



DISS Matters

Autumn/Winter 2025



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Welcome to the Autumn/Winter Edition of Diss Matters

Hi everyone,

We hope you had a fantastic summer. It's been another busy year in Diss, filled with memorable events, inspiring community achievements and the amazing efforts of local volunteers who go above and beyond to make our town shine. And the good news? There's still plenty more to enjoy!

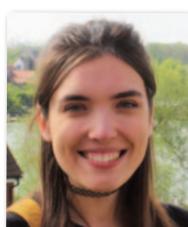
With the Remembrance Parade & Service on 9th November, the Diss Christmas Lights Switch-On set for 29th November, and the Mayor's annual Carol Concert on 9th December, our town's social calendar isn't slowing down...

This edition is packed with positive local news stories, award winners, school achievements, successful event recaps and updates from voluntary projects that will make you proud to call Diss home! Thank you to everyone for your support this year.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Kimberley

Kim



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Council news



Stronger ties with our community

We have worked alongside so many members of our community over the summer.

Highlights include:

- delivering two special beacon lighting ceremonies in Diss Park to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day
- travelling 'around our world' at Diss Carnival
- networking with local businesses during a series of 'retail excellence' workshops
- discussing how we might work better with our library at their re-opening event
- working with a local business and the High School to support their design competition - an insertion for the Town Mayor's chain
- working alongside the Heritage Trust and independent traders' group on a project to help smarten up closed shop fronts and a new 'Visit Diss' website

- continuing to work with users of the Skate Park to consider funding opportunities to improve the facility
- welcoming two Diss High School students on a week's work experience

Upcoming projects

- Discussing funding opportunities for Age Friendly Communities accreditation with the District Council's Health & Wellbeing Partnership Lead
- Exploring the possibility of forming a local group to consider funding for community and wildlife projects in light of government guidance on community benefits from energy infrastructure
- Staff teambuilding day, repairing and re-staining the boardwalk
- Events including Remembrance (9th Nov), Christmas Lights Switch-on (29th Nov) & Town Mayor's carol concert (9th Dec)

Town Councillor Vacancy

- Do you want to help make Diss a better place to live?
- Do you have time or expertise that could benefit your community?
- Do you want to represent the views of local people?

Diss Town Council is seeking a dedicated individual to fill a councillor vacancy. This is an opportunity to contribute to the well-being and development of our historic market town.

The role of a Town Councillor is to represent the interests of the whole community. As a

Visit Diss

councillor, you'll have the chance to address local issues, support community projects and influence decisions that affect the town's growth and prosperity.

If you would like to make a difference, and be involved in shaping the future of your local community, why not step forward and apply to become a Diss Town Councillor?

For more information about the role and to access the application form, please visit www.diss.gov.uk/the-role-of-a-councillor or contact us on 01379 643848 email: towncouncil@diss.gov.uk.



Work Experience at DTC



• OVERALL RATING: 5/5

- **FAVOURITE TASK:** Researching cemetery-related information was fascinating, particularly the unexpected legal complexities. We also enjoyed meeting Council staff, learning about their roles, and exploring ways to improve current practices through local solicitor research.
- **NEW SKILLS GAINED:** Excel, legal research, marketing insights and use of Canva - really helpful for business studies.
- **SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE PLACEMENTS:** Even more hands-on tasks to apply what's learned!



"We're thrilled to hear that the placement provided the students with a real insight into a career in local government, and that they would recommend the experience to others. It's fantastic to know they found it meaningful for their future careers - it was a pleasure having them with us."

Sarah Villafuerte-Richards, Town Clerk

Rainbows, Brownies & Guides' Summer Highlights



2nd Diss Guides had a fantastic time this summer camping at Keswick near Norwich where the Guides enjoyed building their own rafts, paddling and also falling off them!

Some Guides also attended Norjam International Jamboree at the Norfolk Showground in August with thousands of Scouts and Guides from all over the world. The range of activities was amazing from water zorbs, quad bikes and inflatables to crafts and dancing the night away at discos and bands like the "Entitled Sons". They also took part in the "Sweet Shop" Challenge designing, making and selling

their own sweets in an "Apprentice" style challenge.

Rainbows, Brownies and Guides also enjoyed a range of adventurous activities including kayaking, trapeze, grass sledging and fire lighting at Eaton Vale. Other activities including litter picking, visits to Quaker Wood, in and outdoor cooking, crafts and games. Brownies are looking forward to Brownie Holiday soon at Patteson Lodge!

A call for new leaders...

Due to leaders stepping back for personal reasons, we are currently urgently in need of new Brownie and Guide leaders to ensure that these adventures continue. Do you have any time you can give to help shape the future of girls in your community? There are a range of roles available whether it be helping at unit meetings, trips or assisting with administrative tasks that can be done at home at a time that suits you. Full training will be given along with the ability to learn new skills, make a difference, form new friendships and most importantly, have fun. If you are interested, please register your interest on the link below.

