

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The final proposals for LGR have to be submitted to Government by 26 September. The County Council's preferred option remains for a single county unitary. Full details were published on 12 September ready for a meeting of the Strategic & Corporate Select Committee on 22 September leading to a Council meeting on 25 September and a Cabinet meeting that same day to agree the submission.

6 of the districts have put forward a proposal for 3 unitaries and one other for 2 unitaries.

Ultimately the decision on which proposal to accept rests with the Government and that decision is not due until about March next year.

As far as devolution is concerned we are still waiting for Government's proposals for the investment fund (which have been already delayed for a month and now perhaps longer because of the change of ministers at DHCLG). At the moment this is due to come to meetings on 10 and 16 October for a final decision.

Given those ministerial changes doubts are coming forward as to whether LGR and devolution will actually happen or whether any changes will be restricted to the 6 councils on the Devolution Priority Programme that includes Norfolk. The biggest concern is financial – can the changes be afforded; will the savings be made; and has Government enough money to make the investment funds attractive enough to be able to make a difference. At the moment it is a waiting and guessing game.

Norwich Castle Keep reopens following £27m redevelopment

Norwich Castle Keep reopened to visitors following a comprehensive five-year redevelopment project that introduced new accessibility features alongside new galleries and interpretive displays.

Funded by £12 million from Norfolk County Council and over £13 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, all five floors of the newly named People's Palace were opened to the public for the first time ever.

The Grade I listed castle, originally commissioned by William the Conqueror 900 years ago and completed by his son Henry I in 1121, retained its historic significance while embracing modern improvements.

A new light-filled atrium adjacent to the Keep was unveiled in the first phase of the redevelopment in July 2024. Visitors also benefited from a new café, gift shop, and additional toilet facilities to enhance the visitor experience.

Importantly, a lift was installed to provide full wheelchair accessibility throughout the Keep, allowing access from the basement all the way up to the battlements, where visitors could enjoy panoramic views across Norwich.

Nationally recognised 'AI programme to be rolled out across Norfolk to prevent falls

A new, nationally recognised proactive intervention scheme is rolling out across the whole of Norfolk. The initiative will be delivered in collaboration with local partners including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), city, district and borough Councils and NHS organisations, aims to reduce falls in vulnerable and older adults.

Following a successful pilot with 1250 residents, the programme, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify residents at risk of escalating needs, enhances the safety and wellbeing of those at risk of falls. The latest Artificial Intelligence technology, natural language processing is used to 'read' case notes and automatically extract meaningful insight about our residents. This technology enables the council to identify and prioritise individuals in Norfolk most at risk of falling, allows for proactive intervention before they fall.

AI is a rapidly developing technology with the potential to improve the delivery of services. The council is using AI to benefit the people of Norfolk in a safe, ethical and transparent way.

Falls are a major concern, particularly among older or vulnerable adults, and can lead to severe injuries and a decline in quality of life. Through this programme, the council will be able to predict people who are at higher risk and offer timely and targeted interventions to support them.

Congratulations and support extended to further education students on results day

Students across the country received their A level, T Level and Level 3 VTQs results during August.

Every year sees students facing decisions over what to do next with a growing variety of options available for young people at 18.

There's lots of support available to all students, whatever their grades and plans, so they can make decisions about next steps with clear advice on courses and careers.

There's also plenty of help and advice for those who may have not done as well as expected, have changed their mind about their plans, or who don't have anything in place for September.

- Norfolk County Council's [Help You Choose website](#) offers information and support to young people with the different options available to them and advice on next steps whatever their results. The section "[Choices at 18+](#)" includes links and support with education & learning, CV writing, apprenticeship vacancies, health and wellbeing, voluntary work, work experience, information about

different careers, and much more. There is also a section for parents or carers to help them understand the different options for their young person.

- **UCAS offers guidance** to support students through the process of securing a university place with information about insurance choices **and clearing**. Anyone who has just missed out on the grades they need they should contact the admissions team at their preferred university, as they may still be able to offer them a place. There are already nearly 30,000 courses available in clearing this year so there will be plenty of high-quality choices available.
- Students can find out more about education and training choices by visiting **Post 18 options | National Careers Service**. During the exam results period, the hub will also have key information on resits, clearing, appeals and more. Students can also chat directly to an expert adviser via webchat or by calling the National Careers Service exam results helpline on 0800 100 900 on weekdays between 8am and 8pm and Saturday 10am to 5pm.
- Norfolk and Waveney's Children and Young People's Health Services **Just One Norfolk** website offers mental health support and helpful advice on managing anxiety.

Repton Property delivers £1 million dividend

Repton Property Developments, Norfolk County Council's wholly-owned property development company, has announced a £1 million dividend to the county council after a successful 2024/25 financial year.

This follows a £735,000 dividend paid out last year, bringing the total returned to the authority to over £1.7 million in just two years.

Established in July 2017, Repton was created with the aim of unlocking the value of underutilised council-owned land and buildings, while generating financial returns to ease the pressure on the public purse.

Since its inception, Repton has focused on building high-quality and environmentally conscious housing developments across Norfolk.

Long Stratton Bypass opens to traffic

Motorists using the A140 south of Norwich begun using the long awaited Long Stratton Bypass for the first time during August.

This project is a true collaboration with South Norfolk Council and Norfolk Homes, with developer contributions and major funding commitments from The Department for Transport, Greater Norwich Growth Board and South Norfolk Council supporting the project's (£46.9m) overall budget.

Norfolk celebrates 2 million journeys by Beryl

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Beryl and National Grid, is celebrating a major milestone for the county's innovative shared transport scheme, which has now recorded more than **two million journeys** since its launch in March 2020.

The total of 2,057,859 trips covers an impressive 5.79 million kilometres, the equivalent of riding around the world 144 times. By swapping car journeys for two wheels, riders have helped save around 990 tonnes of CO₂, keeping Norwich's air cleaner, streets less congested, and communities healthier.

Over 100,000 people have used the scheme, with the average active rider taking 20.8 trips.

Journeys are made up of:

- 424,186 pedal bike rides
- 407,292 e-bike rides
- 1,226,350 e-scooter rides

Feedback from users shows that 41% of these journeys would otherwise have been made by driving or being a passenger in a private car, and a further 24% would have taken a taxi or ride-hailing service, while 5% would have used a motorbike or moped instead.

Road treatment brings long-term benefits to Norfolk

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Roadtechs Group, has successfully completed a record-breaking road rejuvenation project on the A1066 near Thetford, delivering long-term benefits for local communities, businesses and the environment.

In just under five hours, over 9km of the A1066 was treated with Reclamite, a sustainable asphalt rejuvenator that extends the life of road surfaces and helps prevent potholes. This marks the largest area of highway ever to be treated with Reclamite in a single shift in the UK.

The A1066 is a vital route connecting Thetford and Diss, serving local residents, businesses, and the Shadwell Estate. By completing the work in one shift under a full road closure, the Council significantly reduced disruption for road users, reopening the road before the evening rush hour.

This treatment is designed to extend the life of the surface to prevent it needing full resurfacing at a cost of £3.7 million and taking up to 11 weeks to complete. Instead, this innovative approach has saved time, money, and carbon, producing just 2.31 tonnes of CO₂e compared to 508 tonnes for a traditional resurfacing project.