

# Leader's Update

26 July 2024

Issue: 79

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## Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- South East Midlands leaders unite in support of transformative Universal Destinations and Experiences project.
- New electric bin lorry takes to the streets of North Northamptonshire.
- Grants to help businesses lower carbon emissions.
- Replacement for the W8 bus service confirmed.
- Oundle Library closed until further notice after a fire.
- Four North Northamptonshire parks win Green Flag Awards.
- Have a roarsome Summer at North Northamptonshire country parks.
- North Northamptonshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Partnership's Priority Action Plan underway.
- Expansion of North Northamptonshire SEND primary school agreed.
- Corby Towns Fund: Work to start on the Town Centre to Train Station Link Road.
- Council re-signs Armed Forces Covenant.
- Young artist inspires giant sculpture at Irchester Country Park.
- Free e-scooter skills training sessions.

In addition, you will find below some useful information about forthcoming meetings, Your Voice Matters (our consultation and engagement hub), all the latest press releases and our top social media posts.

Whatever your plans are, I hope you have a great weekend!

## South East Midlands leaders unite in support of transformative Universal Destinations and Experiences project

The leaders and chief executives of the six local authorities representing the South East Midlands region have collectively endorsed the Universal Destinations and Experiences theme park and resort project. In a letter sent to the Prime Minister, the region's leadership emphasised the transformative potential of this initiative.

The project promises to create 20,000 jobs during construction, with an additional 20,000 jobs generated directly and in the supply-chain during the operation of the resort. This significant job creation underscores the economic impact the project will have on the region, and set the South East Midlands as one of the foremost visitor destinations in Europe and the world.

The letter is signed by the chief executives and political leaders of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough, Milton Keynes City, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils.

Attracting such a huge, globally respected name as Universal Studios to our region will be a massive boost for the area and for the economy. This is an extremely exciting project and we're absolutely committed to making it become a reality.

## **New electric bin lorry takes to the streets of North Northamptonshire**

A new electric powered lorry will be used to collect waste in the local area as North Northamptonshire Council continues its work to become carbon neutral.

The all-electric vehicle has been tried and tested on routes and will carry out the same role as the previous diesel vehicles. Residents shouldn't see much difference apart from a quieter vehicle doing the rounds.

Over the vehicle's lifetime, it will save 60,000 litres of diesel and £75,000 in fuel costs.

Waste collection is one of the services that everyone uses so it's important that we consider how we can make it more environmentally friendly.

The council is also trialling the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) in some bin lorries that would have previously used diesel. HVO is a fuel that can be a direct drop-in replacement for diesel, so it doesn't require any vehicle modifications. It can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90%.

Find out more about our [Carbon Management Plan](#) on our website.

## **Grants to help businesses lower carbon emissions**

North Northamptonshire Council has launched two grant schemes to help businesses lower carbon emissions.

The [NNDecarb business grant scheme](#) is offering up to £5,000 of grant funding to support businesses increase energy efficiency, move to a low carbon economy or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The grant covers up to 50% of the project costs for the installation of low carbon and energy efficient measures with the remaining amount to be match funded by the business.

For more details and to apply, please visit the [NNDecarb business grant scheme](#) section of our website. You can apply until 5pm on Friday 16 August 2024.

The [NN2NZ Green Transition Grant scheme](#) is offering capital grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 to help small- and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) become more resilient and support growth.

A particular target for this scheme will be decarbonisation or green research and development initiatives that contribute to reducing carbon emissions or advancing sustainable practices.

Please email [ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk) to request an application form. You can apply until 8am on Monday 2 September 2024.

Grant schemes like these are always extremely popular and the teams receive a lot of high-quality applications. We are looking for projects that can be up and running quickly, so I would encourage businesses to take a look online and apply before the deadlines.

## **Replacement for the W8 bus service confirmed**

Following conversations with North Northamptonshire Council, Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council will expand the VH1 Village Hopper service to replace the W8 bus service.

From Monday 29 July, passengers will be able to travel directly from Wollaston, Bozeat, Easton Maudit, Grendon, Cogenhoe, Brafield, Little Houghton, Great Houghton to Northampton, Wellingborough, Weston Favell, Stanwick Lakes and Rushden Lakes.

The VH1 service will run like a regular bus service with a set timetable. It will offer journeys between 7:30am and 6pm several times a day, from Monday to Saturday, to help residents travel to work, college, the shops and Northampton General Hospital.

