

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT MARCH 2024



E-Newsletter Issue 02/2024

Steve with Kevin Hewitson, Vice Chairman of Denton Parish Council &
Secretary, Denton Village Surgery Patient Voice
at The Social Prescriber's Group

Coffee@Carey

Hackleton

20 February 2024

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NEWS REPORT MARCH 2024

Monthly Highlights

My update for this month is as follows:

There is new signage on the A428 to introduce a 40mph speed limit Order on Bedford Road, Northampton and a 50mph speed limit on A428 Northampton Road, through Great Houghton, Little Houghton, Brafield on the Green, Denton, Castle Ashby and Yardley Hastings. The existing 30 mph stretches through Brafield on the Green and Yardley Hastings remain unchanged.

On 26 February 2024, I received confirmation that the WNC Engineering team had confirmed that work on the A428, Bedford Road had started as planned. Therefore, I arranged to go on site after I finished my meeting in the morning. At first there was very little to see until I noticed signs on both sides of the road when leaving Brafield at either end of the village. Although erected they were partially covered with black plastic covering. I have been advised that due to the number of signs WNC is required to install, they are looking to complete by 15th March 2024. WNC will arrange for the traffic regulation order to be sealed shortly afterwards, which will effectively legalise the speed limit when it will become enforceable.

On 21 February 2024, Amy Holt, Clerk, Hartwell Parish Council and I met with Andrew Leighton and Paul McGrath at the Highways Depot in Brixworth to discuss progress on the ongoing drainage works in Hartwell. They confirmed that they had undertaken works on the Ashton Road by Oakleaf to clear the ditch and the drainage pipe. This area is now running clear. They had originally proposed to 'concrete protect' the pipe to prevent further roots growing into the drains. However, it is more cost effective to put this on a programme to have the root cutting machine visit this area on a six- monthly programme. They have yet to complete the drain connection works near the Church. Unfortunately, a ground survey found that the area was missing a pipe rather than (as previously thought) been disconnected or blocked. They have therefore had to re plan and reorganise the works to put in a new drain across the carriageway. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in late March/early April. As soon as I have a confirmed date for these works to be completed, I will be in touch.

On the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 24 February, the Government announced a series of changes to visa schemes for Ukrainians. See my Monthly Report.

You can give us your views on the Air Quality Action Plan 2024 via the consultation which closes midnight Sunday 17 March 2024.

The consultation on the proposed changes to the Post 16 Transport Policy from September 2024 runs until midnight on Monday 1 April, with residents encouraged to take part via the council's consultation hub.

Businesses are being asked for their views on Home Office proposals for new legislation to ensure stronger protection against terrorism in public places. Known as Martyn's Law, it is named after Martyn Hett, one of 22 people killed in the 2017 Manchester attack. The Consultation closes on 18 March 2024.

Please note that the WNC Customer Service team will be at Hackleton Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, NN7 2AH on 27 March 2024 from 10.00am to 2.00pm. Do come along on this date when WNC Service Advisors will be able to answer your various queries.

Struggling households in West Northamptonshire can seek help from the Household Support Fund. See my monthly report. However due to recent publicity of this support payment, we are seeing an increase in applications. This may increase the processing time from 3 to 5 weeks. To avoid further delays in processing and making payments, please be patient and wait for WNC to contact you.

There are future plans to lease out parts of the former County Hall buildings in Northampton to ensure a positive future for these important heritage buildings. County Hall, along with other historic buildings like the Guildhall, holds significant importance in the town and county's history and forms an integral part of our Council's collection of heritage assets. However, after a thorough review of WNC office space and assets, it became clear that there is a surplus of office and administrative meeting rooms within these historic sites, which could be better utilised whilst reducing costs on the public purse. See my Monthly Report.

At Full Council on Thursday, 22 February, members approved the final budget proposals, Housing Revenue Account and setting of the Council Tax for 2024/2025. Residents will be aware that in common with local authorities across the country, the Council is facing severe financial pressures due to factors including the current economic climate, high inflation rates driving up running costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults. Despite these pressures, we have set a balanced revenue budget for 2024/2025 of £889.5m (£414.5m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant). The budget includes a Council Tax increase of 4.99%, which is in line with the Government's threshold, generating extra funding of around £13.1m – with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care and representing an average increase on a Band D property of £84.52 a year, the equivalent of £1.63 a week. The approved budget follows a strong commitment to making services as efficient as possible and reviewing income streams to maintain and protect services, with £24.1m of productivity proposals put forward. The agreed budget also considered people's feedback in the recent budget public consultation, which attracted over 750 comments from residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders.

The Council has agreed a draft Housing 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.

West Northamptonshire Council has introduced enhanced 'Report It' functionality in the Council app, enabling a seamless and efficient way to interact with the council, report issues and stay connected with the local community on the go. See my Monthly Report.

New signs are going up in every town and parish to support the introduction of the West Northamptonshire-wide Public Spaces Protection Order, which encourages responsible dog ownership and bans smoking in specific open spaces. Once signs are up in your area, reports of breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Order can be reported. A breach of the PSPO could result in a £100 fine. See my Monthly Report.

The Planning Policy Team are engaging with Parish Councils about a key part of the Local Plan – the Rural Settlement Hierarchy. The team are keen to engage with Parishes about their settlements and to collect evidence to inform the new Local Plan. Questionnaires were sent out in mid-February. If you have any questions, please contact the Planning Policy Team at localplan@westnorthants.gov.uk.

I have included a flowchart that explains how the Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) now operates in my Monthly Report and you should note that this applies immediately and will do so until December 2025.

The government has announced that councils in England will need to prioritise brownfield developments. The bar for refusing brownfield plans will also be made higher for those not reaching their locally agreed housebuilding targets. Planning authorities in England's 20 largest cities and towns will need to follow a 'brownfield presumption', if housebuilding drops below expected levels. This will make it easier to get permission to build on previously developed brownfield sites. A consultation on these proposals will run until Tuesday 26 March.

Residents, businesses and community groups are being invited to help shape the WNC tree strategy and join one of the upcoming in person events and online drop in which are taking place this March. See my Monthly Report.

Parents, carers, families and education providers are invited to a communication and training session on upcoming special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) funding changes. The SEND Funding Update event takes place at The Guildhall from 1-4pm on Tuesday 12 March, and is a chance for people to find out more about changes to funding administration, criteria and the funding levels for children and young people up to the age of 25, with and without education, health and care (EHC) plans.

This summer, between 7 and 9 June, there will be another opportunity to join dedicated volunteers in giving time to a worthy cause of your choosing, whether that is supporting a local food bank, tending a community garden, spending time with a vulnerable person or teaching a skill to young people. Those who are aware of any volunteer-led organisations looking to get involved in The Big Help Out 2024, should direct them to talk to the Northampton Community Foundation (NCF)'s Grants Team.

I attended lots of events across the ward this month. Please read about my activities in my Monthly Report.

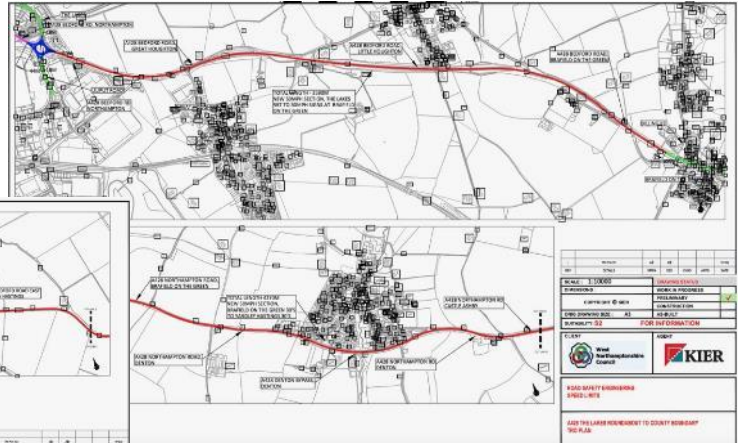
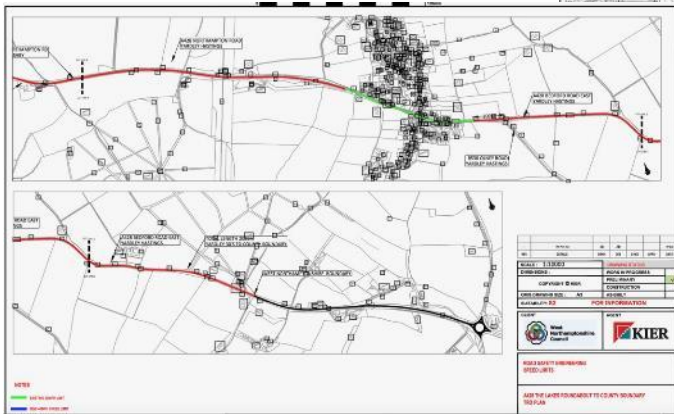
I hope that you enjoy this edition of my Monthly Report. Don't forget you can follow me on <https://www.facebook.com/stephen.clarke.31924>

All the Best, Steve

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

New Signage on A428

There is new signage on the A428 to introduce a 40mph speed limit Order on Bedford Road, Northampton and a 50mph



speed limit on A428 Northampton Road, through Great Houghton, Little Houghton, Brafield on the Green, Denton, Castle Ashby and Yardley Hastings. The existing 30 mph stretches through

Brafield on the Green and Yardley Hastings remain unchanged. On 26 February 2024, I received confirmation that the WNC Engineering team had confirmed that work on the A428, Bedford Road had started as planned. Therefore, I arranged to go on site after I finished my meeting in the morning. At first there was very little to see until I noticed signs on both sides of the road when leaving Brafield at either end of the village. Although erected they were partially covered with black plastic covering. I have been advised that due to the number of signs WNC is required to install, they are looking to complete by 15th March 2024. WNC will arrange for the traffic regulation order to be sealed shortly afterwards, which will effectively legalise the speed limit when it will become enforceable. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.



