



# Foreword

Welcome to North Norfolk District Council's Economic Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2027), which sets out the approach and actions the Council will undertake to support the growth of the local economy over the next 4 years.

'Investing in Our Local Economy & Infrastructure' is an important strand of the recently adopted Corporate Plan 2023-27 and we remain committed as a Council to helping to create a vibrant and dynamic local economy. It is important to us that we play our role in shaping an environment where there are opportunities for all, innovation and creativity can thrive, and businesses are unhindered in their ability to sustain, grow and prosper. However, it is recognised that we cannot do it alone. We all have a part to play and, in these highly challenging times, we need to be clear in our vision, have clarity as to what we want to achieve, be pragmatic about where we focus our efforts, and seek every opportunity to collaborate and build partnerships.

It starts with our **People**. North Norfolk has an aging population and workforce demographic. These are important concerns for the sustainability of local businesses and in turn, the vitality of our local communities. Whilst age brings with it experience and knowledge, we also recognise that we need to keep 'fresh blood' in the system by creating a skilled workforce, with clear career pathways for young people seeking to live and work locally, and through identifying skill gaps and solutions for aspirant businesses.



We are ambitious in our desire to create a **Place** where start-ups, indigenous businesses and new inward investment can all be supported in their growth aspirations. Our emerging new Local Plan sets out our policies to support the delivery of climate resilient sustainable growth and identifies a number of sites that will facilitate significant housing and employment development. Ensuring that there is sufficient infrastructure in place to facilitate these is absolutely fundamental to the successful delivery of the Plan through to 2036.

**Partnership** working is the 'golden thread' that you will find intertwined in almost every element of this strategy's Action Plan. I'm keen for the Council to continue to further strengthen its approach to working with partners and to creating a holistic and joined-up approach to nurturing growth opportunities. Sustainable economic development will simply not happen without the strategic co-ordination of partnership actions.

I invite you to not simply just read this strategy, but to identify ways in which you too can also contribute to supporting your local communities and delivering economic prosperity for the District. These are difficult and indeed worrying times for many, but I am as ever confident that North Norfolk has all the right ingredients to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth.

## **Cllr Tim Adams**

Leader of the Council  
Portfolio Holder for Executive Support  
and Legal Services



# Introduction

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This document sets out a strategic framework for economic development and has been prepared based on a detailed body of evidence including:

**Data Analysis** - A local economic profile of the District has been produced, with particular thanks to the Norfolk Office of Data Analytics (NODA). You will find some of this evidence drawn out within the Strategy, and a more comprehensive report can be found in Appendix D. In addition, both a skills and a recruitment survey of businesses was also undertaken by the Council. The full findings can be found in Appendix B

**Engagements with Businesses** - to which you will also find a number of case studies inserted amongst the pages of this strategy. Appreciating what businesses are experiencing on the ground is absolutely vital to understanding how we can assist them.

**External Partners** - In August 2022 we formed the North Norfolk Local Partnership Group to help shape and inform our Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and, in November 2022, our bid to the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Key stakeholders representing businesses, farmers, landowners, community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors operating in North Norfolk met to review the priorities, challenges and opportunities for businesses and communities. The outcome of this was the securing of £2.7m of Government money which will fund a wide range of programmes and initiatives through to March 2025. A number of these partners are all now engaged in the delivery of this work and we continue to work closely with them.

**Internal Stakeholders** - in October 2023 a workshop, open to all Council Members and relevant Officers, was held to discuss local economic challenges and the work that the Council should prioritise in the Council's Annual Action Plans and, in turn, the Economic Strategy & Action Plan.

From all this information gathered a number of themes emerged, with particular concerns expressed regarding:

- **Inflationary pressures** - both in terms of the cost of living for residents, but also the operational costs of running businesses. The inflation indices have fallen over the last twelve months, but prices generally remain high and are still increasing at a higher rate than that we have experienced over the last fifteen years.

- **Climate change** - and the need for the Council, partners, businesses, and local communities to become more sustainable, save energy and reduce our carbon footprints. North Norfolk was the first district council in Norfolk to declare a climate emergency in early 2019 and we established an Environmental Charter to underpin this. We have also adopted a 'Net Zero 2030 Strategy and Action Plan' and have implemented a number of energy saving measures to our own assets to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a potential opportunity for the Council to play a role in promoting the district as a strong location for investment in sustainable tourism. There are already a good number of operators already investing in sustainable practices, which the Council could promote and seek to weave into a strong narrative that promotes North Norfolk as the destination of choice for eco-tourism.

- **Skills and Recruitment** – to which a number of issues were identified, including access to training providers, an aging workforce, ‘brain drain’, low wages and a high dependency on the visitor economy.

- **Lack of ‘grow on’ space for businesses** – There are approximately 20 distinct industrial sites in North Norfolk and the emerging Local Plan identifies a number of employment sites to support growth. However, the commercial premises stock of many of these sites are aging and they are predominantly saturated, with little capacity to facilitate business expansion. Historically, public bodies such as the Rural Development Commission, English Estates and English Partnerships funded the provision of serviced employment land or advance business premises in rural areas where there was a lack of developer/investor confidence to make such investments, and many of our towns had such land and premises provided through these organisations. However, over the past two decades, funding disseminated through the Regional Development Agencies, and more recently the LEP, has tended to be concentrated on urban areas and so public funding hasn’t been available to support the bringing forward of serviced land and premises. As such, it is recognised that some businesses seeking to scale up have felt no choice but to leave the district to an alternative location in Norfolk where they could be accommodated.

- **Market towns** – and the changing way in which people shop and use our towns, particularly given the growth in out-of-town retail areas and online shopping. Initiatives such as Experience Sheringham, Love Holt and the Stalham High Street Taskforce have demonstrated that there is a desire and appetite to support proactive change within our local town centres. Moreover, the Council is presently in the final stages of delivering a £4.47m North Walsham Heritage Action Zone programme which has enhanced the amenity of key areas

of public realm, undertaken substantial highway improvements, repaired, restored or brought back into use a number of buildings, and delivered a very well received cultural programme.

