iron and limestone striped tower which can be seen from miles around. This abuts the open airy nave with a roof decorated with both the Catesby Shield and their family symbol, a cat. There is an original font and benches.



It is all of the highest quality which suggests a master architect, probably London based. The most surprising thing about the church though is its date. It was built contemporaneously with the English Reformation. Later the estate here came to the Irby family, The Lords Boston, whose tombs particularly handsome - one by Nollekens - are to be found here, alongside that of Thomas Catesby by William Woodman, 1700.

Rev Morna gave us a warm welcome and introduction and a soloist started the evening with Once in Royal David’s City, before we all joined with the choir to sing the remainder of the hymn. We then lit our hand-held candles one by one across the entire church. A number of readings and well-known hymns followed until we finished the service with ‘O Come all ye faithful’.

Everyone stayed for refreshments after the service. This event which takes place once a year is well attended and 200 people were there that night.

Cogenhoe Community Christmas Lunch 18 December 2023



Earlier today, I attended the Cogenhoe Community Lunch. Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council hosted this popular event on 18 December 2023 at the Village Hall in York Avenue, where more than 40 diners enjoyed home-cooked turkey with all the trimmings, followed by Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce or Cream prepared by Wollaston School and served by a strong team of helpers.

A party spirit reigned throughout. Father Christmas put in an appearance and distributed sweets to everyone, and the Cricket Club provided lovely cards and chocolates.

After lunch Andrew Thornton a close-up magician went from table to table performing various tricks such as Rope and Restore, Red Sponge Balls, Spirit Matchbox and other stimulating illusions. A special thank you to all who

made the lunch possible and especially to Deborah Rush without whom the event would not have been such a success.

Coffee@Carey, Hackleton 20 December 2023

On Wednesday, 20 December 2023, in the midst of everyone’s final preparations for Christmas, I visited Coffee@Carey in Hackleton. It was a very busy morning as this



was the last day for the Café until they reopen on 8 January 2024. It gave me an opportunity to wish some of my friends in Hackleton a Happy Christmas and to chat to Rev Jennie Lee about her planed services over Christmas and New Year

Little Houghton Parish Christmas Lunch 21 December 2023

On 21 December 2023, I attended the Little Houghton Parish Christmas Lunch. After a short service from Rev Irene, we all tucked in to a two-course meal of Roast Turkey and all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding and tea or coffee. It was a special time of celebration in the truest spirit of Christmas. The lunch was marvellous, and all the helpers were so kind and helpful. A special thank you to Joy Mayhew and her team for organising such a special lunch. If you would like to join the next Parish lunch, then let Joy know if you would like to come on 01604 890498.



Revd Mark Hurley Appointed to Living Brook Benefice

On 28 November 2023, I was privileged to attend the Licensing of Revd Mark Hurley as Assistant Priest in the Living Brook Benefice with responsibility for Piddington & Quinton Churches at St John the Baptist Church, Piddington.

The Revd Mark Hurley joined the Diocese of Peterborough from the Diocese of Bath and Wells where he was Priest in Charge of Bishops Lydeard w Lydeard St Lawrence, Bagborough, Combe Florey and Cothelstone. Bishops Lydeard is a village and civil parish located in Somerset, which is five miles (8 km) north-west of Taunton. Mark was licensed by the Rt Revd John Holbrook, Bishop of Brixworth and Acting Bishop of Peterborough.



During his introduction the Bishop reminded everyone that Stir-up Sunday which is an informal term for the last Sunday before the season of Advent gets its name from the beginning of the collect for the day in the Book of Common Prayer, which begins with the words, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people...", but it has become associated with the custom of making the Christmas puddings on that day. Then, he turned to Mark and said that he expected him to do great things by stirring things up in the Living Brook Benefice!

Congratulations to Mark on his appointment and I look forward to working with him on Community matters as appropriate. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the evening possible.

Outstanding Ofsted Report for Yardley Hastings Primary School

Congratulations to Louise Brown and team at Yardley Hastings Primary School on your recent excellent Ofsted report. For you and your team to achieve outstanding across all categories is quite an achievement and one in which you all are no doubt immensely proud.

Inspection of Yardley Hastings Primary School

Castle Ashby Road, Yardley Hastings, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN7 1EL

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Predisposition, predetermination or bias

As Chairman of the South Planning Committee, West Northamptonshire Council, I may be involved in the decision making for any subsequent planning application. Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011 provides that a decision maker is not to be taken to have had, or appeared to have had, a closed mind when making the decision just because:

- (a) the decision maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision maker took, or would or might take, in relation to a matter; and
- (b) the matter was relevant to the decision.

This provision does not change the law on bias and pre-determination which means that Committee Members must still take planning decisions with an open mind and having considered all relevant material planning considerations. The safest course is for Committee Members to avoid making public statements (including expressing views in emails) as to their support for or opposition to any application which would indicate they had made up their minds before the formal consideration of the application at the meeting. If a Committee Member has made such a statement, they must be satisfied that they can still consider the application with an open mind and are prepared to consider any new matters or any new arguments in favour of or against the proposed development until the decision is made otherwise, they should not take part in any decision on the application in question.

On the grounds of the above, it would not be appropriate for me to attend Parish Council or Community events which seek to take a decision regarding the outcome of a planning application as I must keep an open mind on this matter so as not to preclude me from participating in any future planning decisions.

REFUGEES

Resettlement: Homes for Ukraine scheme Expression of Interest Form

Are you interested in becoming a host on the Homes for Ukraine scheme? We are currently looking for new hosts to help support Ukrainian guests whose original accommodation has not worked out, or where their original hosts, due to changes in their personal circumstances, are unable to continue to offer the use of their home.

Due to more visa applications being approved, further hosts are needed as new arrivals are looking to make West Northamptonshire their temporary home. Please complete the online questionnaire to tell us whether you are interested in becoming a host; the type of accommodation being offered, and some further information about you. We will use the information gathered to help us continue to support Homes for Ukraine programme in West Northamptonshire.

If you need any further information, please contact us on resettlement@westnorthants.gov.uk



Before you complete this questionnaire, please read the Homes for Ukraine privacy policy which will tell you how the information you give us will be managed.

The scheme opened on 6 January 2023 and closes on 31 December 2023.

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/it/expression-of-interest-homes-for-ukraine/consultation/subpage.2022-10-05.8708209571/>

CONSULTATIONS

A range of consultation and engagement activities are currently taking place across West Northants. I have summarised the main consultations below, but please remember you can check new consultations, have your say, and sign up to receive alerts and updates via our Consultation Hub.

School Admission Arrangements 2025

The consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2025 is now open. West



Northamptonshire Council co-ordinates an annual school admissions consultation on behalf of all schools in the council area. The aim of the consultation is to raise awareness of any proposed changes to school admission arrangements and ensure that these are subject to appropriate consultation for those schools taking part.

This survey closes midnight 31 December 2023.

Please visit the Consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2025 intakes overview for further information for schools taking part and ways to feedback.

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../school.../>

Have Your Say on New Tree Strategy

Work to create a new comprehensive Tree Strategy for West Northamptonshire is well underway - and the views of town and parish councils will be vital in its development. The Strategy will provide a clear framework for managing trees on council land as well as a strategic and proactive vision and action plan for maximising the benefits of trees into the future.



The views of people and organisations across West Northants will be vital to ensuring our approach reflects the needs and aspirations of our communities. So, to mark National Tree Week 2023 (November 26 – December 4), we launched a public consultation giving town and parish councils - together with members of the public and other stakeholders - a chance to have a say. The survey runs until 31 December, and we would welcome the support of Town and Parish Councils in sharing and promoting.

this consultation widely, to ensure we hear from a wide range of voices. The results of your feedback and wider public consultation will help to inform a more in-depth engagement opportunity in the New Year, when we will be hosting some workshops. Please look out for further details on this soon.

Background

The new strategy is the result of a recommendation made by our Tree Policy Task and Finish Group, which was approved by Cabinet in autumn last year. The Tree Strategy will support the goals of our Corporate Plan and provide a clear framework for strategic and operational decision making across the Council, our partners and the wider community. The strategy seeks to:

- Maximise the benefits of trees to people, biodiversity, and achieving net zero.
- Maximise the cross-functional benefits of trees, including nature recovery, flood risk management, and aspirations for quality development.
- Support efficient and effective decision-making.
- Facilitate Improved understanding of trees, their function and role among those involved in managing and caring for trees in West Northamptonshire.

If you have any questions regarding the survey questionnaire or Tree Strategy please contact TreeStrategy@woodlanddwelling.co.uk

New Environmental Policy for Northampton Town Centre

Businesses and residents are being asked for their thoughts on proposals to introduce a new Environmental Policy for Northampton Town Centre. West Northamptonshire Council is seeking to implement a policy which will help improve environmental standards and set out the way that businesses handle their commercial waste. This will be trialled in central Northampton and will then be considered to be rolled out



across the wider West Northamptonshire area. The consultation opened 30 November 2023, closing on 28 January 2024. and seeks public opinion to shape parts of the policy around waste from businesses in the town centre and help the Council to understand if there are any obstacles that businesses face in respect of their waste collections. This will form part of a wider project of engagement with Northampton town centre businesses. All organisations have a responsibility for ensuring that any waste arising from their activities is handled, stored

and disposed of in a responsible manner as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (section 34) and the Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991. After consultation, a waste policy shall apply to the town centre of Northampton for the management of all commercial waste generated by businesses.

