

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT APRIL 2024



E-Newsletter Issue 04/2024

Steve chatting to Sheila Nunn

at

Hackleton Parish Council (HPC)

Health and Well-being Event

Coffee@Carey

Hackleton

28 February 2024

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NEWS REPORT APRIL 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. The Highways Order relating to the speed limit changes on the A428 became effective on 18th March 2024.

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 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. The works are programmed to start on 15th April to place a new pipe across the carriageway at Ashton Road. The engineers are confident that this along with previous works completed will alleviate any of the further drainage concerns on Blacksmiths Way.

I have asked WNC to explain how the council will prioritise the allocation of budget and resources for the complete resurfacing of Lodge Road, Little Houghton in the future. I have been advised that WNC does not have any plans for surfacing Lodge Road as part of the Annual Plan. However, they have agreed to inspect the carriageway to see if a small patching scheme may be possible later this coming financial year. I have advised them that residents are working on a petition for WNC to prioritise the 'allocation of budget and resources for the resurfacing.' I am arranging to meet the Assistant Delivery Manager on site so that we can discuss what options are available to improve the quality of the surface. Before doing so, I would like to understand the details of previous repairs, which have not lasted.

Kier will carry out carriageway resurfacing works along a section of the A428 between Brafield on the Green and Denton. To undertake these works safely they will require a series of overnight closures commencing on 20 May 2024 to 29 May 2024 between 8pm and 6am. The closures will be for pre-patching works, surface dressing, sweeping and lining and a schedule of these works will be provided by Kier in due course.

The Family Hubs consultation closes midnight Sunday 28 April 2024.

Household Support Funding is to be extended for a further six months from the end of March this year. More than £11m was allocated to WNC from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in just over two years with over 251,800 awards of support to households who have struggled financially.

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 historic sites in Northampton, which could be better utilised whilst reducing costs. See my Monthly Report.

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 Council agreed a rent 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.

Residents in North and West Northamptonshire are being encouraged to apply early to vote by post for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Elections on Thursday, 2 May. See my Monthly Report

Residents can do their bit for the democratic process whilst earning themselves some extra money by taking up a role at parish polling stations in the upcoming elections. Further details are in my Monthly Report.

We will be conducting the Stage 2 consultation on the Community Governance Review from 25 April to 24 July this year.

The Planning Policy Team engaged with Parish Councils about a key part of the Local Plan – the Rural Settlement Hierarchy. You needed to have your responses in by 2 April 2024.

I have given you an update on the Urban Design Learning (UDL) event about how the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for planning applications, the sustainable drainage policies many councils have, and other nature-centred strategies fit – or don't fit – together. And, beyond the policy framework, what approaches will actually deliver more biodiverse, climate and flood resilient places? See my Monthly Report.

ACRE and Stagg Architects have taken a significant step forward by publishing a comprehensive guide 'Village & Community Halls: A Net Zero Design Guide' to assist village and community halls in their journey towards Net Zero. I have enclosed details of this in my Monthly Report.

This summer, between 7 and 9 June, there will be another opportunity to join 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.

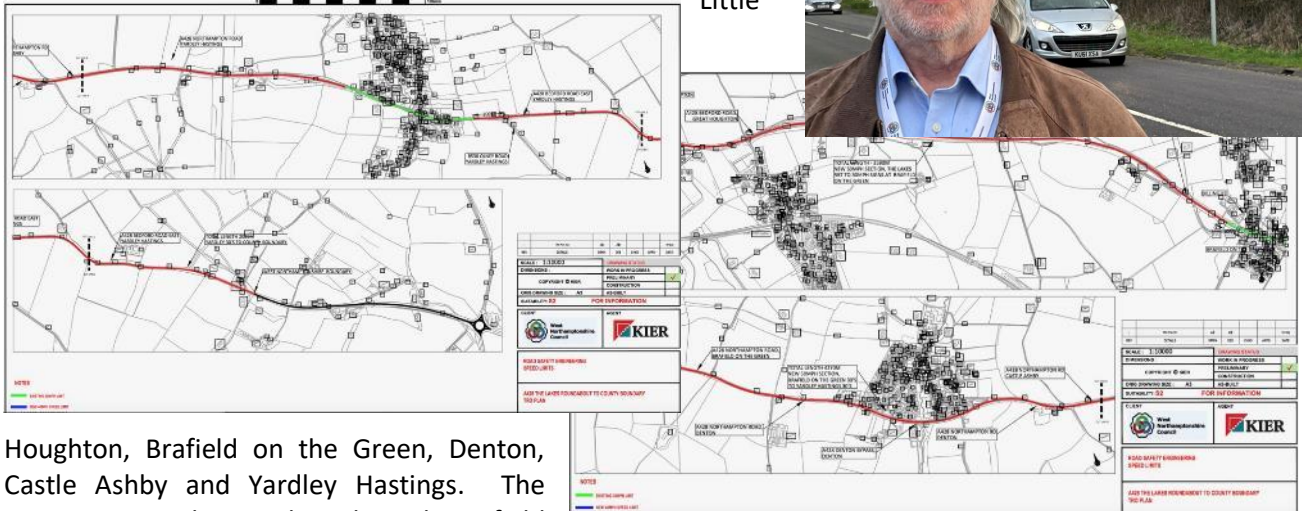
I hope that you enjoy this edition of my Monthly Report. Don't forget you can follow me on <https://www.facebook.com/stephen.clarke.31924>

All the Best, Steve

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

New Signage on A428 now effective

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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. The Highways Order relating to the speed limit changes on the A428 became effective on 18th March 2024.

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. The works are programmed to start on 15th April to place a new pipe across the carriageway at Ashton Road. The engineers are confident that this along with previous works completed will alleviate any of the further drainage concerns on Blacksmiths Way.



Potholes Lodge Road, Little Houghton

I have asked WNC to explain how the council will prioritise the allocation of budget and resources for the complete resurfacing of Lodge Road in the future. I have been advised that WNC does not have any plans for surfacing Lodge Road as part of the Annual Plan. However, they have agreed to inspect the carriageway to see if a small patching scheme may be possible for later this coming financial year.

I have advised them that the local residents are working on a petition for WNC to prioritise the 'allocation of budget and resources for the resurfacing of Lodge Road'. Indeed, they have advised me that this road has never been surfaced properly. Therefore, I am arranging to meet the Assistant Delivery Manager on site so that we can discuss what options are available to improve the quality of the surface. I have asked him to let me have two or three suggested dates and times for us to meet. Before doing so, I would like to understand the details of previous repairs, which have not lasted.



Sheila and her contribution to Hackleton

When I attended the Hackleton Parish Council (HPC) Health and Well-being Event at Coffee@Carey, Hackleton on 28 February 2024, I met a very interesting lady, Sheila Nunn who has lived in Hackleton since 1952. Indeed, she was one of the first residents to live in Carey Road, Hackleton and she still lives there today. Sheila set up the Hackleton Playgroup in the 1960s and she has been a big part of what is now the Pre-School ever since then. She has seen lots of changes including the introduction of Ofsted and advances in technology. The magazine, Nursery World did a spotlight on Sheila on Tuesday, October 12, 2010. At the time she was still a volunteer at Hackleton Pre-School and had worked at the playgroup on and off in various capacities for the previous 44 years. She had started as a volunteer initially before being made Supervisor in 1968. Sheila had been involved in fostering for a number of years and it was her love of children that got her involved in the Play Group in the first place. She has lived a rich life and many children will have been enriched by her care and attention. She says that working with children is wonderful and brings lots of happiness. It was a privilege to meet someone like Sheila who at the age of 94 years is still giving so much to her local community.



Hackleton WEB Group Meeting 5 March 2024

On 5 March 2024, I attended the Hackleton Wildlife, Environment and Biodiversity (WEB) Group meeting at Carey Chapel, Hackleton. They meet to discuss the effects of climate change on their local environment and wellbeing. They explore what is happening locally and nationally and consider how they might be able to change things.

The group includes members from Hackleton School, Wombles, WI, Parish Council, Longland Meadow, The Scouts and the Churchyard Group as well as those who work in food production, buildings sustainability and farming. They are all united in wanting to reduce the negative effects of climate change and to increase wildlife, biodiversity and wellbeing.

We had an update from each of the Groups and Roy Hawkesford told us about the Big Plastic Count which was due to take place on 11-17 March 2024: <https://thebigplasticcount.com/> Nearly 100 billion pieces of plastic packaging are thrown away by UK households every year, and just 12% is recycled in the UK. So, we are being encouraged to use their count tally sheet to record any plastic we use. At the end of the week we submitted our results to: thebigplasticcount.com/submit

Maz Woolley shared the new logo and strap line for the group which was work in progress.

