

County Councillor's report

April 2025

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The County Council is celebrating the installation of large numbers of EV charging points around Norfolk. I thought it would be a good time to share the following link which provides information about EV charging points for Parish Councils:

[EV charging advice for parish councils and local members - Norfolk County Council](#)

School building costs

The County Council has also recently announced that it has completed the rebuild/relocation of the Fred Nicholson Special School. It caught my attention because the cost of the building work is reported as £23million. The Chapel Green Special School was opened not long after I was first elected, early in 2018. The cost of building Chapel Green was £15million which shows how the costs of such construction projects have increased enormously in recent years.

Rather like our own mortgages, the County Council only accounts for its loan payments in its 'revenue budget' but the costs keep mounting up. It certainly begs a big question about whether we should be thinking differently about large scale building projects that politicians are often so fond of.

Local First Inclusion

Speaking of which, the County Council's attempt to reduce demand on Special Education Needs and Disabilities services (SEND) is the 'Local First Inclusion' (LFI) programme. It is underpinned by government funding (called the 'Safety Valve'). At first it was warned by the government that it wasn't delivering enough savings and the Safety Valve money might be withdrawn. We recently had an updated report at the County Council's Scrutiny Committee and officers seem more positive. But the SEND landscape is very much up in the air at the moment as the government is planning major reforms.

I was glad that the report we received reflected my request that it reported on the impact on children as much as the impact on the council's budget. But at the Scrutiny Committee meeting I suggested the Council should be measuring the impact of its own reforms (LFI) over a long period of time – ten years or more – to see what effect it was having on children and their families. They took this on board.

Historic Rights of Way

I've received the following information about registering Historic Rights of Way which may be of interest. I was also sent the Norfolk Trails 'Tube Map' which I have attached and which is pretty funky.

- **The original deadline of 1 January 2031 was scrapped on 26 December 2024.**
Summary on [gov.uk webpage](#)

Local authorities have struggled under the burden of recording historic rights of way, which are estimated to stretch over 40,000 miles, by the 2031 cut-off date introduced by the last government. The government's move to reverse that decision means these paths will no longer be lost to the public. A healthy and thriving natural environment which everyone can access is a critical part of delivering long-term sustainable change across the country. Boosting access to nature will also help drive economic growth in rural communities, as part of the government's Plan for Change. The announcement follows on from earlier action in December to mark the 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which included announcing strengthened powers for our National Parks and National Landscapes so that can deliver more for nature and people.

- **Further information is provided on the [DEFRA Government webpage](#) confirming the above.**

Local authorities will now have the required time to assess whether paths meet the requirements to be added to the “definitive map”. This is the legal record of public rights of way and was established by the Atlee government when they passed the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 75 years ago this month. Once a right of way has been established the relevant local authority will then be legally responsible for maintaining them along with the appropriate landowner. This will ensure paths are maintained properly allowing more people to experience the benefits of spending time in the outdoors. Repealing the cut-off date for historical rights of way is just one of the ways we're improving access to nature. There's lots of exciting work happening to help more families enjoy the benefits of nature.

- **The [Norfolk County Council website](#) (13th dropdown on the page) is in the process of being updated to reflect these recent changes and is not currently accurate.** This has been flagged with Corporate Comms and the Public Rights of Way Teams. The rest of the information on this dropdown providing advice on how to make a modification application and who to contact is correct.

Orsted Community Grants

You might have received this direct but in case not, I received this about the Orsted Windfarms Community Grants:

For more information about Ørsted's Community Benefit Funds please visit our website www.grantscape.org.uk

If any colleagues or potential applicant groups would like to receive future newsletters and updates directly they can register via our website www.grantscape.org.uk/fund/orsted-community-benefit-funds-newsletter

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