If your daughter is interested in joining any of our units Rainbows 4-7, Brownies 7-10 and Guides 10-14 or you would like to volunteer, visit:

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/>

South Norfolk Fitness Instructor Wins Prestigious UK Award

Aberdeen, July 2025 – South Norfolk's very own fitness powerhouse, Amy Bobbins, has been crowned Female Fitness Instructor UK 2025 at the Heart and Soul Fitness Awards.

From thousands of nominees across the country, Amy's passion, dedication, and ability to inspire shone through, securing her this national recognition. The award celebrates not just technical expertise but also the unique energy and heart an instructor brings to their community - something Amy has been doing for over a decade.

Amy has been teaching in and around South Norfolk for more than 10 years, building a loyal following thanks to her vibrant personality, infectious enthusiasm, and signature style that blends serious

fitness with serious fun. Whether it's personal training, delivering group classes, or presenting at events, Amy is renowned for her love of disco lights, cheesy music, and dance-floor energy – creating sessions that are as uplifting as they are effective.

"I'm over the moon to receive this award," Amy said. "Fitness isn't just about strength and stamina, it's about connection, laughter, and joy. To be recognised for doing what I love is an incredible honour."

This accolade highlights Amy's continued commitment to making fitness accessible, fun, and confidence-boosting for everyone she works with. From bootcamps to presentations, she continues to prove that with heart and soul, fitness can truly change lives and a community.





Celebrate Christmas at The Corn Hall Diss

Make The Corn Hall your destination for a fantastic festive season this December. From our much-loved Christmas Quiz to the ultimate Christmas Party Night, The Corn Hall has it all and is the perfect place to get into the festive spirit!

Grab your friends and join us on Wednesday 3rd December for a festive edition of our popular quiz night. Create a beautiful festive-themed wreath to decorate your door in our Christmas Wreath Making workshops with Sarah from Sassy's Floral Design on Thursday 4th and Friday 5th December.

Don't miss our perennial favourite, Christmas Jazz, on Friday 5th December when the Chris Ingham Quintet featuring Joanna Eden return to deliver a stocking-full of delightful festive jazz.

Treat your family to the most magical Christmas surprise with Breakfast with Santa here in The Corn Hall Café on Saturdays 6th and 13th December. And throw on the sequins and head on down to the best Christmas party night in town on Saturday 6th December with Park Radio's DJ, James Grint.

But, of course, the highlight and must-do of any festive season is a trip to the Panto. And, following the smash-hit success of last year's pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk, producer Ryan Holt returns with another magical adventure!

Book now for a spellbinding pantomime adaptation of Beauty and the Beast from 19th Dec to 4th Jan. Enjoy dazzling choreography, vibrant costumes and a cast of unforgettable characters played by some very familiar faces (back by popular demand: Dave Short returns as Dame Dolly Doughnut, Jefferson Parlett as Silly Billy, Evie Forsdicke as Belle and Dylan Morgan as Gaston).

Expect laugh-out-loud moments, toe-tapping musical numbers, heaps of audience participation and the perfect, fully professional, family Christmas pantomime right here on your Diss doorstep (at the fraction of the prices you'll pay at bigger venues).

Don't miss your chance to be part of this unmissable festive treat for all ages!

Remembrance Parade and Service 2025

Diss Town Council, together with the Royal British Legion, warmly invites residents to take part in this year's Remembrance Sunday commemorations. On Sunday, 9th November, the community will gather for the annual parade, wreath-laying and church service - a time to reflect and pay tribute to the men and women who gave their lives in service to our nation.

The afternoon's events will begin at 2.10pm with the Remembrance Parade following the usual route along Mere Street, with a road closure in place. Most of the 35 organisations expected to take part will peel off at the Market Place and take up their positions whilst the youth organisations, including the army & air cadets, continue up Market Hill, back down St Nicholas Street & to the Market Place. Our thanks to all those who take part, including the Salvation Army Band, Armed Forces personnel, emergency services, local clubs, and standard and flag bearers.

The Drumhead Service will take place at approximately 2.30pm. Among those invited to lay wreaths at the drumhead altar are the King's representative, Deputy Lieutenant for Norfolk Philippa Taylor, and Adrian Ramsay MP. The Drumhead tradition dates back to the 18th century, when soldiers fashioned an

altar from their regimental drums to create a moment of reflection on the battlefield. Today, it remains a poignant symbol of remembrance.

This new format was trialled last year to allow more space for public viewing and greater involvement from younger participants, and was received very positively, thank you.

Following the service, the community is welcome to join a special remembrance service at St Mary's Church at 3pm. During this time, the wreaths will be transferred to the war memorial, where a short dedication will bring the afternoon to a close.

This event is organised by a committee led by Diss Town Council, with representatives from the Diss & District Royal British Legion, Salvation Army, local churches, RAFA, local cadet forces, Scouts, Diss High School & Park Radio.

