

Making trauma more **bear-able**

Ninety new recruits have joined the county council's fire service - but they won't be putting out any fires.

The recruits in question are cuddly Blaze Bears dressed as firefighters who will be used to soothe frightened children involved in traumatic incidents.

Gary Miller, watch manager at North Walsham Fire Station, said:

"If we're called to an incident where a child is involved and we can give them a Blaze Bear it helps calm them down and take

their mind off things for a while."

Cash to buy the bears was raised by staff at North Walsham Woolworths and the 90 bears will be shared between crews in North Walsham, Stalham and Mundesley.

Big Blaze Bear is pictured with Shelley Chatten and Sylvia Cook from North Walsham Woolworths and crews from North Walsham and Mundesley.



Celebrating Success

- 52.5% of Norfolk youngsters reached the target of 5A*-Cs in their GCSEs this summer.
- Our brand new bus station opened at the end of August.
- Norfolk Learning Difficulties Service won £150,000 to improve housing support for people with learning difficulties
- Half of Norfolk County Council's recycling centres recycled more than 70 per cent of the waste they received in July.

Customer care improving...

We have made significant progress in improving our customer care, according to the results of an independent 'mystery shopping' exercise carried out recently. OPERA Community Research tested responses across services, using five different communication channels - telephone, letter, e-mail, internet and face to face.

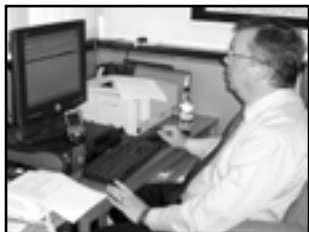
The survey found that there has generally been good progress on all fronts measured against the last survey in 2003. Since then we have improved our website and introduced the Customer Service Centre,

Council Information Centres and corporate Customer Care Standards to help improve our customer focus. It's very encouraging to see the improvements and of course there is still plenty more we can do.

The mystery shopping results will be going to Members in the Autumn and we'll publish more details in the next edition of Our Norfolk. They will also be available on the intranet, so that services can use the information gained from the survey when planning customer care activities. We all need to keep up the good work!



"Welcome to this first online chat about improving customer care. I am here waiting for your questions."



Tim's Talkback

harder to ensure our services are of the highest quality. Unless service users know we really do care about the services we offer, we will seem remote and uncaring.

Andrew McAlpine (Customer Service Centre): *How is Norfolk County Council going to ensure all staff adhere to Customer Care not just the CSC and CICs?*

Tim : *Andrew, we are going to make sure that as many staff as possible get direct training in customer care including working with others from private sector organisations.*

Gethin Davies (P&T): *What is the best Customer Care you've ever experienced outside NCC?*

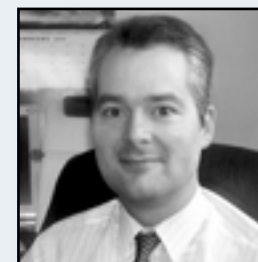
Tim : *Thanks Gethin. The best*

example was from the Dell computers contact centre who talked me through rebuilding my computer at home, it took 2 hours but it worked first time! They were polite, patient and helpful!

To see the full transcript go to the corporate intranet on intranet.norfolk.gov.uk

The next **Talk Back** session will feature Alan Tidmarsh, E services and Efficiency Director talking about the efficiency programme, so tune into intranet.norfolk.gov.uk at 12.30pm on October 3rd. Send your question in advance to **christine.birchall@norfolk.gov.uk** or phone it in on 01603 222843

New Director of P&T



Mike Jackson, currently P&T's Deputy Director, was chosen as the new director after a two-day selection process from a high quality field of candidates from all over the country. He will take over from Sam Ralph, who retires in September, becoming one of the youngest directors in the country.

Mike joined NCC last August from Nottingham City Council where he was Deputy Chief Executive on secondment from Government Office East Midlands (GOEM). Mike has also worked for the Department for Transport (DOT) and subsequently the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). He has worked on a variety of transport and planning initiatives, including the establishment of local transport plans.

Mike lives in Marsham with his partner, Lesley, and their two children, Grace, 10, and Charlie, 6. He said: "Norfolk is a beautiful county in which to live and one of the challenges we face is to make sure the county and its people prosper. I am thrilled to be given this opportunity"

Name and position

Mike Jackson - Deputy Director

Q. How long have you worked for Norfolk County Council

A. One year

Q. What have been your proudest achievements working for the authority?

A. Planning and Transportation have achieved some fantastic things in the short time I have been here, but it is early days for me to be taking any credit for it?

