



B I R C H A M T I M E S



In and around the Birchams

news@thebirchams.uk

December 2025 Issue 26

Parish Council Matters

There was no council meeting in December and the next gathering will be on January 28, 2026, at 7.30pm in the Social Club.

In the meantime, if there is anything that you would like to be discussed at that meeting, please get in contact with the clerk (see below).

Council would like to send season's greetings to all parishioners of the Birchams and wishes everyone the very best for the New Year.

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Newsletter Thank-Yous

With this, the final issue of the year, we wanted to take the opportunity to wish you all a very lovely Christmas and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year. Despite everything going on around us, we all should be very thankful to live in such a wonderful and special place in this part of the country.

We would like to thank all our readers, who indulge our flights of fancy each month, and to those who write in to let us know what they are enjoying. But most of all we want to thank everyone who contributes. Many of our writers do it from the comfort of their homes, bringing us articles on cookery and books, say; others provide details on when their societies and social groups are meeting and what they are up to (including BiB, Speedwatch and the cricket and bowls clubs... thanks Chris F, Hugh K, Alex and Chris W); special thanks to our regulars who never let us down, viz Richard and Steve – the Birdmen of the Birchams – and Bryan, our very own version of the Met Office; and of course to the Parish Council, headed by Hugh R, who distill their monthly efforts into a readable form for this publication. Next we need to thank Peter for printing, and Antony and Keith for organising the distribution. And probably our biggest round of applause goes to the deliverers who are out in all weathers, bringing you the efforts of everyone who contributed before them. Special thanks to Hugh P who keeps the Tofts and Docking Road in the loop with his deliveries. And last but not least to the production and website maestro Mike, who has us up and running in so many formats.

If we've forgotten anyone out there, we apologise profusely....

Do remember that the *Bircham Times* can be delivered to parishioners by email. You can email us at news@thebirchams.uk to request that (or for any other matter). In addition, we publish, in advance of the paper copy, on the 15th of every month on our website: www.thebirchams.uk



Christmas Shopping 1945

Last year we brought you the popular column on what those in West Norfolk were being enticed into the shops to buy 100 years previously in 1924. We've revisited the theme this year and moved ahead to December 1945, the first Xmas after the end of the war. Austere times meant that there were no end of apologies from shops about shortages, but in between we gleaned the following.

For the lady there were ironing boards and practical coal-hods on sale, though Plowright, Platt & Harbage were honest enough in their advertising to describe them as "useful presents". We guess the frivolous things they had on sale were the "numerous small articles in coloured plastic" – whatever they may have been. Catleughs of Lynn apologised that many articles were in short supply: "No men's or ladies lined kid gloves", though you could still get the woollen variety. Richard Shops on the High Street were a little ritzier. "Cami-knickers in long-awaited nylon [!]. Frilled legs and neat-fitting bra-top. Women's sizes [!!]" Well it was panto-cross-dressing-season...

There was the melancholy juxtaposition of war and peacetime in the newspaper columns. News of a soldier shot in Java while escaping from a prisoner-of-war camp sat alongside the knitting circles in Terrington and Mars bars and Batchelor's peas adverts. There were loads of thanks to welcome home committees for former servicemen. Mr Arthur Taylor wished to express his thanks to the members of the Bircham WI; also to the Parishioners of the Birchams for their generous gifts of money. And the realities of the era were expressed in the number of people requesting work, often in care services for the elderly. Many soldiers of course were not yet home and German POWs were busy building houses in North Lynn. One more uplifting, if not odd, request for employment was as follows: "Covello the Magician, MMC has now been released from the RAF and is ready to accept engagements, Specialist in children's parties". Did he learn his skills in the RAF, we wonder.

Back to the shopping. Somewhat surprisingly motor vehicles were being widely advertised. Philip H. Johnson "opposite the GPO" was advertising a list of vehicles, most proudly claiming they had been in careful storage during the war. You could bag yourself for the princely sum of £700 a "1937 Studebaker 26 h.p. saloon, one lady owner and carefully stored since 1939". Jarringly, Harradine & Day horse slaughterers promised "the immediate removal of dropped animals, old horses and plain cows. Top prices guaranteed." Maybe the Studebaker replaced the knackered horse on the farm.

