

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT JUNE 2025



E-Newsletter Issue 6/2025
John Ford with Councillor Steve Clarke and a Special Guest
At VE 80 DAY Afternoon Tea
Little Houghton Village Hall, Northampton
7 May 2025

Contents

Monthly Highlights	5
PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK	7
Leys Lane Great Houghton.....	7
Great Houghton Street Lamps	7
Stagecoach East 41 Bus Service	7
Clifford Mill Hill, Little Houghton.....	7
Little Houghton Waste Bins.....	7
Ecton Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre.....	8
Fix My Street Cogenhoe 6091459, 6925565	10
VE 80 DAY Tribute Denton 3 May 2025	10
VE 80 DAY Afternoon Tea Little Houghton 7 May 2025	10
VE 80 DAY Lighting of the Beacon in Yardley Hastings 8 May 2025.....	11
Denton Coffee Morning on 9 May 2025	11
Little Houghton Coffee Morning 10 May 2025 & Fix My Street 7549020	12
VE 80 DAY Afternoon Tea Brafield on the Green 10 May 2025	12
Clifton’s Coffee Shop Cogenhoe 14 May 2025	13
Cogenhoe Community Support Desk 15 May 2025	13
Little Houghton Parish Lunch 15 May 2025	14
Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Help Desk 22 May 2025	14
Castle Ashby Fun Dog Show & Church Fete 1 June 2025.....	14
Brafield on the Green Flower Festival & Open Gardens 14-15 June 2025.....	15
Fix My Street 6624260/7289767 Denton	15
Fix My Street 6962395 Denton.....	15
Fix My Street 7304127/6958077 Brafield on the Green.....	15
Fix My Street 6881801 Crow Lane	16
Fix My Street Little Houghton to Brafield 7428641.....	16
Fix My Street 7479012 Road Markings A428	16
Fix My Street Cogenhoe 6180931	16
Fix My Street York Avenue Cogenhoe 7177818.....	17
Fix My Street 7051020 Billing Road/Station Road Junction Cogenhoe.....	17
CONSULTATIONS.....	18
FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION	18
Cost of living	18
The Household Support Fund extended in West Northamptonshire	18
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2029-30.....	18
Key Economic and Financial Risks.....	19
Key Funding Assumptions	19
Medium Term Plan.....	20
Bridging the Gap	20
REGULATORY SERVICES	22
Young Leaders to Represent West Northants in Parliament	22
Immigration White Paper Launched	23
Access to WNC Council Services	23
New Mortuary For Northamptonshire.....	23
Single Use Vapes Illegal from 1 June 2025	24

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)	24
RABI Announces Farmers Aid	24
Rural Proofing.....	25
PLANNING MATTERS	26
Planning Appeals.....	26
Determined or Cancelled:.....	26
Pending.....	26
West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets	26
Key Measures in the Planning & Infrastructure Bill	27
Consultation on Reform of Planning Committees	27
2024/5390 Hardington Rise, Northampton, EIA Scoping Opinion	28
What are Material Considerations?.....	28
Predisposition, predetermination or bias.....	29
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS	30
Call for Urgent Investment in Rural Housing	30
ENVIRONMENT	31
New Energy Upgrade for Public Buildings Announced	31
Repeat Offender Fined £6,000 for Latest Offence.....	31
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	32
Spring COVID-19 Jobs now Available	32
Northampton General Hospitals Trust (NGHT) New System Nervecentre	32
EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES	32
Term Dates for West Northamptonshire Schools.....	32
Summer term 2025.....	32
Academic year 2025 to 2026	33
Autumn term 2025.....	33
Spring term 2026.....	33
Summer term 2026.....	33
Merged Futures 7	33
SEND Support Service transformation.....	33
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING	34
Third Party Grant Funding Opportunities	34
Well Northants Programme shortlisted for LGC Award	34
King's Award For Enterprise	35
Night Time Economy & International Award.....	36
Build Your Business 2.0	36
What's new in Build Your Business 2.0.....	37
Start-up grants are back.....	37
Register today	37
BIPC Workshops & Webinars	37
Business basics	37
Marketing.....	37
Business and financial planning	38
Mental Health & Wellbeing.....	38
Grant.....	38
Demolition Works to Transform M&S, BHS and Job Centre Buildings.....	38

Government Confirms First Major Reservoirs in 30 Years	38
TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS.....	39
Queen Eleanor Interchange Improvements	39
Project Timeline	39
Progress to Date	39
Upcoming Works	39
Community Engagement	39
Connecting Communities Through Better Transport	40
A4500 Junction 16 M1	40
POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER	41
Emergency Service Fun Day 6 August 2025	41
Ask Angela Scheme	41
Bike Marking Delapre Abbey	41
Knife Crime Campaign	42
CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT	42
Calling All Performers, Artists & Vendors	42
Fan Zone Themes:	42
New Northants Makers Market Begins in May	42
Run set to 'light a fire' under town	43
All Aboard for the Women's Rugby World Cup	43
New World Cup Trophy on its Way.....	43
Gladiators of Britain Exhibition	44
Decorated glass vessel (AD 200-400).....	44
Clasp knife handle from Piddington (AD 175-300).....	44
Pottery vessel featuring a gladiator (AD 275-325)	45
Pottery vessel featuring amphitheatre scenes (AD 175-225)	45
Hawkedon Helmet (1st century AD)	45
Marble relief featuring a beast fighter (1st-2nd century AD)	45
Colchester Vase (2nd century AD).....	45

NEWS REPORT JUNE 2025

Monthly Highlights

I contacted Highways about the recent e-mail responses to the many and various complaints about the LED lighting in Great Houghton. Whilst I am an experienced WNC Councillor, I am a newly appointed Councillor for Great Houghton without the knowledge of past history and commitments made in 2011-2016 or since. As a result, I am frustrated at not being able to help bring this matter to a mutually acceptable conclusion and therefore, I have recommended a site visit with Highways and members of the Parish Council to consider and discuss this matter further. Once I have a suitable date and time for us to meet, I shall be in touch.

On 31 May 2025, I wrote to David Boden, Business Development Director, Stagecoach East seeking further information about the 41 Bus service and to seek clarification regarding their contract with Milton Keynes Council. The 41 Bus Service is essential to those who live in the villages along the A428, Bedford Road as it connects them to Northampton and Bedford and improves the quality of life for residents by offering access to healthcare, education, and employment. Therefore, I needed to obtain further information regarding Stagecoach East's current plans for this service.

Highways have recently confirmed the condition for Clifford Mill Hill can be discharged as the HGV signage on the highway has been agreed and the internal signage for the coaches (on the applicant's own land), is now being arranged. Planning will be able to discharge the condition shortly and the applicants and parish council can arrange the date for the review meeting, in accordance with the terms of the planning permission. All of the documents are on the public register and the Parish Council has been updated.

On behalf of Little Houghton and Great Houghton Parish Councils, I assisted with an extension to the time for comments on the 2024/5390 EIA Scoping Opinion for Hardingstone Rise as they are expecting a briefing from developers by 5 June 2025. Little Houghton Parish Council needs to confirm that the 20 June 2025 will provide them with sufficient time.

In light of the ongoing service delivery pressures facing local authorities, the broader economic uncertainty, and the unpredictability of future funding allocations, medium-term budget planning has become an inherently challenging and risk-sensitive process. I have set out the details of the WNC Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2029-30 in my Monthly Report. This approach ensures we focus on closing the funding gap annually without overstating the financial position. Despite these challenges, our robust in-year planning process has successfully addressed funding gaps for the past four years. However, it is acknowledged that this task is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain over the medium term.

On 31 March 2025, work started on the long-awaited scheme to improve the Queen Eleanor Interchange in Northampton and it will continue until December 2025. This month, I have provided all Parish Councils in Cogenhoe and the Houghtons with an update on this project.

This month, Government launched the immigration White Paper setting out new immigration rules to reduce reliance on overseas recruitment. The new system will end automatic settlement and citizenship for anyone living here for five years. Instead, individuals must spend a decade in the UK before applying to stay. The Prime Minister also announced updates on raising the skilled worker threshold, education, adult social care and reforms to the deportation system.

The steel frame for Northamptonshire's new public mortuary has now been completed marking a major milestone in the construction of the facility at Riverside Business Park in Northampton.

From 1 June 2025, it will be illegal for businesses to sell, offer to sell, or supply single-use or 'disposable' vapes. The new law applies to all shops and online retailers. All single-use vapes are included in the ban, even if they do not contain nicotine.

There is a consultation on the Reform of Planning Committees which closes at 11:59 pm on 23 July 2025. See my Monthly Report.

When considering a Planning Application, you may find the document produced by Planning Aid, England helpful as it sets out matters or planning policies which legislation and the courts have determined should be taken into account when deciding an application. See my Monthly Report.

The SEND Support Service is undergoing a review and transformation. New offers will be in place from September 2025. WNC is asking for your feedback and engagement in the process. Please complete our 7-question form – it will take less than 5 minutes. The deadline to complete the form is Saturday 21 June 2025.

Since the election, we have been busy settling into the new Council arrangements with Reform in overall control. For me this is quite a change as for the past 26 years, I have always been a Councillor in a Conservative administration.

At the First full Council meeting, I became Father of the House, which is a title that is bestowed, unofficially on the senior member who has the longest continuous service, not the oldest member of the Council. As a result, the honour fell to me to thank Councillors who did not stand for election and Councillors who stood for re-election but were not re-elected for their service to the Council and to the Community. We placed on record our sincere appreciation of the valuable services rendered to West Northamptonshire and extended to them our grateful thanks for their activities on behalf of the Council.

Together with my other duties, I have been given the Shadow Portfolio for Highways and Transport. In the context of local authorities, "Shadow Portfolio Holders" are appointed by the leader of the primary opposition group to mirror the roles of Cabinet Portfolio Holders. They are responsible for scrutinizing the actions of the Cabinet and their respective Portfolio Holders.

Being a shadow portfolio holder will be a challenging but rewarding role that requires a combination of political savvy, in-depth knowledge, and a commitment to effective opposition. It will provide a unique opportunity to learn, develop, and shape policy, even without holding a formal position of power. There's a consistent lack of adequate funding for highways maintenance, particularly in rural areas, leading to a backlog of repairs and a focus on reactive pothole repairs rather than proactive maintenance. So it will be difficult to solve everything overnight. But I look forward to seeing what can be achieved.

All the Best, Steve

www.facebook.com/stephen.clarke.31924.

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

Leys Lane Great Houghton

I asked for a clear statement as to WNC 's intentions regarding improvements to Leys Lane, Great Houghton. However, Sam Simons has been on annual leave and on 31 May 2025, I chased him again for an update. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

Great Houghton Street Lamps

I contacted Highways about the recent e-mail responses to the many and various complaints about the LED lighting in Great Houghton. Whilst I am an experienced WNC Councillor, I am a newly appointed Councillor for Great Houghton without the knowledge of past history and commitments made in 2011-2016 or since. As a result, I am frustrated at not being able to help bring this matter to a mutually acceptable conclusion and therefore, I have recommended a site visit with Highways and members of the Parish Council to consider and discuss this matter further. Once I have a suitable date and time for us



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Stagecoach East 41 Bus Service

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Clifford Mill Hill, Little Houghton

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Little Houghton Waste Bins

On 14 May 2025 I was asked for further advice regarding the playground bin at the top of Lodge Road. I raised the matter with Elly Attwood, WNC Waste and Cleansing Manager. She confirmed that WNC does not provide separate dog waste bins but that they do provide litter bins and she checked with the team and confirmed that there are seven bins in the village plus the one in the play park. The play park one is not a

WNC bin, but we do empty it and the team believe that the Parish Council may have installed it some time ago. The Street Cleansing Supervisor is on leave until the first week of June and when he returns Elly has agreed to ask him to survey the area and decide where the best place would be for another litter bin and about removing the play park bin. Since then Little Houghton Parish Council advised me that the bin on Lodge Close is constantly breaking (the base is very flimsy) and I have asked WNC to look at this with a view to replacing it at the same time. Once WNC has completed the survey, Elly will get back to me with the best option. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

Ecton Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre

I have received a number of complaints about the changes that have been recently made at Ecton lane HWRC. The new parking arrangements are causing huge tail backs onto the road, even going back onto the roundabout at times. I have escalated these problems to WNC and I have been advised that the Council is closely monitoring the demand for HWRC services and any local traffic issues at all HWRCs and making



adjustments where it is possible to do so. WNC has also been trying to proactively advise members of the public via site signage, the website, press releases and social media posts, on what has been a sustained period of high demand for the service. This has included advice to site users to avoid blocking the local highway, as if deemed a safety concern to road users and the wider highways network, it could lead to a sites'

temporary closure. WNC is aware that queues form on the highway at peak times and where it is believed these may result in a safety issue, the site staff have the discretion to temporarily close the HWRC in order to disperse queuing traffic. This measure has been agreed with the highway's authority and the police.

