

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT FEBRUARY 2025



E-Newsletter Issue 2/2025
Councillor Steve Clarke with Steven Hollowell
At St Laurence Church Coffee Morning
Brafield on the Green
25 January 2025

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NEWS REPORT FEBRUARY 2025

Monthly Highlights

Great Houghton Parish Council were promised a resolution to a longstanding problem with Leys Lane. Sam Simons, Service Manager Commissioning & Contract Management, WNC Highways confirmed that the three sections of Leys Lane, Great Houghton, which have been assessed separately, are correctly ranked at 4,040, 8,321, and 8,334, based on the condition and other factors used to prioritise works. The assessed repairs come with a total estimated cost of around £500,000 for a full repair. Once Sam receives an updated report, he has agreed to meet on-site to discuss the findings. I will arrange for this site visit to take place.

MKCC agreed a timetable adjustment to the 33/33A Bus Service, which was effective from 5 January 2025. The new timetable is not ideal, but it will better suit potential passengers. However, the adjustment will not address all the needs of parents who wish to send their children to non-local, “out of catchment” schools. A meeting is scheduled with the petitioners on 3 February 2025 at Hartwell Primary School. Lucy Wakelin will attend on behalf of the petitioners and the clerks from Hartwell, Ashton and Quinton Parish Councils will represent the residents from those villages. West Northamptonshire Council will be represented by

- Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director Place, Economy & Environment
- James Povey, Transport Strategy & Development Manager
- Cllr Adam Brown, Leader of the Council
- Cllr Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
- Cllr Stephen Clarke, Member for Hackleton and Grange Park

West Northants Council, working with Kier Transportation will carry out the Footway works along The Green, Great Houghton leading to Leys Lane on Monday 10th February - Monday 3rd March 2025.

On 13 January 2025, at my request, Joanne Maddams, WNC Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Manager sent me a copy of the Yardley Hastings Pathfinder Flood Risk & Mitigations Report.

I have read the 135 pages of the Flood Risk Report, and I had a number of questions and comments which I sent to Jo for her consideration, and I await a further update. See my Monthly Report.

I first wrote to Adam Brown, WNC Leader on 4 December 2024 regarding a motion against Inheritance Tax on Farming. As this request came too late for consideration at the last Full Council on 28 November 2024, he agreed for it to be considered at the 13 March 2025 Full Council Meeting. I will be presenting this motion then. In the meantime, I have made contact with the MPs for Daventry stuart.andrew.mp@parliament.uk and South Northamptonshire sarah.bool.mp@parliament.uk on this matter and I shall be attending the local Farmers/NFU Meeting with the MPs on 28 February 2025 at Tove Valley Centre, Northampton Road, Towcester NN12 7AH.

On 20 January 2025, I attended a site visit in Denton with Highways. There were two reasons for the visit. The first was in connection with recent difficulties regarding motorists who were not giving way to vehicles turning right onto Northampton Road from Yardley Hastings, which had initially resulted in repainting the worn ‘No Entry’ road markings on the slip road into Denton from Northampton and the second was to look at the safety of the road that extends Church Way to meet Main Street, Denton. We considered the need for highway safety improvements and explored solutions. See my Monthly Report.

I have continued to pursue the issues with the cost of Post 16 School Transport for those pupils living in Denton and attending Wollaston School. Unless things change it is unlikely that there is anything else that can be done to match NNC’s charging. See my Monthly Report.

I have been working on securing improvements to the Grange Park footpath for the disabled residents of Richmond Retirement Village in Grange Park since July 2023. I am pleased to report that the work is currently scheduled for the end of February (subject to weather).

WNC would like your thoughts on shaping the One West Northamptonshire Plan, which is a shared vision for how organisations can work together over the next five years to make a real difference to people's lives. The deadline for completing this questionnaire is midnight Thursday 20th February 2025.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has agreed to pursue proposals to partner with other South Midlands authorities (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and North Northamptonshire) in a bid to join the Government's 'priority programme' for devolution. Not all of the councils are in agreement, and we await the outcome of our submission.

In light of the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) all local planning authorities must produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, no later than 6 March 2025. Work is underway to reconsider the spatial strategies, and I have attended a number of workshops to progress this.

West Northants residents will vote under updated parish boundaries and governance arrangements in the local elections scheduled for 1 May 2025. See my Monthly Report.

Grand Union Housing Group, one of WNC's Social Housing Providers merged with the Longhurst Group, on Monday 16 December 2024. They are now a single organisation. See my Monthly Report.

West Northamptonshire Council's Adult Social Care Team will be at our Welcoming Spaces in Towcester and Brackley Libraries every month this year, no appointment is needed, and the details are in my Monthly Report.

I have enclosed details of the term dates for West Northamptonshire Schools. See my Monthly Report.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) can help fund apprenticeship training for local organisations. As a large employer, WNC allocates part of its apprenticeship levy to support training for its own staff and offers the opportunity for other organisations to benefit through levy transfers. This funding can be a game-changer for developing your workforce and supporting organisational growth.

I publish a Third-Party Grant Funding document quarterly and the January 2025 version is available. Please contact me if you wish to receive this document on a regular basis.

As well as writing to me on important issues, I think it's really important, that I arrange annual site visits. That's why I launched village walkabouts, as an initiative for you to highlight any pressing issues that need my attention. Just let me know when it would be convenient to arrange one here and I will make the necessary arrangements.

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

All the Best, Steve

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

Leys Lane Great Houghton

Great Houghton Parish Council were promised a resolution to a longstanding problem with Leys Lane by Councillor Jonathan Nunn in April 2022. I asked Sam Simons, Service Manager Commissioning & Contract Management, WNC Highways to shed some light on this matter. He has confirmed that the three sections of Leys Lane, Great Houghton, which have been assessed separately, are correctly ranked at 4,040, 8,321, and 8,334, based on the condition and other factors used to prioritise works. The assessed repairs come with a total estimated cost of around £500,000 for a full repair.



As this data is due to be refreshed imminently and may therefore be slightly outdated, Sam intends to ask his audit team to confirm the current condition. They have no record of any historical commitments made by councillors, and these do not carry any weight in their condition scoring system. However, once he receives an updated report, he would be happy to meet on-site to discuss the findings. I will arrange for this site visit to take place as soon as possible.

Arriva 33/33A

Further to my meeting with Adam Brown, WNC Leader and officers on 19 November 2024 to discuss the 33/33A bus service timetable changes, MKCC have agreed a timetable adjustment which was effective from 5 January 2025. The adjustment resulted in the 08:19 AM to be moved forward by 24 minutes to a 07:54 AM departure from Hartwell, arriving at Northampton Bus Station (Bay 14) by 08:30 AM. The evening peak service from Northampton has also been delayed by 15 minutes to a 17:15 PM departure. These adjustments are not ideal, but better suit potential commuters. The adjustment will not address all the needs of parents who wish to send their children to non-local, “out of catchment” schools. You can find the adjusted timetable here:



https://api.arrivabus.co.uk/routes/services/ATSE_WV_33-ATSE_WV_33A-ATSE_WV_X33/250105-250313/33-33A-X33-Milton-Keynes-to-Northampton-from-05-Jan-2025.pdf

So where does this leave us:

- WNC will not subsidise this service and MKCC are unlikely to make any further changes and the route will be reviewed in April 2025
- WNC still needs to honour its commitment to address how best to meet the transport needs of the residents in future and allocate BSIP funding to a study of public transport need in the area so as to identify preferred options for meeting this.

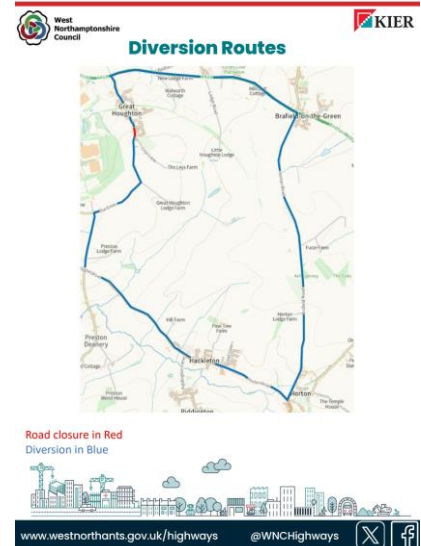
A meeting is scheduled with the petitioners on 3 February 2025 at Hartwell Primary School. Lucy Wakelin will attend on behalf of the petitioners and the clerks from Hartwell, Ashton and Quinton Parish Councils will represent the residents from those villages. West Northamptonshire Council will be represented by

- Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director Place, Economy & Environment

- James Povey, Transport Strategy & Development Manager
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- Cllr Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
- Cllr Stephen Clarke, Member for Hackleton and Grange Park

Great Houghton Footway Works 10 February-3 March 2025

West Northants Council, working with Kier Transportation will soon be undertaking works to construct a new section of footway. This will include excavating the grass verge, installing a new kerb line and asphalt footway tying into the existing. They will also be installing new gully and drainage connections in the carriageway and relocating the existing lamp column. The works will take place along The Green, Great Houghton leading to Leys Lane on Monday 10th February - Monday 3rd March 2025. Working hours will be 07:30 – 16:00 and a road closure will be in place 24/7 which is for the duration of the scheme with an approved diversion route.



