

FREETHORPE PARISH MEETING

ANNUAL REPORTS

2026

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains reports provided by various organisations which operate in the parish of Freethorpe.

1. Norfolk County Council

Provided by: District Councillor Grant Nurden

Norfolk County Council – Annual Parish Report 2025-26

Our Promises	What Was Delivered	Impact
Libraries & Culture	Built new libraries, invested £3m+ , and transformed Norwich Castle into a world-class attraction	Stronger cultural offer and a major boost for tourism
Better Care	Invested £40m+ in care homes and supported living	More residents able to live independently for longer
Backing Our Children	GOOD-rated services , £2.5m+ for care leavers, £5m for jobs, and 600+ opportunities created	Better life chances and stronger futures for young people
Better Roads	Major infrastructure projects completed and £10m extra invested in maintenance	One of the best-performing highways services in the country
Improved Buses	£50m+ invested , more electric buses, and 26% growth in passenger numbers	Cleaner travel and better public transport access
Protecting the Environment	850,000+ trees planted and emissions cut by 50%	Protecting Norfolk's countryside and tackling climate change
Growing the Economy	Investment in high streets, improved connectivity, and hundreds of new homes built	Stronger local economy and thriving communities

Norfolk County Council, under a Conservative administration, has a strong record of delivering on its promises and investing in the county's future. From new libraries and major road schemes to over £40 million in care and significant improvements in children's services, we have focused on the priorities that matter most to residents. We have strengthened local transport, supported businesses and high streets, expanded opportunities for young people, and taken meaningful action to protect Norfolk's environment. This is a council that combines experience with action backing communities, improving services, and driving sustainable growth, while continuing to stand up for Norfolk and secure the investment it deserves.

Norfolk County Council delivers a balanced and responsible budget for 2026–27

Norfolk County Council approved a balanced £613.8m budget for 2026–27, demonstrating strong financial leadership and prudent management in what remains one of the toughest funding climates in decades.

The administration has once again delivered stability and certainty for residents, setting a balanced financial position while identifying £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies and committing £76.3 million in targeted investment to protect vital services and strengthen Norfolk's economy.

Despite significant national financial pressures and ongoing constraints in central government funding, we have ensured the county remains on a firm financial footing, without resorting to emergency measures. This stands in stark contrast to a growing number of upper-tier authorities across the country that have issued Section 114 notices or are facing effective bankruptcy.

The budget enables the council to continue:

- Protecting frontline services
- Investing heavily in adults and children's services
- Delivering new libraries and modern learning hubs in key towns
- Supporting for heritage, culture, and tourism
- Driving transformative reforms to improve efficiency and outcomes
- Backing economic growth and infrastructure

- Maintaining long-term financial sustainability

In line with national funding assumptions a 4.998% increase in council tax was implemented due to the government's continued reliance on placing the burden on local taxpayers to safeguard core services. This decision reflects the financial realities facing councils nationwide, while ensuring essential services remain protected for Norfolk residents.

This budget reinforces Norfolk's Conservative administration's commitment to careful stewardship of taxpayers' money, strong local services, and a resilient future for the county.

Norfolk County Council invests in community led highway improvements across the county

Norfolk County Council has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting local communities with the approval of 99 new highway improvement schemes for 2026-27, delivered in partnership with town and parish councils across Norfolk.

Papers highlight how the Parish Partnership Programme, now entering its fifteenth year, gave local communities a voice in shaping the highways enhancements that matter most to them, whether that's improving pedestrian safety, slowing vehicle speeds, or making it easier to walk, cycle or access local services.

This year's programme represented a total investment of £769,034, made possible through the longstanding 50/50 funding model. Town and parish councils will collectively contribute £384,517, matched by £384,517 from Norfolk County Council, enabling more than twice as many small-scale schemes to be delivered than could be funded by the council alone.

In total local councils submitted 99 bids for 2026/27 and all were approved as viable schemes after being carefully assessed against value for money, community outcomes, safety benefits and compliance.

Norfolk's bus service improvements deliver record growth and faster journeys

Norfolk County Council's ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has transformed public transport across the county, driving a 26% increase in passenger numbers since 2022 and making Norfolk a leading national example for sustainable travel.

