

## MONTHLY NEWS REPORT MARCH 2025



### **E-Newsletter Issue 3/2025**

**Councillor Steve Clarke with Veronica Strachan  
At Denton Surgery Patient Group  
Coffee@Carey, Hackleton  
4 February 2025**

Contents

<b>NEWS REPORT MARCH 2025</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Monthly Highlights .....	4
<b>PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Leys Lane Great Houghton.....	6
Motion at Full Council against Inheritance Tax on Farming.....	6
Great Houghton Street Cleansing.....	7
Denton Surgery Patient Group at Café Carey 4 February 2025 .....	7
Little Houghton Coffee Morning 8 February 2025 .....	8
Little Houghton Winter Warmers 12 February 2025 .....	8
Great Houghton Coffee Morning 14 February 2025.....	8
Denton Coffee Morning 14 February 2025 .....	9
Cogenhoe Community Lunch at Dobbies for Fish & Chips.....	9
Denton Coffee Morning 21 February 2025 .....	10
Goodbye to Julia & Peter from Little Houghton 27 February 2025 .....	10
Farming Forum, Towcester 28 February 2025 .....	11
Grange Park Footpath.....	12
Fix My Street Cogenhoe 3585915 .....	12
Fix My Street 6624260 Denton.....	12
Fix My Steet 5231117 Cogenhoe.....	12
<b>CONSULTATIONS</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Adult Social Care Survey.....	14
<b>FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Cost of living.....	14
WNC Sets a Balanced Budget for 2025-26.....	14
<b>REGULATORY SERVICES</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Pre-election guidance for the local elections 2025 .....	15
When does the ‘Pre-election Period’ begin?.....	15
What is the Pre-election Period? .....	15
Get Ready for the Local Elections this May .....	16
<b>RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Disappearing Rural Banks .....	16
<b>PLANNING MATTERS</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Planning Appeals.....	18
Determined or Cancelled:.....	18
Pending.....	19
WNC Approved Local Development Scheme 2025 .....	19
West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets .....	19
Predisposition, predetermination or bias.....	20
<b>HOUSING &amp; HOMELESSNESS</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Government Unveils Plans for Next Generation of New Towns .....	21
Three Derelict Sites to be brought back into use .....	21
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Recycling Centres to Open 7 Days a Week.....	21
Wantage Park Crematorium at Planning Stage .....	22
<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b> .....	<b>23</b>

Family Hub Opens in Towcester at the End of March.....	23
Chronic Pain Group.....	24
Mindful Art.....	24
Community Responders Age UK Northants.....	24
Expansion of Urgent Dental Care, 700,000 New Appointments.....	24
<b>EDUCATION &amp; CHILDREN’S SERVICES.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Term Dates for West Northamptonshire Schools.....	25
Spring term 2025.....	25
Summer term 2025.....	25
Academic year 2025 to 2026.....	26
Autumn term 2025.....	26
Spring term 2026.....	26
Summer term 2026.....	26
Blue Butterfly Scheme.....	26
Potential Financial Crisis Over Send Funding.....	26
National Offer Day for Year 7 Students.....	27
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &amp; GRANT FUNDING.....</b>	<b>28</b>
Events Tourism & Hospitality Careers Fair 2025.....	28
Third Party Grant Funding Opportunities.....	28
Tour Delivered Economic Boost.....	28
Women’s Business Networking.....	28
Well Northants Programme shortlisted for LGC Award.....	29
<b>TRANSPORT &amp; HIGHWAYS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
20 mph in Villages.....	30
Local Transport Plan.....	31
The three themes and six objectives.....	31
Improved access to Rural Bus Services.....	32
<b>POLICE FIRE &amp; CRIME COMMISSIONER.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Waste Dumped in Rural Areas.....	32
Immediate Justice Programme Clean Up.....	33
<b>CULTURE, HERITAGE &amp; SPORT.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Rugby World Trophy on its Way.....	33
Where the trophy was seen:.....	33
QR Codes in Northampton’s Market Square.....	33
International Women’s Day.....	34
Residents invited to nominate Historical Figures to Honour West Northants History.....	34
Taster Sessions at Old Cricket Club.....	35
Exercise Referral Scheme.....	35
Bird Photographer of the year.....	36
Roman & Indus Valley Archaeology.....	36

## NEWS REPORT MARCH 2025

### Monthly Highlights

On 26 February 2025, following the Great Houghton site visit on 25 February 2025, Sam Simons WNC Service Manager, Highways and Transport confirmed that he has requested quotes to complete all works up to the village hall, in anticipation that WNC can get a contribution from the parish council towards the complete works rather than just pass on responsibility for completion. He has agreed to let me know how this progresses, but he has stressed the urgency with his colleagues. In the meantime, he has asked that any outstanding defects which were discussed be reported via fix my street so that he can chase adequate completion on receipt of the reference numbers.

Following my recent enquiries on behalf of Great Houghton Parish Council, Veolia e-mailed me on 17 February 2025 regarding the Great Houghton Street Cleansing schedule. I am pleased to inform you that a full cleanse of the area commenced w/c 10th February 2025, and it was completed on 17 February 2025. I have set out the streets covered in my Monthly Report. This is on an eight-week schedule, and it is scheduled again for w/c 7th April 2025.

On 28 February 2025, together with over 70 farmers across South Northamptonshire, I attended our MP Sarah Bool's first Farming Forum meeting. We were joined by the NFU, the Rural Crime Police team and others. We had a message of support from Victoria Atkins, MP. See my Monthly Report.

I have registered with Democratic Services a Farming Motion for the Council Meeting on 13 March 2025. I will propose the motion, and it will be seconded by Councillor Dan Lister. See my Monthly Report.

I have been persistently chasing Highways to fix the pooling of water on Main Street, Denton. On 12 February 2025, they confirmed "that the expected completion date for these works will be 22 April 2025, however we hope to complete this as soon as possible." On 28 February 2025, I chased them again, reminding them that the pooling of water continues unabated and that local residents remain concerned that despite initially logging the problem on 16 October 2024, it still remains outstanding and impacts highway safety in icy conditions." I have asked them to consider bringing forward the completion date. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

On 4 February 2025, I advised Highways that Cogenhoe Parish Council was seeking the return of the VAS sign as it belongs to them. On 5 February 2025, I was advised that the sign itself was showing as being one of WNC assets and not belonging to the Parish Council.

I have been working on securing improvements to the footpath for the disabled residents of Richmond Retirement Village in Grange Park since July 2023. Last month, I was pleased to report that the work was scheduled for the end of February (subject to weather). I have heard that the project has been hit by cold / wet weather which has put Highways back a little. I can confirm the current program (delayed due to inclement weather) has Grange Park Footpath commencing on 11 March 2025.

On 26 February 2025 the Planning Policy Committee, approved the updated West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme which sets out a timetable for local plan preparation. The West Northamptonshire LDS was last updated in January 2024. The Publication of Draft Plan and Consultation will be July 2026 with final Adoption taking place in November 2027. See my Monthly Report.

There is only one week left to take part in the national Adult Social Care survey. WNC has invited residents via post, on behalf of NHS England to share what's working well and where they can improve. See my Monthly Report.

On Thursday, 20 February, we agreed the final budget and set Council Tax for 2025/26. See my Report.

On 4 March 2025, Cabinet will approve the amendments made to the Local Transport Plan following public consultation on the plan, and agree support for the Local Transport Plan's adoption at Full Council.

On 3 March 2025, a total of 4,846 secondary school places were allocated to pupils across West Northamptonshire as families of children due to start Year 7 in September have been informed of their school placements. See my Monthly Report.

I have received a great deal of interest in my Third-Party Grant Funding document, which I publish quarterly and the January 2025 version is available. Please contact me if you wish to receive this document on a regular basis.

West Northamptonshire Council has taken a major step forward in bringing a much-needed new crematorium to Wantage Farm, Round Spinney. Following an extensive pre-planning consultation process that involved local residents, community groups, businesses, and faith leaders, the Council has now submitted a planning application for the Wantage Park crematorium.

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. You can apply online to vote by post or by proxy. When applying to vote by post, your completed application must be received by 5pm, 11 working days before the election you will be voting in (5pm on Monday 14 April 2025).

With our Council's elections and town and parish elections due to take place on Thursday 1 May, we will shortly be entering the '**pre-election period**' (previously known as purdah) – this is the period of heightened sensitivity in the run-up to the election when specific restrictions are in place. The Pre-election Period begins on the **morning of Friday 14 March 2025** for our elections in West Northamptonshire. The publication of the notice of election will take place on **25 March 2025**. We will not know the full list of candidates until the close of nominations on **Wednesday 2 April 2025** and will at that stage publish a list of all elected members and others who are candidates to ensure that everyone is aware of all the names of candidates on **3 April 2025**.

Just before Christmas, I was selected to represent you when the ward changes from Hackleton & Grange Park to the Cogenhoe and the Houghtons ward. If elected, it will be a privilege to serve you again and tackle the many challenges you face.