Tickets will be available to purchase on the bus and any valid concessionary bus passes will be accepted. The VH1 service will be part of the previous government's £2 bus fare cap scheme until the end of December 2024.

This move will bring cost savings which the council will use to fund other bus services across North Northamptonshire.

The VH1 Village Hopper timetable can be viewed on the [Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council](#) website.

Links to North Northamptonshire [bus timetables](#) are published on the council's website. They include the VH1 Village Hopper - and some continuing W8 Stagecoach journeys during weekday peak times, with times suitable for school children.

As a council, we understand how important bus services are to communities. Since we became aware that the previous contractor had given notice on running the route, we have been working hard to find a solution. View previous press release: [Final steps being taken for new provider to run bus route in North Northamptonshire](#).

I am delighted that residents who previously used the W8 will be able to use the VH1 service from Monday, with no interruption to service.

## **Oundle Library closed until further notice after a fire**

Oundle Library is currently closed due to a fire on Friday 12 July which was promptly extinguished by the fire service.

All customers and staff were safely evacuated and there were no injuries.

The library will remain closed while the cause of the fire is investigated, and remedial works are carried out.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and thank residents for their continued support and understanding.

Please note that:

- Library cards can be used at any [North Northamptonshire library](#).
- All loans from Oundle Library have been extended so that users will not incur any late return charges during the closure.
- Young residents can sign up to the [Summer Reading Challenge](#) at any library in North Northamptonshire.
- Some scheduled events will take place in the garden next week, including Circuits and Crazy Colin's Magic Workshop. For further details please call 0300 126 3000, email [oundle.libraryplus@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:oundle.libraryplus@northnorthants.gov.uk) or visit the [Oundle Library Facebook](#) page.

## **Four North Northamptonshire parks win Green Flag Awards**

The [Green Flag Award](#) is the benchmark international standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world.

North Northamptonshire Council has received four Green Flag Awards for Coronation Park, East Carlton Countryside Park, Hazel and Thoroughsale Woods and Rockingham Road Pleasure Park.

Hazel and Thoroughsale Woods has held a Green Flag Award for 10 consecutive years.

This tremendous accolade is testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers and community groups who maintain our green spaces to a high standard so that others may enjoy them.

Thank you to the teams for keeping our open spaces clean and tidy - and congratulations to everyone involved.

The Green Flag Award scheme is managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

## **Have a roarsome Summer at North Northamptonshire country parks**

Families can experience realistic dinosaurs for themselves in North Northamptonshire country parks this Summer with the Dinosaur Safari.

Once you have downloaded the free Love Exploring app you will be able to see where all the [interactive walks](#) and games are located.

Dinosaurs may run, fly or even roar at you. The interactive walks are educational and can be a learning tool too. After finding each dinosaur you will get a trivia question to answer.

The Dinosaur Safari is available at East Carlton Countryside Park, Fermyn Woods Country Park, Irchester Country Park, Sywell Country Park, and Barnwell Country Park (due to poor network coverage, use the visitor area free WiFi to start the game - your results will be recorded when you return to the area) as well as West Glebe Park and Pavilion. More sites will follow soon.

Go to one of the locations and pull up a map of all the 'stations'. This is where you will find the dinosaurs. As you walk nearer to them you will see prompts telling you how close you are. On finding the station, the interactive image will pop up and you can take photos and film of your dinosaur.

The interactive walks provide the positive experience that being in an outside environment can bring and enjoyment of the beautiful countryside and parks we have in North Northamptonshire.

## **North Northamptonshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership's Priority Action Plan underway**

North Northamptonshire Council and strategic partners, including the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT), started work on the Local Area Partnership's Priority Action Plan in April 2024.

The plan aims to improve services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

SEND Improvement Workshops, focusing on expected outcomes, will take place in September across North Northamptonshire. Multiple stakeholders across the partnership will work collaboratively to co-produce an outcomes monitoring framework to monitor the Priority Action Plan.

The plan, published on 3 June, responds to the [Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's inspection report](#) on SEND partnership services in March 2024. A draft plan was submitted to the Department for Education and was approved by Ofsted on 24 May 2024. The department issued an Improvement Notice to the partnership last week.

The plan sets out what will be achieved between now and November 2025 in four 'priority' areas:

- Partnership working.
- Joint strategic commissioning.
- Governance arrangements.
- Accurate assessment of needs.

