



NESTON TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report

2025/26

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Neston Town Council

Neston Town Council's Mission Statement:

We are helping to create an environmentally sustainable and thriving market town for Neston's residents, businesses and visitors, by fostering a strong community spirit and improving and increasing the range of locally run services.



**Welcome to
Neston Town Council's
Annual Report 2025/2026
Cllr Simon Davies
The Mayor of Neston**



What a busy and exciting first year in office it has been. I have been serving as a Town Councillor in Neston since 2018, during this time I have always been thrilled to represent the good people of Neston and Parkgate. Neston is a great place to live and work. We are very fortunate to have small but dedicated staff team and a really positive group of hard-working councillors. This year, for the first time since the last elections in 2023, Neston Town Council has filled all remaining casual vacancies which is a great step forward for us. We have welcomed three new members into our midst Martin, Colin and James. I look forward to working with you for the good of our beautiful town. Neston Town Council's Civic Service in the Parish Church of St Mary & St Helen has become an annual occasion in the Council Year when councillors and volunteers around the town give thanks for the opportunity to support members of our community. This was attended by the Deputy

Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, the Lord Mayor of Chester, and visiting Mayors from Frodsham, Buckley and Prestatyn. This followed a busy year of attending Civic Services in Chester, Ellesmere Port, and Civic functions in Flint and Connah's Quay, along with several Welsh neighbouring towns. We have established links, good relationships and connections with our neighbours by these visits. I have represented the Town Council at a number of functions and events throughout the year. Though there have been many highlights, my personal favourites include: the annual Ladies Day Parade in Neston, The Remembrance Day Service in the Parish Church, followed by the formal Remembrance at the Cenotaph and, of course, the Christmas Light Switch-On.



The Mayor's Civic Year continued...

The Switch-On day is always an important event in the town's annual calendar and a delight to witness; I was privileged to be part of the joy and excitement last year and enjoy the Christmas Tree Festival in the Town Hall, which was a special highlight. We have enjoyed special markets organised to celebrate summer, Halloween and Easter. On the last Tuesday before Christmas the Town Council hosted an extra smaller market with some live music from the 'The 64 N'Ukes. Thanks go to our staff for the extra time and effort involved in organising these for our residents and visitors. The free children's activities are always very well received.

Neston Town Council supports a variety of local volunteer groups through the Grants and Donations Scheme and the Council appreciates all the effort involved in making these events and activities happen. Successful events in the town this year have included: Ladies Day, Neston Village Fair, the Music Festival, the Art Exhibition and Theatre Festival, my profound thanks to the dedicated local groups and societies for organising these special events, which are months in the planning stages behind the scenes. My thanks also must go to the Little Actors Theatre Company for their efforts to give the children the opportunity to perform in our local area, and the Samba Pirates for the great rousing music at Christmas and our Annual Town Meeting. We are forever grateful to those give up their time and energy for the benefit of the community. We are very much hoping for a new Christmas lighting scheme for 2026/2027 and beyond.



I am very proud of our young Junior Council members, of which we have spanned two year groups, you can read more about their adventures and the exciting visit to the Houses of Parliament, as you delve deeper in the report. It has been such a privilege to work alongside these bright young people at functions and events in Neston. Thanks too for the organisation, in-depth knowledge and research undertaken by Dr Peter Enevoldson, our local mosquito expert, whose expertise informs the monitoring and warnings of when not to sit in the gardens of the area. A summary of Dr Enevoldson's detailed research is provided on page 12 of this report.



Finally, myself and my colleagues wish to acknowledge the work done behind the scenes by our dedicated staff. Without whom we would not be able to support Neston to be the best it can be. Our whole town runs on the kind-spirited goodwill of our residents and volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to support each other across many events and functions hosted by our groups in the town. My chosen charity for this year is Maggie's based locally at Clatterbridge cancer centre for the sterling work they do in our area.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy the Annual Report 2025/2026.

