



DEMAND BETTER FOR NORFOLK



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Better,

Greener,

Prosperous,

Norfolk



Our Vision

This Liberal Democrat manifesto aims to fix Norfolk's foundations, calmly, competently and with local people at the centre, before likely local government reorganisation (LGR) in two years' time. All this against a backdrop of a country that remains divided and uncertain about its future. The last few years have seen unprecedented challenges from the decision to leave the European Union, the covid pandemic, an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and the growing threats posed by international conflicts. The world we live in is vulnerable, and it is little wonder that people are increasingly questioning whether our existing democratic structures are up to the task of serving the needs of modern-day society.

We all know that local government has had to make huge cuts to its services over the past fifteen years, and the need for proper, sustainable funding in the longer

insufficient to meet the growing demands of service users. This cannot be allowed to continue, and multi-year funding settlements are the minimum necessary to provide a semblance of stability to the financial planning process.

However, all this is no excuse for not standing up properly for Norfolk and its best interests moving forward. There is a very real danger of the county being left behind once again as a new dawn beckons for local government. We have been let down for too long by political leadership that lacks vision, and the energy to make things happen. That has to change. Regrettably, the current Conservative administration has acted irresponsibly over recent setbacks to devolution and LGR in Norfolk when a sensible, cool-headed approach was much needed. That is why it is vital that any successor administration at County Hall works across the political spectrum to secure



lasting benefits for the people of the county. It is time for a change, and we deserve better.

The Liberal Democrats are currently the main opposition party to the Conservatives at County Hall. During this time, we have pursued our own distinctive policy agenda whilst ensuring that the administration has been effectively held to account for its mistakes and failings. However, there has to be room for a more consensual style of politics where we can work with others to achieve the best possible outcomes for Norfolk in the future.

Our manifesto is bold and ambitious and sets out in detail how we would go about that task if given the opportunity by the electorate. We talk about our ideas to create a more prosperous and vibrant local economy whilst ensuring that growth is environmentally sustainable. We highlight the ever-growing threat of climate change and how best to safeguard our local communities, rivers and coastline from increasing dangers. You'll find our ideas to boost public transport across Norfolk, breathing new life into towns and villages that have

become ever more isolated. You'll see how we plan to put local people at the heart of service delivery and ensure that the most vulnerable are properly protected. We set out our pledges to the young people of Norfolk across a wide range of policy areas including education, mental health, jobs and travel.

Elections to the County Council will finally take place in May after the Government belatedly reversed their decision to postpone them once again. The outcome of those elections has never been so uncertain, but the Liberal Democrats are confident of doing well, and we are ready to play our part in moving things forward in the challenging times that lie ahead. The people of Norfolk are calling out for strong leadership and hope. Let us make it the Liberal Democrats' destiny to provide it!

Brian Watkins

County Councillor Brian Watkins

**Liberal Democrat Group Leader,
Norfolk County Council**



SIX TO FIX

Let's get devolution done, to build a more prosperous future for Norfolk's residents – despite recent setbacks to the devolution timetable in Norfolk and Suffolk, the Liberal Democrats believe that a new deal will bring long-term benefits to the County. The plan includes a 30-year investment fund worth over £1 billion to spend on local priorities, with decisions being made by people who know the area best, rather than by Whitehall officials. A directly elected Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk should be in place by May 2028, giving our local area a stronger unified voice in national government discussions.

A youth bus pass for 18–25-year-olds, and a local rail card in Norfolk and Suffolk that will help families – the Liberal Democrats are calling for the introduction of a youth bus pass across Norfolk for 18–25-year-olds, offering a 50% discount. The idea would greatly assist young people in rural areas to better access to employment, training and educational opportunities. We would also introduce a family railcard, offering 1/3 off adult tickets and a small flat rate charge for children up to the age of 16. The card would cost around £15 to purchase and would apply to mainly off-peak journeys across the two counties.

Get the 'greenlight' for the School of Dentistry in Norfolk and grow our own dentists and social workers at UEA – the East of England is the only region in the country without a training school, and the county has an acute shortage of NHS dentists. We hope that the recent government announcement of 50 new dentistry training places, will finally enable the UEA to develop more advanced plans for its school of Oral Health and that it will be able to welcome its first students in September 2027. The County Council also needs to work more closely with the UEA, and other local providers to train and recruit more local social workers.