- **Infrastructure investment** – needed to unlock key growth areas and to address critical ‘not spot’ broadband and mobile signal issues. We are also very conscious that there are a number of water abstraction licences that could be varied or revoked, as the Environment Agency seeks to ensure abstraction in certain in more vulnerable catchment areas remains sustainable. Yet there are also opportunities, with the Bacton Terminal (to which a third of UK gas is landed and processed), in particular, offering a strong potential for carbon capture and storage and hydrogen production. Should these progress then they will likely support a substantial number of jobs during the construction phase in the short term and create a number of high skilled jobs in the longer term.

Many of these challenges are, of course, far from unique to North Norfolk, but the Council is committed to doing everything it can to unblock issues where they emerge, collaborate with partners to achieve a shared objective, or lobby to influence others where it is beyond our immediate sphere of influence. The remainder of this document outlines the strategic context in which this report sits, draws attention to some of the local economic evidence (links to which can be found in Appendix A), provides further detail on the challenges and, most importantly, how we will approach overcoming them.



The focus of this delivery is built around three high level objectives within the Corporate Plan that are centred on supporting the local economy:

**‘Creating an Environment for Business to thrive in’**  
**‘Infrastructure to Support Growth’**  
**‘Skills for Jobs’**



The accompanying Action Plan outlines the projects, initiatives and activities that the Council will undertake to support the delivery of the three priority objectives. It is not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue of all activities, as much of the delivery is business as usual for the Council. However, it serves to highlight some of the particularly key items of delivery that the Council will be engaged in, both presently and over the coming years.

**Cllr Paul Heinrich**  
Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth  
and Chairman of Development Committee

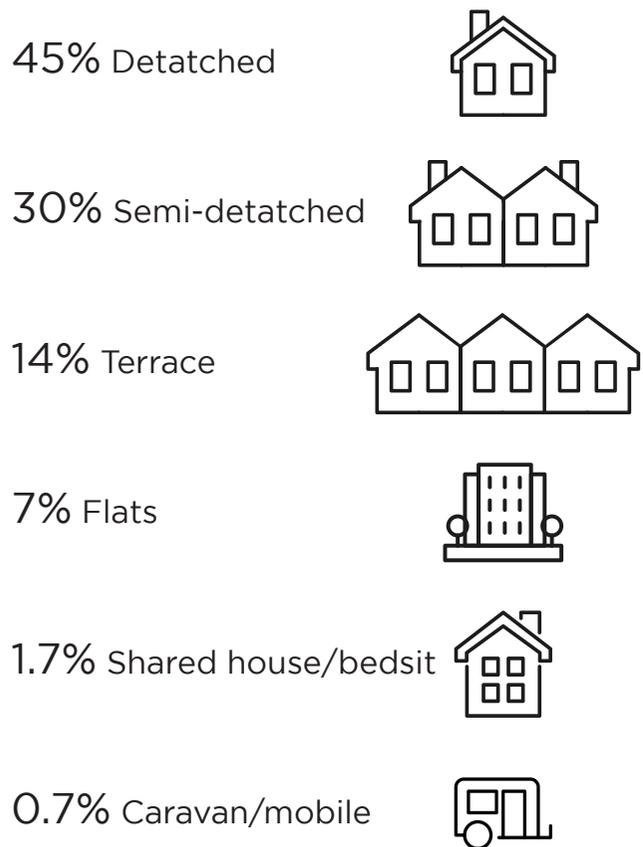


# 1. Homes & Households

Nearly half of all North Norfolk households are in the bottom 4 of The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Journey times to key services are close to double that of Norwich and over a 6th are living in fuel poverty.

