

Leader "bitterly disappointed" at Government decision to scrap devolution deal

More than £600m of investment to create jobs, homes and infrastructure has been scrapped, after the Government halted Norfolk's devolution deal.

Norfolk County Council had secured an in-principle devolution deal in December 2023, to bring more powers and funding to the county - including a £20m investment fund for 30 years.

The Government has now informed the council that the current deal has been halted.

County council leader Councillor Kay Mason Billig said: "I am bitterly disappointed that the new Government has halted our deal.

"Ministers don't support the idea of a Norfolk-only deal, or the idea of a county council leader, elected by the public - even though this would not have involved additional bureaucracy.

"For a Government that is keen on economic growth, this is a shortsighted and damaging decision.

"The Government says it supports devolution, yet it has killed off a deal that was ready to go: a deal that was going to improve lives in Norfolk, and grow our economy and start to address decades of historic under investment in our county.

"Norfolk deserves better than this. I intend to press the Government for talks on how we can salvage as many benefits as possible from our current deal - and ensure we don't go to the back of the queue for new powers and funding."

The deal Norfolk has agreed with the previous Government proposed investment of more than £600m over 30 years. It would have enabled Norfolk to invest in areas such as transport, skills and job opportunities, housing and regeneration, tailored to the needs of local people.

It would mean:

- Having a Council Leader who is directly elected by the public, enabling Norfolk's voice to be heard by the Government
- Targeting funding and resources to Norfolk's own priorities
- Unlocking housing and employment sites
- Investing in the skills we need and attracting and retaining key businesses
- Opening the door to more - further powers and funding in future

Working with district council colleagues and other partners, the county council developed a significant pipeline of projects which would have been funded through the devolution deal.

The first phase of schemes included new health facilities in Kings Lynn and Norwich, funding to unlock major commercial and housing sites in a range of sites including Norwich, South Norfolk, Kings Lynn, Attleborough, Dereham and North Walsham. Together these schemes have the potential to unlock around £750m in investment, more than 1,000 jobs and hundreds of houses.

Norfolk County Council opposes National Grid pylon scheme

Councillors in Norfolk have objected to a National Grid proposal to construct an electricity transmission line across the county.

National Grid has launched a statutory consultation on plans for an 114 mile overhead power line between Norwich in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex.

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

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

At a recent full council meeting, councillors backed a motion expressing concerns over the proposals.

That motion called for Kay Mason Billig, leader of the Conservative-controlled council to write to National Grid with several requests, including further consideration of an offshore alternative and of putting more of the power line underground.

Norfolk countryside at risk from proposed solar farms

Thousands of acres of farmland are being put "under attack" from solar farm developers according to a council leader.

Kay Mason Billig, leader of Norfolk County Council called the plans a "creeping abuse" of the countryside and said the county should resist them.

The Conservative Council leader was speaking after energy companies unveiled separate plans to create the UK's largest two solar farms in Norfolk.

One of the developments, called High Grove, would cover 4,000 acres of land on five sites close to Dereham and Swaffham, on either side of the A47. The other, East Pye, would cover 2,700 acres on 34 fields surrounding several villages close to the A140 near Long Stratton.

Cllr Mason Billig called the plans "deeply disturbing" announcing her opposition at a meeting of Norfolk County Council.

She further added "I applaud the efforts of parish councils to fight this creeping abuse of our landscape. I will certainly be supporting my parishes, many of whom will be affected, in resisting this latest attack on our county.

Norfolk is not a place to be exploited by the Government in its efforts to feed the power-hungry southeast, especially when local people will not even benefit from it.

This is another example of how the government doesn't care about Norfolk. They will happily rape us of our commodities, but give us nothing in return. I, for one, am not going to stand for it and I hope the rest of the council will support me in this."

Conference celebrated Norfolk's market towns and examine their future potential

Champions of Norfolk's market towns came together at a conference aimed at showcasing their strengths and developing plans to maximise their future potential.

Businesses, organisations and councils from market towns across the county took part in the event at Swaffham Assembly Rooms on 1st October, exploring placemaking, business and skills support and transport.

Councillor Fabian Eagle, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, conceived the idea for the conference which will build on the engagement work the county council has completed through its Norfolk Economic Strategy workshops and Love Your Market Town initiative.