Six clear priorities to fix local problems and restore real community focus

Effective use of AI and other technologies to get potholes filled across Norfolk on time and cost effectively – the state of Norfolk’s highways network remains a top concern for many motorists. Untreated potholes are causing damage to many vehicles with owners often having to face large insurance claims. Despite the disappointing outcome of a recent trial using AI technology, the Liberal Democrats believe that the Council should continue to explore innovative ways that digital technologies might be used to spot the potholes on Norfolk’s roads and organise their repair as speedily as possible.

Build a network of community hubs in all major Norfolk towns that provide key services for residents – the Liberal Democrats believe that this initiative will transform rural infrastructure, revitalise town centres, and create a more integrated and fairer Norfolk. Travel hubs would act as specialised car parks, allowing people to drive a short distance from their homes and access fast transport links to other nearby towns. We also support community investment schemes which restore heritage buildings and create local enterprise spaces, following the good example set by Liberal Democrat controlled North Norfolk District Council.

Bring partners together to undertake the real work required on coastal erosion – we are actively campaigning for more government funding to tackle the combined threats of coastal erosion, flooding, and sewage pollution across Norfolk. Steffan Aquarone has called for a new dedicated Minister to ensure a better co-ordinated national approach to support coastal communities, which have too often been neglected. Water companies should be forced to upgrade local infrastructure where it is needed to reduce sewage discharges into rivers, and to further protect the local environment.





Fairer Funding

Local government is under immense strain, and the threat is clearest in counties like ours, **large, rural, and repeatedly overlooked by Central Government.** A one-size-fits-all approach simply cannot meet local needs and now risks pushing vital services to breaking point. This failure may be made in Westminster, but it impacts us all across Norfolk.

We know that unless we move away from “business as usual”, Norfolk will face the very real prospect of bankruptcy. National funding formulas are shifting, where some rural and shire authorities will lose spending power under the 2026/27–2028/29 settlement, widening the gap already felt in Norfolk.

Yet, consecutive **Conservative and Labour Governments have failed** to agree upon a fair system of funding for local government. For Norfolk, this has resulted in the reduction of services which our residents’ treasure most.

Years of uncertainty and short-term funding have forced cutbacks in services residents

value; from youth provision to transport and community support.

Continuing on this path threatens the very foundation of our local services. Only with fairer funding and a move away from sticking plaster payouts can this council play a larger role in tackling the issues which impact our county most.

If elected, we will immediately take the lead in writing to government and lobbying through Norfolk’s MPs for a multi-year funding settlement.

Taking the lead is vital to solve the financial crisis facing local government, whilst there is much responsibility on national government to provide fairer funding, there is much that can be done within the council, **now is not the time to pass the buck.** Transforming our services and allowing the expertise of our staff and other stakeholders is long overdue.

Only with the Norfolk Liberal Democrats will there be the option to undo the mess of the Conservatives and Labour, and provide the expertise to make real, impactful change.





Devolution

Central Government has made its ambition to transfer power from Westminster to local authorities a vital component of its local government policy. This process is called **devolution** and if done correctly can empower local authorities to better tackle issues which affect their areas.

We have been clear that the aim of devolution should be just that, any plans for devolution should empower us to fix issues which are most important to our residents and **move power closer** to the people who understand this county best. For our area, the proposal is for powers to be devolved to a new 'Strategic Authority' for Norfolk and Suffolk, overseen by a newly elected Mayor for the area.

The Liberal Democrats continue to support a strong and workable devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk. We regret the Government's decision to delay the mayoral elections until 2028, as it creates uncertainty at a time when rural counties like ours need **stability, clarity and a stronger voice** in national decisions.

Yet, with national government signalling that it will prioritise areas ready to move, Norfolk cannot afford drift. **Clear leadership and honest commitment are needed to steer us through these next few years.**

That is why we are critical of the current Conservative administration's choice to pull back from co-operation on devolution in response to the Labour Government's chaotic U-turn on reinstating May's local elections. The work should continue. Norfolk has seen too many false starts, and there is a real risk that the opportunity for a better, more locally accountable settlement is lost again.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party that prioritises pragmatism and will work with this government to:

- Deliver **tangible, real-world benefits** for residents across the county.
- **Devolve bus franchising**, so we can fix Norfolk's unreliable transport network.
- **Secure long-term funding** for flood prevention and coastal erosion.
- Be **community-centred**, with services delivered through local hubs, not concentrated in a single place.





Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care provides support to people who are disabled, suffer from mental health issues, are frail, have substance abuse problems and to those who provide care to their families or friends. It ranges from personal care to nursing homes and is delivered by a range of providers including the local authority. The main aim of the service is to enable vulnerable people to live fulfilled independent lives for as long as possible.

Norfolk County Council spends over **£650m per year on Adult Social Care** – this accounts for the largest spend by the council. Despite the best efforts of our carers and council staff, **the service is at risk of collapse.**

We know that residents are waiting far too long for care, the gap between application and help arriving is far too long and often impacted is not only the health of those needing care but also the families who are both caring for loved ones and trying to keep a roof over their own heads.

The Liberal Democrats made **Adult Social Care the centre of our 2024 General Election Campaign.** That is because we recognise the importance of the service, the vital role of those that work within it, and the likelihood that one day ourselves or a loved-one will require social care.

As well as supporting adults who need it throughout their lives, Norfolk has an ageing population; we will work tirelessly to create a service fit for current and future demand **ensuring that Norfolk is a place where people can grow old with dignity and comfort.**

We understand that everyone's care needs are different, what works for one person will not work for another.

It is because of this belief that we fought hard to keep vital reablement services open despite the Conservative's desire to close them, such as Benjamin Court. **If elected, we will expand the Council's reablement service provision to avoid the need to keep patients in hospital longer than necessary.**

It is the Council's duty to ensure that our residents can live



independent and healthy lives for as long as possible, the Conservative Party and Labour Party have pursued policies which directly contradict this duty, to the detriment of our most vulnerable.

If elected, we will reverse the cuts to the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), guaranteeing that those who require extra support will receive it, helping them to live fulfilled and independent lives.

With pressures mounting, the service must be run in a way that's both effective and efficient, so it genuinely works for Norfolk's residents. If elected, the Liberal Democrats will: -

- * Ensure that the Council places greater emphasis on preventative approaches to reduce pressures on the acute sector.
- * Use technology to reduce delays, speed up assessments and cut paperwork to improve both council workers' time and residents' access to council services.
- * Emphasise co-production when shaping the council's

future strategy on promoting independence, learning disabilities and autism.

- * Reduce the long waits that force families to shoulder care alone.
- * Ensure the system is simpler, particularly for people leaving domestic abuse, where current bureaucracy can mirror past control.
- * Call on the Government to reverse years of neglect and give unpaid carers in Norfolk the support they desperately need and deserve. This will include an immediate £20 per week increase in carer's allowance.
- * Work to ensure that our local care sector is sustainable, robust, to meet the high standards of quality that service users need.

“Ensuring that Norfolk is a place where people can grow old with dignity and comfort”





Children's Services & SEND

The Liberal Democrats wholeheartedly believe that schools are one of our strongest pillars of community life; they're where children are, and where early help must be easy to find. That is why we are in favour of tackling child poverty by removing the two-child limit and the benefit cap. **If elected, we would look to immediately extend free school meals to all children in poverty, with the ambition to extend them to all primary school children when public finances allow.**

Organisations across Norfolk know their local areas best. If elected, we will improve multi-agency mental-health responses, support school-commute safety work, and continue efforts to make Norfolk a place for all. We will look to strengthen youth safety by embedding trauma-informed, "Child First" approaches so neurodiverse young people receive support rather than being drawn into the remand system.

We will also look to reset the relationship with parents of children with Special Educational

Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Too many families have been let down by this Conservative administration and are left fighting the system, from revolving doors of EHCP coordinators, to high social worker turnovers that can cause devastating derailments to reunification. **We will introduce a Parents' Covenant; an agreement between parents and ourselves so families know what to expect from us.** We will create a single front door for SEND transitions, so when a child moves into a specialist placement the transport arrangements and support follow smoothly. We want to back parents across Norfolk with simple support: **only share your story once.**

Norfolk must grow the right places in the right locations. We will localise more specialist provision, so children aren't spending hours on transport. We will bring transparency to school place planning and home-to-school transport, openly addressing the "birth dearth", and convene community conversations about the future of small schools and buildings by protecting what is viable now, and



keeping options open should cohorts rise again.

We will also tackle the cliff-edge facing 18–25-year-olds with SEND. Too many young adults making real progress find the ladder removed at 18. We will commission local post-16 to 25 pathways with more supported internships and apprenticeships, specialist Further Education and adult-learning places, and wrap-around therapeutic support, so progress continues and life chances aren't capped.

