

County Council Report - October 2024 - Judy Oliver

1. Devolution

The government has rejected the proposed devolution deal which NCC had secured in principle in December 2023. The deal was said to bring more powers and funding to the county including a £20m investment fund for 30 years.

Like many opponents of the proposed scheme, ministers did not support the idea of a Norfolk-only deal, or the idea of a county council leader, elected by the public.

2. National Grid pylon scheme

Norfolk County Council has objected to a National Grid proposal to construct an electricity transmission line across the county. In non-statutory consultations, Norfolk County Council has urged National Grid to reconsider the scheme, but the project will be determined by the secretary of state for energy security and net zero as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

Norfolk County Council's planning and highways delegations committee have agreed to object to the proposal, arguing that alternative options, including an offshore or underground scheme, had not been adequately considered.

3. Norfolk Business Board

A Norfolk Business Board tasked with helping local companies and ensuring the region has the necessary skills and infrastructure has met for the first time.

Representing a wide range of backgrounds, including agri-food, clean energy, creative industries and financial services, the board's members were chosen from almost 70 applications and will help oversee an evidence-based economic strategy for Norfolk.

Meeting four to six times a year, they will give their time to deliver the board's vision for inclusive economic growth, in partnership with business, education, the voluntary sector and local authorities. The first meeting was held on Thursday 26th September at Hethel Engineering, near Norwich.

4. Funding for agri-tech and food tech businesses

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Innovate UK and regional partners, will spend £7.5m to grow innovation in Eastern England's agri-tech and food technology cluster, which also includes agri-biotech and aquaculture.

The Eastern England region is the national leader in fresh produce, meat, poultry, fish and seafood processing, underpinned by the largest food logistics sector in the UK. There is a strong drinks and convenience food sector as well as leading niche and specialty food producers.

Innovate UK has opened two grant funding competitions to offer innovative businesses the opportunity to win a share of up to £2.5m.

- In the '**Minimum Financial Assistance**' (**MFA**) **competition**, micro, small and medium sized businesses can apply for grant funding between £25,000 and £100,000. The grant is to cover up to 100% of the project costs.
- The **Collaborative Research and Development (CR&D) competition** offers grant funding of £150,000 to £300,000 for business-led collaborative innovation projects lasting between 6 and 18 months. Project consortia must include an SME and be comprised of organisations such as businesses, universities, research institutes, charities and the public sector.

5. Fire and rescue service

Norfolk now has a new Aerial Ladder Platform. The £1million asset will belong to Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service for emergency rescues from height and help in tackling fires from above.

This is part of an investment by Norfolk County Council, including a phase one rollout of the first 22 new fire appliances across Norfolk, and specialist wildfire kit and personal protective equipment.

Over the last year, Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service has introduced 22 new fire appliances, at a cost of close to £7 million across the service. These have gone to replace ageing models across the service. Further appliances will come as part of further phases in the coming years.

6. Subsidised trees available to order

The One Million Trees for Norfolk subsidised tree scheme is now open for individuals, parish councils, community groups, businesses, schools, and landowners to apply for tree packs (and tree protection) at up to 50% off the original price.

As well as the usual range of tree packs available, this year, for the first time there are a limited number of single Norfolk Oak trees, grown at Gressenhall Community tree nursery.

For more information visit **www.norfolk.gov.uk/subsidisedtreepacks**

In addition to the subsidised tree scheme Norfolk County Council is partnering with Busseys to offer the Busseys Community Grant. This offers £10,000 in funding to support tree planting projects across Norfolk. Community groups can apply for grants of up to

£2,500 to plant trees that provide tangible benefits to their local area. The grant is open to any organisation in Norfolk with suitable land and the necessary permissions for planting.

More information on how to apply, the application process, and deadlines visit [**www.norfolk.gov.uk/busseyscommunitygrant**](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/busseyscommunitygrant)

Tree planting projects take place from November to March, and as of the end of the 2023/24 planting season Norfolk County Council had planted 486,825 trees across Norfolk since the programme got under way in 2020. These include everything from single urban trees, to hedgerows and woodlands.

It is expected that the number of trees planted since 2020 will reach 600,000 across the county by the end of the planting season (March 2025).

7. Recycling centres in November

Anyone wishing to visit a Norfolk recycling centre from Monday 18th November 2024 must book in advance. Bookings can be made up to seven days ahead either online via the council's website or by phoning the customer service centre. The new booking system will be live from Monday 11th November.

Slots are available every fifteen minutes and people can make a booking or cancel one right up until the time of the booking. People will be asked to give the registration number of the vehicle they will be using on the day.

Everyone has to book to drop off waste at the recycling centre, including those arriving on foot or by bicycle. People do not have to book if they only want to visit a Re-use Shop but if they also want to leave waste in the same visit, then they need to book ahead.

The booking system goes live on Monday 11th November 2024 to book slots for the following week. More information is available in leaflets from the recycling centre or at [**www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingbooking**](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingbooking) or call 0344 800 8020.

The changes in recycling centres are intended to help with service demand, reduce congestion and make sites safer whilst ensuring costs are covered for the disposal of waste.

Business/trade waste

Business and trade waste customers will be asked to provide their waste carriers licence number. Trade customers, from 1st November, will be charged based on the size of vehicle and the type of waste they bring, instead of the number of bags. There are five vehicle categories, and each vehicle will be assessed and charged as either up to 50% full or over 50% full. Prices are at www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingbooking starting from £10.50 for half a mini-van of recyclables.

Alternative ways for businesses to dispose of trade waste can be found on our www.norfolk.gov.uk/businesswaste

The changes are to make sure that the costs of disposal of trade waste at Norfolk recycling centres are fully covered, and to provide a fair and consistent price for traders based on the volume and type of waste in each vehicle. Close to half of authorities in England have some form of booking system at recycling centres.

8. Young cyclists

Norfolk's Safety Camera Partnership is funding bike lights for Year 6 cyclists who complete their cycle training from September 2024. They are encouraging young cyclists to "be switched on" both day and night by offering a free set of bike lights on completion of their cycle training this year.

The benefits of using bike lights can improve the visibility for the cyclist and other road users. A Danish study in 2012 found that the risk of a collision with a car decreased by 19% in cyclists who used their lights during the day.

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