As expected, army stores were doing great business with coupons and army surplus. And while there may not have been much in the way of edible delights, everyone knew what to do should they have overindulged. "Ovaltine helps to restore the Impaired Digestion" and "bisurated magnesia" was the go-to drug of choice for combatting fermented food [now of course we are encouraged to eat fermented food for our gut health!]. If you were constipated, then a turn on the Kellogg's Bran Flakes met with your doctor's approval [but he doesn't look like a real doctor to us in the ad... maybe an actor from Kellogg's]. If you ached then you could rub in Elliman's universal embrocation, and when you needed to get rid of the smell there was "Puritan soap [which] gives double-ration lather". If all else failed "Mackeson's Stout does you double good" and you were sorted.

On Christmas Day at the movies you could see Greer Garson and Gregory Peck in the "tempestuous romance", *The Valley of Decision* at the Majestic while the Theatre Royal showed Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney in *Strike Up the Band* and the Pilot had George Formby in *South American George*, as a doppelganger of a Latin operatic tenor called Gilli Vannetti.

And more locally, an excellent concert was given by the Bircham concert party in Harpley village hall. The programme comprised sketches, monologues in the Norfolk dialect, dancing, piano duets and vocal solos, concluding with a most effective "Britannia" tableau. Proceeds were £9/1s/8d for the school sports fund.



Words on Birds

COMMON BUZZARD

When I was a fledgling birdwatcher back in the 60s and early 70s, if I wanted to see a common buzzard I needed to travel from my West Midlands home to the wilds of Wales or the West Country – it was a rare bird. Following intense human persecution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the widespread use of the pesticide DDT from the 1950s onwards had a devastating effect on all bird of prey populations, driving some to the edge of extinction in the UK. Following the ban on DDT in 1984, and with a more enlightened approach to birds of prey, common buzzards began to recover, gradually spreading out of their remote western strongholds until today where they live up to their "common" name and can once again be seen almost anywhere.



During bright sunny days in late winter or early summer they can often be seen and heard displaying high above any patch of woodland. There may often be several birds, their loud mewing call carrying far and wide. Their broad wings, often held in a shallow "V" and the short, squarish tail instantly distinguishes them from that other raptor success story – the red kite – with which they share the Norfolk skies. Their plumage is variable, and while the classic 'dark' plumage is common, buzzards are well known for displaying a wide variety of plumage patterns and colour, including some that are very pale, almost white on the head and body. You can easily age any bird you see in flight: if it shows a well-defined narrow black trailing edge to the underwings and to the tail tip, it is an adult. Juveniles lack this feature, acquiring it over the two to three years it takes for them to reach maturity.

They are opportunistic feeders, which probably helps their breeding success. While they will feed on almost anything, their preferred prey are rabbits, especially young ones, and also young hares. However, they also feed on road kills and other carrion as well as earthworms, large insects, voles, rats and mice.

Steve Rooke

Norad's Christmas Tracking

No apologies for giving you the link again this Christmas to plot the transit of Santa around the globe. Starting obviously over Australasia he spends the next few hours travelling the world with reindeer and sleigh.

Norad (North American Aerospace Defense Command), defender of the skies over the US and Canada, has tracked Santa since 1955. As well as tracking via a URL you can now install an app (Android and iPhone), while the site also has games, music and of course a Norad store for purchases while you await the overflight. Tune in on December 24
<https://www.noradsanta.org/en/>

Dates for the Diary

Bircham Windmill Closed Sept 30

RAF Bircham Newton Closed Nov 9

RAF Sculthorpe Closed Nov 2. Reopens Apr 5 2026

Anmer Social Club Coffee, cake and chat, Mondays 10-12, 07947 580555

Snettisham Park Open daily from Feb 1

Houghton Hall & Gardens Closed Sept 28

Sandringham Closed Oct 10

Nov 7-Dec 24 Deepdale Christmas Shopping at Dalegate Market, Burnham Deepdale

Nov 11-Jan 2 North Norfolk Railway Lights Express, from £20

Nov 12-Dec 24 Luminate at Sandringham, entry times 4.30-8.30pm, car park £6, timed tickets £27.25/£18.20

Dec 13, 20 Langham Glass Xmas Workshops, Fakenham, 10-4pm

Dec 13 Christmas through the Ages, Lynn Museum, 10-11am, 11-12noon, 12noon-1pm
 N Norfolk Pole Experience (various dates until **Dec 23**) at Pensthorpe, from £19.95/£22.95