Mayor of Neston—Cllr Simon Davies

The Mayor's Civic Year 2025/26

I have had the pleasure of attending a large number of events this year both in and around Neston including Ladies Day, the Summer Pirate Market, West Midlands Air Ambulance Open Day, and the Mayor of Ellesmere Port's Civic Service.



The Community & Environment Committee

As part of our on-going commitment to work with local organised groups and societies, our officers did a very successful job of planning and co-ordinating a Tree Festival as part of the Christmas celebrations. Over 20 local groups contributed to decorating trees advertising their particular interests. They were very creative,

and attracted a high number of visitors. We included a special World War Remembrance Christmas Tree with individual messages from residents and visitors. We continue to provide financial support through our Grants and Donations system which covers theatre, music, craft, youth groups, art, and environmental groups. This also includes funding



for social, leisure, and health and well-being activities, as well as supporting the town's annual events. We invested in improvements to the front of the Town Hall this year including refreshing the heritage-style street furniture paintwork. The overall frontage improvement project is still ongoing as we head into the new Council year 2026/2027. Two of the town's historic phone boxes have been sent away for refurbishment.

We continue to work with our allotment holders at our three sites in Neston through ongoing programme of upgrading and improvement as allotments form a part of the Town Council's statutory duty, providing there is sufficient demand. Neston still has a wait list.

We had a very successful interactive stall at the Neston Village Fair, run by the Junior Council and Council staff. Members of the Junior Council also had an enlightening visit to the Houses of Parliament in London, where they met our local MP, Samantha Dixon, and were able to experience first hand the business of national government including a personalised tour.

We continue monitoring and commenting on planning applications, particularly larger housing developments with regard to providing the right mix of units to meet local needs, and have concerns about the lack of resources, utilities and infrastructure to support them. We also continue to work to minimise losing valuable areas of the Green Belt, surrounding Neston and Parkgate.

CLLr Brenda Marple (Chair)



Supporting the Community with Grants & Donations

Neston Town Council is committed to supporting the community-spirited work that local organisations work hard to achieve throughout the year. The tables below show the range of groups the Town Council supports and the wide scope of activities that are covered. Grants and donations totalled: £20,134.90.

	GRANT RECIPIENT	PROJECT	GRANT AWARDED
1	Little Actors Theatre Company	2025-26 season of theatre	£2,500.00
2	Ness Rainbows, Brownies, Guides & Rangers Supporters' Association	Purchase of a gazebo	£469.00
3	Neston Singers	Neston singing in the round project	£654.00
4	2375 (Neston) Air Cadets Association	Purchase of a squadron banner	£1,500.00
5	Friends of West Vale Park	Additional support for 2025 Fun Day	£500.00
6	Neston Samba Pirates	Performance at Southbank Centre	£500.00
7	NCYC	Big Lunch 2025	£500.00
8	Community Yarn Crafts	Accessible items, publicity and sponsorship	£255.90
9	NCYC	Water heater for Neston Civic Hall	£500.00
10	NCYC	Community social prescribing service	£1,250.00
11	Neston Royal British Legion	Pipe Band for Remembrance Parade	£500.00
12	Neston Samba Pirates	Neston Future Leaders	£2,000.00
13	Neston Samba Pirates	Christmas event workshops	£500.00
14	Friends of Marshlands Eco Park	Noticeboard purchase/installation	£1,656.00
15	Friends of Neston Railway Station	Contribution towards replacement mural in the railway station tunnel	£500.00
16	NADAS	Spring 2026 art exhibition	£650.00
GRANT AWARDS - ANNUAL TOTAL			£14,434.90

NESTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY DONATIONS MADE DURING 2025 / 2026

	DONATION RECIPIENT	PROJECT	DONATION
1	Neston Village Fair Committee	Neston Village Fair 2025	£1,700
2	Neston Female Society	Ladies Day 2025 entertainment	£1,500
3	Friends of West Vale Park	West Vale Family Fun day 2025	£1,000
4	Neston Music Festival	Neston Musicial Festival - spring 2026	£1,000
5	Neston Library	Summer Reading Challenge 2025	£500
DONATIONS - ANNUAL TOTAL			£5,700.00

In addition, Neston Town Council worked in partnership with a number of local organisations to produce a Christmas lights switch-on event at a combined total cost of £6,966.81.

