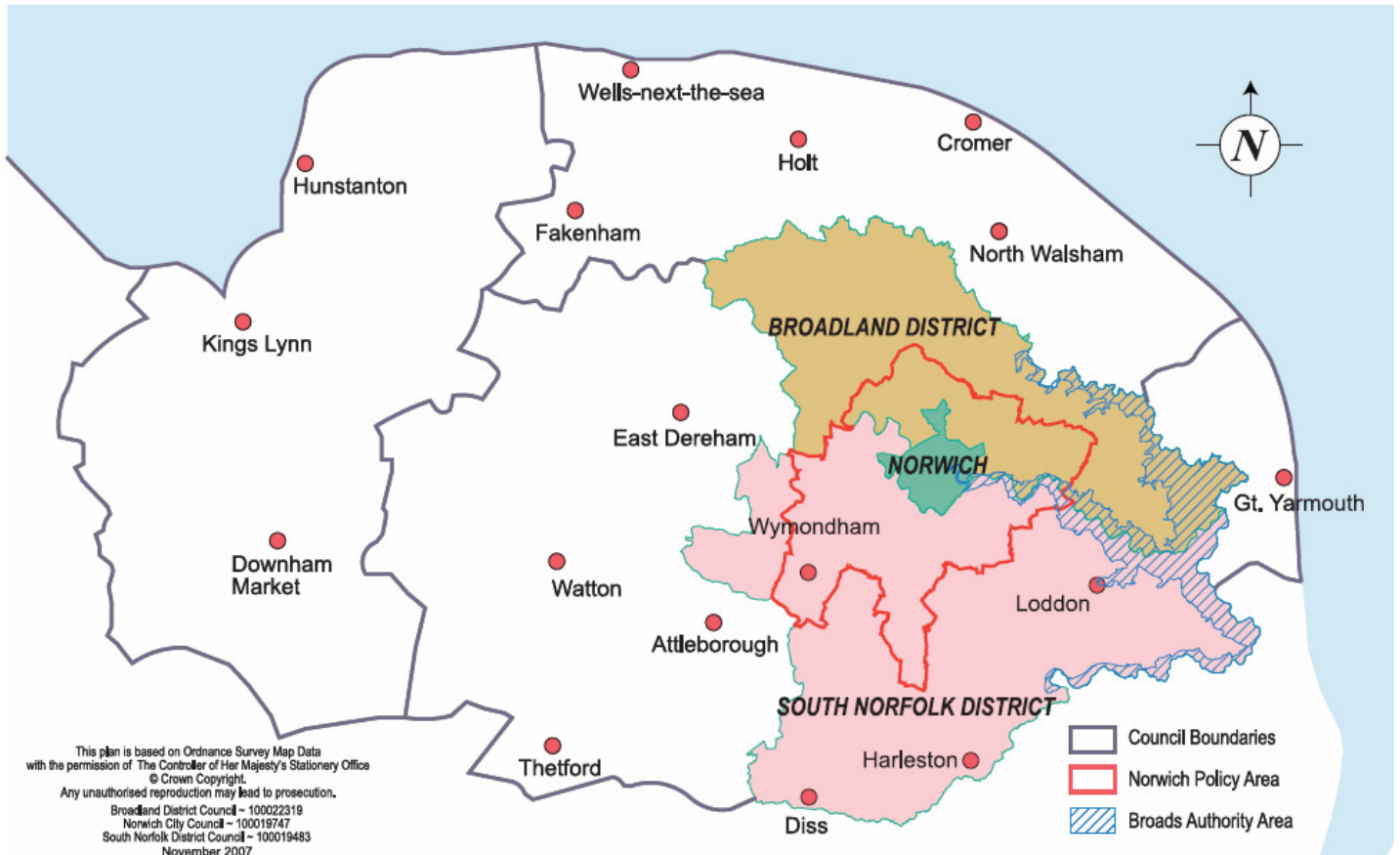


Greater Norwich FEBRUARY 2010



Please note that this report concentrates on Greater Norwich but includes information relevant to all of the districts of Norfolk

Summary

Business confidence ↑

Unemployment ↑

Redundancies ↑

Notified vacancies to Job Centre Plus ↑

House Prices ↓

A wealth of business news during February. Some positive news, with jobs being created and increased orders by firms in a range of sectors from food processing to construction, creative, engineering financial services and tourism.

