

Leader's Update

8 March 2024

Issue: 71

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

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- North Northamptonshire Council celebrates International Women's Day.
- Celebrating female-led businesses across North Northamptonshire.
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- Rural Business Grant Scheme: Grants of up to £50,000 available.
- Grants on offer for voluntary and community organisations across rural North Northamptonshire.
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- Roll out of food waste collections across North Northamptonshire on Executive agenda.
- Kettering Library: Vegetation removal works to start next week.
- Crackdown on underage riders on Voi e-scooters.
- NN2NZ Boost for Business (NN2NZ B4B) programme launches to empower local SMEs towards a sustainable future.

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!

North Northamptonshire Council celebrates International Women's Day

Staff and councillors at North Northamptonshire Council are celebrating International Women's Day, which takes place today (Friday 8 March).

The theme of this year's [International Women's Day](#) is 'Inspire Inclusion'.

At last night's Full Council, Jason Smithers, the Leader of the Council, took the time to speak about the importance of the day and recognise the 23 female councillors who sit on the Council, three of whom sit on the Executive, as well as the women who work at the council. As of March 2023, 68.5% of employees at North Northamptonshire Council were female.

The Leader of the Council also remarked on the number of female staff sitting at the top table, with the council recently appointing its first female Chief Executive, Adele Wylie, who was sat alongside the Chair of the Council, Barbara Jenney, Interim Monitoring Officer, Sanjit Sull and Vice Chairman, Cllr Lora Lawman.

It was also highlighted that North Northamptonshire Council recognise there is still more work to do. The council needs to encourage more women to consider standing for public office and work in local government, with greater female representation at all levels of local government.

The council has been working hard to reduce its [gender pay gap](#) with the median pay gap having reduced to 4% in March 2023, meaning for every £1 a male earns a female earns £0.96. The mean pay gap for the council is 4.3% (the closest, comparative data from the Office of National Statistics puts the national average at 14.3%).

Gender pay gap is not the same as equal pay. Equal pay looks at the difference in pay of men and women doing the same or similar job, or a job of equal value.

To celebrate International Women's Day, the council has been working with women across the organisation to talk about what the day means for them. The thoughts and views from staff have been highlighted on the council's social media pages and a special International Women's Day Vlog from Adele Wylie along with some female senior colleagues and senior female councillors across the recognised political groups.

Adele Wylie, North Northamptonshire Council's first female Chief Executive, said: "It was such an honour to be appointed as the council's Chief Executive. To be the first female leading such a large unitary authority is a privilege.

"International Women's Day is all about empowering women and working together to ensure everyone feels included and respected, regardless of their gender. But today must be about celebrating women's achievements and I am proud to see our female staff achieving great things on a daily basis here at North Northamptonshire Council.

"Although a high proportion of our workforce is female at the council, I would always encourage more women to consider a career in local government - it is highly rewarding, and you will make a real difference."

During Full Council, Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council, said: "Throughout history, women have been the backbone of societies, pioneering change, and driving progress. Despite this, the struggle for equal rights, opportunities, and representation persists. International Women's Day provides the opportunity to mark the progress that is being made in breaking down the barriers that can hinder the full participation of women in all aspects of societal life.

"I am proud that North Northamptonshire Council welcomed its first female chair of the Council last year. I am also proud that the Council appointed its first female Chief Executive too, earlier this year. And it is particularly noteworthy that they are both joined at the top table by Lora, our vice-chair, and Sanjit, our Monitoring Officer. I think this is something that we should all be very proud of.

"The theme of this year's International Women's Day is 'Inspire Inclusion'. I'm sure everyone and colleagues throughout North Northamptonshire Council will agree, that greater female representation at all levels of local government is both good and right."

Celebrating female-led businesses across North Northamptonshire

Join us in celebrating the female-led businesses across North Northamptonshire this International Women's Day.

In an area brimming with entrepreneurial spirit, it's impossible not to notice the huge variety of small businesses that are established and led by inspirational women. Behind each one is a story of passion, determination and dedication.

From vibrant, innovative businesses run in local towns, to those developed and delivered from home, each one is a testament to the creativity and resilience of female entrepreneurs.

What sets female-led businesses apart is not just the products and services they provide, but the fantastic skill-set women bring to the business community. Their strong ability to multi-task, communicate effectively and empathise with employees and customers makes them natural leaders. Not forgetting how they embrace challenges and adapt to the ever-evolving business landscape.