Yardley Hastings Pathfinder Flood Risk & Mitigations Report

Pathfinder 3 commenced in 2019, and it was a 2-year project, however because of Covid we were granted an extension to carry it over. Yardley Hastings was one of the last communities to register for the scheme, so it was a last-minute inclusion for the civil engineers, DSA, to undertake the Flood Risk and Mitigation report, which was completed late in 2023. It was also one report that had not been sent to WNC, so Joanne Maddams, WNC Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Manager had to request it from them when Yardley Hastings Parish council contacted her a few months ago.



The project relied on communities working with the team to embed a community emergency plan and community event, some communities dropped off after Covid and one of these WNC did not hear from was Yardley Hastings. It seems that the report was not picked up to be presented to the parish council and Jo arranged to meet with Geoffry Gill, Clerk Yardley Hastings Parish Council on 21 January 2025 to run through any issues and mitigation needed to help with flooding in Yardley Hastings.

On 13 January 2025, at my request, Jo sent me a copy of the Yardley Hastings Flood Risk Report. Unfortunately, I was unable to join her and Geoffry

Gill, to discuss the report on 21 January 2025 as I had another meeting. In the meantime, I have read the 135 pages of the Flood Risk Report, and I had a number of questions and comments which I sent to Jo for her consideration and I await a further update.

Motion against Inheritance Tax on Farming

I first wrote to Adam Brown, WNC Leader on 4 December 2024 regarding a motion against Inheritance Tax on Farming. As this request came too late for consideration at the last Full Council on 28 November 2024, he agreed for it to be considered at the 13 March 2025 Full Council Meeting, if the matter was not overtaken by events. I asked if this motion would have to wait until March or could it be heard at the 20

February 2025 Full Council Budget Meeting? However the WNC Constitution states that the Annual Budget meeting in February is for budget matters only and the first opportunity to bring forward a motion is 13 March 2025.

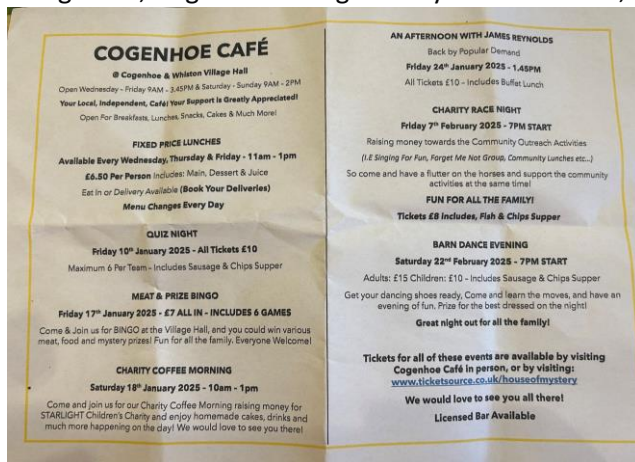


I fully appreciate that the tax changes will affect the next generation of farmers. Indeed, if farmers in West Northamptonshire are forced out of the industry “that’s the next generation of farmers gone, and the food that supplies our residents gone.” Rest assured that I will continue to support the local farmers and once I have further news I shall be in touch.

I have made contact with the MPs for Daventry and South Northamptonshire on this matter: stuart.andrew.mp@parliament.uk and sarah.bool.mp@parliament.uk. I shall be attending the Farmers/NFU Meeting with the MPs on 28 February 2025 at Tove Valley Centre, Northampton Road, Towcester NN12 7AH.

Cogenhoe Community Lunch 6 January 2025

On 6 January, I attended the first Community Lunch of 2025 at the Village Hall, Cogenhoe. A big thank you to Deborah, Julie and everyone



else involved in making it such a great fortnightly event. All your efforts are appreciated.

It was Deborah’s Birthday, and she was taken by surprise when we all sang Happy Birthday to her, followed by Happy Birthday to Robert who had celebrated his Birthday on 28 December 2024. We then received details of activities taking place at

Cogenhoe Café over the next month (See attached). One of the items of great interest was the return of James Reynolds on the Afternoon of 24 January 2025 at 1.45pm. Tickets were £10 to include a Buffet Lunch. James Reynolds is the vocalist & entertainer who delighted us with a selection of Christmas songs and well-known swing music at our Christmas Lunch on 13 December 2024.

Little Houghton Sunday Lunch 12 January 2025

On 12 January 2025, we enjoyed a delightful meal shared with good company in the Little Houghton village



hall. There was a selection of roasted meats followed by home-made puddings and a licenced bar plus soft drinks. We enjoyed the delicious food and great company in a warm welcoming friendly, relaxed atmosphere. The lunch was marvellous, and all the helpers were so kind and helpful. A special thank you to Gill, Liz, Emily, Neil, Sophie, Chloe, Izzy, and others for helping to organise such a special lunch together with Sarah and Richard for running the bar and Mira and Kevin for setting up and clearing away.

I hope that I have remembered everyone who helped make the lunch a success. The parish of Little Houghton always comes together on these occasions

and shows everyone just how much of a community they are. "At the end of a very busy week, the Little Houghton Sunday lunch was a breath of fresh air. Thank you!"

Little Houghton Parish Lunch 16 January 2025

On Thursday 16 January, I attended the first Little Houghton Parish Lunch of 2025 that takes place at St Mary's Church from 12-2pm on the third Thursday each month. We enjoyed delicious food and great company.

The Little Houghton Community Lunch caters to the needs of the village, helping everyone to stay connected and social. Whether you need a lift, a friendly chat, or a fun activity, the 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 those who make the lunch and the short service possible. The next lunch is on 20 February 2025.



Denton Coffee Morning 17 January 2025

On 17 January 2025, I attended the Denton Coffee Morning at St Margaret's Church, one of West Northants Warm Welcoming Spaces. The church is in the centre of the village. It is open every day and provides a community space for everyone in the village. It has become a very popular venue and always a great place to meet for coffee and a chat in Denton especially on a cold damp Friday morning.



They hold coffee mornings, weekly craft sessions, quizzes, and many other general community events. It is open on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. I enjoyed the croissant, coffee and of course the friendly chatter. It was good to catch up with Sheila, Russell, Keith, John, Mary, Angela and others. We were sorry to miss Pat, but I hope that she gets better soon. Angela told me that Home Start had received 125 selection

boxes for the Christmas Party. So, she exceeded the target set for 100 selection boxes. Well done to everyone who supported this worthy cause.

Denton continues to support Baby Basics and the Moses Baskets are in the church if you would like to donate any baby items for 0-3 months. There is a list in the basket of what is required, or you can take a look at the baby basics website <https://baby-basics.org.uk/>

Pastures Farm Shop & Café Yardley Hastings



Whilst out and about in Yardley Hastings on 17 January 2025, I managed to grab a bite to eat at Pastures Farm Shop & Café before my next appointment. The lovely little café contains lots of homemade produce and the shop has a range of fresh and frozen poultry as well as homemade pies, pasties, sausage rolls, quiche, cakes, puddings and homemade preserves. They source beef, lamb and pork from local producers and keep a range of local cheeses, bread, milk, beer, gins and ice cream. They sell and serve Whittlebury Bakery Bread in their café.

This is the first time that I visited them, and I will make sure to include this rest stop when in Yardley Hastings in the future. Even our quietest corners have surprising, delightful rural businesses.

Highways Site Visit Denton 20 January 2025

On 20 January 2025, I attended a site visit in Denton with Highways. There were two reasons for the visit. The first was in connection with recent difficulties regarding motorists who were not giving way to vehicles turning right onto Northampton Road from Yardley Hastings, which had initially resulted in repainting the worn 'No Entry' road markings on the slip road into Denton from Northampton and the second was to look at the safety of the road that extends Church Way to meet Main Street, Denton. The purpose of the site visit was to consider the need for highway safety improvements and explore solutions.



