

A resident called to say that they were concerned about the condition of a hedge in the village which, they felt, was encroaching on the pavement and causing pedestrians to have to walk in the road as a result. They wanted the parish council to write to the resident to ask them to take action to remedy this.

If possible, could you have a look at the hedge, at 30 Yarmouth Road (next to The Olive Tree, on its western side) and see if you feel this is warranted?

Thank you.

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill¹

Based on the latest guidance and summaries of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, here is a comprehensive list of powers that Mayors of Strategic Authorities will have under the new legislation.

The powers outlined in the bill were anticipated in the devolution White Paper, although the bill describes them in more detail.

Powers devolved to Mayors.

1. Housing and strategic planning

- Strategic Authorities will be required to have a Spatial Development Strategy, SDS, (this power is devolved to the strategic authority and not the mayor). An SDS complements and does not replace local plans.
- The Mayor will have:
 - Similar planning powers to the Mayor of London. This includes the ability to direct refusal of planning applications of potential strategic importance (eg large or prominent schemes), and the ability to call in these applications (for example, unpopular schemes). In practice this power will only cover a handful of schemes, with the vast majority continuing to be managed by the planning authorities. These would be significant housing and commercial developments.
 - Powers for mayors to raise a mayoral community infrastructure levy. This levy:
 - Is intended to support local infrastructure projects that align with the MCCA's local growth plan.
 - Will be governed by specific voting and governance arrangements, likely requiring a majority vote within the combined authority or strategic authority.
 - Builds on the existing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) framework but gives mayors a strategic funding tool to support regional development.
 - This funding stream could be used to provide local funding for strategic infrastructure projects such as the NWL or other larger infrastructure schemes where it has become increasingly difficult for NCC to provide local match.
 - The Bill extends the powers to create Mayoral Development Corporations to all mayors of Combined Authorities (CAs) and Combined County Authorities (CCAs). The Bill will require Local Planning Authorities to be consulted and to approve the MDO. Where the LPA(s) do not approve the order, the Mayor can request that the Secretary of State approve the order instead. This request is not automatic and will likely be dealt with through an Inquiry procedure, led by an Independent Planning Inspector.
 - Only a small number of MDCs have been established so far, and are usually used to bring forward regeneration of complex urban sites. The

¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

¹ [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

mayor would need the MCCA to approve a budget to establish and run an MDC.

2. Transport and Infrastructure

- As anticipated in some transport powers will transfer from NCC and SCC to the MCCA – day to day management of local roads and budgets for road maintenance etc will still come to the county council.
- The Bill allows Strategic Authorities to charge a transport levy to their constituent councils to fund their activities. This funding would be expected to come from funding provided to the authorities from the DfT. The Strategic Authority will also be able to pay grants to constituent councils to support the delivery of transport activities.
- The Mayor will have:
 - Oversight of local transport networks, including bus franchising or enhanced partnerships and integrated ticketing.
 - Power to designate a key route network that are considered some of the “most important local roads in an area”, they can then “direct constituent highways authorities” in the use of their powers.
 - Influence over major infrastructure projects and investment priorities.

3. Economic Growth and regeneration

- The Bill introduces a statutory duty to produce a Local Growth Plan (LGP) to include shared priorities with government and an investment pipeline.
- The Bill requires certain public organisations to “have regard” to the shared priorities in the LGP. This is helpful as government and other bodies will be required to cooperate with and have regard to the plan. Organisations can be named and will be required to consider the shared priorities when bidding for government funding.
- Strategic Authorities will be required to work with LGPs on local projects that deliver social or economic benefits for local communities.
- The Mayor will have:
 - Power to lead local economic strategies.
 - Authority to attract investment and support business growth.

4. Skills and employment support

- Authority over adult education budgets and skills provision, together with the budget.
- Power to shape local training and employment initiatives.

