Bircham Times

In and around the Birchams | **news@thebirchams.uk** | November 2026 Issue 37

Parish Council Matters

The next meeting of the Parish Council is on **Wednesday, 25th November 2026**, starting at **7.30pm in Bircham Social Club**. This will be the last meeting before the New Year so council would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone in the parish a wonderful Christmas period, however you may celebrate the occasion.

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In the absence of parish council news we have instead a column by County Councillor Julie Costley, on page 9, who gives us her take on those pressing local matters: the hospital, the Docking recycling centre, speeding in the villages and highways. We are grateful for Julie's contribution.



Newsletter Thoughts

As we pen this there are still 44 sleeps before the "big day", so no need to panic or put up the tinsel just yet. But inevitably we are including more than a nod in the direction of Christmas and ways in which you can participate in seasonal fun. First off there is the festive singing that has been arranged, free of charge, by our very own choirmaster Simon Locke. We thank Simon very kindly for this thoughtful initiative and hope that many of you will take him up on the offer.

Other free events include the local Christmas lights switch-ons. We appreciate you have to get there and you might be stung for a hot toddy, some baubles and a mince pie or two, but....
We list those we know of. For those with deeper pockets we have the other seasonal attractions. We've previously covered Thursford but now we have Luminate at Sandringham, and Santa railway specials among other events. Again, you don't need to spend: the fantastic Christmas tree festival at Fakenham Parish Church welcomes all. We also provide details for the local pantos. *Cinderella* seems popular this year! And in Dates for the Diary we include many local craft fairs to enable you to pick up those stocking-fillers and Christmas sweetmeats, say.

Our recipes focus on our favourite things: no, not "schnitzel with noodles" but cheese and potato. You don't want fancy fare running up to December but warming, rib-sticking indulgences and melted cheese fits that bill.

As ever, we have a book review (well two to be exact) and in his weather column Bryan can now talk about rain! But will it soon be snow?

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 and in Full Colour, on the 15th of every month on our website: www.thebirchams.uk

Who Needs Electricity Anyway?

The recent prompts to stock up with three days' food and water, torches, wind-up radios and so on, in case of emergencies, brought to mind the early 1970s, when electricity was effectively rationed. It was switched off for three or four hours at a time on a district-by-district basis. The schedule was published in the local newspaper, so you knew when each area would be turned off. Where we lived, some lucky people whose houses were next to the hospital got to keep theirs on, as the hospital's supply could not be interrupted, of course.

In those days, most of the UK's electricity was generated by coal. Prolonged strikes by coalminers meant the country's stocks were dwindling to a dangerously low level so, to avoid a potential full-blown blackout, the government introduced emergency measures. Most famous of these was the "Three-day Week", where industry was instructed to only operate three days per week, in order to conserve electricity. But that was not deemed enough, and so the domestic powercuts were rolled out.

As far as our home was concerned, I don't remember it being a particularly big deal. I was only a kid at the time, so it was actually quite exciting and something a bit different. I think it was early 1974 so, being winter, properly dark and cold.



We didn't have central heating, just a couple of gas fires downstairs and no heating whatsoever upstairs – we were used to ice on the inside of the single-glazed bedroom windows in bad winters anyway. So, no impact for us heating-wise.

Cooking was by gas too, so no impact there either, as long as you had a match to light the burners.

Of course there were no mobile phones, computers, or other such devices to power up and the landline continued to work without electricity, as its power was sent down the phone lines from the local exchange.



As for TV, we were in an unusual position. Aerial reception was so poor in our area that we had TV sent down wires strung between houses. Rediffusion the service was called – a very early version of cable TV, I suppose. Like the phone line, it must have been powered centrally. That meant, even in a powercut, we still got sound. There was a rotary switch on the windowsill where you selected the channel. There were only three channels, I hear you say, BBC1, BBC2 and ITV. But no, by the wonder of Rediffusion we had a choice of two ITV channels: Anglian and Tyne Tees. As kids, there was no contest: would you choose Anglian TV with its fertilizer adverts over Tyne Tees with its music programme, the *Geordie Scene*, featuring the likes of Dr Feelgood? We couldn't get pictures during a powercut, of course, as the TV needed electricity for that.