Highways advised me as follows:

Northampton Road: It's very difficult to control the speed of traffic travelling off the A428 onto Northampton Road (from the Northampton direction) as this stretch of road is one way meaning any form of priority feature would be completely ineffective. With no recorded collision history any significant engineering works would not be a

priority for WNC. However, Highways will add a 30-roundel painted on the carriageway at the point the speed limit changes to 30mph, and also a SLOW marking halfway between the 30 speed limit signs and the no entry.



Main Street: WNC generally adopts an evidence led approach to determine any suitable interventions. Every section of the road network represents a risk to one type of road user or another. Sadly, it's impossible to totally eliminate those risks particularly when we know that the presence of pedestrians and other road users can be unpredictable. This narrow section of road hasn't changed in many, many years and has no recorded collision history. As a result there will be no

changes to this section of the road network. I will continue to monitor both areas and if there is any further news, I shall be in touch.

Cogenhoe Community Lunch 20 January 2025

On 20 January 2025, I attended the Cogenhoe Community Lunch at the Village Hall, Cogenhoe. Well done to Deborah and Julie who managed the event. As we started our Community Lunch, we sang Happy Birthday to four local residents. We had a two-course meal of Lasagne, salad and garlic bread followed by bread and butter pudding with custard. The next Community Lunch event is on 3 February 2025, York Room, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall, so please book your place by emailing Deborah at clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk or phone 07512 045418.

Save the Date:

Monday 17 February 2025, Cogenhoe Community Fish & Chip Lunch at Dobbies Garden Centre details from Deborah phone 07512 045418.



St Laurence Church, Brafield on the Green 25 January 2025

On 25 January 2025, I attended a Coffee Morning from 10.30-12.00 noon at St Laurence Church Brafield on the Green. We received a very warm welcome from friends from Little Houghton and Brafield on the Green. A special thank you to Liz, Gill and Magaret who made it all possible.



Yardley Hastings Burns Night Supper 25 January 2025

On 25 January 2025, I attended the Burns Night Ceilidh and Supper at the Yardley Hastings Memorial Hall. Men from Yardley Hastings had a chance to dig out the full kilt regalia, or tartan trousers – or even just a tartan tie, whilst women had donned tartan dresses or a tartan scarf, brooch or sash. Everyone had entered into the excitement of the evening.

The Burns Night Supper fell on Burns's Birthday 25 January 2025 and the live music, bagpipes and a ceilidh was a fine tribute to the bard.

Many thanks to Charlotte, Richard and many others for organising the Burns Night Supper on Saturday. Everyone enjoyed the evening tremendously. There was lots of laughter, conversation, and company and



the live music and dancing added to the excitement. In line with tradition, a platter of haggis was paraded around the room, accompanied by a bagpiper, before being presented to 'the addresser', Richard who then recited Burns's poem, 'Address to a Haggis'. Richard's recitation was dramatic and very fitting.



"Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin'-race!..."

And the haggis, neeps and the shortbread and ice-cream Thank you for all your efforts Yardley Hastings Community with all Church.

tatties were delicious as was afterwards.

on behalf of the Yardley proceeds to go to St Andrew's

Cogenhoe Parish Help Desk 30 January 2025

On 30 January 2025, I met with Deborah Rush, Clerk to Cogenhoe Parish Council at the Tea Rom, Cogenhoe where she was delivering the weekly Denton Surgery prescriptions and providing support from the Parish Help Desk. I was able to give her a completed reference form so that the Parish can apply for some grant funding. At the same time, I heard that the Cogenhoe Village Hopper had carried its greatest number of passengers in a single day on 29 January 2025. It seems that their community bus service is going from strength to strength. The new village hopper timetable can be downloaded <https://www.cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk/.../village...>

The extended route now means you can get to Rushden Lakes, Weston Favell, Northampton Town centre & Wellingborough every day with new stops in Castle Ashby & Billing Aquadrome



'Quiz & Chips' Brafield on the Green 31 January 2025

On Friday 31 January 2025, I joined many folks at a Fish & Chip Supper in Brafield on the Green. It was held at the Sargeant Memorial Hall at 7.00pm in aid of St Laurence Church Funds. Everyone inside the hall was in high spirits whilst we had a delicious meal of fish and chips followed by a choice of some delicious home-made puddings. A big thank you to those who made and collected the Fish & Chips and those who made the mouth-watering desserts. A special thank you to Liz and Gill for working so hard to make it such a success.



The Quiz and the friendly banter kept us engaged throughout the evening and made it a night to remember. Perhaps next time we should rename the evening 'Quiz & Chips'.

Post 16 Transport from Denton to Wollaston School

I have continued to pursue the issues with the cost of Post 16 School Transport for those pupils living in Denton and attending Wollaston School. There are 12 post 16 students on roll who live in Denton, 11 of which state that they take the 356 School Bus and one Year 13 student who drives himself to school who also lives in Denton. I had asked Tom Callaghan, WNC Head of Transport Delivery, to respond to the following two questions:

1. Can WNC consider whether they could match NNC's charging for those few post 16 pupils at Wollaston who reside in West Northamptonshire? *I have been advised that they cannot adjust the cost for families residing in West Northamptonshire whose children attend out of area schools.*
2. Alternatively, can WNC negotiate with its NNC partner for NNC to divert an existing bus to pick up post 16 pupils in Denton using NNC school-home transport? *We have received the following response from NNC: 'We have spoken to our Operators who may have been able to service this but, regrettably, none of them currently have any capacity.'*

Unless things change it is unlikely that there is anything else that can be done to match NNC's charging.

Grange Park Footpath

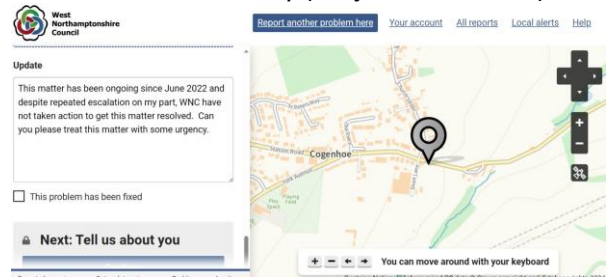
I have been working on securing improvements to the Grange Park footpath for the disabled residents of Richmond Retirement Village in Grange Park since July 2023. The footpath provides a route from the rear entrance of Richmond Village to what might be called the Grange Park Centre – the Co-op, a Doctors' Surgery and other facilities. It runs from Baines Way to Williams

Way, with houses on one side and countryside on the other. This path is very uneven along its whole length, with ruts across the path which cannot be avoided. Richmond residents are elderly; most need walking aids – walking sticks, wheelchairs, scooters, rollators. All these aids are sensitive to uneven ground and for their users there are risks as well as discomfort.

I am pleased to report that the work is currently scheduled for the end of February (subject to weather).

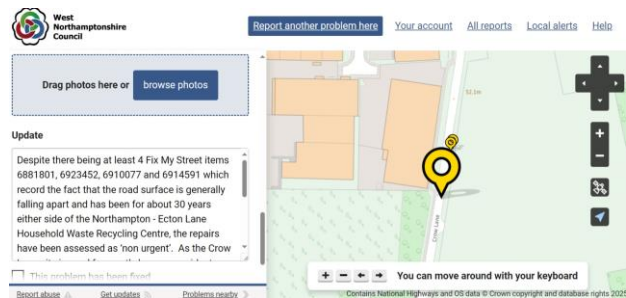
Fix My Street Cogenhoe 3585915

This matter has been ongoing for quite some time and despite repeated escalation on my part, WNC have not taken action to get this matter resolved. I have raised the matter yet again requesting that it be treated with some urgency. I have escalated this matter six times since December 2023. It requires enforcement, yet I am not receiving a response or an update. I have referred the matter directly to highways for resolution on 2 January 2025. I have stressed that it requires enforcement, yet I am not receiving a response or an update and I have chased the matter again on 31 January 2025.