The Town Council is the lead authority for Remembrance Sunday.



Working alongside our community



Members of Neston’s Junior Council did a wonderful job helping out at Neston Village Fair in July 2025. They ran a stall offering a number of traditional fair-ground games. The Town Council plans to purchase more games for future fairs. Participating in extra-curricular activities such as these helps to build confidence and instil a strong sense of self-belief.



Neston Town Council provides all hanging baskets within the Town Centre. These are planted with both summer and winter arrangements by our greening contractor.



Neston is fortunate to have an extensive group of passionate residents who work tirelessly both behind the scenes, and in the public domain, to make the town a better place. Neston’s *Looking Better Group* plant hundreds of bulbs each year; maintaining an abundance of flower beds to enhance the beauty of the town. All of this work is coordinated by Neston’s Civic Society. Neston Town Council operates three allotment sites at Raby Park Road, Marshlands Road, and The Rope-walk in Parkgate. Plots are in short supply and high demand these are managed via a waiting list.



Town Hall and Market Square

During 2025/26 the Town Hall once again exceeded its bookings income target. Over the past year the Town Hall has gained a Pilates group and a local film production company. Regular slots throughout weekday evenings continue to remain full and we now host regular weekend bookings for children's parties.

The Town Hall roof improvement work, funded by CWaC, which began in 2024/25, is now almost complete. The bespoke skylights which delayed the end of the project are currently being fitted. Inside the building, we have continued to keep on top of as many maintenance issues as possible, we continue to work closely with Cheshire West & Chester Council, who own the building, to problem solve and deliver good outcomes for Neston. This ensures that essential interior and exterior improvements are completed in a timely fashion and work on the building's infrastructure is prioritised. However, we do still await a solution to the broken market square bollards, which have caused some issues during the year. Neston Town Hall remains a hungry mouth to feed requiring constant maintenance, work and attention. The Town Council is committed to improving the space and carrying out both special and routine



maintenance. Meanwhile, our officers continue to work on a programme of minor improvements alongside regular safety checks. This year our Caretaker/Market Officer has manufactured and installed custom-made handrails for the rear steps at the Town Hall to improve accessibility. We have also updated the community noticeboard outside the Town Hall adjacent to the High Street, with a smart new board to display community events and information. If you would like to add to the events already displayed, please contact us for details on how to do this. After a slow start due to the year, due to the wet and windy weather,



the market income continues to improve and stallholder levels remain high. You can read more about this on the next page. We have had several new traders join us lately and we have a few more hopefully in the pipeline. We held our ever-popular Easter Market on Good Friday and also hosted a



summer pirate market in early August. We put a slightly different spin on the Halloween event, combining it with a Harvest Market to celebrate the joy and abundance of the harvest season. We were very pleased to welcome The Wirral Pomona Community Cider Making Group, minus the cider, with their apple press.