For public safety, temporary road closures will be in place from 2pm to 3:30pm on Sunday 9th November. Roads affected will include Mere Street, Market Place, St Nicholas Street, Mount Street (between Saracens Head and Market Place), and Market Hill.



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opportunities and support we offer in our highly successful sixth form.

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The Arts Society Diss

New members and guests are always welcome.

We meet on the third Tuesday each month (except July and August) at 2pm in the Corn Hall. To get in touch contact info@artsocdiss.org.uk or go to www.artsocdiss.org.uk for more information.



Members of The Arts Society Diss share their enthusiasm for creativity in the community, embracing art, music, design, drama and dance. We have monthly lectures in the Corn Hall from experienced, qualified lecturers.

Here are examples of feedback from our members:-

'Highly enjoyable and knowledgeable speaker with a clear enthusiasm for the topic.'

'Excellent talk. The speaker knew his subject, was approachable, answered questions fully and had an easy speaking style that flowed. I was sorry when the lecture ended!'

Our next lectures 2025-6

18th November	Tudor Art: a New Story New research
2nd December	The Scoliotic Knight The arms and armour of Richard III

20th January

Arts and Crafts Movement

Cotswolds designers and makers

17th February

Banksy A history of graffiti and street art

Twice a year we hold a Special Interest Day with three lectures and a delicious lunch. The next one is about the Newlyn artists in Cornwall on Tuesday November 11th.

We have also been on many day visits, including Benton End and Gainsborough Museum as well as annual residential trips to Sussex, Liverpool, South Wales, Yorkshire and Northumbria.

Our community Arts Volunteers have liaised with schools, a care home, a drama group, Designermakers21 and the Corn Hall. We have recently sponsored the Bank (Eye) Young Artist Awards, the Depperhaugh sensory garden, Palgrave Players sound equipment and a sale of John Lidzey's artwork in the Corn Hall Art Gallery.



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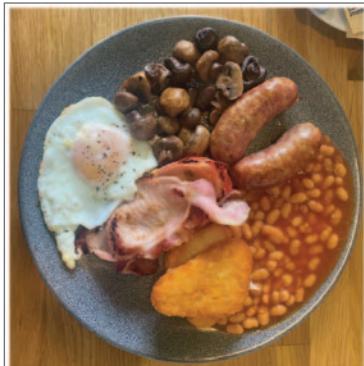
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Success For Diss Students!



A Levels

"We are delighted for our Sixth Form students who have worked hard to achieve impressive results. Not just academically successful, our Year 13 students showed themselves to be a fabulous group of friendly, outgoing and community-minded individuals.

We are very pleased that all who applied to study at university have secured a place, and many of those who chose to apply for apprenticeships and work have already started.

Congratulations to all our students."
James Hurley, Head of Sixth Form, Diss High School.



GCSEs

"We are incredibly proud of our Year 11 students and all that they have achieved in this year's GCSE results. Their hard work, combined with the dedication of our staff and the support of families, has led to outcomes that are even stronger at Diss High than in recent years.

It's wonderful to see so many students achieving their goals and moving on to exciting next steps – these results are a real credit to their determination and commitment."

Sam Stopps, Headteacher, Diss High School.



Diss & District Rotary Club

Over the past year, Diss & District Rotary Club has been actively involved in supporting a wide range of local, national, and international causes. Through our Giant Easter Egg Raffle, we raised funds for EACH and the End Polio Now campaign. We also continued our partnership with Waveney Foodbank, providing both financial support and essential slow cookers to families in need. Internationally, our link with the Chisinau Cosmopolitan Rotary Club in Moldova enabled us to help fund a much-needed playground at a children's TB hospital, and lots more...



In December 2024, our members, alongside Diss 41 Club, held our long-standing Save the Children collection at Morrisons, raising £1,200. This annual event has now contributed over £40,000 across four decades, and we look forward to continuing the tradition this year.

One of our largest projects involved sending reconditioned Norfolk fire engines, packed with rescue equipment and medical aid, to Ukraine. Thanks to generous donations at Morrisons and Bressingham Steam Museum, we covered ferry and fuel costs, ensuring the vehicles reached Ukraine, where they were received with huge appreciation.



Closer to home, we supported the Diss Litter Picking Group by providing a new sign to attract volunteers and highlight their work keeping our town clean.



We also continue to assist Crucial Crew, an important educational initiative run by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, by providing volunteer chaperones. This project helps over 7,000 Year 6 pupils each year learn vital life skills and safety awareness.

Musical fundraising has also been a highlight, with last year's Last Night at the Proms concert raising £3,678, and the Stowmarket Band returned again recently for a lively Oompahkapelle evening at Diss Town Football Club on 4th October. By the time you read this, we will have held our Auction of Promises - Bubbles, Bites & Bids - on October 25th at NBR Mobility. Thank

you to everyone who attended for your support.

More details and ways to get involved can be found at www.dissrotary.org.uk

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Diss Library Celebrates Reading Challenge Success!