A further six 'areas for improvement' were also identified:

- Long waiting times for health services.
- Access to specialist equipment.
- Approach to coordinating early years support.
- Relationships with mainstream schools.
- Strategic commissioning of alternative provision.
- Support for transition services / preparedness for adulthood.

The planning and commissioning of SEND services across the area is the responsibility of the North Northamptonshire Local Area Partnership (LAP). This is made up of two statutory bodies: North Northamptonshire Council and NHS Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board. It is delivered across the area in conjunction with multiple other partner organisations, including Northamptonshire Children's Trust schools, nurseries and North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voice (NPCV).

The partnership will continue to work with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to ensure that improvements are being made.

You can view the SEND Priority Action Plan on the [North Northants Local Offer](#) website. If you would like a copy of the full document in another format, or a version that will be accessible to screen readers, please email [lapsendimprovement@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:lapsendimprovement@northnorthants.gov.uk).

## **Expansion of North Northamptonshire SEND primary school agreed**

Executive members at North Northamptonshire Council have agreed to expand Rowan Gate Primary School onto the former Wilby School CEVA Primary School site.

Rowan Gate Primary School is a community day special school for pupils from four years of age and accommodates children with:

- Cognition and learning needs (severe learning disabilities).
- Communication and interaction needs (autistic spectrum disorder).

Children may also have:

- Sensory and/or physical needs.
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (SLCN).
- Complex medical needs.

The school will initially accommodate up to 30 pupils in Reception to Year 1.

At an Executive Meeting on Thursday 11 July, it was agreed that refurbishments of the Wilby School building, once vacated in July 2024, will progress so that the school can move in ready for the start of the school term in September 2024.

The expansion will provide an opportunity to support our children to access the special needs education and facilities that enable the achievement of the best outcomes, meaning that they can flourish.

## **Corby Towns Fund: Work to start on the Town Centre to Train Station Link Road**

North Northamptonshire Council was awarded £19.9m through the Towns Fund in June 2021.

Some £8.59million was allocated to the [Town Centre to Train Station Link Road](#) project.

The aim is to improve the public realm and provide attractive and safe pedestrian/cycle connections between the town centre and the train station.

In September 2022, residents were asked for their views on a concept design. A revised plan was then consulted on in December 2023. This consultation has led to further improvements and now work will start on the final plans for the scheme to be delivered.

Covering a route along Elizabeth Street, Oakley Road and Station Road, the work will include:

- Improved connectivity with new pedestrian crossing and upgrades to some existing crossings.
- Improved public areas.
- Provision of segregated cycleway and footway facilities where possible.
- Closure of existing underpass.
- Resurfacing works to footways and carriageways within the scheme.
- Highway drainage and street lighting improvements within the scheme.

Work is due to start in early August 2024 and is due to be completed by Spring 2025. There is likely to be some localised disruption during the works. Residents are advised to check before they travel and follow any signage on site.

## **Council re-signs Armed Forces Covenant**

Representatives from North Northamptonshire Council and the Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, James Saunders Watson, have re-signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) (AFC). This reaffirms the council's pledge to continue to support members of the Armed Forces across North Northamptonshire.

The AFC is a commitment that the council acknowledges and understands that those who serve, or have served, in the Armed Forces and their families should be treated with fairness and respect in all aspects of their lives.

Recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces, the covenant principles are that:

- Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

## **Young artist inspires giant willow sculpture at Irchester Country Park**

Budding creative Nevaeh Hardingham from Little Stanion School won a drawing competition during last year's Children's Mental Health Week. Last week, she was invited along to [Irchester Country Park](#) to see it transformed into a giant willow sculpture.

The theme was 'What good mental health looks like to me' and all schools in North Northamptonshire were invited by the [Healthy Schools Team](#) to put forward an entry which demonstrated what this meant to them.

Nevaeh's artwork was chosen by a panel of judges from entries from over 30 schools in North Northamptonshire.

The artist, her teacher, and a schoolfriend were invited to a special event to unveil the sculpture last week. They were joined by the council's Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Gill Mercer, the Director of Public Health, Communities and Leisure, Jane Bethea, and staff from the Country Parks and Public Health teams.

Irchester Country Park is one of five beautiful [country parks](#) we have in North Northamptonshire. Each one offers plenty of opportunities to learn about nature and connect with other people in the great outdoors.

## **Free e-scooter skills training sessions**

E-scooter operator Voi has recently launched a new online traffic school called Ride Safe Academy to help people use e-scooters safely.

The online training covers the UK rules of the road, tips on rider safety and responsible parking practices, all in a fun and engaging way.