As part of our Hi Street campaign, we have met many local women who run small businesses in the area including the wonderful team at The Flower Company of Irthlingborough. This brilliant floristry business has expanded rapidly thanks to owner Jenny's vision and determination, she is a wonderful role model to her team and is huge part of the community in Irthlingborough.

Read our special International Women's Day feature on our [Hi Street Facebook](#) page and the [Hi Street](#) section of our website.

Let's take a moment to celebrate, support, and recognise the invaluable contributions of women-led small businesses on this special day, and all they are doing to inspire inclusion and empower others.

Secondary school places successfully allocated in North Northamptonshire

Supporting children in their education is a priority for the council and moving up to secondary school is a big step on their educational journey.

Last week, children starting Year 7 in England and Wales in September found out about school places.

I am delighted to announce that 96% of applicants have received a place at one of their preference schools.

A total of 4,292 secondary school places for this academic year have been allocated to pupils across North Northamptonshire.

More applications were made online than in previous years - now at 99.4% (up from 99% in 2023).

The following figures apply to pupils' first, second and third preferences:

- **First preference:** 83.01% of applicants (up 3% on last year).
- **Second preference:** 10.51% of applicants (fewer applicants getting second preference compared to 12.1% in 2023).
- **Third preference:** 3.05% of applicants (this has been consistent since 2022).

Families who applied for their secondary school place online before the closing date of 31 October 2023 are able to check their offer on the [School admissions](#) section of our website.

Any parent or carer has the right to [appeal a school place](#) (through the independent appeals process) against refusal of a place at any school to which they have applied.

The next round of secondary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in April.

Primary and Junior school allocations will be announced on Tuesday 16 April.

Government funding boost for transport projects welcomed by North Northamptonshire Council

North Northamptonshire Council has welcomed an announcement from the government of a £149.208million funding injection over seven years from 2025/26 for significant improvements to the local transport network.

From 2025, the Local Transport Fund (LTF) will fund a wide range of projects to improve the local transport connections that people rely on every day, particularly across towns, villages and rural areas.

The funding for North Northamptonshire is part of a wider investment nationally of £4.7billion - announced as part of Network North - with £2.2billion allocated for the Midlands.

The government will develop guidance to enable local authorities to invest in ambitious transport improvements from 2025 through to 2032 which will:

- drive better connectivity within towns and suburbs,
- drive better connectivity between villages and towns, and

- improve everyday local journeys for people.

The money is additional to the funding which was recently announced for the A509 Isham bypass and the A43 dualling between Kettering and Northampton.

This is a substantial allocation of funds to invest in our highway and transport networks.

With previous funding announcements, and assuming we continue to receive existing grants at current levels, this additional funding will bring the total that we will be investing in North Northamptonshire roads to about £418million up to 2034.

Over the next decade this will allow us to tackle major infrastructure projects, complete more resurfacing of the existing network and develop better connectivity within our towns.

A robust and innovative transport infrastructure is essential to unlock future economic growth and improve journey times for commuters as well as in connecting communities and relieving congestion.

The council will now start work on publishing plans on how the money will be spent, as is required. Details will be published on our website in due course.

Rural Business Grant Scheme: Grants of up to £50,000 available

Grants of £5,000 and £50,000 are now available for rural businesses across North Northamptonshire.

Using monies received from the [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#), North Northamptonshire Council has re-launched the [Rural Business Grant Scheme](#) to support existing rural businesses, with applications now open.

Following on from rounds 1 and 2 in 2023, applications are invited from projects that can be started quickly and be delivered with all spend claimed by 28 February 2025. Capital grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 are available in Round 3.

The grant scheme is intended to help rural businesses become more resilient and support growth. A particular target for Round 3 is business diversification and the visitor economy.

Applications for this round of funding must be received by Monday 25 March 2024.

Interested rural businesses who wish to apply for funding in Round 3 are invited to send a request for an application form, eligibility criteria and guidance notes to ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk.

This project is funded by the UK government through the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF).

Grants on offer for voluntary and community organisations across rural North Northamptonshire

Voluntary and community organisations across the rural areas of North Northamptonshire are being urged to come forward and apply for grants of up to £20,000.