## Types of households



102,979 residents

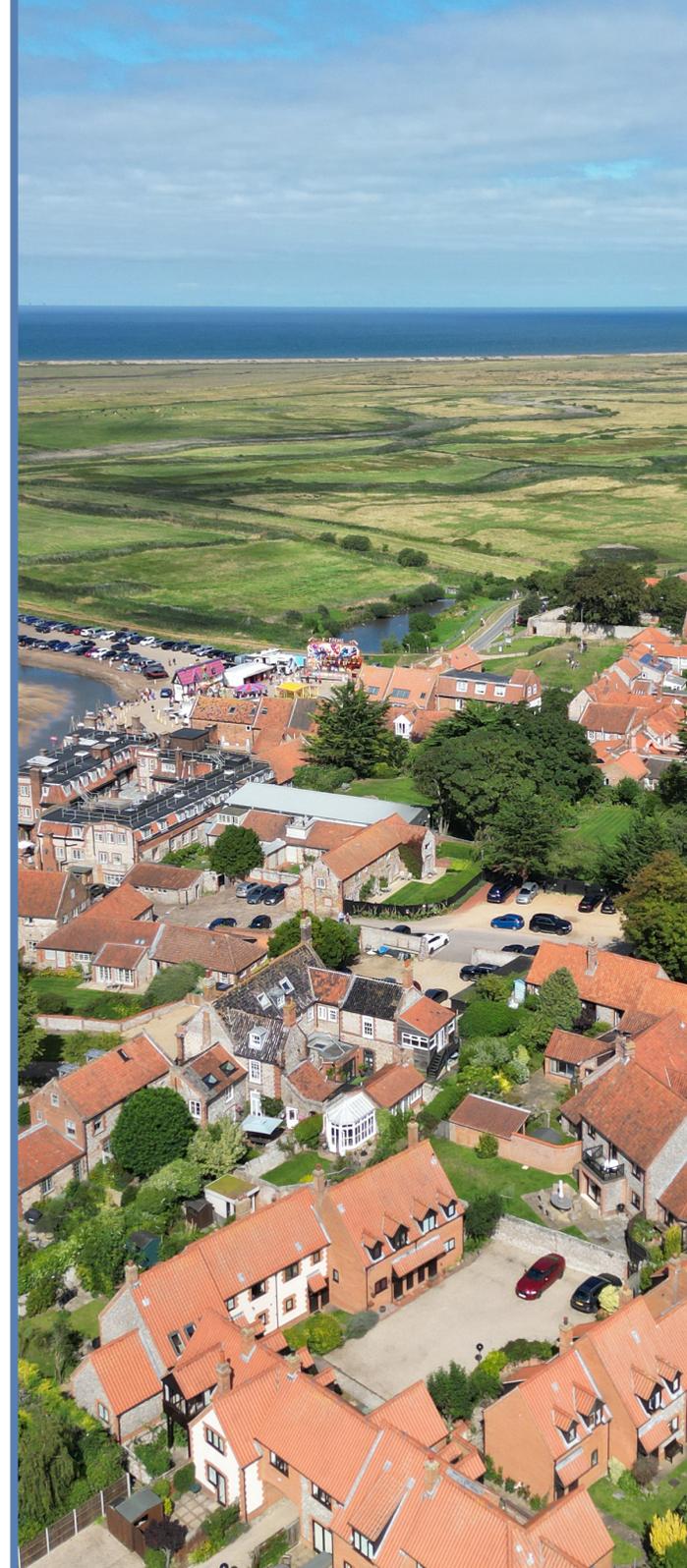
 52,681 Female

 50,298 Males

**Minimum Journey Time**  
to 8 of key services

 18 mins vs Norwich 9 mins

 35 mins vs Norwich 16 mins



## 2. Skills & Employment

North Norfolk's working population are generally less well formally educated, and nearly half of females work part-time. Many people travel to work in the car, and often longer distances, over 10km or more. A large proportion work in the hospitality, retail and health & social care, which account for the top 3 employment types. A lower percentage are employed in professional and technical roles. A low proportion of the working population have qualifications above NVQ3.



### Employment\*

36,800 Employed

6,600 Self Employed

### Working part-time

 44% Female

 19% Males

### Working full-time

 56% Female

 81% Males

### Travel to work

 57%

 30% Travel over 10km

### Qualifications % of 16-64yrs

93% NVQ1+ min 1-3 GCSE's

76% NVQ2+ min 4-5 GCSE's

54% NVQ3+ min 2 A levels

33% NVQ4+ min High Ed Cert/BTEC

### Type of work

19% Wholesale/Retail Trade

16% Accommodation and food service

13% Human health and social work

9% Education

9% Manufacturing

6% Construction

6% Admin and support

5% Professional, scientific and technical

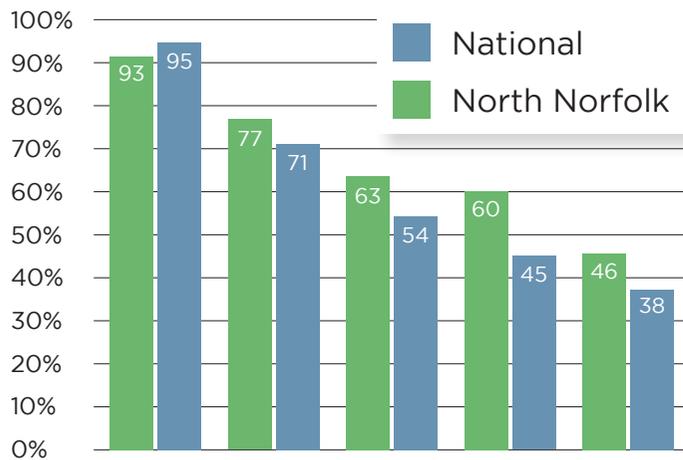
\*(April 2022 - March 2023)

# 3. Business

In North Norfolk's business are predominantly micro, mostly employing less than 9 people. Agriculture, forestry & fishing, accommodation & food services, construction, retail and manufacturing account for the majority of local businesses by volume of enterprises.

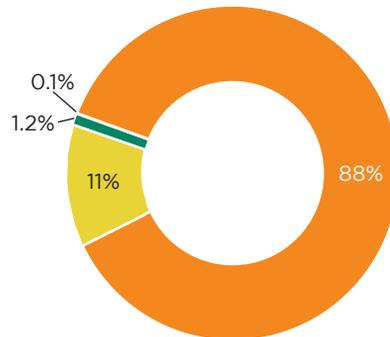


## Business survival rate

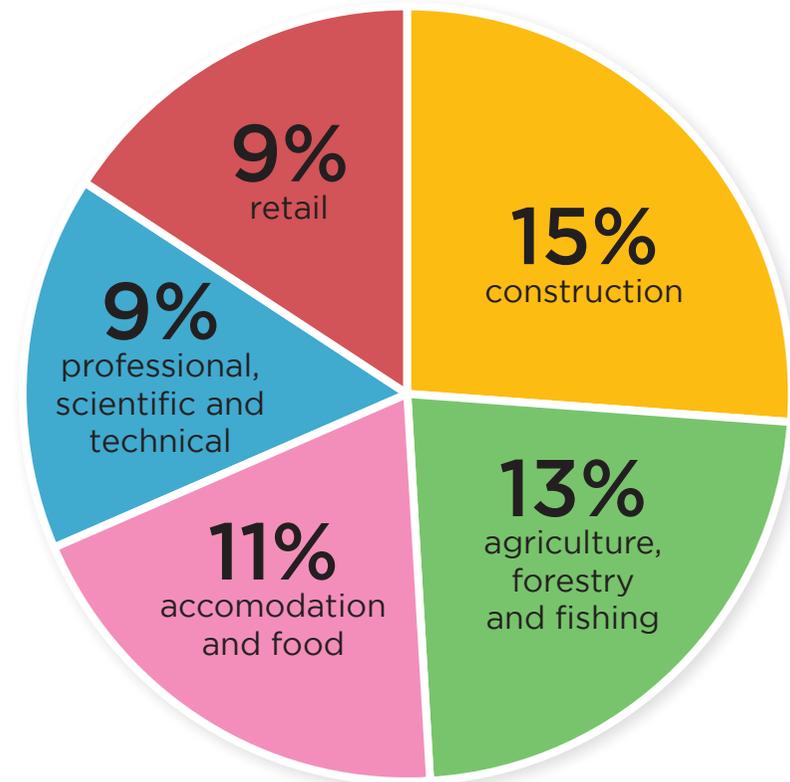


## By employment size

- 88% micro (0-9 employees)
- 11% small (10-49 employees)
- 1.2% medium (50-249 employees)
- 0.1% large (250+employees)