Successes include fruit and veg supplier D&F MacCarthy moving into new larger facilities on the Broadland Business Park, financial services company Validus looking to double its staff numbers and another major contract win for May Gurney.

In addition Kettle Foods at Bowthorpe and its US sister business have been sold for £403m by US firm Diamond Foods in a move which is seen as positive for its Norwich operations.

Amongst smaller businesses, success for three businesses based at Hethel Engineering Centre and significant contract wins for Norwich based digital firms Soup and Real Projects.

In South Norfolk, curtains and soft furnishings firm Brian Fisher & Sons is looking to create up to 100 jobs.

However the fragile nature of the recovery is pretty apparent, with the number out of work and claiming benefit continuing its upward curve – an extra 189 in February.

More worryingly, redundancies spiked in February – 475 reported to Job Centre Plus – the highest level since April 2009. The February 2010 figure is also significantly higher than February 2009, which was just under 200.

An analysis of sectors shows food processing and the public sector hardest hit. The food processing figure of 188 is largely accounted for by Bernard Matthews where 160 jobs were at risk. Following the consultation period the actual number of job losses has been reduced.

The other main sector was the public sector, where there were 173 redundancy notifications. It's likely that with tough financial settlements across the county, this figure will continue to rise in future months.

Sectors already under stress - haulage and distribution, insurance and financial services and construction also saw increases in redundancies.

Vacancies have risen this month – although they are still running significantly lower than last year.

Construction, real estate, transport and retail all are showing a fall in vacancies, with manufacturing, hotels and restaurants and education showing significant rises.

Conclusion

The intelligence – hard and soft – seems to show that some sectors remain under stress – including construction, food processing, retail, transport, financial services and increasingly public sector.

Signs of improvement however can be seen in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants and tourism remains very strong.

Trading Climate & Confidence Levels

Key Facts

Kettle Foods sold for £403m to US snack foods firm Diamond Foods. Redundancies announced by Bernard Matthews. D&F McCarthy moves to larger premises. Norwich Theatre Royal predicts £4.5m boost to economy from sell-out Les Miserables run. Financial services business Validus reveals plans to double workforce. Aviva revealed as the UK's ninth most valuable brand.

Agriculture & Food Processing

Norfolk

Birds Eye – frozen food provider – has left Norfolk and Suffolk farmers in shock after moving out of the region's pea industry, worth more than £5m a year to growers. The 180 members of the Anglia Pea Growers' co-operative have grown about 30,000 tonnes of peas a year for Birds Eye across Broadland, the Waveney Valley and East Suffolk (11,500 acres).

There is potential loss of between £500 and £600 per hectare and it will have a knock on effect on seasonal employment which sees up to 80 people hired for the 60-day pea harvest.

Birds Eye will concentrate pea production in East Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire, where the crop will be processed at a factory in Hull, and also in a smaller operation in Perthshire. Birds Eye said the loss of a "major export contract" to Italy left it with no choice but to act to safeguard its frozen pea business.

The ending of the pea processing business in Norfolk and Suffolk will not have any impact on the Birds Eye factory at Lowestoft, which currently has about 700 employees including agency staff. But about half a dozen specialist agricultural advisers are likely to lose their jobs.

Business rate hikes will have an impact on the region's pub industry. Some country pubs in the county are facing a more than 100 percent increase in rates.

AF Affinity, launched by Anglia Farmers – a new operation to offer staff at East Anglian companies the chance to cut the cost of buying domestic products and services from heating oil and mobile phones to private medical care. The new service has been tested with services for employers with Archant Norfolk. Anglia Farmers group has 1,300 full and 550 associate members and buys more than £165m of supplies for farmers and rural businesses.

A market shortage of farmland will force prices even higher, agents in East Anglia have forecast. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors said strong demand for farmland in the second half of last year had pushed up prices to an average £6,629 an acre- a rise of 7.8 percent.

