

Leader's Update

12 July 2024

Issue: 78

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- Final steps being taken for new provider to run bus route in North Northamptonshire.
- New single taxi zone to be introduced.
- Carbon reduction measures for three council-owned facilities.
- Grants of up to £50,000 for rural businesses available - apply by Friday 26 July.
- Eligibility criteria widened on grants on offer to make energy saving home improvements for hundreds of residents using off-gas heating.
- More than £3 million spend on extra SEND places at schools across Kettering approved.
- Council announces new Executive Director of Children's Services.
- Fun for North Northamptonshire youngsters and their families.
- Summer Reading Challenge 2024 - Marvellous Makers making its way to you from your local library.
- Keepers urged to register their poultry or captive birds.

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!

Final steps being taken for new provider to run bus route in North Northamptonshire

Moves are being made to guarantee that a bus service connecting the towns of Wellingborough and Bozeat will continue to operate uninterrupted.

North Northamptonshire Council is making final arrangements to secure an operator for the W8 service - which also runs through Wollaston - after the previous provider gave notice on running the route.

The new provider would pick up operating the council-subsidised service on Monday 29 July - the date the current contract is due to cease.

We are committed to keeping communities connected, which has multiple benefits all round for our residents and for local businesses.

It's great that we are able to step in and find a new provider and our aim is to be able to do this without a gap in service.

New single taxi zone to be introduced

In yesterday's meeting of the council's Executive, members discussed the findings of a consultation process on the potential removal of the hackney carriage zones in North Northamptonshire. View [Hackney Carriage De-zoning](#) report.

For the purposes of taxi licensing, the previous former authority area zones were retained: Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough.

Each zone continued to license its own taxis and drivers as well as operate to the byelaws in existence for that former area. A driver and vehicle wishing to operate across the whole of North Northamptonshire currently would need to obtain four, separate licenses.

In late 2023 to early 2024, the council consulted on whether the four current zones should be retained or replaced with one zone covering the whole of North Northamptonshire. View [North Northamptonshire Hackney Carriage de-zoning and byelaw review](#).

Yesterday, the Executive considered the consultation responses received alongside the recommendations of the Licensing and Appeals Committee and the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Executive agreed to replace the four hackney carriage zones (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough) with a single North Northamptonshire Council zone from 1 April 2025.

The Executive also agreed that officers will consult upon a revised geographical/knowledge test for drivers before the single zone is introduced. Consideration will also be given to the trade's representation regarding the age of vehicles.

We have been one council for three years now and work has been ongoing to align services and ensure consistency across the local area. One single North Northamptonshire taxi zone should help us achieve this.

Carbon reduction measures for three council-owned facilities

The Executive received a report yesterday on a decarbonisation project that will help contribute towards the council's green targets. View [Decarbonisation Project at Corby Cube, Corby International Pool and Desborough Leisure Centre](#) report.

Three facilities - Corby Cube, Corby International Pool and Desborough Leisure Centre - are all set to have works completed to help the sites reduce carbon levels and be more energy efficient.

Following the completion of energy surveys of council buildings, the authority made a grant bid under the Public Services Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for energy improvement works at the three properties.

The council has been awarded a grant of £3.858million against a total project cost of £4.384million under the Government-run scheme.

The Executive approved the project and allocated £601,000, alongside the grant funds, to the project budget.

The project will be another step towards the delivery of the council's Carbon Management Plan. It is estimated that, once the decarbonisation project is complete across the three sites, 690 tonnes of carbon would be removed annually, a 3% reduction of the council's carbon footprint for its operations of 20,084 tonnes.

The project will see fossil fuel boilers replaced with air source heat pumps and the installation of photovoltaic panels at the facilities, alongside other energy efficiency measures.

This project is a key part of the council's commitment to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030, it developed its carbon management plan, which was published in December 2022 and set out intentions to tackle climate change and reduce CO2 emissions.

The project team is set to go out to procurement for a contractor for the whole project, with works needing to be completed by March 2026. They will be working with operators and users of these buildings to minimise the impact wherever possible.

Buildings like those included in this project are important assets to our communities but they also produce a huge amount of carbon, and it is vital that we look at ways to mitigate this, not just for our current residents but for future generations too.

Grants of up to £50,000 for rural businesses available - apply by Friday 26 July

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, the council has re-launched a grant scheme to support existing rural businesses, with applications now open.

Following on from three earlier rounds of the grant schemes, applications are now being accepted for projects that can start quickly and be delivered in full by 28 February 2025. A particular target for this round is rural diversification, including business diversification and projects which support the visitor economy.

Examples of projects supported in earlier rounds include:

- New Lodge Farm in Bulwick who extended their café and farm shop.
- Austin Davis Biologics who have been able to move into a larger, refurbished facility in Islip.
- Measures Farm in Hemington who developed a new dog field.
- We Don't Do Ordinary who invested in tourist accommodation at Wallis Mill, Brigstock.

The previous three rounds of this grant scheme have made such a difference to a variety of rural business, including farms being able to diversify their offering to appeal to a wider range of customers. With this fourth round, more and more businesses should benefit. Please see our press release: [North Northants allocated £1.1m of funding for rural communities and businesses](#).