A paper discussed at the council's Infrastructure and Development Committee on 22nd January highlighted what has been delivered thanks to the £65.45 million secured for Norfolk from the Department for Transport. That includes;

- New and enhanced bus services on more than 44 routes across Norfolk, including more evening and Sunday services
- Affordable fares: capped single fares in key towns and multi-operator ticketing
- Greener fleet: 75 zero-emission buses in Norwich and 24 more electric buses coming in 2026
- Improved passenger experience: real-time information, safer waiting areas, next-stop announcements and real-time information on more buses.

Not only are we seeing record-setting and increasing numbers of passengers, but customer satisfaction has also risen to 87%, bucking national trends and reinforcing Norfolk's approach to improvements in bus travel across the county.

Norfolk gritting vehicles headed out over the winter season

Norfolk County Council's winter gritting got underway during the recent winter, with gritters active on A/B roads, key bus routes, and village access roads, using new tech for efficiency. The first runs of the recent winter season (late 2025/early 2026) started as temperatures dropped, utilizing the 58-strong fleet with automated salting to cover 2,200 miles of routes, supported by stocked salt barns and public grit bins.

Norfolk County Council took first place in the Eastern region in annual Highways and Transport Satisfaction Survey

Norfolk County Council has once again demonstrated strong performance in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey, taking the top spot in the Eastern region for overall satisfaction and second out of 29 county councils across England.

The annual survey, which gathers public views on highways and transport services, saw Norfolk achieve an overall satisfaction score of 48%, well above the national average of 40%.

This marks the 15th consecutive year Norfolk has participated in the survey, and the 7th year in a row that we have come either first or second overall.

Key highlights from this year's results include:

- Top Regional Performer: Norfolk ranked 1st in the Eastern Region for overall satisfaction.
- Some of the best above average score were in our bus services thanks to improvements that have been made as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan. The 'local bus services' overall category we were 10% above the group average with sub indicators as follows:
 - Public Transport Information (11% above group average)
 - Frequency of bus services (9% above group average)
 - Ease of access to school / work (6% above group average)
- Condition of highways (8% above group average)

Norfolk County Council's Deep Disappointment at Government Decision to Halt Mayoral Election and Slash Devolution Funding

Norfolk County Council expressed serious concern following the Labour Government's announcement that the planned 2026 mayoral election for the Norfolk & Suffolk Combined County Authority will be deferred until 2028. The sudden decision meant that Norfolk would now receive only around one-third of the investment previously promised under the devolution programme.

Norfolk County Councils astonishment at the Government's decision of the government to create 3 Unitaries for Norfolk under Local Government Reorganisation

Norfolk County Council made a robust bid for a Single Unitary council for Norfolk under the proposals for LGR. This bid was based on sound financial information with the primary purpose of protecting front line services, whilst ensuring value for money. NCC already deliver 85% of local services in Norfolk, a single unitary was the easiest to implement,

would ultimately save money for taxpayers and was the most obvious choice for the county. It was also backed by key stakeholders like the NHS and the Police. None of the other proposals, which would split services and cost more to implement and run, stacked up. It is therefore disappointing that despite the 3 unitary proposal not meeting the government's own criteria, that this is the option chosen. This may be more a political decision than a practical one and seems irrational. The council will consider the details of the decision and may choose to challenge this.

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 rolled out across the whole of Norfolk. The initiative was 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](#).

Norfolk County Council Approved £500k Community Fund to Boost Local Projects

Norfolk County Council approved the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26, aimed at supporting grassroots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

The fund will empower local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) groups to apply for grants between £200 and £2,500 to deliver small-scale initiatives that bring people together, promote inclusion, and enhance quality of life. Each of the county's 84 councillors will be allocated £5,000 to distribute within their divisions, ensuring funding reaches every corner of Norfolk

2. Broadland District Council

Author: Councillor Grant Nurden

Marshes Ward – Broadland District Council

Introduction

Over the year, the Council met regularly to make sure local services kept running well, to respond to what residents were telling us, and to plan sensibly for the future of the district. Rather than read every item, I'm going to focus on the decisions that had the biggest impact. And if you want to dig into the detail afterwards, everything is set out in the Council's official minutes.