The consultation runs from Thursday 30 November until midnight 28 January 2024 and people can view the plans at:

Give us your views on the draft Northampton Town Centre Environmental Policy at:
<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../northampton.../>

Feedback from the consultation will be collated and analysed and will help the council to prepare and shape the Northampton Town Centre Environmental Policy which will be considered by Cabinet in May 2024. Prior to coming into effect, the Council will be working with businesses within the town centre to do a soft launch of the policy, in doing so we will be able to advise and signpost businesses for any assistance they may need to be able to work within the policy.

West Northamptonshire Parks Visitors Feedback Survey

The WNC Parks Visitors Feedback Survey opened 1 October 2023 and closes 31 December 2023. West Northants Council manages over 160 parks and open spaces. Parks and open spaces provide vital opportunities for recreation, contributing to the physical and mental health of the people of West Northamptonshire as well as being important for habitats, supporting local wildlife and biodiversity.

We would like to know your thoughts on certain major parks that exist in West Northamptonshire. If you would like to comment on more than one park, please complete a separate survey for each park. The parks we are gathering feedback on are:

- Abington Park, Northampton
- Becketts Park, Northampton
- Borough Hill, Daventry
- Brackmills Country Park, Northampton
- Bradlaugh Fields, Northampton
- Brampton Valley Way Linear Park (Northampton to Market Harborough)
- Brixworth Country Park
- Cracks Hill, Crick
- Dallington Park, Northampton
- Daventry Country Park
- Delapre Park, Northampton
- Hunsbury Hill Park, Northampton
- Lings Wood & Billing Arbours Wood, Northampton
- The Racecourse, Northampton
- Upton Country Park, Northampton
- Midsummer Meadow, Northampton
- Watermeadow, Towcester

The feedback you provide will be used to help us to identify improvements and understand what is working well. Contact parks.ddc@westnorthants.gov.uk

WNC Draft Budget Consultation 2024/2025

At their meeting on 12 December 2023, the Council's Cabinet approved plans to consult on WNC's Draft Budget for 2024-25. This consultation closes midnight Tuesday 23 January 2024.

If you would like further information on the proposals and to give us your comments, please visit:
<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/cet/budget-2024-25/>

If you have any queries, comments or would like a copy of the consultation questionnaire in another format you can contact WNC by email, post, or telephone. Contact details are as follows:



Email address: haveyoursay@westnorthants.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 126 7000

Postal address:

Budget Consultation Response
West Northamptonshire Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Street
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Have your Say on Public E-Scooters

People across West Northamptonshire are being asked to share their views on the public e-scooters, to support Councillors who are scrutinising the effectiveness of the scheme. As part of our Scrutiny process, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is seeking people's feedback on the scheme, which is currently operated by Voi and WNC in the Northampton and Moulton areas.



The Committee is looking for evidence into the opportunities and issues around the e-scooter scheme, which has been running in the town since 2020. At their December 4 meeting, Scrutiny members decided to establish a task and finish group on the issue, to include WNC colleagues and representatives from various organisations to establish a course of action. Residents are now being encouraged to give the Committee their views on the e-scooters scheme by completing a short

survey on the Council's website:

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../your-views-on.../>

The deadline for comments is Thursday 11 January 2024. The outcomes of the scrutiny review will then be presented to Cabinet at a future meeting. Cabinet will take the report into account when considering if the trial will continue for a period of another two years, and if so on what basis.

FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Household Support Fund

West Northamptonshire Council have received further funding from the Department of Work and Pensions to support eligible residents until 31 March 2024. The Household Support Fund will be distributed in a variety of ways including:

- Financial support for those on a low wage
- The provision of food for children eligible for



- benefits related free school meals during school holidays.
- Financial grants for charities to extend the offer of support to families and individuals that they are engaged with and working with
- Working with our trusted partners to identify and support vulnerable families directly.

Please see below for further eligibility criteria for each scheme and note that the criteria and type of support offered for each round of funding for the Household Support Scheme can be different.

Further support can also be found on the following web pages:

Cost of living support <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support>

Government Cost of Living Hub <https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living>

Working on a low wage

Support is available for West Northamptonshire residents earning less than £400 per week. This is not intended as emergency support payment.

All households who make an application will be sent information on how to access further support. Please follow the link below to view the eligibility criteria and application form. Only 1 application can be made per household. Residents who have applied for previous rounds of funding will be able to apply again (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria). The application may be closed at any point. The website will be updated with details, to ensure funds are made available throughout the year up until 31 March 2024.

We are currently aiming to process applications within 3 weeks. (However, we currently have some payment delays which are due to recent publicity of this support payment, we are seeing an increase in applications. This may increase the processing time from 3 weeks to 5 weeks. To avoid further delays in processing and making payments, please be patient and wait for us to contact you.)



Make an application for the Household Support Fund

[https://northamptonshireself.achieveservice.com/service/Apply for the Household Support Fund 2023 to 2024 WNC](https://northamptonshireself.achieveservice.com/service/Apply_for_the_Household_Support_Fund_2023_to_2024_WNC)

Please do not submit duplicate applications or contact us to check the progress of your application if it is within this timescale. This will not speed up your application.

Support for families in receipt of free school meals

We are continuing to fund holiday food vouchers as part of the Household Support Fund (provided by the Department for Work and Pensions). This is for all students eligible for benefits related free school meals. All eligible children will be allocated a supermarket voucher (valued at £15 per student, per week). These will be distributed to parents/carers by the child's school or the free school meal team at the start of each holiday (May 2023, Summer 2023, October 2023, Christmas 2023, February 2024, Easter 2024, subject to individual school holiday dates). Additionally, for the Summer 2023 school holiday, we funded a single £15 School Essentials voucher for each student eligible for benefits related free school meals. This voucher is to be used to support purchases of school essentials such as uniform, clothing and stationery at selected retailers.

Community funding

The Household Support Fund is also supporting community groups. This allows us to provide additional grants and financial support to charities and services offering the following.

- Money and Debt Advice

- Energy Saving Measures and Guidance
- Food Aid, such as Food Banks and Community Larders
- Welcoming Spaces

This additional funding will allow many of our Voluntary and Community Sector Partners to expand the reach of services that they already offer.

For more information on where to find additional support on these services, please see the Cost-of-Living Support pages. <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support>

WNC Unveils £143m Capital Programme for 2024/25

In a bid to strengthen local communities and pave the way for a more sustainable future, West Northamptonshire Council is set to invest an extra £28 million in capital funding next year.



Schemes due to progress in the year ahead include improvements to leisure centres, a new Red Route Road safety scheme and minor adaptations to vulnerable adults' homes to support independent living as the Council sets aside a total of almost £143m in the capital programme for 2024/25 – an increase of over £28m compared to the previous year.

This capital funding pays for projects including new infrastructure, buildings and equipment and is separate from the revenue budget the Council spends

on the day-to-day running of services, which includes funding from Council Tax.

As part of this commitment, in 2024 WNC are proposing to allocate £4 million towards heat decarbonisation initiatives across three key sites: Danescamp, Abington Park Museum, and Everdon Field Centre. This investment will aim to enable these sites to generate a portion of their electricity consumption onsite, resulting in long-term cost savings and a reduced carbon footprint. WNC are also investing in large-scale solar technology to reduce emissions and dramatically cut energy bills as it works towards its commitment to be net zero by 2030.

Alongside these projects, the draft budget also includes investments in a range of areas including continuing the highways maintenance and improvement programme – as well as an additional £1.9m from Government towards road repairs and replacing the publicly-accessible computer network across our libraries.

Beyond the capital programme, the Council remains committed to residents' well-being, addressing health inequalities, and supporting communities through the challenges posed by the ongoing cost of living crisis, with initiatives funded through government public health funding.

WNC considered the full range of General Fund Capital proposals during their Cabinet meeting at The Forum, Towcester on Tuesday, 12 December 2023.

WNC Outlines Future Office Plans

Plans to bring more council teams together into a central office and make further improvements to customer service offerings at localities across West Northants are set to move forward in the year ahead.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is progressing proposals to relocate the majority of its office workers to its base in One Angel Square (OAS), Northampton.

The Council will also continue to enhance its locality hubs at The Abbey in Daventry and The Forum, Towcester whilst also building on the success of its recent Customer Service drop-in events for residents of Brackley.

The moves follow a thorough review which identified the Council has significantly more office space than it requires, along with a need to change how it uses its buildings to better support residents.

Council staff currently based in the modern part of the Guildhall in Northampton and some teams currently working from The Forum in Towcester will relocate to OAS in stages during 2024 and early 2025 and Northampton's One Stop Shop will also move from the Guildhall to the lower ground floor of OAS, resulting in a more modern and accessible service for residents.

The Council will retain the older, historic Guildhall and it will continue to house the Coroner's Office, committee and meeting rooms.

The plans follow the successful relocation of services from Lodge Road, Daventry in the summer, and development of the nearby Abbey Centre into a locality hub including Adults, Children's and other frontline WNC services joining community and voluntary partners.

Once services have relocated from the modern part of the Guildhall during 2024 and 2025, the Council will be looking at disposal options for these surplus offices as it seeks to achieve efficiency savings for taxpayers. The historic part of the Guildhall is not included in these proposals.

Northampton Town Council will continue to operate from the old part of the Guildhall under the current lease arrangements which run until April 2025. WNC will then require the space to accommodate its committees, meetings and other services and will be working with the Town Council to explore suitable alternative locations for the authority when the current lease ends.

Further financial information around the future office proposals will be presented to Cabinet members at their meeting in January.