Applications for this round of funding must be received by Friday 26 July. Interested rural businesses who wish to apply for funding in Round 4 should email ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk to request an application form, eligibility criteria and guidance notes.

This project is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Eligibility criteria widened on grants on offer to make energy saving home improvements for hundreds of residents using off-gas heating

More residents with off-gas heating systems across North Northamptonshire are being urged to apply for a grant aimed at providing energy-saving upgrades to their homes.

Earlier this year, the council announced the availability of the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2), a scheme aimed at providing energy-saving upgrades to residents with off-gas heating systems.

The household income threshold has now increased to £36,000, up from £31,000, to ensure that more families can benefit from this initiative.

The HUG2 program offers free-of-charge energy-saving improvements that will not only keep homes warm but may also help residents manage their heating bills efficiently. Whether you own your home, privately rent, or are a private landlord with tenants, you may qualify to apply.

The grant is available to households meeting specific criteria, including not being heated by mains gas, having a combined annual income of less than £36,000, and having a home that an Energy Performance Certificate declares as 'hard to heat.'

Landlords are also encouraged to apply.

The scheme aims to phase out the use of fossil fuel heating, supporting the UK's 2050 Net Zero commitment and promoting household health and well-being through the reduction of cold homes.

Please visit the [Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2](#) section of our website for more information including eligibility criteria, examples of energy saving improvements and application details.

Council announces new Executive Director of Children's Services

The council has appointed Charisse Monero as the new Executive Director of Children's Services at the authority.

Charisse Monero is currently the Assistant Director for Transformation in Islington Council, where she is responsible for leading and spearheading an expansive portfolio of strategic and pioneering transformation programmes, across Children's and Corporate services, designed to deliver significant improvements, improved outcomes and a lasting positive impact for children and families.

Charisse Monero said: "I am delighted to be appointed as the permanent Executive Director of Children's services in North Northamptonshire and look forward to joining the senior leadership team.

"I was very impressed by the progressive and pioneering ambition to deliver excellent, high-quality services to the children and families in North Northamptonshire, supporting them to achieve the best outcomes and life chances.

"I am excited to build upon the good foundation already in place and to continue to deliver improvements to achieve outstanding services for children and families in North Northamptonshire."

Adele Wylie, Chief Executive of North Northamptonshire Council, said: "I am delighted that Charisse will be joining us in this vitally important senior leadership role at the council. Keeping children safe and improving life chances for young people is one of the council's top priorities.

"Charisse shone out as having the right skills to build on the progress that has been made to date. I look forward to working with Charisse as we drive forward on our journey of improving services to the children and young people in North Northamptonshire."

More than £3 million spend on extra SEND places at schools across Kettering approved

North Northamptonshire Council's Executive has approved a report recommending a £3,143,100 spend on providing 48 more places in mainstream education for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across Kettering.

The funding will ensure that units are provided at Greenfields Primary School and Southfield School for Girls by September 2025.

The council has liaised with the respective schools and Trusts, who have confirmed they can accommodate the units and are able to agree to manage the proposed scheme if approved.

The SEND unit at Greenfields Primary School, part of the David Ross Education Trust in Kettering, will address the needs of speech, language and communication. The unit will provide 32 places over two academic years for children aged two to 11-years-old.

The scheme includes a new building and a part adaptation of an existing bungalow to open in September 2025. The project is anticipated to be completed by September 2025.

The SEND unit at Southfield School for 11-to-18-year-old girls, part of the Orbis Education Trust, will address the needs of a further 16 pupils with or being assessed for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH).

The scheme includes the refurbishment of existing mobile classrooms and the installation of a teaching block including toilets for September 2024.

Fun for North Northamptonshire youngsters and their families

This Summer we want to get young people moving and help keep them entertained. Many of the activities on offer are either free or low cost, so there should be something to suit all circumstances.

Events and sessions will be running from Wednesday 24 July across the North Northamptonshire area at community centres, parks, open spaces and leisure centres.

These include free Turn up and Play sessions for 8-to-14-year-olds, running in Corby, Kettering, Rushden and Wellingborough.

East Northamptonshire and Kettering areas are offering Xplorer sessions. These free, all-ages, family-friendly, fun navigation challenges are both educational and give children a sense of adventure as they explore the park to find the markers.

Our four Active Family Fun Days, suitable for all ages, will be running again this year. These will take place on Wednesday afternoons in August with fun days running in Corby, Kettering, Rushden and Wellingborough.

Two ICanWeCanYouCan events will be held at Rushden Lakes and in Corby town centre to link in with the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We have teamed up with local sports clubs and physical activity providers so that families can try a new sport or activity for free, and find out where they can take part on a more regular basis.

I am also delighted that we continue to support residents during the cost-of-living crisis by running Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) sessions through our provider Northamptonshire Sport for families with youngsters on free school meals. This Summer this will also, for the first time, include swimming and Picnic in the Park sessions.

Please visit the [Summer activities](#) section of our website for full details.

