

Barry Stone - County Councillor for the Loddon Division

Parish Council Report - December 2016

Key Issues



Devolution Update

The Devolution proposals which I have mentioned previously will now not go ahead as the only two remaining Districts, South Norfolk and Broadland, were not regarded as being a sufficient number to continue. The Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, expressed his disappointment but reiterated that if any of the four remaining District Councils voted to withdraw from the process then the deal would be 'off the table'.

At the moment no further offer is being considered but leaders have made it clear that negotiations will continue to find an economic solution for Norfolk going forward and that at this stage no future options have been ruled out.

Buses

After 2 ½ months of operation of the new bus services, passenger usage has been reviewed and attached are proposed, revised timetables.

Points to highlight are...

Service 86

- The service to and from Norwich will revert back to a direct service, rather than a connection at Poringland.
- The timetable, and as a result, visiting times in Norwich and Beccles has been revised significantly.
- Concessionary passes would be accepted prior to 0930 on the 0905 from Loddon to Beccles
- There would be revised fares, to be confirmed at a later date.

Service 85A

Please note the days of operation of the service, specifically the first and last journeys of the day would operate only on college days, the Anglian 85 service would serve Claxton all year round on the first journey in and last journey from Norwich, (0810 arrival in Norwich, and 1815 from Norwich)

Concessionary passes would be accepted prior to 0930 on the 0915 from Loddon

Wherryman's Way Pits Lane-Chedgrave Common Update

Work on the footpath in Chedgrave is still ongoing. The bad weather we had recently did cause some delays for our progress in the Carr. But we're back on top of things now and making good progress.

The footpath from the moorings to the culvert is complete. The section from the culvert to Pitts Lane involves a lot less work, so as long as the weather holds, should be completed ahead of the Xmas break. An extra resource has also been added to the site team to help with the progress.

It might be worthwhile for the PC to mention in their newsletter that although the footpath will re-open, the bank will still need time to re-establish a good grass cover and that users should restrict themselves to the surfaced footpath to avoid damaging the floodbank.

Once reopened the path will again be fully accessible between the 24 hour moorings and Pits Lane (subject to the EA's request that walkers restrict themselves to the new path surface until vegetation can establish).

As the new footpath surface extends to the 24 hour moorings only, the EA have requested that access remains restricted beyond this point (heading east) where the floodbank continues for a short stretch before turning inland. This is also required to allow vegetation to establish to protect the newly formed floodbank from erosion. This will, unfortunately, delay the intended reopening of the accessible section of the Hardley Flood path up to the second (elevated) bridge until next spring.

NorseCare recognised for high quality care provision

Over 700 people from care organisations from around the country attended a ceremony in London, where NorseCare picked up the award for Care Home Group of the year and Lloyd Court Housing with Care scheme in High Kelling, North Norfolk collected the award for Care Team of the Year.

Judges spoke about how the care provided to residents and tenants in NorseCare homes and housing with care schemes is person-centred, how they engage in activities, how well-being and social interaction is promoted, as well as how the care homes are actively made to feel homely for residents. They felt that NorseCare demonstrated these characteristics well and awarded Norse the Care Home Group category against strong competition from some of the largest care companies in the country

Lloyd Court's care team were recognised as the best in the country for their continued delivery of high quality care, their enthusiasm in enabling the tenants living at the housing with care team to maintain their independence and meaningful lives as well as their compassion to care for people at the end of their lives.

Broadband speed issues or faults

In the event of any problems relating to broadband faults or speed issues customers in the first instance should contact their internet service provider (ISP) (e.g BT, Sky, Virgin Media). Internet service providers will be able to identify if the issue is something they will be able to fix or if it is an issue with the infrastructure they will escalate it to Openreach. Openreach can only work with internet service providers, not directly with members of the public, in order to ensure that all ISPs are treated equally.

Many internet service providers have guidance available on their websites which can alert customers if there is an existing network problem in their area and this often includes information on how long it will take to be resolved. Their websites also provide guidance for users to help identify if there is anything they can do to resolve the issue (e.g changing a wifi channel). If internet advice is unavailable most providers will offer a similar service over the telephone.

It is very important for everyone to report faults to their internet service provider so the provider can understand the extent of the issue and pass it on to Openreach if necessary. People should not assume that if they see an Openreach vehicle in the area that their fault is being fixed – they should always check with their service provider.

Mobile Phone Coverage

The Broadband, Mobile Phone and Digital Working Group has met with representatives from the four main mobile network operators (EE, O2, Three and Vodafone). We learnt that mobile operators have an agreement with government to achieve 90% geographic voice coverage across the country by the end of 2017. We understand that operators are on track to meet this commitment which should also result in an increase in 4G data coverage. In turn the government is reviewing the Electronic Communications code to help operators deploy new infrastructure – particularly important in rural areas.

Mobile UK, who represent mobile operators, **have stated** that the government will review the coverage situation once the 90% coverage target has been achieved and the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) has been deployed. The ESN is the new communications system that will be used by the Police, Fire & Rescue, the Ambulance Service and other public safety users. MobileUK said that 'where public money is used to subsidise ESN expansion in rural areas, the infrastructure will be made available to all mobile operators.'

Network operators are working together to share sites and improve infrastructure. However they are still commercially independent so the operators will not publically share future coverage plans. However operators do advise that customers should use a coverage checker to determine the best network for the places where they will be using their mobile phone. Most mobile phone operators have a coverage checker available on their own website but there is also a coverage checker available on the OFCOM

website. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/advice/mobile-coverage-checker>

NCC Children's Services – Ofsted Monitoring Report and change in Director

Children's Services has a new director. Andrew Bunyan started work this week as the interim director on Monday, following the resignation of Michael Rosen at the end of last week. The new appointment came shortly after a letter from Ofsted, providing their latest monitoring report on the service.

The letter reported modest improvements but is critical in some areas of social work practice, particularly some lack of consistency and speed of improvement. It invites us to be "ruthless" in pursuing improvement at all levels.

First countywide gritting run of the season takes place

Friday last week saw the first significant cold weather of the season, with road surface temperatures dipping below freezing throughout most of Norfolk for the first time.

NCC's fleet of gritting lorries headed out to treat more than 2,000 miles of the county's roads with a specially formulated salt designed to prevent ice forming on the road surface. More than a third of Norfolk's roads are on the council's 49 regular gritting routes, including all A and B-class roads and some C-class roads, and each route takes around three hours for a gritter lorry to treat.

Every year when the weather gets cold, NCC launches its Norfolk Winter information-sharing campaign, designed to help people in the county cope during the colder months. Regular gritting updates and other useful advice are posted on social media channels, using the #norfolkwinter hashtag on Twitter and on the Norfolk Facebook page (www.facebook.com/norfolkcc).

People can check which roads are on the council's gritting routes for the 2016/17 season by looking at the map at www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting. On the same map people can find the locations of the more than 1,800 grit bins in the county that are filled by the County Council and which people can use on public pavements, cycle paths and roads.

For more information about the council's Norfolk Winter campaign, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/norfolkwinter. For more information about gritting in Norfolk, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting.

Finally I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