It is available to anyone, whether they have a Voi account or not, and is also applicable to cyclists. Anyone who completes it can claim a free Voi ride reward of 30 minutes.

Every month, Voi hosts free online scooter skills training sessions which reward participants with 30 minutes of free rides.

The next webinars will take place on Thursday 15 August 15 from 12 noon to 1pm and from 1:15pm to 2:15pm.

You can sign up at [Voi Ride Safe Webinar](#).

## Your Voice Matters

Please find below details of our other current consultations and engagement activities. Please use the links below to provide your feedback and inform council decisions and share with family and friends who may be interested in shaping future plans.

Details of all open and closed consultation and engagement activities are available on the North Northamptonshire Consultation and Engagement Hub, [Your Voice Matters](#).

- [Proposed changes to car parking charges at Corby Rail Station](#). The council own and manage the public parking at Corby Rail Station, which is regulated under a Road Traffic Regulation Order. The order also defines the extent of the parking, which vehicles may park, the way spaces should be used and the costs of duration of parking. The order allows the council to review and vary the charges from time to time. The council propose to bring public parking charges at Corby station into line with other pay and display station car parks across the wider council area. Closes Friday 2 August 2024.
- [Public Spaces Protection Order Extension: Corby Town Centre](#). A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) has been in place in Corby Town Centres since 2015, and renewed in 2018 and 2021. It is proposed to extend the current PSPO for a further three years. Closes Friday 23 August 2024.

## Forthcoming meetings

### Executive

- Thursday 15 August from 10am.

### Full Council

- Thursday 29 August from 6pm.

The agenda and papers will be published on the [Council meetings](#) section of our website in the week before the meeting.

These meetings will be live streamed on our [YouTube](#) channel.

## Press releases

To help you stay abreast of the key things the council has been doing, I have included some links to the latest press releases below (starting with the most recent):

- [Have a roarsome Summer at North Northamptonshire country parks](#)
- [Expansion of North Northamptonshire SEND primary school agreed](#)
- [Replacement for the W8 bus service confirmed](#)
- [Grants to help businesses lower carbon emissions now available](#)

- [Heritage visitor attraction 'serving up' new collaboration with Northamptonshire charity to help tackle food poverty](#)
- [Work to start on the Town Centre to Train Station Link Road - a Corby Towns Fund project](#)
- [Four parks across North Northamptonshire awarded coveted Green Flag Awards](#)
- [Update on Oundle Library's continued closure](#)
- [Impact of the global IT outage](#)
- [South East Midlands leaders unite in support of transformative Universal Destinations and Experiences project](#)
- [Council re-signs Armed Forces Covenant](#)
- [Young artist inspires giant sculpture at Irchester Country Park](#)
- [New electric bin lorry takes to the streets of North Northants](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Partnership's Priority Action Plan underway](#)
- [Oundle Library closed until further notice after fire](#)


## Social media: Top stories

Follow our social media accounts and share our [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#) posts when you can.

### Top Facebook posts so far this week (22 to 24 July)

- Work to start on the Town Centre to Train Station Link Road - a Corby Towns Fund project: <https://ow.ly/UFxP50SGWMB>  
(Reach 12,044, Link Clicks 334, Engagements 4,104)
- Please remember that BBQs, and fires of any kind, are not allowed in any area of our parks or woodlands.  
(Reach 11,248, Link Clicks 0, Engagements 1,388)
- If you've had work done at home and there's a problem caused by the trader, you should be able to get it fixed - or at least get some of your money back. Our colleagues at North Northamptonshire Trading Standards and Citizens Advice have useful guidance <https://ow.ly/PA0u50QVknC>  
(Reach 2,429, Link Clicks 4, Engagements 148)

### Top Tweets so far this week (22 to 24 July)

- Work to start on the Town Centre to Train Station Link Road - a Corby Towns Fund project: <https://ow.ly/zNP050SGWMz>  
(Impressions 433)
- Heritage visitor attraction 'serving up' new collaboration with Northamptonshire charity to help tackle food poverty: <https://ow.ly/j4GC50SH2MN>  copyright Nick Rees @ChesterHouse\_UK  
(Impressions 339)
- You could be the final piece of the puzzle. The one we've been looking for. Consider a career in local Government <https://ow.ly/IQob50OWNP3>  
(Impressions 317)

## Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have any ideas for items to include in future updates, please email me at [executive@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:executive@northnorthants.gov.uk).



With Best Wishes,  
Jason

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