REGULATORY SERVICES

Voter ID

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to produce accepted photographic identification when voting in person at a polling station. This new requirement applied for the first time in England from the 4th May 2023 to coincide with local elections taking place in some areas. Your photo ID proves that you are who you say you are when voting and prevents someone else from taking your vote.

Whilst there are currently no scheduled elections taking place this year in the West Northamptonshire electoral area, it is important that residents are aware of these new requirements as they will be in force for any future local elections, by elections or referendums that take place. From October 2023, the Voter ID requirement will be in place for UK Parliamentary General Elections. By elections and General Elections can occur at any time and with short notice.

Acceptable forms of Photo ID

You may already hold an accepted form of photo ID. You can use expired photo ID, as long as the image within the ID remains a good likeness to you. You only need to bring one of the documents to the polling station to vote in person, but it must be the original document.

You can use:

- Passport (UK, EU/EEA, Commonwealth issued)
- Driving licence (including provisional licences) (UK, EU/EEA issued)
- Blue Badge



- Certain older/disabled people concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

For more information and the full detailed list of acceptable voter ID, please visit the Electoral Commissions or call the helpline on 0800 328 0280.

Apply for the free Voter Authority Certificate



If you don't hold an accepted form of photo ID, or you think that your photo ID no longer resembles you, you can apply for a free Voter ID document known as the Voter Authority Certificate. You must be a registered voter to be issued with a certificate, and you can apply for the certificate at the same time as registering. To apply, you will be asked to provide your full legal name, address, date of birth and National Insurance number. You will also need to provide a recent passport style

photo of yourself. This can be taken on a digital camera or camera phone.

Visit the UK Governments website to complete an application form online and upload your photo directly to your application.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority...>

If you do not hold accepted photo ID, you can also apply for the free Voter Authority Certificate.

www.westnorthants.gov.uk/VoterID

WNC Launches Stage One Consultation for Community Governance Review

Residents, parishes, and businesses in West Northants are invited to actively participate in shaping future electoral and governance arrangements for parishes within the area.



West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) launched on Tuesday, 28 November the Stage One consultation for the Community Governance Review that will run until Wednesday, 31 January 2024. This consultation aims to seek views and proposals from residents, parishes, and stakeholders regarding existing parish boundaries, numbers of parish councillors, and potential changes to parishes.

Before starting the consultation, the Council sought requests from parishes that wanted to

make certain changes to their parish arrangements. The outcome of this pre-review consultation, in addition to the recently concluded Local Government Boundary Review, has determined the identified parish areas for inclusion in this consultation. Proposals from the Stage One consultation will be refined through the Stage Two consultation launching in April 2024. New parish arrangements resulting from this review will take effect at the May 2025 local elections, providing long-term benefits for the community and ensuring an efficient and representative governance structure.

For more information, please visit the Community Governance Review webpage:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../community-governance...>

Residents can submit their feedback online or request a paper form by contacting cgrconsultation@westnorthants.gov.uk.

Illicit Vapes Seized from Northampton Stores

A joint operation between Northamptonshire Police and West Northamptonshire Trading Standards saw more than £9,000 worth of illicit vapes seized in Northampton last week. On Thursday, November 23, the teams visited two stores in

Wellingborough Road and Abington Square, seizing £4,650 worth of illicit vapes from one and £4,570 worth from the other.

Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant Aaron Dilley said: "Whilst licensed, regulated vapes can be a useful tool to help adults quit smoking, the illicit vape trade is exceptionally dangerous - often containing harmful, psychoactive substances that can have serious health issues. These vapes often make their way into the hands of young people who have no idea how dangerous they really are.

By taking these items off our streets, we are not only safeguarding people from consuming dangerous substances, but also disrupting serious and organised crime, which is often associated with these types of seizures." We are committed to working collaboratively with Northamptonshire Police to prevent illegal vapes and cigarettes from being sold to young people and residents across the area illegally. Our trading standards team are working proactively with the police to tackle this head on, and I am pleased that together we've prevented £9,000 worth of illegal vapes being sold to our residents.



£2.7m Illegal Vapes Seized from Northampton Warehouse

Acting upon information from Essex County Council Trading Standards that a consignment of non-compliant disposable vapes had been shipped to a warehouse in Moulton Park, Northampton, a team of Trading Standards Officers from West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) visited the site to inspect the vapes. They found that the vapes were illegal because of the tank size being far larger than allowed under



current safety legislation and therefore seized them to be detained within the warehouse.

On Friday 1 December WNC successfully obtained a forfeiture and destruction Order at Northampton Magistrates Court after a Judge found that the vapes did not meet safety provisions. This Order authorises Trading Standards Officers to destroy over £2.7 million worth of vapes from the warehouse and be compensated for the cost of the destruction.

Presenting the case for WNC, Susan Desfontaines of the in-house legal team informed the Court that compliant disposable vapes must contain no more than 2ml of liquid, however some of the devices inspected at the warehouse of Tongda Distribution Ltd contained up to 20ml of liquid - 10 times the legally permitted volume, breaching the safety legislation.

Information provided by the owners of the warehouse, revealed that the goods had no UK based owner and were imported to be sold onto UK based sales and distribution agents.

As part of our commitment to tackle youth vaping and the sale of illegal vapes, WNC is leading a multi-agency approach to work collaboratively on this issue. A summit will be held in February with a range of organisations and partners to move forward on this issue.

Northampton Restaurant Guilty of Hygiene Breaches

A Northampton restaurant has been fined £33,097 for hygiene breaches following successful prosecution by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) after health protection officers found poor hygiene standards during a routine visit. At Wellingborough Magistrates Court on Tuesday 5 December, the food business operators of Kerala Hut, Wellingborough Road, Northampton, pleaded guilty to 12 charges of breaching food safety and hygiene regulations. Prosecuting the case from the WNC in-house legal team, Susan Desfontaines informed the Court that the case followed a routine inspection and subsequent revisits carried out between 28 September 2022 and 31 March 2023 when WNC officers found that the kitchen was not kept clean, equipment in contact with food was in a filthy condition and/or was in poor repair, food was not being protected



from contamination, and adequate facilities for cleaning hands had not been provided. In addition to this, Hygiene Improvement Notices that had been served on the company, had not been complied with. The food business operator, Kerala Hut Ltd, together with the three company directors, were charged with 12 counts of breaching the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013. The company and the three directors received fines totalling £33,097 (which included victim surcharges of £3,742) and were ordered to pay the prosecution costs of £3,147.87 in full.

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To find out more about food hygiene ratings across West Northamptonshire download the 'West Northamptonshire Council' app from the app store on your mobile phone or tablet.

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

RSN 2024 seminar programme

The online seminar programme for 2024 is now open for booking. Events will be taking place as follows:

- Rural net zero – 31st January
- Rural connectivity – 28th February
- Rural fair funding – 27th March
- Rural economy – 24th April
- Rural transport – 22nd May
- Rural affordable housing – 26th June
- Rural planning – 23rd October
- Rural health and care – 27th November

PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Appeals

Since my appointment, I have kept you informed as to the progress of the major Appeals in South Northamptonshire. The update for this month is as follows:

Determined or Cancelled:

- Hartwell, land North of Ashton Road-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land South of Station Road-Dismissed
- Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton-Dismissed
- Greens Norton, land off Mill Lane-Withdrawn
- Milton Malsor, land East of Lower Lane-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land off Northampton Road -Dismissed.
- Yardley Gobion, land at Asana Lodge Appeal-Inquiry 8 February 2022 for 3 days-Cancelled
- Yardley Gobion, land East of Northampton Road-Allowed.
 - WNS/2022/0904/MAO Manor Oak Homes, Outline application for sixty-seven homes, Land at Stratford Road Deanshanger-Withdrawn
 - WNS/2021/0450/MAF Barwood Homes, fifty-two new dwellings with associated open spaces, roads, and drainage infrastructure. Land South of The Wharf, Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire-Hearing-Dismissed
 - WNS/2022/0071/MAO Outline for 32 dwellings on Land off Blenheim Rise, Kings Sutton Hearing -Dismissed

Appeals to be determined

- WNS/2022/1525/FUL Full Planning Permission Land North of Whiston Road, Cogenhoe, Northamptonshire Cogenhoe. Outline planning permission sought for up to two self-custom build dwellings, with access for consideration. Full planning permission sought for restoration works to existing brick lean-to structure.

Levelling Up Bill Receives Royal Assent

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has received Royal Assent and is now law, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has announced. In a statement released 26 October 2023, DLUHC said that the new laws would: “speed up the planning system, hold developers to account, cut bureaucracy, and encourage more councils to put in place plans to enable the building of new homes.”

The measures in the Act will change the planning system in many ways, including:

- Local planning authorities are required to have a design code in place covering their entire area.
- the Act will replace the current section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regimes with a new Infrastructure Levy.
- the scope of local plans will be limited to ‘locally specific’ matters, with ‘issues that apply in most areas’ to be covered by a new suite of National Development Management Policies
- The ‘duty to co-operate’ will be



- dropped, and time limits prescribed for different stages of plan preparation.
- Planning authorities will have the power to instigate auctions to take leases on vacant high street properties.
- Authorities will no longer have to maintain a five-year supply of housing land if they had an adopted local plan.

More information about the bill can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/.../new-laws-to-speed-up-planning...>

National Changes to Planning Fees

Following Government discussions, planning fees nationally increased on 6 December 2023. The Government have said they expect the fee increase to result in increased investment in the planning service hopefully leading to improved services across the country.