Lighting was the main issue during the outages. We had torches, but batteries back then seemed to last about 10 minutes. We had candles like everybody else – even shopping at the local mini-market was done by candlelight. But the main thing I remember is my father making oil lamps out of baked bean cans and milk bottles. He bought, or somehow acquired, some brass lamp fittings with wicks and a screw for adjusting the latter. He fitted these on top of the old baked bean cans that held the lamp oil. Then came, for a kid, the exciting part. We needed to fit the top of each with a milk bottle – the sort the milkman used to deliver – so that the result looked like one of those lamps on *The Little House on the Prairie*. That meant we had to remove the bottom of the bottle: that's where the physics came in. We put about an inch of boiling water in a bowl. Then we put about the same height of ice cold water in the bottle. Then we introduced the bottle into the bowl of boiling water. The thermal shock caused the bottom of the bottle to shear off cleanly (in most attempts!). It did leave a lethally sharp edge of course, but no matter – it was the 70s after all, so no particular health and safety concerns. "Different times", as they say.



Festive Singing

Would you like to take part in some fun communal singing of some festive favourites? Three choir sessions are being held in the run up to Christmas at Docking Village Hall on Mondays November 30, December 7 and 14, 5-6.30pm, then culminating in a performance opportunity on Monday December 21 at 7.30pm, with festive refreshments.

These sessions are completely free of charge, so if you'd like to take part and spread some fun, festive cheer with some communal singing, please do come along. No previous choir experience is necessary, and you don't need to be able to read music or sing on your own. The only requirement is to be willing to have fun! Whilst attendance at all three sessions is preferable, do still come along even if you can't make all three.



If then there is sufficient demand to make a village community choir a more permanent fixture in the New Year, we can do so.

The sessions are being led by choir director and pianist Simon Locke. For more info please contact Simon on simonmusic45@gmail.com or 07854 722650.

Local Cinema Screenings

Films are shown monthly at 7.30pm at **Dersingham Village Centre**, opposite St Nicholas' Church in Manor Road. The price of entry is £6 (for under-16s it's £3). Entry includes tea, coffee, squash. Bar drinks available.

Tuesday November 24 *Military Wives* (12), starring Kristin Scott Thomas, Sharon Horgan, Jason Flemyng. A group of women, whose husbands are military personnel, forms a choir when their partners are on duty in Afghanistan. Soon, they attract media attention and are at the centre of a global movement.

Also a reminder about **King's Lynn Community Cinema Club**, which shows films at 7.30pm at the Majestic Cinema in King's Lynn.

December 10, *500 Miles* (12A) Two brothers run away from home in England to reach their estranged grandfather on Ireland’s west coast. Starring Bill Nighy and Maisie Williams.

January 14, *Tuner* (12A) A talented piano tuner who suffers from hyperacusis (or noise sensitivity) discovers an unexpected aptitude for cracking safes, turning his life upside down. With Leo Woodall and Dustin Hoffman.

See https://www.klccc.uk/whats-on/ for future films and details on membership of the club or for one-off tickets. Films are shown in two seasonal programmes: November to April and May to October, Eight films are shown each season.

Dates for the Diary

Bircham Windmill Reopens Mar 25, 2027
RAF Bircham Newton Closed until spring 2027
RAF Sculthorpe Closed until spring 2027
Anmer Social Club Coffee, cake and chat, Mondays 10-12. Contact 07947 580555
Snettisham Park Daily, 10-4pm
Houghton Hall & Grounds Reopens late spring
Sandringham House and gardens reopen spring 2027