Organisations including parish councils, charities, community groups and school Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are all being encouraged to check their eligibility and apply online.

Organisations will be eligible to apply if they can demonstrate that the funding will be used to support the creation of or improvements to local rural green spaces, existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions or active travel enhancements such as community transport.

The money is from the area's allocation of £217,840 for 2024-2025 from the [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#).

Applications are open until 12 noon on Tuesday 2 April 2024.

NNDecarb: Grants for businesses looking to reduce carbon emissions

North Northamptonshire Council has launched the latest round of [NNDecarb](#), a grant scheme to help local businesses to increase energy efficiency, move to a lower carbon economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This grant scheme has proved extremely popular thus far.

Small or medium-sized businesses can now apply for grants up to £5,000 towards 50% of project costs, with the remaining amount to be match funded by the business.

The funding can be used for:

- lighting and lighting controls,
- heating and heating controls,
- insulation,
- energy efficient machinery and equipment (e.g. air compressors),
- solar panels,
- heat pumps,
- biomass boilers,
- energy storage, and
- building energy management systems.

I would encourage businesses looking to reduce their carbon footprint to apply as soon as possible. Every small change we can make as a community will help towards us becoming carbon neutral.

Full details about eligibility and how to apply can be found on the [NNDecarb business grant scheme](#) section of our website.

The deadline for applications is Monday 15 April 2024.

This project is funded by the UK government through the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF).

Postal voters urged to apply early for the May elections

Residents in North and West Northamptonshire are being encouraged to apply early to vote by post for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections this Spring.

On Thursday 2 May, voters across North and West Northamptonshire will go to the polls to elect the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) oversees local policing and fire and rescue services, manages the police and fire and rescue budget, sets council tax rates for policing, and ensures transparent communication about police activities in the community. They will also make key appointments of the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer for the Northamptonshire area.

Deadlines

- [Apply for a postal vote](#): 5pm on Wednesday 17 April
- [Apply for a proxy vote](#): (when someone votes on your behalf): 5pm on Wednesday 24 April.
- [Register to vote](#) in this election on the [GOV.UK](#) website: Tuesday 16 April.

Students have the option of registering at both their home and term-time addresses. If they are in different local authority areas, they can vote in both locations during the election.

ID to vote

The UK government has introduced a requirement for voters to produce accepted photographic identification when voting in person at a polling station. This new requirement will apply to this election.

Voters intending to vote in person are urged to ensure they have one of the acceptable forms of photo [ID to vote](#) prior to attending their polling station. Residents without an eligible form of ID have until 5pm on Wednesday 24 April to apply for a [Voter Authority Certificate](#).

New strategy launched to tackle serious violence in Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire Serious Violence Prevention Partnership (NSVPP) has launched a strategy to tackle crime and serious violence in Northamptonshire, with a specific focus on violence among under 25s.

On Wednesday 6 March, partners gathered alongside community organisations to hear about the NSVPP's plans and the work already being delivered by partners across the county.

Jordan Letts from the Northampton Saints Foundation delivered a presentation around the club's work supporting young people to build a positive future.

Gifford Sutherland from Upskill U spoke about the Exodus Programme, a therapeutic approach co-designed by young people which aims to support those affected by or at risk of violence and exploitation.

Alongside these guest speakers, an incredibly powerful video was shared of Cheri Curran sharing her personal experiences of knife crime, following the loss of her son Louis-Ryan Menezes.

The NSVPP announced its plans to implement a public health approach to violence prevention. This looks at gaining an understanding of the root causes of violence to develop evidence-based interventions which focus on both reduction and prevention. This early intervention creates the opportunity to treat the root causes of violence and to not just tackle it but prevent it.

Partners set out how they will work together, with children and, young people, and wider communities to prevent and reduce serious violence.

They aim to:

- Stabilise and reduce violence in the short-term.
- Understand the underlying causes of violence in the county.
- Co-ordinate Northamptonshire's communities and public organisations to address those causes in the longer term.

In addition to outlining their commitments and aims, the NSVPP emphasised the importance of building upon the fantastic work already being delivered across the county.

Projects such as the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) have been instrumental in addressing violent behaviour among suspected or known gang members and individuals at risk of gang involvement or criminal exploitation. The work of CIRV is now incorporated into the Youth Violence Intervention Unit which provides support and interventions to participants which aim to reduce violent incidents and enhance community safety.