Decisions and Reasons

- **Approval of the annual budget:** Let me start with the budget. In simple terms, this is how we made sure the essentials were funded—day-to-day services people rely on—while still investing in improvements to infrastructure and continuing to support community projects. The key point is balance: spending responsibly, but not standing still.
- **Adoption of a new housing strategy:** Next, housing. We refreshed our housing strategy because demand is growing, and affordable housing in particular remains a real pressure for many residents. This decision sets out how we'll meet need, and how we'll do that in a way that supports sustainable, well-planned growth across Broadland.
- **Launch of a community health initiative:** We also launched a community health initiative. This wasn't done in isolation—it reflects what communities have told us they need, alongside the public health evidence. The focus is practical: improving wellbeing and making support easier to find and easier to use.
- **Approval of a local environmental policy:** On the environment, we agreed a new local policy with a strong emphasis on reducing carbon emissions and protecting our green spaces. It's about doing our part on climate—yes—but it's also about looking after the places that make Broadland a great district to live in.
- **Revision of planning regulations:** We then updated our planning regulations. The intention here is to make the process clearer and more efficient, and to keep us aligned with national requirements as they change. Put simply: better clarity, smoother decisions, and development that still meets the standards residents expect.

Local Government Reform

Alongside those service decisions, we also started work on local government reform. You'll have heard discussions nationally about how councils are structured—and locally we began looking at what that could mean in practice for Broadland. That includes early work on options around boundaries, how services could be delivered more efficiently, and where closer working with neighboring councils makes sense. The goal is straightforward: a simpler system, less duplication, and services that can keep pace as our community changes. And as we take this forward, we're committed to doing it openly—consulting properly and basing decisions on clear evidence.

Conclusion

So, to sum up: this year has been about focusing on the practical things—supporting local communities, keeping services reliable, investing where it counts, planning for housing need, and taking our environmental responsibilities seriously. None of these decisions sit on their own; together they show the direction we're taking and the outcomes we want to deliver for residents across Broadland.

3. Norfolk Police

Our aim is to provide a truly local policing service – communities working together with officers and partner agencies, to identify and deal with issues that matter most to them. Responding to and working closely with our communities solves problems, reduces crime and the fear of crime, and helps build trust and confidence in our service. Our approach is shaped by our vision to deliver exceptional policing for the people of Norfolk, by protecting communities, delivering exceptional services, and building and sustaining trust.

Crimes and priorities

Top reported crimes in this area

Crime map

Our priorities

Top reported crimes

Most commonly reported crimes during Mar 2026

Violence and sexual offences	41
Anti-social behaviour	16
Criminal damage and arson	6
Other theft	5

Crime prevention

Crime levels in your area

Crime for last year

Crime per Month

Month	Crime Level
Apr 2025	95
May 2025	65
Jun 2025	90
Jul 2025	80
Aug 2025	65
Sep 2025	90
Oct 2025	75
Nov 2025	60
Dec 2025	70
Jan 2026	65
Feb 2026	65
Mar 2026	85

View as a list

Priority:

We work with the community and local partners, as well as looking at our own data to come up with the priority that we will have for Acle for the next three months:

Road Safety across Broadland

Issued 18 March 2026

Action taken:

Over the past month we've done speed checks on Norwich Road in Lingwood and spoken with the A47 project and Traffic Management officer re speeding in South Walsham and rat runs being created. This will continue.

We've also done parking patrols outside Acle Primary School responding to neighbourhood complaints.

Other recent activity includes nursery visits in Brundall, school parking patrols for Blofield School, addressing residents' concerns in North Burlingham for the British Sugar and Highways lorries contravening traffic signs in the area and responding to complaints about a car causing ASB through its manner of driving and noise in Hassingham – worked together with road policing to get the vehicle stopped and prohibition notice issued.

We've also responded to Acle Parish Council regarding vehicles parked on the road without tax and MOTs, did speed checks on Norwich Road, Lingwood, carried meet and greet with the Norfolk PCC at Acle library in which we promoted our area priority of road safety, proactive patrols in Lingwood in relation to recent information about a disqualified driver.