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the opportunity to flourish, no matter their background or personal circumstances. **Families come in all shapes and sizes, so we value how important it is to invest in keeping families together. If elected, we would offer practical help earlier and offer trauma-informed support to provide strong respite. We would also look to expand Council-run foster homes and urgently review fostering payments and allowances, to recruit and retain carers and to reduce out-of-area placements and private profiteering.**

How we'll deliver it:

- * **Fix the basics:** reduce EHCP and social care churn, publish clear service standards under the Parents' Covenant, and offer advocacy as default for parents with additional needs.
- * **Faster, fairer processes:** back the EHCP AI automation project to cut bureaucracy and free staff time for complex casework.
- * **Better market built in-house:** expand supported accommodation and in-house provision and cut dependency on high-cost independents.
- * **Recruit and retain specialists:** prioritise permanent Educational Psychologists over agency reliance and improve caseload management.
- * **Raise the standard nationally:** campaign for a national SEND oversight body to ensure equitable funding across councils, produce a fully-funded national NEET strategy, and plan with our multi-year settlements so we can rebuild youth work and community provision.





Young People

For too long, young people in Norfolk have faced barriers that limit their choices and their confidence in the future. A generation hit hardest by Covid, squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis, and too often forced to look outside the county for opportunity deserves better. House prices continue to rise, rental costs outpace wages, driving test waits stretch for months, and youth unemployment nationally has reached an 11-year high. The opportunities simply aren't there, but we don't believe it has to be this way.

At the heart of this manifesto is a simple belief: every young person in Norfolk should have the chance to use their talents, build a life here, and feel hopeful about the future. That belief guided every conversation we had with Norfolk's Youth Parliament, UEA and NUA students, and young people across the county. They told us repeatedly about the pressures they are under, and mental health was raised time and again. Norfolk is not immune to the national mental health crisis, and far too little has been done to intervene early.

The Liberal Democrats will introduce mental health practitioners in schools, strengthening early intervention so young people can thrive rather than struggle in silence. We also want Norfolk to retain more of its talented graduates. Introducing graduate Speech and Language Therapist posts will boost early-years support while building a stronger local workforce pipeline.

We would look to go much further with the Council's BOOST project, a support programme for young people aged 16–24, that provides coaching, relationship building, and tailored interventions that help overcome barriers and move towards employment, training, or further education. There has already been fantastic success in Breckland, and King's Lynn. If elected we would roll this out across the county, beginning in Norwich and Great Yarmouth and expanding it to cover Broadland, South Norfolk, and North Norfolk, **ensuring all young people, regardless of where they live have opportunities and access to thrive and grow in Norfolk.**





Health & Care

Health and wellbeing are part of every person's daily life: at home, at work, and in our communities. Services should meet people there but too often they don't. Too many residents now face long waits, inaccessible services, or care that falls short of the standard they deserve. We are seeing widening health inequalities, rising poverty, and a system struggling to cope. For a county with our geography, age profile and rural pressures, this trend is simply unsustainable.

A Liberal Democrat administration will take a different approach: **prevention first, communities at the centre, and services shaped around real lives.**

We will expand neighbourhood walk-in centres so residents can see GPs, nurses and practitioners under one roof. We would expand our pilot with Local Authority Co-Ordinator's; health workers who guide families to solutions, and work with people on a 1-1 level to support the complexities and needs of the person as a whole.

We know that people need accessible care in their

communities, not lengthy journeys or unpaid time off work. With 83% of residents able to reach a GP by public transport in twenty minutes, and 67% by foot, we have a strong foundation, but not all communities benefit equally, especially those affected by chronic conditions, COPD, and mobility issues. We will push for investment where access is weakest. **If elected, we will give our Public Health Department an increased budget to ensure they can continue and expand their vital work.**

The closure of Benjamin Court reablement unit was a damaging decision by the Conservative administration that prolonged hospital stays and delayed safe discharge. **We will reverse this direction and expand reablement, so patients aren't trapped in hospital while care packages are arranged.** We will also strengthen safeguarding and care home oversight, responding to the worrying record of poor CQC ratings, missed follow ups and shocking safeguarding allegations. There must be transparency, especially based on this Conservative administration's



serious adult reviews, with a clear plan to immediately improve standards.

The Liberal Democrats also believe that mental health cannot be an afterthought. We will establish mental health hubs for young people in every community, with routine check-ins at key life stages. We will build on voluntary and community initiatives, like wellbeing hubs, Men's Sheds, and local mental health champions to ensure multi-agency responses are timely and coordinated.