Town and County Planning Regulations were approved and made on 8 November bringing in regulations to do the following:

- 1) Increase planning application fees by 35% for applications for major development and 25% for all other applications.
- 2) Introduce an annual indexation of planning applications fees, capped at 10%, from 1 April 2025.
- 3) Remove the fee exemption for repeat applications (the 'free-go').
- 4) Reduce the Planning Guarantee for non-major planning applications from 26 to 16 weeks.
- 5) Introduce a new prior approval fee of £120 for applications for prior approval for development by the Crown on closed defence sites.

Applicants will still be able to benefit from a free-go if their applications have been refused or withdrawn in the preceding months, as long as all other conditions for the free-go are met.

WNC planning officers are working with all key partners and customers to notify them of the national changes to fees and charges. WNC will be making arrangements to update our website to reflect these changes to planning fees, and it will be completed by the go live date for the new fees on the 6 December.

HOUSING

New Housing Allocations Scheme

Care leavers and veterans are among those to benefit from new housing allocations scheme in West Northants. Housing allocations

People with real housing needs including members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families, care leavers, and victims of domestic abuse will benefit from a new housing allocations scheme approved by Councillors at West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) Cabinet meeting on 14 November 2023.

The scheme, which will be adopted from April 2024, has been developed following a 10-week public consultation and will provide an aligned and harmonised approach to ensuring that the area's valuable housing resources go to those most in need.

The scheme will operate through a choice-based lettings system which enables residents to make choices about which properties they



are interested in, making the provision of social housing fairer, clearer and more consistent across the West Northamptonshire area.

The proposed Scheme sets out who is eligible to apply for social rented housing, how the Council will prioritise applicants, and the basis on which accommodation will be allocated. It will replace the existing schemes operating in Daventry, South Northants, and Northampton and recognise people with a local connection to West Northants by residence, employment or close family in the eligibility criteria.

There are currently over 4,000 applicants registered to and active on the existing three housing allocations scheme across West Northamptonshire. The new scheme has the potential to have a positive impact on existing and future applicants' prospects of securing accommodation by providing a greater number of available properties across West Northamptonshire.

Existing housing register applicants will be contacted in the coming weeks with further information on what will be required to register for the new scheme.

The Housing Allocations Scheme Cabinet Report can be viewed on the Council website.

<https://westnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments...>

Proposed Adjustments to Housing Budget

West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) Cabinet met to discuss plans to consult over housing budgets for 2024/25.

Funding from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is spent on maintaining and improving social housing, including building new homes. Within the HRA there are plans to invest £54m in social housing during the next financial year, which forms part of a total five-year capital programme amounting to £279m. Also built into the plans is investment in decarbonisation which is estimated to impact on 500 homes.

The investment in 2024-25 includes:

- £7m on external improvements
- £11m on internal works improvements
- £2.3m on disabled adaptations
- £24m on new build programmes and major projects; and
- £10m on buying back social housing and for spot purchases of suitable properties.

The Council has submitted a draft budget proposal for 2024-25 proposing an increase of 7.7% in accordance with the Government's amended Rent Standard, with effect from 1 April 2024.



This is expected to see the average rent increase from £103.79 to £111.79 per week. The proposals continue to provide support to tenants facing difficulties with the increase in rent, through a hardship fund. In addition to this, the majority of tenants also receive financial support from the Government towards rent payments.

At their meeting on Tuesday, 12 December, Cabinet members agreed the draft proposals, with a six-week public consultation launching the following day (13 December) enabling residents to have their say ahead of the final budget going to Full Council in February.

The full 2024/25 draft budget reports are available on the Agenda for Cabinet, Tuesday 12 December 2023.

New Northampton Council Housing Development

Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) welcomed a visit from the new Minister for Housing, Lee Rowley, alongside Alex Burghart MP to one of their council housing developments in Northampton on 11 December 2023. Steve Feast, NPH CEO, along with Stuart Timmis, WNC Executive Director of Place, Economy and Environment, gave Mr Rowley and Mr Burghart a tour of the site on New South Bridge Road, which will comprise of 28 one and two-bed flats when finished. The

ministers were delighted to see positive progress on this site which will deliver much-needed council housing on behalf of WNC.



The New South Bridge Road development is of particular interest to Mr Rowley, due to an essential funding contribution received from the Department of Levelling Up and Communities (DLUHC) via the One Public Estate programme. The funding awarded to WNC was through the Brownfield Land Release Funding (BLRF) scheme which aims to unlock council-owned sites for housing by addressing site viability issues. Prior to commencement of the building works last year, the former brownfield land had been

unused for several years and the funding from the DLUHC enabled extensive remedial works to completely clear the site and make it suitable for development into housing. The development is currently on schedule and predicted for completion late summer 2024. To find out more about Northamptonshire Partnership Homes, visit www.nph.org.uk

ENVIRONMENT

West Northamptonshire Urged to Recycle Electricals

West Northamptonshire Council has launched a new campaign to encourage residents across the area to recycle their electricals. HypnoCat, the Recycle Your Electricals pink fluffy cat, will be inviting residents to recycle their electricals and he will appear in social media advertising across Northampton.

The project will encourage residents to recycle small domestic electrical items, including toasters, kettles, sandwich makers, hairdryers, irons and other items alongside their household collections. Small items of waste electrical equipment, which will fit inside a carrier bag should be placed on top of your domestic waste bin as follows:

- Daventry area residents: on top of the black general waste bin,
- Northampton area residents: on top of the blue-lidded recycling bin
- South Northamptonshire area residents: on top of either bin

Residents can recycle their single use vapes at Household Waste Recycling Centres or return them to where they purchased them from. Please do not place them with your household waste collection.

This is one of over 40 UK projects funded by Material Focus, the not-for-profit organisation leading the Recycle Your Electricals campaign who have provided £20,000 worth of funding. This will lead the way in West Northamptonshire, joining other projects around the country in making it easier for 10 million UK residents to recycle their electricals. The aim of the nationwide Electricals Recycling Fund is to significantly reduce e-waste and its environmental impact by making it easier for consumers to recycle their electricals. The projects that have been funded by Material Focus include a variety of recycling methods, from kerbside



collections to more drop-off points in schools, community centres, and bring banks. Overall, there will be over 400 new collection points plus kerbside collections for 5.5 million UK residents.

Recycle Your Electricals research has shown that 80% of consumers believe recycling is a good thing, and many of us already recycle things like paper and plastic. Research has also shown that most of us have unwanted electricals we want to get rid of, even if it's just a drawer of cables - millions of electrical items are hoarded in UK homes. And yet 39% of people bin electricals rather than recycle them because they think it's simply too hard to recycle. The aim of these projects is to overcome these issues by making it easier to recycle electricals.

More information about recycling electrical items and batteries can be found at www.westnorthants.gov.uk/weeerecycle and www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk

Christmas Waste & Recycling Arrangements

WNC has sent out communications about this year's waste and recycling arrangements. Here are the arrangements for the coming Christmas and New Year period:

Collection Day changes

Due to the public holidays, some properties had a change in the day of their collections over the festive period. Parish areas in the Towcester and Brackley (former South Northants) area:

Collections due on Tuesday 26 December, took place on Saturday 23 December. All other collections took place on their normal days.

Garden waste

Those subscribed to the service were advised of a short break in collections from 23 December until 5 January.



Real tree collections

Crews will collect real Christmas trees between 8 and 19 January. Residents do not need a garden waste subscription to take advantage of this. People are asked to ensure trees over 6ft tall are cut in half, so they fit in the lorries safely. They can also be taken to the nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).

Food waste

Food waste bins will continue to be collected on their usual weekly schedule. A range of food items can be recycled using the service, including leftover raw and cooked foods, including veg peelings, eggshells, out-of-date food, plate scrapings, solid fats, meat and fish bones. People should not put any liquids in the caddy.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Household Waste Recycling Centres will close on New Year's Day.

Additional recycling

Anyone with more recycling than their bin can handle, can put it in clear or white plastic bags, or in cardboard boxes, and present it alongside your recycling bins or boxes. It can also be taken to the nearest HWRC.

Keeping on top of collections

Downloadable bin calendars with information about arrangements for the different areas across West Northants are available online. We are also urging people to download the free West Northamptonshire Council app from the Apple or Google Play stores. The app allows people to check their collection day and set up reminders, so they never forget to put their bins out.

More information is available at westnorthants.gov.uk/christmas

Reconnect with Nature

Local people and organisations have been working together to help make it easier for people in Northampton to reconnect with nature.

The Active Quarter partnership is made up of landowners, charities, businesses, community groups and organisations including West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), who have been working together to improve access to the vast greenspace between the south of the town centre, Brackmills Industrial Estate and Hardingstone.



This outdoor space offers a range of attractions including the award-winning Northampton Bike Park, the Washlands Nature Reserve and miles of footpaths through nature.

Since 2020, residents have played an active role in improving these spaces for the community including curating a range of new workshops and classes at Delapr  Abbey and completing public research projects with the University of Northampton to help demonstrate the need for more accessible footpath signage in Delapr  Park.