As I said last month, I like to 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](https://www.facebook.com/stephen.clarke.31924).

*All the Best, Steve*

## PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

### Leys Lane Great Houghton

Sam Simons, Service Manager Commissioning & Contract Management, WNC Highways and Transport met Great Houghton Parish Council on site in Leys Lane to review the new extended footpath and longstanding problems.

It was regrettable, that I was not able to join them due to a family emergency. However, they were able to express their concerns about the need for a safe footway for pedestrians seeking to access their village hall and playing field avoiding the risk from traffic turning left into Leys Lane.

The concern was that the proposed new footpath (in red) was to continue into the mouth of Leys Lane thereby providing appropriate pedestrian safety at this junction. Regrettably the current work being carried out is short of the junction and therefore likely that pedestrians will continue to be exposed to risk. The parish council intends to undertake the further resurfacing of the remaining Leys Lane (in green) up to the entrance to the car park and the Anglian Water Compound. This to also include some form of pedestrian safe footway (in Blue).



The Parish Council also had the opportunity of viewing and discussing with Sam the considerable concerns that they had with the poor state of the road that runs from the village, just past the Leys Lane Junction, to the Newport Pagnell Road. There is a significant proposed housing development (Hardingstone Rise, Hampton Court, and Wymersley Green) which will inevitably result in a considerable increase in traffic using this road. The parish council has responded to the planning consultation, seeking a reduction in the current speed to 40mph, and that HGV's be restricted from using the road. Whilst they are aware that planning proposals refer to this road being subject to 'Highway Improvement' (LAA1098 The Green Gt Houghton), they are most concerned that these serious issues should be addressed without delay

On 26 February 2025, Sam confirmed that he has requested quotes to complete all works up to the village hall, in anticipation that WNC can get a contribution from the parish towards the complete works rather than just pass on responsibility for completion. He has agreed to let me know how this progresses, but he has stressed the urgency with his colleagues. In the meantime, he has asked that any outstanding defects which were discussed be reported via fix my street so that he can chase adequate completion on receipt of the reference numbers.

### Motion at Full Council against Inheritance Tax on Farming

Family-run farms and businesses are the backbone of our local economy. Our local farmers are food producers, employers, custodians of the land, and play a vital role in nature restoration and flood alleviation. Farming businesses in our region find themselves in a precarious financial position, as the costs of production have risen over recent years, whilst farm gate prices have stayed the same or gone down. I have registered with Democratic Services a Motion for the Council Meeting on 13 March 2025. I will propose the motion, and it will be seconded by Councillor Dan Lister. The motion states:

"We must strongly object to the changes to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief announced by the Labour government in the autumn Budget and join with North Northamptonshire Council in condemning them."

"Farmers are facing difficult financial challenges whilst also being in the front line of climate change – already bearing the brunt of severe weather. For some, the Chancellor's changes could be the straw that breaks the cow's back."

After all they are not sitting on large financial assets, they are sitting on tractors and other equipment.

I have written to our Daventry and South Northamptonshire MPs asking them to push for the changes to the tax rules to be reviewed.



### Great Houghton Street Cleansing

Following my recent enquiries on your behalf, Veolia e-mailed me on 17 February 2025 regarding the Great Houghton Street Cleansing schedule. I am pleased to inform you that a full cleanse of the area commenced w/c 10th February 2025 and it is being completed on 17 February 2025. The following streets have been completed.

- THE CROSS
- CHERRY TREE LANE
- WILLOW LANE
- WILLOW CRESCENT
- ATTERBURY WAY
- DOBSON CLOSE
- LITTLE LANE
- LIME FARM WAY
- WYMERSLEY CLOSE
- KEATS CLOSE
- PAGET CLOSE



This is on an eight-week schedule, and it is scheduled again for w/c 7th April 2025.

### Denton Surgery Patient Group at Café Carey 4 February 2025

On 4 February 2025, I attended the fortnightly meeting of the Denton Surgery Patient Group (DSPG) at Coffee@Carey, Chapel Lane, Hackleton, Northampton, NN7 2AH. By 10.30am the various members from Denton, Little Houghton, Brafield, Hackleton and other areas were arriving via the Transport Scheme which is provided by DSPG. If you are interested in finding out more then you can e-mail Sue Hayton: [coordinator@dspg.me](mailto:coordinator@dspg.me) or telephone 07506 866298.



Kevin had organised a quiz today, which covered well known TV shows of the 1960s. We were asked to answer the following questions: What was the name of the programme, When was it on and Who played who." As well as participating in the quiz all the members of the DSPG group had a lovely time chatting with friends. It was good to catch up

with Kevin, Sue, Pauline, Vee, Liz, Jenny, David and others. Well done to the DSPG for organising this session, which was well received by all.

### **Little Houghton Coffee Morning 8 February 2025**

I enjoyed meeting up with John, Vicki, Rev Irene, Anne, Colin, John, Mira, Sue, Richard and others on Saturday 8 February 2025 from 10.30-12.00 at the Little Houghton Coffee Morning. The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 8 March 2025. Everyone is welcome for tea or coffee and biscuits and to try your luck at the monthly raffle whilst meeting your friends, or even making some new ones. All proceeds go to support the Village Church Charity. The next Parish Lunch is on Thursday 20 February 2025 12.00-2.00pm. Let Joy Mayhew know if you would like to come along 01604 890498.



### **Little Houghton Winter Warmers 12 February 2025**

On 12 February 2025, I sampled the delights of the Winter Warmer facility at



the Little Houghton Village Hall. It has been set up to ensure all residents have a place to keep warm this winter. A special thank you to Gill Bailey who has taken over the reins since Julia and Peter Harrison moved from the village. Whilst it was very cold outside it was warm and cosy inside the village hall. Thank you to everyone who came to the Winter Warmers and a special thank you to Vicky, Jenny, Mira, Kevin, Helen, for donations of cake, setting up and washing up.

Little Houghton Village Hall, 50, Bedford Road, Little Houghton, NN7 1AB in the centre of the village is open from 2.00pm to 4.00pm every 2nd Wednesday during the winter months, and there is a warm welcoming space for a chat or quiet time with

refreshments available. We look forward to seeing you all at the next one on 12 March 2025. If you require any further information then contact Gill 01604 89100 or 07787 530646.

Save the date for a special VE Day Celebratory Afternoon on 7 May 2025.

As the weather gets colder, and energy bills increase significantly for many households it's a great idea to have warm safe places that you can visit. If you have a community space that can be used, please let WNC know by registering your interest: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx...>

The Welcoming Spaces Initiative was launched by West Northamptonshire Council and they can support the creation and / or development of such spaces across West Northants to support residents struggling with fuel costs. This support can be made to parish and town councils, community and voluntary organisations, registered charities and to other qualifying bodies. More information is available on our Welcoming spaces webpage.

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

### **Great Houghton Coffee Morning 14 February 2025**

On Friday 14 February 2025, I attended the Great Houghton Coffee Morning which takes place in the Great Houghton Village Hall on the second Friday of each month at 10.30 am. This delightful Community Coffee Morning is run by the WI and is very well attended by those from both Great and Little Houghton. We received a very warm welcome and I spent an interesting time hearing about a number of local issues.

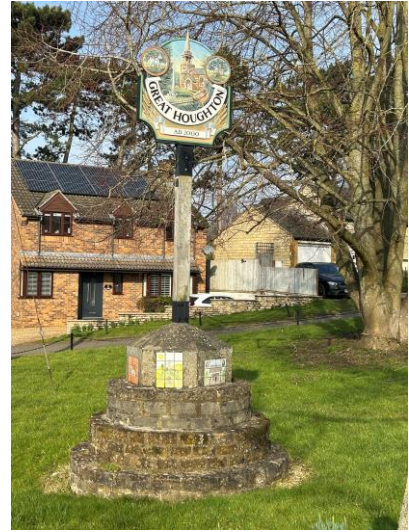


It was great to meet with Mike Billingham, Clerk, Great Houghton Parish Council and we briefly discussed recent events. Before leaving, I was able to speak to Revd Kris Seward and others.

It was Bill Hornsey's Birthday- Happy Birthday Bill!

Despite the roadworks, we were all still able to walk through to the village hall. For those who needed to park at the village hall because of their disability then they had been told to stop at the barrier and they would be let through to Leys Lane.

The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group in Great Houghton will be 14 March 2025, when I look forward to catching up with everyone again.



### **Denton Coffee Morning 14 February 2025**

On 14 February 2025, we met with our friends at the Coffee Morning in St Margaret's Church Denton, 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. They hold coffee mornings, weekly craft sessions, quizzes, and many other general community events. Opening times: Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings.

It has been a couple of weeks since we were able to make it and lots of folks were there today. The tables were laid out café style and there was quite a buzz as everyone chatted and tried to complete the quiz. I enjoyed the croissant, coffee and of course the friendly chatter. It was good to catch up with John, Kevin, Sheila, Pat, Mary, Diane, Angela, David and others. It's always a great place to meet for coffee and a chat in Denton especially on a cold damp Friday morning. We missed Russell who is trying out a care home for some respite care and I was reminded of the time he brought along his beautiful tomatoes to share with everyone.