Greater Norwich

Country Fresh Produce, Hockering – supply fresh fruit and vegetables to public and private sector bodies across the UK – has teamed up with Sustead's Good Food Cellar to offer chefs at pubs, restaurants and hotels a broad range of staple ingredients and specialist cheeses, meats, oils and olives from regional and European producers. Country Fresh Produce has 50 staff and turns over £6m a year. The Good Food Cellar has sales of about £700,000 a year and three staff.

Bernard Matthews, Great Witchingham – turkey farmer – will see 160 jobs lost as part of an ongoing drive to improve efficiency. The company will be shifting its frozen whole bird operations from Great Witchingham to its plant in Holton, Suffolk. The relocation is expected to result in the up to 90 redundancies in the spring and up to 70 in early 2011, when the move will take place. The move is not expected to create any new jobs at Holton, but said some workers made redundant could be offered alternative roles at the Suffolk plant.

Kettle Foods, Bowthorpe – crisp maker, employs 370 people – has been ranked 76th among the UK's fastest growing private equity-backed firms in the Sunday Times Buyout Tract 100 list after seeing average annual profit growth of 35.86 percent over two years. The firm owned by Lion Capital reported profits of £12.7m in the year ending September 2008.

Lion Capital has sold the firm to US snack firm Diamond Foods in a £403m deal. Diamond Foods said the acquisition would help achieve the company's growth ambitions and expansion in the UK, the world's second biggest crisp market behind the US.

D & F McCarthy, Broadland Business Park fruit and veg supplier, employs 45 people – has moved into its new £4m facility at the Broadland Business Park, a site three times the size of the firm's original facility in the centre of Norwich. The new premises provides better transport links and the ability to operate new product lines. The company has a turnover of £11m a year.

Naked Wines, Norwich – online wine retailer – has launched a £5m investment fund to help winemakers across the world to set up new operations. The company has drawn together a network of 20,000 customers – or "wine angels" to create the fund. The fund will commission winemakers, cover production costs, and guarantee to sell the product through the Naked Wine website. The company is targeting turnover of about £7m in 2010.

Other Areas

Cranswick Country Foods, Watton – pig processor – has invested £3m in the meat plant since buying it from Bowes of Norfolk last summer with an increased throughput of about 30 percent. The company intends to put more investment into the facility and increase the volume of throughput over the course of the next months and year.

The company has reported healthy trading figures, with sales soaring in the third quarter of the year. The sales in the three months to December 31 were £200m,

up 31 percent year on year, excluding sales from the pet business that was sold last April. Cranswick's debt increased from £61m to £67m during the third quarter, but that figure was lower than the previous year's £74m.

The company has confirmed it will provide all the meat and pasta for celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's range, which has already been launched to retailers and is expected to appear in stores in the spring.

Waverley TBS, Cromer – drink depot – two thirds of the 25-strong workforce are facing redundancy under proposed changes, which could see the company shed 200 of its 1,300 staff nationwide. The depot could potentially be reduced to a transit point- a stockless location where loads are switched between lorries. The company said that every effort would be made to seek alternative employment for those affected, including outplacement support, retraining and/or redeployment where suitable alternative employment exists.

GRS Inns, Attleborough-based – management company – and its parent company, London Town, have gone into administration after being unable to repay debts following difficult trading conditions. London Town operates about 350 pubs nationally, including 44 leased premises run by GRS Inns. The immediate future of GRS Inns pubs has been secured and buyers are being sought for its 44 pubs.

Construction

Greater Norwich

May Gurney, Norwich – integrated support and construction services, employs 700 people in Norfolk – has won two new contracts with Wessex Water worth £65m over the next five years. This deal follows a separate £170m long-term contract with South West Water.

The company has also secured contracts worth £120m at Anglian Water which will see it install water meters and repair and maintain the infrastructure network in Anglian Water's east area.

The company reported that salaries were not raised in 2009 in order to keep winning new business and protect jobs.

Creative

Norfolk

Norfolk's film industry is to enjoy a boost after a £3.5m fund was unveiled to help get movies made in the county onto the silver screen. The fund will be distributed over the next three years, comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which is managed by the East of England Development Agency. Screen East will look to bring investment into the region, and wherever possible green technologies, such as low-carbon power generators or energy efficient lights, will be sourced locally to encourage money to stay in the East of England.