Market & Town Hall Committee

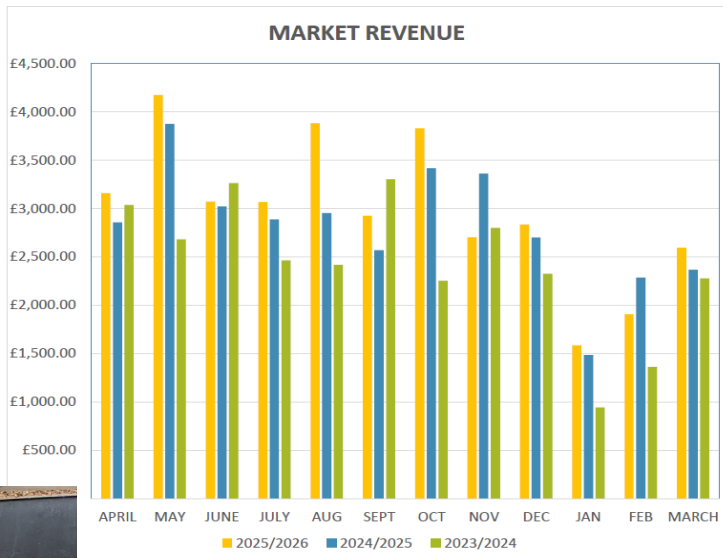


Chairman's Report

Our special themed markets are always a highlight throughout the calendar year. We enjoyed special markets last year over the Easter holiday, during summer, Halloween and Christmas. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor presented one of the winners of the pumpkin decorating competition - Mike from Celtic Works Jewellery - with a trophy (pictured above with special guest Mike Lockley from Little Actors Theatre Company. The Town Council is pleased to sponsor the children's activities so they are free for all. As you can see from the attached tables market revenue has been steady and increasing over the year.

MARKET REVENUE *			
(market stall pitch rent & associated revenue)			
	2025/2026	2024/2025	2023/2024
APRIL	£3,160.10	£2,858.00	£3,036.51
MAY	£4,173.74	£3,875.38	£2,680.86
JUNE	£3,072.21	£3,022.83	£3,262.82
JULY	£3,069.44	£2,888.23	£2,463.59
AUG	£3,882.80	£2,955.24	£2,416.82
SEPT	£2,923.93	£2,569.60	£3,304.07
OCT	£3,829.94	£3,417.50	£2,251.56
NOV	£2,704.61	£3,361.79	£2,800.44
DEC	£2,834.95	£2,701.75	£2,325.43
JAN	£1,586.43	£1,484.61	£942.25
FEB	£1,905.33	£2,286.90	£1,362.96
MARCH	£2,595.23	£2,366.39	£2,276.35
TOTALS	£35,738.71	£33,788.22	£29,123.66

* source - weekly banking sheet. Revenue is minus card payment fees



Continued...

My thanks, as ever, go to our dedicated markets team and the traders who support us each week, come rain or shine, and we have had a lot of rainy Fridays this year! Thank you shoppers for supporting Neston Market we really do appreciate it.



Town Councillors at the summer Pirate Market 2025



CLLr Sion Jones





Neston's Junior Council



Huge thanks to our retiring Junior Council members 24/25

We wish our original Junior Council team all the very best as they continue on their journey through High School and beyond. Pictured above the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Neston, The Lord Mayor of Chester Cllr Sherin Akhtar at Ladies Day in June 2025 along with Emily Ashton – St. Winefride’s Catholic Primary. Matilda Drake – Parkgate Primary, Alex Manning – Woodfall Primary and Penelope Owen – Neston Primary.



From left: Seth Thorton-Stewart, Finn Jones, Abigail Franks & Meabh Kelly

Our new Junior Council 25/26 have already had a very busy year. The Town Council organised its first trip to London for the Junior Councillors to meet local MP for Chester North and Neston Samantha Dixon. The children had a fabulous day trip to London and a personalised tour of Parliament in early March 2026.



Monitoring the Marshes



Mosquito Monitoring



Photo: Zoë Dean

Mosquito monitoring 2025 with Dr. Peter Enevoldson

Monitoring was carried out along the same lines as in the last few years, with weekly adult trapping, marsh pool dipping, biting nuisance forecasting and online bite reporting. The number of adult mosquitoes caught in the traps was comparable to normal years (roughly half the record numbers caught in 2023 and far less than in 2024). Most occurred in October and November with peak numbers in week 45 (early November). The timing of the autumnal surge was rather later than usual, probably because the breeding pools were barely filled by the September high Spring tide and most were not filled till October. There was a significant mosquito biting nuisance anecdotally in October and November though the number of bite reports were less than in recent years (except 2022). Notably, mosquitoes were once again caught in the traps in late December, despite some prior mild frosts and storms.