Update on Drainage Issues in Hartwell

On 21 February 2024, Amy Holt, Clerk, Hartwell Parish Council and I met with Andrew Leighton and Paul McGrath at the Highways Depot in Brixworth to discuss the progress on the ongoing drainage works in Hartwell. They confirmed that they had undertaken works on the Ashton Road by Oakleaf to clear the ditch and the drainage pipe. This area is now running clear. They had originally proposed to 'concrete protect' the pipe to prevent further roots growing into the drains. However, it is more cost effective to put this on a programme to have the root cutting machine visit this area on a six-monthly programme. They have yet to complete the drain connection works near the Church. Unfortunately, a ground survey found that the area was missing a pipe rather than (as previously thought) been disconnected or blocked. They have therefore had to re-plan and reorganise the works to put in a new drain across the carriageway. It is anticipated that this work will



be completed in late March/early April. As soon as I have a confirmed date for these works to be completed, I will be in touch.

Little Houghton Warm Space 7 February 2024

I sampled the delights of the Warm Spaces facility at the Little Houghton village Hall on 7 February 2024. A special thank you to Julia and Peter Harrison for such a warm welcome.

Little Houghton Village Hall, 50, Bedford Road, Little Houghton, NN7 1AB in the centre of the village is open from 2.00pm to 4.00pm every Wednesday until the end of March 2024, and there is a warm welcoming space for a chat or quiet time with refreshments available. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please try to support the Community Litter Pick on 16 March 2024 see the poster below.



Denton Coffee Morning 9 February 2024

On 9 February 2024, I went to the Coffee Morning at St Margaret's Church, Denton to discuss some case work with a resident of Denton. After my meeting, I was able to catch up with Sheila, Diane, Russel, Mary, Sheila John, Doug, Pat John, David and others. It's always a great place to meet for coffee and a chat in Denton, especially on a damp Friday morning. It was good to hear about the interest in the UK Grant Funding document I had compiled, and I will be sending out the requested copies later this weekend.

I was able to see the work that was underway to provide daffodil wreaths for inside and outside the Church at Easter. 'The Crafty Sew & Sews' had been busy fixing daffodils to Wire Wreath Frame Rings. I look forward to seeing the display at Easter.



Little Houghton Coffee Morning 10 February 2024

I enjoyed meeting up with Jenny, John, Ralph, Alice, Vicky and others on Saturday 10 February 2024 at the Little Houghton Coffee Morning. However, I was sorry to hear the sad news about John Smith of Lodge Road who passed away on 9 February 2024. He will be greatly missed in the village.

Well done to Alice, Emma, Lisa and Ralph for organising the greetings cards in aid of the Little Houghton CE Primary School Gardening Club. If you would like to support them then please contact Alice Gadney to purchase the cards directly.
alice@minimapmakers.com

The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 9 March 2024. Everyone is welcome for tea or coffee and biscuits and to try your luck at the monthly raffle whilst meeting your friends, or even making some new ones. All proceeds go to support the Village Church Charity.



Shrove Tuesday Supper, Yardley Hastings 13 February 2024

On Tuesday 13 February 2024, I attended the Yardley Hastings Shrove Tuesday Supper at the Yardley Hastings Memorial Hall. All proceeds were to go towards the upkeep of St Andrews Church in the village. We had a delightful 2-course Supper with a choice of lots of delicious puddings, including pancakes. The food was excellent with beef pie or a vegetarian option with fresh vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy, followed by a wonderful choice of puddings. It was great to catch up with folks including Fiona, who had saved our tickets. A special thank you to Tom, Melanie and the boys who were great company and provided lots of help with the clues for the Sweet Treats Quiz. We didn't do too badly with the quiz, but not close to the winners who managed a score of 40. Thank you to everyone who came together to make the Shrove Tuesday Supper so successful.



Coffee@Carey 14 February 2024

Valentines Day at Coffee@Carey took place on Tuesday and Wednesday this week. Each day Roy Hawkesford was there



performing classic love songs. The purpose of which was to raise funds to replace broken toys in the library, which are used by the play group. When I arrived, Roy was in full swing playing lots of well-known songs.



Towards the end he played one of the Eagles classic songs Tequila Sunrise bringing back memories of 1973 and conjuring up an image of the Southwestern part of the U.S.A. All on a

damp cold day in Hackleton, Northamptonshire in February. It was a great initiative Roy and I do hope you organise a similar event soon.

Coffee@Carey Denton Surgery Patient Group 20 February 2024

On Tuesday 20 February 2024, I visited Coffee@Carey, Chapel Lane, Hackleton and met with Kevin Hewitson, Secretary of Denton Surgery Patient Group (DSPG). We were able to discuss Grant Funding and I agreed to send Kevin a copy of my Grant Funding Small Projects document.

There was a large attendance as various members from Denton, Cogenhoe and Little Houghton attend courtesy of the DSPG transport scheme. If you are interested in finding out more then you can e-mail the coordinator@dspg.me or telephone 07506 866298. Today we caught the last half of a quiz which Jenny Monk provided and next time they are going on an outing to a Garden Centre in Oakham. It was great to chat to Sally, Elaine, Michael and others.



WNC SUPPORT DESK Coffee@Carey 20 February 2024

On 20 February 2024, I attended the WNC Support Desk at Coffee@Carey, Hackleton. As advertised the WNC Customer Service team was at Hackleton



Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, NN7 2AH from 10.00am to 2.00pm. It was well attended, and I was able to gain an understanding as to the common themes being raised. We



talked about the App 'what3words' and how useful it was for locating potholes. Many Councils have adopted 'what3words' as a powerful tool to enhance public reporting. By



integrating 'what3words', residents can now provide highly accurate location information when reporting incidents. Allowing residents to provide accurate location information for issues such as fly-tipping, potholes or on public rights of way where an internet connection is not always available particularly in a rural area. At WNC you can use Report It for fly-tipping: <https://eforms.northampton.digital/reportItWNC/reportIt.html> Our Customer Service Advisors will be at Coffee@Carey, Hackleton again on 27 March 2024. Do come along if you would like them to answer your queries.

Hartwell Club Coffee Morning 20 February 2024



On 20 February 2024, I attended the Coffee Morning at the Hartwell Club, 10 Forest Road, Hartwell. Judy Webster had invited me to come and see the progress that they were making with this warm space which is open every Tuesday from 9-11 am. It was very busy when I arrived and because it was half term there were lots of children too. The Hartwell club was warm and inviting and the cakes were quite a feature. There were four choices of cake today: blueberry muffins, rocky road and cherry tiffin, crispy cupcakes and Banana and Walnut Loaf. Well done to Liz Passmore, Judy and others who make this event possible. It was good to see Geoff and others from the

Thursday group here today. Why not come and join them every Tuesday morning from 9-11 am for a coffee a slice of cake and a chat, or if you know anyone else you think could do with some company it's only £2-50 for your drink and cake.



Yardley Hastings 23 February 2024

Whilst out and about in Yardley Hastings I managed to grab a take-away sandwich and coffee from the Pudding Parlour Provisions, 97 High Street, which I then had in my car before my next appointment. Even our quietest corners are full of surprises. Whilst England is famed for its pretty countryside with rolling hills, forests and rivers, the charming villages of West Northamptonshire themselves are well worth a visit.

Climate Action Hackleton



The next meeting of the Hackleton Wildlife Environment and Biodiversity (WEB) Group will be held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at Carey Baptist Church, Hackleton. There will be a presentation from CA-WN West Northants. For more information contact royhawkesford@g.mail.com

Licensing Service for Rev Kris Seward

There is to be a Licensing Service for Rev Kris Seward previously Curate at Crick, Lilbourne & Yelvertoft as Rector of the Wymersley Benefice on Wednesday 27 March at St Peter's Church, Cogenhoe, starting at 7pm. Kris will have responsibility for Cogenhoe, Great Houghton,



Little Houghton and Brafield on the Green.

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

Government Announced Updates to Ukrainian Visa Schemes

On the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 24 February, the Government has announced a series of changes to visa schemes for Ukrainians.

Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme

Allows those who have been granted permission to enter the UK under one of the existing visas to apply for an additional 18 months permission to remain.

Homes for Ukraine (HFU)

From 19 February, a new applicants initial permission to stay will now be 18 months.

Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS)

The UFS will be closed to new applications, "in favour of rationalising the visa routes to a single out-of-country visa application route (Homes for Ukraine)"

Funding

Local authorities will continue to receive the £5,900 per person and £10,500 per eligible minors. Sponsors will continue to receive their 'Thank You' payments.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../support-for-family-members-of...>

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.

Consultation on Addressing Air Quality



WNC is inviting people to have a say on proposals to address air quality concerns and improve standards across West Northants. All councils have a duty to monitor local air quality to make sure it meets certain standards, and in West Northamptonshire we monitor air quality in several locations across the area. We are in the process of developing an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), which outlines the steps we will take to work towards improving air quality and reducing air pollution. Residents and businesses across the area are now invited to view the proposals and share their views. People can have their say from Monday 19 February to Sunday 17 March by visiting the Consultation Hub on our website: <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../have-your-say.../> The draft AQAP replaces existing plans from our predecessor councils, which have produced positive

improvements in air quality and builds on them further. Some of the actions producing positive effects include:

- 1) controls around planning to make sure air quality is considered
- 2) introducing a Low Emission Strategy in Northampton
- 3) reducing vehicle emissions through improved ways and routes of travel

4) delivering electric vehicle infrastructure.

Given our bold Net Zero commitments, the Air Quality Action Plan is the first crucial step towards putting measures in place to improve air quality in Northampton, and wider West Northamptonshire.