Over 30 OPFCC funded Bleed Kits have been installed across the county in partnership with Off the Streets NN. These kits play a crucial role in providing immediate medical assistance in the event of a violent incident, potentially saving lives.

Teens' sky-high vision gets funding boost for Burton Latimer skate ramp

Young people of Burton Latimer have had a major boost after the dream of two local teenagers got off the ground with a funding boost.

A partnership between North Northamptonshire Council and Burton Latimer Town Council successfully secured a £40,000 grant from the [FCC Communities Foundation](#).

The money will be used to build a new skate facility - complete with a specialist purpose built twin ramp - at the King George IV Recreation Ground in Burton Latimer.

The driving force of the project came from two thirteen-year-olds Alfie Brown and Jamie Neyland after they spent months of hard work lobbying support for the scheme of several hundred local people, including North Northamptonshire Council and Burton Latimer Town, who part-funded the new ramp.

These teenagers have done a wonderful job in getting this project moving forward. They are an inspiration to us all in showing determination to make a difference in their home town.

I would like to thank everyone involved. We are looking forward to seeing the new skate facility take shape over the coming weeks.

Roll out of food waste collections across North Northamptonshire on Executive agenda

Next week, the Executive will discuss plans to introduce food waste collections to the Kettering and Wellingborough areas.

A food waste collection service currently operates across the former Corby and East Northamptonshire areas, with a requirement from central government that all local authorities collect household food waste on a weekly basis from 1 April 2026.

Now councillors will discuss the first phase of the project to roll out collections to all areas of North Northamptonshire and a report asks for approval to accept a grant from Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of £2,495,563 to be used for purchasing food waste containers and collection vehicles.

Further funding is expected from DEFRA to help facilitate the introduction of an area wide service.

If the report is approved, the council will start work to mobilise the new, free service, ensuring it is ready to go live in line with the target of April 2026. As part of the introduction of the new service, residents will be provided with a separate bin and there will be a promotional campaign to inform residents on how to use the service.

Collecting food waste for separate disposal brings environmental benefits as the waste can be processed through a composting process, which produces agricultural fertiliser, as well as energy that can be fed into the national electricity grid. It is a more cost-effective way to dispose of waste, so we can look to spend budgets on other services for residents.

Kettering Library: Vegetation removal works to start next week

As part of the wider project to replace Kettering Library's Grade II listed roof, works are due to start next week (week commencing Monday 11 March) for three days to remove vegetation that has been identified as causing damage to the building.

There may be some disruption for pedestrians using Sheep Street and the Manor House Gardens while these works take place.

All vegetation will be removed from site and composted.

More information about why the works are taking place can be found in our recent press release: [Vegetation causing damage to Kettering Library to be removed.](#)

Further updates about the Kettering Library roof replacement project will be published in due course.

Crackdown on underage riders on Voi e-scooters

North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire Police and e-scooter company, Voi, are urging people not to share their e-scooter accounts with anyone - especially with those under the age of 18.

The age limit for riding a Voi rental e-scooter in Northamptonshire is 18 years old. This has been agreed with North and West Northamptonshire Councils, who manage the e-scooter trials in this area.

Anyone who allows an underage rider to use their account could be banned from Voi - and even face prosecution.

Northamptonshire Police will be carrying out spot checks and patrols on e-scooter riders in the coming weeks to clamp down on underage riders.

Voi e-scooters

To ride a Voi e-scooter in the UK, riders must have either a full or provisional driving licence and meet local age restrictions.

The vast majority of rental e-scooter riders follow the rules and do not share their account with anyone.

However, in the UK, just over 500 Voi riders (out of 1.5 million) have been banned for sharing their accounts with underage riders.

Voi works closely with local authorities to agree to regulations for use of its services, including operating hours, parking zones and minimum age.

Report an incident

If you see someone who you believe is underage riding a Voi e-scooter in Northamptonshire, please report it on the [Report a Voi](#) website or email support@voiapp.io. Please supply as much information as you can, including the date, time, location and, if possible, the e-scooter's four-digit registration number.

NN2NZ Boost for Business (NN2NZ B4B) programme launches to empower local SMEs towards a sustainable future

Electric Places (a trading name of Electric Corby), a leading community interest company (CIC) dedicated to guiding organisations, places, and people to net zero, is excited to announce the launch of the NN2NZ Boost for Business (NN2NZ B4B) programme working with North Northamptonshire Council.