During the evening, we had a presentation from Jane Wood and Harry Mellor from Climate Action West Northamptonshire (CA-WN) who outlined what they do, and what is happening elsewhere. We heard about their program to assess air quality with their own meters and how this works together with WNC's Air



Quality Meters. Harry told us about the troposphere, which is the lowest layer of the Earth's atmosphere. Most of the mass (about 75-80%) of the atmosphere is in the troposphere. Most types of clouds are found in the troposphere, and almost all weather occurs within this layer. The troposphere is by far the wettest layer of the atmosphere (all of the other layers contain very little moisture). The bottom of the troposphere is at the Earth's surface and extends upward to about 10 km (6.2 miles or about 33,000 feet) above sea level. No more than you might cycle in a day Harry said. So why is it important? The troposphere is very sensitive to processes occurring at this level, like evaporation of oceans, photosynthesis in plants,

respiration of living creatures and human activities. Over the last 40 years, the boundary between the troposphere and the neighbouring stratosphere has risen as a result of climate change.

Jane handed out a helpful booklet on how to create a re-wilded space entitled 'CLAIM BACK YOUR SPACE: WORKING WITH NATURE'-Start up notes for small projects written by Brian Webster, Ecologist and Illustrated by Clare Robertson-Marriott. Roy told us about the Parish Council initiative to distribute a pack of wildflower seeds with the Parish Magazine this month. This gift of seeds is to enhance Hackleton gardens with natural beauty and to promote biodiversity and attract wildlife.

Thank you, Jane and Harry, for a very interesting and informative session. Indeed, you gave us much food for thought.

A special thank you to Roy, the WEB Group and the Parish Council for all they are doing to make a difference to our Local Environment. If you would like to make a difference too, please come along to his next meeting. I know you will be most welcome. For more information email: royhawkesford@gmail.com

Great Houghton Coffee Morning 8 March 2024

On Friday 8 March 2024, I attended the Great Houghton Coffee Morning which takes place in the Great Houghton Village Hall on the second Friday of each month at 10.30 am. This delightful Community Coffee Morning is run by the WI and is very well attended by those from both Great and Little Houghton.

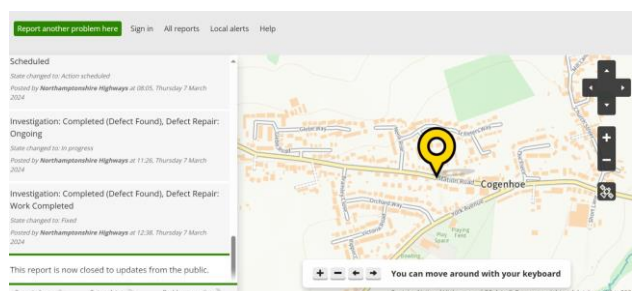
I received a very warm welcome from Mike Barham, Parish Councillor and Mike Billingham, Clerk to the Parish Council and enjoyed chatting to Eileen, Sylvia, Phil, Jean, Chris and others. I spent an interesting time hearing about a number of local issues.

The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 12 April 2024, when I look forward to catching up with everyone again.

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.

Fix My Street Cogenhoe 4718678

I have needed to escalate this item at least twice since it was originally logged. Therefore, I am



pleased to report that the matter was resolved on 7 March 2024.

Winter Warmer Little Houghton 13 March 2024

On Wednesday 13 March 2024, I attended the Winter Warmer in Little Houghton, which takes place between 2pm and 4pm in the village hall. Today was well attended and I enjoyed catching up with friends from the village whilst savouring the wonderful home baked muffins made by Julia for the occasion.



Well done to Julia and Peter for organising this event throughout the Winter. The last Winter Warmer will be on 27 March 2024, when Afternoon Tea will be served and there will be a warm welcoming space for a chat or quiet time with refreshments available. We look forward to seeing you there.

Coffee@Carey Hackleton 13 March 2024

On 13 March 2024 I visited the Coffee@Carey, the village coffee shop set up in the Carey Chapel, Hackleton. I frequently visit there on a Wednesday when out and about in Hackleton. It's always great to catch



up with Rev Jennie and others.

They had their Food Donation from Project 16:15 on display and they were very busy. I was pleased to bump into Sylvia Newnham who I haven't seen for a while, and we spoke briefly about Sheila Nunn and her contribution to Hackleton.

If you want to apply for a blue badge or could be eligible for a grant to allow for disabled adaptations to your home or have a question about council tax, highways or environmental health then please drop into Coffee@Carey on 27 March 2024 and speak to a Customer Service Advisor from West Northants Council or Kier. Well done to Hackleton Parish Council for arranging with WNC and Kier to attend.

Book Swop Quinton 16 March 2024

On Saturday 16 March 2024, I attended the monthly Quinton Book Swop at the Village Hall. It was quite busy with a number of folks browsing the books and ordering carrot cake and coffee from Helen and Emma.



Books are available to take home with you in exchange for a donation of either a book or £1. So, it's an opportunity to mix with neighbours, recycle your pre-loved books and support the village hall. It was great to catch up with Val, Joan, Cynthia, Tina, Barbara, Diane, Graham and others. I heard all about the trials and tribulations of the bus service and of course the excitement about the new bus stop!

Do join the Quinton WI at their Fashion Show on 24 April 2024 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

Cogenhoe Community Lunch 18 March 2024

On 18 March 2024, I attended the Cogenhoe Community Lunch at the Village Hall, Cogenhoe. We had a very good lunch of Sausage and Mash with green vegetables followed by Jam Sponge and custard. Thank you to everyone who came along and supported our community lunch today.



‘Making time for and joining in communal meals is perhaps the single most important thing we can do – both for our own health and wellbeing and for that of the wider community.’ A special thank you to Deborah and helpers who are giving so much back to their local community.

The next Community Lunch Club is on 15 April 2024 at 12.30pm in the York Room, Cogenhoe and Whiston Village Hall £7 in advance, followed by a ‘Scam Awareness’ talk by Northants Police. Then on the fifth Monday, 29 April 2024, the group will be going out to lunch at Frosts Garden Centre. If you are interested in joining everyone then please contact Deborah on 07512 045418, clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk

Coffee@Carey 19 March 2024

On Tuesday 19 March 2024, I visited Coffee@Carey, Hackleton and caught up with a number of folks from the Denton Patients Support Group (DPSG) at their regular fortnightly meeting. There was a large attendance as various members from Denton, Hackleton 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. Although there wasn’t a quiz today members of the DSPG group had a lovely time chatting with friends and it was good to meet with Rev Jennie, Jenny, Sue, John, Anne, Steve and others. I heard all about their outing to a Garden Centre in Oakham recently. Today Hackleton Parish Council (HPC) had a support desk which meant that I was able to discuss relevant matters relating to Hackleton with their Clerk, Alison Benson.



Cogenhoe Community Support Desk 21 March 2024

On Thursday 21 March 2024, I visited the Tea Room, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall for the Parish Help Desk. I spoke to one of our Ukrainian residents about the difficulties she was having and my intervention with WNC Resettlement on her behalf. Deborah has been doing a fine job supporting this resident.

Afterwards we caught up on future events. The next Community Lunch Club is on Monday 15th April at 12.30pm in the York Room followed by a Scam Awareness talk by Northants Police. Deborah is trying to organise a trip for the Community Lunch Club to go to Frosts Garden Centre on 29 April 2024. We will hear more about this shortly.



Watch out for the Annual Parish Meeting which is to take place on 15 April 2024 at the Village Hall, York Avenue at 7.30pm. Many of the Community organisations will be giving a presentation. This is an ideal opportunity for you to raise any issues that you may have.

If you want to participate in any of these events, then please contact Deborah: clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk or telephone 07512 04541.

Little Houghton Parish Lunch 21 March 2024

On Thursday 21 March 2024 after visiting Cogenhoe, I joined the Little Houghton Parish Lunch that takes place at St Mary’s Church from 12-2pm on the third Thursday each month. Although I was a little late, I received a very warm welcome. We all enjoyed delicious food and great company. There was a choice of chicken casserole or ‘toad in the hole’ with potatoes and vegetables followed by a selection of home-made puddings.



The lunch was marvellous, and all the helpers are so kind and helpful. A special thank you to Gill for the great 'toad in the hole' and the entire team for organising such a special lunch.

The Little Houghton Community Lunch caters to the needs of the village, helping them stay connected and social. Whether you need a lift, a friendly chat, or a fun activity, their volunteer-led services are there to support you. The food is prepared and served by dedicated volunteers.

If you would like to come along and make new friends, share your stories, and have a good time with other people in your local community then contact Joy Mayhew on 01604 890498. A special thank you to all who make the lunch and to Irene for her thoughtful words.

Corkill Award Celebration (DSPG) 22 March 2024

On 22 March 2024, I joined Kevin Hewitson and the Denton Surgery Patients Group (DSPG) for their celebration of winning the 2023-24 National Corkill Award. This was not just a celebration but also a recognition of the efforts and commitment of the members of the DSPG and their relationship with the Surgery and the Practice Manager, Nicola Draper and her team together with the volunteer drivers. DSPG was considered with 25 other shortlisted Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and were successful in winning this prestigious award.

The Denton Surgery Practice catchment covers 15 villages spread over 35 sq. miles connected by mainly rural roads and a serious lack of bus services serving over 6,000 patients. This creates problems for people trying to not only access the surgery in Denton but also hospitals in Northampton, Daventry, Corby, Kettering and even as far as Oxford. The Nene Valley scheme set up by Helen Cudmore, Wendy Watson, Madeleine Donald and John Smith was the foundation of the volunteer patient



transport scheme that met the need for over a decade but stopped operating 4 years ago. That is apart from John Smith who many will remember as the coordinator of the scheme and also a member of the DSPG. Sadly, John Smith died recently.