As part of the development of the plan, we will be looking at how we can improve air quality as a local authority and how we can support residents in making changes to help achieve these aims.

The feedback from the consultation will inform the final draft which will be submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), who oversees air quality plans. DEFRA will make a decision on the AQAPs suitability before notifying the council if it can be applied or not. Once in place, the AQAP will be annually reviewed when WNC publishes the Annual Status Report.

West Northamptonshire Parks Visitors Feedback Survey

The WNC Parks Visitors Feedback Survey opened 1 October 2023 and closes 31 March 2024. 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

Post 16 School Travel in West Northants

Have your say on Post 16 school travel in West Northants. People are being encouraged to share their views on proposed changes to the council's Home to School Transport services for Post 16 students across West Northamptonshire. By law, students are required to continue in education or training until the age of 18 years. While local authorities have no statutory duty to provide



transport for students over the age of 16 years, they must publish an annual transport policy statement setting out how they will support young adults to access education and training. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has reviewed the current Post 16 Transport Policy Statement and proposed changes which apply to young people of sixth form age and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans up to age 25. On 1 February 2024, a 9-week consultation was launched inviting residents to share their views on the proposed changes to this service, with any changes coming into effect from September 2024. The consultation runs until midnight on Monday 1 April, with residents encouraged to take part via the council's consultation hub. The changes are the first proposed in a decade and aim to address the high demand and operating costs of the service while providing greater flexibility for parents and carers, supporting young people's independence and helping to promote sustainable travel. Key proposals to the policy include greater support for young adults undertaking apprenticeships, increased use of Personal Transport Budgets (PTB), providing transport provision only at standard school and college start and finish times, and increasing the parent and carer contribution towards the cost of Post 16 transport.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../aff071d2-42d0-42ad...>

The consultation will last nine weeks and residents can take part in the following ways:

- Complete the online survey here: <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../post-16.../>
- Email: schooltransportpolicy@westnorthants.gov.uk
- Write to: Home to School Transport Consultation 2023, West Northamptonshire Council, The Guildhall, St Giles' Square, Northampton NN1 1DE

For more information on Home to School Transport please visit the School travel assistance webpage.

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

Businesses are urged to Complete Martyn's Law Consultation

Businesses are being asked for their views on Home Office proposals for new legislation to ensure stronger protection against terrorism in public places. Known as Martyn's Law, it is named after Martyn Hett, one of 22 people killed in the 2017 Manchester attack. The bill would require venues to take enhanced steps to help keep the public safe, but the Home Office wants to make sure the new requirements are deliverable for smaller businesses, so is seeking views. Businesses can have a say on the Government's online consultation hub:

<https://www.gov.uk/.../martyns-law-standard-tier...>

The Consultation closes on 18 March 2024.



FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Cost of Living Support

Are you feeling the strain on your finances this winter? There is support available to many residents living in West Northants. Have a look to see if you are eligible for support.

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

Government Cost of Living Hub

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

The website will be updated with details, to ensure funds are made available throughout the year up until 31 March 2024.

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.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-2025

On Thursday 8 February 2024, Parliament considered and approved the statutory reports which make up the final local government finance settlement 2024-25.

Amber Valley	3.5m	Erewash	3.7m	North Kesteven	3.3m
Ashfield	4.4m	Gedling	3.3m	North Northamptonshire	64.6m
Bassetlaw	4.6m	Harborough	1.9m	North West Leicestershire	2.6m
Blaby	2.4m	High Peak	2.6m	Nottingham	130.1m
Bolsover	4.5m	Hinckley and Bosworth	2.9m	Nottinghamshire	121.1m
Boston	3.2m	Leicester	138.5m	Oadby and Wigston	1.6m
Broxtowe	3.1m	Leicestershire	64.2m	Rushcliffe	2.6m
Charnwood	4.8m	Lincoln	4.21m	Rutland	4.7m
Chesterfield	4.2m	Lincolnshire	139m	South Derbyshire	2.7m
Derby	74.7m	Mansfield	4.3m	South Holland	3.9m
Derbyshire	132.8m	Melton	1.4m	South Kesteven	4.0m
Derbyshire Dales	1.8m	Newark and Sherwood	4.0m	West Lindsey	3.3m
East Lindsey	7.7m	North East Derbyshire	3.0m	West Northamptonshire	56.5m

Across England, local authorities will see an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £4.5 billion next year, or 7.5% in cash terms. Of the £64 billion total settlement, councils in the East Midlands will receive just over £1billion, broken down as above.

Plans for County Hall

Plans to lease out parts of the former County Hall buildings in Northampton aim to ensure a positive future for these important heritage buildings. County Hall, along with other historic buildings like the Guildhall, holds significant importance in the town and county's history and forms an integral part of our Council's collection of heritage assets. However, after a thorough review of WNC office space and assets, it became clear that there is a surplus of office and administrative meeting rooms within these historic sites, which could be better utilised whilst reducing costs on the public purse. In a move aimed at ensuring these buildings have a productive future and have the best chance of retaining their character and historic significance, Cabinet has approved the following:

- **Judges' Lodgings:** The property will be transferred on a long leasehold basis, with potential use as a hotel or private residence, maintaining its character as a dwelling.
- **Centre Block and Former Constabulary Block:** The Council will seek to transfer this on a long leasehold basis for restoration and conversion, probably to flats, to maximize the property's potential, ensure its preservation, and allow people to enjoy its historic features.
- **Sessions House and Front Block:** Whilst elements may be leased for commercial food and drink operations, the Council will continue to investigate alternative uses which retain public use of these historic spaces and enhance the regeneration of the town centre seeking to attract and increase future footfall. Separately, work will be pursued on options for greater public access to experience the history of justice in Northampton.



WNC appreciates the significance of our cherished County Hall buildings and the role they play in our town and county's history. This week, we announce a decision aimed at securing their preservation and beneficial future use. Our goal is threefold: first, to increase public access and enjoyment of these heritage assets, allowing them to play a valued role in our community. Second, by transforming County Hall, we contribute to the preservation of our heritage and the

regeneration of Northampton. Thirdly, we make good use of public money and reduce our operating costs, allowing us to put more money into services for our residents.

By approving the transfers, WNC paves the way for restoration, preservation, and where appropriate, conversion, ensuring a brighter future for these significant landmarks. This decision aligns with our commitment to the community, aiming to enhance public use and enjoyment of County Hall's rich history. We will continue to engage with the public and stakeholders throughout this process, ensuring transparency and collaboration. For more information, please visit our website.

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

Budget 2024/2025

The Council has set a balanced budget for the year ahead, which will protect frontline services and tackle significant financial challenges. At Full Council on Thursday, 22 February, members approved the final budget proposals, Housing Revenue Account and setting of the Council Tax for 2024/2025. Residents will be aware that in common with local authorities across the country, the Council is facing severe financial pressures due to factors including the current economic climate, high inflation rates driving up running



costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults. Despite these pressures, we have set a balanced revenue budget for 2024/2025 of £889.5m (£414.5m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant). The budget includes a Council Tax increase of

4.99%, which is in line with the Government's threshold, generating extra funding of around £13.1m – with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care and representing an average increase on a Band D property of £84.52 a year, the equivalent of £1.63 a week.

The approved budget follows a strong commitment to making services as efficient as possible and reviewing income streams to maintain and protect services, with £24.1m of productivity proposals put forward. The agreed budget also considered people's feedback in the recent budget public consultation, which attracted over 750 comments from residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders.

It has also been subject to continuous review and scrutiny, including consideration by the cross-party group of members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The 2024/2025 budget will see our Council invest over £164m in its capital programme, to improve local infrastructure and assets such as land, buildings and equipment. The Council is also set to spend an estimated £20m in public health support which is funding from the Government in the year ahead to progress a range of schemes aimed at improving residents' wellbeing, reducing health inequalities and continuing to support communities.

Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) WNC plans to invest £59m of capital funds in social housing during the next financial year. This investment forms part of a total five-year capital programme which amounts to £287m. Also built into the plans is investment in decarbonisation which is estimated to impact on 500 homes. The capital investment in 2024-2025 includes:

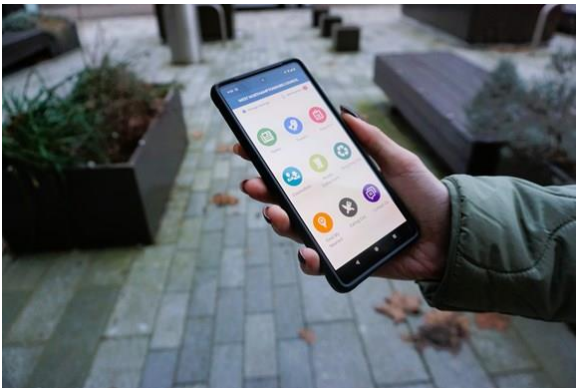
- 1) £10m on external improvements
- 2) £11m on internal works improvements
- 3) £2.3m on disabled adaptations
- 4) £26m on new build programmes and major projects
- 5) £10m on buying back social housing and for spot purchases of suitable properties.

In addition to this the Council will spend approximately £65m on managing and maintaining the existing housing stock which is funded primarily by Housing Rents received from current tenants.

REGULATORY SERVICES

WNC Council App

West Northamptonshire Council has introduced enhanced 'Report It' functionality in the Council app,



enabling a seamless and efficient way to interact with the council, report issues and stay connected with the local community on the go. The app is the go-to resource for West Northamptonshire residents, providing easy access to essential council services and timely local news. Now, with the addition of the Report It features, residents can report incidents ranging from fly tipping and graffiti to abandoned trolleys and street cleansing, all from the convenience of their mobile devices. The app offers a host of functional features designed to enhance residents' experience allowing you to access council

services near your location. Whether you're looking for the nearest council offices, car parks, food banks, libraries, parks or other essential local services, such as the network of Welcoming Spaces, the information is just a few taps away. Download or update the West Northamptonshire Council App from your device's app store to explore the new functionality. The app is continuously being developed, and we will be adding new features as we progress.

New Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Signs

Council colleagues will soon be putting up new signs in every town and parish to support the introduction of the West Northamptonshire-wide Public Spaces Protection Order, which encourages responsible dog ownership and bans smoking in specific open spaces. Once signs are up in your area, reports of breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Order can be reported: <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/local-communities/public-spaces-protection-orders-pspos>

A breach of the PSPO could result in a £100 fine. There are a number of restrictions and requirements which apply to all public open space across West Northamptonshire, including all footpaths, pavements, alleyways, grass verges and bridle paths. These are specifically:

- 1) Picking up after the dog immediately
1. Having the appropriate means to pick up after that dog i.e. a bag
- 2) Putting the dog on a lead when requested to do so by an Authorised person
- 3) Restrict the number of dogs that can be walked by one person to a maximum of 4 dogs at any one time unless they hold a licence to breed, board or provide day care services where up to 6 can be walked at any one time.

There are also some additional requirements that apply to specific parts of all villages and towns across West Northamptonshire, specifically, these are to:

- Prohibit dogs from entering the following: children's play areas; schools when open and in use by pupils; skateparks; tennis courts; multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and bowling greens.
- Keep the dog on a lead when in: Cemeteries; burial sites; graveyards; memorial gardens; allotments; car parks; sports grounds, fields and pitches, when in use for authorised sporting activity, land at Daventry Country Park café, Northampton Town Centre, Phase 2 of Upton Country Park (land between Kislingbury and Upton which flanks the river Nene) and land near school entrances and exits when open and in use by pupils.
- Smoking of tobacco, tobacco related products, smokeless tobacco products including electronic cigarettes, herbal cigarettes or any illegal substances is prohibited in the following areas: Children's play areas; land near school entrances and exits when open and in use by pupils; skateparks; tennis courts; multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and bowling greens.



Members can find out more about PSPOs in force here
<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../public-spaces...>

Food Allergen Training for Businesses

Our Trading Standards Team are reminding food businesses they need to tell customers if any food they provide contains any of the listed allergens as an ingredient. Consumers may be allergic or have intolerance to other ingredients, but only the 14 allergens are required to be declared as allergens by food law. This free online course by the Food Standards Agency provides a useful introduction or refresher for businesses and their staff. Consumers can report businesses where allergen information has been unavailable or incorrectly given to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 2231133

The 14 allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as barley and oats), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin**, **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (at a concentration of more than ten parts per million) and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

RSN 2024 seminar programme

The online seminar programme continues as follows:

- 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

Rural Wellbeing in Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire ACRE is conducting a survey to establish support needs in rural communities. For more information- Please contact Jennifer.hedges@northantsacre.org.uk Please take the time to complete their short survey (and share with your networks).

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
- WNN/2021/0466 Land North Of, Bedford Road, Great Houghton - 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.

5 Year Land Supply

The Government has finally published much anticipated changes to the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and related changes to the operation of 'Five Year Land Supply' ('5YHLS') and the 'Housing Delivery Test' ('HDT'). See here to look at the changes yourself:

Revised NPPF (2023) <https://www.gov.uk/.../national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Consultation Response

<https://www.gov.uk/.../government-response-to-the...>

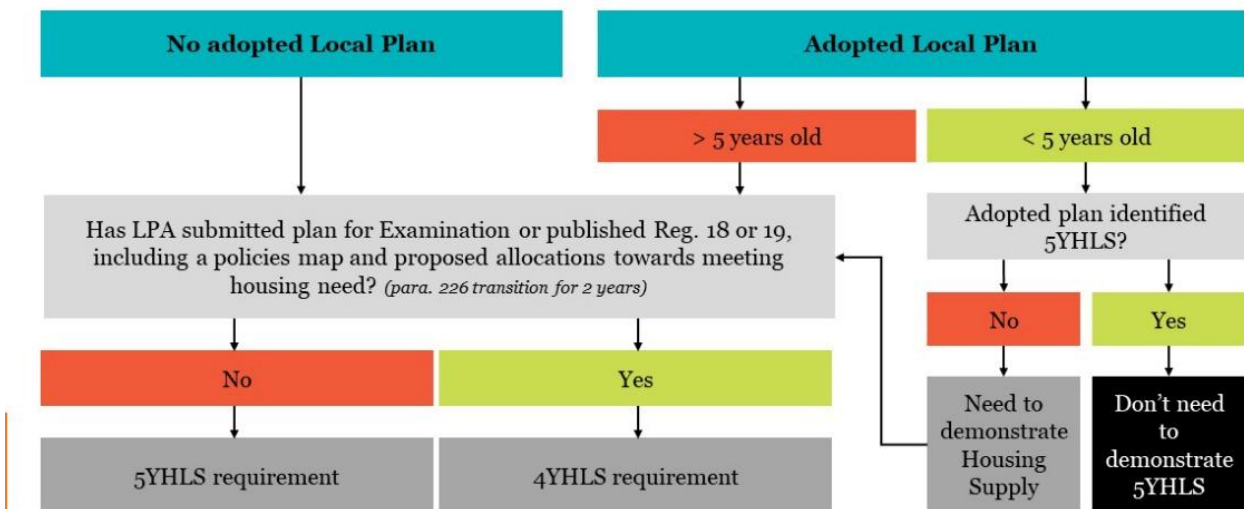
Reviewing the changes now adopted, the Government has not implemented its previous proposals in full. They have listened to concerns regarding the impacts of the proposals on housing supply however and, in doing so, have tried to strike a new balance between the push for plan-making while retaining some release valve for where plan-making fails. In summary, the changes are:

- LPAs with a plan adopted in past 5 years don't need to demonstrate a 5YHLS (some caveats apply

to the determination of existing applications).

- LPAs at the Reg.18 or Reg.19 stage (with caveats out the contents of relevant material) or with plans submitted for examination only need to demonstrate a 4-year supply.
- 5% and 10% buffers are gone but 20% buffers remain.
- Oversupply will count towards 5YHLS in the future but how this works in to be determined.
- The eligibility criteria for Annual Position Statements is now wider; and Paragraph 14 has been beefed up to protect areas with made neighbourhood plans.

The flowchart above sets out how 5YHLS now operates and the above applies immediately and will do so until December 2025.



WNC will be Engaging Parish Councils for New Local Plan

The Planning Policy Team are engaging with Parish Councils about a key part of the Local Plan – the Rural Settlement Hierarchy. The team are keen to engage with Parishes about their settlements and to collect evidence to inform the new Local Plan. Questionnaires were sent out in mid-February. If you have any questions, please contact the Planning Policy Team at localplan@westnorthants.gov.uk

Brownfield Sites Planning Consultation

This week, the government announced that councils in England will need to prioritise brownfield developments. The



bar for refusing brownfield plans will also be made higher for those not reaching their locally agreed



housebuilding targets. Planning authorities in England’s 20 largest cities and towns will need to follow a ‘brownfield presumption’, if housebuilding drops below expected levels.

This will make it easier to get permission to build on previously developed brownfield sites. A consultation on these proposals will run until Tuesday 26 March.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../strengthening-planning-policy-for...>

HOUSING

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, most tenants also receive financial support from the

Government towards rent payments.

At the WNC 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 West Northants Housing Allocations Scheme

Work to implement the new West Northamptonshire housing allocations scheme is underway. It replaces the existing three schemes in Daventry, South Northamptonshire and Northampton, and provides a fairer, clearer and more consistent housing provision for our residents. In order for this new scheme to be delivered, the existing three registers must be transferred to a new computer system and online portal which will provide improved services for residents and applicants. While this essential work takes place, the housing register will be temporarily paused for new online applications from Monday 19 February until Monday 8 April. This means that new applications to rent a home cannot be made online during this time, however homes will continue to be allocated to existing applicants who are already on the register.

The pausing of the register is necessary since legacy schemes require different information from applicants to register their application. Housing applications take several weeks to assess, therefore applications received between now and April will be missing information required under the new scheme criteria. By pausing new applications, we can collect all the information needed to make an informed decision about someone's housing need under the new scheme. This ensures we have the most up-to-date information to properly assess each applicant's circumstances and ensures nobody is unfairly disadvantaged because of missing information. Support is still available for residents who have an urgent housing need through the WNC Housing Team, who will be able to help residents apply manually. Anyone in an emergency housing

situation or who becomes homeless at any time can also contact the Homelessness Team by calling 0300 126 7000 or by visiting the council offices in Northampton, Daventry or Towcester between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

We class urgent/priority needs as people who are new homeless cases, Single Homeless Pathway customers, partner referrals, hospital discharges, Care Leavers and other exceptional circumstances which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Existing applicants who already have a live application on one of the three housing registers will not be affected at this time. They will remain on the housing register and will still be able to bid for properties under the existing allocations schemes for Northampton and Daventry as usual.



Those with a live application for South

Northants will be contacted if a suitable property becomes available. Once the new system is in place, our Housing Team will be in touch with all existing applicants to invite them to re-apply to the new housing allocation scheme using the new online portal. Information around this will be available on the council website and teams working in locality hubs will be on hand to support and guide applicants through the process. This approach will be adapted for customers with specific needs however self-service will be encouraged as far as possible.

We understand that some customers are going to be frustrated about not being able to apply for housing online during this pause. We are particularly keen that residents know that the housing register is not closed during this period, just temporarily paused while we prepare the new system to manage applications and provide an improved service for residents and applicants.

We have also created some FAQs to help answer any questions manage applications and provide an improved service for residents and applicants.