But, I was sad to hear that Doug Littler had passed away on 8 February 2025 at the Spencer Care Home. He was a true gentleman, and I spent many a happy hour with him. My sympathies to Bruce and his family.

### **Cogenhoe Community Lunch at Dobbies for Fish & Chips**

On Monday 17 February 2025, I joined others from the Cogenhoe Community Lunch Group at Dobbies, Northampton. They had set us up in a quiet corner of the restaurant away from the large crowd of folks enjoying their lunch. The fish and chips was delicious and the apple tart and custard splendid. We all had a relaxing time in good company. A special thank you to Deborah and Julie for arranging and help bring some of us to this lovely event.

It is a shame that this Dobbies is closing but the British Garden Centres, the UK's largest family-run garden centre group will be taking over the site in Newport Pagnell Road. The final day that it will remain open is 2 March 2025. Today, the store was exceptionally busy with shoppers searching for bargains and many of our diners took advantage of that too.

A special thank you to all who made the lunch possible and especially to Deborah and Julie without whom the event would not have been such a success.

It is a very good event which runs every 2 weeks and is the perfect opportunity to chat with others whilst having something to eat. The Community Lunch runs from 12.30 -2.30 pm and costs £7 but you do need to let Deborah 07512 045418 know beforehand. The next Lunch Club will be held on Monday 3 March 2025.



### **Denton Coffee Morning 21 February 2025**



On 21 February 2025, I attended the Denton Coffee Morning at St Margaret's Church, one of West Northants Warm Welcoming Spaces. I had promised Kim that I would drop off a contribution for the Play Area Fundraiser with Pat at the Coffee Morning. The Play Area Fundraiser event is at St Margaret's Church on Saturday 1 March from 1-3pm in aid of replacing Play Equipment. Well done to everyone involved in helping to raise these important funds.

As soon as I arrived, I was asked to take a look at the partially repaired footpaths around the church. There is one particular spot which is unsafe, and it will require further attention. I escalated it as soon as I returned home. The Friday Coffee Morning was very well attended, and I enjoyed the croissant, coffee and of course the friendly chatter. It was good to catch up with Sheila, Pat, John, Mary, Diane, Sue, Kevin, Gaynor, David and others.

There will not be a Coffee Morning on 14 March 2025 as it is Doug Littler's funeral at 12pm that day. My thoughts are with Bruce and his family.

### **Goodbye to Julia & Peter from Little Houghton 27 February 2025**

On 27 February 2025, we joined many others from Little Houghton to say goodbye to Julia & Peter Harrison. For the past ten years they have lived in the same cottage in the village, and they had been associated with the village for many years before that. Julia was a former Chairman of Little Houghton Parish Council and Peter remains a member of the Parish Council. They have been instrumental in organising so many of the

village activities that I may not be able to do justice to them all. I have come to know them over the last four years and enjoyed many of the village activities such as Open Gardens, Little Houghton Fete with Teddy Bear Trail, Advent Calendar Displays, Safari Suppers, Little Houghton Parish Footpath Walks and Warm Spaces.



They have always been at the heart of Community events especially during COVID with the Buddy scheme.

Thank you to Alex for arranging such a wonderful gift, which will take pride of place in Julia & Peter's new garden. Jo's poster was exceptional and served as a goodbye from Little Houghton and a welcome to Great Houghton. John Ford spoke for all of us when he reminded us just what it takes to make a vibrant community. Indeed, he spoke about events that would have taken place in the same village hall in the past. He said "Things may have moved on from pass the parcel and afternoon teas to wine and nibbles, but the same need for people and fellowship remained. Julia and Peter had galvanised others into helping to organise community events which brought the entire village together."

Although they have said Goodbye to Little Houghton, Julia reminded us that they are only a mile down the road and that they will come back to join the community in future events. In the meantime, we wish you all the best. May you find new friends in Great Houghton. Your presence within Little Houghton has been a joy and we are going to miss you.

### **Farming Forum, Towcester 28 February 2025**

On 28 February 2025, together with over 70 farmers across South Northamptonshire, I attended our MP, Sarah Bool's first Farming Forum meeting. We were joined by the NFU, the Rural Crime Police team and others. We had a message of support from Victoria Atkins, MP.

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

This meeting was an important opportunity for farmers to raise their concerns directly with Sarah about the policies that are currently threatening the future of the farming industry. Sarah said "I want all my farmers to know I stand with you - the budget from the Government is disastrous for our rural community and farmers. We must continue to show them why their figures are wrong - the Family Farm Tax must be reversed. Food security is National Security and we need the Government to support our farmers."

The new rules on inheritance tax are a complex financial issue and as I've previously said, they're a complex emotional issue too; a farm is also a home and the 'inheritance' for many farmers' children, which isn't sitting in a bank account, it's folded into the fields, the livestock, the crops, and the years put into managing the land." 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."

If you know of any farmers who are struggling, please do ask them to contact:

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



## Grange Park Footpath

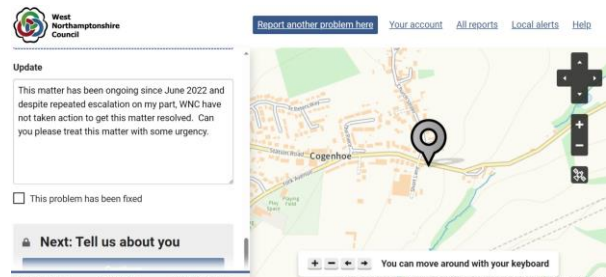
I have been working on securing improvements to the Grange Park footpath for the disabled residents of Richmond Retirement Village in Grange Park since July 2023. The footpath provides a route from the rear entrance of Richmond Village to what might be called the Grange Park Centre – the Co-op, a Doctors' 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 have heard that the project has been hit by cold / wet weather which has put Highways back a little. I can confirm the current program (delayed due to inclement weather) has Grange Park Footpath commencing on 11 March 2025.

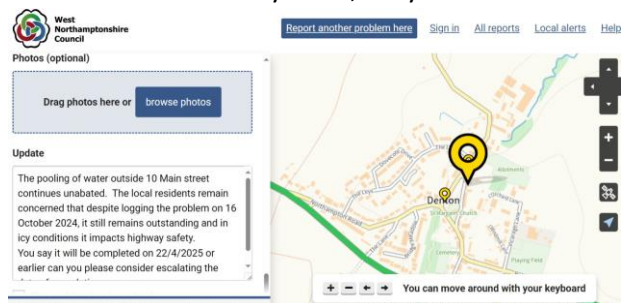
## Fix My Street Cogenhoe 3585915

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 6624260 Denton

I have been persistently chasing Highways to fix this problem. On 12 February 2025, they confirmed "that the expected completion date for these works will be 22/04/2025, however we hope to complete this as soon as possible." This morning, I chased them again, reminding them that the pooling of water outside 10 Main street continues unabated and that local residents remain concerned that despite logging the problem on 16 October 2024, it still remains outstanding and impacts highway safety in icy conditions. " I have asked them to consider bringing forward the completion date.



Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

## Fix My Steet 5231117 Cogenhoe

On 12 November 2024, I was informed that the VAS sign in Cogenhoe would be taken down

- Investigation: Completed (Defect Found) - The area has been inspected and we can confirm that

the sign will be taken down by the end of the week.

- Posted by West Northamptonshire Council at 09:38, Tue 12 November 2024

On 12 November, I asked if the sign would be replaced at the same time. Highways responded on 13 November 2024 confirming that there were no plans to replace the sign.

- Can you please confirm that the sign will be replaced at the same time?  
Posted by Councillor Stephen Clarke at 11:19, Tue 12 November 2024
- Thank you for providing an update. Officers will now investigate the concerns and this may take up to 5 working days. If you believe that your concerns are urgent then please phone us.
- Posted by West Northamptonshire Council at 11:20, Tue 12 November 2024
- Investigation: Completed (No Action Necessary) - Unfortunately, there are no plans to replace the sign at this time.
- Posted by West Northamptonshire Council at 10:40, Wed 13 November 2024



On 4 February 2025, I advised Highways that Cogenhoe Parish Council were seeking the return of the sign as it belongs to them. On 5 February 2025, I was advised that the sign itself was showing as being one of WNC assets and not belonging to the Parish Council. I have advised Cogenhoe Parish Council accordingly.

## CONSULTATIONS

A range of consultation and engagement activities take place across West Northants from time to time. I summarise the main consultations in this section of the report, but please remember you can check new consultations, have your say, and sign up to receive alerts and updates via our Consultation Hub.

### Adult Social Care Survey

There is only one week left to take part in the national Adult Social Care survey. WNC has invited residents via post, on behalf of NHS England to share what's working well and where they can improve.