Diss Library has had a fabulous time over the summer months. This year's Summer Reading challenge ran from 5th July until 7th September and over 170 children, from Diss and the surrounding area signed up! From babies through to pre-teens, children were challenged to read at least six books, collecting stickers and joining in activities including story times, all based around this year's theme of the Story Garden. Several children also enjoyed a visit from local illustrator Rose Feather. Each child who completed the challenge was invited to the library to receive a medal and certificate from Cllr Declan Craggs, Mayor of Diss, during our medal ceremony that took place on the 19th September.

Alongside the children's reading challenge, several adults also pledged to read six books and for those who have finished the challenge, certificates have been proudly presented! A huge well done to all who took part and don't forget if you haven't picked up your certificate, then please pop in to branch during staffed hours as soon as possible.

What's On at Diss Library...

Bounce and Rhyme sessions aimed at children from 0- 3 years continues to be popular at 11am on Mondays and a Stay and Play session has been introduced that runs directly afterwards.

Our Just a Cuppa session has moved to a Thursday morning from 10am, offering people the opportunity to pop into the library for a chance to connect with others over a cup of tea or coffee and is completely free. If you haven't stopped by yet, then our volunteer Jackie would love to see you.

Thanks to recent volunteering opportunities, we are delighted to share that we can now offer Digital Support Drop-in Sessions during the week, giving advice on how to get online or support in using your tablet or mobile phone. For more details, please call into the branch and speak with a member of staff for further details.

To keep up with the latest news at Diss Library, head into the branch on Church Street, visit our Facebook page 'Diss Harleston and Long Stratton Libraries' or check out Norfolk County Council's 'What's on in Libraries' page: www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraryonline



Work experience students James and Harry spent a week at Diss Town Council over the summer. Here, they caught up with the Mayor of Diss, Cllr Declan Craggs, to hear about his journey from running an accountancy firm to supporting local education - and what it's really like wearing the chain of office.

Connecting with the Community

When asked what he enjoys most about being Mayor, Cllr Craggs didn't hesitate: "Probably my favourite part is meeting new people you wouldn't normally interact with. Engaging with others across different social circles and settings is incredibly rewarding."

From Finance to Flexibility

Outside his mayoral duties, Declan runs an accountancy firm with his wife. It was family

life that inspired the shift.

"When I first had my children, I was working long hours, weekends - it was hard to spend time with them," he said. "My wife started the business and I joined soon after. Now I can do the school run and still carry out my duties as Mayor and Councillor."

That flexibility is also a cornerstone of how they run the business. "It's just me and my wife - so clients always get a familiar voice on the phone. We've had calls as late as 8:30pm. We're not a 9-5 business. We adapt to our clients' needs."

For young people looking to enter finance, he stresses the importance of practical experience. "The hardest part is getting experience. Even volunteering your time in any finance-related role can make all the difference."

An Interview with... The Mayor of Diss

A Passion For Education

Education is a clear priority for the Mayor. He serves as a Parent Governor at Diss Infant School and supports the Diss Primary Academy Partnership.

“I'm just a regular person, raising a family in Diss, doing my best for the town

“I saw a call for Parent Governors in the school newsletter and thought it sounded interesting,” he said. “Now I attend termly meetings, support events, and contribute to decision-making.”

Fittingly, his chosen mayoral charity is the Friends of Diss Primary PTA. “The money raised will help children from low-income families go on trips and take part in activities they might otherwise miss.”

One highlight is the annual Town Mayor’s Carol Concert: “Local schools perform, the public sing carols, and there’s mulled wine and mince pies. A brilliant event, and all proceeds go to the charity.”

Approachability

Declan is determined to make the role of Mayor more visible and approachable. “I try to attend as many events as I can - from brewing beer at Ampersand Brewery to the library open day, Diss Carnival, the Corn Hall anniversary event, and many more.”

He hopes people will feel comfortable approaching him. “I want people to know I’m just a regular person, raising a family in Diss, doing my best for the town. There are negative connotations around councils - I want to change that.”

Facing Local Challenges

The Mayor is realistic about the challenges facing Diss, especially the issue of empty shops. “It’s tough - we don’t control business rates as a Town Council,” he explained. “But we’re working with the Diss Heritage Trust on creative solutions. For example, using shop window coverings with colourful images and information about Diss to make the high street more appealing. We’re always open to new ideas.”

Final Thoughts

Through open conversations and visible engagement, Cllr Declan Craggs is bringing fresh energy to his role. He remains grounded in the values of family, flexibility, and public service - and continues to work hard to support the town.

Best of luck to Cllr Craggs for the rest of his mayoral term.



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50 Picks and Rising!