Eighteen months ago, the new DSPG volunteer car scheme was created with support from Helen and John to fill the gap created by the demise of the Nene Valley scheme. Finance to cover some of the running costs came from Parish Councils and my WNC Councillor Covid 19 Support fund. I was privileged to be asked by Kevin Hewitson to help secure funding to re-instate the volunteer driver scheme that collected and took patients to and from hospital and Denton surgery appointments. The grant was used to recruit and support approximately 12 volunteer drivers. The grant enabled them to advertise for drivers and hold a recruitment meeting along with providing driver awareness and training.

DSPG intends to grow its Volunteer Patient Transport Service (VPTS) by working with the Surgery and its Social Prescribers led by Jackie Power and Sue Hayton to use this valuable transport facility to make other events accessible for patients. An example of this is the fortnightly wellbeing meeting that takes place at Coffee@Carey arranged with Rev Jennie and supported by the volunteer drivers. Patients now have the opportunity to get out and meet others socially over a coffee. All of which, supports the WNC Health and Wellbeing LAP initiative. It has been a privilege to support the DSPG and I will continue to do so in the future.

Brafield Fundraiser for D Day Commemoration Weekend

The Tribute

Let us remember those who gave their lives at home and abroad during the D-Day landings, whose sacrifice enables us all to enjoy the peace and freedom we have today.

Let us remember those who came home wounded, physically and mentally, and the friends and family who cared for them.

Let us remember those who returned to restore their relationships and rebuild their working lives after years of conflict and turmoil.

Let us remember the families that lost husbands, wives, sons, daughters and sweethearts.

Let us remember the servicemen and women and merchant seafarers of all nationalities - from all countries - who fought, suffered and died during the D-Day landings and six years of war.

Let us all remember those in the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, Merchant Navy, and our Allies - the brave people who kept us safe on the home front and abroad and those in reserved occupations during the difficult time of war.

Let us remember the brave doctors and nurses who cared for the wounded, the men and women who toiled in the fields, the coal mines, the factories and the air raid wardens, police officers, firemen, ambulance drivers and the young people of the Scouts and Guides who all played such a vital role in the war.

On Saturday 23 March 2024, I joined a number of residents at the Brafield Club Fundraiser for the D Day Commemoration weekend. On 6 June 2024, the world will mark the last major D-Day anniversary alongside Veterans of the Normandy Campaign, which is exactly 80 years on from the D Day landings.

This year, the community project 'Standing with Giants' installed a staggering 1,475 silhouettes across the wild meadow fields of the British Normandy Memorial called 'For Your Tomorrow'. The 1,475 giants reflect the number of servicemen who died serving under British command on D-Day itself. The public will be able to see them as part of the D-Day 80 commemorations throughout Spring and Summer 2024.

The International D Day tributes are to be undertaken at 9.15pm alongside the lighting of the Beacons and the 'Lamp Lights of Peace' on 6th June 2024. All those who are lighting Beacons, and 'Lamp Lights of Peace' are being asked to undertake the reading of The International Tribute (see above) when lighting their beacons at 9.15pm on 6th June 2024. This could be undertaken by your Town or Parish Clerk, Chairman or Leader of the Council, a family member of all ages, or others you feel appropriate, providing them with this unique opportunity to pay 'tribute' to all those that paid the ultimate sacrifice on D-Day and throughout WWII as a whole, whilst fighting for the freedom we all enjoy today.

Whilst in Brafield, we enjoyed our coffee and cake listening to '(I'll be with you in) Apple Blossom Time', 'Don't fence me in' and 'Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive' recorded by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters.



Spring Flower Show Denton 23 March 2024

On Saturday 23 March 2024, I attended the Spring Flower Show at Denton Village Hall from 2.30-4.30pm hosted by the Denton Gardening Club. It was exceptionally busy, and decisions had already been made regarding the winning entries and we were able to walk around the hall spotting the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes. There was a delightful display of daffodils, tulips and other plants. It was great to catch up with Caroline, Muriel, Phillipa and Pat from the Friday Coffee Morning and to meet other friends from Brafield and Little Houghton. Today was a regular date and venue for experienced gardeners. Well done to all who made the event such a success.



Winter Warmer Little Houghton 27 March 2024

On the afternoon of 27 March 2024, I attended the final Winter Warmer session at the Village Hall Little Houghton. Peter and Julia Harrison have been running these weekly events since 1 November 2023. Little Houghton Village Hall, 50, Bedford Road, Little Houghton, NN7 1AB in the centre of the village was open from 2.00pm to 4.00pm every Wednesday until this week, and there was always a warm welcoming space for a chat or quiet time with refreshments available.



As this was the last meeting, everyone was told to expect a special Afternoon tea with 'fizz'. Today was exceptionally well attended by the residents and I enjoyed catching up with friends from the village whilst savouring a wonderful afternoon tea with sandwiches, trifles and cakes. We then played two rounds of Heads or Tails.



Well done to Julia and Peter for organising this event and to Jenny and others for making the trifles and cakes. The Group gave Julia and Peter a special gift in recognition of all their efforts over the winter months to make the Winter Warmer such an attractive place to be on a Wednesday afternoon.

Welcome to Rev Kris Seward, New Rector of Wymersley Benefice

On 27 March 2024, I was privileged to attend the Licensing Service for Rev Kris Seward, previously Curate at



Crick, Lilbourne & Yelvertoft to be appointed Rector of the Wymersley Benefice at St Peter's Church, Cogenhoe. Kris will have responsibility for Cogenhoe, Great Houghton, Little Houghton and Brafield on the Green. Bishop Ed Condry completed the institution, and the induction was carried out by Archdeacon Richard Ormston.

During the service, I together with others welcomed Kris as the new Rector of the Wymersley Benefice. After the service we adjourned to St Peter's Church Room for refreshments which gave us all the opportunity to get to know Rev Kris.

A special thank you to the church wardens, those who provided the refreshments and others who made the evening such a success.

'Take Time Out' 29 March 2024

Fotheringhay is a tiny village in Northamptonshire over which presides the iconic lantern tower of St Mary and All Saints Parish Church. The present Church is all that remains of a mediaeval College of Priests founded by King Edward III. This is a romantic location rich in historical association: King Edward III instigated the building of the Church and College, with work completed by c.1434, King Richard III was born in the adjoining Castle, Edward of Norwich and Richard Plantagenet (Dukes of York), together with the latter's wife and son, are buried there, King Edward IV donated the painted pulpit in the Church and Mary Queen of Scots was executed in the Castle (razed by her son, King James 1, in 1627).

On 29 March 2024, I attended 'Take Time Out' which was an opportunity to pause for thirty minutes in the



calm of the Church of St Mary and All Saints, Fotheringhay. Each Day from Monday 25 March until 29 March 2024 we were invited to hear organ music, reflections and prayers during Holy week 2024. On Good Friday, at 6 pm the organist James Parsons played a selection of J S Bach and James MacMillan. He played 'O Mensch bewein dein Sunde Gross' (Oh Mankind, bewail thy grievous sin..) This sublime masterpiece is from Bach's Little Organ Book, and it is thought to be at the centre of his faith. His second piece was 'Vater unser in Himmelreich' Our Father, who art in Heaven, which is a simple devotional piece. The final modern piece was by James

MacMillan (1959) 'Gaudeamus in loci pace' (Let us rejoice in the peace of this place). It was a very unusual Gregorian chant where we are encouraged to hear swirls of birdsong slowly and melodically rise to the rafters. At that moment, a moth fluttered up to the vaulted roof.

Interspersed with the organ music, the Ven. Fiona Windsor offered words in a spiritual context. "It is an evening where whatever you believe, you'll be very welcome" she said. "Just hit pause." How often do we need to do that in our busy lives? So, wherever you were or whatever you were doing over Easter, I hope that you too had a moment to 'just hit pause'.

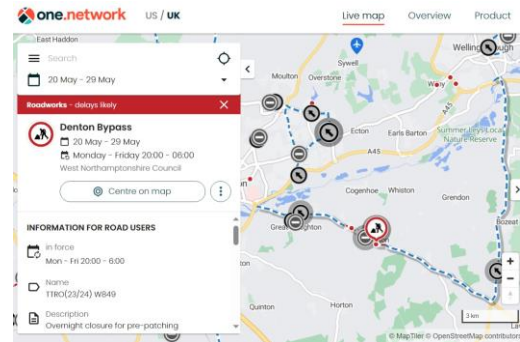
Carriageway Resurfacing A428

Kier is intending on carrying out carriageway resurfacing works along a section of the A428 between Brafield on the Green and Denton. To undertake these works safely they will require a series of overnight

closures commencing on 20 May 2024 to 29 May 2024 between 8pm and 6am. The closures will be for pre-patching works, surface dressing, sweeping and lining and a schedule of these works will be provided by Kier in due course.

The closure and diversion can be viewed here <https://one.network/?tm=138119773>

If you require more information about the works, please contact Sophie Parnell on 01604 529700.



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.

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.