The survey has been sent by post and includes a pre-paid envelope for easy return. Please send your completed survey back by 8 March 2025. Your feedback helps WNC understand the quality of life and experiences of those receiving care. If you or someone you know needs assistance, contact our Customer Service Centre at 0300 126 7000 or email [customeraudit.ncc@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:customeraudit.ncc@westnorthants.gov.uk).



## 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>

### WNC Sets a Balanced Budget for 2025-26

On Thursday, 20 February at Full Council, we agreed the authority's final budgets and Housing Revenue Account whilst also setting Council Tax for 2025/26. WNC, along with councils across the country, continues to face severe financial pressures caused by increasing cost and demand for both children's services and adult social care. Despite this, the Council has managed to set a balanced revenue budget for 2025/2026 of £959.6 million (£431.8 million excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant).

WNC started its budgetary process this year with an anticipated shortfall of £53m for 2025/26 and embarked quickly on an early review of its finances, reducing the overspend to £39m by July, followed by a further major drive over the autumn to close the gap.

Key to helping the Council protect essential services whilst balancing the books in its fifth year as a unitary authority is the income it receives from Council Tax. The budget includes a Council Tax rise of 4.99%, in line with the Government's threshold and representing an average increase on a Band D property of £1.71 a week, or £88.73 a year. This generates extra funding of around £19.2m – with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care.

The Council also continued to review, restructure and transform services within the organisation to find better, more efficient ways of working without adversely impacting the services it delivers to residents, generating efficiencies of around £25m for 2025/26.



The agreed budget also considered people's feedback in the recent budget public consultation, which attracted nearly 400 responses from residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders. It has also been subject to continuous review and scrutiny, including consideration by the cross-party group of members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



## REGULATORY SERVICES

### Pre-election guidance for the local elections 2025

With our Council's elections and town and parish elections due to take place on Thursday 1 May, we will shortly be entering the **'pre-election period'** (previously known as *purdah*) – this is the period of heightened sensitivity in the run-up to the election when specific restrictions are in place for publicity and use of the Council's resources for any political purpose or gain.

#### When does the 'Pre-election Period' begin?

The Pre-election Period begins on the **morning of Friday 14 March** for our elections in West Northamptonshire.

#### What is the Pre-election Period?

The pre-election period (historically referred to as *'purdah'*), describes the period of time immediately before elections or referendums when specific restrictions on communications activity are in place. The term 'heightened sensitivity' is used. It is the period during an election when a 'curtain or veil' must be drawn between Councils as public bodies (and their expenditure) and those standing for election. It applies whether the candidates are standing for election to this Council or to any other election.

Although there is a need to consider events and publicity, if it does not have any connection with any of the candidates and does not appear to promote or adversely affect any political party it is not necessary to cancel or move events. Another individual – e.g. a member of another authority, or person connected with another large organisation like health or police – may be standing for election in any of the elections so please check the full list of candidates before issuing publicity which might promote any individual.

We will not know the full list of candidates until the close of nominations on **Wednesday 2 April** and will at that stage publish a list of all elected members and others who are candidates to ensure that everyone is aware of all the names of candidates.

### Timetable

Application	Deadline for receipt
Delivery of Nomination Papers	Monday 17 March to 4pm on Wednesday 2 April 2025
Deadline for withdrawal of nomination paper	4pm on Wednesday 2 April 2025
Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated	No later than 4pm on Thursday 3 April 2025
Last date for registration	Friday 11 April 2025
Deadline for receiving new postal vote and postal proxy applications, and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes	5pm on Monday 14 April 2025
Proxy vote application deadline	5pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025
Last day for Voter Authority Certificates and Anonymous Elector Documents	5pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025
Receipt of emergency proxy vote applications	5pm on Thursday 1 May 2025

## Get Ready for the Local Elections this May

Residents across West Northamptonshire are being urged to get ready for the upcoming local elections on Thursday, 1 May. Voters will go to the polls to elect West Northamptonshire Council's councillors in the unitary authority's second election since its creation in 2021. This year's Polling Day on 1 May will see changes to voter arrangements after a recent electoral review reduced the number of unitary councillors to be elected



from 93 to 76 and redraw the ward boundaries across the area.

Town and parish council elections are also set to be held in some areas of West Northamptonshire on 1 May.

Whether voting in person at a polling station, by post or by proxy (on someone's behalf), there are some key deadlines to be aware of. If you haven't registered to vote yet, the deadline to do so is Friday, 11 April. It's a quick and easy process that takes just five minutes

online <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> If you've recently moved home or changed your name, you may need to update your details to ensure you can take part.

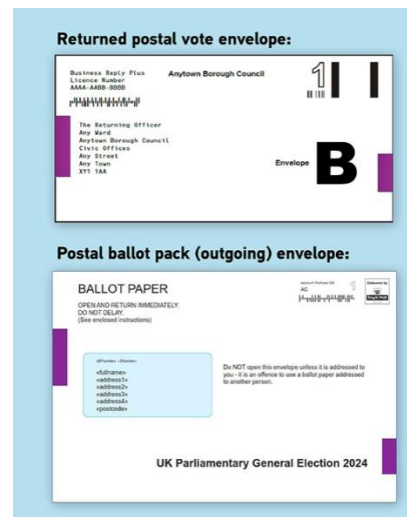
For those who prefer to vote by post, applications need to be submitted by 5pm on Monday, 14 April. Voting by post is a great option if you'll be away on election day or if you'd rather not visit a polling station in person. Your postal vote will be sent to you in advance, so you can fill it in and return it at your convenience.

If you'd like someone to vote on your behalf, known as a proxy vote, the deadline to apply is 5pm on Wednesday, 23 April.

One of the biggest changes recently introduced is the requirement for photo ID when voting in person. If you don't have an accepted form of ID, such as a passport or driving licence, you can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate. The deadline for this is 5pm on Wednesday, 23 April. Without the correct ID, you won't be able to vote at your polling station, so make sure you're prepared.

For more information, visit the West Northamptonshire Council website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/e.../local-elections-2025>



## RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

### Disappearing Rural Banks

Recent discussions in the House of Commons have brought to light the severe implications of bank closures in rural areas. Led by Simon Hoare, MP for North Dorset, a debate on bank closures in rural areas highlighted the disproportionate hardship these closures inflict on rural communities compared to urban settings. The dialogue underscored the need for a "rural proofing" approach to banking services, acknowledging that rural and urban areas face vastly different challenges.

Rural towns, often structured in a hub-and-spoke model, rely heavily on local banks to support small businesses and maintain community cohesion. The closures lead not only to economic strain but also intensify social isolation among residents, particularly the elderly and disabled who are less likely to use



digital banking services. The absence of nearby banking facilities forces residents to travel considerable distances, compounding their day-to-day challenges.

David Smith, MP for North Northumberland, also highlighted the critical role of the Post Office in providing banking services where branches have closed. His constituency, one of the largest in England, faces similar challenges with a significant reduction in bank branches, underscoring the importance of comprehensive banking solutions that include the support of community structures like the Post Office.



Several MPs echoed the sentiment that the loss of banks, often coupled with the loss of post offices, erodes community bonds and accessibility to essential services. The debate highlighted a stark statistic: North Dorset has seen a 74% reduction in banks since 2015, with similar reductions reported across other rural constituencies.

The discussion also brought up the role of banking hubs as a partial solution, providing essential services where banks have retreated. However, the effectiveness of these hubs is limited if they do not fully cater to the unique needs of rural populations. MPs argued for a more aggressive rollout of these hubs, alongside legislative changes to ensure banks consider the broader impacts of their closures.

In closing, the debate stressed the urgent need for legislative action to ensure that banks maintain a physical presence in rural areas or provide comparable services that address the specific needs of these communities. A further debate on high street bank closures, led by Ian Lavery, MP for Blyth and Ashington, pressed upon the severe impact of the decline in bank branches, especially on vulnerable groups and rural communities. The debate focused on the challenges faced by residents due to the lack of local banking services, which has led to financial exclusion for many, including the elderly and disabled. Various MPs emphasised the urgent need for banking hubs and changes to the criteria used by regulatory bodies like Link and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure better accessibility and service provision.

Proposals included revising criteria to consider community needs more deeply and ensuring sustained local banking presence through regulatory requirements on banks. The government recognised these issues, with commitments to improve digital and transport infrastructure to support access to banking services, while maintaining some level of in-person banking facilities through the introduction of banking hubs.

The Rural Services Network (RSN) recognises the critical role that accessible banking services play in sustaining rural economies and communities. We urge policymakers and banking institutions to consider the far-reaching effects of their decisions on rural life and to invest in solutions that uphold the viability and vibrancy of these essential areas.

## 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**.
- WNS/2023/7948/FULL. The erection of boundary fencing on land south of Horton Road, Hackleton,

West Northamptonshire NN7 2AW. Appeal **Allowed** and planning permission is granted in accordance with the terms of the application.

**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**

**WNC Approved Local Development Scheme 2025**

On 26 February 2025 the Planning Policy Committee, approved the updated West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (Appendix A) which sets out a timetable for local plan preparation.

