

Norfolk County Council updates – 29/05/25

Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy – public consultation

The county council is inviting everyone to take part in their public consultation on Norfolk's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Running until 11 June, this consultation aims to gather feedback on priorities and actions for restoring and enhancing nature across Norfolk, reversing biodiversity loss and promoting sustainable land use to benefit both people and wildlife.

Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Please take the time to fill in the survey and share with local groups who might want to provide their input, and with your local residents.

A link to the consultation is available [here](#).

You can find out more on [our website](#)

Contact the team at naturalnorfolk@norfolk.gov.uk for further information and posters.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service update

In the last year, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has helped more people than ever before stay safer in their homes. Between April 2024 and April 2025, the service's Prevention team, fire crews and volunteers completed 8,164 in-person Home Fire Safety Visits, which is a 139% increase on 2023-24 and the highest on record for the service.

Home Fire Safety Visits are free, in-person visits designed to reduce the risk of fire and improve safety and wellbeing in homes across Norfolk. They identify potential hazards, raise awareness and influence safer behaviours and also serve as a gateway to wider health and wellbeing support - with teams able to make onward referrals to services such as social care, mental health support and assistive technology providers.

If you know someone who may benefit from a Home Fire Safety Visit, please refer them via our website where we will check if they are eligible: www.norfolk.gov.uk/firesafetycheck.

Investment for autistic children

Proposals to develop more specialist education places in Norfolk for autistic children have been boosted, thanks to proposed investment from the Cullum Family Trust.

Working alongside the National Autistic Society, the Cullum Family Trust has offered to provide £2.2m to help support Norfolk County Council's plans for more specialist resource bases, supporting children with additional needs at mainstream schools.

If approved, the proposals would see £1.1m invested at both Acle Academy and Alderman Peel High School, with Norfolk County Council meeting the remaining £2.5m capital costs for the projects.

The Cullum Family Trust has been set up by Peter Cullum, CBE, a philanthropist and businessman who grew up in Norfolk. The National Autistic society, on behalf of the Cullum Family Trust, is working in partnership with the County Council and the Wensum Trust to develop Norfolk's first Cullum Centres. The aim of the centres is to provide specialist support to autistic children to help them thrive within a mainstream school.

Further information is available in our press release [here](#).

Norfolk County Council's Cabinet is being asked to agree the proposed investment and partnership with the Cullum Family Trust, when it meets on 2 June.

A link to the Cabinet papers is available [here](#).

New exhibition - Unearthed: The Power of Gardening

Unearthed: The Power of Gardening is a free display beginning in Norfolk's Museum of Norfolk Life at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and continuing to Dereham Library, Norwich's Millennium Library and Fakenham Library.

The display explores the transformative, enriching and sometimes radical power of gardening. Inspired by the British Library's major exhibition, Norfolk Library and Information Service is one of 30 library services celebrating gardening through the UK-wide Living Knowledge Network.

Unearthed: The Power of Gardening explores how the act of gardening can heal and sustain people in a multitude of ways. It reveals how gardening can bring people together, empower communities and shape our relationship with the natural world. It also considers gardening as a form of activism, as a means of challenging land ownership and highlighting social disparities, as well as providing a global story about the movement of plants.

The exhibition's final day at Gressenhall will coincide with Gressenhall's hugely popular Open Farm Sunday free event on 8 June.

The touring exhibition will take place at:

- Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum - 24 May - 8 June
- Dereham Library - 10 June - 12 July
- Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library - 15 July - 30 August
- Fakenham Library - 2-27 September

Further details about this exhibition and additional supporting events are available in our press release [here](#).

National updates

Coastal and rural communities

The government has [announced](#) that coastal and rural regions will receive funding in exchange for hosting clean energy infrastructure by requiring renewable developers to pay into community benefit funds – to be used for new facilities, better transport links, and investment in apprenticeships – which contribute to residents' lives and the local economy.

The proposals will require community benefits for families, businesses and local community groups who live near offshore wind, onshore wind and solar farms - with families in the area deciding where the money should be spent.