Norfolk County Council wants to highlight the crucial role market towns such as Aylsham, Downham Market, and Fakenham play as service centres for local communities and bring together people to share best practice around revitalising them, encouraging pride in place and increasing footfall.

Norfolk Business Board ushers in new era of support for the region's economy

A Norfolk Business Board tasked with developing a vibrant economy, helping local companies to succeed and ensuring the region has the necessary skills and infrastructure has met for the first time.

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

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

To find out more about the work of Norfolk Business Board, visit www.norfolkbusinessboard.co.uk

Latest round of funding open for agri-tech and food tech businesses

Norfolk County Council is working in partnership with Innovate UK and regional partners Greater Lincolnshire LEP, Suffolk County Council and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority on the Launchpad with up to £7.5m to grow innovation in Eastern England's agri-tech and food technology cluster, which also includes agri-biotech and aquaculture.

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

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

- In the '[Minimum Financial Assistance' \(MFA\) competition](#), micro, small and medium sized businesses can apply for grant funding between £25,000 and £100,000. The grant is to cover up to 100% of the project costs.
- The [Collaborative Research and Development \(CR&D\) competition](#) offers grant funding of £150,000 to £300,000 for business-led collaborative innovation projects lasting between 6 and 18 months. Project consortia must include an SME

and be comprised of organisations such as businesses, universities, research institutes, charities and the public sector.

In both competitions, innovative businesses can seek funding for projects developing and applying technologies in themes that include the following:

- Enhancing the productivity of primary crops, livestock, aquaculture or ornamental crops
- Biotechnologies related to agriculture, aquaculture, food processing and nutrition
- Food that promotes safe, lower carbon or more sustainable healthy and nutritious diets
- Resource efficient production and processing methods for low emission foods

Under the Launchpad, Norfolk County Council, Greater Lincolnshire LEP, Suffolk County Council and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority are collaborating as the Launchpad Cluster Management team, showcasing wider support on offer for innovative businesses in the cluster, including events, finance and investment and connections. If you would like to engage with the Norfolk lead, please do contact james.allen@norfolk.gov.uk.

Norfolk businesses looking to apply for the Innovate UK grant funding competitions can take advantage of free innovation bid writing support on offer through the [Innovation Grant Mentoring Project](#).

Aiming high with latest investment in county's fire and rescue service

Norfolk's brand-new Aerial Ladder Platform is having its first outing this week at a prestigious national Fire and Rescue event.

The £1million capability will belong to Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and be vital in emergency rescues from height and help in tackling fires from above extinguishing them quickly and safely.

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

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

As a result of those new fire appliances, the service will be providing one of the old appliances, previously stationed at Heacham, to our friends at Norfolk Fire Museum.

Second World War veterans attended Battle of Britain Commemoration at County Hall

Norfolk County Council hosted a group of Second World War veterans as part of a ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Britain.

The event took place at County Hall on Friday 13th September, hosted by Norfolk County Council Chairman, Councillor Stuart Dark MBE and was attended by members of the Armed Forces and leaders from across the county.

The veterans, with an average age of 100, were led into the ceremony by the next generation of Cadets as part of the opening parade. Music accompaniment was provided by the Norwich City Concert Band.

Prayers were led by Norfolk County Council Chaplain, The Revd. Albert Cadmore who spoke of the heroes who fell during Britain's WW2 aerial battles.

The Airman's Prayer was read by Group Captain Frederick Wigglesworth, Station Commander at RAF Marham.

Extracts from speeches by Sir Winston Churchill to The House of Commons were recited by HM Lord-Lieutenant, Lady Dannatt MBE.

Wreaths were laid ahead of the playing of the last post and a minute silence to honour those we have lost.

The service was concluded with the playing of the National Anthem.

Herring Bridge receives further national awards

The new Herring Bridge in Great Yarmouth, which opened in February, received further national recognition at a Highway Awards ceremony in London last night.

Norfolk County Council's nationally significant infrastructure project won the Major Project of Year award and was also later announced as winner for the Highways Special Merit award across all shortlisted finalists.

This follows the bridge already receiving Major Project of the Year at the New Civil Engineer awards early this summer.

The Highway Awards were held on Tuesday 24th September at Park Plaza, Westminster Bridge in London, with shortlisted entries decided by an expert panel of twelve judges.