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

Local Planning Authorities are required to produce, and keep up to date, a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out and timetables the local plans they will prepare to plan for development in their area. The West Northamptonshire LDS was last updated in January 2024. Members were asked to consider a revision to the LDS to ensure that it is up to date in respect of amendments to the timetable for the production of the emerging West Northamptonshire Local Plan and the time period covered by the plan. Adoption will take place in November 2027. The content of the LDS has not changed in any other aspect.

**Status:** Development Plan Document (Local Plan)  
**Geographical Area:** The whole of West Northamptonshire  
**Timetable for Production and Conformity with Appropriate Regulations**

Stage	Date
Formal Commencement of Preparation/ Consultation on the Scope of the Local Plan / Call for Sites (Regulation 18)	October 2018 – June 2019
Issues Consultation (Regulation 18)	August – October '19
Options Consultation (Regulation 18)	October – December '21
Draft Plan Consultation (Regulation 18)	April '24
Draft Plan Consultation (Regulation 18)	October '25
Publication of Draft Plan and Consultation (Regulation 19)	July '26
Submission (Regulation 22)	October '26
Examination (Regulation 24)	April '27

West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme – February 2025

Adoption (Regulation 26)	November '27
--------------------------	--------------

**West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets**

The Government published tables identifying what the changes would be for each local authority. 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.

### **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

### Government Unveils Plans for Next Generation of New Towns

The Government has unveiled plans for the next generation of new towns across England. Over 100 proposals



have been submitted by councils and housebuilders across the UK, each aiming to deliver at least 10,000 homes alongside essential infrastructure such as schools, GP surgeries, and transport links. While the exact locations have not yet been revealed, the government says most proposals are to extend existing towns or cities, alongside a "smaller number" of new standalone settlements.

The New Homes Taskforce will identify specific locations - as well as funding options - by the summer, with a view to construction on the first sites

beginning by the time of the next election in 2029.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../government-unveils-plans-for-next...>

### Three Derelict Sites to be brought back into use

Several derelict sites will be brought back into use after West Northamptonshire Council was awarded almost £2.6m from the government. The money, from the brownfield land release fund, was given to develop three



locations.

The former bus depot in St James, Northampton, will benefit from a £1,368,000 grant which would help remedy ground contamination and asbestos at the site which has been vacant since 2013. Further work would prepare it for a "residential-led" scheme. Projects at the University of Northampton's former Avenue Campus site, and former Ecton Brook care home, were also awarded grants. An award of £1,031,500 would go towards the construction of roads and utility

upgrades at the former Avenue Campus ahead of a residential development. A £200,000 grant for the Ecton Brook care home site would support demolition works in preparation for a new affordable housing scheme. The brownfield land release fund is overseen by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities through a partnership between the Office of Government Property and the Local Government Association. These three sites will provide in the region of 250 new homes for our residents, as part of our drive to meet growing residential demand.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Recycling Centres to Open 7 Days a Week

Residents will soon be able to take their waste to recycling centres across West Northants 7 days a week offering a better service and value for money this spring. Starting from 1 April, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) will enter a new contract with FCC Waste Services, better known as FCC Environment, to manage all six recycling centres across the area – Sixfields, Ecton Lane, Daventry, Towcester and Brixworth Household Recycling Centres and Farthinghoe Recycling and Reuse Centre.

Feedback from residents helped shape the future of waste and recycling services in West Northants as part of the development of its Resources and Waste Strategy in 2023. Their feedback highlighted that they want to have access to reuse, recycle and dispose of their waste more often and at a time that is convenient for them. Having previously been open on certain days of the week, all centres will open seven days a week from 10am to 4pm from 1 April 2025.

In the near future, other service improvements as a result of the new contract with FCC Environment, will also include a new onsite reuse shop at Sixfields Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) to complement the existing shop at Farthinghoe. The reuse shops will be operated via a charity partner and, residents will be able to visit the recycling centres and shop to donate items suitable for reuse/sale during opening hours of 10am – 4pm. WNC has also awarded a second contract for the treatment of residual waste, which is the waste that is collected in residents' black bins or sacks, and which cannot be recycled, to Thalia Waste Management. Residents will see no changes to their current collection arrangements because of this new contract. This contract, which will also start on 1 April 2025, will ensure at least 95% of residual waste will be treated, significantly reducing the amount sent to landfill. The new contract will not limit changes that can be made to kerbside waste collections, meaning the Council can maximise the amount of recycling in West Northamptonshire. The two contracts will be in place until 2040 and the signing of them was noted at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 11 February.



More information about our HWRCs can be found on our website.

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

### **Wantage Park Crematorium at Planning Stage**

West Northamptonshire Council has taken a major step forward in bringing a much-needed new crematorium to Wantage Farm, Round Spinney. Following an extensive pre-planning consultation process that involved local residents, community groups, businesses, and faith leaders, the Council has now submitted a planning application for the Wantage Park crematorium.

The pre-planning consultation saw over 800 responses, reflecting the strong local interest in ensuring the facility meets the needs of the community. Residents had the chance to review the proposals online and in person, including a well-attended event at Moulton Community Library. Many people shared their thoughts on key areas such as traffic, noise, safety, and environmental impact, and these valuable contributions have directly influenced the final plans.

One key area discussed during the pre-planning consultation was the site's proximity to a local school, with suggestions on how to manage traffic and ensure the facility operates smoothly alongside existing road use.



In response, the project team has worked with transport specialists to design a plan that minimises disruption. Detailed traffic studies have been carried out, and projections show that the crematorium will generate fewer vehicle movements than many alternative land uses for the site. To minimise potential impact, the project team has made several changes, including relocating the entrance road to Thorpeville South to minimise the impact on

peak school traffic times and introducing enhanced road safety measures, such as improved signage and clear access routes.

In addition, the scheme is designed to be a discreet development where visual impact is kept to a minimum while serving as a respectful addition to the community. Proposed screening measures along the site boundary include substantial planting and attractive fencing, which will help keep out of sight site movements.

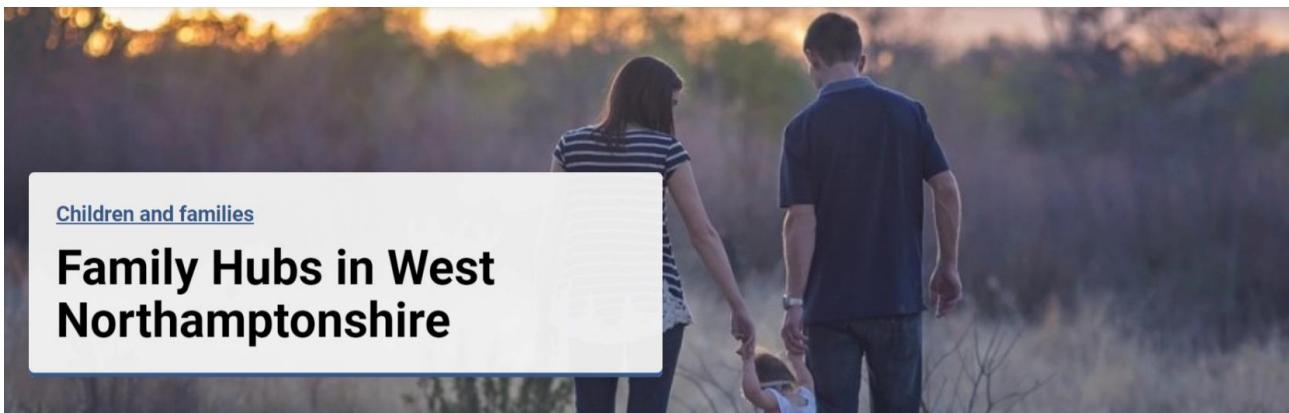
This crematorium has been designed with sustainability at its core. The facility will include energy-efficient electric cremators, solar panels, heat recovery systems, and green roofs, setting a new standard for environmentally responsible cremation services. The surrounding land will be transformed into recreational green spaces with pedestrian routes, ensuring the site benefits the wider community beyond its primary function.

If approved, the new facility will provide modern, high-quality cremation services while maintaining the dignity, privacy, and accessibility that the community needs.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Family Hub Opens in Towcester at the End of March

WNC is pleased to announce the opening of its first Family Hub at The Forum, Towcester at the end of March. The Family Hub supports parents and families with face-to-face guidance, expert advice, and a wide range of services for children aged 0-19 (or up to 25 with special needs). WNC provides one-to-one support or access to resources.



Please help us spread the word by sharing this post or tagging a friend.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/family-hubs-west...>

**Councillor Stephen Clarke**  
**Member for Hackleton and Grange Park**  
**West Northamptonshire Council**  
[stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk)



**Northamptonshire ageUK** **spring**

**MINDFUL ART**

Are you experiencing loneliness, depression or anxiety?  
Do you live with trauma, grief, or chronic pain?

**There is a strong connection between art, creativity and wellbeing**

Experience the healing power of art and join us for some creativity to reduce stress  
Elevate your mood and lower your blood pressure  
A chance to make new friends, become more mindful and relaxed  
No artistic ability needed...creativity is within us all!