Family Hubs Consultation

We are looking for views about:

- Establishing local Family Hubs with the aim of ensuring that families with children, aged between 0 to 19 and or young people aged up to 25 with SEND, can access help, advice and support they need for a wide range of services much more easily. This includes exploring different ways to make services accessible – for example building an informative website and creating in-person ‘hubs’ which looks to provide a space/ location where various services are available for families in one place. Family hubs are being considered for the Daventry area, Northampton area and the Towcester area. The planned location of our first Family Hub is The Forum, Moat Lane, in Towcester. The locations for other family hubs are yet to be decided.
- A proposal to move the activities and services of the Towcester Children’s Centre. Currently the service is provided at The Community Centre, Islington Road, Towcester, and it proposed to move the service into a new Family Hub which will be located within The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester.
- Further information which will help develop the new delivery model for our 0 to 19 Public Health Nursing Services. Building on the recently undertaken needs assessment we want to understand what families and young people would like from these services so that we can develop a local service specification which we will further consult on too. We see the 0 to 19 service being delivered hand in hand with our Family Hubs development programme.



Please visit the Consultation: <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../services-for.../>

for further information and how to have your say.

This consultation closes midnight Sunday 28 April 2024.

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 Sunday 7 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>

FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Cost of Living Support

Are you feeling the strain on your finances?

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. 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.



Household Support Fund (HSF) Extended

HSF funding is set to be extended for a further six months from the end of March this year. The initiative has so far seen more than £11m allocated to WNC from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in just over two years with over 251,800 awards of support to households who have struggled financially.



WNC will now await further information from the Government on the future funding earmarked for West Northamptonshire to support residents through the continued cost of living challenges.

The Council will also continue to work with community and voluntary partners on developing long-term, methods of support available to residents, continuing commitment to the delivery of

the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

This includes:

- 1) Continuing to grow the number of welcoming spaces available in Northampton, Daventry and South Northants areas, providing a place for families and residents to pop in for a hot drink, friendly conversation and other activities. These spaces are available throughout the year, all offering something different.

2) Working closely with local community and food larders as they provide access to affordable food for anyone facing hardship, as well as providing a sustainable approach to waste. The larders have a range of heavily discounted food and grocery items that offer an alternative to supermarket shopping via a membership programme. For more information, please visit Hope Centre Larders and TowFood larders. This includes Food banks to support those in need of emergency food.

For a full list of support available for residents to access here: <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support...>

which includes information on local food larders, money and debt advice as well as help with household bills.

Improved Debt and Money Advice

This week we relaunched our Debt and Money Advice service, now covering the whole of West Northamptonshire. Our team has expanded, welcoming new colleagues who bring fresh perspectives and expertise to the table. With the ongoing challenges posed by the cost of living, our enhanced Debt and Money Advice service couldn't come at a better time. By aligning with our Anti-Poverty Strategy, we're actively contributing to our key priorities and making tangible strides towards building a more resilient community. We are now gearing up to work even more closely with our partners in the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, as well as our colleagues in Health. Together, we're ready to make a significant impact, reaching and supporting a higher volume of residents across West Northamptonshire.

By collaborating with our Local Area Partnerships (LAP), we're tapping into localised insights and creating welcoming spaces tailored to the unique needs of specific areas. Through front-line workers, we're establishing accessible access points to our services, ensuring that support is readily available where it's needed most.

Debt and money advice portal

To support all of this work we've launched a user-friendly portal that allows residents and internal staff to easily submit referral forms ensuring that the support they need is swiftly identified and provided. For more information and to access our services, please visit our newly launched website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../debt-and-money...>

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. We have announced 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. 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 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.

Former Council Web Sites to be Switched off

The websites for West Northamptonshire's legacy councils were switched off at the end of March 2024. These include:

- northamptonshire.gov.uk (the former county council site)
- daventrydc.gov.uk (the former Daventry District Council site)
- northampton.gov.uk (the former Northampton Borough Council site)
- southnorthants.gov.uk (the former South Northamptonshire Council site)

The closure of these former county, borough and district websites follows three years of work to improve content and move it to our new site at westnorthants.gov.uk. If you are responsible for a website or any printed content that links to council services, please ensure those links are up to date and point to content on the West Northamptonshire Council website at westnorthants.gov.uk. Links that point to any of the former county, borough and district websites will no longer work after 31 March.

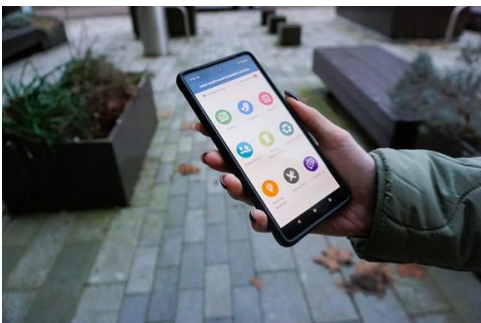
We are improving the West Northamptonshire Council website all the time. We have recently published the first Easy Read versions of pages and this work will continue. We are also still in the process of re-branding some of our forms, and this work will be completed later this year. Town and Parish Councils with any questions about this process can email webteam@westnorthants.gov.uk or find out more at westnorthants.gov.uk/switchoff



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.



Postal Voters Urged to Apply Early for the May Elections

Residents in North and West Northamptonshire are being encouraged to apply early to vote by post for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Elections this spring. On Thursday, 2 May voters across North and West Northamptonshire will go to the polls to elect the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) is elected to oversee local policing and fire and rescue services, manage the police & fire and rescue budget, set council tax rates for policing, and ensure



transparent communication about police activities in the community. The Commissioner will also make key appointments of the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer for the Northamptonshire area.

People are urged to apply for postal votes as early as possible ahead of the deadline of 5pm on Wednesday, 17 April and those wishing to vote by proxy (when someone votes on your behalf) can also do this in advance of the deadline of 5pm on Wednesday, 24 April. Anyone who is not yet registered to vote must do so by Tuesday, 16 April in order to take part in this spring's election. You can register to vote on the gov.uk website. Students have the option of registering at both their home and term-time addresses, and if they are in different local authority areas, they can vote in both locations during the election.

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to produce accepted photographic identification when voting in person at a polling station. This new requirement will apply to this election. Voters intending to vote in person are urged to ensure they have one of the acceptable forms of photo ID prior to attending their polling station. Residents without an acceptable form of ID have until 5pm on Wednesday, 24 April to apply for their Voter ID.

Next Steps for Community Governance Review

Plans to move forward with the review of the parish boundaries have now been considered by Council. This follows the Stage 1 consultation for the Community Governance Review, which ran from November



2023 to January 2024. The primary purpose of this consultation was to gather feedback and suggestions on the number of councillors, the existing parish boundaries, as well as the potential creation, merger, or abolition of parishes and their suggested locations. Thank you to everyone who provided their valuable insights during this phase.

Moving forward, we will be conducting the Stage 2 consultation from 25 April to 24 July this year. During this phase, we will be consulting on the proposals that emerged from Stage 1. In some

cases, this will involve us writing to affected households to encourage participation in the consultation. Your continued engagement and input will be critical as we navigate through this next stage of the review. Please keep an eye out for further communication regarding the Stage 2 consultation, including information on how you can participate and provide feedback.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/have-your-say/community-governance-review>

Employment Opportunities at Upcoming Elections

Residents can do their bit for the democratic process whilst earning themselves some extra money by taking up a role at parish polling stations in the upcoming elections.



With the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) election scheduled for 2 May and a General Election anticipated before the end of this year, people are encouraged to consider a range of casual employment opportunities with the dedicated team responsible for organising elections in West Northamptonshire.

A variety of roles are available, with Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks in rural areas in particular needed to greet voters and issue ballot papers at polling stations. People are also needed to count votes after close of polls. No prior experience in election administration is necessary as comprehensive training will be

provided, however, applicants must be available to work outside of normal office hours to meet the demands of election and canvassing activities.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/electoral-services/employment-opportunities-elections>

Reminder of Key Dates ahead of May Elections

People are being reminded of all the key dates and deadlines ahead of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections on 2 May, as well as the need to have an acceptable form of photo ID ready. Anyone voting in person at a Polling Station will have to produce a valid photo ID in order to vote, following new national requirements introduced last year. Many common forms of photo ID are acceptable, including passports, driving licences, blue badges, ID cards featuring the PASS mark and travel cards such as bus passes, but people are urged to view the full list on our website at

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/service-privacy-notice/electoral-services-privacy-policy/voter-id>

Only one form of photo ID is required, but it must be the original version and not a photocopy, and the name on it must be the same name you used to register to vote. Out-of-date ID can be used, so long as the picture on it still looks like you. Anyone who does not have one of the valid forms of ID listed is urged to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate from the Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>

People must submit their application by 5pm on Wednesday, 24 April in order to receive the certificate in time for the elections on 2 May. Registering to vote and deadlines for postal and proxy votes in good time. The deadlines for this are as follows:

Register to vote by Tuesday 16 April <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Arrange a postal vote by 5pm on Wednesday, 17 April <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/electoral-services/apply-postal-vote-or-proxy-vote>

Organise a proxy vote - when someone votes on your behalf - by 5pm on Wednesday, 24 April <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/electoral-services/apply-postal-vote-or-proxy-vote>

Visit our elections pages for more information <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/electoral-services>

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

RSN 2024 seminar programme

The online seminar programme continues as follows:

- Rural economy – 24th April
- Rural transport – 22nd May
- Rural affordable housing – 26th June



- Rural planning – 23rd October
- Rural health and care – 27th November

Future Proofing Rural Health

In the coming years, England's rural communities face a significant challenge: an increasingly ageing population that demands a strategic and thoughtful response to healthcare and social service provision. Insights from the Rural Services Network.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642570153d885d000fdadf17/1 - Population_v2.pdf

offer a stark visualisation of this impending reality. The statistics reveal that rural areas host a disproportionately high percentage of the older population, with 25.4% aged 65 and over, in contrast to 17.1% in urban areas. This demographic trend is further compounded by the fact that the average age in rural locales is markedly higher and climbing more rapidly than in urban counterparts.