Q. What inspired you to follow your career path?

A. I have not followed a particular career path, however I left the civil service for local government to be more closely involved in the delivery of public services - which provides a very tangible and satisfying service of achievement.

Q. What do you consider the best/worst thing about Norfolk?

A. The best thing has to be the coast - an amazing number of wonderful places to walk, or just mess about with the kids.

Q. Which person in public life do you most admire?

A. Nelson Mandela - not very original, but the dignity of the man I still find truly incredible.

Q. What really makes your blood boil?

A. Litter, inconsiderate dog owners and bad referees.

Q. What is your idea of happiness?

A. Headingly, 1981

Q. What do you never leave home without?

A. Nothing in particular. In fact, I like to have as little with me as possible.

Q & A

Dragon Boat races against the wind for Leukaemia research

In late July, the notorious Norfolk Vikings, consisting mainly of NCC staff, braved the elements and raised nearly £200 for the Anthony Nolan trust for leukaemia research by competing in the Dragon Boat race at Whitlingham Broad.

The Norfolk Vikings, consisting of 10 paddlers and a drummer, were Anna Stubbings, Rachel Macleod, Claire Sullivan, Emma Alerton, Tony Parsons, Oliver Ishmael, Steve Crook, Gethin Davison, Simon

Waters, Steven Lowe, Polly Wake, Chris Skinn and Isabel Whitehead.

The crew had a best time of 1.20 min and were cheered on by a large group of NCC supporters including Chairman John Baskerville who was their sponsor.

NCC staff wishing to contribute to the Anthony Nolan Trust can still do so by contacting Isabel Whitehead at County Hall on 01603 222787.





Peter Mendham (centre), fundraising coordinator for the Air Ambulance, accepts the cheque from James Keenan (left) and Matthew Bull

Cold-hearted? Not these gritters!

A group of roadworkers from Ketteringham depot have raised £530 for the East Anglian Air Ambulance. They all donated £25 from the overtime they would

have earned from a night's gritting run.

It was Bruce Stannard's idea and he and James Keenan soon persuaded others to join in. James said: "We called it 'A Shout for Charity'.

We chose to give the money to the air ambulance as they're always out helping at road accidents and we're always out trying to stop them happening."

News in brief

Norfolk County Services won a five year £7.5 million contract to maintain 3,500 Peddars Way Housing Association homes.

Job Satisfaction

John Birchall has taken on a new communications role where success could help bring a cool £1.6 million into Norfolk.

Norfolk County Council has joined forces with the Borough Councils of Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn & West Norfolk to boost public satisfaction with council services.

Up to £1.6 million in reward grant will be shared between the three authorities if we meet testing targets agreed with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of our latest Local Public Service Agreement. We have until November 2007 to get there.

"The quality of an authority's services is obviously important, but a critical factor in public satisfaction



is whether people actually know what we are doing to make improvements to their lives and local area," says John. "Where we are doing well, we need to bang the drum.

"The three councils have agreed action plans to make sure we use every means possible to get strong positive messages out to Norfolk people, especially those living in the two Boroughs."

For the county council the main target is a ten percentage-point improvement, from 48% to 58%, in overall public satisfaction. There are also eight areas of borough and county service where public satisfaction must be improved.

Go green AND save money with your choice of lease car

Would you be interested in using a more environmentally-friendly lease car? Would you like a lease car that does 50-60 miles per gallon?

If you answer yes to either of these questions, then contact Cheryl Hewett (01603-223229 or email hewett@norfolk.gov.uk) for prices and information on the hybrid-electric Honda Civic IMA.

18 IMA (Integrated Motor Assist) vehicles will be made available via the lease car scheme if there is enough interest from staff. This model has been chosen as it has been very successful in NCC's alternative fuel trials (more details at www.altfuel.norfolk.gov.uk).

Ian Mellish, an Education Social Worker, has been using an IMA for two years,

"It has done 40,000 miles and the only things I have had to change are the wiper blades and tyres! I am very pleased with the car, both in terms of mechanics, specification, build and economy. On long drives it averages 60 miles per gallon, the road tax is low, it is exempt from the London congestion charge and the emissions are extremely low. So I can't complain!"

Hybrid-electric cars have standard petrol engines which are assisted by electricity, reducing fuel consumption and overall emission levels while increasing miles per gallon. Recharging occurs during the normal driving process and the Civic IMA also has 'auto-stop', which means the engine cuts out when you stop and restarts when you put it into gear or accelerate.

Where do I fit in?