Find out how Spring can support you!



Join our 6 week course of Mindful Art classes starting at The Saville Centre in Towcester on 1st April 2022

Call us to find out how to refer into Spring or visit our website at [Home | Spring | springnorthamptonshire.org](http://Home | Spring | springnorthamptonshire.org)

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have any queries, please contact the SPRING admin team on 01604 974995 for more information.

**Chronic Pain Group**

This group is now delivered in Towcester by an experienced qualified teacher who lives with chronic pain. If you are interested then call: Spring on 01604 974995 or e-mail [hello@springnorthamptonshire.org.uk](mailto:hello@springnorthamptonshire.org.uk)

**Mindful Art**

No artistic ability required. A therapeutic space which can be helpful for some during difficult times. Please ring SPRING Admin team on 01604 974995.



**spring** SOCIAL PRESCRIBING IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 18+

**Chronic Pain Management Course**

For people managing long term chronic pain health conditions; newly diagnosed or those with longer term experience.

Improve your understanding of the link between mental health and pain, and learn practical tools to manage pain, problem solving techniques and goal setting



6 weekly sessions of 2 hours (including some social time)  
Refreshments provided  
Time and venue to be confirmed

Taught by: Anna Letts, Independent Instructor and delivery partner of Spring. Qualified teacher, mental health first aid instructor and she has lived experience of managing chronic pain.

Interested?  
Call Spring on 01604 974995  
Or email [hello@springnorthamptonshire.org.uk](mailto:hello@springnorthamptonshire.org.uk)

Please note, no medical advice or information is given, specific diagnoses cannot be addressed.

**Community Responders Age UK Northants**

Age UK have become coordinators for the Community Responder service in Northamptonshire. The service provides support from volunteers to people over 60 years of age. They work closely with the Intermediate Care team and Remote monitoring hub who provide urgent care for acutely unwell patients to avoid admittance to hospital. Age UK volunteers support with welfare checks, helping people up following a fall, collecting emergency prescriptions, providing reassurance while waiting for family, friends, primary and secondary care services to arrive, doing small amounts of shopping and topping up gas and electricity meters to name just a few of the ways they support their community. The service currently runs Monday to Friday, 9am to 3.15pm. They are working to build up the number of volunteers available to support elderly people within Northamptonshire. To help them support as many older people as possible in our communities and to support us to continue to build the number of volunteers we have available across the county, they are asking if you could kindly share the attached poster on Parish notice boards, in local community centres or even newsletters to support this project. If you would like to discuss the support Age UK can offer further or are hosting any events that you feel it would be suitable for them to attend to promote their valuable service, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Kirsty Simms, Community Responders on 07881 230222. Monday to Friday 9am - 3.15pm

t 01604 611200 General/Reception [communityresponders@ageuknorthants.org.uk](mailto:communityresponders@ageuknorthants.org.uk)



**Northamptonshire ageUK** Let's change how we age

Scan me to apply

**Community Responder Volunteer**  
Can you help make a difference to older people?

The Community Responder Volunteer Service provides company, reassurance and low-level support to an older person in their own home, when a delay is anticipated for Primary or Secondary care support. It can be a worrying time when older people are waiting for further support at home, our volunteers are that much needed "friendly face" for up to two hours.

To join this rewarding service, we ask that you are:-

- Age 18 or over
- A confident, caring person with empathy for older people
- Able to stay calm and offer reassurance
- Living within Northamptonshire
- Willing to complete a DBS check and be willing to undertake relevant training.

Your visit could include:-

- Providing reassurance
- Packing an overnight bag
- Making somebody comfortable after a fall
- Contacting a family member or friend
- Collecting a prescription
- Completing a welfare check
- Delivering mobility equipment

If you are interested in this role and would like an informal chat to find out more, please call our Community Responder Coordinators on 07881 230222 or email [communityresponders@ageuknorthants.org.uk](mailto:communityresponders@ageuknorthants.org.uk)

Head Office: 01604 611200  
[www.ageuknorthants.org.uk](http://www.ageuknorthants.org.uk)

Registered Office: The Millbank and Parkside Senior Centre, York Road, Northampton NN1 5DQ. Registered Charity No. 1029995

**Expansion of Urgent Dental Care, 700,000 New Appointments**

The Department of Health and Social Care, along with NHS England, has announced the rollout of 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments in England, following directions issued to integrated care boards (ICBs) nationwide. This initiative is part of a broader plan to address accessibility issues in NHS dental services. The additional appointments are available from April 2025. This rollout targets areas known as 'dental deserts'- regions where patients have faced significant challenges in accessing necessary dental care.



Recent statistics from the GP Patient Survey 2024 highlight a critical gap in service provision, noting that



about one in four patients who attempted to access an NHS dentist over the past two years were unable to secure an appointment. This backdrop sets the stage for the government's latest action to improve access to dental care.

In addition to tackling adult dental care shortages, the government is addressing children's oral health, which remains a concern. With tooth decay as the leading cause of hospital admissions among children aged 5 to 9, the new initiative includes a supervised toothbrushing scheme aimed at improving dental health among children, especially in more deprived areas.

The rollout of these appointments is a part of ongoing efforts to reform NHS dentistry, with a focus on increasing the number of available appointments and enhancing service delivery. This includes offering incentives for dentists to work in underserved areas and reforming dental contracts to attract and retain dental professionals within the NHS.

For a detailed list of the distribution of these additional appointments across various regions and integrated care boards, further information can be accessed <https://www.gov.uk/.../dental-patients-to-benefit-from...>

The rollout of 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments in England, following directions issued to integrated care boards (ICBs) nationwide includes 17,826 additional urgent dental appointments in Northamptonshire.

## 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

### 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

## Blue Butterfly Scheme

On Monday 10th February 2025, PCSO Matt Taylor from the South Northamptonshire Neighbourhood Policing Team visited Deanshanger Primary School and delivered the Northamptonshire Police - Blue Butterfly presentation to all years. The Blue Butterfly Scheme promotes personal safety to young people, in a fun and informative way and covers key aspects of personal safety including, bullying, personal safety, online safety, and also features the hand of trust and identifying who young people can talk to. The scheme replaced the old "stranger danger" scheme, as in 90% of all cases where crimes have been committed by an adult towards a child, the adult is known to the child, it is therefore essential



we move away from this old terminology. For more information about the Blue Butterfly please click the link. <https://www.facebook.com/northantspolice/posts/10157336229014549/> To arrange a Blue Butterfly visit to your school please reply to this link; <https://www.northants.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/>

## Potential Financial Crisis Over Send Funding

A concerning report from the Local Government Association (LGA) has highlighted a looming financial crisis that could affect over half of the councils responsible for supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This crisis stems from the upcoming expiration of the "statutory override," a temporary accounting measure that currently allows councils to manage SEND-related spending deficits separately from their main financial statements.



Without this measure, which is set to expire in March 2026, many councils anticipate severe financial distress. According to the LGA's findings, 53% of councils project they will not be able to balance their budgets in 2026/27. This figure is expected to increase to 63% in 2027/28 and 65% in 2028/29, highlighting a growing trend of financial instability.

The increase in financial pressure is primarily due to the rising demand for SEND support services. Since the introduction of the Children and Families Act in 2014, the number of children and young people requiring Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has surged by 140%, from 240,183 in 2014/15 to 575,973 in 2023/24. This rise has significantly escalated the costs associated with providing necessary support, with councils anticipated to face a combined high needs deficit of approximately £5 billion next year.

In response, the LGA is urgently calling for government intervention in the upcoming Spending Review. Their primary request is for the government to erase the high needs deficits that are crippling council budgets. The LGA emphasizes that without such measures, many councils will struggle to maintain the essential services required by children with SEND.

### **National Offer Day for Year 7 Students**

On 3 March 2025, a total of 4,846 secondary school places have been allocated to pupils across West Northamptonshire, as families of children due to start Year 7 in September have been informed of their school placements.

This year, more families have been allocated a place at their highest preference school compared to the previous two years. The number of families securing a place at one of their three preferred schools has also increased.

Overall, 95.5% (4,629) of applications have been successful in securing a place at one of their preferred



schools, compared to 95% in 2024 and 94.2% in 2023. Of these, 77.8% (3,773) received their first-choice school compared to 76% in 2024 and 77% in 2023. An additional 13.2% (640) were offered a place at their second-choice school, while 4.5% (216) were allocated their third-choice school. Fewer children were placed in a non-preference school this year. 4.5% of applicants were allocated a place at a school outside of their preferences, as their chosen schools were full due to higher priority admissions. This is an improvement

compared to 5% in 2024 and 5.8% in 2023.

