

Councillor Update 17th July

Norfolk Libraries - Summer Reading Challenge

Norfolk Libraries are supporting this year's Summer Reading Challenge, *Read to the Beat*, which uses children's interest in music to encourage reading and help address declining literacy levels. The challenge is important because, nationally, one in four children cannot read well by age 11, and 8.7 million adults lack basic reading skills.

In Norfolk, 10,330 children up to the age of 11 took part last year, showing strong local engagement with the scheme.

The challenge runs from Saturday 4 July to Saturday 12 September, with free children's activities in Norfolk libraries, including sessions with professional music and dance artists. A full list of events can be found [here](#).

All 47 libraries and mobile libraries in Norfolk are taking part, and more than 1,000 children have already signed up.

There is a mini challenge for under-fives, while children aged 4 to 11 can set their own reading goals and explore music-themed reading lists.

Children who complete the challenge will receive a medal and certificate.

Norfolk Museums - summer holiday activities

Norfolk museums are hosting a range of summer holiday programs from mid-July to early September. Highlights include medieval activities at Norwich Castle, celebrating the 100th birthday at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, nature and historical trails at Gressenhall Farm, pirate-themed fun at Time & Tide, and audio-visual trails at Strangers' Hall.

Further details of what's on at Norfolk Museums are available [here](#).

Healthy Ageing: feel connected campaign

Public Health Norfolk's *Feel Connected* campaign is encouraging older residents to stay socially active as part of a wider two-year healthy ageing initiative. The current phase runs from 6 July to 20 August 2026 and focuses on reducing loneliness and isolation by helping people aged 55 and over, particularly those approaching retirement, living alone or at risk of isolation, to find local opportunities to connect with others.

Norfolk has one of the highest ageing populations in the UK and around 125,500 people living alone. Social isolation and loneliness are linked to poorer physical and mental health, higher mortality and increased reliance on health and social care services. The campaign highlights the benefits of spending time with others, sharing experiences and feeling part of a community.

Residents can find local activities and support at www.norfolk.gov.uk/feelconnected.

They can also subscribe to the Healthy Ageing newsletter at www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing

Posters and postcards can also be downloaded from the Health Information Resource Service website [here](#). Additional copies can be requested from sophie.harrison@norfolk.gov.uk.

National Updates

Future of Rural England Report

The Government has published the [Future of Rural England report](#), which sets out a long-term vision for improving opportunities and quality of life in rural communities.

Drafted by the Rural Taskforce (a group of rural stakeholders brought together in April 2025 to explore the strengths and opportunities for rural areas), the report highlights challenges around housing, transport, healthcare, digital connectivity, skills and economic opportunity. It also emphasises the need to support rural businesses, strengthen local services and help communities remain sustainable and resilient.

The report focuses on making sure that rural communities are considered in future government policy and investment decisions.

A new cross-government board will oversee this work, with annual public reporting on progress.

The report is particularly relevant to Norfolk because of the county's large rural population and similar challenges around access to services, connectivity, resilience, and economic growth.

30by30 Land Delivery Plan

The Government has published a [30by30 on Land Delivery Plan](#), setting out how England will conserve and manage 30% of land for nature by 2030. Only 7% of land currently meets the criteria, although around 32% already contributes or has potential to contribute.

The plan is relevant for Norfolk because of the county's protected landscapes, coastline, natural assets and habitat restoration opportunities. It highlights the role of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, protected sites, public sector land and local partnerships, but does not provide significant new direct funding for local authorities. Instead, it seeks to align existing funding and attract more private investment.

Support for unpaid carers

The Government has published a new [cross-government action plan](#) to improve support for unpaid carers in England.

Nearly one in ten people is an unpaid carer, with many experiencing pressures on their work, education, health and wellbeing, as well as difficulties accessing breaks

from caring. The plan focuses on three priorities: recognising carers, referring them to support and helping them reach their potential. It includes 42 actions, with overall accountability sitting with a cross-government ministerial group chaired by the Minister of State for Care.

The Norfolk county council webpages already bring together a wide range of support for unpaid carers living in Norfolk, available [here](#).