Carers – paid and unpaid, young and old – do a remarkable and important job. They deserve far more support but are too often forgotten and ignored. We will support carers with practical help, a named Carers champion, increase carers' pay, and push for fairer National Insurance arrangements.

Norfolk's dental crisis demands urgent national and local attention. **We back a School of Dentistry in Norfolk and will ensure existing resources prioritise children's oral health, tackling preventable decay that affects speech, confidence and education.**

The Liberal Democrats hold health and the environment as inseparable. We will tackle air pollution outside schools and in town centres, expand access to green spaces, look to invest in leisure centres and grassroots sport, and support communities to choose healthy food and active lifestyles without stigma or judgement. Healthy ageing begins early, but it is never too late to improve wellbeing.

Our strategic health action plan will focus on prevention, reducing inequalities and helping people spend five more years of their life in good health. We will confront fuel poverty, support households choosing between heating and eating, and push for energy efficiency upgrades across Norfolk's homes.

Above all, we will ensure that health and social care in Norfolk is accountable, transparent and built around the people who rely on it, not just working within the convenience of the system. With the right leadership, Norfolk can become a county where good health is possible for everyone, at every stage of life.





Economy

Norfolk has key strengths in sectors like energy, agri-tech, research and tourism, especially in our world class assets such as the Norwich Research Park and the emerging corridor towards Cambridge. However, many of our communities are held back by low pay, weak connectivity and limited access to opportunities. Recent closures at major employers show how vulnerable parts of the economy remain and how quickly families can face hardship without a supportive council.

We know that to fully unlock Norfolk's economy it is vital that we embrace innovation. If elected, we will **establish industrial zones for our key sectors to stimulate and coordinate sustainable green growth.**

Growing our economy can only be successful by making Norfolk an attractive place to work, yet there is a worsening exodus of younger people leaving Norfolk due to the lack of connectivity and rural poverty. The Liberal Democrats are determined to get Norfolk moving again, **if elected we will invest in a hub and spoke transport**

model to improve connectivity and productivity across Norfolk.

We also know that for Norfolk's long-term success, stronger skills and resilient businesses are vital. To ensure we can keep Norfolk strong and prosperous, we will work with colleges, universities, and businesses to overhaul the Skills Strategy, which would include delivering management training for small firms so no matter how big your business, all have the opportunity to adapt and thrive.

We will also look to replace business rates with a Commercial Landowner Levy taxing land value rather than buildings. This shift would cut taxes for around 90% of high-street businesses, encourage refurbishment and bring greater stability to rents and leases. This would support small, and medium-sized businesses: the beating heart of Norfolk.





Infrastructure & Sustainable Transport

The Liberal Democrats know what public transport is needed for residents across Norfolk. We stood firmly with Sheringham residents and challenged this Conservative administration's demolition plans to protect the town's historic bus shelter. This was to ensure that there was genuine community voice in local decisions.

We are committed to working with local people, to develop local places. **If the Liberal Democrats are elected, we would look at how the Wensum Valley can be protected whilst also providing effective transport solutions.**

Norfolk cannot grow without improving how people get around. That is why we have already laid out our plan for young people to have a reduced bus fare to get around the county. We know that the problems faced in Norfolk don't just stop at costs, from difficulties with actually using our buses, to failed expansion projects like the Norwich Western Link, everyday travel is stagnating.

From North Norfolk to West Norfolk, we know that there are parts of King's Lynn that are not well served with public transport, particularly for getting to areas of employment like Hardwick and the hospital. If elected, we will invest in King's Lynn by introducing a circular bus route in the centre, introduce electric buses, install more bus shelters and introduce buses earlier in the morning for commuters and later in the evening to improve the nighttime economy.

With Labour politicians confirming there are no current plans to dual key stretches of the A47, including the Acle Straight, despite longstanding safety and economic concerns, the case for a renewed *Just Dual It* campaign is stronger than ever. **We will fully back the dualling of the A47, improvements to the A149 and the A47/A11 Thickthorn junction and support National Highways' ongoing dualling works between North Tuddenham and Easton.**





Environment & Net Zero

As Liberal Democrats we take our role as custodians of the environment seriously, unlike the current Conservative administration who have continuously passed the buck on all things green. From ignoring sewage pollution, and worsening air quality, to missing environmental targets and threatening protected landscapes, the people, and terrain, of Norfolk have been continuously let down.

