

## **Norfolk County Councillors Report**

**November 2024**

### **Local Farmers to be hit with Family Farms Tax**

Changes to inheritance tax announced by the Government in the recent budget, would scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR). APR has been instrumental in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, supporting food security, sustaining rural communities, and aiding environmental stewardship.

According to the County Land and Business Association (CLA) this Family Farms tax is estimated to impact over 70,000 family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £240,000 according to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), which will force many to sell portions of their land or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership over family ownership.

### **VAT on private local Schools to impact Norfolk's SEND Children**

As part of the recent budget announcement by the Government, Norfolk County Council could be negatively impacted heavily by the decision to impose VAT of private schools.

Where previously parents with children with special educational needs had opted to self-fund their children to attend private schools, the immediate 20% increase in cost could lead to a vast number now seeking the support of the Local Authority to apply for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), leading to additional burdens for the Council to process these in accordance with its statutory obligations to ensure each child's needs are met, along with meeting potential financial demands in paying towards the schooling fees themselves.

### **Norfolk County Council commits over £1m to keep people warm this winter**

Proposals to support some of Norfolk's most vulnerable people this winter have been set out today.

Norfolk County Council is looking to use £1.15m of the £6.7m allocated to the county through the Household Support Fund to keep people warm and help them make ends meet.

The county council will use £0.75m to partner with local organisations, including Age UK and Citizens Advice Bureau, to reach some of those most affected by the changes to the Winter Fuel Payments. They will also put £400k into the 'warm spaces' scheme which provides vital respite in community spaces across the county.

The proposals also include £3.6m to continue providing cost-of-living vouchers for families eligible for means tested free school meals. This is in addition to:

- £1.00m to Norfolk Assistance Scheme. Delivered by the Norfolk County Council, the scheme includes direct award of assistance, the provision of household items and emergency help, alongside a range of support and guidance
- £0.70m to local councils across Norfolk to provide proactive and crisis support
- £0.25m to Adult Learning to continue free access to a range of courses to help with cooking at home, budgeting, and digital skills.

### **New strategy puts Norfolk at the forefront of the UK economy**

Ambitious plans for Norfolk's economy have been unveiled in a new strategy to be presented to the county council's cabinet in November.

The strategy seeks to build on Norfolk's influence in key sectors, including clean energy, agri-tech and cutting-edge research.

Norfolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, sets out an overview of the local economy and key priority areas for economic growth.

Norfolk is already at the forefront of some of the UK's most strategically important sectors.

Norfolk is a global leader for offshore wind with £39bn of clean energy investment forecasted over the next 20 years. In Great Yarmouth, the new Operations and Maintenance Campus is expected to create 650 new jobs and new commercial space for the offshore renewable energy sector. This £24.8m partnership project is a collaboration with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, with enabling works well underway.

Work is also underway to examine how to decarbonise the gas supply through the development of a 'Bacton Energy Hub', reusing existing North Sea assets for carbon storage, and blue/green hydrogen production.

The local Agri-Food and Agri-Tech economy puts Norfolk at the epicentre of addressing challenges around food security and climate change. Norwich Research Park is a world-leading research base at the forefront of global food and health research. It is Europe's largest single site hub of research, training, education, and enterprise in food and health.

Norfolk is already well known for a visitor economy which accounts for nearly 20% of all employment. The county was recently successful in bidding to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, alongside Visit East of England and Suffolk County Council. This put them on an even footing with the likes of Cornwall, the Peak District, and the Cotswolds who have the same level of Visit England accreditation.

Major infrastructure projects continue to transform how residents and businesses get around. The completion of the Herring Bridge and the start of construction on the long-awaited Long Stratton Bypass will bring a major boost for the local economy. Norfolk has

also seen year-on-year growth in bus passenger numbers and the introduction of a major electric bus fleet.

The county council continues to push for improvements along the A47, with an ongoing campaign to improve connectivity and safety through further dualling in key areas.

Norfolk has built an increasingly enterprising culture, supporting residents to start up their own business, and for new start-ups to survive and thrive. Norfolk has a better than UK average for survival of new businesses at 63% after 3 years, compared to the UK average of 56%.

New Anglia Growth Hub acts as the 'front door' for local businesses looking for support. Over the past 10 years, the Growth Hub has supported over 14,000 businesses with free, impartial support and advice.

### **£2m boost to Apprenticeships in Norfolk funded by levy transfer scheme**

More than 200 apprentices have been able to start at businesses and organisations across Norfolk thanks to a scheme that has transferred £2.2 million to where it is most needed.