To put this into perspective, in 2020, the average age in Rural Village and Dispersed areas reached 45.9 years, and Rural Town and Fringe areas saw an average age of 44.3 years. This is compared to the national average of 40.3 years, which itself has risen by 1.6 years from 2002 to 2020. These figures highlight the unique challenges that rural communities face in providing adequate healthcare and support services to its ageing population.

The Implications of an Ageing Rural Population

Further emphasising the urgency of addressing healthcare needs in rural areas, projections from The Health Foundation <https://www.health.org.uk/> report Health in 2040

<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/health-in-2040> highlight a concerning trend for England at large. By 2040, approximately 9.1 million people in England are anticipated to be living with a major illness, marking an increase of 2.5 million from 2019. This shift, which elevates the fraction of the adult population living with major illness from almost one in six to nearly one in five, is primarily attributed to the ageing demographic. The rise in life expectancy and the ageing of the baby-boomer generation underscore not only a cause for celebration but also a pressing challenge for the NHS, social care, and other public services, especially in rural areas where access and provision are already strained. The ageing demographic trend in rural areas has profound implications on healthcare provision and social services. The high proportion of older adults increases the demand for healthcare services, particularly for chronic and age-related conditions. Moreover, the geographical spread and lower population density in rural areas exacerbate the difficulty of accessing healthcare facilities and services. These challenges are further magnified by the faster increase in the average age of the rural population, indicating that these issues will only intensify without proactive measures.

Strategic Responses to an Evolving Challenge

The data underscores the need for a multi-faceted and targeted approach to healthcare and social service provision in rural areas. Strategies must consider the unique demographic and geographic characteristics of these communities. Key areas of focus include:

Infrastructure Development

Enhancing physical and digital infrastructure to improve access to healthcare. This includes improving transportation for easier access to distant healthcare facilities and expanding telemedicine capabilities to deliver care directly to rural homes.

Specialised Healthcare Services

Expanding the availability of healthcare services that cater to the needs of an ageing population, such as geriatric care, chronic disease management, and mental health services.

Community-Based Solutions

Leveraging the close-knit nature of rural communities to develop localised healthcare delivery models, such as community health workers and mobile health clinics, that can provide personalised and accessible care.

Preventative Healthcare

Increasing the focus on preventative care to reduce the incidence of chronic diseases through community health programs, wellness initiatives, and early detection services.

Policy and Funding Support

Advocating for policies and funding mechanisms that recognise and address the specific needs of rural healthcare systems, ensuring that these communities are not left behind in national healthcare planning.

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**
- WNS/2022/1525/FUL Land North of Whiston Road, Cogenhoe, Northamptonshire – **Allowed subject to conditions**.
- WNS/2021/1858/EIA Solar Farm Milton Road Gayton-**Dismissed**
- N/2020/1474 a 6 storey building providing up to 112no. one, two & three bed flats and apartments (Use Class C3), commercial development (Use Class E (a,b,c,d,e,f,g(i)) and associated ancillary infrastructure', 123 - 135 Bridge Street, Northampton-Appeal **Allowed**
- N/2020/1497 6 storey building providing up to 66no. one, two & three bed flats and apartments (Use Class C3), commercial development (Use Class E(a,b,c,d,e,f,g(i)) and associated ancillary

infrastructure', 153 - 165 Bridge Street, Northampton- Appeal **Allowed**

Plans for Solar Farm Turned Down

Plans for a massive solar farm in rural Northamptonshire have been turned down by the government. The 175-acre (70-hectare) site would have stretched across two fields near the villages of Gayton, Rothersthorpe and Milton Malsor. A planning inspector had recommended the scheme should go ahead. The developer, Anesco, said the plans would "offer a sustainable development that would bring a raft of benefits".



The proposed development, which would have created enough energy to power more than 13,000 homes, was refused by West Northamptonshire Council in October 2022.

Anesco lodged an appeal, which was upheld by the Planning Inspectorate, but that decision has been overturned by local government minister Simon Hoare.

Parish councils, the Canal and River Trust and local MP Chris Heaton-Harris were among those who had raised objections to the scheme.

The government acknowledged the benefits of the plans, including the production of renewable energy and estimated carbon savings of 11,000 tonnes a year, as well as the creation of jobs.

But Mr Hoare dismissed the plans on the grounds that the solar panels and other infrastructure, including transformers, inverters and fencing, would "inevitably introduce a fundamental change to agricultural land" and cause "major visual harm". Anesco has six weeks to challenge the decision.

WNC Engaging Parish Councils for New Local Plan

The Planning Policy Team is engaging with Parish Councils about a key part of the Local Plan – the Rural Settlement Hierarchy. The team is 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, and they need to be returned by 2 April 2024. If you have any questions, please contact the Planning Policy Team at localplan@westnorthants.gov.uk



10% Biodiversity Net Gain Requirement

On 11 March 2024, Urban Design Learning (UDL) held an event to discuss how the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for planning applications, London's Urban Greening Factor, the sustainable drainage policies many councils have, and other nature-centred strategies fit – or don't fit – together. And, beyond the policy framework, what approaches will actually deliver more biodiverse, climate and flood resilient places?

These were the main points that emerged from the presentations and the discussion:

- It is vital that we preserve and improve water management systems and habitats for nature – failure to do so leads to such a wide range of environmental and human problems from health to flooding, pollution to food insecurity.
- Our planning system leads to negotiated, discretionary outcomes and even the strongest



planning policies are not always met by schemes that gain approval. But the 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) is now legally required so is non-negotiable and the same is expected for sustainable drainage systems during 2024. Adoption of SuDS will be mandatory and local authorities will become lead local flood authorities with legal responsibilities.

- Although the legal power to enforce BNG comes from outside the planning system, the Urban Greening Factor is a planning policy requirement (applied across London and recommended elsewhere by Natural England). The two requirements are different, in particular:
 - BNG is about replacing and improving habitat affected by development. If a site has no habitat none is created. UGF is about creating habitat irrespective of what is on site to start with
 - BNG can be provided off site, but it costs more to do so. UGF should be provided on site.
 - BNG is a non-negotiable requirement, UGF can be negotiated away.
 - On greenfield sites, BNG is a good framework to inform design.
 - On urban redevelopment sites, if UGF informs the design process, BNG is often delivered by default.
- SuDS aim to slow the passage of water from rain to river to allow for greater levels of infiltration to ground water reserves, remove pollutants that could damage rivers and other habitats and hold water back during high rainfall events to prevent flooding. SuDS can be combined with BNG and UGF approaches, but each has its own objectives.
- BNG, UGF and SuDS are relevant for many planning applications. Local authorities should consider if they want to adopt and strongly apply SuDS and UGF-type policies, guidance or codes that clearly explain the types of approaches they wish to see and why. They may wish to also direct how local, off-site provision of BNG should be delivered and how on site SuDS will work with wider public realm systems they may develop
- Viability may be cited by developers as a reason for not delivering UGF, SuDS or local BNG delivery. However, it has been found that SuDS can be 30% cheaper than traditional drainage systems if factored in from the start of the design process. Maintenance of these and more biodiverse habitats can also be cheaper than traditional approaches, but only when carefully designed and planned. More information on cost-effective nature-supporting approaches would be very useful.

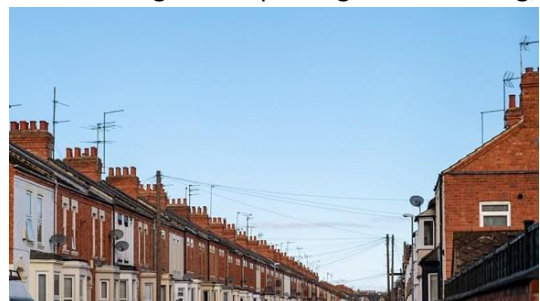
HOUSING

Proposed Adjustments to Housing Budget

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.

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 is on a temporary pause for new online applications 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 have also created some FAQs to help answer any questions

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

ENVIRONMENT

Sign Up for Optional Garden Waste Collection



Residents across West Northamptonshire can now sign up for optional, chargeable garden waste collections from April 2024. The annual subscription charge for the fortnightly service from April 2024 to the end of March 2025 is £58 per bin and can be made online on the WNC website:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/bin.../garden-waste>

Residents can sign up for an annual direct debit to save having to remember to renew every year. Residents who are unable to access the internet can subscribe to the

service by phoning the council on 0300 126 7000. Once households are signed up to the service, they will receive their new 2024/25 garden waste permit which they will be asked to stick on their garden waste bin. Any bins that have not subscribed will not be emptied after 1 April.