Dec 19 SCHOOLS BREAK-UP

Dec 19-24 A Christmas Carol, Westacre Theatre, 7pm and 5pm on 24th, £16/£10

Dec 20 Farmers' Market North Creake, 9.30-1pm

Dec 25 Christmas Day Swim, Hunstanton, from 11am



Christmas Foodie Fare

According to a recent YouGov survey 57% of us eat a roast turkey as our main Christmas meal, with 24% having chicken and 23% beef. Seven per cent have no roast whatsoever and as with all these surveys 2% are "not sure". Sounds sad if 2% of us can't actually determine what it is we are eating!

Norfolk of course has been famous for turkeys for many centuries and traditionally each August up to 250,000 would be walked down to London, usually in flocks of about 500, to meet a butcher with a knife. Their journey would take several months and they would feed on the stubble fields on the way, keeping them plump and ready for the table... but maybe their legs would be a bit tough and muscular. But it's a long walk to London so the turkeys were kitted out with bootees to help them on their arduous walk... not nice woolly ones, though we have heard of leather ones... the turkeys were in fact gathered together near Attleborough and then walked through tar and sand to prepare their feet for the walk.

Of course Christmas is based on traditions and for most countries this means harking back to simpler times and simpler food. For most countries it is also the winter season, so in Greenland it is a whale blubber and skin combo called "muktuk" (mucky tucker indeed), eaten raw mind you (urgh!! note to strike the country immediately from the to-do list at Christmas) and "lantulaatikko" (a swede casserole baked with cream and treacle) in Finland; for Australians it is prawns on the barbie and there's a limitless range of meats on a South African "braai" (barbecue) too, accompanied by Pap and Sheba who either sound like pet Alsatians or maybe Wham's backing singers, but no it's maize porridge (the pap, not unsurprisingly) and the Sheba is a tomato and onion relish.

Going against this traditional take is the KFC, in Japan! Since the 1970s, when the finger-lickin' fried food first arrived in the country, Japanese diners who celebrate Christmas have been doing so by ordering in red boxes with the Colonel emblazoned upon them. Better still there's the "party barrel" of fried chicken, coleslaw and cake.

Norway is bones! We've spent many a Christmas in the country, tempted by the snowy surroundings and winter vibe and being in close proximity to the real Santa of course. Excited Norwegians welcomed us to their Christmas meal, taken on Christmas Eve of course rather than on the 25th, for an array of bones (well pork ribs really) and some boiled potatoes, which didn't exactly count as the cordon bleu experience we'd hoped for.

Spare a thought for a work colleague though. His new girlfriend was Czech and he was invited to Christmas at theirs a good week in advance of the big day (not just a smash and grab vacation... it must be love). When he got there he got the fright of his life since Christmas dinner was still alive and swimming in the bath, and yes the carp continued to do lengths of the domestic bath for a full seven days before making it to the festive table... when maybe the experience and possibly even the budding relationship began to pall.

And while we might scoff at the strange diets from around the world, in the UK we "probably" came up with the biggest monstrosity of the lot (and we don't mean soggy sprouts). It was 2013's "Christmas Tinner", which came in a rather regal purple can and gave you everything you could possibly wish for on your dinner plate. The food, arranged in layers like elaborate soil horizons, started with a scrambled egg and bacon top layer (for brekkie presumably), followed by layers of mince pie, turkey and potatoes, gravy, bread and cranberry sauce and brussels sprouts with stuffing, then carrots and christmas pudding (the only place where a Christmas pudding comes adorned with carrot). It's quite a rainbow seen in profile but one does fear that the layers will merge while sitting in the can. Fear not, the whole thing is sealed in gelatine!

Now this could of course be a marketing hoax aimed at gamers too busy to put their handsets down, and we don't actually remember seeing it in the shops, but it's not that far a reach from our own student days when we were presented with a hard-fast chicken in a tin (surrounded in aspic) that we had to inelegantly "birth" before cooking. Times were indeed hard.



Flowers in St Mary's Church

As you may know, the church is open every day for visitors and private prayer. With this in mind we have been discussing the possibility of having fresh flowers in church more regularly. Currently it's only really festivals and special occasions, but as the church is pretty cold we can usually get a few weeks out of the arrangements!