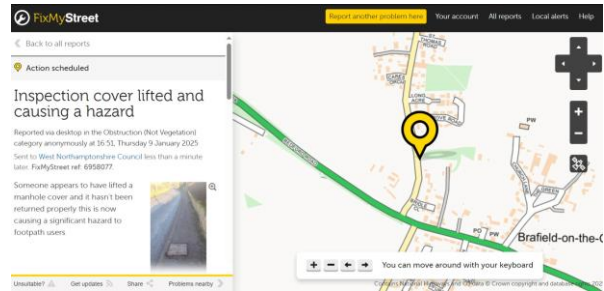
Fix My Street 6923452

Despite there being at least 4 Fix My Street items 6881801, 6923452, 6910077 and 6914591 which record the fact that the road surface is damaged either side of the Northampton - Ecton Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre, the repairs have been assessed as 'non urgent'. As the Crow Lane site is used frequently by many residents I have asked WNC Highways to consider how best to fix this problem once and for all. Particularly as on 20 December 2024, Government announced a record £ 201 million investment for the East Midlands to fill potholes and repair roads. I am seeking an update regarding the planned forthcoming repairs for this location and whether any of this new money can be used to solve this problem. Highways have notified me that this is non urgent and likely to fail if we tried, which in this weather is unfortunately difficult to get across in a priority assessment. WNC has asked if Kier can try and do temporary repairs that we know may fail until we can do something more substantial in better weather. I heard on 29 January 2025 that a works order has been raised.



Fix My Street Brafield 6958077

On 16 January 2025, I escalated the need for this manhole cover to be replaced in its proper position so as to avoid a major accident. This serious hazard required prompt attention and it was fixed on 21 January 2025.



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.

One West Northamptonshire Plan

WNC would like your thoughts on shaping the One West Northamptonshire Plan. View the draft One West Northamptonshire Plan. <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../025---wncc...>

Work is currently under way on creating the One West Northamptonshire Plan which is a shared vision for how organisations can work together over the next five years to make a real difference to people's lives. The aim of the Plan is to develop West Northamptonshire into the 'beating heart of England' by 2030, where



communities flourish and businesses prosper.

The One West Northamptonshire Plan sets out how organisations, businesses, and communities will work together to improve outcomes and make our area thrive by 2030.

You can give your views:

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

The deadline for completing this questionnaire is midnight Thursday 20th February 2025.

FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Cost of living

Further information and support can be found on:

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

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

Support where you live.

Local Voluntary and Community Organisations have been able to apply for grants funded by the Household Support Fund. This allows them to use their knowledge and understanding of the needs of residents to provide tailored support.

For advice on
cost of living support

Visit:
[westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

call:
0300 126 7000*
*Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

or scan:

West Northamptonshire Council
COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

South Midlands Devolution Bid

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has agreed to pursue proposals to partner with other authorities in the South Midlands in a bid to join the Government's 'priority programme' for devolution.

Councillors met on Thursday 9 January 2025 and decided the Council should submit an expression of interest to ministers for a new strategic mayoral authority covering West Northamptonshire, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and North Northamptonshire.



The proposal covering the six authority areas meets all the requirements, set out by the Government in the Devolution White Paper published last month, for the creation a strategic mayoral authority. This included a population size and a coherent economic footprint. The proposal also builds on the strong history the councils have working as SEMLEP and from which the new South Midlands Authorities (SMA) group was formed to drive economic growth across the region and to lead the new DWP Supported Employment programme for the South Midlands. WNC is keen to seize the opportunity to leverage the hundreds of millions of pounds of further investment that is now promised to devolved areas.

Devolution is used to describe the transfer of powers from national to local government and in places with a regionally-elected mayor, this also means the transfer of significant investment to drive new infrastructure, jobs and growth.

WNC will today submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) supporting the creation of a new South Midlands Strategic Authority and has invited the other five councils to join them, following on from recent discussions and interest from the Government in the South Midlands being part of the Devolution Priority Programme. Any Council is able to submit an EOI and proposal for strategic mayoral authority area, although regions that demonstrate a strong and united approach to devolution are expected to be prioritised by the Government. In September, the six authorities submitted an initial Expression of Interest to the Government for a combined authority, although at that stage it did not assume a mayor would be put in place. The Devolution white paper made clear however that it expected all areas to be covered by a mayor and to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme we now have to confirm acceptance of this as well as our interest on the fast-track process.

WNC is already a unitary authority created in 2021, replacing and simplifying the two-tier system of county, district and borough councils to deliver all their services to residents in the West Northants area. WNC is not currently part of a combined authority or strategic mayoral authority, which are formed by two or more neighbouring councils and typically cover around 1.5million residents. Northamptonshire's population of approximately 870,000 is more than half of the number of residents required for a new combined authority according to the Government's criteria.

A strategic mayoral authority is led by a regionally elected mayor, which is entirely different to civic and ceremonial mayors at town councils and has enhanced powers and funding devolved from national government to make collective decisions on issues such as economic growth, transport, housing, skills and employment.

A new strategic mayoral authority including the West Northamptonshire area would not replace the existing unitary council but would provide it with a stronger say and more significant role in regional investment and decision making.

Significant Progress following Peer Challenge Review

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has demonstrated substantial progress following last year's Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. Professionals from a range of local authorities across the country visited the area in March 2024 to assess the Council's performance. This highlighted a strong start since the WNC's launch in 2021 and identified a series of actions which would take that work to the next level. During a return visit in November, the team reviewed all of these areas and in their report just published they noted that "the council has made tangible progress since March 2024 and should be commended for that progress and its renewed optimism and confidence for the future". They recognised a number of advancements since the initial challenge, including:

Vision and Ambition

- The council launched its One West Northamptonshire draft vision for the area, focusing on 'Thriving People', 'Thriving Place', and an 'Efficient and Enabling Council' - they commented that this had created a palpable buzz across partners <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/one-west-northamptonshire-plan>
- A Housing Delivery Board has been established to drive delivery of the Council's Affordable Homes Delivery Plan <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/housing-strategies-and-policies/affordable-homes-delivery-plan>

Customer Engagement and Reputation

- The creation of a single Revenues and Benefits service has improved customer support across the area <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/major-systems-upgrade-improve-services-residents>
- A new, user-friendly council website was launched, receiving high accessibility rankings and offering continual improvement through customer feedback <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/>
- Initiatives such as supporting the Female Founders Summit, <https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/business/female-founders-summit-2025-one-of-a-kind-event-is-returning-to-northampton-for-three-days-this-summer-4941331> which is returning to Northampton in 2025, and attracting the Small Business Saturday <https://smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com/index.aspx> UK national roadshow have raised the Council's profile, and the Council was increasingly involved in national discussions and planning

Budget Sustainability and Risk

- The Medium-Term Financial Plan has been updated, addressing a £53m budget gap for 2025/26 <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/draft-budget-proposals-protect-services-despite-funding-pressure>
- The council resolved technical issues related to the former Northamptonshire County Council's balance sheet, finalising its accounts and avoiding arbitration <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/balance-sheet-disaggregation-will-allow-councils-move-forward-finances>
- Investments in property development and town centre support are under way to bolster the council's revenue budget <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/national-partner-identified-deliver-regeneration-greyfriars-northampton>

As noted in the report "members and officers are noticeably buoyant and energetic about the challenges ahead and how they are tackling or planning to tackle them. Details of the One West Northamptonshire plan and how to get involved can be found on the Council's website.

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/chief-executive/one-west-northamptonshire-plan/> The full peer review progress report is also available on the website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/about-us/west-northamptonshire-corporate-peer-challenge>

REGULATORY SERVICES

Changes to Parish Boundaries & Governance Confirmed

West Northants residents will vote under updated parish boundaries and governance arrangements in the local elections scheduled for 1 May 2025. The Community Governance Order, confirming changes to local



parish boundaries and governance in West Northamptonshire, has now been officially published. This means the changes are finalised and will take effect for the local elections on 1 May 2025, allowing residents to vote within the newly approved arrangements.

The updates follow a year-long Community Governance Review. The review sought input from residents and parish councils to ensure that local governance is fair, effective, and reflective of the area's growing and evolving communities. The key updates across the area include:

Adjustments to the boundaries between several parishes, such as Boughton and Kingsthorpe, Moulton and Pitsford, and Dodford and Weedon Bec, to better reflect community identities and new developments.

Updates to ward boundaries to improve representation and address population growth.

Parishes like Overstone, Pitsford, Ravensthorpe, Thorpe Mandeville, and West Hunsbury will have revised numbers of councillors to improve local representation.

For more information, please visit the Community Governance Review page.

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

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

New Legislation Over Bus Services

The recent introduction of the Bus Services Bill marks a significant legislative milestone aimed at revitalising public transportation across the country. The bill, which grants enhanced powers to local authorities, focuses on improving transport services particularly in rural and underserved areas. Under the new legislation, local councils will gain the authority to set bus routes, timetables, connections, and fares. This is particularly significant in rural areas where public transport options are often limited and vital for daily commuting and access to essential services. The flexibility to tailor bus services to the specific needs of rural communities could lead to more efficient and effective transportation solutions.