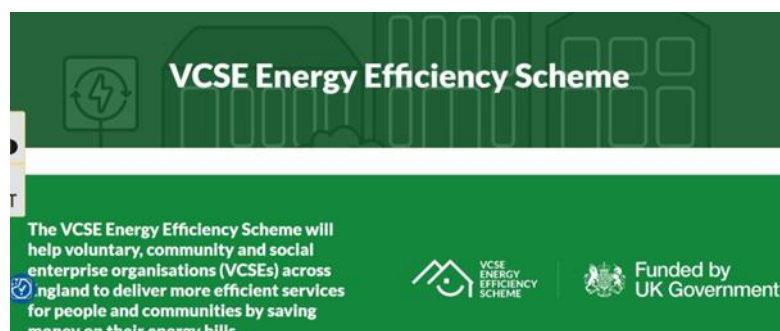
We have also created some FAQs to help answer any questions

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/finding.../housing-register>

ENVIRONMENT

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 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>

Help Shape the WNC Tree Strategy



The Council is developing a new Tree Strategy that will provide a clear vision and action plan for maximising the benefits of trees across West Northamptonshire into the future. Residents, businesses and community groups are being invited to help shape the tree strategy and join one of the upcoming in person and online drop in events, which are taking place this March. People can sign up for the online sessions on Friday 15 March by visiting West

Northamptonshire Tree Strategy public engagement workshops. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../west-northamptonshire...>

Alternatively, we'd love to speak to people in person and you can turn up to one of the following session:

- 1) Monday 18 March 10:30-16:30 at The Guildhall, Northampton.

2) Tuesday 19 March 10:30-16:30 at Daventry Library, The Abbey Centre.

3) Wednesday 20 March 10:30-16:30 at The Forum, Towcester.

The engagement sessions follow on from the public consultation which was carried out in November 2023.

Fly Tipping Grant Scheme

If you are a private landowner who has been the victim of fly-tipping, you can apply for a grant of up to £1,500 to help you deal with the problem. The money can be used to cover the cost of having fly-tipping removed, as well as to fund prevention measures to make your land less vulnerable to fly-tippers in future. The scheme is funded by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) in partnership with West and North Northamptonshire Councils. For more information and an application pack, please email environmentalimprovement.ddc@westnorthants.gov.uk



for areas in the former boroughs of Northampton, Daventry and South Northants Councils.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Local Area Partnership Rural East

The last meeting of the Rural East LAP took place on 27 February 2024 at 1.00pm and the next meeting is on 26 March at 11.30pm. At our last meeting, we discussed the progress on the Website Development, the Highlight Report Update and heard from Samantha Hosking, Brackley and Towcester Town Manager.

Website Development

The new website was presented to the West Northants Executive Place Delivery Board on 16th January. It will contain the following features:

- Webpages bespoke to each LAP geography together with generic information across all LAPs,
- A post code search,
- 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 loaded onto the websites.

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. There will be a local events calendar and asset mapping on each of the LAP websites. Those wishing to display Information for the website will need to complete an online form. At the top of the Homepage, the About page tells what the local area partnerships are about, the way we're working together and the communities that they cover.

The 10 live your best life ambitions explains what we're trying to achieve in West Northants. The News page has all the news in the 9 local area partnerships collated on one page. There are 3 news stories from each LAP every month, so there should be 27 different news stories on the news page. The second phase of the website will involve it being linked to the WNC application. This will have the Where's my nearest function. The developers will continue onwards for Phase two development. We will do a soft launch with the partners within the PLACE Board and the local area partnerships in order to gain feedback and comment. Julie Curtis is working with the developers on the 2nd Phase of the website. The LAP needs case studies, stories, events, photos, and narrative for the website. A small task and finish group will be set up for interested and influential parties to complete the website design.

Highlight Report Update

Family Hub

We are planning to do the Universal stay and play sessions, expanding their health visiting support, looking to get a Social Prescriber Link Worker onsite to support and an Engagement officer and Community Navigator in place.

Dementia Support Project

We have groups within local parish councils at Cogenhoe and Hackleton that WNC will work with on this project. We have created a Co-partnership with one of the Northampton LAPs to create an evaluation. When this is complete, the university will support us with an evaluation. Adult social care has identified candidates for us and we're going to initiate this project soon. We are also having discussions with the local parish councils about dementia friends training. This will hopefully reach out into the chatty cafes and the welcoming spaces as well. We aim to have somebody who has training in dementia in each area for the online programme. We will evaluate the project at month one to see how we're doing and report on progress made.

Men's Wellbeing Group

In conjunction with Café Renew, we've got 67 questionnaires back and we'll collate and evaluate the feedback. We will decide on the name, the topics of the group and USP for the groups. We gave out tickets to encourage people to respond. Rachael Byrne has also been in touch with veteran groups.

Teen Clinic

We will be working with public health to do it the right way. Charlotte Morris will be a part of this group, the police is also on board, MIND, NHFT, Ngage, Service 6. We could use a school or part of the family hub.

Welcoming Spaces

We have 17 welcoming spaces within this LAP. Community Law Service has their free geography and advice service at Towcester Library. We are liaising with the Employment Support Team to offer engagement sessions, interested spaces so far include Blisworth Baptist Church and Deanshanger Library. Adult social care training frontline workers to support navigation of the adult social care website, liaising with WNC Armed Forces Covenant to offer resource packs and engagement sessions. Interested spaces include Blisworth Baptist Church, renew 169 and Safe to Talk. There are community training partnership courses available for frontline workers and volunteers. A Digital Information Pack has been sent out to all spaces, it includes cost of living support, adult social care information, mental health support cards etc, available from Towcester Council office.

Social Isolation

If anyone wants to have loneliness support, Rachael Byrne has a template to transfer the loneliness toolkit onto to be sent to the GPs. It is 40-points, and it will be made more concise in order to be more asset focused.

Brackley and Towcester Town Manager

Samantha Hosking is the newly appointed town centre manager for Brackley and Towcester and she has been in post for six months. The role sits under the Economic Growth and Inward Investment Team at West Northants. It is funded by Section 106 developer contributions and the Town Fund. The role and the fund are to revitalise the town centre. Towcester and Brackley are very similar in terms of the lovely rural market towns and there are no issues with sites. Though there are fewer empty properties below the national average, these properties are causing problem because they have been empty for some time and its affecting the viability of the town.

Samantha's main role within the last six months has been connecting with local people. She started by setting up business forums for high street retailers. There have been conversations about the problems they face and what they think would be good solutions. They're keen to get on board, and they are starting to feel empowered to come up with ideas themselves, taking actions and supporting each other. There are discussions about the kind of initiatives we can bring forward that will help to drive up the 'footfall' in the town, engage existing residents and inform newer residents about what on offer in the various towns. It will be useful to build partnerships with local community organisations, the town councils and the businesses all working together from the ground level up. Samantha's role is to support these groups and support the ideas and initiatives. So, opportunities are available to work with local organisations. There's been a lot of research into high street redevelopment and lots of advice from government and organisations about how to do this. She has been looking into what help we can give retailers to feel safer in their high streets, so she will be working with the local community police teams going forward.

She will be involved with this LAP to share updates and she is interested in the agenda and items because there are things that she has been approached with that she can share and get information on. There are lots of alignment and potential opportunities if we are all working at community level to improve lives. Fundraisers, anything that would serve the community. We need a shop to promote. We're looking to find those spaces within the town to put on activities that are required by the town to support health and wellbeing.

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Term Dates for West Northamptonshire Schools

Below are the term dates for the area, according to West Northamptonshire Council. Dates will vary at independent schools, and there could be additional days off at all schools for teacher training days, which will vary from school to school.

Spring term 2024

Thursday January 4 to Thursday March 28.

February half term: Monday February 19 to Friday February 23.

Easter bank holidays: Friday March 29 and Monday April 1.

Easter holiday: Tuesday April 2 to Friday April 12.

Summer term 2024

Monday April 15 to Tuesday July 23.

Bank holiday: Monday May 6.

May half term: Monday May 27 (bank holiday) to Friday May 31.

Summer holiday: Wednesday July 24 to Friday August 30.

Autumn term 2024

Monday September 2 to Friday December 20.

October half term: Monday October 28 to Friday November 1.

Christmas holiday: Monday December 23 to Friday January 3, 2025.

Personal Safety for Young Citizens Event

Students from Primary Schools across Northampton learned about being good citizens and personal safety



in the second Young Citizens' Day Event of this academic year. Over 650 Year 6 students from 12 Primary Schools attended the event at The Deco Theatre, Northampton, earlier this month. The day was developed by WNC's Community Safety and Engagement

Team and funded by the Northamptonshire Serious Violence Prevention Partnership. The two-day event aimed to give young people a greater understanding of emergency services, to instil an understanding of personal safety and to

encourage being considerate towards others. The students took part in a variety of engaging interactive workshops and group presentations delivered by agencies from across Northamptonshire. These included substance abuse, rail and road safety, crime prevention and personal safety, hate crime, online safety and serious violence. During their lunchbreak students watched an engaging performance by Rushden Academy. The Young Citizens schemes gives us the opportunity to work proactively with children and young people to explore community safety issues and encourage them to be good citizens. The event provides a greater understanding of emergency services, imparts essential safety skills and cultivates compassion towards others. WNC is proud to be involved in such an impactful event and hope that the experience gained will equip these students for their futures.