There are only a handful of people at the moment involved in flower arranging and we would really like to grow the team so we can get a rota going that would more or less cover the whole year. If we could expand the team a little it would probably only mean a twice-yearly commitment on the rota and any Christmas/Easter/Harvest festival flowers you may be free to help with.

No previous experience is necessary and if you are interested then we will be having a meeting in the New Year and will run a little workshop covering the basics of simple arrangements. Obviously, any experienced arrangers would be very welcome too. If you would like more information, or would like to be involved, please do give me a call.

Many thanks, Pauline (07836 739792)

Christmas Lights

The following is a selection of festive illuminations you can find in West Norfolk this season.

Holt Christmas Lights Switch-On, November 14
Burnham Market Lights Switch-On, November 15
Wells Christmas Tide Festival, November 22
King's Lynn, Lights Switch-On, November 23
Fakenham Lights Switch-On, November 29
 Winter Wonderland, **Hunstanton**, November 30
 Big Light Concert, St Mary's **Snettisham**, December 13, 6pm

Also Luminate at **Sandringham** continues until Dec 24 as does **Thursford's** Enchanted Journey of Light.

Pantos This Christmas

'Tis Panto Season and tickets are available now.

Aladdin, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, Dec 6-Jan 4 2026, £18
Jack and the Beanstalk, King's Lynn Corn Exchange, Dec 9-Jan 4 2026, £20-26
Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Fakenham Community Centre, Dec 9-13, 7.30pm, from £10.50

Breaking Pensthorpe News

In early December, Pensthorpe announced its own seasonal arrival with the sighting of a beaver, the first to be seen in the wild in Norfolk in centuries since they were hunted to extinction.

Beavers, "nature's engineers", play a vital role in restoring wetlands. Their activity creates ponds, channels and wet woodland habitats that benefit amphibians, insects, fish and countless bird species.

Dates for the Diary

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Jan 1 New Year's Day Birding Booster at RSPB Titchwell Marsh, 9.30-12.30, £6-21

Jan 5-9, 12-16 Birding for Beginners at RSPB Titchwell Marsh, 10-12, £6.50-17

Jan 18 Taylormania, Corn Exchange, KL, 5pm, £30

Jan 18 Racing at Fakenham Racecourse

Jan 21 The Very Best of Frankie Valli with Peter André, Corn Exchange, KL, 8pm, £48

Jan 22 National Theatre Live, *Hamlet*, Westacre Theatre, 7pm, £14. Also at Majestic Cinema, KL

Jan 22 The Dreamboys, Corn Exchange, KL, 7.30pm, from £33.50

Jan 23 Totally Gaga – The Tribute, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, 7.30pm, £30

Jan 23-25 Big Garden Birdwatch

Jan 25 Norfolk Symphony Orchestra, Corn Exchange, KL, 3.30pm, £16 (max)

Jan 30 An Evening of (Very) Old Radio, Westacre Theatre, 7.30pm, £16/£10

Jan 30 Afternoon Talk – RAF Aerial Reconnaissance and Photography in World War 2, Lynn Museum, 2-3pm £2



Those Long Winter Evenings

Do remember that with the winter evenings drawing in that there is a goodly stock of books, games and jigsaws held in St Mary's that is available for borrowing. If tidying the house or cutting out clutter before Christmas, do consider donations of such items. It's also great practice to take and then give some different items back for others to enjoy. Do seal jigsaw boxes to avoid accidents, though, and it's helpful if you can indicate if there are pieces missing!

If an avid reader, do also take advantage of the monthly visit of the mobile library from Norfolk Library Services. See pages 8 and 10 for details of when the library visits, and more.

St Mary's 100 Club Draw

DECEMBER RESULTS: 1st prize no. **61**; 2nd prize no. **16** (1st prize wins £50; 2nd prize £20). The club has now been running successfully for 5 years. If you would like to take part in the draw for 2026 please refer to the enclosed application form from November for details and either return it together with payment, to me or, alternatively, I could process your application at the next Banter meeting on January 8 in the Social Club.

Sally

Bircham Banter

Next Banter session is on Thursday January 8 from 2.30 to 4pm in the Social Club. Do come along and join with the regulars for chat, tea/coffee and cake, especially if you are new to the village. You'll be made very welcome!! For those already primed with a 2026 diary or calendar the next date is February 5, also in the Social Club.