A pivotal feature of the bill is the provision that allows local authorities to either establish their own bus companies or collaborate with private operators. This aims to facilitate better service adjustments that reflect local demands and circumstances, potentially transforming public transport into a more reliable and convenient option for rural residents. The legislation also ensures that essential bus services, crucial for rural connectivity, are protected. Any proposed changes or discontinuations of these lifeline routes must undergo a review by the local council, thereby safeguarding the interests of rural communities. In addition to structural changes, the bill mandates new safety training for bus drivers to address violence and anti-social behaviour, enhancing safety for passengers and staff alike.

The government states that its commitment to improving bus services includes financial measures, such as recent funding allocations and fare adjustments. The bill mentions the adjustment of fare caps which aims to balance affordability with the sustainability of bus services across various regions.

This initiative reflects a broader effort to address the challenges facing public transport systems, particularly in rural areas where residents rely heavily on buses for connectivity to larger towns and cities.

Drawing on successful examples of local control, such as Manchester's Bee Network - which has seen improvements in service reliability and passenger growth - the principles of enhanced local management and



service quality are anticipated to benefit rural settings significantly.

As the Bus Services Bill progresses through the legislative stages, it holds potential to significantly impact rural transportation. By equipping local authorities with the necessary tools to innovate and adapt bus services to rural needs, the legislation could markedly improve access to essential services and overall quality of life for rural residents.

The Rural Services Network continues to monitor the developments surrounding the bill closely, ensuring that the needs and voices of rural local authorities are adequately represented and addressed in this critical legislative process.

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 thirty-two 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**
- APP/W2845/W/23/3327830 Hall Farm, Main Street, East Haddon, West Northamptonshire NN6
8BU. Appeal **Allowed**
- WNS/2022/2060/MAO. Outline Application - with all matters reserved to provide later living
accommodation (Class 2) as three integrated types of accommodation on a site off the main
entrance to Whittlebury Park. Appeal **Dismissed.**
- 2024/0734/FUL. Application for the increase of occupancy from a six person HiMO (Use Class C4)
to a seven person HiMO (Sui Generis). Appeal **Allowed.**
- 2023/6537/OUT. Whittlebury Park Creation of an indoor/outdoor Wedding Ceremony facility, in
conjunction with returning the Greenkeepers Compound to formerly approved location. Appeal
Dismissed.
- WNS/2023/0011/MAF. Land east of The Meadows, Old Stratford (Grid Ref Easting: 477964, Grid
Ref Northing: 240789. Appeal **Allowed.**

Pending

- 2023/5711/PIP Permission in principle for development of 8-9 custom/self-build Land Poundfield
Road Potterspury Towcester NN12 7QB Appeal **Pending**
- 2023/6117/MAO Outline planning application for 11 serviced plots for self-builders and public open
space Forest Road Piddington Appeal **Pending**
- WNS/2021/1819/EIA Land North Of The Bell Plantation Watling Street Towcester Hybrid planning
application comprising of Part A: Full planning permission for a new roundabout access from the
A5; internal spine road, creation of development plots with associated earthworks and plateauing;
delivery of plateaus and access for Towcester Town Football Club (TTFC); site-wide structural
landscaping and infrastructure; and a single warehouse (Use Class B8) and ancillary office, with
associated access, hardstanding, landscaping, parking and supporting infrastructure. Part B: Outline
planning permission with all matters reserved for the development of TTFC and employment
floorspace falling within Use Classes B2 and B8, with ancillary office space on the development
plots; as established through Part A of this application Appeal **Pending**
- WND/2021/0960 Overstone Park Golf Club Overstone NN6 0AS Appeal **Pending**

New National Planning Policy Framework with a Return of Housing Targets

East Midlands Councils (EMC) has produced an analysis of the impact of the new housing figures on LPAs in the East Midlands. There are a number of significant changes included within the revised housing allocations

and EMC will provide further information in a NPPF briefing note to be shared early in the New Year. The government has announced significant planning reforms, including ‘mandatory’ housing targets for councils, aiming to deliver 1.5 million new homes by 2029. Councils across country will now be required to build 370,000 homes annually, with higher targets set for areas facing severe affordability issues. The reforms also introduce changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), encouraging development on brownfield sites first and reviewing "grey belt" land for potential use while ensuring greenbelt protections remain strict. Additionally, developers will face new “golden rules,” requiring infrastructure and affordable housing as part of any new projects.

To support the changes, councils will receive £100 million in funding to hire staff and conduct technical studies, with an aim to recruit an additional 300 planning officers nationwide. The government has also introduced measures like a New Homes Accelerator and increased housing guarantees to unblock stalled developments and support small-scale builders.

Updated Timetables for Local Plan Preparation

In light of the changes to the NPPF, the Deputy Prime Minister has asked that all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025. The updated LDS should include clear, realistic, and specific dates for consultation and submission of the local plan.

West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets

The Government published tables identifying what the changes would be for each local authority (See above). For West Northamptonshire, this would see the annual requirement increase from 2,124 to 2,515. For the current plan period (to 2041) this would increase numbers by 6,647 (17 x 391), assuming the base date of the Local Plan was moved from 1st April 2023 to 1st April 2024. Then the additional work required to meet this need will extend the period required to produce the plan and therefore, the plan period will need to be extended. For every year extension there will be a requirement of a further 2,515 dwellings. For illustrative purposes an extension of two years would see an overall total additional requirement of approximately 12,000 (11,677) dwellings.

Future of Planning Committees

The Government has announced last week a ‘sweeping overhaul of local planning committees, as part of new measures to tackle the housing crisis. Under new plans to modernise the planning approval process, applications that comply with local development plans could bypass planning committees entirely. The measures would see a national scheme of delegation introduced, the creation of streamlined committees for strategic development and mandatory training for planning committee members. Under the new plans, local planning officers will also have an enhanced decision-making role to implement agreed planning policy.

 East Midlands Councils

New Standard Method for Housing Need December 2024: East Midlands Summary

Local Authority Name	Average Annual Net additions		Old Method	Proposed Method	New Method	Difference	
	2020/21	2023/24				Old/New	Proposed/New
Amber Valley	716	953	682	615	615	204	-57
Ashfield	405	446	604	535	535	89	-69
Bassetlaw	931	260	665	613	353	-353	-52
Blaby	354	329	559	542	213	-213	-17
Bolsover	464	195	424	353	158	-158	-51
Boston	317	250	379	356	106	-106	-23
Broxtowe	332	384	658	621	237	-237	-37
Charnwood	698	1,115	1,017	978	-137	-34	-34
Chesterfield	359	211	558	500	289	-289	-58
Derby	892	1,244	1,062	906	-338	-156	-156
Derbyshire Dales	222	216	571	580	364	-9	9
East Lindsey	544	437	1,091	1,009	572	-82	-82
Erewash	201	376	569	523	147	-46	-46
Gedling	551	460	665	609	149	-56	-56
Harborough	891	510	706	723	213	-17	-17
High Peak	362	243	585	553	310	-32	-32
Hinckley & Bosworth	589	422	689	646	217	-40	-40
Leicester	1,030	2,435	1,690	1,557	-878	-133	-133
Lincoln*							
Mansfield	377	259	540	495	236	-45	-45
Melton	374	192	370	302	170	-8	-8
Newark and Sherwood	675	437	730	707	270	-23	-23
NE Derbyshire	625	224	622	591	367	-31	-31
North Kesteven*							
NW Leicestershire	755	357	621	595	238	-26	-26
Nottingham	1,893	1,845	1,451	1,247	-598	-204	-204
Osby and Wigston	258	198	389	382	184	-7	-7
Rushcliffe	1,079	609	831	880	221	-1	-1
Rutland	101	123	264	266	143	2	2
South Derbyshire	1,033	507	606	581	74	-25	-25
South Holland	680	427	573	542	115	-31	-31
South Kesteven	567	687	912	895	208	-17	-17
West Lindsey*							
N Northamptonshire	1,765	1,856	2,064	1,978	122	-86	-86
W Northamptonshire	2,095	2,124	2,584	2,515	391	-69	-69
*Central Lincs Joint Plan	1422	1,054	1,676	1,552	498	-124	-124
EM Total	23,348	20,793	27,383	25,760	4,967	-1,623	

Higher Figure (pink)
Lower Figure (green)

Next Steps

The Government has published a Planning Reform Working Paper entitled 'Planning Committees'. The measures set out in the working paper will seek views from a range of planning, housing and local government experts before finalising proposed details for planning committees. The government will then publish a formal public consultation on these detailed proposals to coincide with the introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill next year.



