

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**26 March 2026**

### **COUNCILLOR MICHAEL de WHALLEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY**

For the period 15 January 2026 to 18 March 2026

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

##### **Solar Together**

Household registrations for the group buying scheme closed last year.

46 households have agreed to installation work and 16 have completed so far. 202 panels have been installed which equates to 91kW of generation and approximately £140,000 of householder investment. Thirteen batteries have also been installed for that cohort. Works for all 46 households should be completed by May 2026.

##### **Mayor's Business Awards – Environmental Champion**

Two businesses were shortlisted for the 2026 award; British Sugar, Wissington Factory and Goodwins Hall Care Home. The winner, British Sugar, was announced at the awards evening on 6 March 2026. I look forward to reading the entries for 2027 later this year.

##### **Carbon Audit**

The 2023/24 carbon audit is available on our website and work is underway on the 2024/25 audit. We are improving processes to speed up and automate this and any data collection it requires.

##### **Carbon Literacy Training**

Our e-learning provider is processing final amendments to the learning content for use in the council's e-learning platform, which will be made available for all staff and members.

##### **Village Green, South Lynn**

The Village Green application for South Lynn is currently awaiting further information from Natural England relating to the Doorstep Green before it can be finalised by Norfolk County Council.

##### **South Lynn Community Orchard & Beuys' Acorns**

The project nears completion with installation of CCTV at the community orchard. We are awaiting final designs for the interpretation boards.

### Vehicle Fleet Review

Following a successful bid to a national grant scheme, work is progressing to improve the electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure at the Oldmedow Road site. The works will be installed by end of March 2026 and will provide 5 EV charging sockets.

The caretakers' van has been replaced with a battery electric vehicle. A new council livery has been designed to promote the vehicle's green credentials.



### Ferry

As part of our commitment to the long-term viability of the ferry service, the authority's Property Services department has commissioned Richard Jackson

Ltd Engineering Consultants to undertake a routine annual inspection of the landing facilities.

This survey, commissioned in partnership with Norfolk County Council, is a proactive measure to assess the structural integrity of the current site. The data gathered will help:

- Quantify the remaining lifespan of the existing infrastructure
- Inform the feasibility study by providing a clear technical baseline for potential future investments
- Ensure continued compliance and operational stability for the current service

Our current investigations are a complex undertaking, focused on ensuring that all future designs are fully informed by the physical and environmental realities of the river. It is vital that we first understand how existing structures influence river flow, as this technical data is critical to the longevity of any new infrastructure.

While the feasibility study is evaluating a range of solutions precise technical specifications will be looked at during the formal design stage in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Our current investigations are reviewing the complex historical ownership of the facilities. While a definitive "paper trail" has proven elusive due to various historical transitions between authorities, we are continuing to review correspondence to gain further clarity.

From an engineering perspective, we are treating the protection of this historical asset as a priority. Any proposed construction adjacent to the Rennie Jetty involves technical risks that must be mitigated to protect both the new infrastructure and the historical asset itself, which continues to function as intended.

We are working diligently toward the completion of this study. While the process has taken longer than originally anticipated, the complexity of the site merits this level of deep investigation. It is essential that the final report is robust enough to withstand the necessary scrutiny from both Members and the public. The ferry operator has been updated and consulted on these current works. I and officers look forward to providing a full briefing upon completion of the study.

#### **Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP)**

Following a successful funding bid to Innovate UK, work is underway on the development of:

- An online retrofit website
- the Energy Champions model established in Norwich
- Community building decarbonisation in collaboration with Community Action Norfolk
- Heritage Retrofit guidance

A seminar for planning officers has been arranged on 16 March 2026 addressing external wall insulation drawing upon experiences of applicants and installers.

Whilst local authorities focus on local government reorganisation, administration of the partnership will be undertaken by the Tyndall Centre, University of East Anglia.

### **LED Lighting**

There are now proposals for covering the tennis courts with a canopy, with support from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). If the LTA scheme is approved and brought forward, the tennis courts will require a different lighting strategy. It is now considered that the tennis courts should be removed from scope for the current LED upgrades, with replacement lighting installed on the MUGA and Pelican's Pitches only. Project spend is pending authorisation, following which the upgrades are due to be considered for CIL funding.