Greater Norwich

Archant, Norwich – media group – has signed a deal with Palm Paper to receive 30,000 tonnes of recycled paper each year from the new Palm Paper plant at

King's Lynn – a deal worth about £10m. The deal sees Archant switch to a single supplier for paper instead of sourcing paper in Europe, Russia, North America and Scandinavia. Delivery lorries will also return to King's Lynn with a full load of waste paper from Archant and other companies for recycling through waste paper merchant MW White.

The company reported there was a pay freeze in 2009, but staff who were not entitled to a performance-related bonus received an extra £200 in their pay packets in January.

Norwich Theatre Royal – is showing a five-week run of Les Miserables, which is predicted to help boost the local economy by £4.5m. It has boosted directly through ticket sales, people coming into the city to eat and about 100 staff and crew from the production being paid to work, live and eat in the city. But there has also been an indirect benefit through things like food supplies to hotels, and venues like the Marriott Sprowston putting on Les Miserables packages with tickets and accommodation.

Levi – denim clothing company – has used Norwich as a backdrop for some of its latest promotional film footage. The new spring/summer 2010 collection has been modelled at parts of the campus at the University of East Anglia (UEA). A spokesman for Levi's said the UEA was selected "as it reflected the spirit of the collegiate inspiration that Levi's have for this season's collection".

Watch the footage online: <http://tinyurl.com/ykncgdw>

Other Areas

Norfolk Resists, Riddlesworth – engraving company, employs three staff – has been commissioned to carve 600 bespoke glass plaques that will help mark the Jubilee Greenway that was launched last year. The 60km continuous pedestrian and cycle route starts and finishes at Buckingham Palace and is part of a project to celebrate the Olympics and the Queen's 60 years a sovereign in 2012.

Central Cinema, Fakenham – has been sold back to Hollywood Cinemas after the film fanatic who brought it struggled with the financial demands of the cinema. A hot summer encouraging people to go to the beach and frozen roads keeping people at home in the winter have meant it could not survive as an independent business.

The Lynch Casting Agency, Sheringham – provides background people and extras for film production companies – is looking to recruit new people. This summer will see the agency produce a remake of the horror film, 'The Burning', on the broads and Zombie film 'Killer Weed' in Lowestoft. The agency has recently supplied 200 extras for Bafta nominated film 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll', a biopic of the life of the Rings actor Andy Serkis.

Animaru cards, sideline of Cyan Commerce, Holt – graphic and web design company – are hoping to expand through licensing deals with larger companies. The brother and sister team behind the greetings cards have sold about 100,000

copies giving a relatively modest turnover of £10,000 a year but they lack the space, expertise and capital to turn it into a publishing house so are hoping other businesses will like the designs and license them for use in their products.

Energy Norfolk

High Energy Schools' Challenge - a scheme to get more school pupils to think about a career in the offshore wind, gas and nuclear energy industries - has been rolled out across the east of England. The scheme started in Great Yarmouth through the East of England Energy Group (EEEGr).

Engineering Greater Norwich

Create Consulting Engineers, Norwich – engineering consultancy, employs 10 people in Norwich - was set up in December by former managing director of Millard Consultants. The company has attracted a growing roster of clients ranging from a major supermarket to local councils in England and Scotland. The firm remains confident for the future and is looking to expand its staff numbers in the coming months.

Active Technologies, Hethel Engineering Centre – services in a broad range of engineering sectors including aerospace, automotive, marine, oil and gas and renewable energy – has secured 10 new contracts this year – a month after winning a major solar panel deal. The latest contracts have included work in motorsport, development of a pioneering medical injection system with Aston University, an outdoor gym equipment project and the design of a kinetic energy application. The company has taken on three new permanent staff to cope with demand and achieve the target of £3m sales this year.

Hethel Engineering Centre – has seen the arrival of two new virtual tenants – Nexxtdrive and Planscriber. Nexxtdrive creates innovative electro-mechanical technologies that provide the automotive, off-highway, marine and alternative energy sectors with patented hybrid-capable transmission systems. Planscriber have developed a technology to meet the needs of customers that require to reproduce shapes from space in to paper drawings or CAD.

