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1

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT MAY 2025



E-Newsletter Issue 5/2025
Councillor Steve Clarke with Ralph Westmorland
At Denton Social Prescribers Group
Café@Carey, Hackleton, Northampton
15 April 2025

Contents

NEWS REPORT MAY 2025	4
Monthly Highlights	4
PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK	6
Leys Lane Great Houghton.....	6
Great Houghton Street Lamps	6
Fly Tipping Bedford Road, Great Houghton.....	6
Stagecoach East 41 Bus Service	7
Clifford Mill Hill, Little Houghton.....	7
Denton Coffee Morning 4 April 2025.....	7
Out & About in Yardley Hastings on 6 & 9 April 2025.....	8
Cogenhoe Community Lunch 7 April 2025	8
Out & About in Whiston 7 April 2025	9
Out & About in Castle Ashby by 7 April 2025.....	9
Great Houghton Coffee Morning 11 April 2025.....	9
Yardley2Ukraine 12 April 2025.....	10
Little Houghton Coffee Morning 12 April 2025	10
Denton Social Prescribers Group at Café Carey, Hackleton 15 April 2025	10
What Shape is a Home?	11
Out & About in Cogenhoe 25 April 2025.....	11
Out & About in Great Houghton 27 April 2025.....	12
Fix My Street 6624260/7289767 Denton	12
Fix My Street 7304127/6958077 Brafield on the Green.....	12
Fix My Street 6881801 Crow Lane	12
Fix My Street Little Houghton Brafield 7428641	13
Fix My Street 7479012 Road Markings A428	13
CONSULTATIONS.....	14
Call for West Northants Charity Nominations	14
Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service	14
FINANCE ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION	14
Cost of living	14
The Household Support Fund extended in West Northamptonshire	14
WNC Four Years On	15
Thriving Place	15
Thriving People	16
An Efficient and Enabling Council	16
REGULATORY SERVICES	17
Local Elections Held 1 May 2025	17
Young Leaders to Represent West Northants in Parliament	17
Access to WNC Council Services	17
RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)	18
Update on the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)	18
PLANNING MATTERS	19
Planning Appeals.....	19
Determined or Cancelled:.....	19
Pending.....	20

West Northamptonshire Council Housing Targets	20
Planning & Infrastructure Bill-CPO Guidance	21
Key Measures in the Planning & Infrastructure Bill	22
Predisposition, predetermination or bias.....	22
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS	24
WNC Tackles Antisocial Behaviour & Tenancy Fraud	24
Residents with Greatest Housing Need Continue to be Prioritised	24
Call for Urgent Investment in Rural Housing	25
ENVIRONMENT	26
LGA Consultation on Climate Change	26
Never Bin Batteries.....	27
Recycling Unwanted Clothes, Shoes, Books & More	27
Record number of visitors to recycling centres with improved service and warmer weather	28
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	28
Spring COVID-19 Jobs now Available	28
EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES.....	29
Term Dates for West Northamptonshire Schools.....	29
Summer term 2025.....	29
Academic year 2025 to 2026	29
Autumn term 2025.....	29
Spring term 2026.....	29
Summer term 2026.....	29
Pupils Allocated Primary School Places 16 April 2025	29
Merged Futures 7	30
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING.....	30
Third Party Grant Funding Opportunities.....	30
Well Northants Programme shortlisted for LGC Award	30
TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS.....	31
Queen Eleanor Interchange Improvements.....	31
POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER	32
Emergency Service Fun Day 6 August 2025	32
New Plan for Neighbourhood Policing.....	32
New Education Resource through Pol-Ed Programme	33
Ask Angela Scheme	33
CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT	34
West Northants to Honour 80 th Anniversary of VE Day.....	34
Calling All Performers, Artists & Vendors	35
Fan Zone Themes:	35
New Northants Makers Market Begins in May	35
Run set to 'light a fire' under town.....	35
All Aboard for the Women's Rugby World Cup	36
Women's Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour	36

NEWS REPORT MAY 2025

Monthly Highlights

On 15 April 2025, I was asked for an explanation by Great Houghton Parish Council as to why the street lights were now dimmer than expected in certain locations. Highways informed me that “The lighting standards have not changed and are consistent with WNC’s adopted standards. The FAQs on the website explain that lighting standards are not a precise lighting level, but a range with upper and lower limits. Light levels are affected by distance from the lamp, road layout, junctions, column spacing, column height, vegetation and other obstructions, and percentage output of lamps in terms of maximum brightness. While the optic of the new LED lanterns is much improved, they do not quite match that of the older lanterns, this may be more noticeable as the spacing of columns increases, however the average uniformity level of light along any road will meet the required adopted standard.”

WNC Highways confirmed that the construction waste left on the Bedford Road was not left by one of their contractors for any ongoing maintenance and therefore it was lifted by a mechanical lift and then removed. If you have any feedback on these professionally signed and sealed construction waste bags left on the Bedford Road near Great Houghton, then let me now.

Many are concerned about the condition of the road markings between Great Houghton and Little Houghton. However, the current surface dressing programme on the A428 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.

On 21 April 2025, I asked WNC to confirm that the current contract arrangement for Stagecoach East is still with Milton Keynes City Council. They have asked Stagecoach East if they can clarify their future plans for the 41 bus service and they have also engaged with colleagues at Milton Keynes. WNC has yet to hear back from Stagecoach East on the matter. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

Clifford Mill Hill and their transport consultants are in discussion with Highways about the type of road traffic signs needed. They are going to need two signs as there is not an existing sign that covers coaches and HGVs on the same sign that has DOT approval for the public highway. WNC has agreed for the use of two signs. A separate one for coaches on private land owned by the applicant, as this is not allowed to be placed on the highway due to DOT rules, and an HGV sign on the public highway near the road junction. See my Monthly Report.

Registered charities operating in West Northants can now submit their details to be considered for funds from a new doorstep collection service. The opportunity closes on 11 May 2025.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service has launched a public consultation on its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). You can fill in the survey by 21 May 2025.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is now four years old. The unitary authority, which replaced the previous district, borough and county councils on 1 April 2021, has been making solid progress against its priorities since it was formed as “a fresh start for delivering better public services across West Northamptonshire.” See my Monthly Report.

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.

Communities across West Northamptonshire are coming together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, marking the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May 1945. This significant milestone provides 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.

My quarterly Third-Party Grant Funding document is available. Please contact me if you wish to receive this document on a regular basis.

The 1 May 2025 election results are now known, and Reform UK has a 42-seat majority on West Northamptonshire Council. Reform UK will face a steep learning curve going from having no councillors to gaining full control of the Council. The Conservatives have 17 councillors, Labour has nine, the Liberal Democrats have six, and there are two independents.

Despite the overall trend, I was elected as your West Northamptonshire Councillor for Cogenhoe and the Houghtons with a 46% share of the vote. Thank you for your support in the election. You have shown me that you believe in my capabilities, and it is very much appreciated.

To all of you who voted for me, thank you. I trust that my hard work will prove to you that I am the right choice for this position. I promise to work tirelessly for all residents, regardless of how you voted. Indeed, you can contact me at any time, and I will listen and provide support when needed.

I am looking forward to working with you for the benefit of our community.

All the Best, Steve

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

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

Leys Lane Great Houghton

At a recent meeting, Great Houghton Parish Council were able to express their concerns about the need for a safe footway for pedestrians seeking to access their village hall and playing field avoiding the risk from traffic turning left into Leys Lane.

The concern was that the proposed new footpath (in red) was to continue into the mouth of Leys Lane thereby providing appropriate pedestrian safety at this junction. The parish council intends to undertake the further resurfacing of the remaining Leys Lane (in green) up to the entrance to the car park and the Anglian Water Compound. This to also include some form of pedestrian safe footway (in Blue). Sam Simons has asked the design team to create an option to complete the outstanding actions as discussed. I have asked for a clear statement as to WNC 's intentions regarding improvements to Leys Lane, Great Houghton. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.



Great Houghton Street Lamps

On 11 April 2025, Great Houghton Parish Council sought an explanation from Highways about the lack of consultation with the Parish Council regarding the Street Light changes which took place in the High Street recently. I asked them to respond to Mike Billingham as requested. In the meantime, I attended a Great Houghton Parish Council meeting on 15 April 2025 and was asked for an explanation as to why the lights are now dimmer than expected at the following locations:

- In the vicinity of the Cherry Tree on Cherry Tree Lane; and
- At the entrance to Lime Farm Way.

I received the following response from Highways:



“The lighting standards have not changed at this location and are consistent with WNC’s adopted standards. The FAQs on the website explain that lighting standards are not a precise lighting level, but a range with upper and lower limits. Light levels are affected by distance from the lamp, road layout, junctions, column spacing, column height, vegetation and other obstructions, and percentage output of lamps in terms of maximum brightness. While the optic of the new LED lanterns is much improved, they do not quite match

that of the older lanterns, this may be more noticeable as the spacing of columns increases, however the average uniformity level of light along any road will meet the required adopted standard.”

Fly Tipping Bedford Road, Great Houghton

I first asked Veolia to clear the fly tipping on the Bedford Road, Great Houghton on 12 March 2025. It was logged on CXM-REP201509. On 27 March 2025 some of the fly tipped waste was collected, but the building materials located there were left because of the ‘construction waste to be collected’ red sign that suggested the highways team had left it intentionally for future work. Finally, after further



escalation on my part WNC Highways confirmed that it was not left by one of their contractors for any ongoing maintenance in the area and the construction waste was lifted by a mechanical lift and then removed.

If you have any feedback on these professionally signed and sealed construction waste bags left on the Bedford Road near Great Houghton, then let me now.

Stagecoach East 41 Bus Service

On 21 April 2025, I asked WNC to confirm that the current contract arrangement is still between Milton Keynes City Council and Stagecoach East. As I requested, they have asked Stagecoach East if they can clarify their future plans for the 41 bus service and they have also engaged with colleagues at Milton Keynes. WNC has yet to hear back from Stagecoach East on the matter. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

Clifford Mill Hill, Little Houghton

Highways have advised both me and Little Houghton Parish Council about the discussion taking place between them and the applicant's transport consultant. They are discussing the types of sign, cost and where they were being located in order to agree the details. They are now seeking agreement on the best way forward as it turns out that they are going to need two signs as there is not an existing sign that covers coaches and HGVs on the same sign that has DOT approval for the public highway, so WNC agreed the solution is to use the two signs. A separate one for coaches on private land owned by the applicant, as this is not allowed to be placed on the highway due to DOT rules, and an HGV sign on the public highway near the road junction.



The alternative was to apply to the DOT to get a brand-new sign approved with both HGV and coaches on it, so it could be permitted for public highway use, but Planning was advised this would take a long time to go through the DOT approval process. Therefore, WNC has agreed that this was a viable solution, and the preferred option is for two separate signs to control this issue.

Denton Coffee Morning 4 April 2025

On 4 April 2025, I attended the Denton Coffee Morning at St Margaret's Church, one of West Northants Warm Welcoming Spaces. The church is in the centre of the village and it is open every day and provides a community space for everyone.

They hold coffee mornings, weekly craft sessions, quizzes, and many other general community events.

Opening times: Open on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. I always enjoy the croissant, fresh coffee and of course the friendly chatter. There were lots of folks there today and there was quite a buzz as everyone chatted and tried to complete the quiz. It was good to catch up with Sheila, Pat, Carole, Paula and others. I do hope that Paula's fractured wrist heals quickly. It was Sheila's Birthday today, so we all sang Happy Birthday to her on her special day. "May you have another year full of health and happiness, Sheila!"



Out & About in Yardley Hastings on 6 & 9 April 2025

From 6-9 April 2025, I was out and about in Yardley Hastings. The weather was glorious, and I enjoyed speaking to so many of you as I visited another of our beautiful villages in West Northamptonshire. Yardley Hastings is a charming and picturesque village that is steeped in history and surrounded by beautiful countryside. The village offers a great quality of life for its residents, and it is a popular destination for visitors who are looking to escape the stresses of modern life. The village has a strong sense of community, and they have hosted lots of local events, which I have attended over the last few years.



Yardley Hastings is a parish in the hundred of Wymersley, 8 miles S.E. of Northampton. It is renowned for its character and beautiful countryside. Part of the Castle Ashby Estate, it is surrounded by fields, woods, glorious views, historic architecture & grazing sheep. Yardley, meaning 'fenced meadow', affixed the name Hastings following the death of Sir Henry de Hastings in 1250. As he had inherited the Manor of the village, the family name was used after his death to distinguish the village from other Yardleys (i.e. Gobion)

One of the most notable landmarks in the village is St. Andrew's Church, which dates back to the 13th century and is a Grade I listed building. St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and this perhaps gives some clue to the origins of the building, for the lordship of the manor was held by the Scottish royal family between 1114 and 1237. Indeed, David, younger brother of King William "The Lion", died here in 1219. Although Yardley appears from the Domesday Book to have been a fairly substantial village, no evidence has yet come to light to suggest that there was an earlier Anglo Saxon church on the site.



On Sunday 6 April 2025, I was joined by Sarah Bool, MP and many of you were able to chat to her on the doorstep too. On Wednesday 9 April 2025, I visited a number of outlying houses and farms and found myself taking a short break at Pastures Farm Cafe. It's a great little place to rest and recharge your batteries.

Cogenhoe Community Lunch 7 April 2025

On 7 April 2025, I attended the Cogenhoe Community Lunch at the Village Hall, Cogenhoe. We had a very good lunch of Pasta Bolognese with green beans followed by Lemon Meringue Pie and cream. It was great to catch up with Derek, Margaret, Elizabeth and others. Thank you to everyone who came along and supported our community lunch today. A big thank you to Deborah, Julie and everyone else involved in making it such a great fortnightly event. All your efforts are appreciated.



There will not be a lunch club on either 21 April 2025 (Easter Monday) or 5 May 2025 (Bank Holiday). There will be an 'After Easter catch up' with Coffee & Cake on Wednesday 30 April 2025 from 11.00am-12.30pm.

I was asked about acceptable forms of ID for the election on 1 May 2025 and I can confirm that you can use your concessionary bus pass. See my separate posting on Voter ID.

Out & About in Whiston 7 April 2025

On 7 April 2025, I was out and about in the village of Whiston, which is now in the civil parish of Cogenhoe and Whiston, in West Northamptonshire. It is just 4 miles due east of Northampton. On my travels, I came across a house with the name of Hwiccintuna, which seemed unusual. When I got home, I decided to investigate the name further only to discover that the name of the village derives from Old English and was



first recorded as Hwiccingtune in 974. It means "the farmstead of the Hwicce tribe." On 1 April 1935 the parish was abolished and merged with Cogenhoe. Some remains exist of a moated building (Place House), which is said, probably not correctly, to have been the residence of King John.

Further up Castle Ashby Road I was able to gain a spectacular view of Whiston Church which is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. The present building was built for Anthony Catesby in the early 16th century. Anthony Catesby (1500 – 1554) of the significant Northamptonshire Catholic family whose main seat was at Ashby St Ledger (and later “ famous” for

their involvement in the Gun Powder Plot). It is on the hill, separated from the rest of the village, from where it is reached by a footpath. The tower was built first and the church was probably complete by 1534.

Just another beautiful village to visit in West Northamptonshire. There are so many hidden places just dying to be discovered.

Out & About in Castle Ashby by 7 April 2025

After spending some time in Whiston, I then drove on to Castle Ashby for the rest of the day. However, finding your way around Castle Ashby can be challenging. So I was still there early evening.

Castle Ashby is a historic village and civil parish in West Northamptonshire, which is surrounded by the Castle Ashby Estate, home to Castle Ashby House, a beautiful Elizabethan mansion. The village's name means 'Ash-tree farm/settlement'. Originally, there was a castle located there, later replaced by the House. The village



was originally set up to service the needs of Castle Ashby House, and many of the houses in the village are centuries old. The village also had a small pub-hotel, The Falcon, which dates back to 1594. However the Falcon at Castle Ashby has closed and it is now a 'Wellness Centre'.

One of the main attractions in Castle Ashby are the Gardens, which are open to the public and a popular spot for visitors to enjoy. Castle Ashby is a picturesque village with a lot to offer visitors. It is a great place to enjoy a peaceful walk, the gardens, or browse the independent shops in the Rural Shopping Yard.

Great Houghton Coffee Morning 11 April 2025

On Friday 11 April 2025, I attended the Great Houghton Coffee Morning which takes place in the Great Houghton Village Hall on the second Friday of each month at 10.30 am with a cup of tea or coffee and cake, which will cost you just £2.50. This delightful Community Coffee Morning is run by the WI and it is very well attended by those from both Great and Little Houghton.

I received a very warm welcome from Mike and Keith both Parish Councillors and Mike Billingham, Clerk to the Parish Council and we briefly discussed recent events. I enjoyed chatting to Bill, Veronica, Anne, Julia, Peter and others and I spent an interesting time hearing about a number of local issues.



The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming group will be 9 May 2025.

Yardley2Ukraine 12 April 2025

I joined Harvey Welch and Becca Cullum and others for a breakfast gathering at the Rose and Crown Pub in Yardley Hastings on Saturday 12th April 2025, from 09:30 am. We all had a delicious English breakfast with those travelling from Yardley Hastings to Ukraine and we wished them all a safe and successful journey.

The funds Harvey and Becca have raised were crucial for this trip to Ukraine, where Harvey and the team will deliver essential supplies to those affected by the ongoing conflict. All our contributions directly supported the purchase and transportation of these vital items, ensuring they reach those who need them.



We shared a table with Peter, Simon, Fred and Linda as we found out more about the trip and the itinerary. Both Peter and Simon were driving one of the three vehicles from Yardley Hastings and there were going to be 17 vehicles travelling in convoy by the

time they reached Harwich. Peter had been on this trip twice before and he was able to explain their route and modus operandi. This time their focus had been on delivering medicines, generators and other supplies. I hadn't realised until today that the vehicles used for transport would be left behind and the drivers always made it back under their own steam. You can't fail to be inspired by Harvey, Peter and Simon who have put their hands up to take two of the vehicles loaded with supplies on a Yardley2Ukraine convoy. Thank you to Becca and everyone else who helped make the fundraising so successful.



Little Houghton Coffee Morning 12 April 2025

On my way back from the Yardley2Ukraine event in Yardley Hastings this morning, I joined others at the Little Houghton Coffee Morning. It was a fleeting visit as I had agreed to attend another event in Cogenhoe afterwards. It was great to chat to Mira, Liz, John, Sue, Paul, Alex, Anne and others.



It gave me the opportunity to discuss a problem with Mira regarding the footpath between Little Houghton and Brafield, which is overgrown and difficult to use by those using mobility aids. I have escalated this matter to Highways and once I have further news I shall be in touch.

The next meeting of this friendly and welcoming Coffee Morning Group will be 10 May 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.

Denton Social Prescribers Group at Café Carey, Hackleton 15 April 2025

On 15 April 2025, I joined the Denton Social Prescribers Group at Café@Carey, Hackleton. They meet fortnightly at the Hackleton Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, Hackleton, Northampton, NN7 2AH. I enjoyed catching up with Kevin, Gunter, Sally, Ralph, Liz, Pauline and others. I was especially pleased to see Ralph who I hadn't seen for some time and grateful that Liz had brought him from Little Houghton. Well done to everyone who drove someone else here today. It demonstrates the benefit of the volunteer drivers.

Denton Surgery Patient Group (DSPG) are still seeking drivers for their Volunteer Patient Transport Service. To find out more call the co-ordinator Sue on 07506 866298 or e-mail: secretary@dspg.me

The next meeting of the Social Prescribers Group is 29 April 2025 from 10.00am -12.30pm.

We were told about Sharon Utteridge who ran in the London Half Marathon (6 April 2025) and will be running in the London Marathon (27 April 2025). She would like to raise a minimum of £3,000 for two amazing charities-Als Pals (£500) and MacMillan Cancer Support (£2,500). Both of these charities were there when she and her family needed it the most. Today the Group raised over £100 for this great cause. If you wish to donate, then please visit her fundraising page www.gofundme.com/f/als-pals-macmillan-cancer-support



What Shape is a Home?

Unfortunately, I had been unable to attend the Joey Baillon and Sophie Freestone Book Launch earlier this month as I had another Council meeting. Despite not being able to attend the launch, I was so impressed with their work on this tremendous project to raise money for the Northampton Hope Centre, that I committed to support them as soon as I could. Their combined talent of bringing this initiative to life with Joey's words and Sophie's illustrations is commendable. The children's book called 'What Shape is a Home?' introduces children to the topic of homelessness, encouraging them to explore how we can work together to build a better world for everyone. All proceeds support the Northampton Hope Centre.



On 23 April 2025, I caught up with Joey to offer ongoing support and to purchase a couple of the books.

"Joey and Sophie your book is an inspiration to us all. Congratulations on your remarkable achievement."

If you too would like to support this great cause, then you will be able to buy one of the books on Amazon by searching 'What Shape Is A Home?' or by clicking the link below:

<https://amzn.eu/d/3jGalU7>

Out & About in Cogenhoe 25 April 2025

On Friday, 25 April 2025, I was out and about talking to residents in Cogenhoe, sharing my plans for Cogenhoe and the Houghtons ward. I was able to spend time with those who were out in their gardens or walking their dogs. I had a most enjoyable day and found it interesting as I met many friends and made some new ones. I met many from the Community groups which matter so much to the residents of Cogenhoe and I promise to continue to work with you to protect and enhance your essential services including rural transport. Indeed whilst walking along Station Road, I saw the much loved Village Hopper. Thank you to everyone for the support you gave me as I was out and about.



Out & About in Great Houghton 27 April 2025

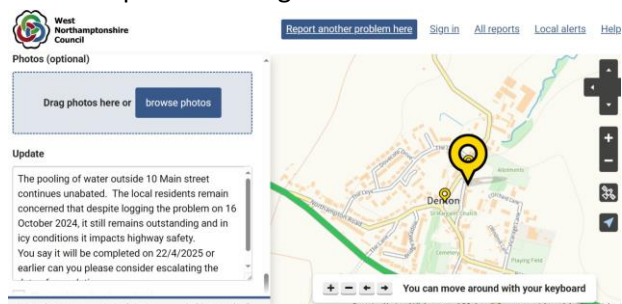
On Sunday, I spent most of the day in Great Houghton meeting lots of residents. I was able to spend time talking to some who were out in their gardens or walking their dogs in the glorious sunshine. I had a most enjoyable day and found it interesting as I met many friends and made some new ones.

I took the opportunity to rest and recuperate over lunch in the White Hart. Although after being so well fed and watered with a fantastic Sunday lunch it was hard to get started again. Whilst there I meet a group of ladies who had come from Wellingborough on one of the 'Wellibus' excursions to the White Hart for Sunday Lunch. They couldn't wait to tell me that they had enjoyed their Lunch and they wished that this was one of their locals. Thank you to everyone for the support you gave me as I was out and about in Great Houghton.



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.

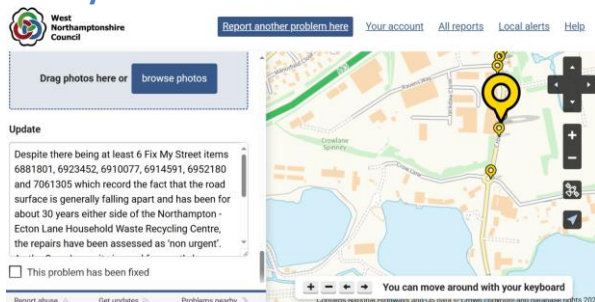


Fix My Street 7304127/6958077 Brafield on the Green

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.

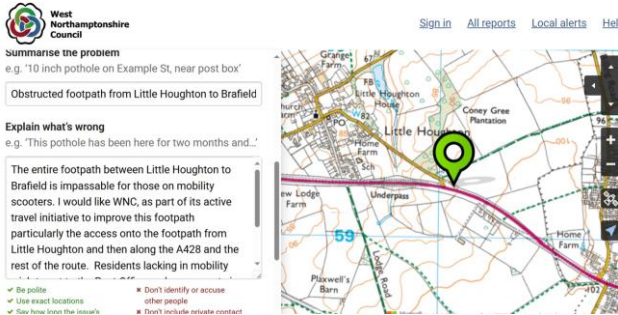
Fix My Street 6881801 Crow Lane



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.

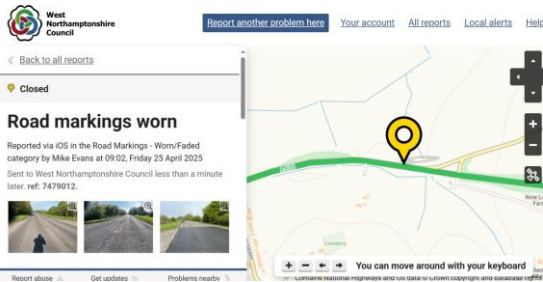
Fix My Street Little Houghton Brafield 7428641

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.



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.

Call for West Northants Charity Nominations

Registered charities operating in West Northants can now submit their details to be considered for funds from a new doorstep collection service. Thanks to a new partnership with Anglo Doorstep Collections, residents can now book free collections of unwanted clothing, textiles, shoes, books and other items for reuse and recycling, whilst raising money for charities. The opportunity closes on 11 May 2025.

How to submit charity details: <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/place/charity-nomination/>



Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service has launched a public consultation on its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

This is a strategic document that is updated every five years to ensure that they are correctly identifying what the risks are in our community, and how they will align resources to reduce those risks and keep residents safe across the county.

At the same time, they are also consulting on proposed changes to their standards of response, which is the target response time that the Service sets itself to get firefighters to incidents.

Please read the document, share it with as many people as you can, and let them know your views on their proposals by filling in the survey.

The draft CRMP can be read on their website by clicking here

<https://www.northantsfire.gov.uk/.../NFRSCRP-DRAFT...>

and you can fill the survey in by May 21 at the following link: <https://www.research.net/r/VQBKPZ8>



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

For advice on
cost of living support

Visit:
[westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

call:
0300 126 7000*
*Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

or scan:

West Northamptonshire Council
COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

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...>

WNC Four Years On

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) will be four years old next month, with plans to improve outcomes for communities in the next four years.

The unitary authority, which replaced the previous district, borough and county councils on 1 April 2021, has been making solid progress against its priorities since it was formed as a fresh start for delivering better



public services across West Northamptonshire. The Council enters its fifth year building upon its 'strong, positive start' highlighted by the LGA's recent independent review and with a new compelling long-term plan to work together more strategically with partners as One West Northamptonshire to help communities flourish and businesses prosper. A full summary featuring highlights of the Council's work so far is available to view in full on the Council's website and includes the following:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/council-turning-four-focus-future>

Thriving Place

- Driving forward economic growth, turning £45m of grants for regeneration in Northampton into £350million of private investment and making progress on major regeneration schemes including the landmark Greyfriars redevelopment and completion of Market Square transformation.
- Building the area's profile as a centre of sporting excellence through our successful bids for major sporting events including the men's tour of Britain and the women's rugby world cup.
- Investing additional millions of pounds into improving the road networks, joining with partners to offer new and improved bus services, particularly in rural areas and opening up new Active Travel routes to encourage walking, wheeling, and cycling.
- Shaping a new climate change strategy and securing millions of pounds in grant funding and investment to progress a range of net zero initiatives with households and businesses.
- Developing and establishing new Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) across West Northants, listening to and engaging with residents at grassroots level to understand health and care needs to help them live their best lives.
- Involving and engaging communities across West Northamptonshire to help shape our new Local Plan, which will guide how our area is developed over the next 15 years.

Thriving People

- Providing essential support to families and individuals struggling with ongoing cost of living crisis, <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support> with a specific focus on helping with the cost of food, free school meals, utility bills, and other vital household expenses. West Northamptonshire is expected to distribute £3.66 million in Household Support funding for the 12-month period and has committed to ensuring the funds help as many people as possible.
- Plans to invest over £9.5million on building new homes to tackle pressures on the local housing market and allocating more than £12.3million to provide relocatable temporary accommodation for those experiencing homelessness.
- Encouraging progress on our improvement journey for children's services, with our adoption, fostering and youth justice services recently rated good by Ofsted, and our overall rating rising from 'inadequate' in 2019, to 'requires improvement to be good' in the most recent inspection in 2022.
- Supporting our communities with the emergency response to flooding and committing to working with partners to review flood defences and improve community resilience.
- Making positive progress against our action plan to address ongoing challenge of increasing SEND placements to help ensure better outcomes for families.
- Launching new Family Hubs initiative to provide a one-stop-shop for families in need of support, with the first hub open in Towcester on 31 March 2025 followed by further hubs in Daventry and Northampton town centre.
- Distributing around £5.6m in community grants funding for hundreds of projects, from helping local clubs and groups to improve their facilities to initiatives tackling young violence and knife crime.
- Working with our residents who opened their homes to nearly 1,000 people fleeing the war in Ukraine, while assisting more than 500 Afghan nationals escaping conflict and persecution through providing emergency accommodation as well as support to help them settle in the UK.

An Efficient and Enabling Council

- Delivering over £115 million of savings to date and transforming the services we inherited – this has involved bringing together over 3,000 staff and hundreds of services from the four former councils, over 800 systems, four main office buildings and thousands of inherited contracts.
- We have kept our budgets balanced, enhanced productivity and protected essential frontline services in the face of continuous financial challenges, rising service demands and inflationary pressures affecting all councils nationally.
- Investing in innovation, using artificial intelligence to drive improvements in services from homelessness to special educational needs.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/council-turning-four-focus-future>

Further information about the Council's performance during 2024/25 will be available in the Council's annual report, to be published in June 2025. You can view previous annual reports on the WNC website.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/reports-and-documents/annual-report>

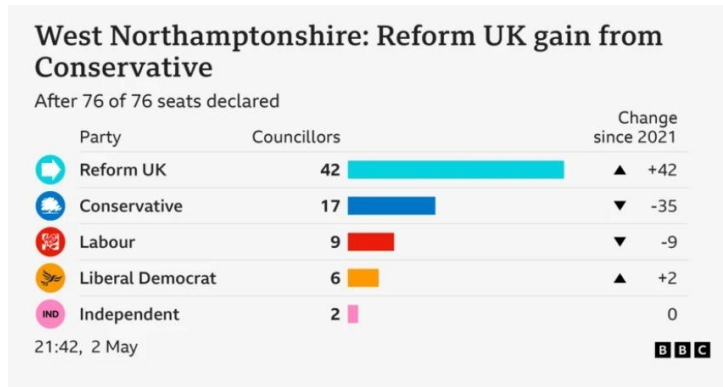
REGULATORY SERVICES

Local Elections Held 1 May 2025

On Thursday, 1 May 2025 voters across West Northamptonshire went to the polls to elect their local representatives. This was the unitary authority's second election since its creation in 2021. There were changes to voter arrangements after a recent electoral review reduced the number of West Northants councillors to be elected from 93 to 76 and revised the ward boundaries across the area. Town and parish council elections were held in some areas of West Northamptonshire on 1 May 2025.

You can find the entire election results here:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/election-results>



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

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...>

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

Update on the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) <https://www.gov.uk/.../department-for-environment-food..>

has recently announced an important update regarding the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). <https://www.gov.uk/.../rural-england-prosperity-fund..>



This fund, a critical component of the government's strategy to enhance economic growth in rural areas, will continue into the next fiscal year with substantial financial support.

Earlier last month, it was announced that the REPF will receive up to £33 million in funding for another year. This funding is aimed at eligible local authorities throughout England, enabling them to invest in initiatives that foster local growth and address specific rural challenges.

DEFRA has published the funding allocations for local authorities eligible for the 2025-26 cycle, along with updates to the REPF prospectus. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/.../Rural...>
<https://www.gov.uk/.../rural-england-prosperity-fund...>

These materials outline how the funds should be utilised to maximise impact in rural communities. West Northamptonshire Council will receive an allocation of £410,315 for 2025-26.

Additionally, DEFRA plans to release a revised table of expected outputs and outcomes from the fund shortly, which will provide further guidance on measuring the success of funded projects.

To ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed about the updates and changes to the REPF, DEFRA will soon host a webinar for all eligible local authorities. This session will offer detailed insights into the adjustments planned for the 2025-26 period. Details and instructions for joining the webinar will be announced shortly.

The REPF is designed to augment the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

<https://www.gov.uk/.../uk-shared-prosperity-fund-2025-26...>

by focusing specifically on the unique needs of rural areas. It supports a range of initiatives, including:

Development of new products and facilities by rural and farm businesses, aiming to diversify income streams and bolster the local economy.

Enhancement of community infrastructure, which is vital for providing essential services and supporting local economies.

The continuation of the REPF aligns with the government's broader Missions agenda, particularly its goals for sustainable economic growth. By funding capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure, the REPF not only boosts productivity but also strengthens the overall fabric of rural communities.

This additional funding comes ahead of broader local funding reforms set to be introduced following the Autumn Statement, ensuring stability and continued support for rural areas.

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:

- Hartwell, land North of Ashton Road-**Dismissed**
- Blisworth, land South of Station Road-**Dismissed**
- Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton-**Dismissed**
- Greens Norton, land off Mill Lane-**Withdrawn**
- Milton Malsor, land East of Lower Lane-**Dismissed**
- Blisworth, land off Northampton Road -**Dismissed**.
- Yardley Gobion, land at Asana Lodge Appeal-Inquiry 8 February 2022 for 3 days-**Cancelled**
- Yardley Gobion, land East of Northampton Road-**Allowed**.
- WNS/2022/0904/MAO Manor Oak Homes, Outline application for sixty-seven homes, Land at Stratford Road Deanshanger-**Withdrawn**
- WNS/2021/0450/MAF Barwood Homes, fifty-two new dwellings with associated open spaces, roads, and drainage infrastructure. Land South of The Wharf, Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire-Hearing-**Dismissed**
- WNS/2022/0071/MAO Outline for thirty-two dwellings on Land off Blenheim Rise, Kings Sutton Hearing -**Dismissed**
- WNN/2021/0466 Land North Of, Bedford Road, Great Houghton - **Dismissed**
- WNS/2022/1525/FUL Land North of Whiston Road, Cogenhoe, Northamptonshire – **Allowed subject to conditions**.
- WNS/2021/1858/EIA Solar Farm Milton Road Gayton-**Dismissed**
- N/2020/1474 a 6-storey building providing up to 112no. one, two & three bed flats and apartments (Use Class C3), commercial development (Use Class E (a,b,c,d,e,f,g(i)) and associated ancillary infrastructure', 123 - 135 Bridge Street, Northampton-Appeal **Allowed**

- N/2020/1497 6 storey building providing up to 66no. one, two & three bed flats and apartments (Use Class C3), commercial development (Use Class E (a, b, c,d,e,f,g(i))) and associated ancillary infrastructure', 153 - 165 Bridge Street, Northampton- Appeal **Allowed**
- APP/W2845/W/23/3327830 Hall Farm, Main Street, East Haddon, West Northamptonshire NN6 8BU. Appeal **Allowed**
- WNS/2022/2060/MAO. Outline Application - with all matters reserved to provide later living accommodation (Class 2) as three integrated types of accommodation on a site off the main entrance to Whittlebury Park. Appeal **Dismissed**.
- 2024/0734/FUL. Application for the increase of occupancy from a six person HiMO (Use Class C4) to a seven person HiMO (Sui Generis). Appeal **Allowed**.
- 2023/6537/OUT. Whittlebury Park Creation of an indoor/outdoor Wedding Ceremony facility, in conjunction with returning the Greenkeepers Compound to formerly approved location. Appeal **Dismissed**.
- WNS/2023/0011/MAF. Land east of The Meadows, Old Stratford (Grid Ref Easting: 477964, Grid Ref Northing: 240789. Appeal **Allowed**.
- WNS/2023/7948/FULL. The erection of boundary fencing on land south of Horton Road, Hackleton, West Northamptonshire NN7 2AW. Appeal **Allowed** and planning permission is granted in accordance with the terms of the application.
- 2023/6117/MAO Outline planning application for 11 serviced plots for self-builders and public open space Forest Road Piddington 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**
- 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 **Pending**
- WND/2021/0960 Overstone Park Golf Club Overstone NN6 0AS Appeal **Pending**

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.

Planning & Infrastructure Bill-CPO Guidance

I have received an enquiry from a local farmer concerned about the new CPO reforms. He is one of the local farmers concerned about the changes to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief announced by the Labour government in the autumn Budget.



He is now seeking assurance that West Northamptonshire Council will not use the new CPO reforms as an excuse to acquire land in order to raise funds for housing development. The Government has said that planning reform – particularly house building – is going to drive the economy, and compulsory purchase is stated to form a crucial part of that reform. Until now, obstacles have usually arisen in a compulsory purchase when considering whether the powers should be used at all, and, if they are, what the level of compensation for the landowner should be. According to the Government's CPO guidance it will now be easier to bring forward schemes using a CPO.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill/guide-to-the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill#part-5-compulsory-purchase>

The changes that will have alarmed farmers are likely to be:

- Acquiring authorities do not need to wait for negotiations with the landowner to break down, or even for them to respond, before commencing the formal CPO procedure.
- Acquiring authorities may make the CPO provided that it has a masterplan of the site showing the general site layout. Indeed it is possible that aspects of the use of the site – for example, the location and mix of affordable housing – could be undecided at that stage without compromising the confirmation of the CPO.
- The updated guidance says that it will not be expected that all impediments to the delivery of a scheme will have been removed or overcome at the point when the CPO is confirmed (or not).
- The updated guidance also includes amendments to the compensation regime. The most interesting for acquiring authorities and developers is the removal of "hope value" in some circumstances. This provides for an acquiring authority to seek a direction to remove hope value (at the point when the CPO is confirmed) for developments where the provision of affordable or social housing is being facilitated which could be part of a mixed tenure scheme), education or health development. The government considers public sector acquiring authorities, in taking forward these schemes, are most likely to be able to justify the payment of compensation below market value is **in the public interest**. This will often significantly reduce the sum that can be sought by landowners and consequently the funding required by the acquiring authority for the delivery of the scheme.

In preparing our new Local Plan I have asked WNC to include a clear statement as to how we intend to use our CPO powers when bringing forward schemes so that the new compulsory purchase land compensation rules do not deny landowners their fair share of compensation.

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."

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

WNC Tackles Antisocial Behaviour & Tenancy Fraud

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has approved a new policy strengthening its commitment to tackling anti-social tenants and preventing tenancy fraud. The policy also promotes lease sustainment and supporting tenants to maintain their homes to avoid unnecessary evictions.

The Tenancy Policy, which replaces the previous policy from Northampton Borough Council, aligns with national regulatory standards and supports the council's broader housing strategies including the Tenancy Strategy, Housing Strategy, and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Developed in partnership with Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH), which manages WNC's housing stock, the policy ensures greater tenancy security, improved sustainment, and effective management of council homes. It sets out clear guidelines on the types of tenancies offered, arrangements for fixed-term tenancies, and WNC's approach to tackling tenancy fraud and unlawful subletting.

- Following a five-week public consultation, the policy has been updated to reflect key changes, including:
- The use of introductory tenancies for all new tenants, ensuring they successfully integrate into their homes and communities before being granted a secure tenancy.
- Reintroducing flexible fixed-term tenancies, which will only be used in exceptional circumstances such as for residents with limited leave to remain in the UK.
- Stronger provisions to tackle tenancy fraud, ensuring social housing is allocated fairly and to those most in need.



The policy also supports WNC's compliance with new consumer standards for social housing, introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2024, which require councils to clearly outline their approach to tenancy management. View the full policy on the West Northamptonshire Council website.

<https://westnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/.../West...>

Residents with Greatest Housing Need Continue to be Prioritised

Residents with the greatest need for social housing in West Northamptonshire continue to be prioritised following a rise of almost double in the number of applications for council houses. Like many councils, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is facing significant demand for social housing due to national factors including a rise in homelessness and no-fault evictions and as a result of more family break-ups because of an increased pressure from things like the cost of living and rising rents. The Council introduced



its new Housing Allocations Scheme in April last year, replacing three separate ones in Daventry, South Northants and Northampton areas in order to harmonise the differences and make it fairer, clearer and more consistent for all residents. It was a legal requirement for the Council to also have a new single Housing Allocations policy across West Northamptonshire within three years of becoming a new unitary authority in April 2021. As part of that process and in line with good practice all those previously on the housing register and hoping to bid for a Council property were asked to reapply under the new policy and because of the new criteria.

The new scheme recognises people in greatest need for help including those experiencing homelessness, with complex health and welfare needs, victims of domestic abuse, Care Leavers, Armed Forces veterans, and those subject to exploitation. While the Council expected some of the previous applicants to drop off the register due to a change in circumstances, it did expect an initial surge in applications as some people reapplied. However, the Council has also seen a rise in applications generally and is now receiving an average of 700 applications a month, compared with an average of around 335 the previous year, highlighting the significant scale of demand. On average, approximately 5,000 people are on the social housing system at any given time, with numbers constantly fluctuating as individuals secure alternative housing or leave the system for other reasons. The register covers West Northants' population of around 430,000, and with only around 1,500 homes on average becoming available over a 12-month period, only those in the greatest need and highest priority bands are likely to be housed by West Northamptonshire Council.

The application process also requires many supporting documents to evidence each resident's needs and checking and validating these is a significant task with both a rise in applications and the re-registering of previous applicants. In many cases the Council may not receive what is required and will then need to chase residents for these before an assessment can be completed.

The increase in applications and the workload to screen, assess and verify each application including all those for residents reapplying to the register has resulted in a backlog and a significantly longer wait for people to see if they are eligible for the housing allocations scheme. WNC has therefore put in place a number of measures to help people pre-assess their eligibility to get an early indication of whether they are likely to be successful and identify people in immediate priority need of housing and ensure they are prioritised whilst staff work through completing all the outstanding assessments. The Council is also working to improve its systems and processes to speed up some steps in the process.

A full review of the Housing Allocations Scheme will also take place this year following its first year of operation. In November 2024, the Council launched its Affordable Housing Delivery Plan underscoring its commitment to addressing the urgent need for more and better-quality homes. The plan outlines ideas for accelerating the delivery of affordable housing with a goal to deliver a minimum of 650 affordable homes per year by 2029/30, and a potential increase to 750 homes annually if market conditions and funding improve. More information about the Housing Allocations Scheme and applications process is available on <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../join-housing-register>

Further information, help and advice for residents is available on <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support>

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

LGA Consultation on Climate Change

The LGA has launched a consultation to get the views of councils and interested parties including government departments, non-governmental organisations, interest groups, think tanks, alliances and more, on whether councils should be set a statutory duty/duties to act on climate change.

Views are welcome on any other issues not covered by the questions via email at climateaction@local.gov.uk

The consultation is now open and will close on Friday 30 May 2025 at 11.45pm

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx...>



Never Bin Batteries

Following a series of fires, residents across West Northamptonshire are being urged to help reduce risk to lives by disposing of batteries safely. People are being urged to ensure that they only recycle batteries using specialist recycling services to help tackle the cause of fires happening in refuse collection vehicles and waste facilities.

Household batteries that are being thrown away in rubbish and recycling bins have caused a number of incidents, including a container at a local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) to catch fire. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has issued a warning that there is a serious risk of fires happening in both homes and HWRCs if batteries aren't disposed of properly.

There are three simple ways residents can reduce the risk of fires:

- 1) Never put any kind of battery into your wheeled bins
- 2) Use the Council's separate battery recycling collection, take batteries to supermarkets, or to a HWRC (please let staff know of any batteries when you arrive)
- 3) Remove all batteries from old electrical or battery powered items before recycling electricals using the separate small electrical recycling collections. If you can't remove the battery out of an item, if it fits in a carrier bag – this can go with the separate electrical recycling collection, if it is too big – please take this to your nearest HWRC.

Domestic batteries can be put into a small plastic bag and tied to the handle of your wheeled bin for safe collection and recycling.

Please put them on the following bins:

- Blue lid recycling bin in Northampton
- Black lid general waste bin in Daventry
- Either bin in South Northamptonshire

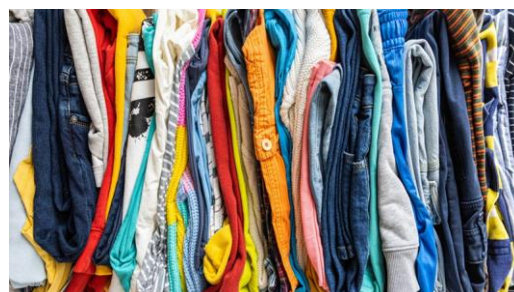
To find out more details of where you can recycle household batteries visit:
www.westnorthants.gov.uk/batteries

Recycling Unwanted Clothes, Shoes, Books & More

WNC has teamed up with Anglo Doorstep Collections to offer a free service that lets you book collections for unwanted clothes, shoes, books, and more. Everything is either reused or responsibly recycled.

The service will also support local good causes. Registered charities operating in West Northamptonshire that would like to be considered for funds from this service are asked to complete the form at <https://ow.ly/nOrB50VHGfy>, open until Sunday, 11 May.

For information on booking a collection visit <https://ow.ly/8M2S50VHGg1>
<https://anglodoorstepcollections.co.uk/west.../>



Record number of visitors to recycling centres with improved service and warmer weather

Service improvements, finer weather and a stretch of bank holidays meant household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) dealt with busier-than-usual conditions across West Northamptonshire.

Over 67,000 visits were made across the sites during April, coinciding with the first month of an improved contract which has introduced seven-day opening and improvements to parking layouts at some of the centres.



West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is working with its contractor FCC Environment to progress further improvements for residents as part of the new contract, which continues to see the centres managed by the same, experienced staff who have been running them for over 15 years in highly-controlled work zones, with strict health and safety rules and processes.

All HWRCs are now open seven days a week from 10am to 4pm, offering people more opportunities to visit on a day and time that is convenient for them. Since being introduced at the start of April, WNC has seen a 20% increase in visitors who are making use of the new open days during the week, which means more visitors are choosing to visit sites on weekdays instead of weekends. Parking arrangements at Sixfields, Ecton and Towcester have also been brought in line with the other centres, with marked bays replacing parallel parking to reduce the distance between cars and containers to improve safety. Sites are also focusing on diverting as much as waste possible from the general waste, to make sure that we're maximising the amount that can be recycled.

Following a busy Easter period and with more warm weather that week heading into the May bank holiday weekend, sites were once again busier than usual and residents were urged to follow guidance to support the smooth-running of the sites including:

- Pre-sorting their waste and recycling before arriving at the site to speed up the process.
- Getting used to following the new parking arrangements at Sixfields, Ecton and Towcester, by parking in the marked bays and following instructions from site staff. Extra staff will be on hand to help direct cars while everyone gets used to the new arrangements.
- Avoiding blocking the highway.
- Making use of all six sites across the area.

As the new contract moves forward, all kinds of systems and processes will be explored in the future to see if any of them can make the service more efficient and further improve the experience for residents. A new onsite reuse shop at Sixfields HWRC is also set to open in the autumn, to complement the existing shop at Farthinghoe Recycling and Re-use Centre and improvements are being made to car parking bays and access at the site as part of this scheme. The reuse shop will be operated via our charity partner Cynthia Spencer and people will be able to visit the recycling centres and shop to donate items suitable for reuse/sale.

To find your nearest centre, please visit www.westnorthants.gov.uk/hwrc

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.



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

Pupils Allocated Primary School Places 16 April 2025

Parents across West Northamptonshire found out on 16 April 2025 their child's reception place for the new school year in September as 4,463 places at primary schools were allocated to pupils. This year, 94.6 per cent of applicants secured a place at their first preference school, up from 94 per cent last year. 99.1 per cent of families were offered a place at one of their preferred schools.



For those who were not successful in gaining a place at their preferred school, parents have the right to appeal through the

independent admission appeals process. Additionally, 224 places at junior school (Year 3) have been allocated. The number of pupils obtaining their first preference was 96.9 per cent. The next round of primary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in 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>

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 (DSLVL) 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>

TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

Queen Eleanor Interchange Improvements

Works have started on the long-awaited scheme to improve the Queen Eleanor Interchange in Northampton. The Queen Eleanor interchange is a busy roundabout that joins the A45 trunk road with the A508 London Road, B526 Newport Pagnell Road and Hardingstone Lane. As traffic has increased over the years, the junction has struggled to keep up, and improvements are needed to make it more efficient. The Council has worked closely with National Highway to develop a scheme to improve the junction to benefit residents and motorists for now and the future.

Temporary traffic management measures were in place from the week of 31 March 2025 to ensure that carriageway widening, new traffic signs and signals, drainage works, and resurfacing can be carried out in a timely manner, with the scheme expected to be complete by the end of the year. There will be lane closures on the Queen Eleanor roundabout, as well as on the road heading into Wootton Hall Park, with a full closure on the dedicated left-hand turn. A one-way system will be in place to minimise the impacts and motorists are advised to follow the signage. Full roundabout closures will be necessary at times, these will occur at night time whilst it is less busy, and dates will be communicated prior to any closure across our channels. A full closure will be in place on the cul-de-sac on London Road.



The Council is engaging with local residents and businesses that may be impacted by the scheme works, access will be maintained at all times to properties and for emergency services, and during full closures, diversion routes will be in place.

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.



New Plan for Neighbourhood Policing

Last week, the government announced a new set of measures aimed at improving visibility, responsiveness, and trust in local policing. As part of the broader “Plan for Change”,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-change>

the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee sets out a commitment to ensure all communities across England and Wales have consistent, visible police presence and support, with a focus on prevention and public confidence. Central to the announcement is the introduction of 13,000 additional neighbourhood police officers by 2029. This represents an increase of more than 50% in neighbourhood policing capacity. The plan also includes a series of standards intended to ensure every community, regardless of location, receives a minimum level of service.



Under the new Guarantee, each neighbourhood will have named and contactable officers, supported by dedicated teams focusing on local issues. There will be guaranteed police patrols during peak times in town centres and other high-traffic areas, including Friday and Saturday nights. The government states this will address concerns about rising antisocial behaviour and visible street crime, which saw significant increases in recent years.

A new role – antisocial behaviour lead – will be introduced in every police force to help coordinate responses with local businesses and residents. These leads will be responsible for tailoring action plans to local circumstances and working with communities to develop targeted solutions.

The initiative also introduces new accountability mechanisms. A Police Standards and Performance Improvement Unit will be created to measure and monitor performance across forces. An online tool will be

launched, enabling members of the public to view how their local police force is performing and to compare services across the country.

Additional legislative measures are being progressed through the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../colle.../crime-and-policing-bill-2025>

These include powers for police to issue Respect Orders aimed at tackling persistent antisocial behaviour, seize vehicles causing disruption, and search properties for stolen goods that have been geolocated – without requiring a warrant. The Bill also proposes changes to remove the perceived immunity for low-value theft, such as goods valued under £200.

According to the government, this is the first time in fifteen years that a universal policing standard is being established across all communities. The reforms aim to reduce variation in local policing experiences – described as a “postcode lottery” – and ensure a consistent presence of police in both urban and rural settings.

New Education Resource through Pol-Ed Programme

Hundreds of children across Northamptonshire will gain vital knowledge on personal safety, healthy relationships, and the law as schools adopt the innovative Pol-Ed education programme.

The Northamptonshire Serious Violence Prevention Partnership (NSVPP) has awarded funding to bring the Pol-Ed programme to local schools, benefitting thousands of children.



This initiative is part of the partnership’s commitment to tackling serious violence through education and early intervention, ensuring young people have the knowledge and skills to make informed choices.

Pol-ed was developed by teachers for teachers, providing expertly designed, age-appropriate lessons to help keep young people safe. The resources have been developed in consultation with subject matter experts and experienced police officers, ensuring they are both educationally robust and relevant to current policing priorities. They are designed to instil a strong foundation of values, skills and attributes and to prevent children from becoming victims or perpetrators of crime.

This programme represents a significant step in the NSVPP’s strategy to reduce serious violence through proactive education and prevention. By supporting schools in delivering high-quality, engaging lessons on crucial issues, Pol-Ed aims to empower young people to make safer choices and build a stronger, more informed community.

Schools can sign up directly through the Pol-Ed website to access the full range of resources.

<https://www.pol-ed.co.uk/>

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...>



CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

West Northants to Honour 80th Anniversary of VE Day

Communities across West Northamptonshire are coming together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, marking the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May 1945. This significant milestone provides 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.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) will be flying the official VE Day flag at its offices in Daventry and Towcester, while a short flag-raising ceremony will take place at 9am on Thursday 8 May outside the Guildhall in Northampton, where the public is invited to attend. Additionally, One Angel Square and Northampton Market Square will be illuminated as part of the national Beacon Lighting Ceremony at 9.30pm.

A range of community events will take place across West Northants including beacon lightings, exhibitions, talks, performances, and themed activities at local libraries. View more details on the VE Day events webpage.



Other key Armed Forces dates will also be recognised this year including Armed Forces Day on Saturday 28 June, VJ Day on Friday 15 August, and Remembrance Day on Sunday 9 Nov.

For more information on VE Day 80 events or guidance on planning a community celebration, including beacon lightings, visit the King's Pageant master's VE Day Celebration Guide.

Communities considering to close a road to celebrate VE Day may need to apply for a temporary road closure. Groups planning larger parties are also urged to let the Council know about the event to check issues such as licensing, safety and traffic management.

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://www.facebook.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 nncreativeplace@gmail.com.



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>

Women's Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour

Excitement is building in West Northamptonshire as the official Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 trophy prepares to arrive in Daventry, Towcester, Brackley, and Northampton on 25, 26 and 27 May as part of a three-week national tour marking 100 days to go and celebrating all eight host locations ahead of the big tournament this summer.

The iconic trophy will visit a number of landmarks and locations across the area, giving residents, grassroots clubs, and fans a unique opportunity to get up close with the centrepiece of the world's biggest women's rugby event. The visit will mark 100 days to go until the tournament kicks off and is part of a wider effort to inspire local communities and celebrate the tournament's arrival in West Northamptonshire this August and September.

Six matches are set to take place at the cinch Stadium at Franklins Gardens in Northampton, seeing teams and fans from around the world flock to West Northants for what promises to be the largest celebration of women's rugby ever.

The trophy tour will begin in London on 14 May before travelling to Brighton & Hove, Exeter, Bristol, West Northants, Manchester, York and ending in Sunderland on 6 June. Each stop will feature pop-up events, community engagement, and the chance to find out more about the tournament and how to get involved. Full details around the tour activities will be revealed soon.

New ticket sales for the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 will open from 14 May, with prices starting at £10 for adults and £5 for children. Full details of West Northants' activities will be announced soon via the official tournament website and social media channels.

For more information about the tournament, visit the official site:

<https://www.rugbyworldcup.com/2025/en>

