

Norfolk County Council updates – 18-07-25

A free exhibition “Unearthed: The Power of Gardening” is now at Norfolk Millennium Library.

The exhibition started at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, then moved to Dereham Library before coming to Norwich.

It emphasises how gardening can bring people together, empower communities, and shape our relationship with the natural world – showcasing the transformative power of gardening and how it can be a force for creativity, resilience and community building. It also considers gardening as a form of activism. The work features collaborations with Black Futures (produced by 'innate creates') and artists from Edible East.

The exhibition will be at the Millenium library until 30 August 2025, when it will move to Fakenham Library from 3-27 September 2025.

Blofield School officially opened

Children in Blofield have celebrated the official opening of their new £8.5m primary school.

The new building was funded by Norfolk County Council and built by Pentaco Construction. NPS Ltd designed the school. As part of the celebrations, children gave a tour to representatives from the Norfolk County Council, senior school leaders, governing body representatives, parish council members and Pentaco.

The school, built in response to projected local housing, has 14 classrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, a library, administrative offices, and a spacious main hall with an adjoining studio.

NHS GP Patient Survey - Norfolk and Waveney results

The [Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care system have reported](#) increased patient satisfaction with GP practices, NHS dental and pharmacy services across Norfolk and Waveney– according to the latest national GP patient survey results.

The Norfolk and Waveney results of the 2025 IPSOS Mori NHS England survey for showed that:

78% of patients had a good overall experience of their GP practice, compared with 77% last year. This is higher than the national average of 75%

87% of patients had a good overall experience of using pharmacy services, compared with 85% last year. The national average is 88%

61% of patients had a good overall experience of local NHS dental services, compared with 56% last year. The national average is 71%

These results are based on the responses of 12,079 patients in the Norfolk and Waveney area who completed a survey.

National Updates

Drought update

The National Drought Group has [said](#) that dry weather continues to impact water resources across England, requiring water companies to take action to manage demand and the public urged to use water wisely.

Across England, rainfall was 20% less than the long-term average for June, which was also the hottest on record, with two heatwaves driving unusually high demand for water. The West and East Midlands are now officially in drought, and three more areas – including East Anglia – have moved into prolonged dry weather status.

The National Drought Group is asking the public to think about how they use water at home and in the garden, and to comply with any local restrictions, as the less water you use at home, the more water there is in your local environment.

A decision to declare drought is taken based on reservoir levels, river flows, groundwater levels, how dry soils are, environmental incidents and water resources position along with consideration of the long-term weather forecasts. These are based on Environment Agency Area classifications. More information on how drought is managed in England can be found [here](#).

Electric Car Grant launched

The government has [launched an Electric Car Grant](#) to support the transition to zero emission vehicles and incentivise sustainable automotive manufacturing.

Car makers can apply for funding from 16 July 2025, subject to [confirmation of vehicle eligibility by the Department for Transport](#). A list of eligible vehicles will be updated on the department website as vehicles are approved. The scheme has funding available until financial year 2028 to 2029. The closure date will remain under review and the scheme will be subject to amendment or early closure, with no notice, should funds become exhausted.

The Electric Car Grant has 2 bands. £3,750 for the most sustainably produced cars and £1,500 for cars that meet some environmental criteria. This is in recognition of the need to address embedded carbon emissions across a vehicle's lifetime, as well as tailpipe emissions. Vehicles that do not meet minimum sustainability standards will not be eligible for a grant.

Once models are approved, the car company will then take the money off the price of the car, so customers will just see a reduced price in dealerships and will not have to do anything themselves to get the discount.

Devolution and Empowerment Bill

On 10 July the Government introduced the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. A link to the proposed bill and accompanying documents is available [here](#).

The Bill aims to establish a more consistent and simpler model of devolution which can be delivered more quickly than current legislation allows - establishing a standardised framework of devolved powers, duties and functions, reforming the local government sector, and empowering communities.

The Bill is technical in nature. It includes the fundamentals to build upon and formalise the intentions set out in the English Devolution White Paper and to create Strategic Mayoral Authorities. The key areas for devolution of funding and powers are those the Government has previously outlined: transport and local infrastructure, skills and employment, housing and strategic planning, economic development and regeneration, environment and net zero, health, wellbeing and public service reform, public safety.

Some additions in the Bill include:

A requirement on local authorities to put in place "effective neighbourhood governance".

- A new Community Right to Buy.
- Creation of a new Local Audit Office

New Strategy for elections published

16-year-olds are to be given the right to vote as part of the Government's new policy paper

[Restoring trust in our democracy: Our strategy for modern and secure elections.](#)

The Government says that they have set themselves new tasks – of futureproofing democracy, securing elections, upholding our values, and protecting elections against interference. Their aim is to reclaim Britain's democracy as an aspiration for the rest of the world.

To do this, they intend to bring forward an elections and democracy bill during this Parliament. A subsequent programme of secondary legislation will set out the detail for implementation.

They also say that they will work closely with local authorities to provide ongoing and timely support to them and their elections teams on the rollout of their proposed programme of reform - in particular respecting the need to allow sufficient time for administrators and voters alike to understand and absorb changes before they come into effect.

Better Futures Fund – for struggling and vulnerable families and children

New government funding – the Better Futures Fund – has been [announced](#). It is intended to provide support to struggling and vulnerable families and children to help them access better education, a safe home, and the caring supportive environment needed to flourish.

The £500 million fund, to be delivered by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, will support up to 200,000 children and their families over the next ten years. The Government plans to raise another £500m from local government and communities, charities, social enterprises, investors, and philanthropists.

Full details of the fund are not yet available. It could fund providing support in schools to improve attendance, behaviour and overall achievement of pupils, intervening to free children from a life of crime, and offering employment support to secure their futures.

Industrial Strategy update

The Government has launched a new [Life Sciences Sector Plan](#) as part of their [Industrial Strategy](#). The plan aims to position the UK as the leading life sciences economy in Europe by 2030, and the third globally by 2035, behind only the United States and China.

Setting out a ten-year mission to harness British science and innovation to deliver long-term economic growth and a stronger, prevention-focused NHS, the plan is built around three core pillars: enabling world-class R&D; making the UK an outstanding place to start, scale and invest; and driving health innovation and NHS reform.

The plan includes six actions to kickstart change. The first is unlocking NHS data to find new cures, with up to £600 million investment to build the world's most advanced health data system.

Progress will be transparently reported through an annual Sector Plan Implementation Update, making clear where the Plan is succeeding or failing.

Future of the Post Office

The Government has launched a [Post Office Green Paper](#), a comprehensive review of the Post Office. The Green Paper seeks to open a dialogue on the future of Post Office, from the services it provides, to how to modernise and strengthen the network, through to how to change the culture and the way Post Office is managed.

Research published alongside the paper highlights the important role the Post Office still plays in the daily lives of people and businesses, adding social value of around £5.2 billion per year to households and £1.3 billion annually to small and medium sized businesses.

Stakeholders from all sectors – postmasters, businesses, community organisations, and the public – are invited to share their views and insights. The closing date for responses is 6 October 2025.

VJ Day 15 August

The government is encouraging members of the public to participate in a national two-minute silence on Friday 15 August to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. More details are available [here](#).