

## **County Council report June 2024 – Judy Oliver**

### **1 Norfolk agreement with Ukrainian region of Lviv**

A cooperation agreement has been signed between Norfolk County Council and the Ukrainian region of Lviv to explore knowledge transfer, educational exchange and trade opportunities.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at the Ukrainian Embassy in London by Leader of Norfolk County Council and in Lviv via video link by Maksym Kozytskyi, Head of the Lviv Regional Military Administration. It is the first such agreement to be signed with Lviv by any part of the UK.

Both Norwich and Lviv have links to UNESCO: Norwich is a UNESCO City of Literature, and the historic part of Lviv city (300-acre historic centre) is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. In 2022, Lviv was granted Freedom of the City of Norwich in solidarity with Ukraine, and the MoU - similar to a twinning arrangement build on these links.

Norfolk and Lviv have identified several key opportunities for collaborative working, including the TechBridge programme, a strategic partnership between the UK Government, Ukraine Ministry of Digital Transformation and Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs to forge connections between our tech ecosystems.

The Lviv tech sector are recognised on the international level. Lviv IT specialists developed the Skype app and special effects for films such as Harry Potter and Spider-Man. Norfolk also has a strong growing ICT/Digital sector and the MoU will encourage collaboration within the sector between the regions.

There will also be a visit to the Theatre Royal Norwich in October by the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, led by leading conductor, Theodore Kuchar.

### **2 Grants**

Voluntary organisations who support people with the cost of living in Norfolk were offered two new grants to apply for from Norfolk's Household Support Fund.

£2.15m of funding, from a combination of UK Government and Norfolk County Council sources, was made available to Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprises in Norfolk that are supporting those with the cost of living, including one-off grant funding to enable community groups and social enterprises to meet the emergency needs of residents, particularly those at the highest risk of living in poverty and those who have higher than average costs due to specific needs such as care costs.

And £800,000 is being made available to organisations that are already supporting people in Norfolk, to help meet any emerging needs these individuals may have, such as help with the cost of food and energy. Applicant organisations can receive up to £20,000 to distribute to individuals in grants of up to £100 to help meet these costs. Applications for this funding, via the Norfolk Household Support Fund, are open until 30th September.

Between 2021 and September this year, a total of £43.485m will have been allocated to the Household Support Fund in Norfolk, comprising £40.2m from central government and £3.285m funded by Norfolk County Council.

### **3 Creativity and Wellbeing Week**

This took place at the end of last month and is a partnership between London Arts and Health Forum and the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance. It is an annual open festival and anyone who wants to host an event focused on culture, arts and wellbeing.

### **4. Youth Parliament Members**

Four Norfolk teenagers have been officially inaugurated as the county's new Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs). Norfolk Youth Parliament helps young people to have a voice on the future of Norfolk. Working with regional MPs and local Norfolk councillors, the young leaders will represent their peers and advocate for important issues such as education, mental health, and climate change. Aiesha Page-Geeves is the representative for North Norfolk and Broadland

The new MYPs, are all aged between 13 and 18, and selected through a process that includes applications, interviews, and public voting. A total of 16,345 votes were cast by 11 to 18-year-olds in Norfolk's MYP elections, approximately 21.5% of the population of young people in Norfolk and the largest paper vote for young people yet.

Young people also had the chance to cast their votes in the Make Your Mark ballot, which asks them to vote for the issues most important to them from a list of options. This year, health and wellbeing was voted as the most important issue to young people followed by culture, media, sport, jobs, the economy, and benefits.

### **5 Foster carers**

Five children in Norfolk come into care every week and Norfolk County Council is calling for more people to come forward as foster parents. Foster Care Fortnight is used to urge more people to consider fostering and encourage more businesses to become foster friendly employers by making it easier for their staff to become carers. Foster Friendly employers support their staff by giving them flexibility to take their foster child to medical appointments, attend parents' evenings and sports day, or to work from home if the child is sick.

There are more than 1,200 children in care in Norfolk and, although numbers have stabilised in recent years, the council needs more carers to provide stability and safety for the children it looks after.

Norfolk County Council itself has recently become accredited as a Fostering Friendly Employer and has 30 employees who are also foster carers with Norfolk Fostering Service. Foster carers are self-employed. Many continue working at their usual place of employment at the same time as being a foster carer.

### **6 Music**

Norfolk County Council has been appointed by Arts Council England to lead the Norfolk and Suffolk Music Hub from September 2024, as part of a national programme to provide high-quality music education for all children and young people. Norfolk County Council's Music Service has led the Norfolk Music Hub, a partnership of organisations and schools since 2012.

The Arts Council England funds Music Hubs and it has decided to reduce the number of Music Hubs across England from 118 to 43, including a combined hub for Norfolk and Suffolk. Norfolk has won the bid to lead this hub.

As the new Hub Lead Organisation for both counties, Norfolk County Council will receive just over £2m from the DfE to coordinate music education, plus £661,967 to invest in new musical instruments, equipment and technology.

## **7 Nature and biodiversity**

Norfolk County Council, along with 47 other local authorities, is working on a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as part of a national effort to protect biodiversity in England. A survey has been launched to find out which aspects of nature are most important to people in Norfolk which will help to ensure the strategy represents local views.

The survey will also seek opinions on which habitats and species should be included in the strategy.

By taking part in the survey residents will contribute to the process of creating this very important strategy. Nationwide, wildlife species have declined by 19% since 1970 but in Norfolk we have more protected spaces for nature than elsewhere. However, these spaces are in isolated pockets that need improving and linking together, protecting them for future generations to enjoy.

The 48 strategies being created across England will be put together to form a national 'nature network', with each strategy highlighting the most important local habitats and the best places for new habitat to be created.

As well as making more space for nature, this strategy has a wide range of benefits for residents, landowners and businesses. For example,

- The creation of additional coastal habitats can assist communities in adapting to sea-level rise, safeguarding homes and businesses.
- New green spaces for recreation, such as woodlands, can improve health and wellbeing outcomes for nearby residents.
- Supporting farmers to manage their land for nature can bring new funding into the rural economy, generating employment and training opportunities. (a survey for farmers and landowners will be launched in the next four weeks)

Residents can take part in the survey online until Sunday 30 June.  
Visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/LNRSpubliCSurvey](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/LNRSpubliCSurvey) for more information.

## **8 Home Composting**

To mark Compost Awareness Week last month, Norfolk County is encouraging people who are interested in home composting but haven't yet started to give it a try. To learn how to compost at home visit [www.norfolkrecycles.com/home-compost](http://www.norfolkrecycles.com/home-compost). To get a cut price compost bin, visit [www.getcomposting.com](http://www.getcomposting.com), or call 0800 316 445.