Watch our video of the event on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUhb056xiXw>

Improvements in Fostering Services

Significant improvements to fostering services in Northamptonshire have led to their Ofsted rating rising to

'Good' from 'Inadequate' in the last 12 months. Ofsted have published their report following a week-long inspection of Northamptonshire Children's Trust Independent Fostering Agency from 15 to 19 January, finding that 'since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in how well foster carers are supported and supervised.' This is positive news for our children and young people, our foster carers and colleagues who work hard to improve outcomes and help give our young people the best start in life. In their report, inspectors said 'supervising social workers spend time with children on a regular basis. This has helped to improve the overall quality of relationships



between children, foster carers and their supervising social workers.’ In turn this means ‘children are settled and make good progress. Many children remain with their foster carers for many years and into their adulthood.’ This leads to positive outcomes for children in giving them stability and consistency. They also saw that ‘The fostering agency is working hard to better understand the quality of children’s lived experiences. Care practice is now more meaningful and child centred. Children have their own separate recordings that are, overall, written in a child-friendly way.’ Evidencing that children and young people are at the heart of all that NCT do. Inspectors saw that the fostering service are working collaboratively within NCT, saying ‘There is a better understanding and appreciation of each other’s professional roles. Collaboration between supervising social workers, children’s social workers and foster carers is improving.’ Achieving permanence for children and young people is evident and inspectors noted that ‘Managers have been creative in linking across the children’s trust to support good outcomes for children. Good relationships between the fostering agency and the voluntary adoption agency mean that children benefit from early permanence in their care.’

To see improvements in care being more child centred, for educational needs to be met and understood as well as our young people regularly taking part in extracurricular activities is all really encouraging. ‘Good’ judgement for fostering service following improvements.

Send Funding Changes

Parents, carers, families and education providers are invited to a communication and training session on upcoming special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) funding changes. The SEND Funding Update event takes place at The Guildhall from 1-4pm on Tuesday 12 March, and is a chance for people to find out more about changes to funding administration, criteria and the funding levels for children and young people up to the age of 25, with and without education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Places are free but must be booked in advance here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../send-funding-update...>



The changes, the earliest of which will be made on 1 April, are the result of work carried out by the SEND Funding Steering Group which included representatives from educational settings, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and representatives from parent and carer forum groups. The focus of the project team was on creating a funding framework to allow our Council to allocate funds to schools, colleges, units and early years settings in a more consistent and transparent way. The event at the Guildhall next month will share the progress that has been made and the

timetable for the changes which will be implemented. There will also be the opportunity to see a demonstration of the Education Banding Tool which is used to recommend funding levels for children and young people with EHC Plans. It will be followed by a number of online update meetings after Easter, the schedule for which will be communicated as soon as it is available.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Volunteer Grant Funding

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has launched a third round of grant funding which aims to create additional volunteering opportunities in West Northants. Local charities, voluntary or community groups, clubs, community interest companies, and not for profit organisations are invited to apply for a grant up to £1,500 to recruit new volunteers for use for projects which address a local community need. This Community Funding Grant Scheme has received £47,000 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to fund these creation of additional volunteering projects.



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 an application form or wish 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.

More information about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) can be on the Gov website. <https://www.gov.uk/.../uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

Community Ownership Fund

The £150m Community Ownership Fund (COF) exists to help communities across the UK to take ownership of assets at risk of closure. It will run until March 2025. For more information:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/.../What-is-the-Community...>

Assets of Community Value (ACV) form a part of the Community Right to Bid. It acts as the first stage in identifying and nominating buildings or other assets such as land that have a main use or purpose of furthering the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so into the future.

Once listed as Assets of Community Value with the local authority, the local community will be informed if they are listed for sale within the five year listing period. The community can then enact the Community Right to Bid, which gives them a moratorium period of six months to determine if they can raise the finance to purchase the asset.

An Asset of Community Value is defined as: A building or other land is an asset of community value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future. The Localism Act states that 'social interests' include cultural, recreational and sporting interests.



The following community organisations can nominate land and buildings for inclusion on the list:

- 1) Parish councils
- 2) Neighbourhood forums (as defined in Neighbourhood Planning regulations)

- 3) Unincorporated community groups of at least 21 members which do not distribute profits to members (this could include community groups with constitutions)
- 4) Not-for-private-profit organisations (e.g. charities).

Community organisations also must have a local connection, which means their activities are wholly or partly concerned with the area, or with a neighbouring authority's area.

Grant Schemes Launched to Support Debt and Money Advice & Immigration Services

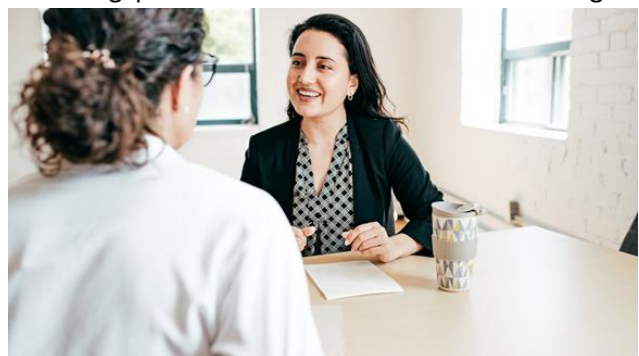
West Northamptonshire Council has launched a new £770k grants scheme to support Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisation initiatives providing debt and money advice and immigration support services in West Northants.

The grant funding will be available from 1 April 2024 to 30 March 2026 for eligible projects or services. These can be new initiatives, existing projects or services, or expansions of existing projects or services that:

- 4) Help to prevent people from experiencing debt and financial crisis by providing early intervention and support around issues such as bankruptcy, foreclosure and eviction.
- 5) Provide debt management and money advice services to enable people to contain and manage their debt obligations. This can be by creating manageable repayment plans, advocating services, negotiating with creditors and landlords, or other forms of support to avoid people falling deeper into debt.
- 6) Provide tailored welfare and benefit advice enabling people to maximise their entitlement to welfare support and reduce and contain their debt obligations.
- 7) Promote financial stability and security by helping people to build a foundation that reduces future financial stress and uncertainty.
- 8) Improve financial literacy by providing support, education and resources, particularly in the areas of how to budget and manage debt effectively.
- 9) Empower residents to take control of their financial lives and equip them with the knowledge, skills and resources to overcome financial obstacles, achieve goals, and work towards a brighter financial future.
- 10) Reduce socioeconomic inequality by providing communities who may be disproportionately affected by financial challenges with access to quality debt and money advice.
- 11) Improve overall economic impact by reducing personal debt levels and contributing to economic growth and stability at both the individual and societal levels.

In addition, grant funding is available for existing projects or services that provide immigration support, including those that:

- Provide individuals with legal guidance to understand their rights, options, and obligations under immigration law. This also includes the navigation of the immigration processes, which can be complex and daunting, especially for individuals who may not be familiar with the legal system or who face language barriers.
- Protect Human Rights and ensure that individuals fleeing persecution, violence, or other forms of harm have the opportunity to seek protection and immigration in accordance with international Human Rights standards. These services should also safeguard the rights and dignity of vulnerable immigrants.
- Empower individuals to make informed decisions about their migration journey and reduce their



- vulnerability to exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous individuals or organisations.
- Help individuals to understand their eligibility for various services and benefits such as healthcare and education and support with applications and documentation to ensure that migrants can access the resources they need to rebuild their lives in a new country.
- Support family reunification, promote integration and enable social cohesion and contributions to society.

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 an application form or wish 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.

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.



Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Transfer

Businesses can expect a seamless transition when the functions of the local enterprise partnership transfer to West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) this spring. The move follows the Government's decision last year to end core funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships from 31 March 2024, to allow for continuing services to be run through local authorities. From the start of April 2024, WNC will take the role of host for the continuing functions from the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP). This includes:

- 1) Strategic regional economic planning
- 2) The Growth Hub, a government-backed business support service which provides free 1-2-1 advice, guidance and resources to assist businesses located in the South East Midlands to realise growth

ambitions and overcome constraints.

- 3) The Careers Hub, which connects local employers to individual schools, colleges and training providers to coordinate careers education to the needs of the region's economy and enhance each student's early experiences of the workplace.

SEMLEP

South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership

This approach was agreed collectively by the six local authorities in the South East Midlands – Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire.

The Central Area Growth Board, made up of the leaders of each authority, will provide the initial governance structure, prior to the establishment

of a joint committee. The board will be supported by a newly formed Business Board with representatives from the business community across the area. The Business board will play a critical role in ensuring businesses across the South East Midlands have a hand in shaping the economy, and a voice on issues that affect them. Final preparations are now being made to transfer staff and functions to WNC as the host authority, along with the agreed budget for their management. These arrangements will be discussed at a meeting of WNC's Cabinet on Tuesday 13 February 2024.

Market Square Contractors Invest in Local Community

West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) contractor for the Market Square project has been adding social value to the area by encouraging the aspirations of local people. As part of an ongoing commitment to 'Level Up' West Northants, WNC ensures that the contractors for our regeneration projects add social value

to the community they are working in. This social value requirement means that investment from the Towns Fund not only enables us to deliver great projects such as the Market Square redevelopment, but some of this investment directly benefits communities across West Northants.

Delivering on these social value requirements has included partnering with schools to deliver engaging workshops, providing employment and placement opportunities as well as supporting local businesses to grow the local economy.



Over the past year Stepnell have visited many local schools to spark an interest in construction and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) related fields through creative and interactive workshops with students of all ages. Representatives from Stepnell have worked with seven schools, committing over 70 hours to engage with young people who have an interest in construction and STEM. They ran fun, interactive workshops with children of all ages to teach them a range of skills including team working and critical thinking as well as introducing them to basic concepts in design, engineering, physics and material chemistry.

These workshops taught students about biodiversity in construction by building 'bug hotels' for the school grounds. They learnt about how different insects and bugs are attracted to different materials. Zip wire construction provided insights into momentum and scientific experiment design by enabling children to investigate and experiment how different materials and angles used affects the ability of a zip wire to transport a toy from one side of the classroom to another. In addition to working with schools to provide these workshops, Stepnell further facilitated the encouragement of our young people's aspirations by

offering work experience to college and university students with an interest in civil engineering. The development created apprenticeship opportunities meanwhile Stepnell employed five local employees on training programmes.