In April, intelligence gathering and development has been ongoing following reports of driving offences being committed in the Lingwood area

Speed checks carried out on Salhouse Rd Panxworth and South Walsham Rd Acle.

Actioned 29 April 2026

[Acle | Your area | Norfolk Police | Norfolk Constabulary](#)

4. Trees & Conservation

Author: John Fleetwood

Annual Report for 2025-2026

By John Fleetwood, Freethorpe Tree & Conservation Advisor

Broadland Tree Warden Network

The Broadland Tree Warden Network was sadly dissolved in March of this year. It was founded in November 2018 following Broadland District Council's decision to close its Network in order to save officer time. I was Chairman and Network Co-ordinator from the outset but decided to stand down this year due to my age. However, as nobody was willing to replace me, we had no choice but to dissolve the Network leaving South Norfolk as the only Tree Warden Network in Norfolk.

I am pleased to report that Freethorpe Parish Council offered to create the post of Tree and Conservation Advisor which I readily accepted and I look forward to serving the parish for some time to come.

Wickhampton Pond

No action has been taken re: Wickhampton Pond and my recommendation remains that no attempt is made to remove or otherwise manage the *Crassula helmsii*. Specific and specialised licences are required in order to disturb, transport or bury the plant.

Village Hall and Playing Field

One of the large oaks bordering the highway opposite Freethorpe Primary School has a damaged branch which requires removal on safety grounds. I am currently seeking a price for the work from a qualified tree surgeon.

A recent inspection of the trees bordering the playing field revealed no major problems.

Growth has been removed from many of the trees bordering the playing field, leaving stub ends which will allow disease to enter them. During coming months I shall remove as many of the stub ends as possible.

Other minor works will be completed in the coming weeks.

Wickhampton Playground

Several dead trees will need replacing in the next planting season.

Of the five young trees planted along the north-eastern boundary, three are dead. I would never recommend planting trees along that boundary as they will prevent light from reaching the adjacent dwelling and will inevitably lead to disputes. My recommendation is to remove all vegetation from that boundary.

Freethorpe Primary School

Several years after we closed our Junior Tree Warden Scheme in Freethorpe I was delighted to be asked to advise the school gardening club to advise on tree and conservation matters and the response from the pupils was wonderful.

Joined by Cllr Andrea Rowlands we provided the junior tools that we had from our original Junior Tree Warden scheme and the Parish Council generously provided the funding for additional tools. In addition, together with the pupils and funded by the Broadland Tree Warden Network I planted a beech hedge along the roadside boundary.

I very much look forward to continuing to work with the school in the future, maybe nurturing my replacement as Tree and Conservation Advisor

Planning Applications and General Tree Matters Within the Parish

I continue to monitor planning applications that may have an impact on our trees and hedges and remain available to provide advice, free of charge, on trees and hedges to all parishioners.

5. Freethorpe Parish Council

Author: Andrew Moll / Nick Spencer

The Parish Council enjoyed a stable year with excellent support and attendance from the Parish Councillors. We have 6 parish councillors and one vacancy. We also received excellent support from John Fleetwood, Tree Warden, and our District Councillor, Grant Nurden, who is also a Parish Councillor for Freethorpe. The council operated within budget, and delivered a number of projects from earmarked reserves within budget. During 2025-26 some of the highlights were:

Playing Field and Play Areas

- Operating a monthly/quarterly/annual inspection regime for the Freethorpe Playing Field and Wickhampton Play Area; and keeping on top of corrective actions and risk mitigations highlighted by inspections. £1,200 was spent on various repairs at Freethorpe.
- Continuing to provide for grounds maintenance at Freethorpe Playing Field, Wickhampton Play Area. With the changing climate it has been difficult to keep on top of the grass with the current fortnightly cuts.
- Wickhampton Play Area is leased from Beckhithe Farms, for whose support the Parish Council is most grateful.
- Use of robotic pitch setting for the football pitches
- Section 106 funds for floodlights for petanque
- Section 106 funds for new goalposts to support the growth in youth football
- Section 106 funds for a pitch improvement project based on FA assessment
- Initial support in considering options for the MUGA

Speed Management & Road Safety

- Monitoring speed measurement in Freethorpe and sharing data with the Police for targeted speed checking. The statistics continue to give particular cause for concern on Reedham Road entering the village.
- New gateways have been installed near the Village Hall and at Lower Green to try to discourage speeding, the Village Hall gateways being seen as the highest risk for children crossing. Match funding was obtained via the Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership Scheme.
- The flashing school signs made an impact on the speeds being

measured near the Village Hall, with a reduction of 4mph on the 85th percentile.