Nov 15 Victorian Christmas Bazaar, Flitcham Community Centre, from 10am
Nov 17 Coastal Crafters Workshop, Diamond Art Christmas Hanging, Docking, £10. Call 07825 216009
Nov 20-Dec 24 Luminate @ Sandringham, from 4.30pm
Nov 21 Christmas Gift Fair, Creake Abbey, 10-3pm
Nov 21 Hunstanton Craft Fair, Town Hall, from 10am
Nov 21 Snettisham Flea Market, Memorial Hall, from 9am
Nov 22 Dersingham Craft & Gift Fair, Village Centre, from 10am
Nov 22 Sedgeford Christmas Fayre, Village Hall, 10-3pm
Nov 26, Dec 3 Pensthorpe Christmas Wreath Workshop, 10-1pm, from £55
Nov 29 Christmas Market @ Pensthorpe, 10-3pm, adults £3
Nov 29 Christmas Dog Walk and Jumper Competition, Bandstand Hunstanton, 3pm
Dec 3 Carols in the Courtyard, Holkham Hall, 5-6pm
Dec 5-23 Pensthorpe's North Norfolk Pole Experience, from £17.95



Foodie Fare

The days are miserable and cold, and Christmas is still a while off, but never fear we have some cheese and potato dishes for you. And what better combination of foods are there than cheese and potato? Even Mr Walker saw a gap in his crisp-making kingdom....

POTATO SAVOYARDE
Roughly three large potatoes, thinly sliced
170g Gruyère cheese, grated
chicken or vegetable stock
garlic
black pepper

First grease with butter a shallow casserole dish. Next peel and thinly slice sufficient potato (preferably waxy ones) to create three layers. Start with a potato layer that covers the base of the dish, add grated cheese (a little under a third), ground pepper, and crushed garlic. Here you have to go by your own personal preference or skip it altogther if you don't like garlic. As a guide, we like it – so 5-7 decent-sized cloves peeled and crushed for the entire dish. I said we like it.
Then continue to layer, ending with a final layer of potato and the largest third of grated cheese to enable a crunchy topping. Finally, add the stock. Don't just throw it over the potatoes though, since you'll wash away the cheese topping you've just created. Pour gently into one corner of the casserole dish and stop pouring once the liquid level is sighted. As just mentioned it shouldn't cover the final potato layer... just gently tickle its toes. Cook in an oven for 45 minutes at 200°C or thereabouts. The top will be golden and the potatoes soft. Times may vary depending on the depth of your casserole, the thickness of your potatoes, etc. The cheese within the bake goes gooey and you're also left with a garlicky liquor to be slurped up or mopped up with crusty bread.

Once we decided to have with Toulouse sausages and remained friendless for several days!

CHEESY AU GRATIN POTATO STACKS
This is a "make-up your own" recipe but the fundamentals are that you needed a muffin tin (or mini muffin tin if you are creating appetizers), potatoes, cream and cheese. First, grease the tin. Next you need to slice potatoes in a paper-thin manner. Use a mandoline if you dare and have had the appropriate training! Thinly layer the base and sides of muffin tins with the potato. essentially you are using potato as a replacement for pastry. Then continue to layer with grated cheese and double cream and bake until golden. The choice of cheese is down to you: Cheddar or Emmental or Gruyère or even Double Gloucester if you like the colour, or blue cheese if you enjoy that.

Of course you can add chives, garlic or garlic cheese, or maybe a very thin disc of chorizo, or chilli or chilli jam, or well whatever you like best. And then experiment... and remember to scale down for the mini muffin appetizers.

CHEESY POTATO SOUP
Wow! Roll on cold winter days if we have this one to look forward to. Again, you can't really go wrong in what you add to this soup. First sauté some chopped onions, then add some diced potato and a stock (vegetable or chicken) and cook until the potato is soft. You can then "mash" the mixture if you like smooth soups or leave it slightly chunky. Then add the grated cheese, cream and warm through. Of course if you are lucky enough to have a soup maker, then just lob the whole lot in. Season as you prefer with pepper, chives, etc. Though you are unlikely to need any more salt since you have added stock and cheese.

With all this cheesiness and potato goodness inside you, it might just be the moment to contemplate whether humans really should hunker down and hibernate every winter after a hearty meal.