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.

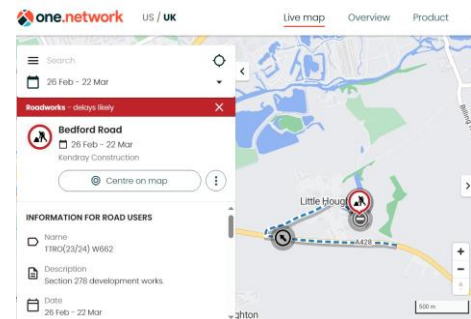
Further information and the full criteria for applications can be found on the WNC website and in the Council's Community Funding Grants Framework. If you would like to speak to the Community Funding Grants Team about your project or your eligibility to apply for this grant, email: communitygrants@westnorthants.gov.uk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

Major Section 278 Works Bedford Road, Little Houghton

Kendray Construction are carrying out major section 278 works along a section of the above road. These works include kerbing, footpath/footway construction and resurfacing works. To undertake the works safely the road is expected to be closed from the 26th February until the 22nd March 2024.

The closure and diversion can be viewed here <https://one.network/?tm=137246187>

If you require more information about the works, please contact Kendray Construction on 07971 042813.



Update on Traffic Enforcement Measures

Nearly 600 motorists will be warned about flouting road restrictions at a congested Northampton junction since recently introducing enforcement measures to help keep traffic moving there.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is in the process of issuing 597 warning notices to drivers who have blocked the hatched yellow box at the junction of St John's Street and Victoria Gardens since enforcement cameras went live at the start of this month 1 February 2024.

The measures have been put in place to help reduce town centre traffic congestion after the Department for Transport (DfT) changed legislation to enable local authorities to apply for powers to enforce against moving traffic contraventions.

During the first six months of this site going live, a warning notice will be issued for first offences to any vehicle, and from 1 August onwards, all motorists who breach the rules at this site will receive a Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) of £70.00, reduced to £35 if paid within 21 days. No PCNs have yet been issued. Any money from future



PCNs is ring fenced and will be put back in to funding highways services and projects under the legislation. Figures show that despite town centre diversions potentially causing additional traffic along St John's Street, the majority of those drivers facing warning notices for blocking the yellow box were travelling away from the town centre on the Victoria Gardens gyratory system.

On 16 February, WNC also introduced enforcement at two other sites with the following number of warnings currently being issued:

- Right turns are not allowed from Fishponds Road into Great Billing Way – 187 warning notices
- Hermitage Way is a bus only route which is routinely used by other motorists – 36 warning notices

With its highways partner Kier and the police, WNC has identified the first five spots which would benefit from this kind of enforcement. Alongside the cameras put in place this month, two further locations already agreed are set to be added at a later stage:

- Deanshanger Road, Old Stratford
- Horsemarket junction with Gold Street and Mare Fair

Entry into the specified stretch of Deanshanger Road is prohibited except for buses. At the Horse Market junction with Gold St and Marefair, several right and left turns are banned, and drivers should also ensure they follow the blue directional arrow signs. Motorists should avoid stopping in the box junction at the eastern end of Gold Street. Further sites for enforcement are under consideration, especially those that residents suggested during the consultation process.

New Cycle Routes



More than a kilometre of traffic-free routes for use by walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users will be implemented towards the South of Northampton Town Centre to provide better connection to local amenities and encourage more sustainable methods of travel through the town. West Northamptonshire Council has successfully bid for and been awarded £0.67m from Active Travel England to enable this scheme to be brought forward.

Work is set to start on 26 February, with the completed routes anticipated to open in June 2024 for the local community to enjoy.

The active route will provide essential connectivity between Northampton Town Centre and local amenities such as Delapré Abbey, The University of Northampton and Northampton Bike Park, as well as support commuters travelling to Brackmills Industrial Estate. The works are being carried by Kier, the Council's Highways partner for West Northamptonshire.

Road Closures for North-West Relief Road

The Northampton North-West Relief Road will provide a vital link from the A428 Harlestone Road to the A5199 Welford Road. It will serve the housing growth that is proposed to the west and north of Northampton and help address existing congestion by providing another crossing of the river valley.

WNC, alongside our Highways partner Kier Transportation and contractor Balfour Beatty, will be carrying out significant works to bring forward this scheme which include essential road closures of Sandy Lane and Welford Road. The scheme is supported by SEMLEP, the South East Midlands Local



Enterprise Partnership and benefits from £7.93 million of Local Growth funding. In addition to three-way lights that are currently in place on Brampton Lane until 28 March, road closures will be in place in the following locations:

- 1) Sandy Lane will be closed from 4 March until 3 April with a diversion in place via Northampton Road and Harlestone Road. Access to properties and amenities on Sandy Lane will be maintained throughout the closure.
- 2) Brampton Lane/ Welford Road will be closed at night between 8pm and 6pm Monday to Friday from 18 March to 28 March with a diversion in place overnight.
- 3) Welford Road will be closed from 3 April until 21 June with a diversion in place for road users. Access to properties and amenities will be maintained throughout the closure.

For further information regarding the project visit: Major highways projects:
<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../major-highways-projects>

For full details of the road closures please visit: Roadworks | West Northamptonshire Council
([westnorthants.gov.uk](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk))

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/roadworks.../roadworks>

POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Carry a Basketball not a Blade

A Northamptonshire campaign to encourage children to take up sport rather than knife crime has been awarded £6000 by Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Stephen Mold. Carry a Basketball, Not a Blade is



run by Basketball Northants and uses sport and educational workshops to lead youngsters away from knife crime. The campaign sees a team led by professional basketball player Andre Arissol go into local schools to deliver both practical and classroom sessions. The classroom-based sessions teach children about the misconceptions around knife crime when it comes to self-defence and personal protection. They applied for funding through the Police, Fire and Crime

Commissioner's Making Northamptonshire Safer Fund and found out that they were successful in January 2024. Read more, including how to apply for a grant from the 'Making Northamptonshire Safer' fund, on the website:

www.northantspfcc.org.uk/basketball-grant/

Do not share Voi Scooter Accounts with those under 18 years

No-one under the age of 18 is allowed to ride a Voi rental e-scooter in Northamptonshire, as agreed with West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Councils, who manage the e-scooter trials in this area. Anyone who allows an underage rider to use their account could be banned from Voi and even face prosecution. Northamptonshire police will be carrying out spot checks/patrols on e-scooter riders in coming weeks to clamp down on underage riders. At the same time, Voi is reminding people that e-scooters are for people aged 18 and older with a joint campaign. To ride a Voi e-scooter in the UK, riders must have either a full or provisional driving licence and meet local age restrictions. The vast majority of rental e-scooter riders follow the rules and do not share their account with



anyone. However, in the UK, just over 500 Voi riders (out of 1.5 million) - or just under 0.04% of all users - have been banned for sharing their accounts with underage riders. If anyone spots someone they believe is underage riding a Voi e-scooter in Northamptonshire, they can report it to the company on either report.voi.com or support@voiapp.io.

Please supply as much information as possible, including the date, time, location and if possible the e-scooter's four-digit registration number. Voi works closely with local authorities to agree to regulations for use of its services, including operating hours, parking zones and minimum age.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Rising Sports Stars Urged to Apply for Talent Scheme

Up-and-coming athletes in West Northamptonshire are being given the chance to take their careers to the next level – in an Olympic and Paralympic year – with Everyone Active's Sporting Champions scheme. Relaunching this month, the renowned programme empowers aspiring athletes to unlock their full potential by offering access to state-of-the-art training facilities and mentoring support from Olympians and Paralympians.



Since its inception in 2016, the scheme has transformed the lives of more than 5,000 athletes by providing them with free access to Everyone Active's 230-plus leisure centres nationwide, helping them press forward in their journey to sporting stardom. These include Moulton Leisure Centre and Daventry Leisure Centre, run in partnership with West Northamptonshire Council. For 2024, the legendary Colin Jackson, Olympic 110m hurdles silver medallist and former world

record holder, returns as the scheme's Ambassador. He will be working alongside a line-up of inspiring Elite athletes who have starred on the Olympic and Paralympic stage – Northamptonshire swimmer Maisie Summers-Newton, Lauren Steadman, Lutalo Muhammad, Jessica and Jennifer Gadirova, Kadeena Cox, Richard Kilty – in group mentoring sessions throughout the year. These sporting heroes will share their wisdom and expertise, guiding up and coming athletes every step of the way. Over the past eight years, the Sporting Champions scheme has poured more than £2million into young athletes, proving its commitment to grassroots sporting excellence. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, no fewer than 30 Sporting Champions competed, taking home five gold, two silver and three bronze medals.

Applications open on Monday, February 12, 2024 and run until Monday, March 11, 2024 via the Everyone Active Sporting Champions website, easportingchampions.com Follow the Sporting Champions Instagram (@easportingchamps) for more information on how to apply.

Choirfest Free Pop Up Group Singing Experience

Gareth Fuller and show cast members lead this relaxed, fun singing opportunity, open to all regardless of experience....and its free! An exclusive pop-up taster singing session, offering individuals of all skill levels a chance to discover the joy of singing, is set to prove what many have questioned – everyone can sing! The bold claim is set to be put to the test during an engaging session taking place on Saturday 9 March



2024, from 10.30am to midday at The Carnegie Room, Northampton Central Library. Providing participants with a glimpse into the power of singing together, attendees will learn harmonies plus other vocal

techniques and be taught a song by the end of the session, creating a choir in the process! Whether a complete beginner or looking to refine your singing skills, the session promises to be an enjoyable and educational experience plus a great opportunity to discover the many benefits of singing with others.