- We looked into a zebra crossing near the blacksmith's shop corner but the costs would be far too great. We continue to look for grant funding opportunities to have a survey done which would support a bid for a zebra crossing if a grant window were to open.

Wickhampton

- Wickhampton Pond has an invasive weed, crassula helmsii, which has prevented any restoration of the pond. We have not yet been able to find an affordable solution to clearing the weed without it coming back.
- A Roadside Nature Reserve has been established along Church Road.

General

- With the demise of the Broadland Tree Warden Network, we created a new voluntary role of Tree and Conservation Advisor which is filled by John Fleetwood.
- Recycling banks generated £315 for the parish in 2025-26. Unfortunately this will reduce next year with the removal of the paper bank by the supplier.
- We received £14,452 in grants for specific projects, including £10,162 from the Lottery Community Fund for solar panels.

Village Hall

- New noticeboards were put up at the Village Hall.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points are quiet but may yet prove a valuable facility.
- The Defibrillator Cabinet is accessible to qualified people via 999. It contains a bleed kit and a defibrillator. With the demise of Freethorpe First Responders, Helen Utting is kindly continuing to oversee this.
- The new kitchen is up and running.
- We obtained a grant from the Lottery Community Fund for solar panels for the Village Hall, which will result in significant cost savings.
- By agreement we've held off the annual donation to the Village Hall while the solar panels project is under way.
- A new dog bin was purchased and installed near the Playing Field, which will cost us around £120 a year for emptying

Funding and Support

- The Parish Council adopted General Powers of Competence in 2024 on completion of the Clerk's CiLCA training.
- Financial contribution to grass cutting in the three churchyards/cemeteries
- Making donations to a number of organisations supporting the community
- Reviewing numerous planning applications and responding to all of them with a view to protect and enhance our community life.
- Maintaining its commitment to an Armed Forces Covenant.
- Ensuring the Rampant Horse Public House continues to be recorded as an Asset of Community Value.

The Parish Council plans for 2026-27 include:

- Successful internal and external audits of accounts and administration
- Reduction in speeding through further development with Highways
- Completion of solar panels project by August
- Identification of S106 sports project/s
- Establishing an affordable and sustainable approach for Wickhampton Pond
- Continuing to contribute to the planning process in support of the parish and its community.

6. East Anglia Air Ambulance

Author: **Tammy Swiderski**

Community Fundraising Lead



On behalf of everyone at East Anglian Air Ambulance, please accept my sincerest gratitude to Freethorpe Parish Council for their generous donation of £250.00 towards our work.

Your support helps our crews continue to deliver the very best care when the very worst happens - directly at the patient's side as quickly as possible. In addition, your generosity helps us to support patients and their families in the turbulent aftermath of their incident through our Aftercare programme and enables our Community Training team deliver vital CPR and defibrillator training to businesses, schools, groups, clubs and organisations across the region.

With your donation, we have been able to purchase the day to day items our crews use every day - the things we take for granted but are a vital part of the care we provide. What an incredible thing to help us do! Thank you all so much for choosing to support East Anglian Air Ambulance and the patients who need us most - often at the most traumatic moments of their lives.

7. Friends of Wickhampton Village

Author: David Brown

FRIENDS OF WICKHAMPTON VILLAGE

The Friends of Wickhampton Village (FOWV) are most grateful to Freethorpe Parish Council for their ongoing help and support on issues relating to the Village.

Wickhampton Bridleway

Concerns continue to be raised about the increasing number of unauthorised vehicles using the bridleway and the resulting threat to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. This is often exacerbated by the speed of vehicles using the bridleway. These concerns have been raised with the Parish Council, and the Highways Engineer has been asked to assess the current signage which is clearly inadequate. Enforcement is also a key issue.

There is also the issue of an increasing amount of dog mess left by owners on the bridleway. We need to look at potential for new signage and enforcement. Dogs also need to be kept on leads during the ground bird nesting season.

Speeding Traffic

Many residents have continued to express their concerns about the speed of traffic travelling through the village roads which are narrow and without pavements and at speeds that have no regard for the safety of pedestrians, and in particular for the small children living in the village. We will seek to gain Parish Council support to look at ways of mitigating these concerns.

Village Pond

The restoration of the Village Pond has proved a great deal more problematic than originally thought, following the discovery of crassula helmsii, a highly invasive weed. However, it is in our view essential that the pond be retained and advice from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust is that the pond is indeed of value and that the weed can be managed and the pond restored. We are working with the Parish Council on solutions and hope that remedial work can commence in the autumn. We are extremely concerned about the illegal use of weedkiller on the banks of the pond and the potential for substantial harm to the wildlife and plants. Planters have also been placed along the bank which is of course on Council land.

The pond is not only a valuable hotspot for wildlife and biodiversity but is also an asset to alleviate the potential flooding of the low-lying bungalows opposite. Persistent rainfall last winter caused flooding on Low Road, and it has been suggested that a run-off for rainfall from the road into the pond be reinstated.

Roadside Nature Reserve/Environmental Concerns

The Friends are very pleased to report the creation of a Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) which runs down both sides of Church Road, and we are most grateful to the Parish Council for their help and support. This followed the devastation of wildflowers last year when the verges were cut in June. We remain concerned that the verges were cut earlier in the year but understand this may be due to landowners not being aware of the new regime. We hope matters are now resolved to avoid any recurrence.

We remain very concerned about vehicle damage to roadside verges which makes the Village look uncared for despite our efforts and the continued lack of progress by landowners in adopting a more wildlife friendly policy towards the maintenance and planting of hedges and trees. Sadly, nearly all of our roadside hedges are intensively flailed so that they are thin, fragmented and of little benefit to wildlife. This is particularly disappointing given the recent initiatives to improve biodiversity and the imperative to do so.

Playground

The Friends are grateful to the Parish Council for ensuring that the Playground remains safe and well-maintained. We were pleased to work with the Parish Council recently to establish a wildflower border along the east side of the playground which should improve biodiversity. The playground is a valuable and well-used asset for the village.

Friends of Wickhampton Village

May 2026

8. Freethorpe Bowls Club

Author: Jill Finein

This year has proven to be a very challenging time for the club, and just prior to the season our groundsman felt he was unable to continue.

With the short notice before the start of the season and with little work undertaken on the green it looked very probable that the club may fold.

Fortunately we did find an experienced green keeper who has been willing to take on some of the work at least this season. A group of us are also contributing to the upkeep as best we can.

Just as we got over that hurdle the Chairman and Treasurer also elected not to continue so we have had to have a number of meetings to re -elect to those positions (although the agreement has been they will be in these posts to get us over this season). With all the uncertainty we lost about 5 members who moved to other clubs, but we have also managed to gain about the same number of new people joining us.

On a positive note Mike Lord put our Open Day (which was Sunday 3rd May) onto the village hall web site and with various posters also put out, this brought 6 new people in to have a go. We are proposing to run a weekly Saturday roll up at 2pm to try to continue to entice both those people and hopefully other people from the village to come and have a go.

We will still be having an Open Tournament in memory of Janet Church in August, which is a very good fund raiser.

This is the very start of the season so it is hard to predict how this season will go, we clearly now have the added expense of having to pay someone for maintaining the green so it is hard to anticipate whether this is something we can afford to do next season or in fact whether we can keep/ gain members to make this viable.

Jill Finein (Secretary) 4/5/2026

9. Royal British Legion



Acle & District Royal British Legion

The branch meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the Bure Room, Acle Recreation Centre, Bridewell Lane, Acle starting at 7.15pm.