Similarly, once spend is authorised for upgrades at the depot, electrical contractors will be invited to quote for identified LED replacements at this building.

### **Streetlighting Phase II**

Property Services have completed a review of the columns proposed for upgrade and identified several lanterns not in our ownership, resulting in some changes to scope. For our heritage style fittings, where we had previously intended to install straightforward bulb replacements, we have also been advised to install LED gear trays, given lack of space within some lantern heads. The gear tray option is also a warranted solution, with a fifteen-year warranty.

We are in discussions with our contractors to understand and agree on the costs associated with these revisions but are targeting an April start for the first round of LED replacements.

### **Re:Fit**

Panasonic have issued written confirmation that the warranty agreements on their equipment can be reinstated. Whilst this is a significant step forward, the overall performance from the heat pumps is still not meeting with expectations. We are reviewing our options in consultation with legal and Salix (the programme managers for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme).

### **Solar Panels**

Once spend is authorised, we will be moving to launch a tender exercise to procure these works. One of the challenges previously faced, when developing schemes for the Corn Exchange building, has been identification of a suitable mounting system. Recent discussions with a specialist roofing contractor, however, have indicated that a solution can be found. The other sites proposed for upgrade are Downham Market Leisure Centre and King's Lynn Innovation Centre (KLIC).

### **Biodiversity Officer**

Since being appointed, our Biodiversity Officer has worked on the following projects:

- South Lynn Community Orchard  
Pathway installed, hedgerow planted, replacement trees, strimming and clearing  
Benches installed  
Installation of bins  
Working with the Men's Shed to build raised planters
- Howdale  
Working with Nature Volunteer Network  
Planting shrubs  
Preparing wildflower areas
- Heacham Ponds  
Working with the northern grounds team to clear the pond of willow and scrub during the dry season  
The ponds have been transformed
- The Willows – Downham Market County Wildlife Site  
With funding secured from the EA, the first phase of clearance works has occurred to deal with a historic lack of maintenance  
Volunteer interest obtained moving forward
- King's Lynn Habitat Creation Project  
A future project looking at improving our Open Spaces for biodiversity
- Wildlife surveys over the spring months

