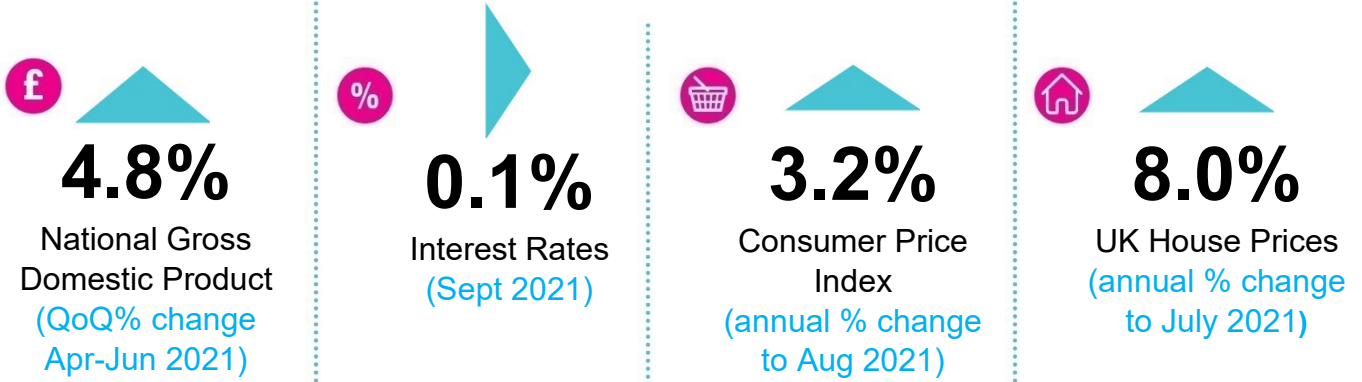




Norfolk Economic Intelligence Report

This July to September 2021 report brings together key business, economic and labour market intelligence to provide a regular insight into the current state of the Norfolk economy. Data is correct to 30 September 2021.



Source: ONS, Bank of England.

Go Digital launch

After the successful original pilot to support **43** small businesses with increasing digitisation, the programme grew significantly, and **190** businesses are now on the programme thanks to district funding support.



The programme has now received funding for **600** additional spaces which has been enabled by the Interreg EU funded C-Care Project. This is a cross border France Channel England project, aiming to support people and businesses to recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic.

This phase of the programme successfully launched alongside the Norfolk Digital Strategy on 22 September and runs until March 2023.

Eligible Go Digital applicants are assigned an experienced digital advisor who will conduct a 'digital audit' and provide a comprehensive report to identify digital opportunities. The advisor will help the business put together an action plan and then businesses will have the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to **£500** to help them deliver projects using this plan. Feedback from the businesses has been extremely positive:

"Go Digital opened my eyes to things I didn't know about." **The Painter's Palette**

"The Go Digital consultant was excellent. She showed us how to resolve our technical problems and talked us through our plans for the new site. She explained why some of our suggestions wouldn't work and this saved us time and money. It was great to be able to share our ideas and get guidance." **Iceni Partnership**

"The Go Digital Business Consultant was like therapy really. I talked through my business ideas with her, and she really listened and looked at them from a totally different perspective. She asked what I was most passionate about and made loads of useful suggestions." **Bridget's Flowers**

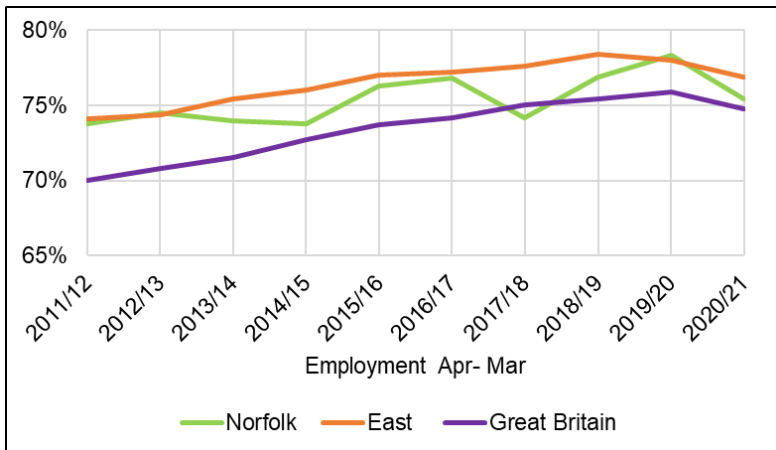
"We'd already identified digital marketing as something we wanted to get into and Go Digital gave us a fresh eye on things. It fitted our strategy to shift our focus to marketing, selling, and exporting." **Thurn Group**



Norfolk Economic Snapshot



Employment



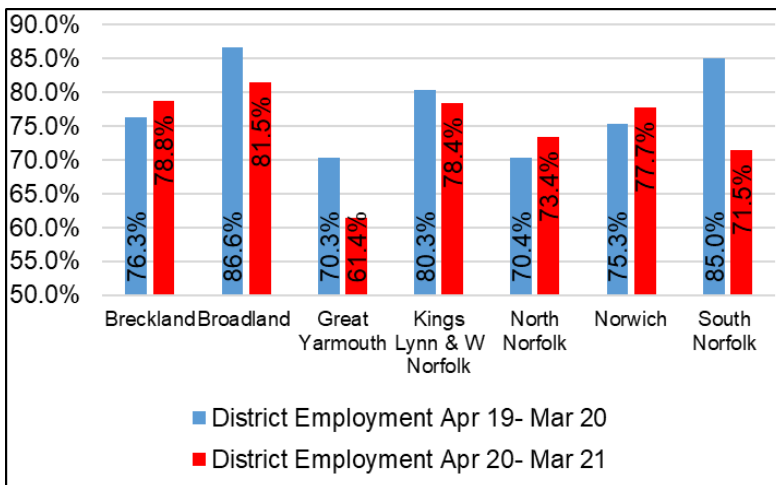
The employment level in Norfolk has decreased by **2.9%** from the same time last year.

At **75.4%**, the County's performance is above both the national level (**74.8%**), and below the regional level (**76.9%**).

Year on year comparison shows a more mixed picture for Districts, with South Norfolk experiencing the sharpest fall.

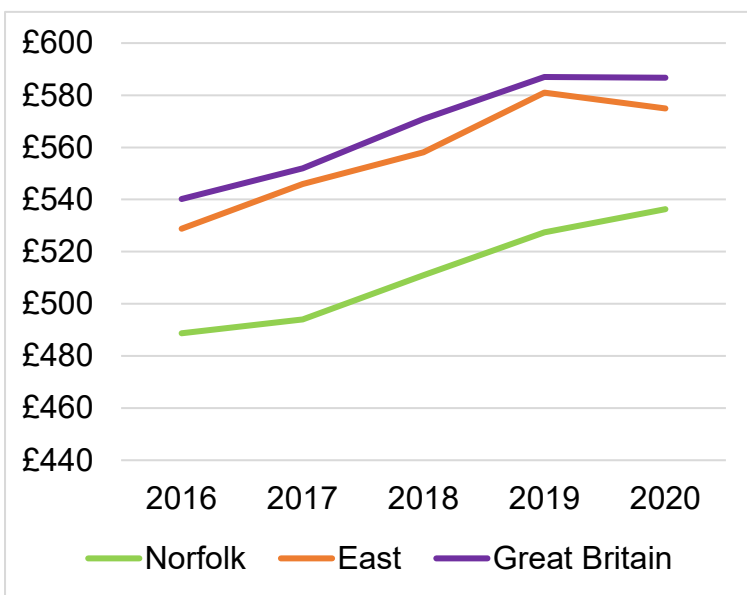
At **5.9%**, Norfolk's unemployment level has not performed so well when compared to both national average (**4.9%**), and regional level (**4.3%**).

However, it is important to note these are annual figures with delayed reporting and have not included the impact of the current ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as furloughed staff are still classified as employed.



Source: NOMIS.

Average weekly earnings



The average gross weekly earnings in Norfolk are consistently lower than both the regional and national average.

The average weekly earnings in Norfolk has risen by **7.9%** between 2016 and 2020, this is lower than the regional growth of **9.8%** and national growth of **8.7%**.