Other Areas

Brimbelow Engineering, Catfield – supplies luxury yacht builders and traditional boat builders with rudders and propulsion parts as well as some specialist parts – believes the recession is over for the marine industry and is looking to recover some ground lost in 2009 after posting a record turnover of £600,000 in 2008. The company has taken on marketing and a website for the first time to tap into online research inquiries.

Westcotec, Dereham – traffic safety firm, employs 14 people – hopes to boost business with a new electronic road sign designed to give speeding drivers an unexpected warning. The firm worked with North Walsham-based engineering

firm Ladbroke to come up with its latest design. The sign is very bright once activated and is powered from the electrics within the street light, ensuring a much lower cost of installation. Last year turnover grew by 12 percent to over £2.25m a year.

Financial

Greater Norwich

Aviva, Norwich – insurance firm – expect steady growth in 2010 despite paying out £100m in insurance claims following recent storms. Last year saw a 12 percent drop in sales in the life and pensions business, falling from £36.24bn in 2008 to £32bn, although the last three months of 2009 saw sales rise to £7.94bn – up 21 percent over the previous quarter.

According to research by Brand Finance consultancy, Aviva is the UK's ninth most valuable brand. Aviva ranks 140th in the 500 most valuable brands worldwide.

Validus, Norwich – specialises in managing credit hire arrangements for the insurance industry, employs 87 people – has doubled its workforce in the last 12 months with plans to expand to 150 in the next six months. The company has developed a unique computer software system that evaluates the cost of providing a temporary vehicle – examining whether the paperwork is correct and whether the sum being sought is fair in comparison to thousands of similar claims. The company is planning to double its turnover to £8m by the spring of 2011 – partly driven by the development of a “software as a service” business for insurers who want to buy Validus technology rather than outsource the job of processing claims to the firm.

Price Bailey, Norwich – accountancy firm - has recently been consulting with the Norfolk Network team about ways to support budding entrepreneurs. The result is an entrepreneur support package specifically for Norfolk businesses. For those businesses who can demonstrate a sound business model, the entrepreneur support package will provide a free initial review of the business plan and objective feedback on its feasibility. Businesses will then receive ongoing help, support and advice at a subsidised rate on a range of issues, including financial management and reporting, access to finance, dealing with HMRC, effective tax planning and high level management skills.

Health & Life Sciences

Greater Norwich

Scientists at the Sainsbury Laboratory at the John Innes Centre, Norwich Research Park have applied for official permission to plant GM potatoes in a field trial at Colney. The three year trial involves two plots of Desiree potatoes that have been genetically modified to resist late potato blight which costs farmers an estimated £3.5bn worldwide each year.

Other Areas

Baxter Healthcare, Thetford – supplies medical products and services to hospitals in the UK, and is a global leader in technologies related to the blood and circulatory system – reported that pay had increase in 2009 and would go up in 2010.

ICT

Greater Norwich

Real Projects, Norwich - design and create custom e-learning solutions – has won a new client through social media website Twitter. Simprentis, a Norwegian oil and gas industry training specialist skyped Real Projects after they tweeted about a new game they are developing to help train people working in the oil and gas industry. The company has a turnover approaching £500,000 a year.

'whostheref.com' website, designed by a Norfolk referee – has been used by Scottish Rugby for a range of domestic fixtures to select the match officials for the game – from stand-by linesman to the referee. The system is also being used by about 30 clubs in Norfolk. The developer is hoping the system will soon be deployed by cricket clubs in the West Country and believes the system may be the root of a £1m turnover business.

Soup, Norwich - digital marketing agency - have won several contracts recently including working on Ryvita's digital strategy, including the relaunch of their website, as part of a wider above-the-line and below-the-line campaign. The company wanted Ryvita products to be seen as something for everyone who enjoys good food, a healthy approach to life and sociability: hence the Ladies That Crunch campaign. Soup also won a contract with Aviva Risk Management Services to revise their eCRM (electronic Customer Relationship Marketing) offering.