Apprenticeships Norfolk's Levy Support Scheme enables unspent funds, which would otherwise be returned to HM Treasury, to be transferred to employers that can use them to fund apprenticeships, for new or existing staff.

Aviva, BBC and the University of East Anglia (UEA) are just some of the organisations to transfer their unspent levy to the Apprenticeships Norfolk programme, which, in its second financial year has reached its £2 million milestone in transfers.

To find out more about the Levy Support Scheme, you can [visit the Apprenticeships Norfolk website](#) or contact the team at [apprenticeships@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@norfolk.gov.uk) or on 0344 800 8024.

### **Conference explores how to boost visitor numbers in Norfolk's market towns**

Reimagining Norfolk's market towns to attract more visitors was the theme of a conference which brought together more than 100 people from businesses and organisations across the county.

Taking place at the Swaffham Assembly Rooms, the event organised by Norfolk County Council and sponsored by Lovell, with representatives from 22 market towns in attendance to hear success stories celebrated and challenges explored.

Separate panel discussions explored sharing best practice on the regeneration and placemaking of Norfolk's market towns as well as opportunities for business and skills support.

Breckland Council highlighted the successful placemaking projects that had taken place in Swaffham town centre where shopfronts and prominent buildings, including the Georgian Assembly Rooms, have been regenerated thanks to the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

Delegates also heard about how the historic market town of Melton Mowbray took advantage of its vibrant food and drink sector to promote itself as a 'rural capital of food' to reverse declining town centre and falling visitor numbers.

### **Tis (almost) the season... for a high-tech winter**

As the colder days draw near, Norfolk County Council's highways maintenance teams are getting ready to help keep Norfolk residents moving safely around the county as we launch our annual #NorfolkWinter campaign.

2024 will witness the most technologically advanced gritting operation Norfolk has ever seen. With 45 brand new gritting vehicles joining the fleet over the last 2 years and all 58 of our vehicles now operating at the highest specifications available.

Each vehicle will run with brand new auto-salting technology. Aided by satellite navigation, it will allow teams to salt the road with limited manual intervention, making the operation more accurate, saving time and reducing waste.

On average, the technology reduces the amount of salt used by between 10% and 15% and saves salt being distributed onto grass verges and other areas that do not require gritting. The technology was trialled in some vehicles last year ahead of full implementation across all depots.

Using mapping data, information from the Norfolk network, along with input from our highly skilled drivers, vehicles can track pre-programmed routes making treating Norfolk roads easier and more precise.

Because route data is uploaded into the vehicles, any driver can select any route, set the required spread rate and drive - improving safety and ensuring more effective use of resources and drivers. This means that the network will be treated appropriately and consistently throughout this winter helping to keep Norfolk's roads moving.

Alongside this technology we are also upgrading the Roadside Weather Stations across the County as they come to the end of their serviceable life. Recent upgrades include Smallburgh, Cromer and Barn Road Norwich, with Wells programmed for replacement within the next few months. These stations collect roadside data, such as road surface temperatures, which enables the Highways Team to decide on gritting actions over the forthcoming 36 hour period.

Throughout the winter season updates will be posted to the county council's social media channels to let people know when gritting will be taking place. As well as tips and advice

for travelling safely through the winter. Look for the #NorfolkWinter hashtag on Facebook.

People can check which roads are on the council's gritting routes at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting). On the same map people can find the locations of around 2000 grit bins in the county that are filled by the County Council and which people can use on public pavements, cycle paths and roads to help everyone get around safely.

Find more information on our website: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/winter](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/winter).

### **Consider adoption this Adoption Week - whatever your family make-up**

Following the recent Adoption week Norfolk County Council is calling on people from all different backgrounds and family make-ups to consider becoming adoptive parents.

A survey by You Can Adopt revealed that 68% of people in the East of England believe there is no such thing as a "normal" family.

The survey revealed that the vast majority of the public (89%) feel it's important to teach children that families come in all shapes and sizes, and that this promotes acceptance of children from non-traditional family units (54%). However, 50% of the public surveyed were not taught this themselves when growing up.

Norfolk County Council is a proud partner of Adopt East, and this adoption week is looking for parents for 18 children in care waiting for their forever home.

The council needs adopters for children of all ages and is particularly looking for adopters for brothers and sisters, toddlers and young children aged four and older, and children with disabilities.

If you are interested in adopting visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/adoption) or call **01603 638343**.

Mark Kiddle-Morris

Mark.kiddle-morris.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk