

## **Cllr BILL BORRETT**

Parish Report for the Elmham and Mattishall Division

December 2025



**A very Happy Christmas to you all**

**My Deep Disappointment at the Government's Decision to postpone the Mayoral Election until 2028.**

The Government has this week announced that the elections for the New Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor are to be postponed for 2 years, they have not given any believable reason for this instead citing a lack of preparedness. The only silver lining is that it may reduce the chances of us ever getting a Mayor if a General Election is called before then!!

At the moment the Government has not mentioned the County Council Elections that were due to be held on the same day in May 2026. I have said in the strongest possible terms that these Elections should go ahead as planned, especially as they have been postponed once already from May 2025.

Democracy is very important, and any public body that has overstayed its public mandate is no longer properly representing the electorate.

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### **Have your say on the future of Local Government in Norfolk**

As I have mentioned in previous Reports, all residents across Norfolk can now take part in the Government's Consultation on Local Government Reform or LGR as it is often known. This is supposed to inform the Government on which of the three options that have been put forward for Norfolk should be chosen by the Minister.

They are proposals for Three, Two or One new Unitary Councils in Norfolk in place of Breckland, Norfolk County Council and all the other District Councils in the county.

The consultation runs from Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026. All proposals and an online response form are available on the consultation website - <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/norfolksuffolk/consultation/>

I am supporting the 3 Option as it keeps the important democratic accountability, and reduces the chances of large increases in Council Tax for Breckland's residents that may happen when all of the Council tax charges are levelled out between the old authorities. Breckland's being the lowest and Norwich City Council's far higher.

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### **Norfolk County Council has encouraged Parish Councils to Bid for Local Improvements Through Parish Partnership Scheme**

I have championed for Parish Councils to be able to apply for funding through its **Parish Partnership Scheme**, which supports community-led improvements to highways and local infrastructure.

The scheme, now a well-established part of Norfolk's approach to supporting local communities, offers **50% match-funding** for a wide range of small-scale projects that make local areas safer, more accessible and better connected. A total fund of **£848,702** is available for the 2025/26 round.

The Parish Partnership Scheme enables Parish Councils to deliver projects that might otherwise be unaffordable, including:

- New or improved **bus shelters** and bus-stop facilities
- **Village gateways**, signage and speed-awareness measures
- **Trod footpaths** and other low-cost pedestrian routes
- **School-zone safety** improvements, including advisory 20mph signs
- Enhancements to **public rights of way**, crossings, and local walking routes
- **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points** in suitable community locations

By combining local contributions with County Council funding, parishes can make meaningful improvements that directly reflect their community's priorities. Councils can also use other sources such as CIL or developer contributions to meet their matchfunding share.

The scheme welcomes bids from parishes of all sizes, including first-time applicants and smaller rural councils. Norfolk County Council works closely with local Highway Engineers and the Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC) to support parishes through the bidding and delivery process.

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### **New Tap On Tap Off payment technology on Norfolk's buses**

I am really excited that Norfolk County Council and First Bus have partnered to introduce Tap On Tap Off (TOTO) contactless payment across all First Bus services in Norfolk from Sunday 23 November.

The enhanced system, installed across the fleet of 240 vehicles, has been funded through £465,000 awarded to Norfolk's bus operators via the Department for Transport as part of the county's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

**The real benefit for residents is that TOTO offers much greater flexibility and value, charging only for the journeys taken and automatically capping at the best available day fare, with further savings for frequent weekly travel.**

Full details are available from First Bus.

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### **Norfolk's gritting vehicles head out on their first run of the season**

Norfolk's gritting fleet has completed its first run of the winter season. Over recent years, all Norfolk gritters have been upgraded with state-of-the-art autosalting technology to improve accuracy, save time and reduce waste. And thanks to Norfolk's schoolchildren and local residents, all 55 vehicles now proudly carry their own names, so keep an eye out for *Edith Gravel*, *Grit Yarmouth* and *Gritty Gritty Bang Bang*, to name just a few.

Follow #NorfolkWinter and Norfolk County Council on Facebook, Nextdoor and Instagram for updates throughout the season.

Residents can check this year's gritting routes using the online map at the council's website.

Last winter, teams completed 66 full gritting runs between November and March. Each run treated around 2,200 miles of road—the equivalent of travelling from Norwich to Istanbul and back. In total, crews covered 145,200 miles (almost six times around the Earth) and spread approximately 14,800 tonnes of salt, around the weight of 2,500 elephants.

Norfolk's routes include all A and B roads, and selected C roads focusing on commuter routes, key bus corridors and village access. Services are delivered by Norse Highways. The A11 and A47 are gritted by National Highways.

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### **New support service launched as Norfolk faces rising redundancies**

Norfolk County Council is developing an integrated support package in response to a report following the Budget warning that residents of the county may face up to 15,000 redundancies from firms over the next few years.

The 12-month pilot will create an online portal where businesses and employees can access both local and national support when redundancy risks arise. Individuals needing more detailed help will be referred to specialist services offering tailored one-to-one assistance.

Major announcements this year include up to 550 job losses at Lotus Cars and a potential further 350 at the NHS Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board.

During the 2020 recession, 750,000 job losses were recorded nationally. Although no local figure was available, Norfolk typically accounts for around 2% of the national picture—equating to the projected 15,000 local job losses.

Businesses report that increased employer NI contributions, rises in the minimum wage and new Day 1 employment rights (including for parental leave and sick pay) are all placing pressure on budgets and staffing levels.

Connect to Work: Supporting over 4,000 people facing barriers to employment People in Norfolk with disabilities or long-term health conditions that prevent them from working will receive tailored support through the new Connect to Work programme.

Building on the success of Working Well Norfolk and the Local Supported Employment projects, the programme aims to reduce Norfolk's higher-than-average rate of economic inactivity.

In 2024, 109,100 people (20.6%) aged 16–65 in Norfolk were economically inactive— 1.5% higher than post-Covid levels. 30,100 (27.7%) were living with long-term sickness, above both regional and national averages.

Connect to Work will support residents aged 18+ (and in some cases 16–17) across a wide range of groups, including people with physical and mental health challenges, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, care leavers, carers, veterans, ex-offenders, refugees, the homeless and victims of domestic abuse. Those already in work but at risk of leaving due to health or other challenges will also be supported.

Funded by the UK Government, the programme will be delivered by Norfolk County Council in partnership with Future Projects, Norfolk and Waveney MIND, Seetec, Shaw Trust and Standguide, reaching more than 4,000 people.

To access support, visit [norfolk.gov.uk/workingwell](https://norfolk.gov.uk/workingwell) or email [connecttowork@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:connecttowork@norfolk.gov.uk).

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### **Norfolk makes early progress towards long-term economic ambitions**

In light of the disappointing news on the economy, Norfolk County Council together with Partners across the county, is taking significant strides towards boosting its long-term economic goals. There is progress underway across key sectors including agri-food, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and digital technology.

Recent milestones include the launch of an Immersive Visualisation and Simulation Lab at Norwich University of the Arts, designed to boost jobs in the digital tech sector, and the installation of Gigabit Fibre broadband to 7,000 premises across the county.

The Norfolk Business Board's 2024–2029 Action Plan sets out how partners will deliver the region's shared economic strategy. The Plan will help coordinate activity, support investment, and demonstrate Norfolk's commitment to seizing new economic opportunities and addressing barriers to inclusive growth.

Gigabit Fibre rollout is a key part of the Plan. Combined with commercial broadband programmes, it will significantly reduce connectivity "cold spots". To date, 7,000 premises have been upgraded, with more than 80,000 set to benefit from the Government's £128m investment.

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### **Nature recovery roadmap launched for Norfolk and Suffolk**

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have published their respective Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)—a major step towards identifying opportunities for recovery and delivering wider **benefits such as reduced flood risk**.

The strategies were launched on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November at Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve, with contributions from partners involved in shaping and supporting nature recovery work.

The two councils have worked closely together through the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to identify shared themes, challenges and opportunities for restoring nature across the region.

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### **Keeping people in Norfolk safe at home this winter**

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is sharing essential advice to help keep residents safe at home this winter.

Start by completing a free online home fire safety check at [norfolk.gov.uk/fire](https://norfolk.gov.uk/fire). Elderly and vulnerable residents may also be eligible for a free in-person home visit—eligibility details are available on the website.

Key winter safety advice includes:

- Ensure working smoke alarms are installed on every floor and test them regularly.
- Keep portable heaters at least one metre from people and flammable items. Never use them to dry clothes, switch them off overnight and check regularly for damage.
- Buy heaters only from reputable retailers.
- If you use emollients, avoid smoking or going near open flames, heaters or hobs— residue on clothing and bedding is highly flammable.
- Have chimneys professionally swept before use.
- Never leave candles unattended; switch off Christmas lights when leaving home or going to bed.
- Avoid overloading plug sockets and do not use block adaptors—use power boards instead.
- Check electric blankets and heated throws for damage; never use them with hot water bottles.
- Inspect hot water bottles: the flower symbol shows the date of manufacture. Replace after two years and check regularly for wear, as damaged bottles can cause serious burns.

More advice and safety checks are available at [norfolk.gov.uk/fire](https://norfolk.gov.uk/fire).

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on [bill.borrett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bill.borrett@hotmail.co.uk)

Best wishes

**Bill**

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