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.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Crucial Support to Vulnerable Individuals this Winter

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has launched its comprehensive Winter Provision Service and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to provide vital support for people experiencing homelessness, rough sleeping and other vulnerable individuals this winter. The service, developed in partnership with local charities Northampton Hope Centre and The Salvation Army, will provide crucial support to the most

vulnerable residents from November to March 2025, ensuring they have access to shelter, warmth, and essential services.



This will include implementing a temporary nightly shelter when SWEP is activated and temperatures reach zero °C and below, providing verified rough sleepers with a safe place to sleep as well as access to housing advice and wrap around support. In addition, a winter shelter will be run by Northampton Hope Centre during January and February, to provide verified rough sleepers with a safe place to sleep during the worst period of winter. In addition, expanded day centre services will be available at the

Northampton Hope Centre offering hot meals, health check-ups, and access to housing support services seven days a week. The programme will also provide holistic services including mental health support, debt advice, and substance misuse counselling to help individuals transition towards long-term housing solutions. SWEP is usually activated when the temperature is forecasted to drop below 0°C for three nights in a row or during extreme weather conditions such as heavy snowfall or storms. WNC's outreach teams will be deployed to identify and assist individuals at risk, ensuring they are aware of the overnight accommodation and available services. To find out more about support available for people sleeping rough in very cold or extreme weather, please visit the WNC website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../help-people-sleeping...>

If you are concerned about someone who maybe sleeping rough, or are sleeping rough yourself, you can let us know by using Street Link. <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/>

This is a national service that informs local authorities about people sleeping rough in their area and helps to connect people to local services and support. You can also email the Council's Outreach Team.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/housing.../homelessness>

If you use What Three Words, <https://what3words.com/products/what3words-app> you can email the location this gives you to let us know where we might find someone.

£3 Billion Housing Support

The government has announced a £3 billion housing support package aimed at unlocking more homes and driving growth within the UK housing sector. This package includes a range of guarantees designed to help housebuilders access more affordable credit, a key step in overcoming barriers to growth.

The newly announced guarantees will help housebuilders, particularly smaller and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to secure low-cost loans from banks and lenders. These guarantees, designed to reduce risk for lenders, aim to stimulate housebuilding by making credit more accessible. This additional funding will support the construction of over 20,000 new homes across the country, helping to progress the government's target of delivering 1.5 million new homes by 2029.

One of the key elements of the package is the doubling of the ENABLE Build scheme, which will now provide £2 billion in funding to support smaller housebuilders. This will help to deliver over 10,000 new homes, including those for students and older people, in areas where housing needs are particularly high. In addition, the Private



Rented Sector Guarantee Scheme will reopen later this year, with nearly £2 billion available for Build-to-Rent developers. The scheme is expected to help ramp up housebuilding efforts, offering more accessible funding for a wider range of housing projects, particularly in areas where private rental accommodation is in high demand. While the announcement has been welcomed by many in the housing industry, including the Federation of Master Builders and the British Business Bank, it also highlights the ongoing challenges faced by smaller housebuilders in securing finance. With access to credit often limited for SMEs, these new guarantees are seen as a necessary step in ensuring they can continue contributing to the housing market. As the government looks to accelerate the delivery of new homes, it remains to be seen how these additional support measures will impact housebuilding rates across the UK in the months and years ahead. The goal remains to meet the demand for affordable housing and improve the availability of homes for communities across the country.

For rural areas, this package could be particularly important as smaller builders and developers, who often focus on rural and underserved locations, stand to benefit from the increased financial backing. If successful, the schemes could help address housing shortages in these regions and contribute to wider economic growth by supporting local construction projects. The Rural Services Network will continue to monitor the rollout of these schemes and provide updates to members, particularly those involved in local housing and development projects.

GUHG now Amplius

On Monday 16 December 2024, Grand Union Housing Group merged with the Longhurst Group. They are now a single organisation.

Aileen Evans, CEO GUHG has left, and Julie Doyle is the new Chief Executive Officer, Amplius (Formerly Grand Union Housing). Over the past month, I have needed to deal with a number of housing queries as residents have been unaware of who to contact since the take over. In the past, when confronted with the escalation of social housing case work, I would have liaised with Aileen Evans, CEO GUHG, and her PA Lucy Evans together with Phil Hardy, Property Manager GUHG and others. For the time being Lucy Evans remains a good contact on phone number 0333 015 2054 or lucy.evans@amplius.co.uk



ENVIRONMENT

Tackling Environmental Crimes

Efforts to tackle littering and other environmental crime across the area continue as West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) enters into a new contract to crack down on those who break the rules.

The new three-year contract with Kingdom Local Authority Support will cover the whole of West Northants, whereas the previous one only covered the Northampton area. The will ensure consistency, increase visibility and provide reassurance, as the Council along with residents are keen to see action taken against those who commit offences and will therefore help to keep our communities clean and green.



Following a robust procurement process, Kingdom Local Authority Support will be able to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for littering, graffiti and other environmental crimes on behalf of WNC and will complement the work of the

Council's neighbourhood wardens. It will also support the enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order

for the area which aims to encourage responsible dog ownership and bans smoking in some public areas, and there's scope to extend to other environmental services in the future.

The partnership comes at no cost to WNC. The service is self-financed through the revenue generated from fines issued for offences, making the initiative both effective and economical.

The Council however monitors the performance of the contract to ensure that the process is fair and in line with contract conditions. Residents can continue to support this work by reporting littering, graffiti and other environmental crime via the West Northamptonshire Council app or on our website.

<https://eforms.northampton.digital/reportItWNC/reportIt.html>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

West Northamptonshire Local Area Partnerships

Many of you are aware that I am the Hackleton and Grange Park WNC Representative on the Rural East LAP. If you live in West Northamptonshire, your area will be part of one of the following Local Area Partnerships:

- 1) Northampton East: Billing and Rectory Farm, Riverside Park, and Talavera
- 2) Northampton South: Delapre and Rushmere, East Hunsbury, Nene Valley and Shelfleys
- 3) Northampton West: Duston East, Duston West, St Crispin and Sixfields
- 4) Northampton Central: Abington and Phippsville, Castle, Dallington, Spencer and St George
- 5) Northampton North: Boothville and parklands, Headlands, Kingsthorpe North, and Kingsthorpe South
- 6) Rural North: Braunston and Crick, Brixworth, Long Bucky and Moulton
- 7) Rural West: Daventry East, Daventry West, and Woodford and Weedon
- 8) Rural South: Brackley, Middleton Cheney and Silverstone
- 9) Rural East: Bugbrooke, Deanshanger, Hackleton and Grange Park and Towcester and Road



Local Area Partnership Rural East

The date of the next LAP Rural East meeting is 18 February 2025 13:00-14:00 on Teams.

I have provided an updated version of 'LAP related Activities underway in Hackleton and Grange Park January 2025' to a number of interested parties this month.

WNC Adult Social Care

West Northamptonshire Council's Adult Social Care Team will be at our Welcoming Spaces in Towcester and Brackley Libraries every month this year, no appointment is needed, please could you help promote the attached material to your networks and residents.

**Welcoming Space
Towcester Library
Adult Social Care
Engagement
Sessions**

2025

14 January	8 July
11 February	12 August
11 March	9 September
8 April	14 October
13 May	11 November
10 June	9 December

We will work with individuals on what a 'good life' looks like if long term support is needed and identify the best outcome together with the individual to provide support



#welcomingspacesWN



**Welcoming Space
Brackley Library
Adult Social Care
Engagement
Sessions**

2025

17 January	18 July
21 February	15 August
21 March	19 September
18 April	17 October
16 May	21 November
20 June	19 December

We will work with individuals on what a 'good life' looks like if long term support is needed and identify the best outcome together with the individual to provide support



#welcomingspacesWN



Grants Scheme for a New Healthwatch Service

A new grants scheme to operate a local Healthwatch service starting in April 2025 has been launched by West Northants Council (WNC). This initiative aims to deliver a Healthwatch service on a local basis for residents across the area. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires local authorities to establish and maintain a



local Healthwatch service to understand the needs, experiences, and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. Currently, West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council have a joint Northamptonshire Healthwatch organisation contract that will expire on 31st March 2025. This transition will enable the Council to separate from a Northamptonshire-wide Healthwatch service and develop a new, local Healthwatch West Northamptonshire service. This new service will be more inclusive and representative of the residents of the

Council by embedding Healthwatch into the area, raising awareness of its role and function, maximising local participation and representation, and providing a strong and local independent public voice that is both recognised and valued.