Manufacturing

Greater Norwich

Brian Fisher & Sons, Harleston – specialises in hand-made and machine-sewn curtains and soft furnishings, employs 40 people – is to create up to 100 new jobs following major growth in demand from existing customers and recent contract wins. The company plans to establish a national sales team to generate new business. In addition to the new jobs the company plans to take on up to nine teenage apprentices. The company saw a 15 percent increase in turnover in 2009 to about £1.2m, attributed in part to the demise of competitors.

NewGenn, Thetford – manufactures cleaning products – is set to expand into South Korea following the launch of a new franchise (NewGenn Sciences) with products aimed at fighting infection in the home, at work and in hospitals. The company saw sales rise last year following the outbreak of swine flu.

Norfolk Saw Services, Horsford – sawmill servicing and sales – has been affected by a dip in turnover and the loss of a number of customers through firms

going under. But rather than shed staff, the brothers behind the businesses have invested nearly 3100,000 in new machinery. The firm's turnover, which has dropped to just under £800,000 in the past year from about £1m two years ago, is split 60/40 between sales and sharpening. It sharpens everything from band saw blades for major saw mills in the area to metal cutters and flaking knives, used for chipping.

Other Areas

Anglian Chemicals, Fakenham – cleaning chemical manufacturer – has seen 25 jobs saved after its previous owner stepped in to strike a last minute rescue deal with administrators. The firm had been sold in 2007 to Hampshire-based investment firm Tigertails Capital in August 2007 and at the time was profitable, but the announcement of it going into administration and workforce facing redundancy spurred the former owner into action.

Foster Refrigerator, King's Lynn – manufactures food fridges for the catering industry, public sector and major retailers – is to work closely with its new sister company in Holland, Gamko, which specialises in drinks refrigerator units. Foster's American parent firm ITW brought Gamko in South Holland which employs 450 staff.

Tourism Norfolk

Norfolk Tourist Attractions Association (NTAA) – has launched its 2010 brochure and is banking on 2010 proving to be yet another bumper year as holiday makers rediscover what the county has to offer. More than 500,000 brochures have been printed. Short break and holiday bookings are already said to be strong for this year.

Minutes from the Norfolk Tourism Partners meeting:

- Great Yarmouth have launched their new brochure for 2010. Self catering accommodation had a good year last year and expecting a storming year this year. Vauxhall Holiday Park / Seashore the Haven Park have seen a 21 percent increase in advance bookings. Hotel business has been fairly static and some are selling up. Last year saw a tight season on the seafront.
- Norfolk Country Cottages- forward bookings for 2010 in 2009 were up but January bookings are two weeks behind, probably because of the weather. For 2010 it is predicted that the average cost of a holiday will go down as customers are picking the cheaper options.
- NTAA - Attractions have been slow; Thursford had a few bad days last season but fairly good on average and not sure how things will go this year. The last business confidence monitor (BCM) was out in October and everyone should make sure that they fill in the current BCM to give as good a picture as possible. Hoping the 'staycation' will continue this year.
- North Norfolk - people are sitting tight as less planning permission's are coming through. Tourism Round Table seems very buoyant and feels it will be

quite a strong season, but local small businesses are saying that bookings are slow.

- Norwich & the Broads - the small hotel sector is continuing to feel the strain in the Norwich area. Larger chains i.e. Holiday Inn at Norwich airport is performing well compared to the others & is going through a re-brand, Dunston Hall is doing well in comparison to others in its chain. It appears that those who are different do well.
Attractions are positive, Norwich Castle had its best ever promotion on the Norwich Shopping Guides last year. On the Broads bookings are up 5 percent on the boats, and 15 percent on shore side accommodation (including a 2 percent price increase) and are up 8 percent overall.
- West Norfolk Accommodation sector - Thursford effect was good and hotels fared well last year. The leisure market slowed down in December as the weather made bookings slow. Hotels are filling up on Tuesdays and Wednesday and the season ahead looks good. People are offering value for money, leisure parks will do well. General trading business confidence is not there at the moment. Meetings and the corporate market are not looking so good. Searles bookings are looking up for the summer. Outdoor leisure depends greatly on the weather.
- Park House - very badly hit by the weather over the winter period. People weary to come because of the weather. It is hard to foretell the season ahead at this moment in time.
- Brancaster Staithe & Deepdale Traders - it was not the barbeque summer as forecast but we need to reinforce that Norfolk did have a lovely summer, but others didn't. Many of those who came last year have rebooked.
- East of England Tourism - confirmed that the East of England was the driest, warmest and sunniest region last year.
- Broadland - confident for the year ahead. They will be putting together a local food directory including pubs and restaurants all keen to source locally, which hopes to affect the eating out experience.