Our meetings are open to everyone. You do not need to be ex services or a member of the Royal British Legion to come and join us. To encourage people to attend, we have a variety of presentations and talks throughout the year.

On Wednesday 3 June we have Kath Hutton, the Armed Forces Support Officer based at the James Paget Hospital joining our branch meeting, to give her annual update on assistance available to ex service personnel.

In July, we have Jayne from Heart to Heart Norfolk coming to talk to us about her charity installing and maintaining defibrillators around Norfolk and for those brave enough we will receive instruction in the use of defibrillators.

On Wednesday 5 August, we have Wally Webb joining us to talk about his 40 years with Radio Norfolk. Later in December, we are joined by the author Chris Crowther a former helicopter pilot and now writer of murder mysteries based in Norfolk.

In addition, to our meetings we are busy organising fund raising opportunities for the 2026 6Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The annual Prize Bingo will take place on Saturday 10 October in the Main Hall of Acle Recreation Centre. In addition, following last years success, The Seaside Ukulele Band will return on the afternoon of Sunday 22 November, again in the Main Hall at Acle Recreation Centre.

We are delighted to confirm the amount collected in the Acle & District Poppy Appeal for 2025 was an amazing £13566.37

As always. I am extremely grateful for all of the support. Huge thanks to all of the collectors, shops, businesses, churches and schools who all play their part in making it such a success. Thank you to everyone who donated.

If anyone would like more information or are considering joining the Royal British Legion please call Jayne Smith, Branch Secretary, Acle & District RBL on 07584 825749 or email jaynesmith15@btinternet.com

10. Freethorpe Methodist Church

This year we welcomed the Rev. Stephen Oliver as minister in this Circuit. He has pastoral care of the Methodist churches in Acle, Freethorpe, Lingwood and Magdalen Way in Gorleston. We look forward to working with him and pray for his ministry with us.

We are continuing with one service per Sunday. This alternates between morning and evening services with the fifth Sunday being a morning service. There are special occasions when two services are held.

We continue to work with the Anglican church of All Saints. There are joint services.

1. Carol service in Village Hall
2. Joint Covenant Service at Methodist Church
3. World Day of Prayer at Methodist Church
4. United Summer service at one of the Anglican churches in the Benefice.
5. Remembrance Sunday at the War Memorial in churchyard at Methodist Church.

We hold many social events. Coffee Morning, Beetle Drive, Quiz & Chips and Summer Concert. We welcome all to those events and thank the many people who support us.

We hold a weekly Pop-In and during the winter months this has been a Warm Place. Please do drop in for a cup of tea and a natter.

We continue to be a Christian presence and witness in our community giving support and help to other people and organizations where possible.

Corinne Hill, Church Steward

11. St. Andrew's Church, Wickhampton

Once again, Wickhampton PCC would like to thank the Parish Council for their very generous annual contribution towards the costs of grass-cutting and maintenance in the churchyard at St Andrew's.

The Friends of Wickhampton Church (FOWC)

FOWC have arranged the following fundraising events for 2026, to be held at the church:-

Saturday 13 June at 7.30pm

Talk by Michael Pollitt – “In the heart of Broadland”.

With the benefit of 30 years' experience as Agricultural Editor of *The Eastern Daily Press*, Michael will reflect on the remarkable legacy of global environmentalist Andrew Lees, for both farming and wildlife in Andrew's home county of Norfolk, and further afield.

Tickets: £7.50 on the door (cash please) to include light refreshments.

Friday 10, Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 July, 11am-4pm

Photographic Exhibition.

Free entry, cream teas and light refreshments.

Saturday 1st August at 7pm

Talk by medieval historian Imogen Corrigan - “The hazards of the journey”.

What possessed people to trudge hundreds of miles, often in appalling conditions, and sometimes perishing on the way? From maps and motivation to souvenirs and shrines, Imogen will discuss travel in the round as well as specifically for spiritual reasons.

Tickets: £7.50 on the door (cash please) to include light refreshments.

Sunday 16 August: 11am-4pm

Our 8th Teddy Bear Parachute & Zip-line day.

A fun-filled day for all the family. Refreshments, ice creams, tombola and raffle.