The Diss Litterpicking Group has recently celebrated a milestone, completing its 50th monthly litter pick since forming in 2021. What began as a simple idea has grown into a remarkable community effort, making a visible difference in keeping Diss and the surrounding countryside clean and tidy. In the early days, volunteers often uncovered rubbish that had been lying in ditches and undergrowth for years. Now, it's rare to find litter more than a few months old. Thanks to the group's consistent work, almost every area in and around the town has been cleared at least once. Volunteers now follow a rotation system to ensure no part of Diss is left neglected.

This progress is only possible through the commitment and hard work of the group's volunteers. New members of all ages and abilities are warmly welcomed, with all equipment – from sacks to litter pickers – provided. Beyond the environmental

benefits, the group has developed into its own friendly social club, encouraging new residents and younger members to meet new people while working together for the good of the town. Several have even used their volunteering as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Local businesses have also shown their appreciation by generously treating volunteers to lunches after a morning's work – a well-deserved reward for their efforts.

Litterpicking mornings are held on the second Saturday of every month, meeting at the DYCC on Shelfanger Road from 10am to midday, with refreshments provided at both the start and finish. There's no need to sign up – simply turn up on the day and get involved.

Together, we can keep Diss a clean, tidy, and pleasant place to live.

George Waterman, Diss Litterpicking Group

DISS CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON

SWITCH-ON
6PM

FREE ACTIVITIES AT
UNITED REFORMED
CHURCH
2 - 5PM

29TH NOVEMBER 2025
DISS MARKET PLACE
2PM - 6.30PM

LEON MALLETT



EAST ANGLIAN BOY



MUSIC FROM

SERENA GRANT



SANTA'S
GROTTO AT URC
2PM - 5PM

MEET THE CORN HALL

PANTO CAST!



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Diss Christmas Lights Switch-On 2025

Save the date: Saturday 29th November | 2pm – 6.30pm

After last year's unfortunate cancellation due to stormy weather, we're keeping everything crossed for a sparkling celebration this time around! Diss is ready to light up in style—don't miss this magical day packed with festive fun, music, food, and community cheer.

Live Entertainment

Get into the Christmas spirit with fantastic performances from **Leon Mallett (East Anglian Boy)**, **The Salvation Army Band**, **Serena Grant**, **Will Power**, **Bombshell Rheanne** and **Pat & Kenny**. Between acts, **Park Radio** will keep the festive energy flowing and will also host the event as our compère for the day.

Delicious Food & Drink

The **Wonky Donkey bar** is back, serving up your seasonal favourites, alongside an array of tasty street food: hog roast, warming chips, spiced treats, doughnuts, waffles, and indulgent festive hot chocolates. Don't forget to browse Diss' wonderful independent shops for unique gifts – and visit **St Mary's Church**, where you'll find charity stalls and a warm welcome.

Family-Friendly Festivities

There's joy for all ages!

- **Larry Gray's Fun Fair** returns to **Mere's Mouth**
- Free festive activities at the **United Reformed Church**
- **Santa's Grotto at the URC** is open from 2pm – 5pm (just £3 per child, including a gift – no need to book!)
- **Punch and Judy** with children's entertainer **Poz** in the URC

The Parade & Lights Switch-On

At 5:40pm, Santa will arrive in style on a vintage fire engine, making his way up **Mere Street** to the **Market Place**, joined by his elves, **Dinsdale**, the **panto cast**, **Parky Bear**, the **Town Mayor** and **Mayor's Cadets**.

Gather at the stage for the big **6pm Lights-On** moment, with **Leon Mallett** helping us countdown to the switch-on! Then stick around for more live music to bring the event to a close at 6:30pm.

Let's light up Diss together this Christmas!

Follow along for updates: facebook.com/disschristmaslightswitchon

Merry Christmas from all of us!

Angie's Story: The Journey of Diss Museum

If you think Diss Museum is small (or, as we like to say, "small but beautiful"), you should have seen it in October 1975. That was when it first opened - in just one room - thanks to the help of the local newspaper.



Back in 1969, a local resident, George Moss, bequeathed £1,000 to help set up a museum. More funds were raised, and premises were found in a former butcher's shop. The town centre location was ideal, but the room itself was shabby. And who was going to look after the exhibits when the public visited?

Meanwhile, just across the way, the Diss Express needed a front office. The editor and the museum trustees struck a deal: the paper would pay for the refurbishment of the butcher's shop and also provide a receptionist - Angie Tooth.



Angie, now 71 and living in North Norfolk, has fond memories of her joint roles. "I'm really interested in history and loved working in the museum," she recalls. "The windows were clear of boards then, and it was light and bright. Most of the visitors behaved well, though I did have to tell one man off for roughly handling a fragile animal bone. In those days there was only one cabinet and a few other items on shelves. My job for the paper was to take advertisements as well as obituaries and put through calls."

This year, the museum - now two rooms packed with artefacts - faced a different challenge. Diss Museum trustee, Daniel French, had offered to create a new website, but he was determined it should look professional. At first, the costs of photographing the archive seemed prohibitive. Then the Diss and District Camera Club stepped in. Three members worked in poorly lit, crowded conditions and produced brilliant results!

That's what communities are all about.

www.dissmuseum.co.uk

www.disscamera.org.uk

Life Fest 2025: The Best Year Yet!

It was a delight to be able to hold our 4th Life Fest on the beautiful Diss Park in August.

Since our first one in 2022, it's not so much the scale of Life Fest that has grown, though it certainly has a bit, but more so the crowd numbers attending from the local community. The vision for Life Fest remains the same though - making it fun-filled and faith-filled.

For Diss Baptist Church to partner with other churches this year - Fressingfield Baptist Church came with their Youth Band, and Dove River Church in Eye came with a creative arts venue - both helped not only in making a great festival vibe, but also a sense of unity throughout the day. Also a new feature was the football cage which was busy all afternoon overseen by Integrate Youth For Christ.

We had a really strong musical line-up this

year, with the likes of Beth Merill (Bedford) Gwil Davey (Norwich) and MC J Messy (Diss) making a glorious return, but also new acts making their mark - local pop/rock band LetzFly, singer/songwriter/rapper Zach G Wilson (Reading) and lo-fi electro indie duo Jayne and Levi (York). All of whom created a connection on the park as well as an amazing soundscape all afternoon.

We make Life Fest free to attend and take part, because as Christians, we believe that the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ is free. In the bible, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God.

It's an honour and a privilege to be the director of Life Fest, and I'll finish with a huge thank you to the volunteers that powered the day, with a big shout to everyone.

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Diss Macular Disease Society Support Group

Have you heard of macular disease? Despite it being the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, many people remain unaware of the condition.

Nearly 1.5million people in the UK are living with macular disease. It is a devastating condition, often leaving those affected unable to read, drive or recognise the faces of their loved ones. Like my wife, many people have never heard of it until they receive a diagnosis.

The Diss Macular Society Support Group was set up to support people in and around Diss living with sight loss. We know losing your sight is incredibly challenging. Many people describe it as being similar to bereavement. This group provides information, encouragement and friendship

to people who are affected by any sight loss conditions, to help them feel less alone.

We meet every second Friday of the month, 11am-1pm at the Community Room, Morrison's Supermarket, Victoria Road, IP22 4XF. If you would like to join or volunteer, call me, the group leader, Richard Pither on 07947 831730, or just pop in to a meeting.

For more information on macular disease and to get support, call the Macular Society Helpline on 0300 3030 111, email help@macularsociety.org or visit the website: www.macularsociety.org

Macular Society
Beating Macular Disease

Hope Church Diss – Community Café & Support

At Hope Church, we love serving our community. Every **Monday and Friday**, our friendly **Drop-In Café** is open to everyone – a welcoming space to enjoy a cuppa, connect with others, and feel at home.

Alongside the café, we offer:

- **Foodshare** – free produce donated by local supermarkets and shops, available each week.
- **Foodbank** – support for those in need, available during café hours.
- **Friday Community Lunch** – a delicious hot meal, completely free of charge. It's more than just food – it's a place to make friends, find support, and know you belong. Everyone is welcome.
- **Sunday service** – 10.30am every week. We would love to see you!!



For more information about this and other ways Hope Church serves our community, please get in touch:

www.wearehopechurch.net
office@wearehopechurch.net
01379 644223

A Busy Year for the Diss Royal British Legion

The Diss branch of the Royal British Legion has had a particularly active and memorable year, marking its 101st anniversary (1924–2025) with pride and community spirit.

In February, we were honoured to receive the prestigious Addison and Williamson Award from RBL Norfolk County, recognising our progress and efficiency as a branch.

May saw us collaborating with Diss Town Council to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, a significant moment in our shared history.

In early June, we took part in the Diss Carnival, where our dedicated Poppy Co-ordinator Dave and wife Julie, proudly drove the Mayor and Town Mascot 'Dinsdale' in the parade. We enjoyed having a stall at the Fun Day.



Later in June, we joined Armed Forces Day celebrations in town where highlights included Ampersand Brewery's special event brew, performances from the 366 Land Army girls and the Gislingham Variety Company, displays from David Hines, featuring a WWII

Jeep and staff car, author Kara Neave presenting her book, *A Nightingale Flew* and participation from the RAF Association, Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps, and RAF Regiment.

In August, we again partnered with Diss Town Council for the Victory in Japan anniversary event at Diss Park.



Through October and November, we'll be actively involved in Poppy Appeal collections at local supermarkets, the Mere, and various other locations.

Our annual Remembrance Parade and Drumhead Service will take place in November, supported by Diss RAFA and the Salvation Army.

We've also shared our story with local listeners through interviews on Park Radio. If you're interested in joining us, we meet monthly at Diss Bowls Club on the third Monday at 7.15pm. New members are always welcome!

Follow us on Facebook to keep in touch: *Diss & District Royal British Legion Norfolk*



Spec-tacular Window Win for Adkins Opticians

Looking back, 2008 was a significant year for us. Several things happened at around the same time; the creation of Park Radio, we established Adkins Opticians and of course – the return of the Diss Carnival.