Pool Dipping Results (abridged)

Breeding pools were wet over winter with modest numbers of surviving larvae. The first spring high tide triggered mass hatching of eggs with rapid increase in larval numbers, repeated four weeks later. Some of these larvae were beginning to pupate (the stage before emerging as adults) when the pools dried up due to the hot, rainless weather. The spring high tides of 10-11th September (week 37) were uncharacteristically “low” and many of the breeding pools surveyed did not fill. However, there was heavy rain later in September and the next tide (week 41) filled all the breeding pools, causing further egg hatching. Other notable results from the dipping are: Over the last 6 years, larvae have been discovered which have been shown by various methods to be a species called *Culiseta litorea*. This species bites birds but importantly has never been found in the Dee estuary previously and classically was thought only to occur in southern England. More extensive dipping studies this year have identified that this species is only found in certain types of pools: small, highly vegetated and near the edge of the “marsh”. Furthermore, they appear to be emerging as adults earlier in the year than published data would suggest. These findings have been supplemented in 2025, with a view to publication in 2026. Over the summer, some larvae of a species called *Culex pipiens* were found, as in most years. This is a very common species (elsewhere in the UK it is the commonest) which very rarely bites humans and animals (so it is not attracted to our Mosquito Magnet traps) and typically bites birds. It most commonly breeds in freshwater (e.g. water butts, rain-filled buckets or flood puddles) but can also breed in weak brackish water (as was the case in marsh pools which had been filled by rainwater). This species will not have added to the mosquito biting nuisance locally or contributed to the reported trap results. Most importantly, none of those reared from the marsh larval samples or the few caught in the traps were of the species *Culex modestus* (species that will bite humans and can convey certain viruses).

Feedback from our Grants & Donations Scheme



A steam train, Neston Civic Society logo, and Neston Town Hall (Brenda Marple photo)

Neston Civic Society was pleased to refresh the train station's mural in the underpass, replacing the original artwork which was completed in 2016. Andy Birch, a professional graffiti artist returned from North Wales, to work with 18 students from Neston High School, led by Ms Cleverly Dodd and Mr R. Williams, of the Art Department. The art includes Vikings, an owl (for the Dee estuary), old and new trains. **-Brenda Marple**

The grant from NTC ensures we can offer 50% discounts to low income families to ensure an access for all approach. It also means we keep fees low to be as affordable as possible to all. The grant ensures we can afford room hire to stay local and rooted in the Town Hall and therefore having arts provision in the centre of the town. The positive impacts on the children are palpable and they are learning skills for life e.g. clear speaking, team collaboration, critical thinking and social cohesion. They build confidence and feel free to be creative. At this year's CWVAN awards we won Highly Com-mended for our work with the youth theatre and we won the performing arts category for the Neston Theatre Festival that we created in 2025. Thank you Neston Town Council. **-Samantha Giblin MA**



Here are a few photos showing the Banner Kit which the Town Council had kindly supported with a Grant, being used in the Community on Remembrance Sunday in November 2025. **Andrew Langshaw**
2375 (Neston) Air Cadets Association



Awards photo: Stephen Cain photography



Neston Town Councillors at 31st March 2026

NESTON WARD

Cllr Janet Griffiths
Cllr Martin Halford
Cllr James Jardine
Cllr David Ruscoe
Cllr Nicola Ruscoe
Cllr Christine Warner

LITTLE NESTON WARD

Cllr Steve Adderley
Cllr Carol Braithwaite (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Sion Jones
Cllr Pat Kynaston
Cllr Geoff Swaffer
Cllr Stephen Wastell

PARKGATE WARD

Cllr Simon Davies (Mayor)
Cllr Colin Dignam-Gill
Cllr Paul Doughty
Cllr Shirley Hudspeth
Cllr Brenda Marple

STAFF TEAM

Zoë Dean—Locum Chief Officer
Audrey Duncan—Community & Environment Manager
Trevor Godfrey—RFO/Finance Manager
Nicky McMahon—Market & Town Hall Manager
Joanna Harding—Community Engagement Officer
James Jones—Caretaker & Market Officer