

### **Showcasing Norfolk's high tech agriculture industry**

Norfolk businesses at the cutting edge of agri-tech have been on display following a visit from the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to the county.

DEFRA Secretary Stephen Barclay visited the Broadland Food Innovation Centre, at the Food Enterprise Park in Easton, Norfolk, to witness first-hand the range of technological solutions being employed by Norfolk farmers. These included a visit to Fischer Farms' new state-of-the-art 25,000m<sup>2</sup> vertical farm, as well as Club Cultured's fermentation facility.

The Secretary of State, alongside Norfolk County Council Leader, CEO of Norfolk County Council, and the Director of Growth and Investment at Norfolk County Council, were given tours of the cutting-edge facilities, which include some of the most advanced and innovative farming methods in use in the UK.

With over 8,000 businesses and almost 80,000 employees in the agriculture, food and drink sector across Norfolk and Suffolk, our county is one of the leading agri-food locations in the country.

### **Herring Bridge opening**

Norfolk County Council has announced that the official opening of the new Herring Bridge in Great Yarmouth is scheduled for Thursday 1 February.

The bridge will be an important link between Great Yarmouth and Gorleston, providing an economic boost to the region, and improving links throughout the area and across the town.

Final plans and timings for the launch will be announced in the coming days, with time for the public to take a walk on the bridge following the official proceedings, ahead of the road being fully open to traffic later that afternoon.

Local residents are being given the chance to enter into a draw to be among the first people to travel across the new bridge riding aboard the famous seafront road train. Residents can apply for tickets by emailing 'Herring Express' to [Gy3rc@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Gy3rc@norfolk.gov.uk) stating their name and address, how many tickets they require, along with names of all passengers in their party and any special access requirements. Tickets are limited to a maximum of six per family and one entry per household. The competition will close at midnight on 28 January and successful entrants will be contacted the following day.

Motorists are advised that access to William Adams Way from the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout is likely to be closed to through traffic while the event takes place and anyone traveling to the area to watch the proceedings is advised to use public transport or travel on foot where possible.

### **Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is the first fire service to partner with a charity to help those affected by serious road traffic collisions.

The Chief Fire Officer has signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Road Victims Trust (RVT) so fire fighters at the scene of an accident can signpost people to get ongoing help from the charity.

The RVT works to help people impacted by grief or trauma following a road death, serious injury or life-changing collision. It offers emotional and practical help, as well as a specialist counselling service to people across the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

The charity, which started offering its support services in this county last summer after receiving funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, provides free and confidential support for as long as it is needed to those affected by serious collisions – including witnesses.

### **NHS Norfolk and Waveney long-term plans for NHS dental services - consultation**

NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB is launching a 4-week period of public and stakeholder engagement around long-term plans to commission NHS dental services in Norfolk and Waveney.

From 24 January to 21 February, they are asking all stakeholders to provide feedback on the priorities that they have identified to be the focus of their commissioning activities over the next two years. The priorities have been identified from early engagement with dental professionals and their representative bodies. They also considered feedback received from local people as they were developing the Joint Forward Plan, as well as from local Healthwatch organisations and many others.

Proposed priorities are around:

- Urgent care
- Developing capacity in dental teams
- Improving access to dental care
- Promoting good oral health

Feedback can be provided online, by email, or post. An Easy Read version of the survey is also available to download.

Further details and a link to the survey available [here](#).

## **Government updates**

### **Additional funding for local councils**

The government has announced that councils in England will receive a share of £600 million to help ease the financial pressures they face.

This comes after council warnings about cuts to services as a result of growing funding gaps and following a recent letter to the Prime Minister from MPs, including more than 40 Conservatives, asking for extra funding for councils in England to avoid big cuts to services.

The extra money still falls short of what local government leaders say is required. The Local Government Association had argued a figure closer to £1.6bn was required to plug the shortfall in council budgets for the next financial year.

In a written ministerial statement the government says they are making £500m available for social care in England, to be earmarked for rising costs in children's services and adult social care. There will also be an uplift in the government's funding guarantee from 3% to 4% and a further £15m for the Rural Services Delivery Grant.

The statement also sets out how the government expects councils to spend this funding and a focus on securing greater 'efficiency'.

The extra funding will be put into the final Local Government Finance Settlement, which sets out how much core funding councils receive for 2024/25. The settlement will be voted on in Parliament in the coming weeks. It is not yet clear how much Norfolk will receive.

The full written statement from government is available [here](#).

### **Call for criminal record checks for councillors**

The local government minister Simon Hoare has written to upper-tier and unitary authorities "urging" that councillors have their criminal records reviewed before sitting on education or social care committees.

Former chief constable for Norfolk Constabulary, Simon Bailey, made this suggestion in his review of the effectiveness of the disclosure and barring regime in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This work was commissioned by the Home Office.

The letter call for unitary and upper tier authorities to adopt as best practice enhanced criminal record checks provided by the Disclosure and Barring Service ('Enhanced DBS checks') for all councillors being considered for appointment to any committee which discharges education or social services functions.

Further information and a link to the letter [here](#).

### **New guidelines to help directors and business leaders boost their resilience against cyber threats.**

The government has published a draft Code of Practice on cyber security governance to help directors and senior business leaders shore up their defences from cyber threats.

The government is seeking views on the draft code and is inviting responses by 19 March 2024. Link to further information and the online call for views [here](#).

Kind regards

james