## By industry



# 4. Visitor Economy in Focus

## Economic Impact 2022 vs 2019 (Pre-pandemic levels)

### Day trips 2022

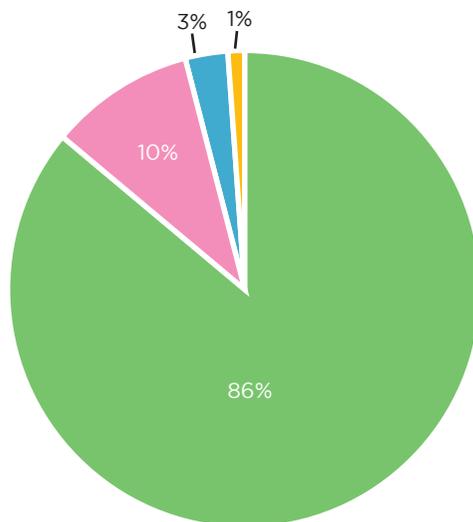
548,400  
worth  
£136,658,000  
2022 vs 2019  
**-3%**  
2021 vs 2019  
**-34%**

### Overnight trips 2022

9,014,000  
worth  
£287,813,000  
2022 vs 2019  
**-9%**  
2021 vs 2019  
**-30%**

### Trips by purpose

86% Holiday  
10% Friends/Family  
3% Business  
1% Other



## Value of Tourism

2022	£512,370,262
2021	£365,221,323
2019	£528,931,378

### Breakdown of expenditure (Total staying)

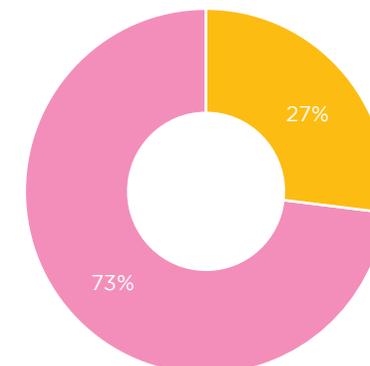
32% Accomodation  
29% Food & Drink  
12% Shopping  
10% Attractions  
17% Travel

### Breakdown of expenditure (Total day visitors)

43% Food & Drink  
26% Shopping  
18% Travel  
13% Attractions

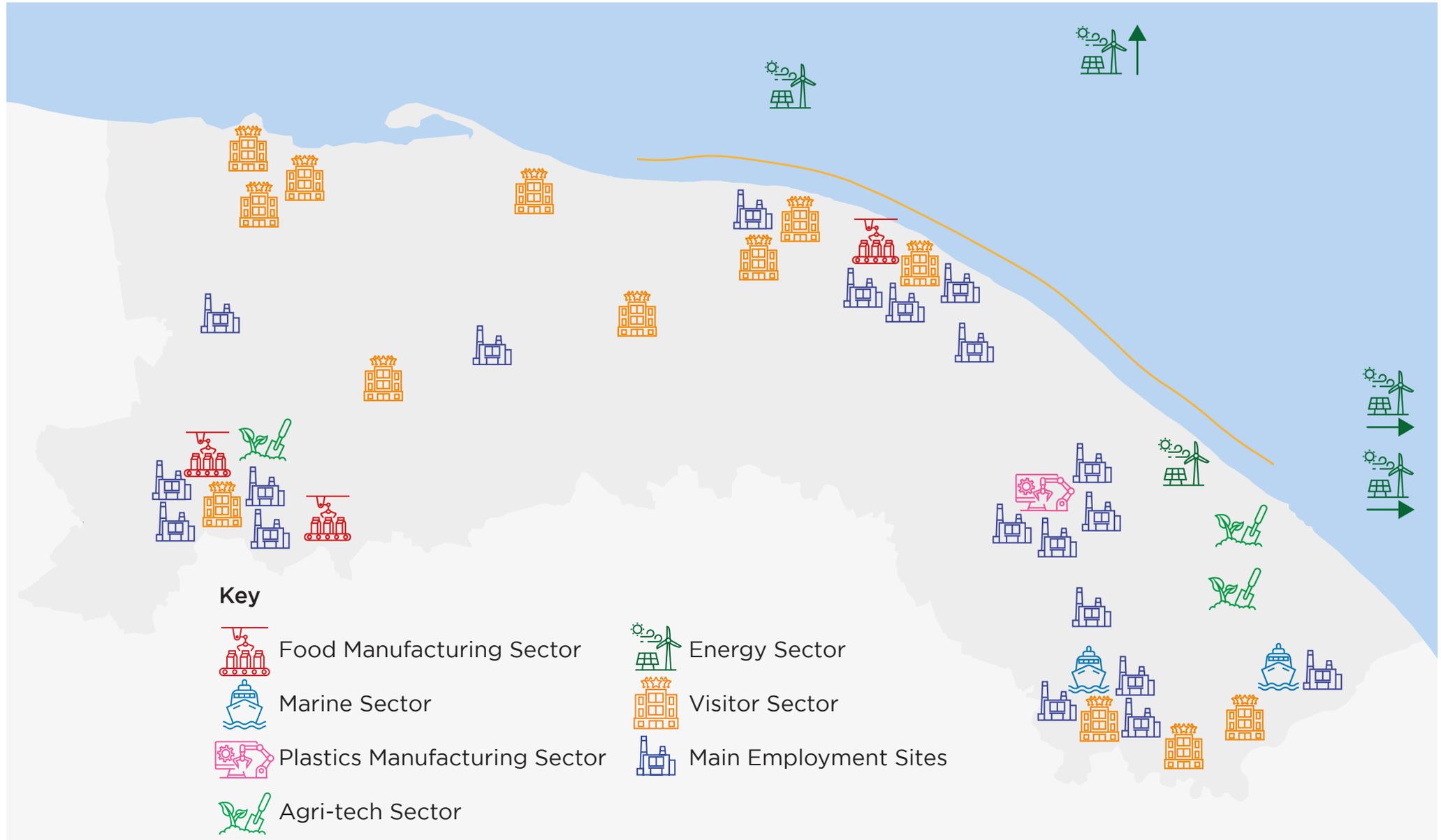
### Tourism jobs as a % of total employment