Other than the Christmas Lights Switch on, this was the first time we observed an event in Diss, which attracted such a large crowd. It is exciting to see the creativity that the Carnival continues to grow each year. The standard of floats from businesses, enthusiasts and community groups seems to get higher every year. Our children have always enjoyed participating in the parades and experiencing the great atmosphere. Thankfully, the weather has mostly been kind!

We have always enjoyed entering the window display competition along with many others in the town. It is a great excuse for businesses to use their imagination and give their own interpretation of the carnival theme each year.

In our case, it's a good reason to get the sewing machine, glue and paint out and stock up on materials to make a lot of the props, including lots of bunting. We like to use as much colour as possible to brighten our windows.

As usual, there were plenty of amazing entries in this year's competition, which makes it even more of an honour to have been chosen as the 2025 winner! The theme 'Around Our World' presented a lot of opportunity for variety and ideas in all the shop windows.

We hope that our window display brought smiles to lots of faces and that everyone continues to support the carnival to ensure that it continues to bring our special community together for many more years to come. It really is one of the highlights in Diss each year and we can't wait for the next one!

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Lunchtime Carols: A Joyful Festive Tradition for All

As the festive season approaches, there's no better way to embrace the Christmas spirit than by joining the much-loved Lunchtime Carols at St Mary's Church. Now in its 15th year, this heartwarming event has become a cherished tradition in our town—and this year promises to be as joyful as ever.

Mark your calendars for Friday, 19th December at 12:30pm, and come along for an uplifting hour of seasonal songs and community cheer. Whether you've attended before or are thinking about coming for the first time, you'll be warmly welcomed into a relaxed and festive atmosphere that's a far cry from a formal church service or concert.

What makes Lunchtime Carols truly special is its inclusive and light-hearted nature. It's suitable for all ages - from toddlers to grandparents - and especially ideal for families wanting to introduce little ones to the magic of carol singing. Expect smiles, laughter and plenty of familiar tunes led by the talented Jenny Vere on the organ, guiding us through a well-loved selection of classic carols.



Take a well-deserved break from the seasonal rush, reconnect with the local community, and soak in the joy of the season. Whether you're singing your heart out or simply soaking up the atmosphere, we'd love to see you!

Gerry Hosking
Event Organiser

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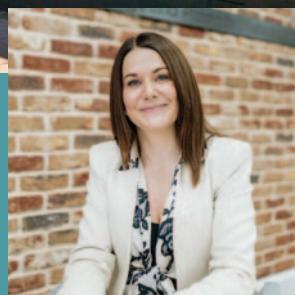
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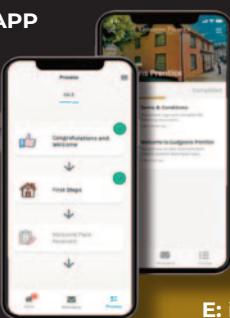
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Dan Becomes Plantscape's First Arborist Apprentice with Support from Apprenticeships Norfolk

Plantscape Tree Services, based near Norwich, has welcomed its first arborist apprentice, Dan Leivers, through support from Apprenticeships Norfolk.



Thanks to a £5,000 Building Futures grant and a levy transfer from Shell, the firm saved on training costs and enrolled Dan in a Level 2 arborist apprenticeship.

The support also included onboarding, mentoring, and sustainability training. Dan, 23, previously worked in retail but wanted a more active, outdoor role. His training at Plantscape combines hands-on tree care with coursework via YMCA. Business Manager Alex Ellingham said the funding encouraged them to invest in training an apprentice, helping align Dan with their methods and values. "Dan's already boosted team productivity, and we're now considering a second apprentice."

Apprenticeships Norfolk offers grants and levy transfers to support new apprenticeships in South Norfolk and Broadland.

Learn more at www.apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org and www.plantscape.co.uk



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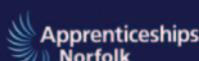
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'Dark green' Apprenticeships

Additional enhanced grants of £5,000 are available for businesses who take on a 'dark green' apprentice; such as a Low Carbon Heating Technician, Arborist, Countryside Worker, Crop Technician or Horticulture/ Landscaping Operative



This project is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Remembering those we love at Christmas

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The service is free to attend and open to everyone.

Quaker Wood - Community Spirit in Full Bloom!

Quaker Wood is a beautiful 5.5-acre site on Factory Lane between Roydon and Diss, tucked behind Diss Football Ground (IP22 4EG). Managed entirely by local volunteers through the Diss Community Woodland Project, this haven of young woodland, open spaces, a wildflower meadow, pond,



and natural areas is open every day for the quiet enjoyment of the community and the benefit of local wildlife.

It's been a busy Summer as July marked the start of scything season in the wildflower meadow, with volunteers hard at work cutting and clearing growth, filling hedges, tidying the car park, and caring for the site. From practical conservation to guided Bat Walks and other events, Quaker Wood thrives thanks to community spirit.