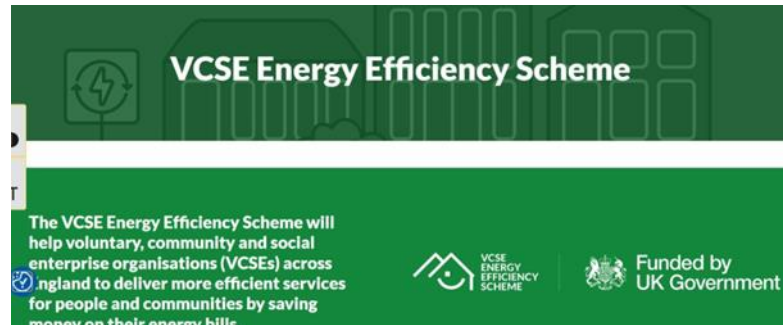
This month, the vision for the Active Quarter takes another step forward with the launch of a brand-new website designed to make finding and enjoying great outdoor spaces in Northampton even easier. The website includes an outdoor spaces directory and information about street lighting, seating, public toilets, and other useful details as well as upcoming health and wellbeing events and updates about improvements in the area.

In keeping with the aims of the Active Quarter project, the website will grow and evolve over time with residents being invited to contribute. Visitors to the site can complete a website feedback form, contribute to a map of outdoor seating in the area and share any local community groups they are part of. Find out more by visiting the new Active Quarter website.

DCMS Launch £25m Energy Efficiency Scheme for Voluntary & Community Sector

The £25.5m VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme is now open to help voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in England improve their energy efficiency. It is part of the package of over £100 million of support announced by the Government at the Spring Budget to help frontline delivery organisations with the increased cost of living. The scheme will be delivered by a consortium of partners, led by Groundwork UK and supported by Energy Saving Trust, Centre for Sustainable Energy, Locality and Social Investment Business. The VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme will have two elements:

- Eligible organisations can apply for the cost and delivery of an independent energy assessment. This will help identify how to reduce bills through measures such as improving or installing new energy features in the building, or changing how energy is used. These assessments will be useful to organisations whether or not they apply for the second element. This part of the scheme is now open for applications, and will remain open until August 2024
- organisations with an energy assessment may then be eligible to apply for a capital grant to install the recommended energy efficiency measures in their premises. This part of the scheme will open to applications in January 2024 and grant rounds will also run until August 2024.



An eligibility checker is available at www.groundwork.org.uk/vcseenergyefficiency. To apply for an independent energy assessment, organisations must:

- be based and operating in England.
- be a VCSE organisation, with charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes.
- be delivering frontline services or operating a hub (a building) that delivers multiple frontline services.
- be able to evidence the need for energy efficiency support.
- be able to evidence that they are financially sustainable.
- not be suitable for blended finance or loan support through other energy focused schemes.

Additional eligibility criteria will apply to the capital grants. These criteria will focus on the organisation's relationship to their building and the evidence and impact for the requested energy measures.

Priority will be given to organisations:

- for whom energy is the biggest concern
- directly supporting individuals and communities with critical needs, particularly those related to the rising cost of living.
- with a turnover of less than £1m a year.

Practical support will be available to help organisations manage capital installation projects. All measures will need to be installed and paid for by March 2025. More information on the scheme, including application guidance, is available through the following link.

You can find out more at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vcse-energy-efficiency-scheme>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Local Area Partnership Rural East

The last meeting of the Rural East LAP meeting took place 12 December 2023 at 1.00pm. There will be a task group including people in WNC to talk through issues concerning the Towcester Youth Coffee House. Towcester Youth Club is running sessions at the Coffee House as well as the Community Centre. They

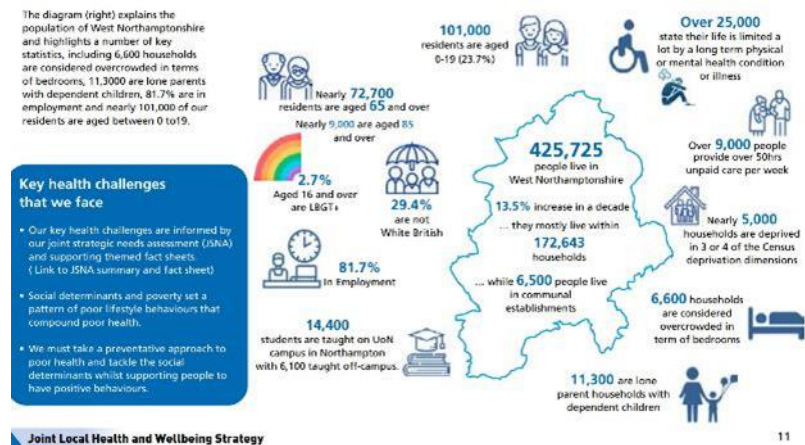
also offer a sports outreach at the Leisure Centre. We've had positive conversations and MIND is offering the Coffee House free of charge for youth activities. We're in the process of getting that all set up. The Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council case study is available for information and as part of the update on the Good Neighbour scheme, it will also be uploaded on the LAP website once operational.

LAP Plan on a page

The LAP Plan on a page will be used as a vehicle to show the work that is happening across the local area in one page when talking to organisations. The plan on a page is a snapshot in time. It is work in progress and it's there to identify the priorities the LAP is working on, how the priorities were decided upon, how they contribute to the 10 Live your best life ambitions and highlighting the partnerships around the task groups that will be set up to work on the delivery against the priorities. At each meeting there will be a highlight report from each priority area that will be fed back into the LAP so that people can see how we are progressing. The plan on a page won't go on the website, due to accessibility issues, it is for presentation purposes. We have looked at all the data and local insight to help identify the LAP priorities:



Our current position in West Northamptonshire



- Priority one is older people. Higher proportion of people aged over 75 years is higher than the England average. People aged 65 and over at 20%, which is higher than the English average. Pensioner households are numbered at 5,503, up 2.9% at 23.7% which is above the England average of 22%. We have identified issues which are loneliness particularly with older men, rural health, and social isolation. A men's mental health group has just been set up and we are exploring undertaking a pilot using assisted technology to help ease feelings of isolation. We are also looking at providing Digital skills support at Cogenhoe. The Deanshanger task group has been set up, we'll have more information on these moving forward.
- Priority two is families. The Forum in Towcester, being a central, modern setting was identified as an opportunity to host a pilot Family Hub within the community. We have identified issues for lone parents, employment services, welcoming spaces, and poor mental health. The Towcester Youth Club which has been set up by South Northants Youth Engagement will support a girl's sport project in Cogenhoe, and lastly work is taking place to develop a teen clinic working in conjunction with a local school.
- Priority three is transport services, which includes rurality and social isolation, because we know within the rural areas it's difficult to access transport and this can be a barrier to

accessing services. Under the transport and services priority, we have parish councils, chatty cafes, and mobile community assets. We've got the SNVB working with corporates to increase the numbers of volunteer drivers. We've got the welcoming space pilot. There is capacity for more task groups to be set up depending on the outcome's future discussions. We've got two of West Northants biggest initiatives within this LAP. It will have the only Family hub now, and it is also the pilot site for the roll out of the welcoming spaces.

The Active Life Strategy was adopted by the Health and Well-Being Board in September. Therefore, all partners that sit around the board have committed to ensure that this is utilised in their own organisations, staff, and the people that they'll work with. Each LAP might end up with its own active lives' framework bespoke to the needs of the local population.

Sport England are keen on the work that we are doing and having an active life strategy within the LAPs. We'll be looking at what we can do for active lives with the people that are suffering dementia. We'll also make sure that dementia work flows through all nine LAPs. The aim is for all the Welcoming Spaces to become dementia friendly.

Welcoming Spaces Update

The pilot in Towcester library is going well. We've got our six-month pilot with our Employment service and Community Law that started a couple of weeks ago will carry on until next March. We'll review, monitor, and see what the feedback is, how many people came, is it worth trying to get them back in again. Emma Parry is in conversation with adult social care as they are aligning their teams with the LAPs, and it is hoped they will conduct some outreach sessions in the Welcoming Space. We've gone live with the re-registration of the Welcoming Spaces. Across West Northants we've got 76 and we've got 15 in the Rural East. We've got Cogenhoe parish council, Towcester library, Deanshanger library, Roade community library, Yardley Gobion Chapel, Renew café in Towcester, Tove Beneface, Blisworth Baptist Church, Bugbrooke, Hackleton Coffee@Carey, Nether Heyford and Grange Park Parish Council. There are a lot more spaces in this area to work with and provide the wrap around support, there are grants available. LAP members can help promote the grants and help with re-registration of the spaces. Emma Parry will send the Welcoming spaces update to the LAP members.

Men's Mental Health Group

Emma Parry and Rachael Byrne are working with Renew Wellbeing Café and Northamptonshire MIND to set up a men's mental health support group. The LAPs advice and guidance is needed. There is a draft consultation looking at Men's mental health which includes data on their ages and post codes. We want to gauge what the actual need is out there. What is the likelihood of someone talking to a family member? Will they want to talk to a professional? How would they prefer to receive support for their mental health visit? and where would they feel most comfortable in getting that support? We hope to have it running early next year once the draft consultation is finalised, it will be sent out to all community groups, Welcoming Spaces, partners, parish councils and sports clubs in the Rural East. The aim is for the consultation to last 6 weeks. Charlotte Morris offered to ask for the consultation to be put in Northamptonshire Talking once finalised. LAP members can give their comments on the Men's mental health group update when the information is finalised and sent. Name suggestions for the men's mental health group can be sent to Emma Parry and Rachael Byrne. Actions: Emma Parry to share the Men's mental health group draft consultation to the LAP.

LAP Website

The webpages will be bespoke to each LAP geography, but they will also contain generic information across all LAPs. There is a post code search and an interactive map, information on places to visit, spotlight on key projects, information on the priorities the LAP is working on. Information will also be included on how we're working together and the difference we are trying to make, what's happening in the area - including new stories and case studies. Different news stories will appear every month and will be kept up to date on the website. We have all the partners logos within the websites and the people and organisations working together. Get in touch – We are working on a generic e-mail address which will be monitored by the LAP administrators to review emails and signpost where appropriate. We are planning to have an events calendar that will be populated using a Microsoft form which anyone can fill in if there's an event happening in their LAP. Decisions: We need case studies, stories, events, photos, and narrative for the LAP website. The aim is to launch the LAP website in January 2024.