73% Total jobs  
27% Tourism



# Key Sectors & Sites

A full list of locations is shown on the next page.



# Key Sectors & Sites

Note: this list is illustrative of businesses within some of North Norfolk's key sectors, but it is not exhaustive.



## Food Manufacturing Sector

Hain Celestial, Fakenham  
Kinnerton, Fakenham  
Crisp Maltings, Great Ryburgh  
Jonas Seafood, Cromer



## Marine Sector

Oyster Yachts, Hoveton  
Landamores, Hoveton  
Haine Marine, Catfield  
Jeckells, Hoveton  
Benthic Solutions, Hoveton  
Trendmarine, Catfield



## Plastics Manufacturing Sector

East Coast Plastics, North Walsham  
Coda Plastics, North Walsham  
Weener Plastics, North Walsham



## Agri-tech Sector

Ploeger UK, Fakenham  
Ernest Doe, Fakenham  
Sands Agricultural Machinery, Brumstead  
Crop Systems, Happisburgh



## Energy Sector

Bacton Gas Terminal  
Sheringham Shoal  
Hornsea 3 (Pending delivery)  
Vanguard (Pending delivery)  
Boreas (Pending delivery)



## Visitor Sector

Cromer Pier  
Holkham Hall  
Wells Maltings & Sackhouse  
Wells Harbour  
Sheringham Little Theatre  
The Broads  
Bewilderwood  
Wroxham Barns



## Main Employment Sites

Catfield Industrial Estate  
Crossways Business Centre  
Fakenham Industrial Estate  
Scottow Enterprise Park  
Laundry Loke Industrial Estate  
Lingate Industrial Estate  
Stonehill Way Industrial Estate  
North Norfolk Business Centre  
North Norfolk Retail Park  
Rose Centre Retail Park  
Stalham Road Industrial Estate

Fakenham Racecourse  
Deep History Coast  
Thursford Steam Engine Museum  
and Christmas Spectacular  
Cley Marshes Visitor Centre  
Holt Country Park  
Sheringham & Pretty Corner Country Parks

Tattersett Business Park  
The Folly Industrial Estate  
Tilia Business Park  
Weybourne Road Industrial Estate  
Clipbush Park Estate  
Melton Constable Industrial Estate  
George Edwards Road Industrial Estate  
North Creak Airfield Business Park  
Middlebrook Way Industrial Estate  
Scottow Enterprise Park

# Challenges

North Norfolk is faced with a number of challenges that belie a perception that the casual observer or visitor to the district may have. Whilst it is undoubtedly blessed with an array of unique environmental and built assets - with 45 miles of attractive coast, a plethora of charming villages, bustling coastal resorts and an abundance of places of cultural and historical interest - these mask a number of significant and emerging issues.

Indeed, some of its strengths are also the source of some of its weaknesses. For example, local people are challenged by its rurality; with no motorways or trunk roads and limited public transport outside of the towns, this can make it difficult to access employment, training, education and essential services. Moreover, its popularity as a place to retire has exacerbated an aging demographic which potentially will place long-term strains on social care and future labour supply.



Though some may have a perception that **North Norfolk** is a wealthy district, **43.5% of the population** are in fact within the four most deprived deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Whilst they make a valuable contribution in terms of local spend, the greater wealth tends to be concentrated amongst those who have retired and relocated to the district, often from areas of higher income and with accumulated wealth. **Over one third of the population are over 65** and this is predicted to increase. An aging population tends to place greater strain on social care and access to healthcare. This can also have an impact on those of working age who may need to provide care for family members.

A large proportion of **those of working age are in fact on lower incomes** by national standards. The median salary for full time workers in North Norfolk is 9% less than the rest of Great Britain and full and part time pay for locally employed females remains both less than locally employed males and less than the national average. Consequently, the recent high levels of inflation have had a proportionately greater impact on many residents within North Norfolk. Much of the inflationary pressure has come from rising energy prices, which is further exacerbating a trend of increasing fuel poverty within the district, with 16.3% of the local population living in fuel poverty.

**The concentration of growth in the Greater Norwich area** and A11 corridors, is placing some of our communities, particularly traditional market towns such as Fakenham and North Walsham, at a disadvantage economically as they become increasingly 'dormitory' in their role and make-up. There is a concern that encouraging people to travel out of their home towns for employment on a large scale also has wider implications for the well-being of the home communities as the local retail and service base is undermined; people who commute to work often do their shopping and other business whilst at or travelling to/from work and this is creating a challenge for the district in sustaining some of our local town centre economies.

**Housing affordability is a significant issue within North Norfolk** as significant numbers of residential properties within certain parts of the district are being bought by older people retiring here or for second homes and holiday lets. It has been observed that high price housing locations are often occurring where median salaries are lowest. This is having a significant impact on the sustainability and viability of some of our communities, particularly in the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the availability of small and affordable properties is extremely limited and is impacting upon the provision of basic community and public services, as well as the supply of labour for tourism businesses. **Local people are effectively 'priced out' of the area** and are therefore moving inland to market towns such as Fakenham and North Walsham where they then access more 'local' jobs (or more easily commute to Norwich) and thus support local services in these locations.