People who do not wish to sign up to the service have the option of composting their garden waste at home, either in a traditional compost heap or by purchasing a compost bin by visiting [Get Composting](https://getcomposting.com) and typing in their postcode to see offers available in their area. <https://getcomposting.com>

People can also recycle garden waste for free at any of the Council's household waste recycling centres. A comprehensive list of FAQs is also available on the Council's website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../garden-waste...>

More information can be found at on our garden waste webpage.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/bin.../garden-waste>

The Net Zero Guide for Village Halls

ACRE and Stagg Architects have taken a significant step forward by publishing a comprehensive guide 'Village & Community Halls: A Net Zero Design Guide' to assist village and community halls in their journey towards Net Zero. Released during the recent Village Halls Week, the guide is not just a testament to ACRE's commitment to rural sustainability but also a practical tool for community leaders and volunteers. Deborah Clarke, ACRE's Village Halls Manager, emphasises the guide's intention to be "a simple, practical and helpful resource" for hall committees. It's clear that the timing and the thought behind the creation of this guide align with both the urgent need for action on climate change and the increasing accessibility of green technologies.



The guide is enriched with case studies, demonstrating achievable results through the dedication of small volunteer groups across rural England. What stands out in the guide is its practical approach, starting with the fundamentals of assembling a project team, through the intricacies of funding and grant applications, to detailed guidance on energy use, insulation, and the installation of renewable energy sources. It's clear that the journey to Net Zero is seen not just as a technical challenge but as a community project that can enhance cohesion, inclusivity, and the wellbeing of rural areas.

ACRE's work is a beacon for rural communities, showing that even the smallest village hall can contribute significantly to the fight against climate change. By following the guidance, not only can these halls reduce their carbon footprint and energy costs, but they can also become more comfortable, inviting spaces that serve their communities more effectively.

More information and access to the free guide can be found here.

<https://acre.org.uk/village-halls-net-zero-guide/>

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 as the meeting on 26 March was rescheduled to 27 April 2024. I met with Rachael Byrne on 27 March 2024 so that we could catch up on our activities.

Dementia Support Projects

We have groups within local parish councils at Cogenhoe and Hackleton and WNC will support these projects. 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.

There is a Dementia Group entitled 'Forget Me Not' in Cogenhoe which is operational. This month I have worked with Hackleton on their application for Grant Funding for their new Dementia Group. Providing support for those with Dementia and their carers as well as helping them to stay socially connected and maintaining an active lifestyle are key elements of staying healthy and an integral component of WNC's overarching aims and objectives. This service will be well supported by approximately 50 members of the community, many of whom have no support in place. I attended the recent Hackleton Parish Council open meeting when the residents were able to confirm their support needs and endorse Dementia support as essential. I am happy to recommend this initiative as a valuable opportunity to engage with this group here in Hackleton.



As one of the four lead members on the WNC Rural East Local Area Partnership (LAP) I am familiar with the various health and wellbeing activities that are underway in Hackleton. I have worked directly with Rachael Byrne, Local Area Partnership Leader, Public Health and Wellbeing and we are particularly focussed on social wellbeing & outreach in Hackleton. As a result, I have supported their various activities including the fortnightly Denton Patients Surgery Group (DSPG) outreach sessions at Coffee@Carey for the elderly. The DSPG uses volunteer drivers from the Denton Surgery with support from their Social Prescribing team. Not everyone finds it so easy to get out and about and stay social, especially those who live alone or are less mobile and this facility will help to complement their new Dementia Group. I attend most of the health and wellbeing initiatives that take pace in Hackleton and I continue to support Wendy Blake and other members of the Parish Council as they seek to provide services locally.

West Northants Adult Weight Management Services

A new provider has been appointed to run adult weight management services across West Northants. Over the last few years, the providers who have offered this Tier 2 weight management service have included Slimming World, Northampton Town Football Club, and Solutions for Health. Due to the Slimming World and Solutions for Health contracts coming to a close at the end of March 2024, our Public Health Team have carried out a full procurement process in line with guidance to appoint a new provider.



Following this procurement process, DDM Health will take over both face-to-face and digital services. The face-to-face aspect of the service will be targeted at groups who evidence suggests are in greater need of support, including those living in areas of deprivation, ethnic minority groups, people with mental health conditions, residents with learning disabilities and post-natal women. These services will be run at community venues

to make them more accessible - a model the provider uses in other parts of the country to great success. A digital offer will also be available to everyone who is eligible for help. This is all adults over 18 with a BMI over 30,

or 27.5 for adults from African and Asian communities.

The support offered focuses on behaviour change around issues to do with weight management, with the aim of helping the individual start their healthy weight journey. Reducing obesity levels in the adult population is a core focus for the West Northants Public Health team with around 2 in every 3 adults (69%) in the county being overweight or obese. Evidence also indicates that overweight and obesity is the leading cause of years of life lost to disability, and so it is essential our weight management services are targeted in order to provide the best outcomes for those they support.

DDM will continue to work alongside Northampton Town Football Club in their weight management offer, as well as our Grow Cook Eat project, delivered by the Hope Centre and Community Health Works, which aims to increase the number of people growing and cooking their food from scratch.

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.

Secondary School Places Allocated

A total of 4,844 secondary school places have been allocated to pupils across West Northamptonshire on Friday 1 March 2024 as families of children who are due to start in year 7 from this September have been notified of their school place. This is an increase of 60 places from the previous year, with 95% of families having secured a place at one of their three preferred schools, a slight increase compared to last year. Families who applied for their secondary school place online and within the deadline of 31



October will receive an e-mail offer and are able to check their offer on the council's online Admissions Portal.

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

Secondary school is the start of the next step in a young person's education journey and will help with their development to adulthood. Their years at secondary school will provide them with a wealth of new experiences, skills and knowledge so it is great to see that 95% of applications have been allocated a place at one of their three preferred schools. All applications have the right to appeal (through the independent appeals process) if they have been unable to secure a place at one of their higher preferred school options. The next round of secondary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in April / May. Primary school allocations will be announced on 16 April 2024.

Ofsted and CQC Inspection of SEND Services

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) began their inspection of the Local Area SEND Partnership on 11 March 2024. The inspection process will run for three weeks, with Ofsted and CQC looking



at the full range of services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities across West Northamptonshire. This will not only involve them spending their time with children and their families, but also speaking with colleagues from across the SEND partnership, including WNC, our Children's Trust and partners such as schools and health care providers. As part of their inspection, Ofsted and the CQC are also keen to hear the views of the children, parents, carers and practitioners who use those services, and those people are being encouraged

to have their say via an online survey.

<https://ofsted.smartsurvey.co.uk/p/AreaSend/10299831>

We welcome this inspection as an opportunity for Ofsted and CQC to see the strong foundations we have been laying to improve outcomes for children and their families several months on from the launch of our new three-year SEND strategy co-produced with local families and partners. But we also know that this inspection comes in the very early days of our improvement journey, where many families will not yet be able to feel the impact of the gradual progress we're making. We know we still have a long way to go to address our SEND challenges and fully expect this inspection to reaffirm that, but we also hope it will recognise the early and firm steps we've been taking towards improving outcomes for families. Actions already taken against the six priorities set out for our first year of delivering the strategy include:

- 1) Launching a new and effective co-produced Local Offer <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/local-offer> to help families find the right service, support group or activity as easily as possible
- 2) Opening 75 new places for children and young people with SEND
- 3) Commissioning a new educational psychology service to clear the backlog of cases
- 4) Developing a centralised training offer along with a new programme of supported internships, apprenticeships, and training opportunities

We will continue to keep you updated and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact WNC.

Construction Started on SEND School

Construction works have started on the development of a new special school located in Towcester which will provide much-needed places for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leading construction firm Wilmott Dixon are underway with the development of the new school, called Tiffield Academy, which is



set to open in autumn 2025 and will cater for children and young people between the ages of four to 18 with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), as well as those with severe learning difficulties (SLD). The school will be designed to physically accommodate 250 pupils, although it will operate to an admissions number of 230, with the remaining 20 places expected to be filled through emergency placements or other extenuating factors.

The school will have general and practical teaching spaces, a lift providing access to the upper floor, with each key stage next to a calm room, intervention room and a group room. There will be two halls proposed to provide physical activities, music, drama and assembly spaces.

The Early Years phase will be co-located with need specific sensory rooms and separate dining spaces for primary and secondary pupils. Further updates on progress will continue to be shared as building works continue.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Home Upgrade Grant

Residents who have a combined gross annual household income of under £33,000 and are not connected to mains gas networks could be eligible for government funding to help to make their homes more energy efficient and save money on heating their homes.

The second phase of the Homes Upgrade Grant, delivered by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), provides Government funding to help those who are eligible to have affordable and energy-efficient heating solutions. WNC is partnered with Agility Eco to be able to offer this scheme to the people of West Northamptonshire this opportunity by arranging and carrying out the improvement assessment and all the retrofit work.