Family Hub development

One of the main workstreams in the children & young people priority is the family hub development which is happening in Towcester and then expanding to other areas in West Northants. Family Hub is part of the Start for Life programme, and its purpose is to improve access to services for all families, children and young adults in West Northants that need support during their child's journey from 0-19 years and up to 25 for young people with SEND. The programme covers the transition to a family hub model and the development of key services to improve the access for families and children, improve connection between families, professional and service providers, and to put relationships at the heart of family support. The principle of family hub is about understanding the importance of early help and prevention. The key concept around family hubs for West Northants Council is about reaching young people or families before they get to a crisis point because they were not aware of existing services that they can access. The purpose of the family hubs is to get all these services to the families and to enable them to access the support needed at the earliest point of when symptoms start arising. It's a prevention and early intervention concept to tackle through the family hubs programme. It is a whole family approach about the relationship support that we'll be providing for families. It's got a central access point to all the services and it's about how we integrate these services that we commission across the system. For example, WNC commission the 0-19 service including the health visiting and school nursing service. There are other services that are not working jointly that we can bring together.

Family hubs have got three main arms of programme/services, the first one is the physical offer, which is the building where the family hub will be located. It is the 'one stop shop' offer, the physical side where families could go in and access all the services that they need. There is the outreach offer, which is about how do we as a family hub, reach out to those families that are not coming into the hub, and not accessing the services where they need it. Then, there's the digital offer, which is the virtual offer that is available to families to get knowledgeable about all the services available for them, shared system, and visibility of data support. It's about how do we develop our website and all the information that we have online, to ease the way for families to know about these services.

Examples of the services available in a family hub are GPs, youth work, emotional well-being support, safeguarding support, housing support, school nursing, community safety and police, registrars and libraries. Towcester has been chosen as the first area in West Northants where we want to pilot the family hub.

West Northants did not receive funding from central government to implement family hubs. WNC have been told they could be receiving funding for family hubs during the next round in 2025.

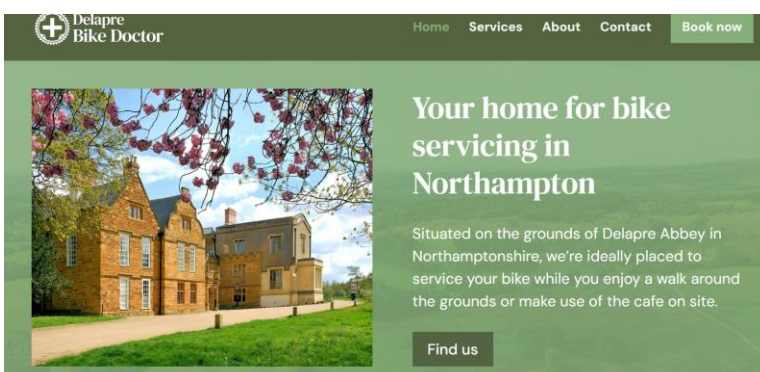
In the Forum the children's side of the library will be re-purposed into a family hub. The floor plans are currently being worked on. The purpose of it is to have this one stop shop where services like 0- 19 service, strong start service, maternity services will be available there, offering support for families and children. Because this is the first pilot in West Northants, we are looking at some of the existing services that we already commissioned and how we use these services in a more effective and efficient way to work together.

This is a phased approach, the aim is around December, just before Christmas to launch Towcester Forum as the first family hub. During December promotional work will take place, ensuring all the information on services is available on the website page, as well discussions with partners who will run services from the Hub. Phase one is 3 months, phase two will be another three months and then phase three is the last three months. By August, we will have a full family hub offer running. We are going to have a workforce team, and a family hubs team that will sit in Towcester to help with project management support. Phase two is where we start recruiting the permanent team and family hubs lead that will be running the family hub in Towcester. Phase three is when we have a full family hub offer running and that's when we will be able to take the learning, look at the outcomes and start lifting and shifting this model to other areas of West Northamptonshire. Some of the services currently being offered at the Childrens Centre in Towcester may re-locate to the Forum to form the core offer of the Hub.

A steering group will be created to drive the development work of the Family Hubs. Rachael Byrne and Karen Rolfe to be included in the steering group membership. Work of the steering group will feed into the Families priority for this LAP. Public Health have regular contract review meetings with the 0-19 service and Strong Start. Discussions have been started with maternity services about offering some session from the Hubs. Racha Fayad is currently developing a business case for WNC Transformation Team with the aim to have funding agreed for project management support around development of the Family Hubs. As well as a Family Lead for each Hub. Actions: Racha Fayad and Rachael Byrne to add family hub in the steering group for the Rural East. Racha Fayad to check whether there is a plan to re-locate the children's centre into the Hub and feedback to Karen Rolfe.

New Bike Scheme

Pupils from a West Northamptonshire School have received bikes for Christmas as part of a scheme to support children's mental wellbeing and grow a love for cycling and being active.



Nine students in Years 5 and 6 at Daventry's Monksmoor Primary School received the free bicycles under the pilot initiative, which aims to encourage young people to take part in physical activity, enjoy the outdoors and connect with friends. By having access to these bikes, will help to support our younger generation to consider active travel options that are local to them, as well as prompt enjoyment through using more

sustainable modes of transport. All the bikes were donations gifted to the project and refurbished by The Delapre Bike Doctor, Steve Adams, making them into their good-as-new condition, before presenting them to the children. The pupils also received safety equipment including cycle helmets, as well as cycling proficiency lessons from Space 2 Talk, insight into cycling safely through Northamptonshire Police and a short course in basic bicycle maintenance from The Bike Doctor.

The pilot scheme is a partnership effort which has stemmed from the Rural West Local Area Partnership, serving the communities of Daventry East & Woodford, Daventry West and Weedon. Partners involved include West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), Daventry Town Council, The Delapre Bike Doctor, Space 2 Talk, Northamptonshire Police, Goodwill Solutions, Daventry Community Shed and Olleco.

This project is the first of its kind in West Northamptonshire and is being piloted in a small number of schools initially, with the aim of rolling it out further if it proves a success. As part of the scheme, people with old bikes they no longer use are being asked to consider donating them to the cause in the New Year. Anyone who would like to support the initiative can donate their old bike by dropping it off at The Stable Block at Delapre Abbey, Tuesday to Friday between 10am to 3.30pm, or on Saturdays between 10am to 1pm starting from the New Year.

All bikes will be assessed to ensure they can be refurbished to a high standard and cost effectively before they are gifted to others. Not all bike donations may be accepted. We are particularly interested in XS adult bikes with 26" wheels and 24" wheeled children's bikes.

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

School Admissions for September 2024

Parents and carers of children living in West Northamptonshire can apply for a reception place in a primary or infant school, a year 3 place in a junior school, or a Year 7 place in a secondary school, for the September 2024 intake. Parents and carers will be able to apply up until midnight on the closing dates for both Primary and Secondary applications. Parents and carers can apply for a place in reception if their child will be four years old on or before 31 August 2024. The closing date for applications for places in reception (and year 3 at junior school) is 15 January 2024 at midnight.



All applications, whether postal or online, must be received by the closing date to be considered as on time. Late applications will not be processed until after National Offer Days and will be processed in monthly rounds. All on-time applicants will receive an offer of a school place on National Offer Days – 1 March 2024 for secondary places and 16 April 2024 for reception/junior school places.

Applicants will then be provided with information on the next stage of the process. There is a separate application process for children who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, details of which can be found on the SEND admissions page. It is a big decision choosing the preferred school places for your child or children, whether it is for reception, year 3 or year 7 – all just as important but equally exciting for your child / children in the next step of their education journey. If you are unsure of how the process works or are not sure where to start, please do look at the information available on our website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/school-admissions>

New SEND Facebook

Local Offer West Northants have launched their new Facebook page, where you can find news and activities for families of 0-25s with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) in the area.

<https://www.facebook.com/LocalOfferWN>



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Monthly Drop-in Sessions to help find a new job.

Residents in West Northamptonshire are invited to attend a range of free monthly drop-in sessions to access the help they need to identify sustainable, local opportunities and benefit from dedicated support to land their dream job.

The drop-in sessions will be led by West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) Economic Growth and Inward Investment team alongside employment support partners including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Jobcentre Plus and many more.

The sessions aim to help as many people as possible become employment ready and find the best job for them, with support including job searching, updating CV's and cover letters, any training needs along with mental health support, volunteering, money advice and more.

The service is supported by many local businesses including Screwfix, Paisley Pear, Sainsbury's and Whittlebury Hall.

The sessions will take place every 2nd Wednesday of the month between 1pm and 3pm in the Watermeadows Room at Towcester Library and will run until 14 February 2024. Dates of the sessions are:

- 10 January 2024
- 14 February 2024

More information about the employment support service can be found on the WNC website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/free-employment-support>



Mysteries Unearthed at Northampton Market Square

In September this year, fragments of medieval shoes, textiles, pot fragments, dating back to the 13th-14th century, animal bones and wood, and the remnants of several structures were uncovered underneath Northampton Market Square. Since these discoveries the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) has been monitoring the historical finds that have been taking place on the site of the Market Square regeneration.