Ever wondered how the job you do fits into the bigger picture of Norfolk County Council? Although, we are a large organisation with lots of different services, we are all working towards a shared goal - a better quality of life for local people.

Our services are not a matter of chance and they fit into a plan that reflects the Council's priorities, agreed by councillors after listening to local people.

The highest level of planning has our strategic objectives, but there is something (often called a 'golden thread'), linking these through departmental, service and team plans to the individual goals set annually for each employee.

If you would like to know, why not visit on the council website.

Under 'Council and Democracy' you'll find 'Planning and Performance'. By dipping into the 'Corporate Planning' section you can find the Council's main plans, as well as details on all of the priorities. Check out the ones that relate to your own area of work or look at what other services are doing. The 'Performance' pages are where you can find out if we do what we say we will!

Our customers sometimes ask about the Council's plans and performance so these are useful internet pages to refer them to.

If you want to know more, contact our corporate Policy and Performance Team on 01603 228852 or e-mail:

PolicyandPerformance@norfolk.gov.uk

Children's Support Services

'Great Exhibition' on 20th October 2005

10am to 4pm Sports Centre, Easton College

An opportunity to find out about support services for children and young people in your locality

To book your free ticket or find out more about exhibiting contact Caroline Groom on 01603 495123

Open to all agencies and sectors

Event sponsored by Norfolk Children's Fund

Who pays you?

Norfolk County Council pays 27,000 people monthly, and a further 435 weekly - work carried out by just 25 hardworking payroll clerks.

Payroll staff are split over two sites, with those based at Charles House paying external contracts, fire service, members, schools, colleges, NPS and adult education.

County Hall staff look after the wages for all the rest, including homecare (paid 4 weekly), Highways Road, temporary staff register and sessional payments (all weekly).

And it doesn't just stop there!

Payroll get hundreds of claims every month

which have to be processed and entered



with rates and accountancy codes. They are then batched up punched in to the computer by hand.

All new employees have to be allocated a personnel number and all details have to be input on the screens. And of course missing information has to be chased and clarified

Any changes of post, grades or regradings also have to be input

and money worked out manually, and if someone leaves in the middle of a payment period payroll may have to collect an overpayment.

Making sure you get paid on time.

A common fault is not quoting pay (personnel) numbers or giving the incorrect ones and quoting the old rates of pay or no rate at all.

If sessional claims don't include details such as personnel number or date of birth, we can't trace them - especially if they have a common surname like Smith.

We also work to a deadline and whilst we try our best to get late claims paid, it's not always possible. If

claims are late we are often asked to do a special payment which then puts back the ongoing work.

This includes paying around 68 attachment of earnings orders for council tax, CSA and court orders, tax code changes, bank changes and forms to be completed - all of which have to be done to a deadline making sure you receive your payslip once a month (or every four weeks, or every week.....etc)

So how can you help?

- Always quote your employee number.
- Keep to deadlines
- As a manager check the forms you are signing are completed correctly.

Calling all NCC Project Managers!

Norfolk County Council is developing a corporate approach to project management following an Audit Commission report earlier this year. While the Council delivers successful projects, there is no standard approach across the Authority. The development of a corporate approach will give us consistency, improve our project management capacity and capability, and ultimately, improve the way we deliver services to people in Norfolk.

Peter Jackson is leading the approach as Project Manager, with Chris Cleary as Sponsor and Mike Britch as Champion. There are two main strands to the approach.

- **To develop corporate guidelines for project management, drawing on best practice internally and externally.**

- **To establish a supportive environment for those involved in project management to recognise, share and learn from each other's experiences.**

The Project Management Forum (PMF) was set-up in February this year and is the first step towards a corporate approach and has met three times to discuss project management issues and disseminate best practice.

So, if you manage projects or are heavily involved in project work, the PMF could be a great opportunity for you. Alternatively, if you can contribute towards our work, please let us know.

If you would like further information, please contact:

Peter Jackson at peter.jackson@norfolk.gov.uk

IT'S SHOWTIME.....

Doing well at the Royal Norfolk Show

95,000 people attended this year's Royal Norfolk Show at the end of June, and to the gallant band of 70+ staff manning the corporate marquee it felt like most of them stopped in to see us.

For the second year running our link up with Radio Norfolk and BBC East helped to draw the crowds - but what did we get out of the two days.....

