

Potter Heigham Village Meeting 2024.

District Councilors Report

This Year has been dominated with climate change and the consequences of global warming.

The abnormally wet summer turned into a deluge over Autumn followed by a winter of rain and storm.

The consequences for some residents on the Broads and Coast have been truly devastating, though we have various agencies in North Norfolk dealing with Coastal Flood and Erosion, we are reliant on a more County and National approach for dealing with fluvial flood, which means we must be assertive to be in the front of the queue when it comes resources. NNDC Emergency response has been helping the excellent flood wardens with coordination and warnings.

Since last May, I have been lobbying with the all-party Local Government Association for a new sustainable central funding scheme for the Independent Drainage Boards, the present model of local District Councils bearing the brunt of these ever-increasing costs cannot continue. If low-lying properties are to be protected and even remain as sustainable housing, in the face of dramatic weather and climate events. The increased required funding must be borne by the population at large through central government. I am concerned that without strong IDBs flood vulnerable properties may experience adverse pressures on valuations as has been experienced by some coastal properties.

I urge all residents to make yourselves aware of where you are in the flood risk map and improve your homes or businesses resilience for future flood events. The government floodre.co.uk with Build Back Better means you can be insured against flood and for very low-lying properties, almost certainly, already are, thanks to the support of this scheme.

Regardless of various opinions of causation, the administration at NNDC is determined to follow the science. With that in mind the District Council continues to aim for our ambitious goal of Carbon Neutrality by 2030,

With that in mind we are continuing to expand NNDC areas for solar arrays at Leisure sites, such as Sheringham, North Walsham and soon at Fakenham. We are at the forefront of facilitating hydrogen power at Bacton. We continue to explore the practicality of an electric refuse collection fleet for our more urban areas. Likewise, the food waste collection in more populated areas will be in place before the end of this administration.

As you will all be aware, the changes to refuse collection days have had to alter again for reasons beyond our control. I am sorry if you have been inconvenienced by this, I can only apologize, all indications are that it is going better than the last time this happened. If in doubt about your collection days check on <https://forms.north-norfolk.gov.uk/outreach/BinCollectionDays.ofml>

I am afraid there was some confusion when linking the refuse collection with the barge collection from the riverside chalets, my understanding is that this has been dealt with.

The NNDC Warm Homes Initiative is under way, this has started rolling out in the east of the region (us) 40% of the take up so far is in the Stalham area. All the information can be found on <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/projects/energy-saving-tips/>

There are currently 70 + people on the housing register for Potter Heigham Parish, 2,485, in North Norfolk, with local families in emergency accommodation. These figures are not affected by

immigration accommodation, other than we are in competition outside the District with the Home Office for Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation. This year we will have gained an extra 25 homes for those in most need, I am afraid a pin prick compared to the size of the emergency.

The housing shortage has been compounded by 2nd homes, also, living accommodation being converted to holiday businesses such as online B&B sites. This has led to Section 21 No Fault evictions from residential rental properties. Regretfully this has been compounded by the increase in the cost of living leading to mortgage and rent defaults.

We are absolutely committed to Local Homes for Local People, and we work with local housing associations and with or against Builders some of whom are reluctant to provide truly affordable housing within their schemes. This issue is compounded in Potter Heigham as there is fundamentally no building land available. There is an opportunity for parishes to help with this, identifying homes that for whatever reason have been unoccupied for a significant time, can either be purchased by the council for social rental housing or be supported to return to the housing market.

To help with this dilemma we are committed to increasing Council Tax on second homes as soon as legislation is passed in Parliament and then the split between County and District can fairly be negotiated. I would contend that Districts dealing with the largest second/holiday home ownership should have a share commensurate with the problems this engenders.

I believe this disincentive for 2nd homes will free up additional housing in the area. Personally, I will work against holiday chalets being included in that 2nd home cohort and I don't think they will be.

A biproduct of this expansion of 2nd and holiday homes is that Potter Heigham is shrinking in terms of actual population therefore Parish, District and to a smaller extent County may have pressures to raise taxes or cut services for residents to make up for the shortfall going forward.

The Council subjected itself to a Peer Review, which in effect is having our homework marked by external and critical Councilors and Officers from Councils around the country. I am pleased to report they found NNDC to be a good council giving us 4 points to improve on to be excellent. They are returning shortly to check on our progress.

I continue to be exceptionally honored to be allowed to represent **Potter Heigham, The Real & Beating Heart of the Broads**; On North Norfolk District Council, the Broads Authority, (Navigation, Standards, and Chair of Planning) The Upper Thurne Working Group, The Strategic Flood Alliance, The two North Norfolk Internal Drainage Boards, The Broadland Futures Initiative, with additional responsibilities of a District Councillor, on Licensing and Standards Committees, as well as being the Cabinet Member for Coastal Matters, which requires attendance and/or chair of a further 7 committees/forums/groups.

For this, I thank you all, and wish you all a Happy (and Dryer) 2024/5

Harry Blathwayt.