On 26 October MOLA made an incredible and exciting discovery whilst proceeding with the groundworks for the surface renovation program of the Market Square. During the surface works an underground cellar was exposed at the site and with archaeological supervision of the excavation of a shallow trench for electrical cables along the western perimeter of the site, the structure was

revealed. The unearthed cellar is part of the wider cellar network.

The row of buildings between the Market Square and the Drapery, including the cellar, was constructed after the Great Fire of Northampton in 1675, possibly during the 18th and 19th centuries. During the excavation, several post-medieval sherds also were found, providing valuable insights for dating purposes.

While opening the trench, one of the blocks was damaged, allowing a rare peek inside this piece of Northampton's history. To much surprise, the entire cellar was filled with concrete almost up to its ceiling. The only visible feature beyond the concrete layer was a small fragment of a possible door frame leading into the Market Square building.

Fragments of the textile material, sometimes used to stop spillage during the concreting process, were also found on the opposite wall, suggesting that some relatively recent work on this cellar was undertaken, possibly dating back to the 1970s when parts of Market Square were redeveloped.

The discovery of this hidden cellar not only adds a new chapter to Northampton's history but also underscores the intricate layers of the Town's past waiting to be uncovered.

The Market Square regeneration is just one part of the Northampton Forward Town Investment Plan to transform Northampton town centre. The works on Market Square will create an accessible space for everybody including families, tourists, young professionals, and the elderly. The newly rejuvenated area, opening in the summer of 2024, will offer new permanent market stalls for traders, high-quality seating and planting, a flexible event space, and a new water feature to activate the area. To find out more about this exciting regeneration project and other transformation projects happening across Northampton visit the We are Northampton Website. <https://www.wearenorthampton.com/>

WNC Launch Grants for Volunteering Opportunities

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has launched a second round of grant funding which aims to create additional volunteering opportunities in West Northants.

The Community Funding grants project has received £47,000 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).



Voluntary and Community Sector organisations can apply for grants of up to £1,500 for projects which address a local community need while supporting the Council's vision to make West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work, visit and thrive.

Free 2 Talk CIC was recently awarded funding to support new supervised volunteers work which aims to improve outcomes across academic, behavioural, emotional, and social areas of young people's lives in Northampton.

Northamptonshire Mind also received a grant to deliver their Rural Outreach Project which will recruit supported volunteers to provide community outreach in areas identified as being at the highest risk of social exclusion. In addition, Renew169 Wellbeing Café in Towcester received funding to enable the recruitment of volunteers to support safe space sessions, which aim to reduce loneliness and isolation in people with emotional or mental health difficulties.

Further information and the full criteria for applications can be found on the WNC website and in the Council's Community Funding Grants Framework. If you would like to speak to the Community Funding Grants Team about your project or your eligibility to apply for this grant, email: communitygrants@westnorthants.gov.uk including your contact telephone number.

Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Hackleton and Grange Park
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk



Future of Greyfriars

At the crossroads between the Market Square and Roadmender, between the Cultural Quarter and the Racecourse, Greyfriars sits empty. Click here:

<https://ampnorthampton.com/?fbclid=IwAR20gyYG1gwYB46Mp94PGhVhk622R38Y6MV907EY0nGNLHTg-KC-kgv85k#home>

to learn more and give us your views.

Digital Phone Switchover

The UK's telephone network is changing. Between now and 2025 most telephone providers will be moving their customers free of charge from old analogue landlines over to new upgraded landline services using digital technology. This means services that rely on the old landline system such as home phones and



healthcare devices will be switched over.

How will it affect me and what do I need to do? Your telecoms provider should contact you before the switchover to check in and discuss what you need to do to make sure your service isn't affected.

If you have an internet connection, the change may be as simple as plugging your phone into your broadband router rather than the socket on the wall. If you have other devices connected to your phone line, such as alarm systems, your alarm service provider might need to upgrade your device to make sure it is compatible.

In an emergency - Digital landlines cannot carry a power connection, so in the event of a power cut they will not work. If you have a mobile phone this can still be used to contact emergency services. If you have no other means of calling the emergency services, your telecoms provider will offer a solution to allow calls to be made to emergency services.

Phone scams

The transition from analogue to digital technologies has created new opportunities for criminals to target vulnerable residents. For example, criminals may use phishing emails, fake websites, or phone calls to trick people into providing personal information including bank account details or passwords.

Ways to report concerns and stop fraudulent activity related to digital switchover include:

A call blocking unit will plug into your existing landline phone and filters out unwanted calls, giving you the peace and quiet you deserve. These are especially useful for vulnerable residents.

Reporting scams or fraudulent activity - report any scams or fraudulent activity to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via their website. <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and...>

Report to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133

Further Information Visit the Government website for further information on the digital phone switchover. <https://www.gov.uk/.../uk-transition-from-analogue-to...>

WNC Launches Grants to Support Rural Business

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has launched a Rural Business Grants programme to support businesses in the most rural parts of West Northants to diversify and grow.

Utilising £919,772 of UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF), this programme will provide up to 50% of equal match-funding of between £2,500 and £100,000 to businesses located in Defra's designated rural areas within West Northamptonshire.

Grants can be used to support the building and equipment of capital projects, for example converting a farm building for an alternative business use such as a business hub, wedding venue or for hospitality; growing rural tourism; the acquisition of food and drink processing equipment; or the purchase of commercial grade equipment to increase productivity. All projects and expenditure must be complete by 31 March 2025.

To secure a grant, applicants will need to check the eligibility criteria on the WNC website and complete an online application form. This will be appraised with a final decision made by a Grant Decisions Panel which will include representatives from both local businesses and the Council.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund is a 'top up' to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund provided by Defra and managed for the Government by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to support the Government's levelling up agenda. It is intended to provide investment for identified rural areas facing additional challenges and can be used alongside UKSPF funding.

The Council has appointed Ngage Solutions Ltd to manage the Rural Business Grants programme. Ngage Solutions has worked with rural businesses in West Northamptonshire for over 7 years through the LEADER project. Full details of all UKSPF and REPF funded projects in West Northamptonshire can be found on the WNC website.



TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

WNC Community Transport Grant Scheme

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has launched a new £950k grants scheme to create new and support existing community transport initiatives in West Northants, as well as support the expansion of current grant funded transport projects and services.

This grant funding will be available over the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 for eligible community transport projects from 1 April 2024, following £547,181 funding from Central Government via the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and £60,337 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), in addition to £342,000 of Council funding.

The grant funding will be allocated to community transport projects and services that meet identified needs and assist the Council in achieving one or more of its corporate priorities, including improving accessibility to employment, healthcare, leisure and education services; addressing unmet needs where there are gaps in the commercial bus network provision; and connecting rural communities to the locations they need to access.



The types of community transport projects or services that will be considered for the grant funding will also play a crucial role in enhancing the wellbeing of individuals and communities by addressing the various transport-related challenges they face including:

- Increasing accessibility and inclusion by providing access to transportation for individuals who may have limited mobility, disabilities, or live in areas with inadequate public transport options.
- Reducing social isolation by enabling independent living especially among young people, older adults, and individuals with disabilities who may otherwise be confined to their homes due to a lack of suitable transport options.
- Providing access to healthcare by providing reliable community transport that is critical for individuals to access healthcare services.
- Enabling safer transport by prioritising safety and the training of drivers, community transport providers will understand their users' needs to make transportation a safer option, especially for vulnerable individuals.
- Supporting economic opportunities by helping people access employment opportunities, education and training and contributing to economic development, economic empowerment, and self-sufficiency.
- Assisting in the maintenance of sustainable communities by connecting rural communities to the services they need and providing dependable travel resulting in well-connected places.
- Providing environmental benefits by using more sustainable and eco-friendly vehicles or limiting car mileage, contributing to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and a cleaner environment helping us to reach net-zero by 2045.
- Relieving traffic congestion by providing alternative transportation to reduce the number of individual vehicles on the road, thus alleviating traffic congestion in urban and suburban areas.
- Providing a cost-efficient alternative to existing transport services, particularly for users who might find traditional private transportation unaffordable.
- Building communities by promoting a sense of community, bringing people together and facilitating social interaction.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations that operate within the geographical area of West Northamptonshire and the Town and Parish Councils within the area are invited to submit an expression of interest form for this Community Funding Grant.

Further information and the full criteria for applications can be found on the WNC website and in the Council's Community Funding Grants Framework. If you would like to speak to the Community Funding Grants Team about your project or your eligibility to apply for this grant, email: communitygrants@westnorthants.gov.uk including your contact telephone number, as a telephone conversation can sometimes clarify a question more efficiently. More information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) can be found on the Gov website.

POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Closure Order Issued on Towcester Home

A house in Towcester has been issued with a closure order following concerns around drug dealing and anti-social behaviour from members of the public.



Reports from local residents highlighted that the council-owned property, located in Caernarvon Close, was being used for the supply and use of drugs by the occupier and his associates and attracting persistent illicit behaviour, causing the community a high level of alarm and distress.

On 7 December 2023, Northamptonshire Police and West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) Anti-Social Behaviour team successfully obtained a closure order to shut down the property under Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The council and the police worked with Grand Union Housing Group to gather the evidence needed to obtain the closure order at Northampton Magistrates Court. The property will be secured and boarded to allow only Grand Union Housing and emergency services staff authorisation to enter. Any unauthorised person who enters the property will be committing a criminal offence.

Closure orders last for a period of 3 months and can be extended further if necessary. They are used when other approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour have been unsuccessful and aim to protect residents living in the neighbourhood by preventing criminal behaviour taking place in or around a property.