Pantos and Christmas Lights

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS
Nov 21 Burnham Market Christmas Market and Lights Switch-on, including funfair, Santa's grotto, music and food and drinks stalls, 1-6pm
Nov 22 King's Lynn Christmas Lights Switch-on with singer Sarah Mai, Tuesday Market Place, from 2pm
Nov 28 Fakenham Christmas Craft Fayre, and Christmas Lights Switch-On at 4pm
Nov 29 Hunstanton Christmas Lights Switch-on, a live music day and a visit from Santa, 10-6pm
Dec 12-13 Wells ChristmasTide Festival with Santa's arrival at the quayside by boat (12th/booking needed), lit procession, craft stalls and fireworks. Lights switch-on 4.30pm on the 12th. Also Christmas tree festival 11-13th

Other "lighted" experiences include:
Nov 10-Dec 23 Thursford Christmas Spectacular, showtimes 2pm and 7pm
Nov 14-Jan 3 Norfolk Lights Express at North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham to Holt and back https://nnrailway.co.uk/the-norfolk-lights-express/
Nov 14-Dec 23 Mid-Norfolk Railway "Polar Express" train ride, Dereham
Nov 20-Dec 24 Luminate at Sandringham https://luminate.live/sandringham-estate
Nov 21-Dec 23 Santa Specials at North Norfolk Railway with Santa and present https://nnrailway.co.uk/santa-specials/
Nov 26-Dec 3 Christmas Tree Festival. Fakenham Parish Church
Nov 29, Dec 1-3, 6, 8-9, 14 (guided), 15-18, 23, 27-30 Holkham Hall by Candlelight, £36

PANTOMIMES
Dec 8-12 Fakenham Community Centre, **Pinocchio** www.fadlos.org.uk/box-office/ from £10.50
Dec 5-Jan 3 Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, **Cinderella**, 01485 532252 or email boxoffice@princesshunstanton.co.uk
Dec 8-Jan 3 King's Lynn Corn Exchange, **Sleeping Beauty** 01553 764864 kingslynncornexchange.co.uk
Dec 18-24 Westacre Theatre, West Acre, **Cinderella**, box office 01760 755007. £16/£10

Seal-Bombing

In less enlightened times (1946 to be precise), it seems there was a seal "problem" off the North Norfolk coast. Too many of the blighters to be precise and they were eating ALL the fish (bet they weren't!). Rather than thanking the Lord for the end of the Second World War and fawning over the lovely pinnipeds, it seems that one individual (actually the chair of the county council) couldn't wait to do battle with the enemy once again. Sir Henry Upcher thought the most effective way of dealing with the seals was to heavily bomb them from an aeroplane, which he had already sought out, as well as the vessel from which the plane was to be launched. Luckily for the seals, sanity at the council prevailed and his measures were voted down. https://wahooart.com/fr/art/arnold-mason-sir-henry-upcher-1870-1954-chairman-of-norfolk-AQV6GF-en/

Dates for the Diary

Dec 5 Sedgeford Christmas Party with live music, Sedgeford Village Hall, 7-11pm, £12
Dec 5 The Pantaloons' Every Christmas Movie Ever, Westacre Theatre, West Acre, 3pm & 7.30pm, £20/£10
Dec 9 Victorian Christmas Home Education Workshop, Lynn Museum, 1-3pm, £5 per child/adults free
Dec 11-13 Holkham Christmas Market, 10-4pm
Dec 12 Christmas Party Night, Fakenham Racecourse, two-course meal and disco, from 7pm, £45.60 www.fakenhamracecourse.co.uk
Dec 12 Medieval Christmas Family Event, Lynn Museum, from 10am/11am/1pm
Dec 13 Carols & Candlelight, West Acre Theatre, 2-4pm, £20
Dec 16 Carols at Dersingham Village Centre, 5-7pm, light refreshments and mulled wine
Dec 17 Mini Museum Club (for under-5s), Lynn Museum, 10.30-11am, 50p per child
Dec 18 CHRISTMAS SCHOOLS BREAKUP
Dec 25 Hunstanton Christmas Day Swim, register 10am at Oasis Centre, swim at 11am

Toddler and Baby Group

A toddler and baby group is held on Wednesday mornings during term time from 9.30 to 11am at Hunstanton Methodist Church in Austin Street, Hunstanton PE36 6AL

For further details ring 01485 298316

All are welcome!

St Mary‘s 100 Club Draw

NOVEMBER RESULTS: Here are the latest draw results: 1st prize no. **46** ; 2nd prize no. **87**. (1st prize wins £25; 2nd prize £10). Many congratulations to the winners!

If you would like to take part in next year's monthly 100 Club draw the details and application form are enclosed in the newsletter and will also be available during "Bircham Banter" on December 3.

Sally

Bircham Banter

Next Banter session is on Thursday December 3 from 2.30 to 4pm at St Mary's, Great Bircham. Do come along and join with the regulars for chat, tea/coffee and very good cake, especially if you are new to the village. You'll be made very welcome!!

Pauline



Stanhoe & Barwick WI

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

December 3 Peg Hunter will be leading a floral posy workshop (members only).

Visitors are always welcome. Our charge is £5, which includes refreshments.
Contact stanhoeandbarwickwi@gmail.com for more details about events and membership.

Another Reprieve... this time at Queen Elizabeth Hospital

The at-risk A&E department at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital appeared to have been given a reprieve from closure in early November. It followed – though maybe not as a result of – a protest held in King's Lynn and a very healthy petition against the move that was under consideration.
More from County Councillor Julie Costley on page 9.

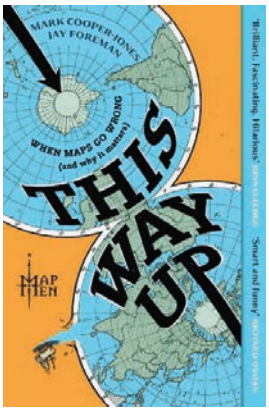
Household Hazardous Waste Day

Locally, the next household hazardous waste days are Friday 20th and Saturday 21st November at Hempton Recycling Centre (just to the south of Fakenham on the A1065). As normal, you'll need to book a slot in advance; booking opens on November 12 at 9am on 0344 800 8020 or online (see p8).
Check https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/38615/Hazardous-waste-items for those items accepted/ not accepted



Curl Up With a Good Book

This Way Up – When Maps Go Wrong (and why it matters) (2025) by the Map Men (aka Mark Cooper-Jones and Jay Foreman).



Believe it or not there are some people out there who don't like maps. That is their loss, because maps can be beautiful, colourful, antique, informative and actually, well just plain daft, wrong or unfathomable. It takes lashings of artistic work and no little science to make a map. And sometimes there is a sprinkling of subterfuge involved. I remember well in my own map publishing days – at the start of the electronic era – when we added fake places to a map. Not to befuddle the user but to dissuade other publishers from nicking our maps. We did the same with lists of published books, slipped in a fake one, and when our lists were lifted wholesale so were the errors and copyright action could be started! It was nothing new: early editions of the *London A-Z* were similarly doctored.

This Way Up similarly chats about this phenomena as well as when maps are wrong or go wrong for multifarious reasons. It's based on a popular YouTube video series but don't let that put you off. The discourse is breezy ahd chatty, with lots of diversions and running up culs-de-sac in the telling of wild stories. This is a mazy tour of the world through time. A typical discussion centres on an 18th-century French map of Africa, highly detailed at the margins thanks to European trading to the Far East but a bit of a mystery in its interior where labels indicated "a dwarfish breed who hunt elephants" and "always at war" and "men-eaters"!.

More local is the way TV regions sprang up in the UK (because of the location of TV transmitters) and why: "King's Lynn, a posh, genteel and decidedly southern town was now receiving the same news as Bradford". We'll pass on the KL description but apparently "chilled at the prospect of their children hearing the words 'ee-bah-gum' some 70,000 East Anglians complained to the IBA and the matter was raised in parliament."

The authors also discuss an Indian map of Kolkata with no street names. Of course, we didn't really need street name and numbers until we had a postal service. And the inability of Americans to recognise the outline of their country "is it Asia?" or the fact they think Africa is a country, or Hong Kong lies atop Rio de Janeiro. In Stalin's Soviet Union the totalitarian state took over the running of the country's maps and the Secret Police were put in charge. The first two guys in charge were shot. Kinda makes Trump's Lake America seem so tame. This is frothy stuff but with plenty of embedded kernels of knowledge that make you a hit (or not) with friends.

A second book this month but those of a nervous disposition should look away now. We had intended to bring you a review of a book that reached the Booker Prize longlist: **The Palm House** (2026) by Gwendoline Riley. The blurb gave little away and and as one of the best 13 English-language books of the year we thought we'd give it a whirl. Coming in at just over 200 pages, we set about it. The novel is broken into five parts, is dialogue heavy, written by an up-and-coming female author and tells of a platonic relationship set in the world of publishing. Except the second part, returning to the female protagonist's childhood, graphically but dispassionately tells of her grooming by a crazy-looking TV comedian, her infatuation with him and his strutting walks and Dickensian language (naming no names of course). Well in this month of all months we thought we'd better not continue with the *Palm House* since... well the coincidences are more than well... coincidental. For those we've intrigued rather than appalled – Off you go!

We did false-start with one further novel, **Lake Wobegon Days** (1985) by Garrison Keillor. A gentle and humorous taste of rural US. Garrison Keiller was, for decades from 1974, the host of a radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion", and the book was a spinoff with gentle tales and so on. But seems that Keillor was latterly had up for sexual infelicities in real life... so we put that one down too.

It's been one of those months....



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 4/No news as yet on Jan services
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

BUS 33 (new timetable from June 1)
To Hunstanton (from King's Head): Mon-Sat 07:36 (not Sat); 08:36; 10:36; 12:36; 14:36; 17:06
Return from Stand A Bus Station

To Lynn (from Bircham Stores): Mon-Sat 07:33 (not Sat); 09:18; 11:18; 13:18; 15:18; 17:18
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

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

Bircham Weather

October began with settled conditions, allowing us to enjoy some of the more pleasant features of autumn: early morning mists followed by warm, sunny afternoons. No rainfall was recorded until the 7th and the sun still had sufficient warmth to lift temperatures into the low twenties with a maximum of 22.0°C recorded on the 5th. Unfortunately, this also proved to be the highest temperature of the month as the 8.9mm of rain recorded on the 7th heralded the arrival of the Atlantic influence and, apart from a brief respite on the 10th and 11th, only three dry days were recorded between the 12th and 28th.

Temperatures also took a downward turn, helped by an incursion of northerly winds between the 16th and 18th. This resulted in a maximum of just 11.7°C on the 17th, while showers blowing in from the North Sea served to emphasise just how different conditions had become since the opening week of the month. This spell was followed by the wettest day of the month, when heavy rain on the 21st produced 22.2mm. Then, on the 23rd, the first named storm of the season, Storm Austen, tracked along the Channel, bringing a further 15.9mm of rain. Fortunately, we escaped the worst of the gales, although Storm Boelo, arriving on the 24th, had a greater impact when gale-force winds persisted into the following day, accompanied by another 16.0mm of rain.

The month's rainfall total reached 110mm, almost twice the average for October and established it as the wettest month so far but, despite the unsettled conditions, the average maximum temperature was 15.4°C which was still slightly above the seasonal norm. The final three days of the month brought a welcome return to the early morning mists and sunny afternoons, although without the warmth of the opening week as the sun continued its gradual descent towards the horizon. Perhaps there are more storms lurking out there, just waiting to be given a name. Maybe the Met Office might yet conjure up a Storm Zebedee before the end of winter!

Bryan



Your County Councillor Speaks...

It's been a busy few months getting to grips with the workings of Norfolk County Council and the role of a County Councillor. This is my first venture into local government, having previously worked in both the private and public sectors.

My days are a mixture of meetings at County Hall, representing the Council on outside organisations and, importantly, dealing with residents' queries and casework. I provide Parish Councils with a monthly report and attend as many parish meetings as I can. If you would like to receive my monthly report by email, please get in touch.

Around the County
October has seen developments involving the Council's finances, SEND provision, devolution, changes to planning rules, Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and the future of council-run care homes. Norfolk urgently needs more foster carers. I encourage anyone who might be interested to find out more about the different ways they could help. Information is available on Norfolk County Council fostering webpages.

The consultation on the Council's 2027/28 budget is open until December 7, and I encourage residents to have their say at www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget.

One unwelcome surprise in the draft budget was the proposed closure of Docking recycling centre. As a Docking resident, I was acutely aware of the impact this would have locally and did not believe the proposal represented a sensible or viable saving. I made extensive representations to the Cabinet member, setting out the consequences for our area, so I was pleased when the proposal was subsequently withdrawn.

Highways and speeding
Speeding continues to be a concern for residents in the village. I've held onsite meetings with representatives from the Parish Council, Speedwatch and Highways to look at issues first-hand and discuss options. I'm having further discussions with the Council's road safety team about its approach to speed management and whether there are opportunities to consider different measures in the future. I don't want to make promises I can't keep, but please be assured I recognise the concerns and continue to pursue them.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital
I've had contact from residents concerned about the future of acute services at the QEH. While the immediate threat to 24-hour A&E and intensive care services appears to have receded, maternity, neonatal and children's services remain under review. I'm following developments closely. My position is clear: I would strongly oppose proposals that resulted in the downgrading of essential acute services at the QEH, or indeed at any of Norfolk's hospitals.

Other work
Among my other responsibilities, I chair the Council's Planning (Regulatory) Committee. I note an interesting article in your June newsletter about Harding's Pits. On October 20 the Committee approved the registration of Harding's Pits as a village green, which was welcome news locally. I also represent the Council on the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, helping to scrutinise its finances and its important work protecting our marine environment and supporting sustainable fisheries. I am also delighted to sit on the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape Partnership, which has recently launched its five-year plan for protecting and enhancing our wonderful Norfolk coastline.

Finally, I recently attended a public meeting about the proposed Longmarsh energy and data centre development in West Norfolk. Although some distance from us, a development of this scale could have wider implications, and I will cover this in future updates.

I continue to work on a range of issues raised by residents, so please get in touch if there is something I can help with.

Julie Costley Julie.Costley.Cllr@norfolk.gov.uk

Christmas Day Swim

For many decades the Christmas Day swim at Hunstanton has been a date in the calendar, something to take part in or to view before tucking into a Christmas lunch.

The first official sponsored swim, organised by Hunstanton and District Round Table, was believed to be held in 1971 with few participants. By 1984 the numbers of swimmers had grown to between 150 and 200 brave and hardy souls, prepared to dip into the North Sea in December dressed in fancy dress for charity. One of the first to get engaged was 1970s MP Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler, who wore a nightshirt, nightcap and candlestick, dressed presumably as Scrooge.



But aside from the swim and having a laugh, the main point of the event is the charity aspect and the sponsorship that helps local charities – in the past enabling the Round Table to buy a mini-bus and an ECG machine.

In recent times the event has seen record crowds watching those splashing about. So even if you don't feel up to a mid-morning dip, why not go along and give your support?

Registration is from 10am
10:40am Judging of costumes
10.50am Parade to sea
11:00am Swim begins

There are few rules but having a sponsorship form and money is one. It is also compulsory to have footwear and it makes total sense to wear fancy dress. Afterwards, it is quite likely you'll need towels and a change of clothing. Under-18 swimmers must have an adult present, who is responsible for them.

Location: Hunstanton Promenade (by the Oasis Leisure Centre), Hunstanton, Norfolk

Bircham in Bloom

We are only a month away from another successful year of planting, pruning, growing and, above all else, watering the common areas around the village. The focus on watering has been extremely challenging for all our volunteers and we thank them for their dedication and devotion with this task. In an attempt to help alleviate this in the future we have tried to plant more drought-resistant varieties. This process is ongoing and we plan to continue in the years ahead.

Unfortunately, our current chairman and secretary are both stepping back at the end of this year and we would like to thank them for their help and guidance over the past 12 months. Without their great stewardship we would not have progressed as well as we have. Clearly this has created two vacancies and if anyone would like to volunteer to take on either role please contact the PC at clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk for further information.

Racing at Fakenham...

... we hope! On November 22 and December 20 there should be racing at Fakenham, with the latter date being the Christmas celebratory meeting. Unfortunately, the first two meetings of the season were cancelled because of the condition of the course. No significant rainfall during the year meant that there was unsufficient grass growth and the meetings were abandoned. Thanks to the arrival of rain, we reckon it might be third time lucky!