Interested in joining us? We meet on the first Saturday of every month from 9:30am to midday, with all equipment provided - and even a break for "elevenes." Everyone is welcome to join in, regardless of age or ability.

Find us on Facebook or visit quakerwood.org.uk for more information.

Waveney Foodbank: How to Get Help and How to Give Back

Waveney Foodbank is here to support anyone in crisis across the Waveney Valley. If you or someone you know is struggling to afford food, help is available.

The foodbank operates a voucher referral system—vouchers can be obtained through local agencies such as Citizens Advice, schools, housing associations, or by calling South Norfolk Council Help Hub on 01508 533933.

Once you have a voucher, you can visit one of the many distribution centres in the area, this will be explained when you call. A home delivery service is also available for those unable to travel.

If you'd like to support Waveney Foodbank, there are several ways to donate. You can

give food at local collection points such as Tesco, Aldi Morrisons, or a local church. Financial donations can be made via PayPal, bank transfer, or by post. Every donation helps provide emergency food and support to those in need.

For full details on locations, opening times, and how to help, visit www.waveney.foodbank.org.uk or call 07484 394749

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Serving our Community



Diss United Reformed Church is used for many community groups, but what you might not know is that we lead five community groups aimed at supporting those in the Diss Area. Through our Dove Dementia Cafe, Dove Song and Dove Afternoon Tea groups, we support people with Dementia and their carers. Our Dove Song Plus sessions support adults with complex needs. Whilst Dovelets is for children with special needs and their parents.

Earlier this year we heard about the United Reformed Church and Congregational Community Project Award. This is a national award and we knew that we would be up against some stiff competition, but I am thrilled to say that we won! Our hard work, our superb volunteers and our wonderful Dove members impressed the judges. So, in July two of our leaders went to the General Assembly of the URC to be presented the award.

Our Dove groups are not our only community activities, however. We also run our Welcome Cafe which is open to everyone, each Friday morning from 9.30am-12 noon. There's always a warm welcome waiting for you and, as well as having a drink, you can sample our famous cheese scones or treat yourself to a homemade cake to take home.

We also have a yearly Charities Fayre where people sell their wares to raise money for their chosen charity. This year it is on Friday 21st November from 9.30am-12 noon.

And every year on the afternoon of the Lighting Up ceremony we hold an interactive event for children and their families in the church followed by a free hot chocolate. This year our theme will be 'Getting Ready for Christmas'. We hope to see you there!

Please contact Ruth Bridges, our Community Worker for more details:

rthbrdges@gmail.com
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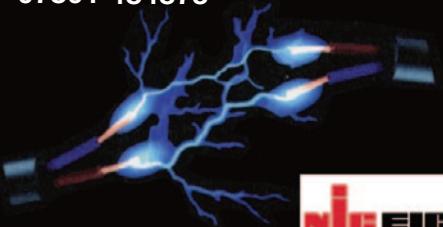


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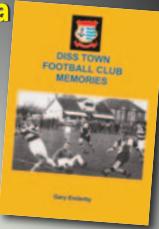
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Town Mayor Highlights 2025



It's been a privilege to serve as your Mayor this year and to attend so many events over the summer. It's given me some great opportunities to meet residents, connect with local groups and organisations, celebrate community events, and support local initiatives.

My first event was on 28th May with a brewery tour at Ampersand alongside the Royal British Legion, where a special beer was created for Armed Forces Day. The following evening, I attended the Air Cadets awards at Diss Methodist Church.

Diss Carnival on 8th June was a highlight: I rode in a military jeep with Dinsdale, judged floats, danced, limboed, and helped with set-up and clear-down. On 10th June, I joined the Citizens Advice networking event, and a few days later took part in the Diss Litter Pick before presenting certificates at the Roydon Green photo competition.

Later in June I attended the Mayor of Thetford's Civic Reception, celebrated the Corn Hall's 15th birthday, and presented

thanks to the Army Cadets and Fair Green Fish Bar for their contributions to the town. The month also included the Aldi store opening and a memorable Armed Forces Day on 28th June.

In July, highlights included the reopening of Diss Library, a car boot sale in Diss Park, the high street event at the Corn Hall, and Dissitude, where I joined in the fun by throwing a sponge at the headteacher!



I also spent time with work experience students, attended the Ipswich Mayor's Civic Event, and had my first radio interview on Park Radio.

I was honoured to give a reading at the 80th Anniversary VJ Day Commemoration in August and to attend De Lucy House Care Home's 10-year celebration in September. Most recently, I hosted my Civic Reception at the Corn Hall, supporting my chosen charity. This summer has reminded me how active and engaged our community is, and I am grateful for the opportunities to celebrate what makes Diss such a wonderful place to live.

Happy New Year to you all!

Cllr Declan Craggs
Mayor of Diss



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