5. Health and well being

- A new legal requirement for MCCAs to ‘have regard’ to the need to improve the health of people in their areas and reduce health inequalities.
- No powers around health are being taken from the county council.
- The Mayor will have:
 - Influence over local NHS and public health priorities.

6. Police and fire

- The Bill will allow a mayor to take over the functions of more than one PCC and more than one Fire and Rescue service (Mayors can only take on one of each at the moment)
- PCCs are not expected to merge – but FRAs could. FRA mergers are possible under existing legislation, however mergers would be determined locally.
- Oversight of community safety initiatives.

7. Climate and Environment

- No new powers. Government is committed to exploring future opportunities in this area.

Flexibility Mechanisms

- **Right to Request Further Powers**
 - Mayors can formally request additional powers, funding, or partnerships from central government.
 - This will be helpful as it would enable the Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA to secure additional funding and powers which have been given to other MCCAs.
 - It also provides an opportunity to negotiate powers over areas such as flooding and energy.

Powers of Competence

The Bill gives Mayors of Strategic Authorities new powers, to give them the means to drive growth, collaboration and improvements within their areas. These are:

1. **General Power of Competence** - allows mayors and their authorities to do anything an individual can do, unless explicitly prohibited by law.
2. **Power to Convene** - enables mayors to convene local partners (e.g. public services, businesses, voluntary sector) to address strategic challenges.
3. **Duty for Partners to Respond** - when a mayor uses the power to convene, local partners are legally required to respond.
4. **Duty to Collaborate** - requires mayors of neighbouring Strategic Authorities to formally collaborate where appropriate.

Norwich Castle Keep reopens following £27m redevelopment

Norwich Castle Keep reopened to visitors following a comprehensive five-year redevelopment project that introduced new accessibility features alongside new galleries and interpretive displays.

Funded by £12 million from Norfolk County Council and over £13 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, all five floors of the newly named People's Palace were opened to the public for the first time ever.

The Grade I listed castle, originally commissioned by William the Conqueror 900 years ago and completed by his son Henry I in 1121, retained its historic significance while embracing modern improvements.

A new light-filled atrium adjacent to the Keep was unveiled in the first phase of the redevelopment in July 2024. Visitors also benefited from a new café, gift shop, and additional toilet facilities to enhance the visitor experience.

Importantly, a lift was installed to provide full wheelchair accessibility throughout the Keep, allowing access from the basement all the way up to the battlements, where visitors could enjoy panoramic views across Norwich.

Nationally recognised 'AI programme to be rolled out across Norfolk to prevent falls

A new, nationally recognised proactive intervention scheme is rolling out across the whole of Norfolk. The initiative will be delivered in collaboration with local partners including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), city, district and borough Councils and NHS organisations, aims to reduce falls in vulnerable and older adults.

Following a successful pilot with 1250 residents, the programme, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify residents at risk of escalating needs, enhances the safety and wellbeing of those at risk of falls. The latest Artificial Intelligence technology, natural language processing is used to 'read' case notes and automatically extract meaningful insight about our residents. This technology enables the council to identify and prioritise individuals in Norfolk most at risk of falling, allows for proactive intervention before they fall.

AI is a rapidly developing technology with the potential to improve the delivery of services. The council is using AI to benefit the people of Norfolk in a safe, ethical and transparent way.

Falls are a major concern, particularly among older or vulnerable adults, and can lead to severe injuries and a decline in quality of life. Through this programme, the council will be able to predict people who are at higher risk and offer timely and targeted interventions to support them.

For more information about preventing falls visit [Preventing and dealing with falls](#).

Congratulations and support extended to further education students on results day

Students across the country received their A level, T Level and Level 3 VTQs results.

Every year sees students facing decisions over what to do next with a growing variety of options available for young people at 18.

There's lots of support available to all students, whatever their grades and plans, so they can make decisions about next steps with clear advice on courses and careers.

There's also plenty of help and advice for those who may have not done as well as expected, have changed their mind about their plans, or who don't have anything in place for September.