Local installers in each region will guide customers through the application journey, helping them understand and establish eligibility for the scheme. If eligible, the installer will identify which improvements for the home will provide the greatest benefits and arrange any necessary surveys and installations. To be eligible for the scheme, homeowners must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Applicants for the scheme must not use a mains gas connection for heating.
- 2) Applicants must have a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) score of D or below, which can be found in an up-to-date Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). Residents will be supported with this part of the eligibility process during application. Residents will be provided with a free EPC where they do not already have one.
- 3) Applicants must have a total household annual income of £33,000 or below or live in an eligible low-income postcode area. The list of eligible postcode areas has been selected by the Government and you can check your postcode via this link. <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx...>
- 4) For rented homes, tenants must have permission from their landlord, who is required to provide a financial contribution of at least one-third towards the work. If you are in a rented property, the financial eligibility criteria relate to you, not your landlord.

Funding is only available if your landlord has a portfolio of four properties or fewer and the funding cannot be used to meet their existing legal minimum energy efficiency requirements.

How to Check Eligibility:

You can check if your property has an EPC and learn about your SAP score at:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>

Village Halls Week 18-24 March 2024

Rural community buildings across West Northants will be considering how they can save energy and work with groups in their community to contribute to Net Zero as part of a national campaign.

Organised by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), Village Halls Week 2024 ran from 18 to 24 March as a call to action with village hall management committees being encouraged to consider how they can safeguard their own future, and that of the wider environment.



Run almost entirely by volunteers, village halls are a cornerstone of rural community life in our area providing what are often the only spaces where people can meet and socialise locally. They also sustain many livelihoods connected with use of the venue. But over the past couple of years many halls have struggled to meet increasing energy bills – indeed many buildings are old, off the gas grid and difficult to heat. Campaign organisers, including local charity Northamptonshire ACRE believe there is great potential to connect these concerns with broader action to address the climate emergency.

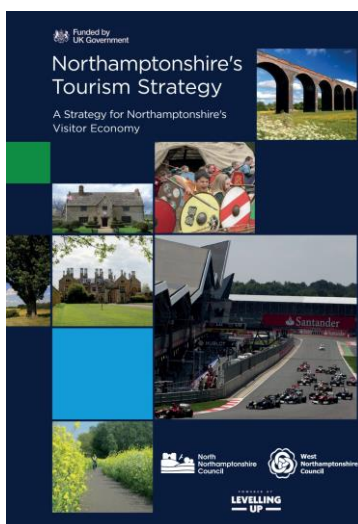
On Monday 18 March, a livestream launched the publication of a new design guide produced by Stagg Architects which offers practical advice on retrofitting halls to reduce energy consumption and dependency on fossil fuels. It features the efforts of six pioneering halls who have done just that.

– improving insulation, replacing heating systems and even generating their own electricity. It is hoped that with the recent £5m uplift in grant funding announced by the Chancellor in the Spring Budget will help many more communities undertake such works.

<https://www.northantsacre.org.uk/village-halls-week-18-24...>

Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy Launched

To coincide with English Tourism Week, a brand-new tourism strategy for the county has been launched by North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC).



The Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy sets out a vision and approach to nurturing and enhancing the county's visitor economy and aims to improve pride in place, generate inward investment and create new employment opportunities as well as reduce carbon emissions in line with both councils' sustainability goals.

The strategy, which has been developed over an 18-month period and co-produced by WNC and NNC alongside partners and stakeholders from across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors, will be implemented between now and 2030 focusing on 4 key themes: Visits and Value, Great People, Better Business and Inspirational Places.

A total of 150 representatives from across the industry, both councils and stakeholders gathered for an event at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery on 19 March 2024 to hear about opportunities to progress the development of a Northamptonshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership, as

well as see the new strategy and hear from presenters including Visit England.

National statistics show Northamptonshire receives over 18 million visits each year. This totals a spend of close to £1billion which supports over 30,000 jobs and 3,000 businesses across the county, including a wide range of attractions, hotels, pubs and other amazing venues that visitors value and enjoy. NNC and WNC want to grow this economy to not only support local businesses and increase footfall and spend, but to raise the profile of Northamptonshire on a global scale as a unique destination to visit time and time again.

As well as the launch of the Tourism Strategy for Northamptonshire, it was the first birthday of the Discover Northamptonshire Hub at Rushden Lakes - a fully interactive space which promotes all things Northamptonshire, including days out, attractions, walks, town and village offerings, places to eat, sustainable transport, heritage, accommodation and local and major events. The hub has events planned to mark English Tourism Week as well as for the Easter holidays. The strategy can be viewed on the Discover Northamptonshire website.

Market Walk Shopping Centre Plans Agreed

Plans to transform the vacant Market Walk shopping centre in Northampton town centre have been given the go ahead by West Northamptonshire Council on 19 March 2024



Leisure developer STACK's planning application will see the creation of an exciting and innovative entertainment hub with independent street food outlets, bars and a dedicated space for interactive games. The scheme also includes a main stage, which will be used for live music and entertainment.

The facility is set to be the first in the Midlands and will enhance the town's vibrancy and vitality, supporting both the daytime and night-time economy and complementing

the adjacent ongoing transformation of the historic Market Square and public realm of Abington Street and Fish Street. The scheme is being supported by the council, which is providing up to £4.2m investment through the Towns Fund, with a further £8m investment from STACK which will enable the space to be transformed into a new leisure, entertainment, and social community hub. The plans for STACK in Northampton are the latest in a number of announcements made by the company as it rolls out its master plan to become a nationally recognised brand.

TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

WNC Community Transport Grant Scheme

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) 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 were 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.

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.

Local Transport Fund Allocations Released

This week, the Department for Transport announced the new £4.7 billion Local Transport Fund (LTF), proposed to improve transport connectivity in the North and the Midlands.

Announced as part of the DfT's Network North, the Midlands is set to see £2.2 billion of the total £4.7 billion fund over seven years from April 2025 until March 2032. The East Midlands will receive just over £1.02 billion in additional LTF funding over that time: broken down as follows:

The East Midlands Combined County Authority, which includes Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, will receive a City Region Sustainable

Transport Settlement, allocations for which have not yet been confirmed by DfT.

- Leicester £159,559,000
- Leicestershire £238,154,000
- Lincolnshire £262,339,000
- North Northamptonshire: £149,208,000
- Rutland: £49,341,000
- West Northamptonshire: £162,831,00



WNC wins bid for Electric Buses

Northampton will soon benefit from around £9.4m Government investment into electric buses as part of a more sustainable public transport network. On 22 March 2024, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced it was awarding £9,365,523 to West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and Stagecoach as part of its Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas 2, (ZEBRA 2), initiative.



Introduction of electric buses onto the Stagecoach network will help reduce carbon emissions and pollution in Northampton, which currently has six Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). The 51 new buses will cover a variety of routes across Northampton including Ecton Brook, Kingsthorpe, Duston and Camp Hill. The project is expected to save 76,708 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions and reduce nitrogen oxides emissions by 27 tonnes over a 17-year period. The new buses and charging infrastructure costing around £28m will now be commissioned and should join the Stagecoach fleet by

late 2026. The buses will also meet the latest accessibility standards set out by the DfT, including additional wheelchair and pushchair space, and induction loops for those with hearing loss.

Road Closures for NW Relief Road

Motorists are being advised of road closures as work to complete the Northampton North-West Relief Road continues. The road is being built in partnership with Kier Transportation and contractor Balfour Beatty and will provide a link from the A428 Harlestone Road to the A5199 Welford Road, serving housing growth and reducing congestion. The scheme is supported by SEMLEP, the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership and benefits from £7.93 million of Local Growth funding. Road closures are set to be in place in the following



locations:

- 1) Sandy Lane will be closed 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 6am Monday to Friday) from 18 March to 28 March with a diversion in place.
- 3) Welford Road will be closed from 3 April until 21 June with a diversion in place. Access to properties will be maintained throughout the closure.

Find more information about this project here and access more details about these road closures here.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../major-highways-projects>

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. 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/

Northamptonshire Emergency Cadets



I am pleased to inform you that the Northamptonshire Emergency Service Cadets (NESC) recruitment for 2024 is now open and will be until Sunday 07 April 2024. Our Cadet scheme is unique in that it collaborates all 3 primary emergency services in Northamptonshire. The scheme is for young people aged between 13 and 18. We are particularly keen to receive applications from young people within South Northamptonshire

to start with the Towcester Unit in September 2024. Further information can be found here.