PC Jim King, of the Towcester Neighbourhood Policing Team, said: "We don't underestimate the impact such problem properties can have on those around them, and we rely on information from our communities and partners to get the evidence needed to secure closure orders like this.

"Those using this address have caused a repeated nuisance to the community here, through general noise and loud music, to the smell of drug use and constant comings and goings.

"It has been a long process to get to this point and finally be able to put a stop to the behaviour associated with this property, but it has been well worth it."

Sergeant Wyn Hughes, who coordinates the application process for closure orders at Northamptonshire Police, added: "When we were placing details of the closure order on the property earlier this week a passer-by approached us and asked what we were doing.

"When we explained the closure order and what it would mean, this person's relief was visible, and they became quite emotional as they told us 'It has been hell'. That sort of response is humbling to see and is exactly why partnership work like this is so important."

New Taxi Marshal Service at Night-Time

A new taxi marshal service has been launched in Northampton to help people to travel more safely during peak Night-Time Economy (NTE) periods.



The marshals will be positioned at the taxi rank on Mercer's Row in Northampton town centre between 11pm and 5am on Friday and Saturday nights during weekends during busy and festive periods.

Taxi Marshals will be responsible for making sure lone females, vulnerable people and those accompanied by children are safely supervised when using taxis as well as addressing any conflicts arising on the taxi rank and reporting any incidents to the Licensing Authority and Northamptonshire Police.

They will also help to manage taxi queueing systems and move on private hire vehicles 'plying for hire' and will be SIA licensed and accredited in accordance with Security Industry Authority (SIA).

The scheme, which launches on Friday 22 December through to September 2025 with the possibility to extend, will be funded using Safer Streets 5 funding led by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and delivered by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). EP Traffic Services LTD have been successful in procuring the contract.

This initiative pilot will enhance the current work carried out by WNC and Northamptonshire Police to work with taxi drivers and private hire vehicles to ensure they comply with legislation and carry out the relevant training.

Other projects and improvements in the Night-Time Economy funded via Safer Streets funding include taxi rank lighting upgrades, additional CCTV cameras and Safer Night's Out routes and help point. In addition to this, Northants Police also staff permanent Operations around predatory behaviour in the town centre.

The scheme is also part of a wider programme of work to tackle violence against women and girls in the Night Time Economy that has seen £1.2 million spent on initiatives including ID scanning technology at late night venues, environmental improvements such as lighting and CCTV, training for staff in pubs and clubs to recognise vulnerability and challenge harassment, the introduction of the SNOvan and the Licensing SAVI scheme to help premises improve safety for customers at their venues.

PCSO Recruitment

Northamptonshire Police will be recruiting for Police community support officers. The application window will open on 18 December 2023. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are an essential part of neighbourhood policing in Northamptonshire. Patrolling the streets and engaging with the public every day, PCSOs are the face of policing within our communities. They are approachable and offer reassurance, help



[Home](#) > [Careers and volunteering](#)

Join as a PCSO

build trust and provide vital support that helps to make our towns and villages safer and stronger. Being a PCSO is a challenging and satisfying role – with no powers of arrest, communication and problem-solving skills are key tools. Working at the heart of each Neighbourhood Policing Team, PCSOs complement and support their police officer colleagues, helping fight crime and protect people across Northamptonshire. Whether you're already an active member of your local community or want to be, becoming a PCSO with Northamptonshire Police is your opportunity to use your local knowledge and problem-solving skills to

reduce crime and Anti-Social behaviour where it matters most to you.

If you would like to apply, the below link will take you to the application page on the Northamptonshire Police website:

<https://www.northants.police.uk/police-forces/northamptonshire-police/areas/northamptonshire-force-content/ca/careers-and-volunteering/join-as-a-pcso/>

Safer Road Police Team Checks

Organisations across West Northamptonshire come together to deliver an operation to keep residents safe. West Northamptonshire Council's Licensing Team and Northamptonshire Police Safer Roads Police Team



are working in partnership to work with licensed vehicle drivers to carry out spot checks, focusing on vehicle safety.

On Friday, 8 December 2023, they carried out an operation where several licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in West Northamptonshire had their licences suspended due to failing safety spot checks.

The vehicle spot checks carried out by the Police Safer Roads team and the Council's Licensing Officers identified several vehicles that were

deemed unsafe to carry passengers.

Four vehicles out of 23 inspected by officers and examiners were found to have immediate safety defects which included worn tyres and faulty lights. One vehicle was found to have a tyre which was worn to the extent the cord was exposed. An additional vehicle was found to not be compliant with law around smoking in vehicles.

Emergency Response Corps Looking for New Volunteers

The Northampton Emergency Response Corps (NERC) are looking to recruit new volunteers. As some Members will be aware, NERC brings together voluntary organisations and recruits individual volunteers from across the county to help where they can. NERC Reservists are called upon in times of need to assist in all kinds of ways. It could be a flood, a disruption in the energy supply, a health crisis or any other emergency. Part of the response to such events is always dependent on volunteers who help to keep their communities informed, distribute supplies and check on the vulnerable. Specialist skills like dealing with flooding can also be used and even when the county is not having to respond to an emergency, NERC would love people to get involved helping to run the charity by working on the website, managing finances, or helping with administration.



Northamptonshire Emergency Response Corps Reservists

Sign up to the Northamptonshire Emergency Response Corps and support your community in times of need.

Great training opportunities

NERC is now starting a new programme of training, offering a great chance for volunteers to learn new skills. You could become a flood warden, learn first aid or safeguarding skills, become part of the search and rescue team, or be taught how to deal with those in distress using psycho-social support. Really valuable skills like home fire safety, neuro-diverse training and conflict management will also be available.

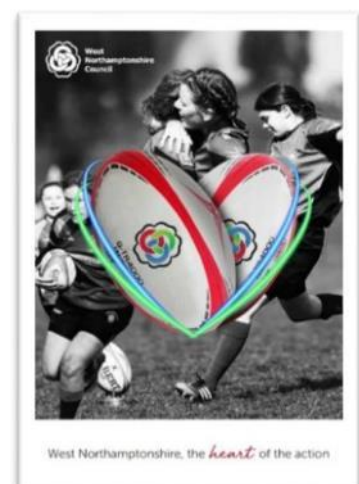
CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

West Northants to host Women's 2025 Rugby World Cup

West Northamptonshire will be taking part in the biggest-ever celebration of women's international rugby having been announced as a host for the Rugby World Cup 2025 – and the 2-year countdown kicked on 22 August. The 10th edition of the women's pinnacle global tournament is set to take place between 22 August and 27 September 2025, and will see matches taking place in front of a worldwide audience at Northampton's legendary Franklins Gardens stadium - home of the internationally renowned Northampton Saints.

The tournament will be the most accessible women's Rugby World Cup ever and will expand the reach of the game across the five-week period by bringing the world's best players to cities and venues across the country, including:

- Brighton and Hove – Brighton and Hove Albion Stadium
- Bristol – Ashton Gate
- Exeter – Sandy Park
- London – Twickenham Stadium
- Manchester – Salford Community Stadium



Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Hackleton and Grange Park
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

- Northampton – Franklin’s Gardens
- Sunderland – Stadium of Light
- York – York Community Stadium

While the full match schedules and ticketing details will be announced next year, the milestone two-year celebration and confirmation of dates and venues provides the ability for fans across England to start to plan their Rugby World Cup 2025 experience.

British Museum Recognises Northampton Military Archive

The Northampton Museum and Art Gallery Volunteer Military Archive and Research Team have won a national award and been highly commended for the Volunteers in Museum Learning Award issued by the Marsh Trust in conjunction with the British Museum.



The 6 volunteers make the military archive of objects and documents relating to the Northamptonshire Regiment and the Northamptonshire Yeomanry accessible by answering family history queries alongside book and other research enquiries. The team also support visits to the collection and in January, were on hand to provide support to the new recruits from C-Company Anglian Regiment during their visit to see the Victoria Crosses held by the museum.

The volunteers contribute different skills and expertise to the group and meet every week at the museum. In 2022 they answered 148 external and internal enquiries during 2016 hours of volunteering and received lots of fantastic compliments – occasionally even making people cry with happiness.

The British Museum and the Marsh Charitable Trust have been working in partnership for the fifteenth year through the Volunteers for Museum Learning award which recognises the hugely important contribution that volunteers make to help museums engage with their visitors. The award forms part of a programme of awards presented by the Marsh Charitable Trust in the fields of science, ecology, conservation, heritage, literature and volunteering.

Nominations for 2024 Inspirational Women’s Award

Organised by our Women’s Forum, the awards aim to publicly recognise and promote those women who inspire and have a real impact on the lives of others in the community or the workplace.

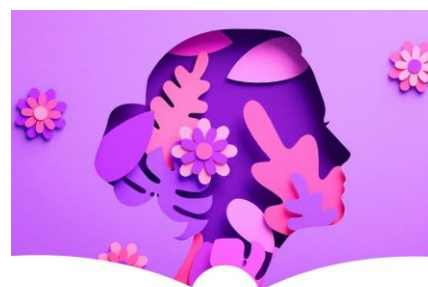
Please save the date for International Women’s Day which will take place on Saturday 9th March in The Great Hall & Court Room, The Guildhall, Northampton.

<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

Further details to follow re the event.

Please see the press release on how to nominate an inspiring women for the 2024 Inspirational Women Awards.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../nominate-inspiring...>



Inspirational Women Awards 2024

Celebrating International Women's Day

Call for nominations!