Pauline

Stanhoe & Barwick WI

Forthcoming events to be held at the Stanhoe Reading Room, Cross Lane, PE31 8PS at 2pm.

January 8 Medical detection dogs.

February 5 King's Lynn Night Shelter

March 5 History of the Control Tower, Sculthorpe

Visitors are always welcome. Our charge is £5, which includes refreshments.

Contact stanhoeandbarwickwi@gmail.com for more details.

The Tricky Period

The Tricky Period is a campaign within the county to provide free sanitary products to anyone in need, no questions asked. This service is for women and girls who are caught short as well those who are struggling to afford such necessities. Bags of products can be picked up from local libraries, including the mobile library (see page 10).



The initiative is funded by the government's Household Support Fund and parallels the free period products available for state school pupils in the county.

Health News

A reminder of the jabs you can receive this winter.

Flu jab: Over 65s or in a high-risk group

Covid jab: Available to over 75s and anyone else who is immunocompromised. Both vaccinations can be given together.

Call Bayfield Surgery on 01485 521135 to arrange an appointment or use the NHS Account App or access via the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/account/>



Curl Up With a Good Book

Every Man for Himself (1996) by Beryl Bainbridge

Many of Bainbridge's writings build stories around people and events from history (see below). Here we have a man named Morgan, a traveller in First Class on the fated *Titanic* liner, who associates with many of the elite passengers. Adopted at a young age he is related to the banker JP Morgan, a man who had a hand in the White Star Line, *Titanic's* owners. Bit by bit we find that Morgan is linked to the *Titanic*, via his work in the design office that created the third-class toilets and his off-chance meetings with Captain Smith.



He spends four days aboard before the fatal collision and engages with people from all ranks of society before the inevitable happens. Bainbridge describes decisions made and behaviours while all on board face their watery demise.

Her other notable books include *According to Queeney*, a depiction of Samuel Johnson; *Master Georgie*, that tells of a Victorian surgeon who sets off for the Crimean War; and *The Birthday Boys*, a novel about Captain Scott and his ill-fated fellow South Pole explorers.



MAJESTIC CINEMA
Tower, Street, King's Lynn



Many of you are doubtless familiar with the art deco cinema in King's Lynn – with its stylish foyer and its stained-glass windows – that was built in 1928. Today, as well as having four modern-day screening-systems from the largest Screen 1 with 280 seats down to the intimate Screen 4 with 44 (and some gorgeously relaxed seating, nay beds!), you can also hire Screen 4 for your own screenings for friends and family and celebrations.

General pricing ranges from peak to non-peak with offers for the Kids' Club, Senior Citizens and other deals such as Majestic Seniors (60+), Bargain Mondays and those pesky Meekats also have an offering. And gift cards make a great last-minute Christmas present.

King's Lynn Community Cinema Club (KLCCC)

Films are screened at the Majestic Cinema so if you are looking for something to do on Thursdays at 7.30pm why not consider joining this club for like-minded cinema-goers. The films on show are both modern and old classics and are chosen from selections by members. You get a choice: either with day membership (£6 on the door) for a specific film that takes your fancy or as a member for a season (£20). There are two seasons per year (May to October and November to April), leaving summer clear for outdoor film screenings in spaces such as The Walks in King's Lynn and The Green in Hunstanton. Each season showcases at least eight films

Of course the club is involved in a lot more than just viewing films: there are talks, post-screening discussions and occasional social events.

The films for the winter season are

Jan 8 *The Phoenician Scheme* (15) by Wes Anderson, starring Benicio del Toro

Jan 22 *The Marching Band* (15), a French film about a musical conductor

Feb 12 *Santosh* (15), a story set in the rural badlands of N India when newly widowed Santosh inherits her husband's job as a police constable

Mar 12 *Tina*, a New Zealand tale set around the after-effects of the Christchurch earthquake

Apr 9 *Dragonfly* (15), with Brenda Blethyn and Andrea Riseborough

Apr 23 *If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* (12A), starring Rose Byrne

Discounts are given if you join midway through a season. Full details at <https://www.klccc.uk/>



MOBILE POST OFFICE

Scheduled stop at Bircham Social Club, Church Lane is as follows.