If elected, the Liberal Democrats will immediately **declare a climate emergency in Norfolk – aligning ourselves with our neighbouring councils who have already taken this important step in displaying leadership.**

Alongside declaring this emergency, we would look to expand in clean growth in opportunities such as employment and upskilling being beneficial to us all across Norfolk. We support turning Bacton Gas Terminal into a hydrogen hub and carbon capture site to drive local green economic growth. **If elected, we will establish a point system for business applicants**

for funding or support if they include new apprenticeships with a focus on sustainability, the environment or net zero.

We also believe in restoring and protecting our precious chalk streams, safeguarding their biodiversity, securing clean water for future generations, and treating these globally rare habitats as natural assets that underpin our environment and local prosperity. Significant restoration projects are currently underway to improve their health. That is why nationally, we want to take the necessary next steps and nominate the UK's chalk streams as a serial UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site.

Norfolk's chalk streams are a natural treasure; restoring them is essential to our county's environmental health.

Farming, fishing and rural communities have been let down and taken for granted by the Conservatives and deserve better. We will replicate the success undertaken by the Liberal Democrat administration in North Norfolk by creating more green spaces and country parks across the County. **We will also help farmers lead the restoration of**



Norfolk’s natural systems, from peat and rivers to woodlands and wildlife, while continuing to produce food responsibly, for those across Norfolk and beyond.

Conservatives have failed to prepare homes across Norfolk for changing climates; this has left many residents with the difficult choice of choosing between heating and eating. **If elected, we will counter this issue head on by setting up an organisation within the council, staffed by full-time officers, with the goal of ensuring insulation upgrades are carried out in 50% of rural Norfolk homes by 2030.**

We know that people can’t live freely if the air, water and climate they rely on are degraded. This is **why we still oppose any revival of plans for a Norfolk incinerator, after Conservative councillors moved to reopen the decade-old ban despite the huge financial and environmental fallout of past attempts.**

Many of us in Norfolk have been impacted by flooding and the situation is only becoming more critical with climate change. Despite this, the Conservatives

have failed to tackle flooding in Norfolk. **Our focus must be on prevention, every £1 spent on prevention prevents a further £14 spent on damage.**

Our Plan for Flood Prevention

- ⊕ Increase funding for environmentally sustainable flood prevention work.
- ⊕ Support the fantastic work of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance, supporting its growth within the County Council.
- ⊕ Strengthen flood protections by reviewing planning processes, improving transparency, working with national partners, and issuing clear guidance on climate-resilient, responsible site selection.
- ⊕ Make it easier for residents to access help when they need the support.

Together, the Liberal Democrats will deliver local, visible improvements, cleaner rivers, healthier air, warmer homes and skilled green jobs.

“Enhancing Norfolk’s forests, fields and parks, giving everyone access to green spaces they can enjoy.”





Strong Communities

Safe, confident communities are the foundation of a thriving county. But after years of Conservative cuts and poor decision-making, too many residents feel less secure. Whether it's walking home at night, accessing local transport, or simply trusting that the council will listen when concerns are raised.

We have successfully challenged cutbacks that harm our communities. The withdrawal of the UEA night-bus service raised understandable fears about student safety. **The Liberal Democrats at Norwich City Council pushed for the service to continue, alongside the UEA and the Students Union. By applying pressure to reinstate it, a one-year trial run was instituted and at the end of the trial, it was deemed an enormous success which has been continued by First on an entirely commercial basis.**

We know that public safety must start with restoring the basics. Streetlighting switch-offs have left neighbourhoods feeling

vulnerable, and residents have repeatedly warned that reduced visibility risks both crime and road accidents. **We will review these decisions, prioritising areas where communities have already raised concerns.**

The Liberal Democrats believe that easy access to services, whether it be financial, health related, educational or social is necessary to maintain vibrant and strong communities. That is why we have been avid supporters of community hubs in Norfolk which seek to bring key services under one roof, they also offer a communal safe space for **a whole range of events and classes. If elected, we will expand the council's community hub programme in key locations across the county – ensuring that our residents are able to access services locally.**

Strong communities rely on resilient and growing economies, especially in rural areas and market towns containing numerous small businesses. Despite this importance, access to financial services and cash has been made more difficult. **The Liberal Democrats recognised**



this issue, and successfully secured a vital banking hub in Holt, Cromer and North Walsham: a one-stop shop for all banking needs. If elected, the Liberal Democrats will push for bank hubs across Norfolk's rural areas, reinvigorating rural economies and ensuring access to key financial services.