While the County has a high employment level, we are trailing behind the Country when it comes to pay both in absolute amount and percentage growth.

This is mainly due to the County having a higher proportion of lower skilled jobs.

Source: NOMIS.



Business

Business Development Team: leads and supports inward investment, business growth and business support in Norfolk. **Business team email:** econdev@norfolk.gov.uk

Local Flavours 2021

On Wednesday 29 September the Business Development team attended the 2021 Local Flavours event, of which Norfolk County Council are a sponsor. The event is put on for the Eastern Region food and drinks producers that are creating amazing tastes and flavours for menus and retail shelves, all produced from exceptional ingredients lovingly sourced, and wherever possible, from close to home. Local Flavours is all about education and awareness, creating unique experiences to get local produce on shelves and menus, and ultimately in front of the consumer. The team were there to promote the Go Digital project to Norfolk businesses and raise awareness of the project and the support available.



Innovation Grant Mentoring Project – Innovation Webinars

The Innovation Grant Mentoring Project aims to support SME's in Norfolk and Suffolk tap into the wealth of innovation funding available to research and develop a new product, process or service. The project provides bespoke assistance from an Innovation Mentor or Bid Writing Coach, as well as a programme of webinars introducing innovation funding.

Norfolk & Suffolk Innovation Grant Mentoring



During the last quarter two webinars have been held; in July **'What is Innovation Funding'** and in September the webinar focused on **'Preparing a Winning Bid'**. Expert advice was given by the project Innovation Mentors and Bid Writing Coaches during these sessions, an invaluable source of information for businesses considering innovation funding. The events are proving popular with **50** local businesses registering for the webinar in September. These events are organised to increase awareness of Innovation Funding to businesses in the region and promote the projects free mentoring and bid coaching, for businesses keen to develop an innovation funding proposal. Find out more here on the project and register: www.norfolk.gov.uk/IGMP



Infrastructure

Infrastructure Development and Greater Norwich Teams support growth and help remove infrastructure constraints in key areas such as transport, housing and planning.

Infrastructure team email: infrastructure@norfolk.gov.uk

Fens Reservoir

The Strategic Planning Team is working closely with Anglian Water (AW) on their possible development of a new Fens Reservoir in the west of the County. AW is exploring the possible development of two new reservoirs, the other in South Lincolnshire, to help provide resilience to future droughts and climate change. AW is the largest water company in England by geographic area. They serve almost **seven million customers** in one of the UK's fastest growing regions, projected to grow by **175,000** homes by 2025.

The scale and complexity of this potential new infrastructure means that long lead-in times would be required before it could be built. They are now planning for schemes that may be required for delivery between 2025 and 2035. The Fens Reservoir: a proposed new reservoir in the Fens either to the east or west of the Ouse Washes which could benefit customers of AW and Cambridge Water. When river flows allow, water would be sourced from the River Ely-Ouse at Denver, with potential additional water sources from the River Bedford-Ouse at Earith, Middle Level Drain at St Germans, and the Ouse Washes being assessed. It is expected that water would be transferred to the reservoir via pipelines, although open water transfers will also be considered.

The Strategic Planning Team is working with AW on a wide range of pre-application matters scoping out any potential issues as part of the County Council's statutory roles and duties; as well as exploring the wider socio-economic implications.

Figure 4: Visualisation of proposed reservoir (not location specific)





Skills

Employment and Skills Team comprises the LIFT, CHANCES and, Apprenticeships Teams, and the Skills Development Partnership. The focus is on raising skills levels within Norfolk for the benefit of both the individual and the economy. **Employment and Skills team email:** skills@norfolk.gov.uk

BRINGING
EMPLOYMENT &
SKILLS
TOGETHER

Norfolk Energy Business Skills Partnership (NEBSP)

In partnership with NCC Growth and Development Business Development and Suffolk County Council skills colleagues, Employment and Skills are launching the Norfolk Energy Business Skills Partnership project (NEBSP) – the project aiming to maximise skills opportunity and increase SME growth in the Off-shore/On-shore energy supply chains.