<https://www.northants.police.uk/.../northamptonshire.../>

Immediate Justice Scheme in Northamptonshire

Anti-social offenders have been out in their communities to repay the damage they have done as the Immediate Justice scheme continues to roll out in Northamptonshire. The Immediate Justice scheme means that adults found committing anti-social behaviour can be made to repair the damage they have inflicted by being made to pick up litter, remove graffiti or carry out other environmental improvements in the areas where they have offended. In the last month, there have been 11 further referrals to the scheme, almost double the number of cases



in the first two months after its December launch. The scheme is being trialled in Northamptonshire, one of just 16 pilot areas in the country. Home Office officials went to see the scheme delivered first hand. The officials were accompanied by the Supervisors as well as the Commissioner in a visit to see a 23-year-old man, who had been found in the possession of cannabis, carry out four hours of litter picking in Corby. The young man told Supervisors that he had found the session of value. Last month it was announced that Northamptonshire Police would receive at least £1 million from the Home Office to help deploy extra uniformed patrols in anti-social 'hotspot' areas. The new patrols will help the Force to tackle behaviour such as drug taking, criminal damage, public nuisance, shoplifting and dealing with drunk and disorderly people. Feedback from local residents has consistently highlighted that anti-social behaviour is one of the main concerns for people across the county, and this extra funding means that £3 million has now been invested in tackling this behaviour in Northamptonshire in the last two years.

Stolen Gator from Rothersthorpe

The Police are appealing for information after an agricultural machine (Gator) was stolen from Kislingbury Road, Rothersthorpe. The theft occurred overnight between 7pm 8 March 2024 and 8am on the 9 March 2024.



The machine is described a green Kawasaki Gator, similar to the one below (photo for reference purposes only). Did you witness anything? Did you see anyone or any vehicle(s) in the area that looked suspicious? If so, then please contact Northamptonshire Police on 101. You can also pass on information anonymously to the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

PCSO Matt Taylor, South Northants Neighbourhood Policing Team

Theft in Brackley Town Centre

Between 28 February and 6 March, there have been 2 reported incidents of elderly shoppers having their purses stolen from within their handbags in Brackley town centre.



It is possible that the victims had been followed from Lloyds Bank, High Street and then approached/distracted for the thefts to take place.

Enquiries are ongoing but this is a plea to remind any elderly relatives or friends to remain vigilant when out and about. Consider using purse bells, which can be collected from the Police Station if needed and keep their belongings close to them at all times when out.

If you see anyone acting suspiciously around elderly people, please report it to shop staff or approach the elderly person to check on their welfare. Ring 999 if

you see someone committing this type of theft.

Extension of Towcester House Closure Order

Residents in Towcester are being further protected from drug-related anti-social behaviour after their Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) worked with partners to extend a closure order on a problem property. Back in December, Northamptonshire Police and WNC's Anti-Social Behaviour team successfully obtained a three-month closure order to board up a property in Caernarvon Close under Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.



Reports from residents had highlighted the council-owned property was being used for the supply and use of illegal drugs and attracting persistent anti-social behaviour (ASB), causing alarm and distress to people in the area.

With the original order due to expire on March 7, to guard against the chance of the displaced occupant trying to return, officers from Towcester NPT again worked with WNC and Grand Union Housing colleagues to apply for an extension until May 21, 2024. This was granted on February 22 at Northampton Magistrates' Court, meaning the only people allowed to enter the property during this time are the emergency services and Grand Union Housing staff.

Anyone else who goes inside will be committing a criminal offence and can be arrested. Anti-social behaviour can have a devastating impact on the lives of victims and as a council we are committed to tackling the growing challenges around this crime. This closure order demonstrates that we are passionate about listening to residents and creating safer communities, and I strongly urge any victims of anti-social behaviour to report it immediately and not suffer in silence. People can report non-emergency ASB, crime and suspicious activity by calling 101 or online at <https://www.northants.police.uk/ro/report/>. In an emergency, always call 999. Find advice and support on ASB here: <https://www.northants.police.uk/.../antisocial-behaviour/>

Dogs Rescued in Brackley

On 25 March 2024 the police received information from a concerned member of the public regarding 2 dogs being left for over a week in an abandoned property in Brackley. Officers from the Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Rural Crime Team attended immediately along with the RSPCA. As their action shot shows, entry was forced to the address and both dogs were found thankfully alive and removed to safety. They are now in the care of the RSPCA who will look to prosecute the owners.



New App Police.UK

A new mobile app was launched on Friday 22 March 2024, to help the public access policing services and information. The app, called [Police.UK](https://www.northants.police.uk/ro/report/), mirrors the functionality of the website of the same name, which is the official national website for policing services and information. You can use a number of services within the app e.g. to report non-emergency crimes, access the wider services available on Single Online Home (the national police website platform which Northamptonshire Police website is on), and look at neighbourhood policing information as is available via the Your Area



pages.

Theft of Snapper RXP210 Ride on Tractor Mower

PC Hutchings from the Northamptonshire Rural Crime team is investigating the Theft of a Snapper RXP210 ride on Tractor Mower which was stolen from Litchborough, during a Burglary 'Non Dwelling' which occurred between 1900 hours on Friday 22nd of March and 0800 on Saturday 23rd March 2024.

Persons have attended the location in a vehicle, cut locks to gain entry through a gate to the Private land and then proceeded to Break into the building and remove the Mower. For this kind of Crime to take place and the tyre marks left at the scene, a



Van or pick up style vehicle would likely have been used.

Were you in the Litchborough area during those times? Did you see any suspicious vehicles or persons? Have you got DashCam that you could check or indeed any CCTV - Doorbell camera footage that may have picked up movement through the night.

Please quote 24000170010 regarding any information around this theft.

www.northants.police.uk website has a dedicated section around Crime Prevention offering you the best advice around securing your items.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Councils to Apply for free copy of King's Photograph

The Lord Lieutenant is reminding town and parish councils across the county that they have until 28 March 2024 to apply for their free portrait of His Majesty The King. To celebrate the new reign of His Majesty The King, the Cabinet Office announced in November a government-funded voluntary scheme throughout the United Kingdom to allow public authorities to apply for a free, framed portrait.

The scheme, run by the National Association of Local Councils and the Cabinet Office, allows all parish, town and community councils to submit an application. Members who also sit on parish councils are asked to remind clerks that

they can view the image and apply for one free framed portrait

per council. Once a registration has been accepted, councils can place an order and provide delivery details. <https://tpcportraitscheme.cubiquityonline.com/loginreturn...>

The closing date for applications was 28 March 2024. Please refer to the FAQs for specific questions about the portrait and the scheme. <https://tpc-portraitscheme.cubiquityonline.com/t/FAQs>



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

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.

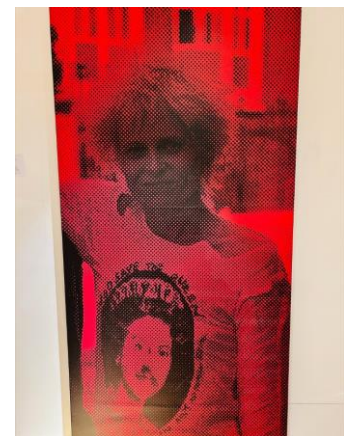
Email enquiries@ncf.uk.com or call 01604 230033.

Vivienne Westwood a Personal Collection

People are invited to discover the beauty, innovation and artistry of Vivienne Westwood clothing and footwear through the eyes of a private collector, Lee Price. Lee, originally from Kettering, worked for Vivienne Westwood in the mid 90's for 18 years and has been collecting Westwood clothing and accessories for over 35 years. This exhibition is the result of a collaboration between Lee and Northampton Museum and Art Gallery.

The exhibition opens in the Temporary Gallery at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery on Saturday 16 March and will run until Sunday 9 June with free entry.

Disclaimer: The Vivienne Westwood group and brand was not involved in the curation or organisation of this exhibition. It is not an institutional partnership with Vivienne Westwood Limited.



Grassroots Sports Projects

The Government announced recently that more than 1,100 grassroots sports projects will benefit from £93 million of funding as part of the continued drive to get more people active. Research shows exercising more was the UK's most common New Year's resolution for 2024, and the Government is helping hundreds of thousands more people across the UK keep their resolution and get active by delivering high-quality grassroots sports facilities. Nineteen projects in Northamptonshire will benefit from the investment totalling over £339,000, towards projects costing £666,601. In West Northamptonshire, Silverstone Recreational Association, Grange Park Parish Council, as well as grassroots football clubs such as Brackley Athletic, Long Buckby AFC and Weedon Football Club accessed funding for a range of areas such as changing room upgrades, goalposts, and grass pitch maintenance equipment. West Northamptonshire's share of the award across its 8 projects is £285,518.

This funding from Central Government will not only help to upgrade and maintain these high-quality facilities but will ensure they continue to be accessible to all as we continue to grow our reputation as a major sporting destination and welcome large-scale events, including the Women's Rugby World Cup, to West Northamptonshire. We hope initiatives like this will inspire even more people to get involved in sports and look into what is available in their local area.



Since 2021, the Government, along with its partners, have helped deliver new facilities or improvements at almost 2,400 sites across the UK aiming to get at least 120,000 more people active, through the £325 million programme. This investment is supporting grassroots clubs up and down the country, including women and girls' teams. It also follows the Government and The FA announcing an additional £30

million to build 30 new state of the art 3G pitches and facilities to prioritise women's and girls' teams across England, following the Lionesses success at UEFA EURO 2022, and the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. Details on how to get facilities investment in your area can be found at the Football Foundation or you can contact Stuart Smith, Head of Facilities & Investment at Northamptonshire FA by email.

To read the full press release, please visit the Government website.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../getting-active-made-easier-with-93...>