For more information email wickhampton@gmail.com

Sara Stephenson, Wickhampton PCC

12. All Saints' Church, Freethorpe

PCC members

Graham Allcock	Church Fabric and Churchyard Officer
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Ros Boar	Safeguarding Officer
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Lynda Boyle	Treasurer and Electoral Roll Officer
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Christine Crossman	Secretary
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There is no Churchwarden

There are 8 members on the Electoral Roll

There has been 1 wedding, 1 funeral and 1 burial of ashes during the year.

Attendance is still on the low side but Christmas services were well attended.

Tony Edelsten and Graham Allcock still act as Authorised Worship Assistants.

Graham Allcock provides music when Brenda Pawsey cannot attend.

Ladies Christian link still continues during the summer months at the home of Lynda Boyle. There have been some interesting speakers.

Open the book has sadly been cancelled at the village school.

There has been 2 PCC meetings during the year where many things have been discussed.

Bingo sessions were tried at the village hall to try and raise some funds for the church, but these were abandoned due to lack of support.

In November a change to the pattern of services was discussed.

Harvest festival gifts were donated to the food bank.

This year a new man has been employed to cut the grass in the churchyard . We are very pleased with his work and have employed him for 2026.

Safeguarding

There are no issues to report . Safeguarding training is up to date.

13. Freethorpe Wednesday Night Out

Author: Ruth Bacon

We are enjoying a successful year yet again with 24 members joining the club mainly from Freethorpe but also from Halvergate, Reedham, Southwood and Cantley and 4 Guests. We meet together on the first Wednesday of the month in Freethorpe Village Hall at 7.30pm.

We are still run by a committee of only four. Brenda Pawsey, Ruth Bacon, Patricia Cater and Linda Turner, who together arrange the varied yearly programme of events. Our subscription year runs from October, and so far we have heard about Norwich in the 1970's, Blackhall Barn crafts, our December meeting was held in the Methodist Chapel as it was decided that it would be cosier there and in 2025 so far we have enjoyed listening to a variety of subjects – we have had Wally Webb talking about Radio Norfolk, a talk about the Venetian Waterways Gardens of Great Yarmouth and have heard about The Caister Lifeboat and the work of Medical detection dogs.

We are still charging only £5 to join and £2 for each meeting and £3 for guests. Our Bring and Buy stall continues to generate funds that contribute towards increasing speakers fees and Village Hall charges.

Our club was started on 4th March 1969 and after 56 years we are still going stronger than ever.

Ruth Bacon - Treasurer

14. Freethorpe Brownies & Rainbows

Freethorpe Brownies and Rainbow are pleased to report another busy year with our 25 Brownies and Rainbows and team of 5 volunteer leaders. We meet on a Monday during term time at Freethorpe Village Hall and during our meetings have taken part in a number of activities including cooking, games, crafts and work towards lots of badges.

Last summer we enjoyed a pack holiday to Sheringham where we went on the beach and played games, went on the train and enjoyed chips and ice cream!

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Freethorpe Parish Council for their generous donation which has been put towards the annual GirlGuiding census and our planned sleepover at Limpenhoe later in the year. Support such as this means that we can make Brownies and Rainbows as affordable and inclusive as possible.

We look forward to another exciting year ahead!

Thanks for your support

Helen Utting

15. Freethorpe Village Hall Defibrillator

Freethorpe Community First Responders ceased operating in 2025 and the responsibility of the defibrillator at Freethorpe Village Hall has been handed over to the Parish Council along with a donation from Responders for the upkeep of the equipment. Helen is the registered guardian for the defibrillator, carries out a monthly maintenance check and checks the defibrillator after it has been activated to ensure it is ready for use.

Helen Utting

16. Freethorpe Flower Show

Once again the 2025 show had a good number of participants with 252 entries from 40 exhibitors, including some new names. There was a good spread over all categories although the children's section was once again disappointing. Everyone seemed to enjoy the show and it continues to be a well supported event in the village calendar.

2026 will be the 90th year of the show and some classes will reflect this.

We are currently looking for a new treasurer and additional help on the day is always welcome.

Cheryl Nicholls

Secretary