From the 1st April a new contract was entered into with FCC Ltd (this is a re-awarded Contract, as prior to the new Contract, FCC Ltd were also the operators of the service) to manage and operate the HWRC service. The new contract gave WNC an opportunity to harmonise the opening days across the six West Northants sites. Feedback from the Resource and Waste Strategy completed in 2023 was used to help shape the new opening hours and days, together with vehicle counts to determine when the sites were used most effectively. The strategy feedback highlighted that people want to access HWRC sites to reuse, recycle and dispose of their waste more often and on a day that is convenient for them; by opening for 7 days this allows people to access any WNC HWRC site on any set day. For example, on the previous operating schedule Ecton Lane HWRC was closed every Tuesday and Wednesday and there was only 1 site open on a Wednesday (Sixfields) which WNC residents would need to travel further to, than their local site. To help manage the changes to 7 days a week operation from 1st April 2025, WNC has increased its communications both at the sites, on the website and through social media channels. FCC currently has additional site staff across the sites to give advice on the changes, along with supporting site users.

Other HWRC Service improvements will be:

- Revised site layouts to ensure reuse and recycling is encouraged over the disposing of household waste.
- There will be a new on-site Reuse shop at the Sixfields HWRC where the service provider will be working closely with a Charity Partner. Farthinghoe will continue as a reuse and recycling centre with

the new service provider, changes at this site will include revised parking and traffic management along with ramps and enhanced skip provision for recyclates.

- The new bay parking was introduced to improve Health & Safety at the sites and many HWRCs nationally have the same parking methodology.
- Reverse bay parking increases accessibility to containers for residents because the waste containers are closer to the boots of resident's vehicles. The previous parallel line parking meant that residents were unloading their vehicles and carrying items across live lanes of traffic, potentially dragging waste over parking lanes and exit lanes and consequently dropping waste on the floor, and because of this at peak times the sites could appear messy and there was a risk of residents driving over dropped items. In terms of the benefits of bay parking, which 2 of our sites already had, all West Northants HWRCs sites now have refreshed line marking and bay parking (a few sites including Ecton Lane have maintained some parallel parking provision for large vans and trailers) which aligns how our residents use the sites.
- Bay parking also increases the opportunity for engagement with our residents, which in turn helps to divert as much waste as possible to reuse, recycling and away from the residual containers, which reduces the Council's costs and increases recycling rates. It also helps site operatives to manage the commercial type vehicle permit scheme (e-permit scheme) and further control trade waste abuse, which can be an issue especially at larger sites like Ecton Lane.

The new site layouts were reviewed by WNC waste officers and health and safety officers in advance of any changes. Since the new bay parking has been introduced, the HWRC Contractor has had a site visit (at Sixfields HWRC – but the same reverse bay parking system has been introduced at both Sixfields and Ecton Lane) by both a Health and Safety Executive Officer and Environment Agency Officer on 1 May 2025 who observed the site changes to reverse bay parking operations and left site with no negative comments.

Please see the below response from FCC contract manager.

“Thank you for contacting West Northamptonshire Council regarding your complaint. FCC Environment manages the Household Waste Recycling Centres on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council. We are sorry to hear of your complaint and have naturally investigated into the incident you describe.

Following our investigation we would like to advise the following. Over the past two months we have seen a steep rise in the number of people visiting our household waste recycling centres across West Northamptonshire. These additional visits have naturally put increased pressures on our HWRC service whilst we try and deal with the additional materials brought to the centres by members of public.

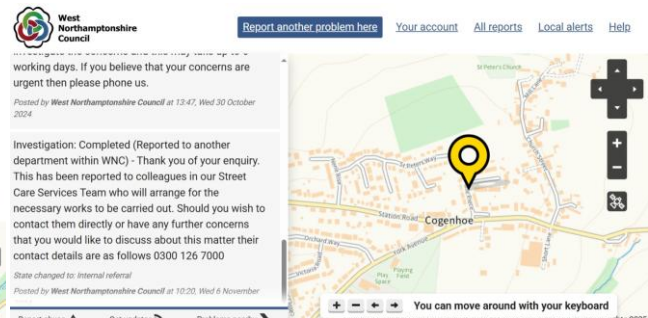
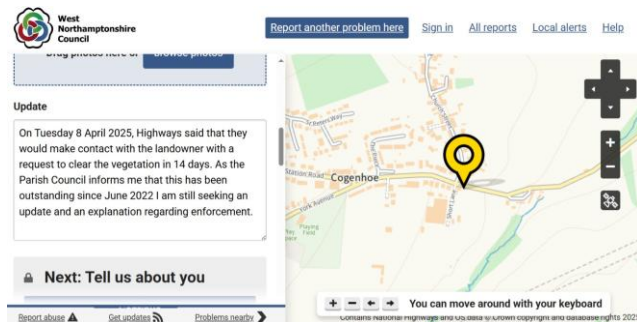
To help alleviate these pressures we have brought in extra resources to deal with the increase in waste volumes we are seeing, and to ensure that our sites continue to operate safely for the general public and our staff.

We thank you for bringing this to our attention and hope that the actions above are reflected on any further visits you wish to make to any of the Household Waste Recycling Centres in West Northamptonshire.”

Cogenhoe Parish Council have raised a number of further comments about Ecton Lane Household Recycling Centre and I have asked Stephen Phillips, WNC Waste Operations and Services Manager to respond to them directly.

Fix My Street Cogenhoe 6091459, 6925565

On 21 May 2025, I wrote to Highways advising them that the Fix My Street 6091459 report hadn't been updated to reflect the actions being taken. WNC



have now raised the matter with Kier and requested a review of the case so that a full and accurate update can be provided. WNC are also reviewing how updates are recorded in the system to ensure they accurately reflect the current position and provide

clear information to residents and stakeholders. WNC has asked Kier to provide an update on this report, as well as Fix My Street 6925565, which I noted in the system also appears to lack a detailed update <https://fix.westnorthants.gov.uk/report/6925565>, and as soon as I have a detailed explanation of what is happening I will be in touch again. If there are any other reports that you would like me to review going forward, please let know and I would be happy to do this.

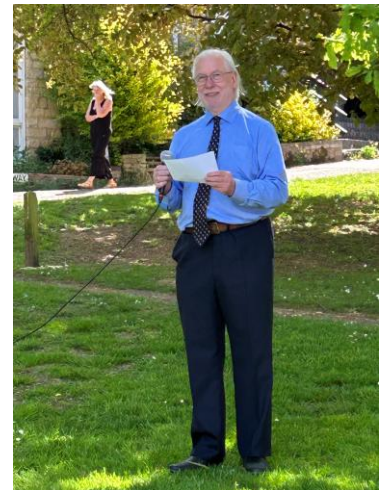
VE 80 DAY Tribute Denton 3 May 2025

Thank you for inviting me to deliver a VE Day Tribute in Denton on 3 May 2025 on the occasion of the historic anniversary of VE Day, which takes place on the 8th May 2025 when communities across the nation will come together to unite and celebrate 80 years of peace since the end of World War II in Europe.

I used the same VE Day 80 Tribute which will be repeated at lots of events across the United Kingdom over the next few days. See below.

The bells were rung at mid-day and a number of local residents were waiting on the green to hear my address which was meant to provide a short reflection before the start of a day of events across Denton. Before leaving, I managed to share a coffee and cake with many friends in St Margaret's Church as they prepared for the 1940's afternoon teas. There were displays of 40's memorabilia and a number of folks dressed in 40's costumes.

Please join me in thanking the organising committee for the VE day 80 event and in particular Bob Bell, Alan Jukes, Allison Samaloussi, Jennie Campbell, Jennie Cottrill, Omar Samaloussi and Ben Cook who were instrumental in the planning and preparation of this shared moment of celebration. Everyone who took part in this anniversary will have experienced a day of joy, reflection and celebration.



VE 80 DAY Afternoon Tea Little Houghton 7 May 2025

On 7 May 2025, we joined many others for a wonderful afternoon tea at the Little Houghton Village Hall. It was one of the many community events taking place across West Northamptonshire including beacon lightings, exhibitions, talks, performances and street parties. Everyone came together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, celebrating 80 years of peace since the end of World War II

in Europe on 8 May 1945. This significant milestone provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought for freedom, as well as the resilience of communities during the war.

We tucked into spam, cucumber and cheese sandwiches with sausage rolls and lots of wonderful cakes, biscuits and scones.



We all participated in a VE Day Quiz and chatted as we tried to find the answers to the twenty five questions.

A special thank you to Gill who organised the VE 80 Day event and everyone who made the afternoon so special including Mira, Kevin, Kay, Liz, Viv, Jenny, Vicky, Chris, Sarah, and Fiona plus all who cleared



away and helped with the washing up.

Earlier today I heard the story of Eric Page a 102-year-old war veteran, from Desborough, Northamptonshire who recalled how he marked Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) by drinking beer and eating raw onion sandwiches without butter. Well, the fine spread prepared for the Afternoon Tea in Little Houghton yesterday was considerably better than that.

VE 80 DAY Lighting of the Beacon in Yardley Hastings 8 May 2025

On 8 May 2025 after I attended the Yardley Hastings 2025 Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of Yardley Hastings Parish Council at the Memorial Hall, Yardley Hastings, I walked down to St Andrews Church and looked at the VE Day memorabilia that was carefully arranged throughout the church. Afterwards, I joined others who were gathered on the green outside the Church by the Lych Gate. We all chatted as we stood in near darkness with our torches awaiting the lighting of the beacon on top of the St Andrews Church Tower. Then the beacon was lit and the VE 80th Proclamation was said before we all sang the well known hymn, 'I Vow to Thee My Country'. We then shared a toast before singing the National Anthem.



This significant milestone provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought for freedom, as well as the resilience of communities during the war.

Well done to Debbie, Anita and others who organised this event.

Denton Coffee Morning 9 May 2025

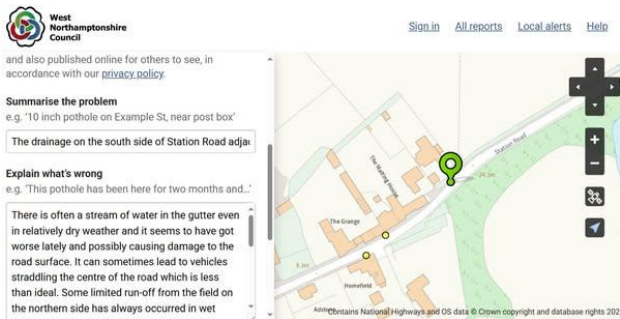
Denton Coffee Morning on 9 May 2025

On Friday 9 May 2025 I visited the Denton Coffee Morning at St Margaret's Church, Denton one of West Northants Warm Welcoming Spaces. There were thirty people there today. It was good to catch up with Sheila, Alison, Carole, Margaret, Pat, Michael, and others. They always provide great coffee and croissants,

toast or homemade cakes. The church is in the centre of the village. It is open every day and provides a community space for everyone in the village. They hold coffee mornings, weekly craft sessions, quizzes, and many other general community events. Opening times: Open on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. Although it was very hot outside it was cool inside the church. Well done to everyone that makes this welcoming space possible.

Little Houghton Coffee Morning 10 May 2025 & Fix My Street 7549020

On 10 May 2025, I attended the Little Houghton Coffee Morning at St Mary the Virgin Church, Little Houghton. It was good to meet up with friends again including John, Anne, Mira, Colin, Alice and others. The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 14 June 2025.



Everyone is welcome for tea or coffee and biscuits and to try your luck at the monthly raffle whilst meeting your



friends, or even making some new ones. All proceeds go to support the Village Church Charity. Afterwards, I went to examine the drainage on the south side of Station Road, Little Houghton adjacent to the speed limit sign. I am even in relatively dry weather and it seems to have got worse lately, possibly causing damage to the road surface. It can sometimes lead to vehicles straddling the centre of the road which is less than ideal. Some limited run-off from the field on the northern side has always occurred in wet weather but I was asked to escalate the problem with the drainage on the south side of Station Road, Little Houghton. As soon as I arrived back home, I raised the matter on Fix My Street 7549020. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

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VE 80 DAY Afternoon Tea Brafield on the Green 10 May 2025

On 10 May 2025, I joined many others for a wonderful afternoon tea at the Sargeant Memorial Hall, Brafield on the Green. It was one of the many community events taking place across West Northamptonshire including beacon lightings, exhibitions, talks, performances and street parties. Everyone came together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, celebrating 80 years of peace since the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May 1945. This significant milestone provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought for freedom, as well as the resilience of communities during the war.



We tucked into spam, cucumber, corned beef and cheese sandwiches with sausage rolls and lots of wonderful cakes with tea or coffee. We all participated in a VE Day Quiz and chatted as we tried to find the answers to the questions. A special thank you to Liz Banyard & Gill Bailey who organised the VE 80 Day event and everyone who made the afternoon so

special. There were several song sheets on the tables for Land of Hope and Glory, In the Mood, Swinging on a star and Wish me Luck as you Wave Me Goodbye. Unfortunately, I missed the singing as I had to leave early for another appointment.

Clifton's Coffee Shop Cogenhoe 14 May 2025

On the way back from a site visit with Kier on 14 May 2025, I popped into the newly opened Clifton's Coffee Shop, Cogenhoe. It was great to meet Becky and her amazing team at the café, which is a hidden gem at the Village Hall in the heart of the village.



Those who live here are fortunate to have such a relaxed and friendly cafe run by local people serving wonderful coffee, locally sourced produce and homemade cakes. I do hope that it is well supported and becomes a real community hub, a place to meet others

and make connections within the community, all within walking distance.

The Grand Opening of the new Cliftons Coffee Shop took place on Saturday 10 May 2025 and Wednesday was the first weekday opening. The Opening Hours are Wednesday-Friday 8.30am-4.30pm and Saturday-Sunday 8.30am- 4.00pm.



Cogenhoe Community Support Desk 15 May 2025

On Thursday 15 May 2025, I went to Clifton's Coffee Shop, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall for the Parish Help Desk. Deborah was handing out prescriptions and after she finished, we caught up on recent and future events.

The next two Community Lunches will take place on 19 May and 2 June 2025.

On 21 May 2025 there is a Games morning for the Chatty Café Group from 11.15 am-12.30 pm. Lunch is then available from Clifton's Coffee Shop, which is followed by Singing for Fun from 1.45pm-2.45pm. Everyone is welcome. If you want to participate in any of these events then please contact Deborah: clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk or telephone 07512 04541.



Little Houghton Parish Lunch 15 May 2025



On Thursday, 15 May 2025 after visiting Cogenhoe, I joined the Little Houghton Parish Lunch that takes place at St Mary's Church from 12-2pm on the third Thursday each month. Although I was a little late, I received a very warm welcome. We all enjoyed delicious food and great company. There was a choice of chicken, mackerel or gammon with salad followed by a selection of home-made puddings.

The lunch was marvellous, and all the helpers are so kind and helpful. A special thank you to all who make and serve the lunch and to Rev Irene for her thoughtful words.

The next lunch is on 19 June 2025.

If you would like to come along and make new friends, share your stories, and have a good time with other people in your local community then contact Joy Mayhew on 01604 890498.

Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Help

Desk 22 May 2025

On 22 May 2025, I attended Clifton's Café with the Community Help Desk and caught up with Deborah Rush, Clerk to Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council. We spoke about a number of current issues whilst I took a quick break from carrying out some casework in Cogenhoe. Deborah was handing out prescriptions and she had a great deal of them this week.

The next Community Lunch is on Monday 2 June 2025 at 12.30 pm. There is an Art Festival at Cogenhoe Primary School; on Saturday 14 June 2025 from 10.00 am to 4.00pm. There will be refreshments and Artworks by local artists for sale. All proceeds will go towards Art Supplies for the school. I look forward to seeing you all there. All the Best, Steve.



Castle Ashby Fun Dog Show & Church Fete 1 June 2025

Earlier this afternoon, I went to the Castle Ashby Fun Dog Show and Church Fete, which is held annually on the Castle Ashby Cricket Ground. The various show classes started at 1.00pm. There were 7 classes including Best Rescue or Veteran, Prettiest Bitch, Dog with the Waggiest Tail, Best Child Handler, Most Handsome Dog, Best Biscuit Catcher, Dog the Judge would most like to take home and the Championship Class. Dog owners of all ages showed off their dogs with great pride. As a dog-loving nation, many village and town fetes now run dedicated fun dog shows within their own activities, and some like Castle Ashby create a special Fun Dog Show event. It was a lovely spacious, doggy friendly venue with a large fenced in field and a large dog show ring.

It was great to meet up with so many friends again, including Tom's dog who had just won a well-earned prize.



Brafield on the Green Flower Festival & Open Gardens 14-15 June 2025

Brafield on the Green Flower Festival and Open Gardens will welcome visitors on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 June 2025 1.30 to 4.30pm – the gardens will be open until 5pm.

There will be free parking and free entry to the Flower Festival. All proceeds from the Flower Festival, refreshments and stalls will go to St Laurence Church.

If you need further information then contact Mike Hamborg 07739 583715 mike.hamborg@btinternet.com

Weekend tickets for the Open Gardens cost £5 and are available from the Parking area. Accompanied children under 16 years are free. Well behaved dogs welcome. Proceeds from the Open Gardens will go to the Village Jubilee Fund. Gill Ager 07802 533137 or gill@ager2.co.uk

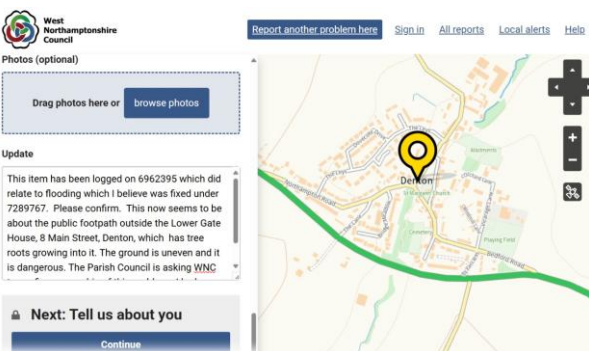
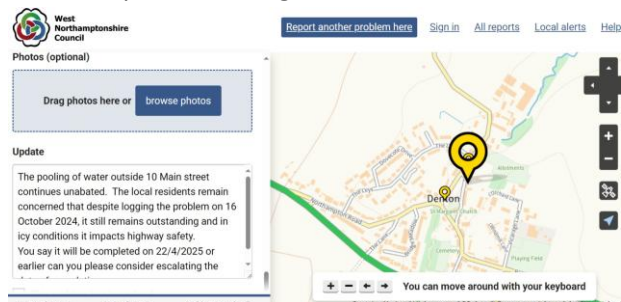
The suggested walking route round the village includes the church, the village pond and the village allotments as well as about seven Open Gardens. There are Refreshments and Toilets at the Village Hall

National Gardens website <https://www.opengardens.co.uk>



Fix My Street 6624260/7289767 Denton

I have been persistently chasing Highways to fix this problem. Despite informing me that the work had been completed, I needed to escalate the problem again on 17 March 2025. On 25 March 2025, I was advised that WNC are currently waiting for a trial hole and investigation to begin. I have sent another reminder to Highways on 1 May 2025. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.



Fix My Street 6962395 Denton

This item has been logged on 6962395, I have asked Highways to investigate. This relates to the public footpath outside 8 Main Street, Denton, which has tree roots growing into it. The ground is uneven and it is dangerous. I have asked WNC to confirm ownership of this problem. Once I have further news I shall be in touch.

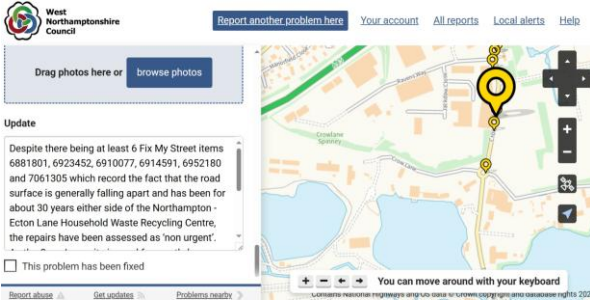
Fix My Street 7304127/6958077 Brafield on the Green

I have referred this matter to Anglian Water, Customer Services earlier today. I had tried to log the problem with West Northamptonshire Council Fix My Street (reference number is now 7304127) regarding a drainage issue at Billing Road, Brafield on the Green. It was logged on West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), Fix My Street, Ref: 6958077.

As I have been informed that this is an Anglian Water issue, I have asked them to provide me with a job reference number and to arrange for a member of their Water Networks team to carry out a check as to the source of the water and undertake the necessary repairs. I am asking them to communicate with me directly at stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk to assure me that they will now take action. I want to be in a position to advise residents that we now understand the source of the water so that we can gain commitment

to a resolution of a problem that has been outstanding for some time. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

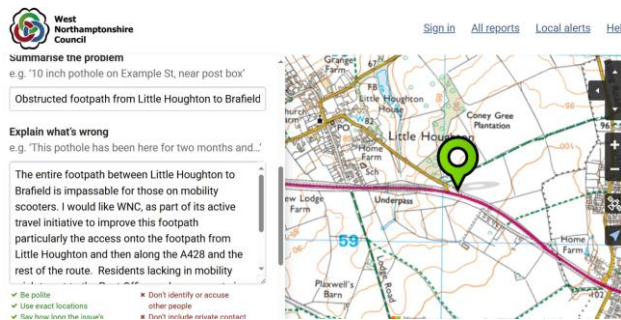
Fix My Street 6881801 Crow Lane



Despite there being at least 6 Fix My Street items 6881801, 6923452, 6910077, 6914591, 6952180 and 7061305 which record the fact that the road surface is generally falling apart and has been for about 30 years either side of the Northampton - Ecton Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre, the repairs have been assessed as 'non urgent'. As the Crow Lane site is used frequently by many residents, I have asked WNC Highways to consider how best to fix this problem once and for all.

Fix My Street Little Houghton to Brafield 7428641

I was asked to look into whether anything can be done about the entire footpath between Little Houghton to Brafield which is almost impassable for those on mobility scooters. I have asked WNC, as part of its active travel initiative to improve this footpath, particularly the access onto the footpath from Little Houghton and then along the A428 and the rest of the route. Residents lacking in mobility wish to get to the shops in Brafield as they no longer have these facilities in Little Houghton. It is far too dangerous to ride disability scooters along the A428. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

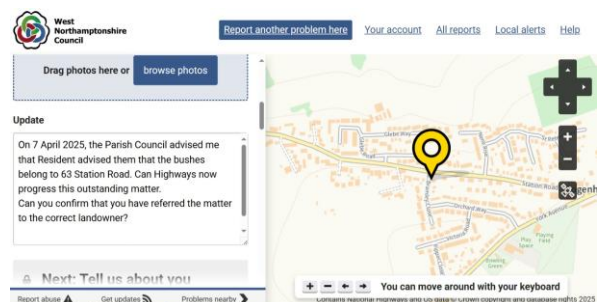


Fix My Street 7479012 Road Markings A428

I have escalated directly to Highways the need to reinstate the white lines, red painted area and cats eyes on the A428. Many are concerned about the condition of the road markings between Great Houghton and Little Houghton. Following the recent patch repairs, the white lines were not reinstated. Fix My Street 7479012 has been closed with a statement saying the white lines will be renewed. However, I have stressed the need to reinstate all the road markings in order to make the road safer. The current surface dressing programme is due to commence in mid-June. Once this has been completed all existing road markings and studs will be reinstated and this should be completed by mid to late July.

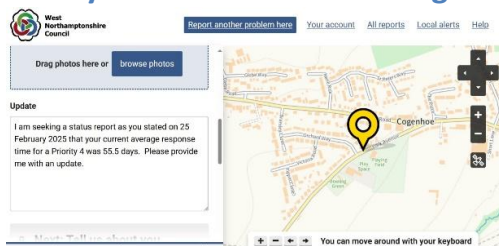
Fix My Street Cogenhoe 6180931

On 7 April 2025, the Parish Council advised me that the bushes belonged to another landowner. As a result, I have escalated the matter yet again with Highways.



Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Cogenhoe and the Houghtons
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

Fix My Street York Avenue Cogenhoe 7177818



I am seeking a status report from Highways as they stated on 25 February 2025 that the current average response time for a Priority 4 was 55.5 days. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

Fix My Street 7051020 Billing Road/Station Road Junction Cogenhoe

Reported via mobile in the Blocked/Damaged category on Wednesday 29 January 2025. Rain is not running from the path but out of the drain grate, it appears to be blocked and causes flooding every time it rains. I have escalated the need to get this fixed as quickly as possible.



CONSULTATIONS

A range of consultation and engagement activities take place across West Northants from time to time. I summarise the main consultations in this section of the report, but please remember you can check new consultations, have your say, and sign up to receive alerts and updates via our Consultation Hub.

FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Cost of living

Further information and support can be found on:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support>

<https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living>

The Household Support Fund extended in West Northamptonshire

The Household Support Fund (HSF) will continue in West Northamptonshire through its 7th tranche (HSF7), providing crucial financial assistance to vulnerable households across the area. The funding is set to commence on 1 April 2025, continuing through to 31 March 2026.

The funding will provide essential support to families and individuals struggling with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, with a specific focus on helping with the cost of food, utility bills, and other vital household expenses. While the full details on the scheme's implementation are still being finalised, the Council is committed to ensuring that the funds are distributed as effectively as possible to help as many residents as possible.

The Household Support Fund is part of a broader effort to combat financial hardship across England. It is anticipated that Government will allocate approximately £742 million nationally for HSF7, with West Northamptonshire expected to receive roughly £3.66 million in funding for the 12-month period.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../household-support...>

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2029-30

The current economic landscape for local authorities remains highly challenging, with a combination of critical factors impacting councils both operationally and from a financial planning perspective. Over recent years, councils have faced increasing levels of demand for key statutory services, both in terms of volume and complexity of expenditure. At the same time, there is an ongoing need to understand and adapt to post-pandemic service demand levels for effective medium-term planning. These challenges are compounded by the financial pressures arising from inflation-driven increases in service delivery costs, adding further complexity to medium-term financial planning for local authorities.

In addition, while the government's decision to redistribute grants or provide recovery grants based on needs is at face value sensible in addressing areas of high deprivation, the formulas used means the allocations for West Northamptonshire do not reflect our varied levels of need. The formula for assessing "relative need" looks at the average level of need and deprivations and while West Northants has areas of high deprivation these are netted off in the formula by the wealthier south in our area meaning that we are deemed of average need and do not benefit from the recovery grant.



The detailed budget process seeks to correct the budget for the forthcoming year and the medium-term position to reflect current and estimated future levels of demand for the services that are affected the most such as:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Temporary Accommodation
- Home to School Transport

However, even by adding growth into future years the last three years have shown that the demand for these services continues to outstrip what is put into the budget thus illustrating the complexities of local authority budget setting. While some risks and variable demand can be accounted for the actual impacts of a range of factors impacting demand and need, national events and other factors are harder to predict.

Key Economic and Financial Risks

Key economic and financial risks currently include:

- The ongoing cost-of-living crisis, with interest rates remaining at 4.75%.
- Inflation rates continuing to be higher than Government targets. Indeed, inflation is expected to be over this target for the whole of 2025.
- The timescales to deliver the positive impacts of prevention, housing solutions and the asset projects.
- The impacts of changes to landlord incentives and regulations resulting in poor private landlords pulling out of the private rental market or pursuing no fault evictions.
- The health financial deficits which drive key decisions about funding, the withdrawal of funding or the decommissioning or withdrawal of services that impact demand into adults, children's and housing.
- The risk of demand-led service pressures outpacing national funding allocations or assumptions built into the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- Upcoming reforms announced as part of the provisional settlement to address national challenges in Children's Services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and Adult Social Care, including changes to service delivery models and funding allocation methodologies.
- Re-setting of the business rates baseline and the fair funding review potentially having a detrimental impact on the Council.

The provisional settlement for 2025-26, announced in December 2024 has provided some level of funding certainty for that year. However, the Government has pledged to review both the funding allocation methodology and business rates income ahead of the 2026-27 settlement. These reviews will significantly impact local authority funding levels over the medium term, introducing further uncertainty to medium-term financial planning assumptions.

Key Funding Assumptions

- Council Tax - the budget applies a 4.99% increase across the medium term along with estimated tax base growth of 1.5% annually this is based on average historic growth levels.
- Business Rates Income – the medium-term plan has been prepared on the assumption that there will be a business rates reset in 2026-27. This will have the effect of reducing the growth retained by Local Authorities as its effectively centralised and redistributed across the system. The planning assumption is that there will be transitional arrangements that will reduce the impact and remove

any effective cliff edge but these transitional arrangements will form part of the consultation process in 2025-26. It is also expected that some of this funding that will be taken away from high growth areas like WNC will be recycled using other distribution methods and therefore some of the funding lost may make it way back to the Council through a different grant or allocation process.

- Core Grant Funding – inflationary increases of 2% have been applied universally across the medium term.

Medium Term Plan

The Council’s medium-term position is set out in the table below, and when projected forward leads to a medium-term gap of £57.5m over 4 years starting with a 2026-27 deficit of £25.8m which represents 6% of the net budget reducing to 2% in 2029-30. This demonstrates the importance of continual focus on reducing and managing demand more effectively and reducing the cost-of-service delivery.

The tables below present the medium-term financial position in two different ways. The first table assumes we do nothing about closing the budget gap each year and provides the cumulative position over the medium term on the basis that the deficits each year are not addressed. This is the ‘cumulative’ budget gap. In this scenario we would have to fall back on reserves to balance the budget and would run out of general fund reserves before the end of 2027-28. Clearly taking this approach would not be financially sustainable for the Council.

The second table sets out the more realistic position. New proposals are delivered every year to eliminate the forthcoming year’s budget deficit. The second table therefore assumes that this practice continues as it has done successfully for the five years WNC has set a budget. The table shows the incremental gap each year assuming the gap will be closed for each year of the MTFP without the need to fall back on general fund balances. Therefore, balancing the gap of £25.8m in 2026-27, leaves a gap of £10.8m to close in 2027-28.

	2025-26 £'000	2026-27 £'000	2027-28 £'000	2028-29 £'000	2029-30 £'000
Net Expenditure Budget (excluding DSG Funded)	431,841	463,587	496,388	530,632	563,308
Total Funding	(431,841)	(437,705)	(459,711)	(482,466)	(505,803)
Forecast Cumulative Budget Gap	0	25,881	36,677	48,165	57,505

Forecast Incremental Budget Gap	0	25,881	10,796	11,488	9,340
% of Net Budget requirement	0	6%	2%	2%	2%

Bridging the Gap

In order to bridge the funding gap over the medium term the Council is focussed on:

- Promoting and encouraging the use of invest to save schemes where up-front investment can lead to significant on-going revenue savings, in particular prevention and early intervention schemes that can reduce current and future demand

- Delivering a 'pipeline' of projects which drive significant savings into the medium to long term.
- Continual review of transformation resources and projects they are driving forward to ensure that the resource is focussed and delivering on the major projects which are those that often have significant savings associated with them.
- Inclusion of these medium-term savings and efficiencies proposals, taking a prudent approach and only including them where there is a level of certainty in terms of delivery and clear financial benefits.

As a result the medium term financial plan underestimates the savings coming from these projects until there is confidence they will be delivered and a reasonable estimate of savings can be included.

- Maximisation of resources through applying the maximum allowable increases in Council Tax rates with 4.99% applied across the medium term. A prudent assessment of the risks associated with the reset of business rates income and application of transactional funding pending confirmation later in 2025-26.
- Maximisation of income streams through application of grant funding inflation over future years at 2% based on current estimation.
- Capital programme invest to save proposals are included where business cases are financially viable and support the decision for capital investment driving sustainable saving and efficiency proposals over the medium term.
- Inclusion where confirmed of any medium-term benefits delivered through the Councils transformation agenda and strategic projects.

The Council's transformation agenda supports the medium-term planning process through the continued focus on the progression of key strategic projects that will drive service improvement and opportunities across the Council in the medium term. These projects are underpinned by transformation governance that ensures clear ownership and reporting through to the Executive Leadership team and through ongoing development will feed into the medium term when benefits assumptions are confirmed and approved for inclusion

Key projects include:

- Taking proactive steps to grow and maximise our preventative services to reduce the expected and future demand for statutory interventions such as the 'family hubs' concept.
- Utilising our assets to provide more in-house facilities for care and accommodation to avoid expensive private sector placement.
- Delivering our services even more efficiently through the use of technology and continued learning.
- Building of a new crematorium to improve service provision and drive significant income streams.
- Considering and driving forward green energy initiatives that will reduce utility costs and provide further income streams.
- Considering several housing initiatives, including the creation, acquisition and supply of housing to address social need, reduce the need for temporary accommodation and reduce homelessness.

These projects have been expanded through the Council's PACE programme to ensure there are clear links into the medium-term planning process and any developing budget opportunities are tracked and reviewed regularly through the Executive Leadership Team. As soon as there is confidence in delivery and a reasonable estimate of financial savings they are incorporated into the MTFP to reduce the budget gap going forward. This is a continual process.

In light of the ongoing service delivery pressures facing local authorities, the broader economic uncertainty, and the unpredictability of future funding allocations, medium-term budget planning has become an inherently challenging and risk-sensitive process. To navigate this complexity, we have adopted a prudent approach grounded in the application of the principles outlined above.

This approach ensures we focus on closing the funding gap annually without overstating the financial position.

Based on our experience over the first few years of medium-term financial planning we have changed some of the key assumptions so they are closer to what the likely position will be in a bid to not overstate the size of the budget gaps. However, this is not an exact science and is based on judgement. Inevitably the forecasting will be wrong but the purpose of it is to provide a medium term outlook that allows for strategic proactive planning which seeks to address the position forecast.

Despite these challenges, our robust in-year planning process has successfully addressed funding gaps for the past four years. However, it is acknowledged that this task is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain over the medium term.

REGULATORY SERVICES

Young Leaders to Represent West Northants in Parliament

Council, with two of them also stepping into national roles as Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs), following a successful election delivered in partnership between West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and Clubs for Young People Northamptonshire (CYPN).

The elections, which took place across schools, youth clubs and sports groups in the area, marked a powerful opportunity for young people to have their say and help shape the decisions that affect them. Thousands of votes were cast as part of the democratic process, with polling stations hosted at schools and community venues across West Northants.

The newly elected MYPs are:

- Chanel – MYP and Chair of the Youth Council (Northampton School for Girls)
- Thomas – MYP and Vice-Chair of the Youth Council (Caroline Chisholm School)



Chanel and Thomas will go on to represent West Northamptonshire at a national level, including participating in debates in the House of Commons and engaging with MPs on key issues affecting young people. The Youth Council will meet monthly to campaign on local priorities, discuss challenges, and collaborate with WNC and other partners to create meaningful change.

To learn more about the West Northamptonshire Youth Council or get involved, please visit: www.westnorthants.gov.uk/community-forums or contact communityforums@westnorthants.gov.uk

Immigration White Paper Launched

This week the Prime Minister launched the immigration White Paper setting out new immigration rules to reduce reliance on overseas recruitment. The new system will end automatic settlement and citizenship for anyone living here for five years. Instead, individuals must spend a decade in the UK before applying to stay. The Prime Minister also announced updates on raising the skilled worker threshold, education, adult social care and reforms to the deportation system

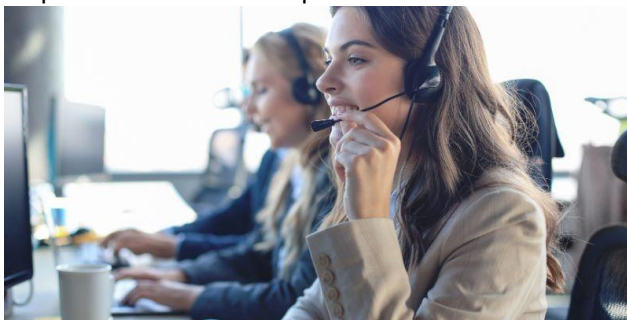
<https://www.gov.uk/.../restoring-control-over-the...>



Access to WNC Council Services

West Northants residents will have faster, easier, and more flexible ways to access council services, with quicker responses, clearer information, and more choices for how they engage—whether online, via text, or in person.

Following the approval of a Resident Access Strategy at Cabinet last week, we will be introducing more responsive services that put residents first. Whether it's requesting a service, updating personal details, or getting advice, residents need quick, convenient, and reliable ways to engage. The strategy envisions a future where finding information is effortless, questions are answered instantly, and help is available in the right way.



By embracing digital technology and improving traditional methods, the Council aims to cut wait times with a new SMS service that will direct people straight to the forms or information they need, reducing unnecessary delays. The webchat function

will continue to be improved to offer real-time support online, guiding residents to solutions in seconds. People will also receive updates on processing times, so they always know what to expect, while step-by-step video guides will make navigating services simple.

Council's commitment to accessibility remains at the heart of the strategy. Information will be made clearer, simpler, and available in multiple formats, including translated materials, read-aloud features, and Easy Read content. Whether someone prefers in-person support or digital solutions, they will have a choice in how they engage.

This vision has been shaped by extensive engagement with residents over the past three years. Conversations in contact centres, community hubs, libraries, and Welcoming Spaces, along with feedback from public consultations, have provided invaluable insight into what people want and need. Now, those insights are driving real change.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../plans-transform-how...>

New Mortuary For Northamptonshire

The steel frame for Northamptonshire's new public mortuary has now been completed marking a major milestone in the construction of the facility at Riverside Business Park in Northampton. Due to be completed in autumn 2025, the new mortuary will be a purpose-built facility designed to deliver the highest standards

of care and compassion during some of life's most difficult moments serving communities across Northamptonshire and surrounding areas.

It will provide modern, dignified spaces for families, including private viewing and identification areas, ensuring a respectful and supportive experience for those dealing with the loss of a loved one. The facility will also bring key services under one roof, simplifying processes and reducing the need for travel between



different sites. This will not only make it easier for families by reducing delays but will also improve efficiency for funeral directors, healthcare professionals, and other essential services.

The mortuary will also help emergency services if there is ever a major incident, such as a disaster with multiple casualties. It will ensure that Northamptonshire is well-prepared to handle such situations while continuing to provide vital services for the community. The project is being

delivered by Stepnell Ltd, a contractor with extensive experience in managing large-scale construction projects. Find out more about the Northampton Mortuary on the West Northamptonshire Council website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../plan-improve-county...>

Single Use Vapes Illegal from 1 June 2025

From 1 June 2025, it will be illegal for businesses to sell, offer to sell, or supply single-use or 'disposable' vapes. The new law applies to all shops and online retailers.

All single-use vapes are included in the ban, even if they do not contain nicotine.

It will also be a legal requirement for retailers to arrange for any unsold single-use vapes to be collected by a registered vape recycling service by 1 June 2025.

Retailers will still be allowed to sell reusable vapes after the deadline.

More information at <https://ow.ly/x8Sz50VYvSi>



RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN).

RABI Announces Farmers Aid

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) <https://rabi.org.uk/> has announced the forthcoming launch of FarmersAid, a pioneering initiative that will provide farmers with vital, real-time trauma guidance to use in the crucial moments following a serious on-farm accident. Launching in January 2026, the first phase of FarmersAid will centre around a free, easy-to-use smartphone app. The app offers step-by-step instructions for treating the most common life-threatening injuries on farm – such as crush incidents, falls from height, and severe bleeding – enabling users to act fast and effectively before emergency services can reach the scene.

Farming remains the most dangerous industry in the UK. Though it employs just 1% of the workforce, it accounts for around 20% of all workplace deaths. On average, 31 people die on British farms each year and thousands more are left with life-changing injuries.

Beyond the digital app, FarmersAid also includes plans for on-farm critical care kits, training pilots, wellbeing referrals and educational outreach programmes throughout the agricultural sector. The app will be officially launched with a nationwide roadshow and communications campaign throughout 2026, supported by giveaways, printed materials and targeted outreach at farming shows and events across England and Wales. RABI will be inviting all partners, funders, and farming stakeholders to help support the rollout of FarmersAid. Further information will be shared later this year.



Rural Proofing

The Government has published its latest update on rural proofing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-proofing-the-governments-approach-and-priorities/the-governments-approach-to-rural-proofing-2025>

It sets out examples of how departments have considered rural needs across areas such as housing, digital connectivity, transport and the environment. This is a welcome continuation of the principle that rural communities must not be left behind in national policy. But as ever, the true test lies in how far this principle is embedded in practice.



The Rural Services Network, has long championed the need for stronger rural proofing. The concept is simple: policy should work for all communities, not just those in urban centres. Yet in reality, too many national strategies are still designed with city-based assumptions—leading to unintended disadvantages for the 9.7 million people who live in rural England. The latest government document offers encouraging signs of progress. There is clearly greater awareness in Whitehall of rural considerations, and some positive examples of rural thinking influencing policy. However, these case studies remain the exception rather than the rule. Rural proofing is still often applied too late in the policy process, if at all. The result is that challenges unique to rural areas—like sparse public transport, higher service delivery costs, and digital exclusion—are routinely overlooked.

When rural proofing is applied meaningfully and early, it can lead to better, fairer, and more effective policymaking. It highlights where one-size-fits-all approaches won't work and encourages smarter, more targeted solutions. For example, understanding the true cost of service delivery in dispersed areas helps ensure rural councils aren't unfairly underfunded. Recognising barriers like distance to services or poor mobile coverage can improve access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunity. But to deliver real impact, rural proofing needs to become a standard part of government thinking rather than being a discretionary extra. That means moving beyond principles and into practical reform. Policies should be accompanied by clear rural impact assessments. Departments must be held accountable for how they've considered rural implications—not just that they have. Better data collection is also essential, particularly in identifying hidden deprivation in rural and coastal areas that can be masked by broad-brush statistics.

It's vital that rural voices are included early in the policymaking process. Engaging with rural councils, community organisations, and service providers before policies are finalised ensures that challenges are properly understood—and that solutions are realistic and deliverable on the ground.

PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Appeals

Since my appointment, I have kept you informed as to the progress of the major Appeals in South Northamptonshire. The update for this month is as follows:

Determined or Cancelled:

- WNS/2021/1819/EIA Land North Of The Bell Plantation Watling Street Towcester Hybrid planning application comprising of Part A: Full planning permission for a new roundabout access from the A5; internal spine road, creation of development plots with associated earthworks and plateauing; delivery of plateaus and access for Towcester Town Football Club (TTFC); site-wide structural landscaping and infrastructure; and a single warehouse (Use Class B8) and ancillary office, with associated access, hardstanding, landscaping, parking and supporting infrastructure. Part B: Outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the development of TTFC and employment floorspace falling within Use Classes B2 and B8, with ancillary office space on the development plots; as established through Part A of this application Appeal **Allowed**

Pending

- 2023/5711/PIP Permission in principle for development of 8-9 custom/self-build Land Poundfield Road Potterspury Towcester NN12 7QB Appeal **Pending**
- WND/2021/0960 Overstone Park Golf Club Overstone NN6 0AS Appeal **Pending**
- **2024/4562/Shepstone House 27 Church Street Cogenhoe NN7 1LS proposal: listed building consent for the demolition of existing rear conservatory and replacement Appeal Written Representations Start Date 20/05/2025**

West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets

The Government published tables identifying what the changes would be for each local authority. For West Northamptonshire, this would see the annual requirement increase from 2,124 to 2,515. For the current plan period (to 2041) this would increase numbers by 6,647 (17 x 391), assuming the base date of the Local Plan was moved from 1st April 2023 to 1st April 2024. Then the additional work required to meet this need will extend the period required to produce the plan and therefore, the plan period will need to be extended. For every years extension there will be a requirement of a further 2,515 dwellings. For illustrative purposes

an extension of two years would see an overall total additional requirement of approximately 12,000 (11,677) dwellings.

Key Measures in the Planning & Infrastructure Bill

Two weeks before the spring statement, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the Planning and Infrastructure bill. The Bill will have significant implications for local authorities, developers and communities. They will be planning for it to pass by the summer recess.

Ministers have set a target of making at least 150 decisions on major infrastructure projects during this Parliament – three times as many as during the five years to 2024. This includes energy schemes, some of which will bypass local authorities.

Key measures in the bill include:

- 1) The introduction of a national scheme of delegation which would, through regulations be introduced at a later date, sets out which planning functions should be delegated to officers and which should go to a planning committee or subcommittee.
- 2) Stronger compulsory purchase powers for acquiring land and limiting the compensation paid to landowners.
- 3) Additional powers for development corporations.
- 4) Reducing consultation over major projects that constitute 'nationally significant infrastructure projects' (NSIPs) such as reservoirs, windfarms, roads and railways, with fewer statutory consultees.
- 5) Limiting legal challenges to government decisions.
- 6) Cutting energy bills for people living near clean energy infrastructure.



The Local Government Association (LGA) remains concerned around "how it will ensure that councils – who know their areas best and what they need – remain at the heart of the planning process." They say that "the democratic role of councillors in decision-making is the backbone of the English planning system, and this should not be diminished."

Consultation on Reform of Planning Committees

Further to the introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill this consultation seeks views on the implementation of the three aspects of reform proposed:



- a national scheme of delegation
- control of the size and composition of planning committees

- mandatory member training

This consultation closes at 11:59 pm on 23 July 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../reform-of-planning-committees...>

2024/5390 Hardingstone Rise, Northampton, EIA Scoping Opinion

Little Houghton Parish Council asked me to assist with an extension to the time for comments on the EIA Scoping Opinion for Hardingstone Rise as they are expecting a briefing from developers by 5 June 2025.

I have received confirmation from Nicky Scaife, Team Leader, Development Management - Major Projects and Shivesh Seedhar, Major Projects Officer to an extension of time. Little Houghton Parish Council will need to confirm a date for the Local Planning Authority to receive their response. In this connection they have asked whether a date of 20 June 2025 will provide them with sufficient time. I have also asked Mike Cunningham, Clerk, Great Houghton Parish Council to consider whether they are seeking an extension of time and whether they wish to liaise with Little Houghton Parish Council on this matter.

What are Material Considerations?

When considering a Planning Application, you may find the enclosed document produced by Planning Aid, England helpful as it sets out matters or planning policies which legislation and the courts have determined should be taken into account when deciding an application.



Material Planning Considerations

When a decision is made on a planning application, only certain issues are taken into account; these are often referred to as 'material planning considerations'.

MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

Issues that may be relevant to the decision

(There may exist further material planning considerations not included here)

- Local, strategic, national **planning policies** and policies in the Development Plan
- Emerging new plans which have already been through at least one stage of public consultation
- **Pre-application planning consultation** carried out by, or on behalf of, the applicant
- **Government and Planning Inspectorate requirements** - circulars, orders, statutory instruments, guidance and advice
- **Previous appeal decisions** and planning Inquiry reports
- Principles of **Case Law** held through the Courts
- **Loss of sunlight** (based on Building Research Establishment guidance)
- **Overshadowing/loss of outlook** to the detriment of residential amenity (though not loss of view as such)
- **Overlooking and loss of privacy**
- **Highway issues:** traffic generation, vehicular access, highway safety
- **Noise or disturbance** resulting from use, including proposed hours of operation
- **Smells and fumes**
- Capacity of **physical infrastructure**, e.g. in the public drainage or water systems
- Deficiencies in **social facilities**, e.g. spaces in schools
- Storage & handling of **hazardous materials** and development of **contaminated land**
- Loss or effect on **trees**
- Adverse impact on **nature conservation** interests & biodiversity opportunities
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- **Incompatible or unacceptable uses**
- Local **financial considerations** offered as a contribution or grant
- **Layout and density of building** design, visual appearance and finishing materials
- Inadequate or inappropriate **landscaping** or means of enclosure

The weight attached to material considerations in reaching a decision is a matter of judgement for the decision-taker however the decision-taker is required to demonstrate that in reaching that decision that they have considered all relevant matters.

Generally greater weight is attached to issues raised which are supported by evidence rather than solely by assertion.

If an identified problem can be dealt with by means of a suitable condition then the Local Planning Authority is required to consider this rather than by issuing a refusal.

NON-MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

Issues that are not relevant to the decision:

(There exist further non-material planning considerations not included in this list)

- **Matters controlled under building regulations** or other non-planning legislation e.g. structural stability, drainage details, fire precautions, matters covered by licences etc.
- **Private issues between neighbours** e.g. land/boundary disputes, damage to property, private rights of access, covenants, ancient and other rights to light etc.
- **Problems arising from the construction period** of any works, e.g. noise, dust, construction vehicles, hours of working (covered by Control of Pollution Acts).
- Opposition to the **principle of development** when this has been settled by an outline planning permission or appeal
- **Applicant's personal circumstances** (unless exceptionally and clearly relevant, e.g. provision of facilities for someone with a physical disability)
- **Previously made objections/representations** regarding another site or application
- **Factual misrepresentation of the proposal**
- Opposition to **business competition**
- **Loss of property value**
- **Loss of view**

Planning Aid England provides free, confidential and independent planning advice.
Call: 0330 123 9244 or Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk



Predisposition, predetermination or bias

As Chairman of the South Planning Committee, West Northamptonshire Council, I may be involved in the decision making for any subsequent planning application. Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011 provides that a decision maker is not to be taken to have had, or appeared to have had, a closed mind when making the decision just because:

- (a) the decision maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision maker took, or would or might take, in relation to a matter; and
- (b) the matter was relevant to the decision.

This provision does not change the law on bias and pre-determination which means that Committee Members must still take planning decisions with an open mind and having considered all relevant material planning considerations. The safest course is for Committee Members to avoid making public statements (including expressing views in emails) as to their support for or opposition to any application which would indicate they had made up their minds before the formal consideration of the application at the meeting. If a Committee Member has made such a statement, they must be satisfied that they can still consider the application with an open mind and are prepared to consider any new matters or any new arguments in favour of or against the proposed development until the decision is made otherwise, they should not take part in any decision on the application in question.

On the grounds of the above, it would not be appropriate for me to attend Parish Council or Community events which seek to take a decision regarding the outcome of a planning application as I must keep an open mind on this matter so as not to preclude me from participating in any future planning decisions.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Call for Urgent Investment in Rural Housing

At Current Rates, Clearing Rural Social Housing Waiting Lists Would Take 89 Years.



A pioneering partnership between housing and homelessness organisations has launched a report to make the case to scale up Housing First approaches in rural communities, homelessness has risen by 40% over five years. English Rural Housing Association, <https://englishrural.org.uk/> Porchlight <https://www.porchlight.org.uk/> and Commonweal Housing <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/> have joined forces to develop new Housing First solutions specifically designed for rural areas. The report comes as research shows rough sleeping in rural England increased by 24% in just one year between 2021 and 2022, highlighting the urgent need for intervention. At the current rate of social housing delivery, it would take 89 years to clear the rural social housing waiting list backlog.

The partnership aims to address the unique challenges of rural homelessness, where isolation, limited support services and transport barriers can make it particularly difficult for people to access help. Currently, just 8% of homes in rural areas are affordable, compared to 17% in urban areas, leaving over 300,000 households languishing on social housing waiting lists.

Housing First provides stable accommodation as an immediate response to homelessness while offering ongoing, flexible support to help people maintain their tenancy. While the model has proved highly successful in urban areas, its presence in rural communities remains extremely limited.

The partnership is calling for:

- 1) Investment from government in a new tranche of rural Housing First provision
- 2) A commitment to deliver genuinely affordable homes in rural communities through scaled-up Rural Exception Sites
- 3) Dedicated investment via the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme
- 4) Ongoing financial support for Rural Housing Enablers

With rough sleeping on the rise and waiting lists growing, the partners emphasise that these changes are needed now to prevent the rural homelessness crisis from worsening further.

Read the report in full here.

<https://englishrural.org.uk/rural-housing-first/>

ENVIRONMENT

New Energy Upgrade for Public Buildings Announced

The Government has announced a new round of funding to improve energy efficiency across public sector buildings, aiming to reduce energy costs and cut carbon emissions.

Through the latest phase of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/.../psds-phase...>

£557 million has been allocated to support over 1,000 projects across England. The funding is designed to help public bodies—such as schools, hospitals, leisure centres, and council buildings—install modern, energy-efficient technologies that lower energy bills and contribute to net zero targets

The funded projects will implement measures including:

- Installing low-carbon heating solutions, such as heat pumps.
- Upgrading insulation and window systems.
- Replacing older, inefficient lighting with modern LED alternatives.

This round of funding is expected to cut lifetime emissions by 7.4 million tonnes of CO₂—the equivalent of removing around 3.2 million petrol cars from the road for a year.

The announcement forms part of the Government's wider net zero strategy, which includes efforts to decarbonise public sector buildings and reduce overall reliance on fossil fuels.

Regional Funding Breakdown

As of May 2025, the regional allocation for Phase 4 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is as follows:

- North East: £65,191,456
- Yorkshire and the Humber: £81,262,778
- North West: £116,815,617
- East Midlands: £73,405,602
- West Midlands: £84,306,700
- East of England: £29,149,553
- South East: £35,720,404
- South West: £30,002,246
- Greater London: £113,914,685
- Wales: £2,500,000
- Across Regions: £1,325,000

Repeat Offender Fined £6,000 for Latest Offence

A man has been ordered to pay more than £6,000 in fines and costs after finding himself in court over waste related offences for the second time in less than two years. Umit Bilgin's first appearance before Northampton Magistrates came on 6 June 2023, after waste belonging to him was dumped in Spectacle Lane, Moulton. Magistrates ordered him to pay £3,350 in fines and costs on that occasion. However, the day before that hearing, Neighbourhood Wardens from West Northamptonshire Council had found yet more rubbish belonging to Bilgin while patrolling Duke Street in Northampton.



It resulted in the 45-year-old being issued with another summons to appear at court, where on Monday, 12 May 2025, he was convicted for a second time of failing in his duty of care to ensure his household waste was disposed of properly. This time Bilgin, of Patterdale Walk in Northampton, was ordered to pay a £2,000 fine, plus a victim surcharge of £800 and prosecution costs of £3,500. While demonstrating the Council's commitment to dealing with fly-tipping, the case also highlights the difficulties officers sometimes face when prosecuting such offences. Bilgin refused to engage with the officers' enquiries or the investigation process and had to be issued with an arrest warrant after failing to appear at the first scheduled court date on 16 January 2024. And when he failed to appear at the second scheduled court date of 7, May 2024, a further arrest warrant was issued. His first court appearance eventually came on 3 March this year, when he pleaded not guilty, leading to the trial on Monday, 12 May 2025.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Spring COVID-19 Jabs now Available

Eligible people are urged to top up their protection against COVID-19 by getting vaccinated this spring. Those at increased risk from severe illness can get the vaccine, including those aged 75 or over on 17 June 2025, people with a weakened immune system or those who live in an older adult care home. Those eligible will be able to book an appointment until 17 June 2025. If eligible, you do not need to wait for an invitation to book your vaccine. To book, please visit the NHS App, the NHS website or call 119 for free. You may also be able to visit a walk-in site which does not require a booking or you can find out about local opportunities on the Integrated Care Northamptonshire website and select where you can get a vaccine jab.

If you or family members are eligible, make sure you get any extra protection you need this spring. Get vaccinated against COVID-19.



Northampton General Hospitals Trust (NGHT) New System Nervecentre

From Saturday 28 June 2025, NGHT teams will use digital devices to document your care. They will be using a system called Nervecentre, a digital tool that keeps all your medical information, like your medical history, test results, and medications, in one place.

This means staff may use a mobile phone, a tablet, or a laptop while caring for you. To find out more about Nervecentre and what it means for you, please visit <https://orlo.uk/5QIYb>



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Term Dates for West Northamptonshire Schools

Below are the term dates for the area, according to West Northamptonshire Council. Dates will vary at independent schools, and there could be additional days off at all schools for teacher training days, which will vary from school to school.

Summer term 2025

Tuesday 22 April to Tuesday 22 July

Half term holiday: Monday 26 May to Friday 30 May

Summer holiday starts: Wednesday 23 July

Academic year 2025 to 2026

Autumn term 2025

Monday 1 September to Friday 19 December

Half term holiday: Monday 27 October to Friday 31 October

Christmas holiday: Monday 22 December to Friday 2 January

Spring term 2026

Monday 5 January to Friday 27 March

Half term holiday: Monday 16 February to Friday 20 February

Easter holiday: Monday 30 March to Friday 10 April

Bank holidays: Friday 3 April and Monday 6 April

Summer term 2026

Monday 13 April to Monday 20 July

Half term holiday: Monday 25 May to Friday 29 May

Summer holiday starts: Tuesday 21 July

Bank holiday: Monday 4 May

Merged Futures 7

Digital Northants will be hosting their annual technology showcase event on Friday June 13th 10am at the University of Northampton. Merged Futures 7 is a full day of talks & exhibition stands showing off local



innovation and interesting stories of technology. Silverstone Museum will kick off the event with their keynote talking about their use of technology to bring to life the history of F1. Different rooms will be home to talks on a wide range of topics including the use of AI in predicting homelessness to the use of games design to promote the Women's Rugby World Cup. There is a dedicated Education Room with some great talks about the use of Immersive and Virtual Reality technology in Billing Brook SEN School to unlocking creativity using open source tools. In total there are 15 talks and 20 exhibition stands to try out. You can spend the whole day or just pop in and out of various sessions. It's a great day of learning, building local connections and setting up new collaborations. Bookings are free so please sign up today.

<https://digitalnorthants.com/merged-futures-7>

SEND Support Service transformation

The SEND Support Service is undergoing a review and transformation. New offers will be in place from September 2025. WNC is asking for your feedback and engagement in the process. Please share with your teams, with wider partners and complete our 7-question form – it will take less than 5 minutes. The deadline to complete the form is Saturday 21 June 2025.

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=9rFq2WDmUE2ez1oK8hIXI-E-Z9ZJpNGgBZYBkkzQcRUNjNGMFISVFIOV05BVzdHTVI5WjdaMDI3UyQIQCN0PWcu&origin=QRCode&route=shorturl&wdLOR=c9210B4D3-17D9-462E-B111-FCAE6AA2A5FA>

To allow for effective change, WNC is pausing all requests for support from Friday 23 May 2025. SEND Support Service will complete all open pieces of work in schools by the end of summer term.

WNC will complete all open pieces of work with parents and CYP at home by the end of summer break. They will then review the feedback from all partners to inform next steps, with a new offer identified and in place from September 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact the team at sss.ncc@westnorthants.gov.uk.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Third Party Grant Funding Opportunities

I distribute a Grant Funding document quarterly and the April 2025 version is now available. Please contact me if you wish to receive this document on a regular basis.

Well Northants Programme shortlisted for LGC Award

Services that support underrepresented communities in West Northamptonshire have been shortlisted for a prestigious national award. The Well Northants programme has beaten off competition from other council and community initiatives across the country to reach the final stage of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards. The programme has been instrumental in supporting underrepresented groups and communities including people living in isolated conditions or with limited access to support and care services.

The project has seen community development workers embedded in these areas to work closely with the community, enabling West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) to deliver tailored support to those facing the most complex health and social challenges. The programme has led to transformative outcomes, with more than 80% of participants reporting feeling more connected to their communities. Local projects have included sewing groups, education sessions for families, and pop-up food banks to support



those in need.

In the past year, the programme has invested £30,720 into building community assets and funding 19 projects, 14 of which were voted on by local community members. Other key Well Northants projects include the Semilong and Briar Hill evening hubs, which provide a vibrant space for weekly arts, crafts, and active play in a supportive and engaging environment. These hubs also offer educational opportunities outside traditional hours, with a split format that allows adults to gain essential skills such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), budgeting, and digital literacy, while children participate in activities nearby.

Another impactful initiative is the Healing Garden, a therapeutic space funded by Well Northants. Rooted in the belief that gardens offer restorative and emotionally calming benefits, the Healing Garden provides a peaceful sanctuary in the heart of Northampton. Open to all, the garden encourages visitors to reduce isolation and improve their emotional wellbeing through mindfulness. It also offers parents and young children a chance to connect with nature, while providing valuable volunteer opportunities and a space for quiet reflection. The garden is accessible via the Cathedral carpark on Barrack Road (NN2 6AG) and remains open to the public.

Additionally, the You Are What You Grow project seeks to transform two neglected outdoor spaces within the Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village (DSL) in Daventry. The vision for these areas is to develop them into a community garden and sensory space, as well as an outdoor learning environment for students and the wider community. The project will not only serve as an extension of the classroom but also provide a safe space for mental wellness and expose children to life experiences they may otherwise not have had. Beyond Well Northants, WNC has continued to support the full range of communities in the District through various initiatives, such as the Northampton Peace Vigil, Northampton Pride festival, Holocaust Memorial Day, the Inspirational Women Awards and the Male Role Model Awards. The Council's Community Forums have also ensured that seldom-heard groups are actively involved in decision-making, promoting a more inclusive and vibrant West Northamptonshire.

The winners of the LGC Awards will be announced at a ceremony on Wednesday, 11 June 2025. Find out more about the Well Northants programme via the Council's website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/well-northants>

King's Award For Enterprise

Three Northamptonshire businesses have been recognised with the prestigious King's Awards for Enterprise, the UK's highest honour for business success. Enovation Consulting Ltd, Sol Retail, and Ziggurat XYZ Ltd have each received an award in the International Trade category, celebrating their outstanding achievements in overseas markets. The King's Awards for Enterprise highlight the innovation, growth, and impact of UK businesses across a range of sectors. Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, James Saunders Watson, said :

“Receiving a King's Award for Enterprise is a monumental achievement, and I am thrilled to see three businesses from our region recognised for their incredible contributions to international trade and innovation. These companies are setting the standard for excellence and making a real impact on a global scale. Their success is a testament to the talent, determination, and entrepreneurial spirit that thrive here in Northamptonshire.”

Enovation Consulting was founded in 2018 following Dr. Cristiana Pace's pioneering PhD investigating and implementing a more data-driven and robust approach to sustainability in motorsport organisations. While early applications included F1 teams, manufacturers, and motorsport federations, the business quickly evolved into an international ESG consultancy working to accelerate changes across the sport sector. Today, Enovation Consulting offers end-to-end creative, innovative, and data driven solutions for sports organisations, integrating sustainability best practices into business strategies and enabling clients to deliver on ESG goals.



Sol Retail, based in Northampton and founded by Barry and Katy Tong in 2012, has been recognised with a King's Award for Enterprise in International Trade. The business began with £10 selling ornaments and DVDs on eBay and is now ranked among the top 100 sellers on Amazon UK and the EU. Sol Retail supports health,

beauty, and wellness brands, with sales nearing £20 million annually. It also donates to local charities, including over £500,000 in stock to the Lewis Foundation.

Ziggurat XYZ Ltd, founded in 2016 by Charles Haynes is a Northampton-based talent and creative agency, has been honoured with a King's Award for Enterprise in International Trade. Specialising in factual entertainment, the agency supports a diverse range of clients, including blacksmiths, chefs, mathematicians, and gardeners, empowering them to expand their reach and impact. Over the past five years, Ziggurat has achieved an average annual growth rate of 40% and now operates in 12 countries, employing 19 staff members.

Night Time Economy & International Award

Northampton town centre's 'gold standard' evening and night-time economy has been honoured with a top international award for the sixth year in a row. It was confirmed yesterday that Northampton has retained the prestigious Purple Flag award which celebrates places that create thriving, vibrant night-time economies that are safe for visitors, workers and residents. Across the globe only 90 locations – including world-renowned tourist destinations – have been awarded the Purple Flag which is similar to the Blue Flag scheme for beaches and aims to raise the standard and broaden the appeal of town and city centres between 5pm and 5am.



In addition to Northampton, seven areas are celebrating receiving a Full Renewal accreditation, and four areas are celebrating receiving an Interim Renewal accreditation. Northampton Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) worked closely with multiple partners, including West Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to successfully retain the Purple Flag status. The £12 million STACK scheme is being funded by an £8 million investment from STACK and a £4.2 million investment from West Northamptonshire Council. Receiving Purple Flag accreditation has been shown to boost local economies, increase tourism, and improve the overall quality of life for residents by providing more night-time entertainment and social opportunities. The award judges were impressed with the revamp of Northampton's Market Square, which has enhanced the area with its alfresco dining, public art and water features. They also found that inclusive events like the town's free Music Festival and lively Diwali celebrations had brought the community together.

Other key successes in Northampton's submission included its focus on night-time venue safety initiatives such as staff upskilling and awareness programs like Ask for Angela. The introduction of the Safer Routes Home initiative, which provides University of Northampton students with a designated and safer path home from the town centre to the Waterside Campus, was also singled out for praise.

For more details visit www.discovernorthampton.co.uk

Build Your Business 2.0

The Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) Northamptonshire, part of the BIPC national network led by the British Library and delivered through Northamptonshire Libraries, is proud to announce the relaunch of its highly successful business support initiative, now rebranded as Build Your Business 2.0.

Delivered in partnership with West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council, this enhanced programme builds on past success to offer even greater support to aspiring entrepreneurs, start-ups and established businesses across the county.

Running until March 2026, and funded with £310,000 from the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Build Your Business 2.0 will be offered entirely free of charge to participants, ensuring accessible support for anyone seeking business assistance.



Designed with flexibility at its core, the programme allows participants to access support as and when they need it, completely tailored to their individual business goals. Participants can benefit from one-to-one support sessions, expert-led webinars and workshops, networking opportunities, access to specialist market research tools and start-up grants of up to £2,000.

As part of a complete package of support, the BIPC Northamptonshire's dedicated team of business advisers will be running regular drop-in sessions at BIPC Local

libraries in Wellingborough, Kettering, Brixworth and Towcester.

What's new in Build Your Business 2.0

This refreshed version of the programme covers key areas of running a business including marketing, business growth and financial planning along with a brand-new webinar series focused on mental health and wellbeing for business owners. Delivered by Susan Liverman from The Kindful, these sessions are designed to help entrepreneurs build resilience, manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance while running or growing their business.

Start-up grants are back

Eligible businesses less one year old can apply for a £2,000 start-up grant to help cover business-related costs. Successful applicants will not only receive this valuable financial boost but will also gain access to ongoing support from the experienced BIPC Northamptonshire team.



Register today

Businesses interested in taking advantage of the Build Your Business 2.0 programme are encouraged to visit the BIPC Northamptonshire website. There, they can learn more about what's on offer, register on to the programme, explore upcoming drop-in sessions, and sign up for workshops, webinars, one-to-one support, and more.

Contact Information

West Northamptonshire Council Communications Team
communications@westnorthants.gov.uk

<https://www.bipcnorthamptonshire.co.uk/buildyourbusiness>

BIPC Workshops & Webinars

Business basics

10am Tuesday 10 June – How to research my market

10am Tuesday 17 June – How to write an effective business plan

Marketing

12.30pm Friday 6 June – Learn at Lunch: content creation

10am Tuesday 10 June – Build you business with a marketing plan

10am Thursday 26 June - Digital marketing that will build your business

Business and financial planning

10am Thursday 19 June - An introduction to business legal structures: sole trader or limited company

10am Wednesday 25 June - How to create your pricing strategy

Mental Health & Wellbeing

10am Friday 20 June - Mental health & wellbeing essentials for entrepreneurs

Grant

10am Thursday 12 June - How to write a winning grant application

eventbrite.co.uk/o/business-ip-centre-northamptonshire-10768898280?utm_source=brevio&utm_campaign=BIPC%20Northamptonshire%20May%20Newsletter&utm_medium=email

Demolition Works to Transform M&S, BHS and Job Centre Buildings

Preparatory works are set to begin on 2 June 2025 to pave the way for an innovative new development on the site of the former stores and Job Centre buildings, located on Abington Street, Wellington Street, and Wood Street in Northampton. Completion of this part of the project is anticipated in early 2026. The demolition, to be carried out by specialist contractor Colemans, marks the beginning of an exciting transformation for Northampton's town centre. The redevelopment scheme, which is being funded through



the Government's Town Fund, will breathe new life into the area, with plans for more than 200 high-quality build-to-rent homes above modern retail and leisure spaces at ground level.

This will be the first development of its kind in Northampton, offering high-first-rate, professionally managed rental homes that are owned and operated by a single provider. Main demolition activities will begin in mid-June, starting with the structures facing Abington Street. These works will be carefully phased and managed to minimise disruption to local businesses, residents, and visitors. This phase of the project is scheduled for

completion in early 2026.

This ambitious project will provide much-needed housing for local residents and create new opportunities for businesses. It will also support economic growth and job creation. By enhancing the vibrancy and appeal of the town centre, the scheme is set to create a more welcoming and dynamic environment for residents, visitors, and investors alike. During the demolition period, the Wellington Street car park will be temporarily closed and used as a site compound. The Council recognises the importance of maintaining a vibrant and accessible town centre and will make every effort to minimise disruption. We apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused. Strict environmental controls will be in place to monitor and manage noise, dust, and vibration. Working hours will be limited to Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 6:00pm, with no noisy works permitted outside these hours. Steps will also be taken to protect the recently upgraded paving on Abington Street. All demolition activities will be undertaken with the utmost care to ensure no damage occurs to this important investment.

Government Confirms First Major Reservoirs in 30 Years

The Environment Secretary, Steve Reed MP, has confirmed the proposed building of 2 major reservoirs for the first time since the 1980s, with 1 located in East Anglia and 1 in Lincolnshire.

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. The Lincolnshire Reservoir would provide up to 166 million litres of water per day for up to 500,000 homes, with the Fens Reservoir supplying 87 million litres to 250,000 homes. Both projects will now progress to consultation phase, where developers gather views from communities and stakeholders.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../government-steps-in-to-build-first...>

Aerial shot of a circular slipway, Ardingly reservoir, West Sussex.



TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

Queen Eleanor Interchange Improvements

I was asked by Yardley Hastings Parish Council to investigate whether the Improvement to Queen Eleanor Interchange is on schedule and following my request for an update, I received the following which is self-explanatory:

The project is currently progressing on schedule. The works commenced on 31 March 2025, and the planned completion date remains December 2025, subject to any unforeseen circumstances.

Project Timeline

- March 2025: Project commencement and initial traffic management setup
- April–August 2025: Carriageway widening, drainage improvements, and structural repairs
- September–October 2025: Installation of upgraded traffic signals, lighting, and safety barriers
- November–December 2025: Final surfacing, road markings, signage, and project close-out

Progress to Date

- Safety barriers have been installed
- Structural surveys completed
- Vegetation cleared from the roundabout and subway
- Drainage system installation underway
- Site office setup initiated at Wootton Hall Park

Upcoming Works

- Weekend Closures:
 - 1st–3rd August and 8th–10th August
 - Purpose: Removal of road surface on the bridge deck
 - Installation of new traffic signal infrastructure on the inner ring road
 - Public utility diversion works

Community Engagement

Customer Drop-In Event, Hardingtons Village Hall, Tuesday, 3rd June, 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Connecting Communities Through Better Transport

Better transport <https://bettertransport.org.uk/>

is transport that is safe, accessible, affordable, reliable, integrated and green – does amazing things. It connects communities and brings people together; creates a thriving economy and revitalises local areas; it's



good for our health and wellbeing; and it cleans up our air and tackles climate change. We think that's something worth celebrating.

This year, the annual celebration of sustainable transport will take place from 16 to 22 June and the theme for the week is how better transport can help connect communities and bring people together.