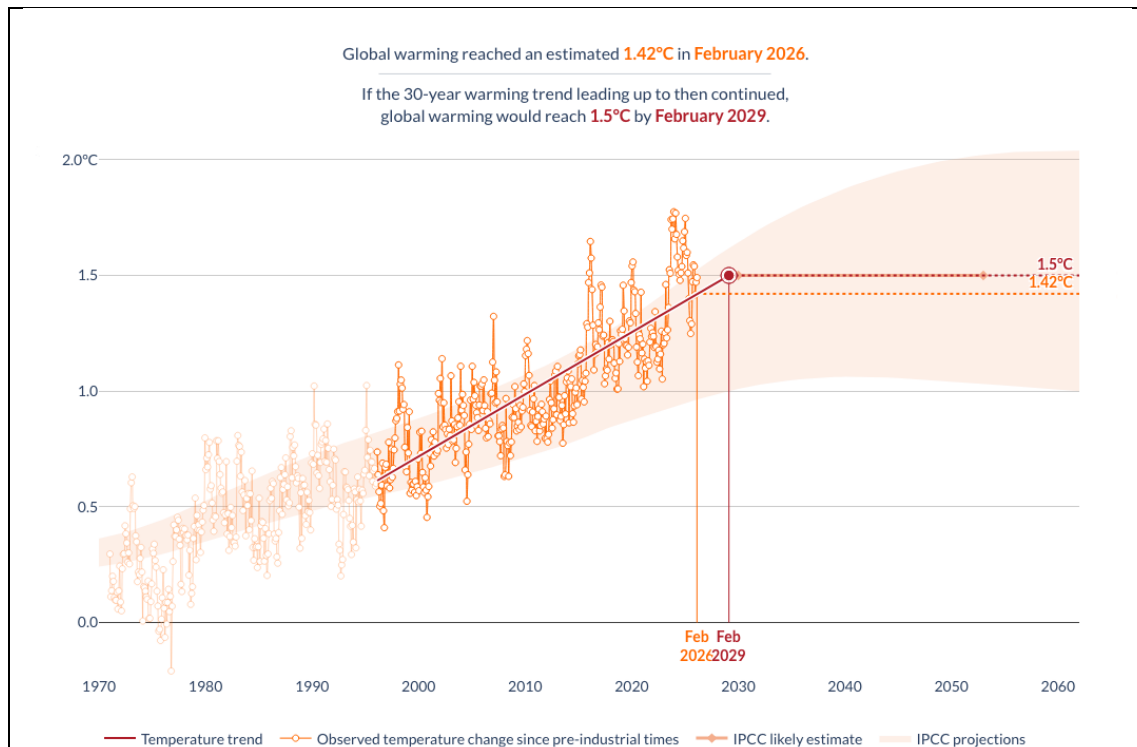
### **Air Quality**

Air quality levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) have steadily fallen over the last few years within the Railway Road Extended Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in King's Lynn. Given NO<sub>2</sub> levels have not exceeded the legal air quality annual mean limit for the last 5 years within the AQMA there is an obligation to review and revoke. We will bring this to committee for discussion. On revocation an air quality strategy will be developed in due course. It is fully intended that monitoring will continue.

### **Climate**

Since the 1980s the UK climate has been warming at a rate of approximately 0.25°C per decade. UK sea levels have risen 19.5cm since 1901.

*Source: "State of the UK Climate in 2024," Met Office National Climate Information Centre, Exeter, UK.*



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Source: *European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).*

February 2026 was the fifth-warmest February on record globally, with an average surface air temperature of 13.26°C, 0.28°C cooler than the record set in February 2024. February was about 1.49°C warmer than an estimate of the February average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period.

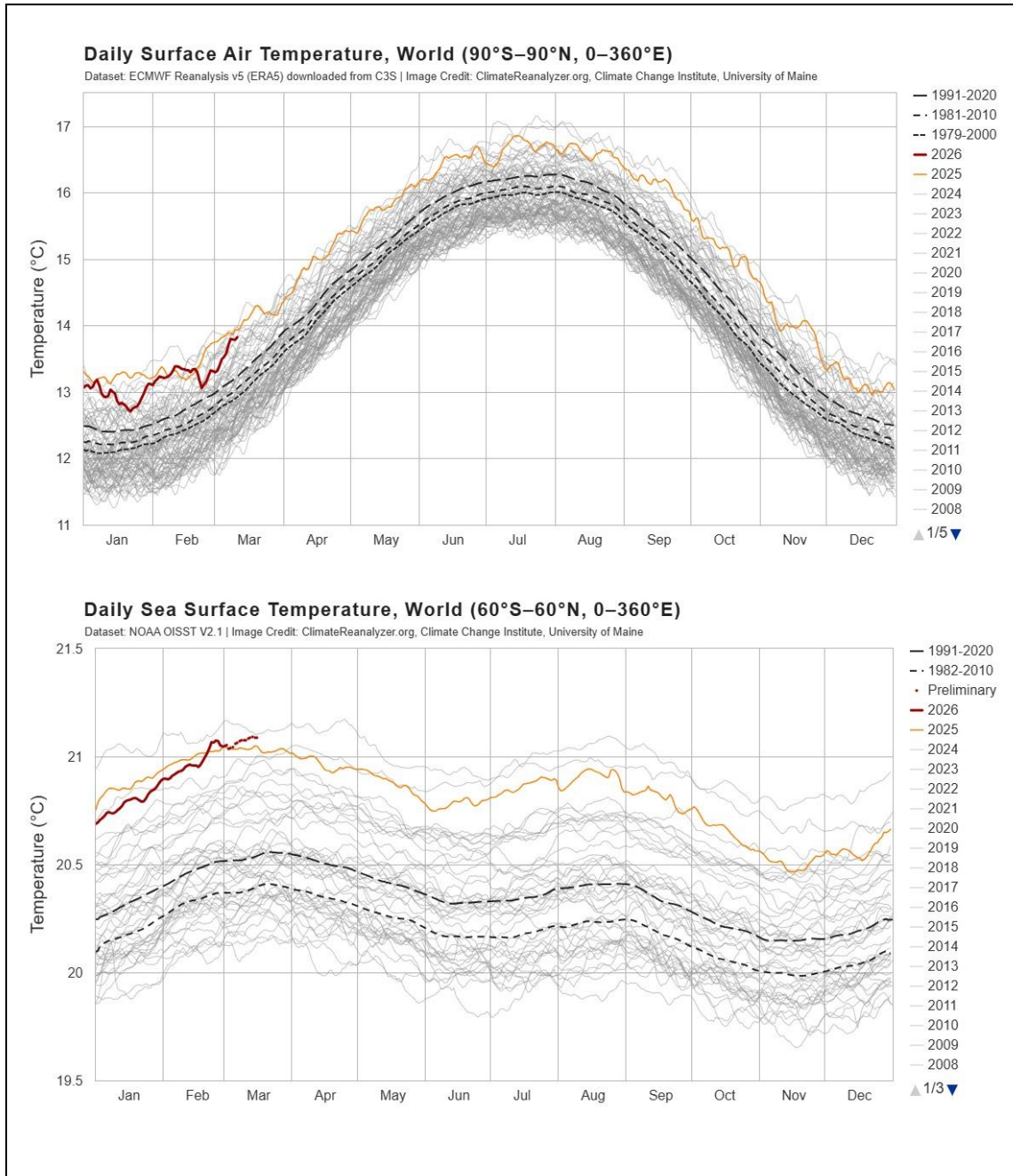
The average global sea surface temperature (SST) for February 2026 over 60°S to 60°N was 20.88°C, the joint second-highest for the month in the dataset (with February 2025), 0.18°C below the record set in February 2024. Sea surface temperature is defined over the global extrapolar ocean, from 60°S to 60°N. This is used as a standard diagnostic for climate monitoring.

*Data source: European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts - ERA5.*

Arctic sea ice extent for February 2026 was 14.1 million km<sup>2</sup>, circa 5% (0.7 million km<sup>2</sup>) below the 1991–2020 average, the third-lowest monthly extent for February in the 48-year satellite record.

The average Antarctic sea ice extent for the month was 3.2 million km<sup>2</sup>, about 3% (0.1 million km<sup>2</sup>) below the 1991–2020 average. This is in sharp contrast to the large negative anomalies of 25% to 33% observed in the past four years

*Data source: OSI SAF Sea Ice Index v2.3*



## 2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

### Beat Your Bills Roadshow

Further dates are in the process of being arranged

### Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Following scrutiny at Environment and Community Panel on 14 April 2026, Cabinet will be considering the refreshed climate change strategy and action plan on 23 April 2026. The strategy will guide our decarbonisation work until Norfolk's new local government structure commences. The proposed strategy maintains our twin approach to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and to encourage the wider community to address climate change. Over the next few

years I look forward to the emergence of an exemplar facility at the St George's Guildhall and continuation of our current community focused work with households, businesses and young people.

### **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

Cabinet Briefings  
Cabinet Sifting  
Cabinet

Gaywood River Study Stakeholders Meeting(IDB)  
West Lynn Ferry Walkabout  
STARS Tour  
King's Lynn Conservancy Board  
King's Lynn IDB Meeting  
Mayor's Awards Site Visit – Goodwins Hall  
Mayor's Awards Site Visit – British Sugar Wissington Factory  
Member Briefing - Values and Behaviours  
Planning Committee Training  
Member Briefing - Customer Services Systems Review  
Anglian Water Briefing  
LGIU Roundtable – Energy Transition in Local Government  
Climate Change Informal Working Group  
Schools Project Meeting  
Joint Cabinet Away Session with Breckland Cabinet  
MAG 001 Norfolk Groundwater Challenges  
Member Briefing – Norfolk & Waveney University Hospitals Group Update  
Norfolk Climate Change Partnership Portfolio Holders Meeting  
Norfolk Coastal Forum  
Biodiversity Ranger Update  
Tour of New King's Lynn Library  
Housing Delivery Strategy Review  
Scrutiny Training Workshop 1  
Garden Wildlife Project Meeting  
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee  
NWN Catchment Partnership Meeting (CaBA)

#### **Portfolio Holder Briefings and updates:**

Climate Change Updates  
West Lynn Ferry Updates