We also recognise the importance of community based and grassroots projects – especially when there is a focus around sustainability, and positive health outcomes. We want to encourage communities to work together, to make improvements to their areas where they see fit, and to instil a sense of pride within. **If elected, we will set up a Sustainable Community Fund for Norfolk, consisting of £250,000 allowing groups to made bids of up to £5,000 – this money can be spent on improvements such as solar panels, playground equipment and much more.**

Few counties match Norfolk's breadth of places, people and character, from our town centres and coastline to our countryside and vibrant city life. We want communities to feel safe in the

places they live. That means expanding 20mph zones where they are needed and improving footpaths and crossings. Where major infrastructure is proposed close to homes, we will ensure there is thorough planning scrutiny and genuine community engagement. Yet we also recognise the unique pressures that rural areas face. We will deliver a more robust response to rural crime, by tackling equipment theft, hare coursing and heritage crime with clearer priorities and smarter enforcement.

Lastly, as this Labour Government are looking to reform driving laws, bringing in three-yearly vision checks for drivers over 70, the Liberal Democrats will demand these licence changes do not penalise drivers in Norfolk and that these changes are matched with real investment in rural mobility.





Heritage & Culture

Norfolk is famous for its rich history and diverse culture. Whether it is the looming castle over Norwich's skyline or the luscious stretches of North Norfolk's coast, both tourists and locals alike enjoy what our beautiful county has to offer. It is vital that we invoke a sense of pride in our natural heritage and culture, especially within our children and younger people.

The Liberal Democrat group want all to be able to celebrate our heritage. We would allow free access to the Council's museums for all Norfolk children, simply by presenting their library cards. We would also **expand the 'Kick the Dust' programme run by Norfolk Museums which offers young people aged 13-25 with opportunities to get involved with museums and heritage and seek to introduce opportunities based in Norfolk's natural environment within the scheme.**

Tourism is a significant contributor to Norfolk's economy; it is worth £3 billion and accounts for 20% of employment across the county. However, despite its importance,

the Conservative administration has not been ambitious or innovative enough to unlock the industry's full potential.

If elected, we will introduce a £100,000 heritage sustainability fund made available to businesses within the tourism industry. The fund will be open for applications for grants to invest in sustainable tourism practices and innovative ways of showing off our rich heritage.

Brown signs are also fantastic for highlighting our wonderful tourist economy. Yet, businesses in Norfolk face some of the highest costs in the country for these signs. We would look to reduce this expensive cost, so more tourist destinations could benefit from showcasing their attraction.

Norfolk's music scene is infamous and attracts talent from across the country, from old-school artists performing at the LCR to England's oldest working theatre with a Shakespearean connection in King's Lynn. If elected we will commit to protecting the council's music budget for the duration of the term, ensuring that Norfolk's musical and creative scene is enjoyed for years to come.





Democracy

When democracy feels inconvenient, that's when it matters most. We

wholeheartedly believe that by delaying elections, even by a year, strips people of their right to hold elected representatives to account.

We publicly opposed proposals to postpone the May 2026 elections and called out the Conservative administration for refusing to instruct the Labour government for local elections to proceed. The Liberal Democrats have stood steadfast in ensuring Norfolk residents can use their democratic rights.

Alongside local elections, Norfolk is also going through Local Government Reorganisation. This is set to undergo the most radical shake-up to local government since the 1970's by replacing the two-tier system of county and district councils with just three across Norfolk from 2028. These new councils will be responsible for the full range of local services in their area.

We are delighted by this outcome as we know with three unitaries,

Norfolk keeps its identity. Not a one size fits all solution, but a structure that actually recognises who we are. We are committed to ensuring that wherever you live in Norfolk, your needs are met and your voice drives this new chapter. The transition to this new structure will be an extremely multi-layered and complex process, and **we call on Government to provide additional financial support to ensure that this happens as seamlessly as possible.**

Within this transitional period, the Liberal Democrats will ensure that the future Councils have effective scrutiny and genuinely reflect residents' views. This means building a culture where decisions are openly tested, and communities are heard early. We have been campaigning for town councils to be introduced, so more residents' voices are heard. We believe residents must see how their input shapes outcomes. We will ensure that local voices are heard, striking the balance between local autonomy and county-wide efficiency, to preserve local identity.