Monday	10:45-11:30
Tuesday	10:45-11:30
Thursday	10:45-11:30
Friday	12:10-12:55

MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

Fridays Dec 5/Jan 30/Feb 27
Stops at:

Monks Close	15:15-15:35
Village Shop	15:45-16:00
Social Club	16:05-16:15
Windmill Hill	16:20-16:35

RECYCLING CENTRE

For pre-booking your visit at **any** Norfolk centre:
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/62632/Norfolk-Recycling-Centre-bookings>
Or phone 0344 800 8020

BUS 33/33A

To Hunstanton (from King's Head): Mon-Fri
07:36 10:36 13:36 17:16; Sat 8:21 10:36
13:36 15:41
Return from Stand A Bus Station

To Lynn (from Bircham Stores): Mon-Fri
07:17 09:23 12:23 15:38 15:43; Sat 09:23
12:23 15:38 17:08
Return from Stand E Bus Station

GREAT MASSINGHAM AREA COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

Offering a reliable door-to-door car service,
7 days a week for anyone without personal
transport. Book on 01485 520823
Please give at least 2 days' notice

Bircham Weather

November, seldom a particularly engaging month, lived up to its reputation by becoming the wettest of the year so far, although in the context of this year it was not a difficult record to claim. However, it was reached with plenty to spare as a rainfall total of 114 mm represented approximately 1.8 times the monthly average. Only nine days were completely dry and most of these came in the first half of the month, aided by a settled spell from the 4th to the 9th.

Temperatures followed a similar two-part pattern and during the first half of the month the daily maxima exceeded 10°C every day until the 14th, whereas only three days surpassed that threshold thereafter. The period from the 3rd to the 6th was notably mild with highs above 15°C each day, reaching a peak of 16.4°C on the 6th. Overall, the average maximum temperature for the month was 11.0°C, this being close to the long-term average, while the mean minimum was a significant 2.8°C higher at 6.5°C. The early-month warmth was driven by persistent southerly winds, a regime that finally broke on the 14th with the passage of Storm Claudia to the south-west of the UK. This event brought easterly gales and produced the month's wettest day when 37 mm of rain was recorded. Conditions eased somewhat the following day but the shift to a north-easterly flow was responsible for lowering temperatures while also blowing showers in from the North Sea, these turning to sleet during the evenings of the 19th and 20th.

The first air frost of the season was observed overnight on the 20th when the temperature dipped to -1.0°C and further frosts were to follow on the subsequent nights. The lowest daytime maximum was also noted on the 20th and marked the coldest day of the month with a high of only 4.5°C. Thereafter, Atlantic air returned, bringing milder conditions accompanied by additional rainfall, including the second-wettest day on the 22nd, when 19 mm fell. This unsettled pattern continued to the month's end, interrupted only by a calm spell on the 26th when the preceding clear night created November's lowest temperature of -2.7°C.

Bryan



Local Government Reorganisation

Consultation on the future of governance of Norfolk ends on January 11, 2026 and residents have until then to ensure their views are noted. As you probably all know by now, the government has asked Norfolk and Suffolk to review the way the counties are organised and now the proposals for both are in.

In the Birchams we currently have three tiers of governance, each tier having different responsibilities. The three tiers are parish council (the Birchams), borough council (the greater King's Lynn and West Norfolk area) and the county council (run from Norwich and responsible for the entire county). You can see from your itemised Council Tax Bill what percentage of your payment goes to which authority. As a crude rule of thumb the parish takes care of lighting, footpaths, green spaces; the borough, refuse and bins, crematoriums; and the county, education and social care. The idea behind reorganisation is, again crudely, that instead of eight authorities all running bin lorries, there would be one running the entire gig and saving costs. But of course that's how it would work and benefit on paper, but might that also mean more missed routes, or less frequent rounds, and as always with power centred in a city (Norwich), will those in the countryside become second-class citizens with more resources being given over to the cities? It's an age-old problem where urban areas are melded with rural areas. Hence the chance for Norfolk's inhabitants to voice their views and for the politicians to lay out their arguments. This is all, necessarily, a broad brush description. You can read about King's Lynn and West Norfolk's reasoning on their council pages and the county council's thoughts on Norfolk's page and make your own mind up. And for those of you who are devoted to petitions and referenda... well there won't be any. This will probably be your only say on the matter.