It is recognised that **community and voluntary organisations play a vital role** in the provision of a wide range of activities (both essential and additional) and local facilities that deliver a number of health and well-being benefits that would otherwise not be met. These are needed and highly valued by local people, but are often highly dependent on grants or fund-raising in order to sustain themselves. In North Norfolk such facilities are commonly found in locations that have limited (or no) public transport and, as such, local communities, and particularly those which are vulnerable or on lower incomes, have limited ability to access services that are more readily available in more urbanised areas. Moreover, many facilities have experienced a lack of investment stretching back decades, and rising costs have placed substantial strain on their viability. The loss of such facilities, and the organisations that they support, could cause further degradation to the vitality of many of North Norfolk's rural hamlets and villages.

**The anticipated impact of climate change creates uncertainty** in the seasons, an expectation of further rises in sea levels and a higher frequency of storms. This will bring challenges in relation to water resource, flooding, coastal erosion and impacts on the natural environment.

In many parts of **North Norfolk, businesses**, communities and future housing provisions **are facing a number of threats** in terms of water security, nutrient neutrality and coastal erosion. The Council is working with partners to develop programmes that will help to partially mitigate or build a greater degree of local resilience to these challenges.

“

In our skills surveys - over a third (38%) found it difficult to meet training needs. Identifying cost, location and lack of suitable courses as the top reasons.

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**SMEs account for 99.9% of North Norfolk businesses**, with 88.2% of them being at the micro level (employing less than 10). Businesses of this scale generally tend to be less well informed about opportunities (business support, grants etc.), are less able to obtain commercial lending (particularly new and fledgling enterprises) or access trading markets.

North Norfolk has a very narrow sectorial make up, with a **third of employment being accounted for within just 3 sectors** - agriculture (inc. forestry & fishing), accommodation & food services and retail. These sectors tend to pay lower wages than most other sectors.

Business in North Norfolk can be very insular and interdependent, with some businesses having limited ability or awareness of how to trade at a national or international scale. **The district has no major road nor high-speed train infrastructure** and the geography is such that it is not en route to anywhere. You have to come here for a reason, but also its catchment is only 180 degrees - being on the North Sea coast.

Historically, North Norfolk has struggled to compete with other areas in securing European and Government infrastructure funding. Eligibility for such investment has typically been assessed in terms of their ability to deliver thousands of jobs, which is something that, as a rural district, could not be demonstrated locally. However, arguably a number of locations in North Norfolk could in fact deliver a number of relatively smaller projects that could support local growth (possibly involving hundreds of jobs) that collectively would be of significant value to the sustainability and future prosperity of the district. With a changing funding landscape and the emerging Levelling-up agenda, it is hoped that this will provide the opportunity for North Norfolk to secure higher levels of investment to help overcome some of the endemic local issues and foster growth opportunities, commensurate at least to the anticipated housing growth within the emerging Local Plan.

The high level of commercial development sites that have arisen over the last two decades within the key growth locations in the region (eg Greater Norwich, A11/A47/A14 corridors) has meant that some indigenous businesses looking for grow on space that can't be found locally have relocated. 'Development-ready' serviced sites are attractive to businesses seeking turnkey premises with limited further investment required. **North Norfolk has over 20 well established industrial sites**, but more recent commercial growth opportunities within the extant Local Plan have come through mixed allocations where the developers have placed greater focus on bringing forward the residential land and have marketed the commercial elements without established site servicing infrastructure. This has dissuaded local businesses and some inward investment who are seeking a more ready-made offering that gives greater certainty of capacity for further growth.

Moreover, the concentration of **new jobs in more urbanised areas has had increasingly negative impacts on market towns** which historically had a good level of self-containment, with local manufacturing jobs on the outskirts in turn supporting retail and professional services jobs in town centres through locally retained footfall. High numbers of jobs from now long forgotten industries have effectively been redirected to the Greater Norwich and consequently market towns, in both North Norfolk and the rest of the county, have become increasingly dormitory and less sustainable locations, resulting in greater commuting distances and higher levels of congestion within the Norwich area. Whilst many **local businesses demonstrated a high degree of resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic**, this was largely met through a combination of Government support and the use of business or family resources. Consequently, a high number of businesses are now sitting on lower cash reserves or in higher leveraged positions than before the pandemic, reducing their ability to invest in their business and inhibiting their capacity for growth.

However, many businesses - partly driven by necessity and in part through delayed investment plans - have recognised a number of opportunities to diversify, innovate and build resilience into their business. The pandemic has also highlighted that some businesses are not embracing new ways of working and risk returning to previous outmoded models of conducting business and people management. In general, engagement with our businesses has identified that the pandemic had exposed a number of fundamental structural issues in businesses, including insufficient cash positions, lack of contingency preparation, business planning and management training.

It is recognised that a number of our cultural, historic and heritage institutions - struggling with rising costs and many successive years of under-investment - are also feeling the strains. Such businesses and organisations, which all play an integral role in the make-up of the local cultural heritage and visitor offer, are keen to explore ways to invest in their facilities so that they can sustain themselves and improve the visitor experience.

The relatively **poor performance of businesses in North Norfolk**, in terms of real GVA growth and productivity in recent times, has been **compounded by poor utility infrastructure**, including broadband and mobile coverage. Improved communication infrastructure across the whole county, including rural areas, would help to ensure greater equality in growth across the region and deliver wider benefits through local economic regeneration and reduced congestion.