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire will have several key rights and responsibilities, including:

- The power to monitor, known as “Enter and View,” health and social care services (with some exceptions). The primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers, and the wider public think of health and social care.
- Reporting findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision-makers and making the case for improved services.
- Being a strong and powerful voice for local people, influencing how services are planned, organised, and delivered.
- Being an effective voice rooted in the community. Healthwatch will find out what local people think about health and social care, researching patient, user, and carer opinions using various methods.
- The option to escalate concerns and report evidence to national organisations, including Healthwatch England, NHS England, and the Care Quality Commission.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 places limitations on the types of organisations that can provide Healthwatch services. These limitations ensure that providers meet the definition of voluntary, community, or social enterprise organisations, and certain not-for-profit constitutionalised organisations. A grant of up to £137,000 per year is available to provide Healthwatch West Northamptonshire from 1 April 2025 for two financial years, with an option to extend for a third year. The closing date for applications is 5pm on Wednesday 22 January 2025. Click here for more information on the grant programme.

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

To request an expression of interest grant application form or to find out more about your eligibility, please email: communitygrants@westnorthants.gov.uk.

Warm Welcome Week

Residents across West Northamptonshire can find out more about local services which provide a warm space this week as West Northamptonshire Council recognises warm welcome week.

<https://www.warmwelcome.uk/warm-welcome-week>

The annual awareness week took place from 20 January to 26 January. Warm Welcome Spaces are places where everyone, no matter where they come from or what they believe, can come together. By being together, we can help people feel less lonely and make everyone feel like they belong.



Warm Welcome Week celebrates the over 4,600 Warm Welcome Spaces all over the UK. These are safe and friendly places like community centres and libraries where everyone can come together to stay warm, make friends, and have fun.

There are 112 welcoming spaces across West Northamptonshire, which are delivered through collaborative working with parish and town councils and partners in the voluntary and community sector to create a network of Welcoming Spaces. West Northamptonshire Council has created a directory of all the places available to our residents across the public, private, health and voluntary sectors so that anyone who is cold

knows where they can go to stay warm and enjoy a little company and some hot refreshments this winter. WNC is asking local groups, clubs, and places to become Warm Welcome Spaces. By opening your doors, you can help people in your community stay warm during the coldest months. To find out more and join in, visit Welcoming Spaces | West Northamptonshire Council.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost.../welcoming-spaces>

We want to make sure no one feels alone this winter. We hope to bring friendship, connection, and support to everyone.

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 2025

Monday 6 January to Friday 4 April

Half term holiday: Monday 17 February to Friday 21 February

Easter holiday: Monday 7 April to Thursday 17 April

Summer term 2025

Tuesday 22 April to Tuesday 22 July

Bank holidays: Friday 18 April and Monday 21 April

Bank holiday: Monday 5 May

Half term holiday: Monday 26 May to Friday 30 May

Summer holiday starts: Wednesday 23 July

Academic year 2025 to 2026

Autumn term 2025

Monday 1 September to Friday 19 December

Half term holiday: Monday 27 October to Friday 31 October

Christmas holiday: Monday 22 December to Friday 2 January

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

Spring term 2026

Monday 5 January to Friday 27 March

Half term holiday: Monday 16 February to Friday 20 February

Easter holiday: Monday 30 March to Friday 10 April

Bank holidays: Friday 3 April and Monday 6 April

Summer term 2026

Monday 13 April to Monday 20 July

Half term holiday: Monday 25 May to Friday 29 May

Summer holiday starts: Tuesday 21 July

Bank holiday: Monday 4 May

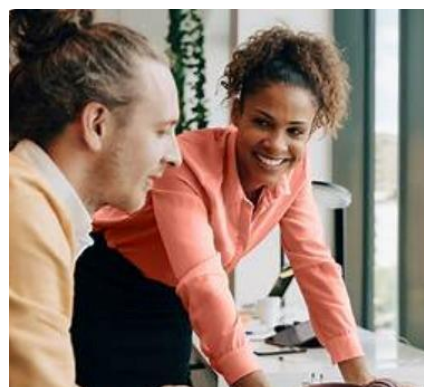
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Apprenticeship Opportunities with WNC Levy Funding

Did you know West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) can help fund apprenticeship training for local organisations? As a large employer, WNC allocates part of its apprenticeship levy to support training for our own staff and offers the opportunity for other organisations to benefit through levy transfers. This funding can be a game-changer for developing your workforce and supporting organisational growth.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds>

<https://transfers.manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk/...>



Events Tourism & Hospitality Careers Fair 2025

Northamptonshire's premier Events, Tourism & Hospitality focused Careers Fair is back for its 3rd edition. Places are limited and will be offered on a 'first come, first served' basis, so please make sure you book as soon as possible.

Please fill in the form to register your interest in attending the Careers Fair for Events, Tourism & Hospitality Industries at the University of Northampton - details below:

Date: Tuesday, 11 March 2025 Time: fair opens at 11am and closes at 2pm, set up will be available from 9.30am.

We are able to offer 1 stand per participating organisation, approximate size 1600x800mm and you are welcome to bring your banners and other promotional material.

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx...>

Third Party Grant Funding Opportunities

I distribute a Grant Funding document quarterly and the January 2025 version is available. Please contact me if you wish to receive this document on a regular basis.



stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

20 mph in Villages

I have been asked to explain the process required to achieve a 20mph speed limit in a village. For completeness, I have set out below the entire response received from Highways:

"At present there are no plans to introduce wide ranging 20mph limits in West Northamptonshire. Whilst 20mph 'signed only' limits instinctively feel like a good idea, the evidence is clear that the implementation of a 20mph restriction without physical calming measures will not translate into compliant speed. In other words there is disparity between the aspiration for a lower limit and the reality of conformity. In addition, any associated modal shift, health or environmental benefits are unlikely to be achieved without a significant reduction in speed. This is reinforced by the government study in 2018 which found that signed only 20mph limits have very small effects on speed and no reductions in casualties. In addition, local people did not perceive changes and behaviour improvements were small.

20 mph zones are certainly more effective because they are required to be accompanied by physical traffic calming measures which, in the main but not guaranteed, have a self-enforcing effect on vehicle speeds. However, these measures tend to be emotive and contentious in local communities because of increased infrastructure, aesthetic streetscape impairment and reduced on-street parking footprint. However, we note that most of the recent business cases are advocating signed only schemes but typically tend to lack any supporting or compelling evidence to justify implementation. They rather rely on perception and supposition.



As you may know, we follow an evidence led approach which ensures that our limited budgets are prioritised and directed where they are most needed. Other than the government study (by far the largest and most sophisticated study to date) the whole subject lacks a robust body of evidence or clear insight to endorse 20mph restrictions in terms of tangible benefits and positive outcomes for local communities.

In order to have a meaningful impact we are supportive of 20mph restrictions but generally in areas where vulnerable road users tend to be at risk. This means that the vast majority of new 20mph restrictions in West Northamptonshire have been in relatively localised areas outside primary schools and the traffic calming element is normally in the form of vehicle activated signs. 20mph limits covering a wider area tend to be contentious, and also more expensive as they generally require physical traffic calming measures in the form of speed humps, raised platforms or chicanes in order to gain compliance. With limited funding available it is also essential that we direct our resources to where they are most needed. We would therefore have some expectation that a speed reduction measure would deliver a collision and casualty reduction benefit.

To support local communities requesting 20mph restrictions, it has been agreed that West Northamptonshire Council will offer a trial 20mph advisory scheme as a suitable alternative. With this in mind, we would encourage Yardley Hastings Parish Council to participate in the scheme to see what impact this may have on traffic speeds and driving behaviour. If after the trial there is enough evidence to support a 20mph speed limit application, then we could look at this in more detail.

When requests for a review of speed limits are received, West Northamptonshire Highways and Northamptonshire Police undertake a formal review which involves a 'panel' of relevant officers that includes the Community Liaison Officer; the Principal Highways Engineering Officer; safety engineers; road safety practitioners and the Safer Roads Team Leader for Northamptonshire Police, who has delegated authority from the Chief Constable in speed limit consultations. The Panel is therefore able to provide a consensus decision from both organisations."

New Passenger Charter for Buses

A new passenger charter has been launched to set out how we will work with partners to improve bus services across West Northamptonshire. Whether you are going to work, school, or just exploring the area, we want your journey to be smooth and pleasant. The charter - developed by an Enhanced Partnership made up of our Council, bus operators and other stakeholders - sets out how we're working to develop more reliable, efficient bus network which is reliable and easy and enjoyable to use. <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/buses-and-transport/bus-timetables/bus-passenger-charter>



POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Safer Northants Website

The Northamptonshire Serious Violence Prevention Partnership (NSVPP) has launched Safer Northants, a new online resource aimed at providing information to make communities safer. The website is designed to empower young people, parents and guardians with the knowledge they need to stay safe and support one another.