Families who applied for their secondary school place online and within the deadline of 31 October will have received an e-mail offer. They can also check their offer on West Northamptonshire Council's online

Admissions Portal. All applications have the right to appeal (through the independent appeals process) if they have been unable to secure a place at one of their higher preferred school options. The next round of secondary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in April / May. Primary school allocations will be announced on 16 April.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

### 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.



### Tour Delivered Economic Boost

Did you enjoy The Tour Of Britain when it came to West Northamptonshire in September? It had a really positive impact on our local economy too. The event's fifth stage, held on Saturday, 7 September 2024, showcased West Northants as a hub of excitement and community pride, seeing thousands of residents line the streets to cheer on the world-class cyclists, contributing significantly to the race's overall success.



Research carried out for British Cycling

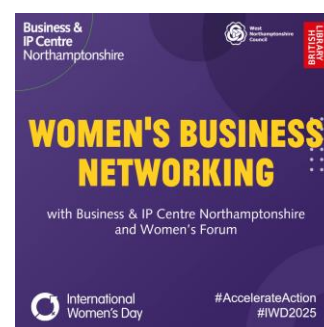
<https://www.facebook.com/britishcycling> by YouGov shows the event delivered a £5.69 million boost to West Northamptonshire, driven by £3.6 million in attendee spending.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../british-cycling...>

### Women's Business Networking

We've partnered with the Women's Forum to offer a free networking event for businesswomen and those looking to start their own ventures, in celebration of International Women's Day.

Open to all, this group provides a friendly and supportive environment for building business connections.



Join us from 12-2pm, Wednesday 05 March, at The Guildhall, Northampton.

[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/womens-business-networking-tickets1232814213499?aff=oddtcreator&fbclid=IwY2xjawlKMGhleHRuA2FibQixMQABHVX\\_dW28GmcTyV-M2BlfocP4EkCLoRUXLIF9jP4ZssNaRWPegZhuJg\\_aem\\_SwV\\_SAIflIWZGU9FyS7NJQ](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/womens-business-networking-tickets1232814213499?aff=oddtcreator&fbclid=IwY2xjawlKMGhleHRuA2FibQixMQABHVX_dW28GmcTyV-M2BlfocP4EkCLoRUXLIF9jP4ZssNaRWPegZhuJg_aem_SwV_SAIflIWZGU9FyS7NJQ)

### **Well Northants Programme shortlisted for LGC Award**

Services that support underrepresented communities in West Northamptonshire have been shortlisted for a prestigious national award. The Well Northants programme has beaten off competition from other council and community initiatives across the country to reach the final stage of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards. The programme has been instrumental in supporting underrepresented groups and communities including people living in isolated conditions or with limited access to support and care services.

The project has seen community development workers embedded in these areas to work closely with the community, enabling West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) to deliver tailored support to those facing the most complex health and social challenges. The programme has led to transformative outcomes, with more than 80% of participants reporting feeling more connected to their communities. Local projects have included sewing groups, education sessions for families, and pop-up food banks to support



those in need.

In the past year, the programme has invested £30,720 into building community assets and funding 19 projects, 14 of which were voted on by local community members. Other key Well Northants projects include the Semilong and Briar Hill evening hubs, which provide a vibrant space for weekly arts, crafts, and active play in a supportive and engaging environment. These hubs also offer educational opportunities outside traditional hours, with a split format that allows adults to gain essential skills such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), budgeting, and digital literacy, while children participate in activities nearby. Another impactful initiative is the Healing Garden, a therapeutic space funded by Well Northants. Rooted in the belief that gardens offer restorative and emotionally calming benefits, the Healing Garden provides a peaceful sanctuary in the heart of Northampton. Open to all, the garden encourages visitors to reduce isolation and improve their emotional wellbeing through mindfulness. It also offers parents and young children a chance to connect with nature, while providing valuable volunteer opportunities and a space for quiet reflection. The garden is accessible via the Cathedral carpark on Barrack Road (NN2 6AG) and remains open to the public.

Additionally, the You Are What You Grow project seeks to transform two neglected outdoor spaces within the Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village (DSLVL) in Daventry. The vision for these areas is to develop them into a community garden and sensory space, as well as an outdoor learning environment for students and the wider community. The project will not only serve as an extension of the classroom but also provide a safe space for mental wellness and expose children to life experiences they may otherwise not have had. Beyond Well Northants, WNC has continued to support the full range of communities in the District through various initiatives, such as the Northampton Peace Vigil, Northampton Pride festival, Holocaust Memorial Day, the Inspirational Women Awards and the Male Role Model Awards. The Council's Community Forums have also ensured that seldom-heard groups are actively involved in decision-making, promoting a more inclusive and vibrant West Northamptonshire.

The winners of the LGC Awards will be announced at a ceremony on Wednesday, 11 June 2025. Find out more about the Well Northants programme via the Council's website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/well-northants>

## 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.

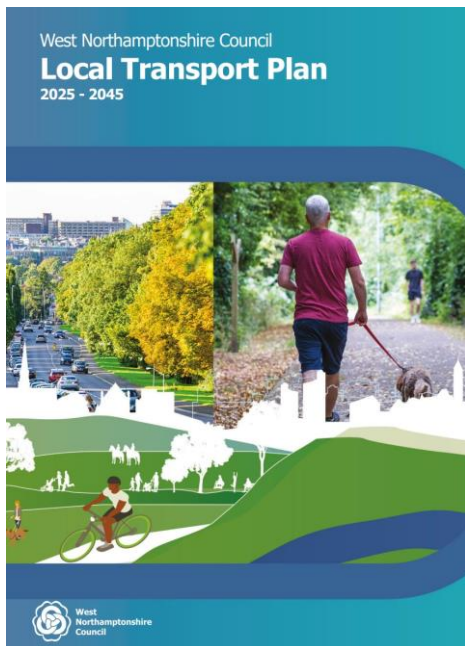
When requests for a review of speed limits are received, West Northamptonshire Highways and Northamptonshire Police undertake a formal review which involves a 'panel' of relevant officers that includes the Community Liaison Officer; the Principal Highways Engineering Officer; safety engineers; road safety

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."

## Local Transport Plan

On 4 March 2025, Cabinet will approve the amendments made to the Local Transport Plan following public consultation on the plan, and agree support for the Local Transport Plan's adoption at Full Council.

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



The Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out West Northamptonshire Council's priorities for the next five years and beyond for improving how people and goods travel, both within and through the area, based on a clear vision and objectives developed with both internal and external stakeholders. The LTP is a statutory document required by the Government. It helps guide the engagement, planning, design, decision-making, investment, operation, and maintenance of our transport system. This plan replaces the 2012 plan of the former Northamptonshire County Council. The LTP development has been informed by an updated evidence base and policy context review. It has also been guided by an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which has been developed in parallel with the plan, as well as multiple rounds of stakeholder workshops comprising officers, a cross-party selection of members and wider transport stakeholders. Following Cabinet approval in July the draft Local Transport Plan was consulted on from 25 July to 17 October 2024. The consultation resulted in 476 responses to the consultation, 370 of which were from residents of West Northamptonshire. Overall, the consultation responses showed strong support for the LTP's vision, objectives and

policies. Key themes for responses received from the consultation were buses and community transport, active travel, travel choice and accessibility, environment, funding, road maintenance and better connectivity between sustainable transport modes. Consultation respondents have suggested that a number of changes be made to the document, these range from an additional word, to additional policy measures and scheme proposals. A fuller list of the changes requested is presented in the You Said/We Did section of the Local Transport Plan Consultation Report. The LTP sets West Northamptonshire Council's transport priorities for the next five years, part of these priorities will include the production of a series of supporting strategies and action plans. These documents will cover the following topic areas, active travel, freight, road safety, mobility hubs, rail and Northampton.

## The three themes and six objectives

### CONNECTING PEOPLE BETTER

- Objective 1: Improve the accessibility of the public transport, walking and cycling networks, to promote a system that is fair and provides attractive travel alternatives to key destinations.
- Objective 2: Create thriving communities through local investment in a more resilient transport network, services and the public realm in urban and rural towns and villages across West Northamptonshire.

### SHAPING HEALTHIER PLACES

- Objective 3: Improve road safety and reducing pollution, while expanding active travel networks and supporting infrastructure that facilitates improved public health outcomes.
- Objective 4: Enhance local environments and further reduce carbon emissions from transport by

investing in low carbon and electric modes, mindful of local heritage.

#### MOBILITY ENABLING PROSPERITY

- Objective 5: Reduce inequalities through better transport connections to key employment and education opportunities, to support local socio-economic growth.
- Objective 6: Maximise the benefits to communities and businesses through use of technology and innovation.

#### Improved access to Rural Bus Services

Over the next five years West Northamptonshire Council will:

P04A: Work with operators to review bus and coach network coverage and routes, operating hours, service reliability, road and vehicle infrastructure to better serve communities and advocate for and support enhancements where appropriate, with interventions presented and costed within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and other relevant initiatives.

## POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

### Waste Dumped in Rural Areas

Neighbouring Counties to Northamptonshire have seen deposits of waste dumped on a large scale in rural areas. This waste is concealed in bales of coloured plastic wrap designed to look like legitimate farming bales.



Bales of waste are often found stacked on farmland but can also be stored in rented or vacant warehouses.

This has a damaging effect on farmers and rural communities. The waste pollutes our environment, affects wildlife, and undercuts legitimate businesses who specialise in waste management. Landowners who have been duped by criminals into storing bales on their land are forced to pay high removal costs once they are revealed to be baled waste. The storage of waste can be extremely hazardous and could pose a serious fire risk to the countryside.

The offence of waste crime is taken very seriously and punishment for dumping such waste can result in very heavy fines and prison sentences. Northamptonshire Police are committed to tackling all anti-social behaviour.

They ask that landowners and farmers remain vigilant and report any suspicious contact requesting to store bales on your land, and any sighting of trespassers, people or vehicles. Crime prevention measures such as ensuring access to your land is controlled through robust fencing and gating, and keeping outbuildings and barns locked with good lighting where possible, will prevent the waste dumping often associated with organised crime.

You can call the 24-hour Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. You can also report anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111, or by the Crimestoppers Website here: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

- More crime prevention advice can be found on the Northamptonshire Police Website. <https://www.northants.police.uk/>

- If you would like to contact your local policing team, search in the your area section on the home page. <https://www.northamptonshiretalking.co.uk/>



### Immediate Justice Programme Clean Up

Do you know of any places in your town or parish area that would benefit from a clean-up? Run by the



Northamptonshire Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, the Immediate Justice programme offers people who have committed low-level crimes an alternative to prosecution, through completing reparative work such as litter picking, graffiti removal, gardening and repairs. The programme has so far delivered over 650 hours of work across 30 locations in West Northamptonshire, and the feedback the team has received from communities has been positive. If you have any suggestions of areas, or what work could be implemented, please email: [immediatejusticeteam@northants.police.uk](mailto:immediatejusticeteam@northants.police.uk)

## CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

### Rugby World Trophy on its Way

People had the unique opportunity to see the prestigious Women's Rugby World Cup trophy up close, take pictures and learn more about the upcoming tournament during a series of events taking place during the half-term. The silverware travelled to public locations in Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes ahead of six pool games being hosted at Franklin's Gardens. People had the opportunity to see the trophy up close and learn how they can take part in the lead-up to the event.

#### Where the trophy was seen:

Monday, 17 February: 09:00 GMT to 10:00 at Franklin's Gardens and 10:30 to 15:30 at Rushden Lakes Shopping Centre

Tuesday, 18 February: 14:00 to 15:30 at Derngate Theatre in Northampton

Wednesday, 19 February: 09:00 to 15:30 at Milton Keynes Shopping Centre

Thursday, 20 February: 09:30 to 11:30 at Weston Favell Library and 12:30 to 18:30 at Northampton Market Square

Friday, 21 February: 09:00 to 15:30 at Northampton Museum and from 17:00 at the Loughborough Lightning v Ealing Trailfinders match at Franklin's Gardens

The WRWC begins on 22 August and ends with the final taking place on 27 September at Twickenham. The first match hosted in Northampton will be Ireland v Japan on 24 August.

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

### QR Codes in Northampton's Market Square

Visitors to Northampton's Market Square can now delve into the rich history of the site with the help of newly installed QR codes. These codes provide access to detailed information about the fascinating archaeological finds uncovered beneath the Market Square surfaces, dating back to the medieval period.

Archaeologists from MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), which has an office in Northampton, have unearthed a treasure trove of artifacts from between 1200 and 1350. Among the remarkable discoveries are:



- A decorated medieval leather flask
- A medieval wrist guard for an archer
- The upper part of a medieval boot
- Part of a medieval decorative leather strap
- Medieval leather offcuts of udders

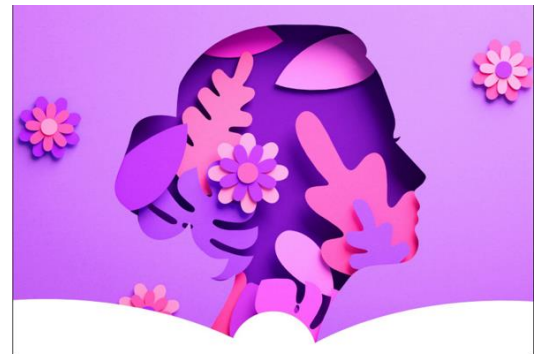
In addition to these items, the excavation revealed animal bones, wood, and remnants of several structures. Noteworthy finds include:

- A fine stone building in the centre of Market Square, potentially a previously unknown market hall, dated later than the medieval layers
- A stone building dated 1100 to 1150, which could predate the first market area established in 1236
- The Great Conduit of Northampton at the south end of Market Square, believed to have been built by Edward IV and documented as being repaired in 1509
- Buildings depicted on John Speed's map of 1610, discovered on the west side of the market, which stood before the Great Fire of Northampton in 1675

An archaeological finds map is available, allowing visitors to view the locations of various discoveries within the Market Square. This map can be accessed through the QR codes which are displayed on white ceramic tiles and have been set into the ground amongst the porphyry stone paving or the website here.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/nor.../archaeological-finds>

The installation of QR codes is part of a broader initiative to regenerate Market Square and transform Northampton town. This project aims to enhance the area's historical significance while promoting tourism and community engagement.



Celebrating International Women's Day  
Save the Date  
Saturday 8th March 2025

## International Women's Day

Save the Date-Saturday 8 March 2025.



West Northamptonshire Council



International Women's Day

## Residents invited to nominate Historical Figures to Honour West Northants History

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is launching a new Blue Plaque Scheme to honour the people and

events that have shaped the area's rich culture and history. As part of the Histories of Northamptonshire project, led by Northampton Museums & Art Gallery and supported by Arts Council England, the scheme aims to commemorate remarkable individuals and groups who have left a lasting legacy.

Building on the success of the 2019 Northampton Blue Plaque Scheme, this new initiative will expand across West Northamptonshire introducing 8 new plaques, celebrating local heritage and inspiring communities to engage with their shared history. Residents are invited to submit



nominations for the Blue Plaque Scheme, with an open application process running until 31 March 2025. Nominees must have:

- died at least 20 years ago
- made a significant contribution to the area
- not have already been recognised with a Blue Plaque
- have a strong connection to a surviving location in West Northamptonshire

Nominations can be submitted by completing an online form or by emailing: [hon@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:hon@westnorthants.gov.uk) to request a nomination form. A panel of historical and cultural experts, alongside community representatives, will review applications to select the 8 honourees whose plaques will be installed from September 2025, to coincide with the Histories of Northamptonshire in 100 Objects exhibition.

The scheme also welcomes volunteers to assist with historical research and content development, ensuring that the stories behind each plaque are well-documented and widely accessible.

### **Taster Sessions at Old Cricket Club**

Old Cricket Club have spaces for new members to join their juniors, women's, and senior team for 2025. Join them for a taster session during their indoor winter practice on Sunday nights during February and March at Northants Cricket Barn, Brixworth. The club is an ECB Clubmark accredited club based in the north of Northampton, near Pitsford and Moulton. They provide a welcoming family environment and social scene to get everyone involved at the club, even for those who aren't playing cricket. For more information about taster sessions, contact Club Chairman Dec Ryan on 07813037867.

<https://oldcc.play-cricket.com/home>



### **Exercise Referral Scheme**

The GP Exercise Referral scheme aims to provide opportunities for people with underlying medical conditions, or those at risk of developing conditions to become more active in a safe and welcoming environment and raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity, helping to create long-term behaviour change.



Regular physical activity can help you manage your weight, have a positive effect on you mentally, improve your muscle and joint functions, and benefit your heart health too. Not only will it help you manage and control existing conditions, but it will help protect you from developing other health complications as well.

The 12 week programme will be designed to help individuals self-manage their condition more effectively and with more confidence. Ask your healthcare professional to make your referral on your behalf or for more information please click the link below.

<https://www.everyoneactive.com/content-hub/health/exercise-referral/>

### Bird Photographer of the year

Photographers from all over the world entered the Photographer of the Year Awards in 2024. 23,000 images were received resulting in beautiful and thought-provoking photographs of the avian world. The exhibition includes the overall winner and winners of various categories including Conservation, Bird Behaviour, Birds in the Environment and Comedy Bird Photo amongst others. The exhibition is running from Saturday 1 March until Sunday 27 April at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery.

<https://www.northamptonmuseums.com/directory-record/502>



### Roman & Indus Valley Archaeology

Visit a new display about the Romans & Indus Valley Civilization which opened on Saturday 1st March until Friday 29 August at the Daventry Museum.

The exhibition curated by the South Warwickshire Archaeology Society (SWAS) explores the fascinating world of Romans and Indus Valley people, plus features artefacts rarely seen outside of the British Museum. The SWAS team joined the display launch and gave x2 Free Talks at 10.30am and 12.30pm respectively. The talks lasted approximately 10-15 mins were suitable for all ages.

Daventry Museum, 3 New Street, Daventry, Northants, NN11 4BT

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1290319858858599/1290332895523962/>