Summer Reading Challenge 2024 - Marvellous Makers making its way to you from your local library

This Summer, children aged between four and 11 can visit any North Northamptonshire library to join the 'Marvellous Makers' Summer Reading Challenge, firing up their imaginations through the power of reading.

In partnership with Create, a leading arts charity, and the Reading Agency, this year's challenge celebrates children's creativity and storytelling abilities.

Children will be encouraged to explore new books and stories while taking part in free activities, from arts and crafts to music, dance, and more. Libraries will be offering a vibrant array of arts and crafts themed events for children over the Summer from tie-dye and bee bot workshops, magic shows, fizzing dinosaur eggs, pirate parties and much more.

The bespoke challenge artwork is illustrated by celebrated artist Natelle Quek, bringing the 'Marvellous Makers' theme vibrantly to life. By reading books and collecting incentives at the local library young readers can foster their creative thinking skills over the summer break.

Nurturing a love of reading is so important as not only is it a vital skill but can also be wonderfully enjoyable.

This is a long-established scheme which has always proven to be tremendously popular, and I would encourage as many children as possible to sign up this year. Children can sign up to the challenge anytime at their local library from now onwards.

Keepers urged to register their poultry or captive birds

The council is reminding people who keep poultry or captive birds to register with the Animal and Plant Health Agency before Tuesday 1 October.

From the beginning of October, new requirements for all bird keepers who keep their poultry outdoors - regardless of the size of their flock - will be introduced that which will require anyone who owns captive birds or poultry to officially register their birds.

Currently those keepers with less than 50 birds can register voluntarily.

The new rules cover owners of backyard flocks, birds of prey and pigeon fanciers, but do not affect caged pet birds (excluding any poultry species) kept inside a domestic dwelling - like a parrot, canary or budgie.

Registering their birds will mean that keepers will receive important updates relevant to them, including details of local avian disease outbreaks, any associated restrictions and information on how to help protect their flocks. This will help manage future, potential disease outbreaks (including bird flu) and help to limit any spread.

Keepers will also be able to keep up to date with the latest national and regional guidance.

Keepers can register their birds and poultry on the GOV.UK website at [Poultry and other captive birds: registration rules and forms](#).

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](#).

- [We would like to hear your views on services for adults who are Autistic or have Mental Health Needs](#). North Northamptonshire Council is currently recommissioning services in partnership with the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) for adults aged 18 and over. Commissioners are seeking views from local residents, families/carers and professionals in relation to accommodation and support services for individuals with Mental Health Needs and those who are Autistic. Closes 28 July 2024.
- [Application under the Environmental Permitting \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2016, as amended - Northants Concrete Group Ltd, Earls Barton](#). The company known as Northants Concrete Group Ltd, 9-11 Whitehouse Industrial Estate, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire NN6 0HJ has applied to North Northamptonshire Council for a permit to operate an installation for the storing, loading or unloading of cement or cement clinker in bulk prior to further transportation in bulk. Closes 30 July 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):

- [Fun for North Northamptonshire youngsters and their families](#)
- [Summer Reading Challenge 2024 - Marvellous Makers making its way to you from your local library](#)
- [Final steps being taken for new provider to run bus route in North Northamptonshire](#)
- [Grants of up to £50,000 for rural businesses available - apply by 26 July](#)
- [New taxi zone to be discussed at Executive](#)
- [Carbon reduction measures for three council-owned facilities on Executive agenda](#)
- [Keepers urged to register their poultry or captive birds](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council supports Armed Forces Week](#)
- [Progress made on Kettering Library roof project](#)
- [Catapults, crafts and community - the Romans return to The Chester House Estate this summer](#)
- ['Fascinating discovery' unearthed at Northamptonshire heritage site by university student](#)
- [Young North Northamptonshire residents to get water safety advice](#)
- [Residents reminded of the need for photo ID when voting](#)
- [More than £3 million spend on extra SEND places at schools across Kettering approved](#)
- [Council announces new Executive Director of Children's Services](#)
- [Eligibility criteria widened on grants on offer to make energy saving home improvements for hundreds of residents using off-gas heating](#)
- [How do the constituency boundary changes impact you - information to voters](#)
- [Carbon Management Plan annual report to be discussed by Executive](#)
- [North Northants pauses to remember on D-Day](#)

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 (8 to 10 July)

- Strategy for improved North Northamptonshire bus services to be discussed by Executive <https://ow.ly/O5tr50SwMBB>.
(Reach 30,396, Link Clicks 118, Engagement 2,364).
- Carbon reduction measures for three council-owned facilities on Executive agenda <https://ow.ly/BkOF50SwOec>.
(Reach 4,251, Link Clicks 30, Engagement 359).
- North Northamptonshire children will have a summer to remember as we bring a range of activities to local children across the summer holidays. Find an adventure online <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/summeractivities>.
(Reach 3,358, Link Clicks 18, Engagement 104).

Top Tweets so far this week (8 to 10 July)

- Strategy for improved North Northamptonshire bus services to be discussed by Executive <https://ow.ly/XzOt50SwMBA>.
(Impressions 440).
- 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 345).
- Celebrations mark 50 glorious years of Wellingborough Library <https://ow.ly/yw4h50SwMyh>.
(Impressions 305).

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

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