- **373 people took part in taster sessions to find out more about us on www.norfolk.gov.uk**
- **We gave 100 leaflets to people enquiring about their county councillor**
- **606 people visited our onsite mobile library - 43 children registered for the summer reading game, and five signed up as new members.**
- **50 people enquired about becoming a school governor**
- **20 were linked to new volunteering activities**
- **500 took part in our recycling activity**
- **50 took part in a foster carers competition - generating two serious enquiries about becoming a carer.**
- **250 did our arts in education activity**
- **100 did youth and community 'stress' sessions**
- **250 people played the emergency planning board game**
- **We took 300 enquiries about the archive centre**
- **250 entered a trading standards competition about age restricted sales**
- **220 applied for the new adult education prospectus**
- **22 designed a playground for an NPS Competition**



- **2,200 snapped up two for one vouchers for Roots of Norfolk**
- **we gave away 14 boxes of road safety information**



Veteran Tree Day very well received

More than 130 people attended a training day organised by Gerry Barnes, Environment Manager (Operations), Planning and Transportation, at Stradsett Hall on 27 April. There were three lectures followed by a guided walk to look at some old trees, including a veteran tree.

Gerry received many letters of thanks from the attendees, who clearly found the day interesting, enjoyable and helpful. Tom Williamson, Lecturer in Landscape History at the UEA, said: *"This is precisely the kind of thing that Norfolk County Council should be encouraging as an extremely cost-effective way of delivering real environmental benefits."*

Factfile

One of the biodiversity action plans for Norfolk is for wood pasture and remnant wood pasture landscapes contain many veteran trees. A veteran tree is one of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size and condition. Norfolk is particularly rich in old trees and the oldest oak trees in the county are up to 900 years old.

Did you know that Norfolk County Council staff can book at concessionary rates for many activities, talks and exhibitions at Norwich Castle?

If you plan to check out the Buried Treasure exhibition on at the Castle (on til January 15th, with some of Britain's most spectacular archaeological discoveries including amazing finds from our own region), why not go along to some of the events linked to the main exhibition at a reduced rate, including....

Horrid Treasures Conference

Saturday 17 September 10.30am - 4.30pm

Look beyond the glitter to discover how quirky finds like fake Roman coins have contributed to our knowledge of history.

Cost: Adult £12.00, Conc.(including NCC staff) £10.00.

History in Focus Evenings at Norwich Castle

Tuesday 11 October and Tuesday 8 November 6pm until 9pm

Find out more about the wonderful objects on display. Meet the experts for a lively evening of talks, tours and presentations

Norfolk County Council staff -£5.00 per person.

Town Close Talk

Portable Antiquities and the Treasure Act

Saturday 22 October 2pm

Cost: Adult £3.90, Conc and NCC staff. £3.10.

Advance booking for all events essential. Tel. 01603 493636.

Drop in Family Events at Norwich Castle (Museum admission price only)

- Saturday 24 September 11am - 4pm
Identification and Finds Day.
- Saturday 15 October 10.30am - 4.30pm
Metal Detecting Day
- Tuesday 25 October (Half Term) 10.30am - 4.30pm
Meet a medieval coin maker

School Travel Plan

Central government has extended the funding for the P & T School Travel Plan Team until March 2008. This is great news for the team of four officers who work with schools to reduce car use and congestion on the school journey and encourage pupils to walk and cycle to school.

School Travel Plan Officer Emma Luxford said 'We are really pleased. Over the past year we have worked with over 200 schools to help them develop and implement travel plans. The staff and pupils at the schools have been very enthusiastic about the process and it has real benefits for the environment and the health of pupils.'

Schools that complete a travel plan receive a grant from the Department for Education and Skills of approximately £5,000 for primary schools and £10,000 for secondary schools to spend on items such as cycle storage and pedestrian shelters on their school sites.

The School Travel Plan team has developed a range of resources for schools to use to help them encourage walking and cycling to school and to emphasize the health and environmental benefits of leaving the car at home.

For more information, contact the Travel Plan team on 01603 638080. Email schooltravelplan@norfolk.gov.uk. Website: www.schooltravelplan.net/norfolk

Norfolk County Council Sports and Social Club

Saturday

17th September
Kids Games Night
Starts 7.30pm
Food Available- Bar
Menu

Saturday

1st October @
8.30pm
L.A.-Brilliant Girl Duo

Saturday

15th October @
8.30pm
The Return of the
Ever Popular Tony
Cann

Saturday

15th October @
7.30pm
Watch out for the

Ghosts & Ghouls its
Hallowe'en - Prizes
for best Fancy Dress

Saturday

5th November @
8.30pm
Motown and Soul-
With Gerrard



If you need this leaflet in large print, or in an alternative version, please contact Norfolk County Council Communications Unit on (01603) 224471