- Norfolk County Council's [Help You Choose website](#) offers information and support to young people with the different options available to them and advice on next steps whatever their results. The section "[Choices at 18+](#)" includes links and support with education & learning, CV writing, apprenticeship vacancies, health and wellbeing, voluntary work, work experience, information about different careers, and much more. There is also a section for parents or carers to help them understand the different options for their young person.
- [UCAS offers guidance](#) to support students through the process of securing a university place with information about insurance choices [and clearing](#). Anyone who has just missed out on the grades they need they should contact the admissions team at their preferred university, as they may still be able to offer them a place. There are already nearly 30,000 courses available in clearing this year so there will be plenty of high-quality choices available.
- Students can find out more about education and training choices by visiting [Post 18 options | National Careers Service](#). During the exam results period, the hub will also have key information on resits, clearing, appeals and more. Students can also chat directly to an expert adviser via webchat or by calling the National Careers Service exam results helpline on 0800 100 900 on weekdays between 8am and 8pm and Saturday 10am to 5pm.
- Norfolk and Waveney's Children and Young People's Health Services [Just One Norfolk](#) website offers mental health support and helpful advice on managing anxiety.

Repton Property delivers £1 million dividend

Repton Property Developments, Norfolk County Council's wholly-owned property development company, has announced a £1 million dividend to the county council after a successful 2024/25 financial year.

This follows a £735,000 dividend paid out last year, bringing the total returned to the authority to over £1.7 million in just two years.

Established in July 2017, Repton was created with the aim of unlocking the value of underutilised council-owned land and buildings, while generating financial returns to ease the pressure on the public purse.

Since its inception, Repton has focused on building high-quality and environmentally conscious housing developments across Norfolk.

Long Stratton Bypass opens to traffic

Motorists using the A140 south of Norwich begun using the long awaited Long Stratton Bypass for the first time during August.

This project is a true collaboration with South Norfolk Council and Norfolk Homes, with developer contributions and major funding commitments from The Department for Transport, Greater Norwich Growth Board and South Norfolk Council supporting the project's (£46.9m) overall budget.

Norfolk celebrates 2 million journeys by Beryl

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Beryl and National Grid, is celebrating a major milestone for the county's innovative shared transport scheme, which has now recorded more than **two million journeys** since its launch in March 2020.

The total of 2,057,859 trips covers an impressive 5.79 million kilometres, the equivalent of riding around the world 144 times. By swapping car journeys for two wheels, riders have helped save around 990 tonnes of CO₂, keeping Norwich's air cleaner, streets less congested, and communities healthier.

Over 100,000 people have used the scheme, with the average active rider taking 20.8 trips.

Journeys are made up of:

- 424,186 pedal bike rides
- 407,292 e-bike rides
- 1,226,350 e-scooter rides

Feedback from users shows that 41% of these journeys would otherwise have been made by driving or being a passenger in a private car, and a further 24% would have taken a taxi or ride-hailing service, while 5% would have used a motorbike or moped instead.

For more information, [visit the Beryl website](#).

Road treatment brings long-term benefits to Norfolk

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with Roadtechs Group, has successfully completed a record-breaking road rejuvenation project on the A1066 near Thetford, delivering long-term benefits for local communities, businesses and the environment.

In just under five hours, over 9km of the A1066 was treated with Reclamite, a sustainable asphalt rejuvenator that extends the life of road surfaces and helps prevent potholes. This marks the largest area of highway ever to be treated with Reclamite in a single shift in the UK.

The A1066 is a vital route connecting Thetford and Diss, serving local residents, businesses, and the Shadwell Estate. By completing the work in one shift under a full road closure, the Council significantly reduced disruption for road users, reopening the road before the evening rush hour.

This treatment is designed to extend the life of the surface to prevent it needing full resurfacing at a cost of £3.7 million and taking up to 11 weeks to complete. Instead, this innovative approach has saved time, money, and carbon, producing just 2.31 tonnes of CO₂e compared to 508 tonnes for a traditional resurfacing project.