Gareth Fuller, ChoirFest Music Director and Choir Director to over 450 Northants based community voices and Liam Gallagher's sold out Knebworth shows attended by over 160,000, said: "During our weekly community choirs across Northamptonshire and the UK, we have proven that no matter your ability, singing really is something everyone can do! "Stress-relieving and confidence-building, I am excited to lead this session and create a choir in a short time and prove that everyone can sing!" This joint initiative by Public Health, Northampton Central Library and West Northamptonshire Council will also include cast members of the highly anticipated music production Collide: A ChoirFest Experience, sharing a snippet of what to expect from the show which takes place on 30 March 2024, at The Royal & Derngate Theatre.

The specially commissioned musical show celebrates the joys of group singing whilst providing an opportunity for 200 local community voices to sing alongside a full live band, string section and Karen Gibson MBE, famed for leading the choir at the Royal wedding of the Sussexes, Harry and Meghan.

In addition to the many services available at Northampton Central Library, a large collection of musical scores sets are available for choirs and orchestras to hire at reasonable rates. A variety of service options are available, from an annual subscription to a one-off set. Currently around 40 groups use the service, with 6920 scores loaned in the last year. All fees and charges can be found on the WNC website.

Free tickets for The Exclusive Taster Singing Session will be available from 5 February, book your tickets here:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/.../harmony.../e-ldbgyb>

Tickets for Collide: A ChoirFest Experience are on sale now, available from the Royal & Derngate website:

<https://www.royalndderngate.co.uk/whats-on/choirfest/>

Silverstone home of the British Grand Prix for another 10 years

Silverstone will remain the home of the British Grand Prix for another 10 years, further strengthening West Northants as a destination of sporting and cultural excellence.

The world-class motorsports venue has announced it will continue to host the British Grand Prix until 2034 after reaching an agreement with Formula 1. This new deal will see Silverstone race into its ninth decade having hosted the first ever Formula 1 Grand Prix in 1950. The British Grand Prix has become one of the largest attended events on the F1 calendar and a pivotal event in West Northamptonshire. Last year's event attracted some of the biggest names in sport, music and culture, as the race drew in a record crowd of 480,000 across the weekend with over 60,000 fans camping in the local area. This year, fans will enjoy a weekend filled with great racing as well as off-track entertainment including concerts every evening on Silverstone's main stage headlined by music's biggest artists, including Stormzy and Kings of Leon.

The 3.6 mile (5.8km), 18-corner Silverstone circuit has been revered by drivers through the ages. 74 years on from Giuseppe Farina's first victory, a roll call of Formula 1 royalty have taken the chequered flag including Alberto Ascari, Sir Stirling Moss OBE, Juan Manuel Fangio, Jim Clark OBE, Jack Brabham AO OBE, Sir Jackie Stewart OBE, Niki Lauda, Alain Prost, Michael Schumacher, and Sir Lewis Hamilton MBE, who has a record eight victories. Three other members of the 2024 grid have claimed victory around the famous circuit including two-time winners Max Verstappen and Fernando Alonso, and Carlos Sainz who took his maiden victory there in 2022.

Great Britain has always played a pivotal role in Formula 1 and today it is home to seven teams competing in the World Championship, many located just a few miles from the circuit. Throughout its history, F1 has contributed significantly to the UK economy, creating thousands of jobs and boosting the country's manufacturing industry through pioneering research and development projects. F1 also works closely with UK universities and schools to drive interest in STEM subjects, fully funding full-time university scholarships

at five universities, running STEM skills workshops across the country and hosting career insight days for school students. The Formula 1 Qatar Airways British Grand Prix 2024 will take place from 4 to 7 July 2024.

Museum & Art Gallery to Mark D-Day

Northampton Museum and Art Gallery is collecting D-Day stories and would love your help. The 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings and Operation Overlord on the Normandy coast falls on 6 June 2024. To mark the occasion, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery is creating a commemorative exhibition in libraries at Brackley, Daventry, Towcester and Weston Favell. Each library will host exhibition cabinets filled with Northamptonshire stories, objects and memories of D-Day and its immediate aftermath. The project will emphasise the Northamptonshire connection to D-Day, looking at those serving in the theatre of war as well as the impact on the home front. They are looking for information on the following themes:



- 1) Northamptonshire Yeomanry at Normandy and their families on the home front
- 2) Northamptonshire airfields, the RAF and the Jedburgh teams and their families on the home front
- 3) Northamptonshire people in the armed forces at Normandy and their families on the home front
- 4) Northamptonshire Regiment soldiers seconded and active in D-Day
- 5) The impact of D-Day on families and civilian life
- 6) A snapshot of what was happening in Northamptonshire on D-Day

How you can help: The project wants to connect with local people and their family stories of D-Day.

If you or anyone you know has a D-Day story or memorabilia, please email museums@westnorthants.gov.uk

We also want to know about any D-Day events happening in your area. Please email details to communications@westnorthants.gov.uk

Film Festival Returns to Northampton

With award-winning filmmakers, new talent and famous faces tackling topics from love and loss to burlesque and bullying, this year's Northampton Film Festival returns to town from 8 to 16 March.

More than 60 short films, and six feature films will be shown at venues across the town during the festival, showcasing the very best of local film-making talent.

The festival opens on Friday 8 March with a free networking and drinks event supported by the University of Northampton at their Waterside Campus, accompanied by a screening. This is followed by the festival's opening gala, 'Inspiring Women', at Delapre Abbey on Saturday 9 March. There will be short and feature-length film screenings throughout the festival at Cineworld Northampton, Northampton Filmhouse and Lings Forum Cinema - culminating in the Awards Ceremony at Cineworld on



Saturday 16 March where the winners for 2024 will be announced.

Tickets to some events are free with the rest starting at £5 for an individual screening. People can also access all of the events by buying a Festival Pass. More information can be found on the Northampton Film Festival website <https://northamptonfilmfestival.eventive.org/welcome>

New Cricket Facility in Northampton



West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has agreed to lease land to Northamptonshire County Cricket Club (NCCC) as it seeks to deliver a brand-new cricket facility in Northampton. At the cabinet meeting Tuesday, 13 February 2024, councillors approved plans for a 125-year lease for land at New Manor Farm, Moulton to NCCC, which will enable the club to take a step forward in consulting with residents around the further progress of proposals to deliver a second site. Those proposals will be tested through the

planning process and local licensing regimes, which will be subject to the usual consultation processes.

Both the cricket club and the council are committed to engaging with all stakeholders including parish councils, community groups and local residents in the area to ensure that the detailed plans are fully explored, and any mitigation required is understood prior to any planning application being submitted.

The plans are for a permanent capacity of 2,000 and while the illustrative plans from NCCC show temporary stands which would substantially increase the capacity, this could only happen with the permission of the local authority and is not part of the lease agreement considered by WNC's Cabinet yesterday.

The new venue would become a home for the development of women's and girls' cricket of all formats, including softball festivals, junior leagues and provide a consistent venue for pathway cricket. There are no plans to move the professional men's setup or club offices away from The County Ground, a venue Northamptonshire County Cricket Club has been proud to call home since 1886. Many of the club's goals align with the objectives of the council to provide accessible sport and wellbeing opportunities within the local community. The proposals will enable NCCC to grow participation in cricket from grass roots programmes through to academy level, making the sport accessible to people from all backgrounds.

Return of the Big Help Out

Last year, Northamptonshire Community Foundation joined the Lord Lieutenant's Office to support The Big Help Out, in celebration of King Charles III's Coronation and to highlight the vital importance of volunteering in our local communities. In 2024, they are once again



supporting this cause and will be working with charities and community groups across the county to give residents the chance to discover volunteering opportunities in

their local area. This summer, between 7 and 9 June, there will be another opportunity to join dedicated volunteers in giving time to a worthy cause of your choosing, whether that is supporting a local food bank, tending a community garden, spending time with a vulnerable person or teaching a skill to young people.

Those who are aware of any volunteer-led organisations looking to get involved in The Big Help Out 2024, should direct them to talk to the NCF's Grants Team.

Email enquiries@ncf.uk.com or call 01604 230033.

On-line Trailer Promoting Women's Rugby World Cup

Sixth form students from Northgate Academy in Northampton have partnered with Northampton Film Festival to produce an online trailer promoting the Women's Rugby World Cup, which is coming to West Northamptonshire in 2025. Around 20 young people are taking part in the project and overseeing every stage of creation, from planning and story boarding to filming and creative direction, with a number of sessions taking place at the Bee Hive in Northampton. The project launched following students' work experience placements with the WNC Web Team, where they demonstrated a keen interest in stop motion films and working in the film industry as a future career aspiration. The project aims to provide students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) with a greater understanding of the realities of seeking employment and working in the film industry and aims to equip them with essential employment skills whilst learning the art of film production, exercising their creative abilities and building a portfolio of work experience.



The Northampton Film Festival have delivered hands on workshops for the students centred around writing poetry and short stories as well as auditioning hopefuls wanting to take part in the film. The final trailer will be premiered during the Northampton Film Festival at Cineworld in March, with the full video teaser being used to promote the Women's Rugby World Cup being hosted in West Northants in 2025.

The Bee Hive is a vocational sixth form provision for young people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and is part of the Northgate School Arts College Academy Trust. The centre provides students with first-hand real-life experiential learning. It has a café, a conference hall, a commercial kitchen, a second-hand shop, and a wellbeing centre. The project has been a joint initiative by Northgate School and WNC's Digital, Technology and Innovation; Sports and Leisure teams and the West Northamptonshire Partnership. Free tickets to the premier on 11 March are available on the Northampton Film Festival Website.

<https://northamptonfilmfestival.eventive.org/schedule/16yrs-and-under-in-competition-screening-pg-cert-65a803d954f77e0039d7f181>