UK Power Network's local distribution network serving the east of the North Norfolk District are at capacity. This is a critical local issue, desirably requiring distribution infrastructure to be upgraded from the Norwich main sub-station up to North Walsham. **The pressure on this network exists** not only in terms of supply to **support new**

**business and housing growth**, but also the ability of new sources of embedded generation through solar, onshore wind and anaerobic digestion facilities being able to connect into the 'grid'. There is a risk that, if the local electricity distribution network serving the east of North Norfolk is not addressed, the district faces being in the same position as with gas landed at Bacton Gas Terminal - with supplies coming into the UK effectively **'bypassing' the district**, with the area experiencing all of the inconvenience of accommodating these major schemes, but seeing little of the benefits. It is appreciated that this can be a difficult pill for local people to swallow when they similarly observe and suffer the inconvenience and disruption of cable corridors proposals for major offshore wind developments crossing the district, however well the construction of these schemes are managed.

As with many other areas of the country, particularly within the south and the east, **water security remains a critical issue for North Norfolk**. The combined pressures of climate change and increasing demand, along with the need to tackle environmental issues and ensure resilience to drought, have resulted in a sizeable inter-regional water resources challenge. Ensuring that there is an adequate water supply is essential to supporting future housing and business growth and sustaining businesses who abstract water.



North Norfolk has an aging population and workforce. Many businesses are struggling to address the matter of succession planning, which threatens their future existence and places financial and wellbeing strain on business owners. This is often compounded by the rurality of their premises, which typically means that public transport is limited (or non-existent) and therefore **many local businesses struggle to recruit and retain staff**, particularly when higher wages and better access to training, education or other opportunities can be found outside of the district.

As in common with many other rural areas, **'Brain Drain' is a significant issue for North Norfolk** which has very limited access to further education, higher education and training. There is also a 'perceived' lack of opportunity by some, which conflicts with the fact that a number of businesses have struggled to fill vacancies for highly skilled and well paid roles, such as engineers. It has been observed that young people leaving the area for education, training or work opportunities elsewhere are not returning, possibly only intending to retire here later in life. The income-to-house-price ratio serves to further exacerbate this issue with **North Norfolk having a lower median salary** than both Norfolk and the East of England region. The issue is particularly stark within our most rural villages and hamlets, which are commonly seeing an aging and diminishing population with consequent impacts on local services that are becoming increasingly unviable.

Some businesses are failing to engage young people and to raise the profile of their business and demonstrate career pathways. Many businesses seek to fill only immediate vacancies and do not necessarily have the knowledge or foresight to recognise the value of sowing seeds with those of pre-work age e.g. work experience, internships, career days etc. In addition, **employment retention in some sectors locally is very poor**, particularly in care and hospitality. This has had a significant impact on service delivery.

Much of the jobs growth in Greater Norwich has been to the south-west of the city – Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, Norwich Research Park, Longwater and the A11 corridor – all of which are relatively inaccessible for many North Norfolk residents without significant effort. The concentration and clustering of new business growth and employment in such areas potentially creates long-term problems for North Norfolk. A high commuter outflow of working-age people has in part fuelled the narrowing employment choice within the district and exacerbated 'brain drainage', **with young people choosing to locate to locations where there is greater opportunity**. Others are left to travel some distance to access jobs, with significant cost in terms of commuting either by personal or public transport.



**Access to post-16 education and training facilities in North Norfolk is difficult** as many courses and providers are typically found in areas of greater population density. Apprenticeship numbers have been falling nationally for some time and the issue is further challenged locally by the fact that there are no training providers headquartered within North Norfolk. Furthermore, many local businesses willing to invest in training or apprenticeships have frequently advised that they are having to send staff significant distances for accredited training, often outside of the East of England, resulting in additional costs for both the business and the employee.

A contributing factor to the lower median wages in North Norfolk is that approximately **a quarter of the population are employed within some aspect of the visitor economy**, which in the main tends to pay lower wages than other sectors. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on local tourism. The Economic Impact of Tourism Report for North Norfolk in 2022 indicated some degree of recovery but that the volume and value of tourism still have not returned to the pre-pandemic levels.

Whilst the 2022 report did demonstrate a recovery, **North Norfolk's high dependence on the visitor economy**, and the recently exposed fragility of it, means it is essential to find ways to ensure it remains vibrant, resilient and moves more towards a year-round offering. Shifting from the traditional seasonal tourism patterns, which tends to create short-term, lower-paid employment and less animated places for local people in the low seasons, will be essential to fostering greater wealth creation and economic resilience.



In our recruitment survey, 81% of respondents had difficulty in obtaining new staff. 



# Delivering Success

The Economic Strategy & Action Plan is focused on supporting and delivering against 3 priority objectives:

## Creating an Environment for Business to thrive in

Helping to create a place where local businesses can grow and prosper, new enterprises can flourish, inward investment is nurtured, and innovation, fresh thinking and creativity is welcomed.

## Infrastructure to Support Growth

Working together to deliver the fundamental elements needed to support the objectives of increased housing provision, economic growth, mitigating climate change and creating thriving and sustainable communities.

## Skills for Jobs

Creating a skilled, robust and sustainable workforce to support local businesses in their ambition to fulfil their growth aspirations.



### What we will do:

- Work with our market and resort towns to reinforce their roles as local service centres, centres of employment, financial services and business activity, served by public transport
- Provide support to allow rural businesses to thrive, recognising that many of our larger employers operate outside of our main towns.
- Look to maximise the benefits to our business community of the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funds.
- Continue to promote North Norfolk's diverse tourism and visitor offer.
- Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity.

### How we will do it:

We will undertake the following projects and activities:

**Rural Business & Communities Grant** – design and deliver a grant scheme to increase business investment and diversification, and to help community organisations with projects that support social action, volunteering and culture.

**Business Support Programme** – providing 1-2-1 support, advice and guidance and assisting with access to funding and resources.

**Business Digitalisation Programme** – supporting businesses through undertaking a digital audit and providing funding to assist with implementing recommended measures that deliver efficiency gains or improve their digital presence.

**Tourism marketing and business support** – working with Visit North Norfolk to deliver marketing campaigns (including the promotion of the Deep History Coast), and work with tourism businesses to support North Norfolk's diverse tourism and visitor offer.