Norfolk's entry was a joint submission with consultants WSP who worked with the council and partners to take the project, constructed by BAM Farrans joint venture, from its inception through to delivery.

Subsidised trees available to order as Norfolk County Council aims to hit 600,000 trees for Norfolk

Trees in Norfolk are set for another increase as Norfolk County Council launches projects for the new tree planting season which starts in November.

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

As well as the usual range of tree packs available, this year, for the first time there are a limited number of single Norfolk Oak trees, grown at Gressenhall Community tree nursery, making it possible for more people to take part and be 'one in a million'.

Those interested can apply for subsidised tree packs by visiting www.norfolk.gov.uk/subsidisedtreepacks

In addition to the subsidised tree scheme Norfolk County Council is once again partnering with Busseys, to launch the Busseys Community Grant. This initiative offers £10,000 in funding to support tree planting projects across Norfolk. Community groups can apply for grants of up to £2,500 to plant trees that provide tangible benefits to their local area. The grant is open to any organisation in Norfolk with suitable land and the necessary permissions for planting.

More information on how to apply, the application process, and deadlines visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/busseyscommunitygrant

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

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

Other projects supporting our tree planting ambition this year include:

- Free hedgerow planting for County farms tenants
- Tree planting pilots being run as part of the Trees Outside Woodland (ToW) project. We are a partner of the ToW project, led by DEFRA. This is a research project, looking at new ways to increase tree cover outside woodlands and strengthen biosecurity, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

- Free Advice Pilot - we have partnered with the Norfolk Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group to offer free advice to landowners who wish to plant more than 0.5ha of woodland (Woodland creation).
- We also continue to encourage residents to '[Tell Us Where You Planted](#)' by letting us know online if they have planted a tree so they can be part of Norfolk's 1 million Trees story.

For more information on Norfolk's 1 Million Trees initiative visit

www.norfolk.gov.uk/milliontrees

Changes coming to Norfolk's recycling centres in November

Norfolk residents and traders are set to benefit from an improved experience at recycling centres across the county thanks to changes coming in from November this year. The changes will help with service demand, reduce congestion and make sites safer whilst ensuring costs are covered for the disposal of waste.

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

Slots are available every fifteen minutes and people can make a booking or cancel one right up until the time of the booking. People will be asked to give the registration number of the vehicle they will be using on the day. Business and trade waste customers will also be asked to provide their waste carriers licence number.

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

In addition to the booking system, trade customers will also see a change to the way they pay to dispose of their waste from the 1st November.

Businesses will be charged based on the size of vehicle and the type of waste they bring, instead of the number of bags.

These changes are to make sure that the costs of disposal of trade waste at Norfolk recycling centres are fully covered, and to provide a fair and consistent price for traders based on the volume and type of waste in each vehicle.

- 43% of LAs in England have some form of booking system at recycling centres

- The booking system goes live on Monday 11th November 2024 to book slots for the following week. Customers can find out more by picking up a leaflet at a recycling centre or at www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingbooking . Or call 0344 800 8020
- The trade waste service is available at our seven largest recycling centres; Caister, Dereham, Hempton, King's Lynn, Norwich North, Norwich South and Thetford
- There are five vehicle categories, and each vehicle will be assessed and charged as either up to 50% full or over 50% full. Prices can be found at www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingbooking starting from £10.50 for half a mini-van of recyclables
- Alternative ways for businesses to dispose of trade waste can be found on our www.norfolk.gov.uk/businesswaste

Initiative encourages young cyclists to illuminate their rides day and night for enhanced safety

Norfolk's Safety Camera Partnership with the support of Norfolk County Council are encouraging young cyclists across Norfolk to "be switched on" both day and night by offering a free set of bike lights on completion of their cycle training this year.

It became apparent during Bikeability training commissioned by Norfolk County Council and delivered by Outspoken, SJ3 and Pedal Power; that some cyclists in Norfolk either don't have access to bike lights or choose not to use them.

In response to this community need, Norfolk's Safety Camera Partnership agreed to fund bike lights for Year 6 cyclists who complete their cycle training from September 2024, supporting their transition to high school.

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

For more information about cycling courses available in your area please [visit Primary school road safety education courses](#).

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Cllr James Bensly

