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# Norfolk County Council’s consultation on reducing opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities.

## Overview

The Council faces difficult decisions to deliver on its ambitions for the people of Norfolk against a difficult economic climate and more than a decade of reduced funding. Each year, the Council reviews its budget and proposes the savings it will need to make for the following year to balance its budget.

We carried out our annual budget and council tax consultation for 2024/25 between October and December 2023. However, the Government’s autumn statement and provisional funding settlement, which followed our budget consultation, set out a worse funding position for local authorities than had previously been anticipated. As a result, the Council is £4m worse off than it had expected to be.

For 2024/25 the Council has proposed £41.5m of new savings which may require further consultation. This is one of those consultations. The Council is doing its best to protect key services, but faced with rising costs, rising demand and under-funding, it must make difficult decisions to balance the books.

In this consultation we are asking for your views on our proposal that would affect a number of Norfolk’s recycling centres.

We are proposing to reduce opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities. This means that all recycling centres in Norfolk would be closed on Wednesdays.

There are 19 recycling centres across Norfolk - 13 are open seven days a week and six are part-time. Part-time centres are open from Friday to Monday.

This proposal, if implemented, is expected to save around £200,000 a year.

## Why we are consulting

We want to find out what people think about our proposal to reduce opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities.

We are consulting through:

* The online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy
* Email /Letter to key stakeholders and partners
* Email to members of the Norfolk Residents’ Panel

We are consulting from **15 February to midnight on 22 March 2024**. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our savings proposals.

**If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email** [**haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk**](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk)**, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.**

The consultation should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

The questions start on page 9 of this document.

## Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our savings proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council’s data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. [You can find a copy of our privacy statement on the Norfolk County Council website.[[1]](#footnote-1)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy)

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer.

## Introduction

Norfolk County Council is committed to making Norfolk a county where businesses, organisations and communities continue to thrive together. [Our Better Together, For Norfolk strategy available on our website](#Introduction)[[[2]](#footnote-2)](#Introduction) sets out our ambitions to be one of the highest performing countries in the country, overseeing economic growth, creating jobs and opportunities for the people of Norfolk, while maintaining and cherishing our environment, countryside and heritage.

However, we, like other upper tier local authorities, continue to face very significant pressures arising from rising costs driven by inflation, growth in demand and the National Living Wage.

Although the Council’s budget increases each year with Council Tax, it is not enough to meet growing needs and costs.

The October 2023 Cabinet meeting considered 2024-25 savings proposals totalling £26.5 million. [The 2023 Cabinet meeting minutes are available on the Norfolk County Council website.](https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/496/Meeting/2053/Committee/169/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx)[[3]](#footnote-3) They make a significant contribution towards our target of £41.5 million and will help the council to continue to deliver the key services for Norfolk’s residents, while balancing the books.

It is in these difficult times that the County Council cannot afford any complacency and, working with its partners, we consider how best to deploy our own limited resources to support the most vulnerable people and communities, whilst continuing to provide wider public services.

We are consulting on the proposal to reduce opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities.

**It is estimated that this proposal would save around £200,000 a year.**

We want to hear your views on our proposals to help our elected councillors make the right, even tough decisions, in agreeing a robust and sustainable budget for the year ahead.

## Our current service

There are 19 recycling centres across Norfolk provided by Norfolk County Council which enable people to recycle and dispose of accepted household waste.

13 recycling centres which are currently open seven days a week will be affected by the proposal. The proposal means that they would be closed on Wednesdays.

These recycling centres **are** affected by the proposal – they are currently open seven days a week, 9am to 4pm:

* Ashill Recycling Centre
* Caister Recycling Centre
* Dereham Recycling Centre
* Heacham Recycling Centre
* Hempton Recycling Centre
* King's Lynn Recycling Centre
* Morningthorpe Recycling Centre
* Norwich North Recycling Centre
* Norwich South Recycling Centre
* Sheringham Recycling Centre
* Strumpshaw Recycling Centre
* Thetford Recycling Centre
* Worstead Recycling Centre

These recycling centres **are not** affected by the proposal - they are currently open Friday to Monday only, 9am to 4pm (closed Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday):

* Bergh Apton Recycling Centre
* Docking Recycling Centre
* Snetterton Recycling Centre
* Wells-next-the-Sea Recycling Centre
* Wereham Recycling Centre
* Wymondham Recycling Centre

**Additional information**

**Neighbouring authorities**

A review of neighbouring authority recycling centre opening days was completed in January 2024:

* Suffolk have 11 recycling centres (open every day apart from Wednesdays)
* Cambridgeshire have 9 recycling centres (open seven days a week)
* Lincolnshire have 11 recycling centres (open every day apart from Wednesdays and Thursdays)
* Essex have 21 recycling centres (11 are open every day and 10 are closed between 1-3 days a week, mostly mid-week)

**Fly-tipping**

Norfolk residents regularly share their concerns about fly tipping with us through social media, written enquiries and through our annual survey.

In Suffolk there was no reported increase in fly-tipping incidents due to closing on a Wednesday. This is also reflected in our own experience where we have made changes to recycling centres – such as introducing part time hours, relocating sites and when DIY waste policy changes have been made.

Although reported incident numbers of fly-tipping in Norfolk were up by 2.8% to 11,058 in 2022/23, across the eastern region incidents were up 4%. National figures have remained stable with a 1% decrease - small fluctuations of this level year on year are usual.

**Previous consultations**

Wednesday closures have been considered as a cost saving measure twice previously. Most recently in 2022 Wednesday closures went to public consultation along with closing recycling centres at 4pm in summer months.

The Wednesday closing consultation received 332 responses.  28% (92 responses) agreed with the Wednesday closure.  12% (40 responses) were neutral to the proposal, while 60% (200 responses) opposed the proposal, raising concerns about the impact on staff, possible increases in fly-tipping and the proposal impacting recycling targets.

At the Norfolk County Council Cabinet meeting in January 2023 the proposal was removed and this was subsequently reported on Citizen Space [We Asked, You Said, We Did - Norfolk County Council - Citizen Space](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnorfolk.citizenspace.com%2Fwe_asked_you_said%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ccharlotte.angelbeck%40norfolk.gov.uk%7C2bcd2f3e493f448e9a8a08dc1c332f1a%7C1419177e57e04f0faff0fd61b549d10e%7C0%7C0%7C638416253352542898%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kARPAsSYCjtLZ6nrnYkGWk0aFghrMb3ss6BP3Wicr1M%3D&reserved=0)[[4]](#footnote-4)

## Our proposal

We are proposing to reduce opening hours at some recycling centres. This means that all recycling centres in Norfolk would be closed on Wednesdays, in line with our neighbouring authority in Suffolk.

There are 19 recycling centres across Norfolk - 13 are open seven days a week and six are part-time. Part-time centres are open from Friday to Monday.

This proposal, if implemented, is expected to save around £200,000 a year.

When developing these proposals, we have taken the following into account:

* We want to make sure there are recycling centres available to communities across Norfolk at suitable locations and that are open at convenient times.
* We want to keep it simple to understand what days sites will be open.
* We have considered how the proposal affects the smooth operation of recycling centres.
* We have considered how the proposal impacts staff working at recycling centres.
* We have looked at what other councils do elsewhere.
* We have considered whether this proposal could impact the amount of illegal fly-tipping.
* We have checked what services the law requires us to provide.

**Why we've put forward this proposal**

Norfolk’s recycling centres receive around 1.5 million visits a year, and just under 12% of visits take place on a Wednesday (about 180,000 visits).

This means Wednesday is generally one of the quieter days of the week, with Saturdays and Sundays the busiest days.

Although number of visits on Thursdays are currently slightly lower, at around 11%, closing on a Wednesday is in line with Suffolk recycling centre operating hours.

Choosing a different day of the week has the potential to cause issues with cross border waste (people taking waste from one county to another).

**Who would be affected by our proposal and how**

Closing on a Wednesday would impact users of the recycling centres, as well as users of the trade waste service, which is available at eight sites from Monday to Friday.

If all recycling centres close on a Wednesday there will be some redundancies required and many, or all staff, will need to change their shift patterns and / or reduce hours.

If this proposal goes ahead, we will consult with staff to discuss the impact these changes could have.

## Our recycling centre consultation questions

1. **Which of Norfolk’s Household Waste and Recycling Centres do you use most often, or consider your local centre?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Ashill Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Bergh Apton Part-time Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Caister Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Dereham Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Docking Part-time Recycling Centre

Heacham Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Hempton Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

King's Lynn Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Mayton Wood Recycling Centre (closed)

Morningthorpe Recycling Centre

Norwich North Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Norwich South Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Sheringham Recycling Centre

Snetterton Part-time Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Strumpshaw Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Thetford Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Wells-next-the-Sea Part-time Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Wereham Part-time Recycling Centre and Reuse Shop

Worstead Recycling Centre

Wymondham Part-time Recycling Centre

1. **How often do you use your local recycling centre?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Every day it is open

Weekly

Monthly

A few times a year

Hardly ever

Never

1. **How often do you visit your local recycling centre on a Wednesday?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Weekly

Monthly

A few times a year

Hardly ever

Never

1. **How far would you agree or disagree with our proposal to reduce opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don’t know

1. **Please tell us more about why you chose that answer and whether you have any other comments on the proposals, using the box below** [150 word limit]:

Please write your comments here:

## How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings of this consultation to Cabinet in June 2024.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

* The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.  As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
* The views of people and stakeholders consulted
* The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
* The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
* Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

# About you

To make sure we are learning from a wide range of people – we would like to ask some questions about you. These are optional questions (so you may choose not to give this information), but this information is helpful to understand who is responding to our consultations.

1. **Are you responding as...?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

An individual / member of the public

On behalf of a voluntary or community group

On behalf of a statutory organisation

On behalf of a business

A Norfolk County Councillor

A district or borough councillor

A town or parish councillor

A Norfolk County Council employee

If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group, or business?

Please write your answer here:

1. **How did you hear about this consultation?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Local media (e.g., newspaper, radio)

From a social media post (e.g., Facebook)

From a friend

From a group I belong to

From my place of work or education

The Norfolk Residents' Panel

District council web page

Norfolk County Council web page

My parish council

From an email I received

By post

1. **Are you...?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)

If you prefer to self-describe, please specify here:

1. **How old are you?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below*:*

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

85+

Prefer not to say

1. **Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

1. **If yes which of the following best describes your condition or disability?**

Please select **all** answers that apply:

Blind or partially sighted

Deaf or hard of hearing

Limiting health condition *e.g. heart disease, asthma, stroke, osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and magic encephalomyelitis (ME)*

Learning Disabilities

Neurodiversity *e.g. autistic spectrum disorders, dyslexia, dyspraxia*

Mental health conditions e.*g. depression, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder*

Physical disability *e.g. limb disorder, amputee, wheelchair user, cerebral palsy, motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy*

If you have another type of disability not listed above, please write here:

Prefer not to say

1. **How would you describe your ethnic background?**  Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

**Asian or Asian British**

Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, please describe here:

**Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African**

Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background, please describe here:

**Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed or multiple group, please describe here:

**White**

English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Roma

Other White background, please describe here:

**Another ethnic group**

Arab

Any other ethnic group please describe here:

Prefer not to say

1. **Which district/borough/city do you live in?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Breckland

Broadland

Great Yarmouth

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

North Norfolk

Norwich

South Norfolk

1. **Do you have caring responsibilities?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below*:*

No

Yes – for children with additional needs

Yes – for older family members/ Adults

Yes - Parent Carer

Yes – for a disabled adult(s)

Yes, other. Please write here:

1. **Which of the following best describes you?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

Employed (full time)

Employed (part time)

Self-employed

Unemployed

Student

Looking after the family home

Long term sick

Retired

1. **What is your first language?**

English

Other, please write here:

**Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.**

**You can fill in our online feedback form at** <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/savingsproposals>

**You can email return your feedback form to:** [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk)

**You can send back a paper feedback form to:**

Reducing Opening Hours at Recycling Centres CONSULTATION 2024/25

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

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1. https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/corporate/council-vision-and-strategy [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/496/Meeting/2053/Committee/169/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/we\_asked\_you\_said/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)