**North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone** – deliver the final year of this programme. This will improve pedestrian flow and enhance the public realm; bring back to life under-utilised spaces; and, improve the structure, character and viability of a number of important buildings within the town.

**Stalham High Street Task Force** - take forward the recommendations of the Stalham High Street Task Force Action Plan through the facilitation of a Town Team, or Place Partnership.

**Facilitate a Banking Hub** - work with partners in Fakenham to retain banking and post office services in the town centre, through establishing a banking hub facility.

**Business Partnership/forum** – we will explore the development of a business forum for businesses to engage with the Council, share information and provide a sounding board for new initiatives.

**Business Decarbonisation Programme** – deliver a programme to support businesses on their sustainability journey by helping them to develop a decarbonisation strategy and through grant support.

**Business Sustainability Toolkit** - develop a package of resources to support local businesses to become more sustainable and reduce their energy costs.

**Invest North Norfolk** – building on the virtual business hub to further develop the brand and act as an umbrella for the promotion of NNDC’s business support offer in terms of location, skills, supply chain support etc. Continue to develop an effective regular communication channel to help businesses to keep up-to-date with information on council services, events and other sources of support.

**Improve Business Intelligence** – through the acquisition of business, labour market and movement data intelligence. This will improve our knowledge and understanding of businesses and labour market supply/demand, and enhance our evidence base to support the development of funding bids.

**Project Pipeline Management** – maintain a database of identified business and community projects and investments, including establishing their needs (funding, resource, advice etc), timescales to deliver and, where required, the support needed from the Council and/or partners to realise them.

**Key Account Management** – deliver a rolling programme of one-to-one engagements with our larger employers. This helps to instil the Council’s role as a key point of contact to support new investment, help overcome any barriers to growth or support with any appropriate early interventions if a business is experiencing financial difficulty.

**Business Survey** – undertake a business survey to help the Council to better understand the prevailing economic and business conditions facing local businesses. This will help to inform and shape future business support.

**What we will do:**

- Explore opportunities for securing development of our few brownfield sites.
- Seek to maximise the potential from the local implications of the transition towards hydrogen and carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) at the Bacton Gas site.
- Act as a digital champion to promote investment to address our competitive disadvantage through broadband and mobile connectivity challenges.
- Influence issues of water scarcity and constraints in the local electricity distribution network.
- Ensure an adequate supply of serviced employment land and premises to support local business.

**How we will do it:**

**Key Infrastructure delivery** - actively work with developers, Norfolk County Council and other partners to support the delivery of important infrastructure projects, such as the Fakenham A148 roundabout enhancement and the North Walsham western link road.

**Bacton Energy Hub** - be a lead advocate and facilitator in establishing the Bacton Energy Hub site as one of the UK’s principal locations for carbon capture and storage and hydrogen production. This will serve to support the UK’s energy transition to Net Zero, realising the employment, supply chain and wider economic benefits for North Norfolk, Norfolk and the wider East of England region.

**Develop Energy Infrastructure and Water Resources Plans** - working collaboratively with partners, we will seek to develop and lobby for solutions to resolve key infrastructure constraints in the district that need to be addressed by statutory undertakers so that businesses and developers are not disadvantaged in taking forward investment plans in the district.



**Mobile and digital infrastructure** - through developing a deeper understanding of the constraints of existing mobile and digital infrastructure in North Norfolk, lobby key operators and providers so as to reduce the “digital divide” which exists in the district.

**Serviced land business case/pipeline development** - based on previously commissioned surveys, develop a pipeline project proposal which seeks to increase the supply of serviced land or advance factory premises at Fakenham, Holt or North Walsham and can be delivered at pace if external funding can be secured for such an investment.

Establish and maintain a regular dialogue with **private sector developers** and commercial property agents, to inform decision making and assist the delivery of employment sites.

**Market Town Network Improvement Strategies** - Norfolk County Council have previously produced reports for North Walsham, Fakenham and Hoveton and Wroxham. We will encourage and support reports in the other towns.

**Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans (LCWIPs)** - support the development and delivery of LCWIPS in Sheringham, Cromer, Holt, and Fakenham.

**Commercial opportunities marketing** - Monitor and map data relating to employment sites and premises and promote development/investment opportunities where they exist.

**Establish new facilities at Fakenham Sports Centre** - including a 25m swimming pool, a full size 3G all-weather artificial grass pitch and implement carbon reduction measures to the existing Trap Lane facility.



### What we will do:

- Promote innovation and workforce development throughout the district.
- Promote improved access to post 16 vocational education.
- Continue to provide apprenticeships opportunities, directly as a large local employer and promoting uptake in the wider business economy.

### How we will do it:

We will undertake the following projects and activities:

#### **Establish and support a North Norfolk Skills Assembly** -

to help embed a joined up and collaborative approach to supporting skills and recruitment and overcome critical issues.

Support the delivery of the **Local Skills Improvement Plan** through collaborating with the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce and local partners - helping employers to access to funding and workforce/employee skills support.

**Delivery of the Future Skills Now** project (2024/25) - empowering employers to develop upskilling opportunities and the provision of UKSPF funding for training aligned to specific employer needs.

**Collaborating with Further education**, independent providers, Norfolk Country Council and VCSE organisations - to help promote and increase post-16 opportunities across the district.

### **Raise and support the access to careers (IAG) advice**

across the district - working with the Careers hub, Enterprise network and our education establishments to promote career opportunities across North Norfolk.

Support and contribute to the **New Anglia Learning Providers Forum** (NALPF) - sharing best practice in this theme and leveraging further opportunities for the region.

Work collaboratively with **Apprenticeship Norfolk** - to promote and introduce employers to the benefits for Apprenticeships.

**Act as ambassador** for apprenticeships - through the Council leading by example by taking on apprenticeships as a means to grow our own talent.





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