The project will work intensively with a range of key stakeholders in the sector and key objectives include:

- Identify the workforce and skills requirements of high-level contractors within the Clean Energy and associated Infrastructure (Civil/Construction/Renewables) sectors.
- Assess the capability of Norfolk SMEs to secure contract opportunities in these sectors and develop the necessary support measures required to increase that capability.
- Support a Clean Energy Skills and Supply Chain Management Forum, with attendance made up of invested stakeholders.
- Establish and detail the transferable skills opportunities from high demand roles in the sector maximising onward employment opportunities from Covid-19 affected sectors and disadvantaged communities.
- Identify the skills required for the new and emerging occupations in Green Energy development and correlating these to current gaps in provision and projected future demand.



The project is anticipated to operate for 12 months from Autumn 2021.

European Social Fund (ESF) LIFT/Community Grants Open for New Projects!

LIFT Community Grants is a grant scheme funded by the ESF run by Norfolk County Council that invests in attractive and accessible employability support projects in the form of structured learning in Norfolk and Suffolk.



LOCAL INVESTMENT IN
LEARNING PATHS TO WORK



European Union
European
Social Fund

In August the LIFT Community Grants Team were pleased to announce their success in bidding for a further **£200,000** of funding and were accepting applications, of up to **£20,000** each, for new projects from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises sector to deliver employability support and vocational/informal learning.

Projects needed to assure the team that they could deliver their support and reach financial completion by the end of May 2022. Despite a tight timetable. the response to the call was incredible and currently the appraisal team are looking at **19** full applications, with the board making decisions during October. If the funding is not exhausted in October then a further call for projects will be issued in November.

If you would like to talk to someone about an idea please contact us at lift@norfolk.gov.uk or visit [LIFT Community Grants - Norfolk County Council](#)



Funding

External Funding Team- provides support to the Council and other partners to access external funding, with the aim of increasing funds spent in Norfolk.

External Funding Team email: funding@norfolk.gov.uk

Decarbonisation Funding

The External Funding Team (EFT) have been working to explore the possibility of an application to the current round of decarbonisation funding streams on offer. There are two key strands of this funding: Social Housing and Public Sector, each with its own application process. With a commitment to achieving a net zero carbon economy by 2030, carbon reduction across our estate, and within the holdings of external partners is clearly of vital interest.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund

The government launched the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme in 2020, to fund low carbon heating projects in public sector estates. Projects should take a 'whole building' approach to heat decarbonisation, i.e. combine low carbon heating system upgrades with energy efficiency measures. The scheme is managed by Salix and aims to put the public sector at the forefront of decarbonising buildings, showcasing projects that pave the way to help the UK meet its net zero target. The total amount of funding available for Phase 3 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is not yet confirmed and there is no guarantee of any funding until the outcome of the Spending Review with applications submitted at the risk of the applicant. NCC were successful with, a very small application previously to Phase 1 and we have recently been successful in a further application to the Low Carbon Skills Fund for heating system decarbonisation plans for **seven** of our complex sites covering around **15** buildings. The plans will be used to identify the best way to reduce the carbon emitted from these sites and suggest cost effective low carbon solutions. These plans will be completed before the 31 March 2022 in line with the scheme's terms and conditions.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)

The impact of carbon reduction in the housing sector would also have a high impact, given the scale of the estates managed by Housing associations. Flagship Group have 10K homes within Norfolk. The EFT has been working with Flagship Group on both their regeneration and green ambitions supporting their application to the SHDF. The application will seek funding to cover approximately 250 homes that are in the worst percentile of energy efficiency within the Flagship estate. As part of the project Flagship will cover costs for any measures that enable homes to exceed the target efficiency loads.

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a **£3.8bn** SHDF over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social rented homes, on the pathway to Net Zero 2050. The SHDF aims to deliver warm, energy-efficient homes, reduce carbon emissions and fuel bills, tackle fuel poverty, and support green jobs. Up to **£160m** will be made available to Registered Providers of Social Housing, including Private and Local Authority providers in England through Wave 1 of the SHDF to support the installation of energy performance measures in social homes by 31 January 2023 taking a worst first, fabric first, lowest regrets approach. The aim is to improve the energy performance of homes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C. This is the first wave (out of a total of four waves, subject to future spending review agreement) of the SHDF programme. Applications for Wave 1 will be accepted from 23 August to 15 October 2021.