This innovative initiative, aimed at North Northamptonshire small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is set to help businesses develop tailored carbon reduction strategies and foster a green, thriving local economy.

The NN2NZ Boost for Business programme, led by Electric Places, is designed to assist North Northamptonshire businesses to recognise the benefits of carbon reduction.

By formulating comprehensive carbon action plans and assisting with access to grant funds, the programme aims to accelerate North Northamptonshire's transition to a low-carbon future.

This project is funded by the UK government through the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF).

Further information

For more information and key programme highlights, please read the full press release: [NN2NZ Boost for Business \(NN2NZ B4B\) programme launches to empower local SMEs towards a sustainable future](#).

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](#).

- [North Northamptonshire Urban Green Space Strategy - residents survey](#). North Northamptonshire Council has secured just over £1.5M of the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to invest in the creation and improvement to the area's local green spaces, community gardens and watercourse spaces. Delivery of projects is scheduled to be complete by March 2025. The six urban areas identified are Corby, Desborough, Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Higham Ferrers. Closes 18 March 2024.
- [North Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation](#). The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 sets out how, over the next five years, North Northamptonshire Council will work collaboratively with our partners to build on our existing approach and respond to challenges to tackle and help prevent homelessness and support those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We are seeking the views of residents and local partners to understand your views. Closes 31 March 2024.

Forthcoming meetings

Executive

- Thursday 14 March from 10am.

Full Council

- Thursday 25 April 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):

- [North Northamptonshire Council celebrates International Women's Day](#)
- [New strategy launched to tackle serious violence in Northamptonshire](#)
- [Grants on offer for voluntary and community organisations across rural North Northamptonshire](#)
- [Roll out of food waste collections across North Northamptonshire on Executive agenda](#)
- [NN2NZ Boost for Business \(NN2NZ B4B\) programme launches to empower local SMEs towards a sustainable future](#)
- [Secondary school places successfully allocated in North Northamptonshire](#)
- [Grants for businesses looking to reduce carbon emissions launched](#)
- [Government funding boost for transport projects welcomed by North Northamptonshire Council](#)
- [Grants of up to £50,000 for rural businesses available](#)
- [Crackdown on underage riders on Voi e-scooters](#)
- [Postal voters urged to apply early for the May elections](#)
- [Teens' sky-high vision gets funding boost to deliver skate ramp for Burton Latimer](#)

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 (4 to 6 March)

- Work starts today to install cameras on George Street, Corby. An exact go live date for the traffic enforcement measures will be published on NNC's channels soon. More information about the enforcement measures that are due to come in: <https://ow.ly/9Wep50QLuhZ>

(Reach 13,186, Link Clicks 343, Engagement 2,454)

- We would like local people to get involved with our Residents' Panel - and have your input on various local issues and public services. Find out more and sign up: <https://ow.ly/ot5150QH7xf>
(Reach 7,723, Link Clicks 116, Engagement 673)
- Please do not place clothing in your recycling bin. If they are in good condition, clothes can be taken to a charity shop, textiles bank or one of our Household Waste Recycling Centres (tips). Find your nearest HWRC <https://ow.ly/okzw50QcNLT>
(Reach 2,525, Link Clicks 5, Engagement 164)

Top Tweets so far this week (4 to 6 March)

- Work starts today to install cameras on George Street, Corby. An exact go live date for the traffic enforcement measures will be published on NNC's channels soon. More information about the enforcement measures that are due to come in: <https://t.co/zAvYvmMUZQ>
(Impressions 835, URL Clicks 5, Engagements 20)
- Looking for a new job? Have you considered a career in local government? Are you the final piece of the puzzle to make our team the best it can be? Check out our latest vacancies, and we look forward to welcoming you to NNC! <https://t.co/MvHTjgSvKy>
(Impressions 418, URL Clicks 14, Engagements 19)
- A by-election is due to take place on 4 April for a Councillor for Desborough ward on North Northamptonshire Council. To find out more, including key dates and deadlines to apply for postal and proxy votes: <https://t.co/U1SBKeRkLF>
(Impressions 373, URL Clicks 3, Engagements 7)

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.

With Best Wishes,
Jason