The idea behind local government reorganisation in its modern guise (there was wholesale change in 1974) dates from the 1990s with the adoption in certain places of unitary authorities. These are areas of the country where all local government services are under a single authority... and they started in metropolitan areas and have continued at pace ever since.

Needless to say there has been disagreement at Norfolk-wide level (Suffolk is also undergoing the same issues) with the county council proposing a single authority; the district council of South Norfolk suggesting that we divide the county into two (Norwich & East Norfolk and West & North Norfolk); and the remaining six districts, including King's Lynn and West Norfolk, proposing three councils (East Norfolk, West Norfolk and Greater Norwich). If adopted, we'll obviously fall into West Norfolk.

And if you find all this confusing, then the initial plans were to have a joint authority that included both Norfolk and Suffolk combined (imagine those in Ipswich making decisions on house-building in Bircham Tofts or TPOs in Great Bircham). How quickly would already slow planning proceed for your dropped kerb or your conservatory extension?

And on a slightly different tack, you may have noted that another tier of local authority – the police and crime commissioner role – has been abolished. Invented in 2012, the role has been criticised for unnecessary bureaucracy with the role disappearing by 2028. Their responsibilities will be absorbed by the new regional mayor. A regional mayor you say, we don't have one of those.... but they are coming to a combined county authority (Norfolk and Suffolk... or is it Suffolk and Norfolk) near you in the none-too-distant future (May) but that is for another day....

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1ed62v8p7vo>

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/norfolk-suffolk/>



Local Libraries — Not Just for Books

On page 8 we mention the route and timings for the mobile library. Pop along to the mobile van to get a library card and take evidence of your identity plus address (a utilities bill, say). You can also renew books and do all the above online.

But if you do have transport our local library branches are at:

Dersingham (parking in Orchard Cl, off Chapel Rd – open all week (unstaffed Tues, Fri, Sun)).

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/40176/Dersingham-Library>

Fakenham (Oak Street – open all week (unstaffed Wed, Sun)).

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/40184/Fakenham-Library>

Hunstanton (12-14 Valentine's Rd – open Tues-Wed, Fri-Sat).

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/40203/Hunstanton-Library>

Here you can freely access computers and wi-fi, large print, braille and dyslexia-friendly book titles as well as audio books and e-books.

Also, take advantage of free digital support or book a session to learn all about family histories and genealogy. For babies and toddlers there are singing sessions; for the more grown-up there is lego play and story-telling. And for those of more advanced age you can do jigsaws, imaginative colouring, knit & natter, adult crafting, play chess, backgammon, etc. There are also job clubs and drop-in bereavement cafes. Oh and of course book clubs are catered for. You can even just drop in for a cuppa.

And there is more still, with baby-weighing facilities (just your own please!) and free period products.

We know that local councils (as well as families) are finding it tough to make ends meet so where provision is made (and free at that), we suggest that we are all a little duty-bound to use such facilities. We're all long enough in the tooth to know that if physical support for them dries up then they will be gone for good. [And before anyone mutters: "It's not free; we pay our council tax" ... be a little generous and don't begrudge those potentially life-changing benefits to others]

Christmas Day Dip

Need to work up an appetite before your Christmas lunch? Maybe you'd rather support friends and family braving the North Sea for a dip? Or possibly supporting the good causes of organisers Hunstanton and District Round Table?

Once again the traditional Christmas Day Dip at Hunstanton is scheduled for 11am. For participants, register now or on the day by 10.30am at the Oasis Leisure Centre, and don't forget to wear your classiest fancy dress to add to the occasion. And the water quality has risen this year from "sufficient" to "good", so what are you waiting for?

New Year's Racing at Fakenham

Take a trip to watch the gallant racehorses doing their thing on the Sky Bet Christmas Raceday held on Sunday December 21 at Fakenham Racecourse. Tickets are from £18 and under-17s go free. Dogs are welcome. Racing returns to Fakenham in the New Year on Jan 2.



And if footie is more your thing, why not try the Boxing Day fixture at The Walks when King's Lynn Town take on local rivals Peterborough Sports. All sporting events can fall foul of bad weather of course, so in that case it is mince pies in front of the telly watching *The Great Escape* once more (probably!).