The level of payments to communities depends on the size of the infrastructure project and will range from tens of thousands of pounds a year for small developments up to millions of pounds per year for largescale developments.

This announcement follows the government's previous announcement about a [new Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund](#) (as reported in last week's member brief)

These plans will build on measures being introduced in the proposed [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#), where households within 500 metres of new or upgraded electricity transmission infrastructure will receive a level of discount on their electricity bills.

New Creative Foundations Fund

Arts and cultural organisations will soon be able to apply for a share of £85 million from the government for vital repairs and upgrades, ensuring everyone has access to high quality institutions in the places they call home.

The new Creative Foundations Fund will help arts venues across England to address a range of issues, such as repairing building infrastructure, outdated or failing systems, inefficient energy systems and inaccessible spaces. It will ensure beloved local venues like theatres, performing arts venues, galleries, grassroots music venues and contemporary arts centres can continue to offer opportunities, boost skills and attract more visitors from across the country.

Arts and cultural organisations across England are encouraged to apply for a share of up to £10 million each from the fund, which recognises the huge contribution they make towards boosting growth and breaking down barriers to opportunities for young people by helping them to learn vital creative skills.

The funding is part of the government's £270 million Arts Everywhere Fund and will be delivered by Arts Council England.

Further information about the fund is available in the government's press release [here](#).

The online portal to register Expressions of Interest for the Creative Foundations Fund opens on Monday 30 June 2025. [Full Guidance](#), including eligibility criteria and details of how to apply can be found on [Arts Council England's website](#).

Funding for speech and language interventions

The government has [announced](#) funding of £3.4m for the Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) programme that could mean that up to 20,000 more children will benefit from earlier targeted support to address speech and language difficulties over the coming year. ELSEC deploys specialist teams across primary schools and early years settings, helping to identify and respond to speech and language needs, particularly for children with SEND.

As part of the ELSEC programme, Speech and Language Therapy Assistants become part of the school environment, working across multiple settings in their area to assist children aged 2-11. This might range from universal support for the whole class to specialist 1:1 help for pupils with intensive needs.

The government sees the ELSEC programme as paving the way for a reformed wider SEND system that embeds earlier intervention and targeted support. A lack of early identification of speech and language delays can have a significant impact on development, social skills, school attendance, and academic attainment.

Support for neurodivergent children in mainstream schools

Around 300,000 children, including those with conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, will be better supported to achieve and thrive as the [government expands their programme](#) to help boost attendance and behaviour.

Backed by £9.5 million in government funding, the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme – which supports neurodiverse students by training teachers to

identify and better meet their needs and improves parental engagement – will be extended for another year across a further 1,200 schools.

The programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and supported by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE).

New reservoirs for East Anglia

In a significant intervention to speed up delivery of much-needed reservoirs, the Environment Secretary Steve Reed has taken control of the planning process to build two major reservoirs for the first time since the 1990s.

[Two new reservoir projects](#) in East Anglia (Cambridgeshire) and Lincolnshire have been awarded status of 'nationally significant'. This means the government view the projects as crucial and that the planning process is escalated from a local level to the Secretary of State.

Anglian Water are proposing to build the Lincolnshire Reservoir to the south of Sleaford, aiming to be operational by 2040. They have also partnered with Cambridge Water to propose the Fens Reservoir, located between the towns of Chatteris and March, set to be completed in 2036.

Drivers no longer need to submit planning applications to install electric vehicle chargepoints

Future of Roads Minister, Lilian Greenwood, [has confirmed](#) that from 29 May 2025, more drivers and businesses will no longer need to submit a planning application to install public or private EV sockets.

By cutting down on paperwork, more EV owners with a driveway should find it easier, quicker and cheaper to install a private chargepoint and power up their EVs at home. The minister says that this will unlock savings of up to £1,100 a year compared to running a petrol or diesel car.

With planning changes also applying to workplace and public chargepoints, businesses will be able to install new sockets faster and for less, helping increase the number of public chargepoints so that EV owners can charge more easily, wherever they live and drive.