<https://safernorthants.co.uk/>

Packed with practical advice and guidance, the website covers important topics such as knife crime and substance use. It equips young people with the knowledge to make informed decisions and provides parents with the tools to guide and support their children.

Safer Northants also caters to professionals by providing key information on serious violence, a detailed overview of the public health approach to prevention, and guidance on applying for Serious Violence Duty Grants. These key insights will enable professionals to support future prevention efforts and community safety initiatives. The website serves as a hub for information on the NSVPP's efforts offering visitors a comprehensive introduction to the partnership's work, its strategy to tackling violence and the latest news and updates. By connecting users to critical support services, the platform seeks to foster a more informed and engaged community.



Home Who we are Our work News Parents / guardians Young people Professionals



Parking Outside Schools

This is a source of regular complaint, I know almost every school sends regular reminders to parents about parking responsibly, but a parent's "right to choose", means more and more cars are coming to and from our schools as there simply is no other alternative.

Pick-up and drop-off times are busy outside schools. This can cause an increased safety risk to both children and parents. Parking restrictions outside schools are there to keep you and your children safe. Parking inconsiderately can put people in danger and you also risk being fined. It's important that motorists follow the Highway Code.

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code-road-safety>

Further advice on parking near schools can be found here

<https://www.northants.police.uk/.../parking-outside-schools/>



CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Northampton Film Festival 7-15 March 2025

Ready for "lights, camera, action"? Then get involved in the production of a film about Northants' unique independent spirit, set to premiere at the launch of the 2025 edition of Northampton Film Festival. Northampton Film Festival will take place from 7 – 15 March 2025 at Delapré Abbey, Cineworld Northampton and the University of Northampton, but the action began before that, in December 2024 - with Northampton residents invited to take part in the production of a film about Northants: a county of Rebels and Revolutionaries, Misfits and Mavericks, Creatives and Changers.



The film will be produced between December and February through free workshops and filming sessions, including evenings and weekends. Any Northampton resident aged 13 years+ is welcome to take part, including people with no film experience, as well as film professionals.

<https://northamptonfilmfestival.co.uk/>

Women's Rugby World Cup 2025

Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 has already smashed records as the fastest-selling edition of the tournament ever, with more than 220,000 tickets sold to date. In the ticket application window, 90,000 tickets were secured by fans, building on the 130,000 sold during the presale period. With just over eight months to go until the opening match between England and the USA at Sunderland's Stadium of Light on 22 August, the continued strong interest in Women's RWC 2025 has led to ballots for high-demand fixtures, including England's pool matches and the final at



Twickenham Stadium. The surge in demand ensures that the largest sports event in the UK next year, hosted across eight cities in England, will also be the biggest and best Women's Rugby World Cup in history. Fans from across the globe are eager to join the excitement, with applications received from 72 countries. Notably, there has been an equal balance of men and women purchasing tickets, setting the stage for the most inclusive and widely celebrated Women's Rugby World Cup in history. There will be a further chance for fans to secure tickets when the next ticket phase opens from 11:00 GMT on Tuesday, 25 February 2025. To be the first to hear the latest ticketing news, fans can register for updates at rugbyworldcup.com/2025/newsletter.

Fans can also now elevate their Women's RWC 2025 tournament with a ticket-inclusive premium experience package. All experience packages include an official match ticket and are available now for every match via experiences.rugbyworldcup.com. Prices start from £240 (including VAT) per person. With such exceptional demand for tickets and to avoid disappointment, fans are urged to secure their tickets through the official channels at tickets.rugbyworldcup.com or experiences.rugbyworldcup.com. Tickets bought via unofficial sources and reselling platforms will not guarantee access to the match venues.

England 2025 will be the first Rugby World Cup hosted under a new joint-venture model (Local Operating Company) between World Rugby and the RFU, with funding from the UK Government, which will aim to optimise efficiency and impact across the tournament. All the latest tournament news, including the full match schedule, can be found at rugbyworldcup.com/2025

Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 is supported by its Principal Partners Mastercard, Capgemini, Gallagher and Asahi.

Trilogy Support for Adults & Kids Leaving Care

A partnership between health and fitness provider Trilogy Active and West Northamptonshire Council has seen over 100 adults and children leaving the care system being given the opportunity to use pools, gyms and access exercise classes as they journey on to the next chapter of their lives.



It is estimated that across the UK over 100,000 children are in the care system and experiencing real and impactful challenges as they leave care and move in to the community. Trilogy Active and West Northamptonshire Council are delivering a scheme for 120 Annual Supergold memberships and 10 Annual Junior Active Memberships at Trilogy Active that are available to young adults and children leaving the care system. Trilogy Active operates Cripps Recreation Centre, Danes Camp, Duston Sports Centre, Lings Forum, The Mounts Baths and the

Forum Cinema as well as Berzerk Active Play Centres in Northampton, Derby and Birmingham and Belper Leisure Centre in the Midlands. The project is jointly funded by West Northamptonshire Council and Trilogy Active. The programme has seen Trilogy Active and West Northamptonshire Council partnering with the Northamptonshire Children's Trust to ensure the memberships go to the correct people so that all users can benefit from access to all Trilogy Active Centres. An Annual Supergold membership at Trilogy Active gives users unlimited use of all five Trilogy Active gyms, four swimming pools, over 220 fitness classes, two health suites and free cinema and off-peak racket sports. The Junior Active Membership at Trilogy Active includes a weekly lesson in swimming, gymnastics or football plus swimming, cinema, holiday activities, after schools clubs, roller-skating, Berzerk and gym use for those over 11 years old. The programme started in September 2024 and 100% of memberships have been allocated and they run until August 2025. The 130 memberships that this programme includes, covers approximately 15% of all care leavers receiving this benefit in Northampton.

International Women's Day

Save the Date-Saturday 8 March 2025.

Discover the Northamptonshire Archives Service

The service that looks after the historical records of Northamptonshire and makes them available for residents has been recognised for its work with a national accreditation. The Northamptonshire Archives Service, that safeguards the county's unique and irreplaceable archives has recently received the Archive Service Accreditation, the UK standard that defines good practice within the archive sector.

Residents across the county are being encouraged to explore the archives, which house an amazing eight miles of shelves of documents charting the rich history of the county, dating from the 12th Century to modern times.

The National Archives accreditation acknowledges the service's commitment to preserving, conserving, and making the documentary archives accessible to the public. Documents created by families, businesses, and



organisations in the course of their operation or day to day life, varying from title deeds, estate papers, minute and account books, diaries, maps and plans, photographs, and many more are held within the archives. These include first-hand accounts of the great fire of Northampton, royal signatures, and records of poor houses. The service, which is run by West Northamptonshire Council on behalf of itself and North Northamptonshire Council for their residents, also helps people to engage with the heritage of their communities, to develop a sense of place, family rootedness, and belonging. Using the archives can also help residents

build skills and confidence and support their mental health and wellbeing.

For more information about the Archive Service Accreditation visit: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Snowdrop Walk at Lamport

Brighten the Winter months and enjoy a stroll through gardens and woodlands adorned with stunning snowdrops and spring bulbs. Rare snowdrops and irises will be available for purchase. Visit the Spring Open Exhibition by Northants and Rutland Open Studios in the Carriage House. Watch artists create live in the gardens and explore diverse art forms, including painting, sculpture, textiles, and more. The Lamport Stables Café will serve drinks, homemade cakes, soup, and handmade rolls.

Event Details: 8th & 9th and 15th & 16th February, 10am to 3pm

Dates: Two weekends only.

Parking: Clearly signposted, 4-acre field near Old.

Tickets: £5 (16+), under 16s free. Cash and card accepted.

Accessibility: Wheelchair/pram-friendly, but paths may be uneven or muddy. Well-behaved dogs on leads are welcome. Dress for the weather—this is an outdoor event. Location: Lamport Hall, Lamport, Northamptonshire, NN6 9HD, (NN6 9EZ for satnav)





Northampton Museum & Art Gallery Valentines Day

Why not join the Valentines Day Workshop and create a Valentine's card and a token of love for someone special. Choose from making a heart brooch, sweet-filled love bug or cuddly pom-pom heart as well as creating a pop-up card.

All materials supplied. Booking essential for this children's event.

<https://www.northamptonmuseums.com/.../valentine%E2%80...>