Good public transport networks, shared travel, walking and wheeling, and cycling help connect us to the people we love, the things we need and the places that matter. Better transport networks create thriving places and stronger communities and help build a fairer future for everyone.

To celebrate these connections, along with partners, Better Transport will be hosting events, competitions and much more throughout the week. There'll be lots of ways to get involved in Better Transport Week 2025,

<https://bettertransport.org.uk/better-transport-week/> whether you're an individual, or organisation or a community group. You can find out more here.

<https://bettertransport.org.uk/better-transport-week/>

A4500 Junction 16 M1

Works begin Monday 2nd June 2025 at A4500 Junction 16 M1 and continues in 3 phases until Saturday 28th June 2025. Please plan ahead, allow extra time & follow signage.

[#A4500](#) [#M1Junction16](#) [#RoadWorks](#)
[#TrafficUpdate](#) pic.x.com/LymgacZQ0

The poster is titled 'A4500 Junction 16 M1' and is issued by KIER. It details the roadworks schedule from Monday 2nd June to Saturday 28th June 2025. The works are carried out in three phases: Phase 1 (diversion to junction 15a), Phase 2 (lane closure on the M1), and Phase 3 (off-slip closure). A map shows the affected area around junction 16, including locations like Hargate, Killingbury, and Bartonthorpe. The poster includes contact information for KIER, a QR code for more information, and a 'Thank you!' message. It also features social media links for @WNCHighways and the website www.westnorthants.gov.uk/highways.

POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Emergency Service Fun Day 6 August 2025

Enjoy free food, entertaining activities, emergency service demos, and learn more about the important work our Emergency Services provide for the community.

DATE: Wednesday 6 August 2025

TIME: 10am - 2pm

WHERE: Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village

The event is FREE.



Ask Angela Scheme

Additional resources and training will be offered to venues across West Northamptonshire to further support safety in the area's night-time economy (NTE). The Ask for Angela initiative, which has been operational in Northampton and parts of West Northants for several years with the support of the Community Safety Partnership and Pubwatch partners, enables individuals who feel unsafe or uncomfortable to discreetly ask venue staff for help by "asking for Angela." Staff are trained to respond and provide support, helping ensure everyone can enjoy a night out safely.

In 2024, the scheme was refreshed with new locally branded posters to raise awareness. As part of the next phase, an official list of participating venues is being compiled. These venues will benefit from:

- Specialist staff training to respond to disclosures or distress
- Window stickers to clearly identify participation
- Ongoing support and resources from the Council and partner organisations

This move supports a wider action plan under the Northampton Town Centre Task Group's NTE strategy, coordinated by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) which includes test purchases throughout the year to assess how well the scheme is being implemented and to identify areas for improvement.

The scheme is one of several initiatives in place to support the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda in Northampton, alongside visible and active measures including the SNO (Safer Nights Out) Van, Street Pastors, Northampton Guardians, Taxi marshals, OP Kayak which tackles predatory behaviour, and CCTV monitoring.

All initiatives are showcased in the Council's Northampton NTE video, produced as part of the town's successful Purple Flag accreditation bid.

The Ask for Angela scheme is now open to venues across the whole of West Northamptonshire, and all hospitality businesses are encouraged to sign up. Find out more on:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../northampton-town...>



Bike Marking Delapre Abbey

Officers from your local neighbourhood policing team held a Bike Marking event at Delapre Abbey on Wednesday 28 May 2025 between 1.30pm and 4pm.



Knife Crime Campaign

A powerful new campaign showcasing the collective grief experienced by those affected by knife crime is being launched across the county. "When you carry a knife, no one wins" is a video commissioned by the Northamptonshire Serious Violence Prevention Partnership (NSVPP) seeking to deter young people from carrying a knife. The campaign was developed through a series of focus groups and workshops held with young people across the county, ensuring that the messaging authentically reflects their experiences and resonates with their reality.



<https://safernorthants.co.uk/no-one-wins/>

CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Calling All Performers, Artists & Vendors

WNC is looking for musicians, dancers, entertainers, artists, and food & drink vendors to join the Women's Rugby World Cup Fan Zone in Northampton Market Square this summer.

With a big screen, licensed bar, and a celebration of women, sport, culture, and heritage, this is your chance to shine.

Fan Zone Themes:

- 24 Aug: Tech & Innovation
- 30 Aug: Festival Vibes
- 31 Aug: Family Fun
- 7 Sep: Art, Music & Culture

Please submit your Expression of Interest to majorevents@westnorthants.gov.uk by 30 April 2025 with details of your act or stall. Tag a performer, artist, or vendor who should be part of this celebration.

[#WRWC2025](https://twitter.com/WRWC2025)



New Northants Makers Market Begins in May

A new series of Saturday pop-up stalls known as the 'Northants Makers Market' is set to launch in May on Northampton's Market Square, to showcase the art and creativity of the county. Organised by The Creative Place (TCP) and supported by West Northamptonshire Council, the Northants Makers Market will feature 15 stalls set up outside The Creative Place in the Market Square, beginning on 24th May and continuing on 5th July, 26th July, 23rd August, 20th September and 11th October, from 11am – 4pm. As well as stalls where you can buy local creative products, like jewellery and ceramics, each market will also feature a live performance and hands-on activities for the public. The Creative Place, possibly the smallest arts centre in the world, seeks to support and connect creatives, and showcase the wide range of creativity in Northamptonshire. The opportunity to have a stall at the Makers Market is open to all Northants creatives and anyone interested should get in touch at ncreativeplace@gmail.com.



Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Cogenhoe and the Houghtons
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

Those interested in keeping up-to-date with TCP activities and events, can visit The Creative Place <https://nncreativeplace.org> or sign up to the mailing list here at <https://nncreativeplace.kit.com/3f69967f3f>

Run set to 'light a fire' under town

Three-hundred-and-fifty years ago fire spread through Northampton, destroying 700 of the town's 850 buildings. The Amazing Northampton Run half-marathon – set to take place on September 14 - has always had the town's heritage at its heart, so giving the 2025 edition a 'Great Fire' theme seemed natural. Organisers want to attract 2,000 runners this year, offering an opportunity to not only showcase the town's history, but to energise it by attracting thousands of people.

For more information:

<https://www.theamazingnorthamptonrun.co.uk/>



All Aboard for the Women's Rugby World Cup



Keep an eye out for the Women's Rugby World Cup branded bus, which will be travelling routes across West Northamptonshire as we count down to the big tournament this August and September. The freshly liveried bus was unveiled at the cinch Stadium at Franklin's Gardens, the home of Northampton Saints, recently. The stadium will host six matches during the World Cup, including England vs Samoa on 30 August.

<https://www.rugbyworldcup.com/.../cities-and.../northampton>

New World Cup Trophy on its Way

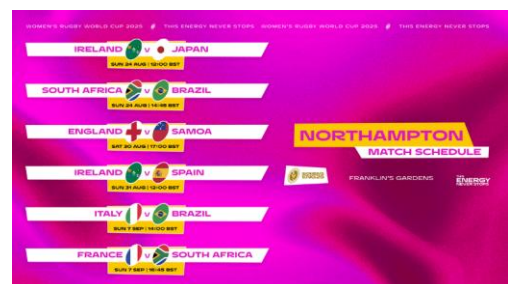
Shoppers had the opportunity to snap a selfie with the Women's Rugby World Cup trophy at Northampton Market this Bank Holiday Monday 26 May 2025. The new trophy - which was unveiled for the first time recently to mark 100 days to go before the start of the tournament. It was in the Square between 9am and 3pm as part of three-day tour of West Northamptonshire.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../brand-new-world-cup...>

The trophy was at the MotoGP in Silverstone on the Sunday, and the Brackley town centre and Northampton Casuals Rugby Club on the Tuesday. The Women's Rugby World Cup runs during August and September this year, with six matches taking place at the cinch Stadium at Franklin's Gardens - home of the Northampton Saints.

<https://www.rugbyworldcup.com/.../cities-and.../northampton>

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../brand-new-world-cup...>



Gladiators of Britain Exhibition

This summer, Northampton Museum & Art Gallery invites visitors to discover the thrilling world of Roman gladiatorial combat with the arrival of *Gladiators of Britain*, a major touring exhibition developed in partnership with the British Museum and Colchester and Ipswich Museums. The exhibition explores the history and cultural significance of gladiatorial games in Roman Britain and will be on display from 24 May 2025 to 7 September 2025. The free exhibition brings together 25 significant objects from the British Museum and Colchester Museums collections, alongside important local artefacts that highlight the Nene Valley's rich Roman heritage. It tells the compelling story of the gladiators who fought and died for public entertainment across Britain during the Roman occupation.

Occupying Britain for over 350 years, the Romans introduced many aspects of their culture including gladiatorial fights for public entertainment. The events of the amphitheatre, with its wild beasts and enslaved fighters, are one of the most enduring aspects of Roman culture that still capture the public imagination today.

Gladiators of Britain will look at the social position of enslaved fighters, who were both vilified and admired as the celebrities of their day. Considered as infamis in Roman law and society, they were excluded from having the rights of other citizens. Visitors will also find out about the many different classes of gladiator and

how they were ranked, including beast-fighters known as bestiarii, who clashed with predators including lions and bears.

Although no local amphitheatre has been discovered in Northamptonshire, archaeological evidence reveals that the region's wealthy inhabitants were fascinated by gladiatorial spectacles. The Nene Valley, extending from the hills of Northamptonshire to Peterborough, was an area of considerable Roman prosperity, with profitable industries in pottery production and metal working. The Romans displayed their wealth by constructing luxurious villas

throughout the area, with over twenty possible villa sites identified along the valley. These villas featured painted walls, decorative mosaics, underfloor heating, and bath houses - all hallmarks of Roman luxury.

The exhibition will showcase four exceptional objects discovered in the Nene Valley that demonstrate the enduring local interest in amphitheatre spectacles over three centuries:

Decorated glass vessel (AD 200-400)

Glass fragments from a luxurious beaker were discovered in one of the bath houses at Whitehall Villa, near Nether Heyford. The gladiator depicted is of the secutor class, recognisable by his smooth round helmet with small eye holes. Another fragment with a loin cloth indicates a second gladiator, perhaps a retiarius. This traditional opponent of the secutor fought with a trident and weighted net. The high-quality drinking vessel was probably made in the Rhineland and imported to Roman Britain.

Clasp knife handle from Piddington (AD 175-300)

Archaeological excavations at Piddington Villa have been taking place since 1979. Evidence has revealed that the site was occupied from the first century AD, for about three hundred years. Clasp knives were common tools in the Roman world and often had decorative handles made of bone, ivory and bronze. Depictions of



gladiators were frequent, showing us how their bodies were objectified and commodified both in and outside of the arena.

Pottery vessel featuring a gladiator (AD 275–325)

Very few vessels made in Roman Britain decorated with gladiators have survived. Although the figure on this jar is interpreted as a gladiator, he carries a large round shield decorated with a boss, similar to those used later by the Roman army.

Pottery vessel featuring amphitheatre scenes (AD 175–225)

Similar to the Colchester Vase, the exceptionally decorated Peterborough pot records two scenes from the amphitheatre: a gladiator combat and a venatio event with a leopard and acrobat. Pots like this may have been made to order by some of the Nene Valley's wealthy villa owners, to show off their love of the games. Key objects loaned by the British Museum and Colchester and Ipswich Museums will include:

Hawkedon Helmet (1st century AD)

The only confirmed piece of gladiatorial armour found in Roman Britain. Recent metallurgical research has revealed this helmet would have been made on the continent and imported to Britain.

Marble relief featuring a beast fighter (1st–2nd century AD)

A relief illustrating a fight between a lion and a specially trained beast fighter (venator). The exhibition also highlights new research into bite marks that were found on a Roman skeleton in York, which found that these marks were made by a big cat such as a lion as shown here.

Colchester Vase (2nd century AD)

A cremation vessel found in a Roman grave, thought to feature a real battle between gladiators Memnon, Valentinus, and beast-fighters Secundus and Mario. Research has confirmed this vessel was made in Colchester, with its inscription revealing it to be the first real evidence of actual battles taking place in Britain. The exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of talks, events and activities for all ages. Find out more on the Northampton Museums website.