In summary – everyone is quite positive and confident for the forthcoming season.

Greater Norwich

Ferry Boat pub, Norwich – public house, closed in 2006 – is set to be turned into Norwich's first eco-friendly backpackers hostel. The team behind the renovation run the eco-friendly backpackers accommodation at Deepdale Farm, Burnham Deepdale. The hostel will offer canoe and cycle hire and would create jobs by working with local businesses.

Gentleman's Walk, Norwich, has been shortlisted for a national fashion award – Google Street View awards, which will be decided by a poll of web users. Gentleman's Walk is one of 20 nominees in the Britain's Best Fashion Street category, while High Street in Cley has been shortlisted for the Best Foodie Street prize.

Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (Heart) – is recruiting taxi drivers, hotel staff and other volunteers to become ambassadors for Norwich as part of a scheme to improve visitors' first impressions of the city. Heart was in talks last year with VisitNorwich about the scheme, and hopes to set up half day training sessions in the next few months with a view to having ambassadors in place by the summer. Heart hopes to recruit 200 ambassadors in the first two years of the scheme.

Enjoy the Broads 2010 campaign – will be launched at the Boat and Caravan show at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. The campaign is the largest collaborative one ever to promote the Broads as a leading UK tourism destination, and is being carried out by the Broads Authority and the Broads Tourism Forum. 36 Broads Tourism Forum businesses are supporting the campaign. 175,000 24-page brochures have been printed to be distributed throughout East Anglia and beyond.

Whitlingham Country Park, Trowse – competing in the finals of the Waterways Renaissance Awards because of the way it encourages young people and children from Norwich and Great Yarmouth who live in deprived areas or who have been excluded from school to enjoy the outdoors through a forest schools project.

Norwich International Airport – has predicted a return to growth this year after a 30 percent drop in passenger numbers saw revenues fall by £2.4m. Passenger numbers had fallen from 575,000 in 2008/09 to a predicted 404,000 for the year ending March 31, while turnover dropped from £12.4m to £10m. But the airport suggests that an expansion in charter flights would spearhead growth in passengers in coming years, with 475,000 passengers forecast in the 2011/11 financial year, and that there had been growth in helicopter passengers on routes serving the offshore oil and gas industry, up about 10 percent to 80,000 this year.

Other Areas

Norfolk Hideaways, Burnham Deepdale – holiday cottage letting firm – launched last year on Valentine's Day has taken nearly 900 holiday bookings in its first year and generated more than £800,000 in rental income for its homeowners. The firm had opened with just six houses on offer, but now has 106 and employs five people at the office, 15 housekeepers and two maintenance workers.

North Norfolk Simply Outstanding exhibition will be held at Searle's Leisure Resort in Hunstanton in March. It is the first time the show has included West Norfolk. Sandringham House, Cromer Pier and Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Gardens are among many Norfolk attractions that will feature in the show, covering an area from The Wash to the Norfolk Broads. The show will also be open to the public for the first time.

**Other
Norfolk**

Voluntary groups and organisations caring for some of Norfolk's most vulnerable people have lost their funding as social services cuts £1m from children's services. As mentioned in December's report 28 groups who were receiving £2.4m between them had to re-apply for a share of £1.4m. County councillors have agreed to cut the amount they spend on voluntary sector support because a freeze in both government grants and council tax is expected next year.

20 voluntary and community groups across Norfolk and north Suffolk have been awarded £135,700 from the Big Lottery Fund.

Two hundred parents with autistic youngsters will lose dedicated support from Asperger East Anglia (AEA) charity due to a cut in funding. AEA will lose £40,000 a year which it used to provide children's activity groups on Saturdays, along with advice and emotional support for parents who are often in distress, and will see 14 job losses.

East of England Co-Op has sold its second motor dealership in a fortnight – Peugeot in Norwich to Busseys and Peugeot in King's Lynn to the Walker family. The business retains its Citroen dealership in King's Lynn and has been investing heavily in its core operations, food stores and supermarkets.

Norfolk Probation Area - provides services to offenders, victims and courts from offices in Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Lowestoft – will see job losses when it merges with Suffolk over the next three years.

Greater Norwich

Harleston Job Club, South Norfolk – formed at Harleston Information Plus last year in response to the recession – will be able to employ a part-time coordinator to run the job club thanks to the European Social Fund. The club has welcomed its 100th customer this month and since the job club was launched in June about 20 job seekers have found employment whilst others have gone on to full or part-time training.

The Ferry Boat Inn, Norwich – derelict pub - has been bought by a Norfolk family who plan to turn it into an "eco-friendly" hostel. The Borthwick family has bought the property to model on its current backpacker hostel, Deepdale Farm, on the north Norfolk coast. The hostel, which would be the only one in Norwich, should open next year and offer accommodation along with canoeing, cycling and a cafe.

Scrumptious Buns, Norwich – cupcakes – was set up in October 2009 after the recession made her career in graphics more quiet and she was made redundant. Business is said to be booming and her experience in advertising has helped with marketing and design of the website.

Youngs, Loddon – hardware store combined with a funeral undertakers – is closing the hardware element due to competition from large DIY stores and online shopping coupled with the recession, Instead they will expand the funeral side of the business which has been unaffected.

The Window, Norwich – new café – is opening this month after the owner had advice and a loan from the Prince's Trust, as well as workshops from WEETU, which provides advice for women, and Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services. The café can only seat up to five people at a time and offers a range of handmade cakes, teas, hot chocolate and coffee brewed using a drip bar technique, which is unique in the city.

Norwich had the highest vacancy rate of all the towns and cities surveyed in the East by The Local Data Company, with 12.5 percent of shops currently empty, just above the UK average of 12.4 percent. 52 percent of Norwich shops were non-food “comparison retailers” which tended to suffer more during the recession, compared to the UK average of 38 percent. King's Lynn was ranked ninth in the regional table with 8.2 percent, Dereham with 2.8 percent.

Jarrold & Sons, Norwich – department store retailer – has strengthened its sports and outdoor activity operation with the purchase of Venturesport, four years after it acquired Pilch Sports. The deal will see staff move and share a refurbished floor with Pilch.

The Specs Factory – dispense-only opticians, employs 18 people – is looking to expand the number of shops from the current four to a total of 20 within five years with three to five staff at each. All would be in East Anglia and follow the same business model as the Norwich headquarters, where customers arrive with their prescriptions at edge-of-town sites and under certain circumstances can have their glasses within the day. The company has a projected £1m turnover for the next financial year.

John Lewis, Norwich – department store – improving sales of furnishings and fashions helped total sales rise by 11.9 percent in the third week of the month compared to the same week in 2009. The rise in sales at the Norwich store mirrored an improving trend across the retail partnership – with sales across the country up 12.5 percent to £49.5m.

Norwegian Blue bar, Norwich – has closed as trade at the Riverside has been hit hard after the closure of both Lava/Ignite nightclub and the Hollywood Bowl bowling alley more than two years ago due to structural problems. The company which runs Norwegian Blue also owns Squares on Riverside. It is said the closure is temporary as it is not busy enough to keep both of them open, but is hoped to reopen when both Lava/Ignite nightclub and Hollywood Bowl reopen later in the year.

Other Areas

Snetterton Circuit – premier motor racing circuit – ambitious plans to turn Snetterton Circuit into a world class venue have been put on ice after approval 18 months ago. The original £10m scheme included the creation of 500 jobs at a new business park and hotel off the A11. The owner is not confident of putting more money into Snetterton Circuit with the global economic downturn and its expansion had taken a “backward step”.

OSR Recruitment Services, King’s Lynn – Norwich recruitment agency – is opening a new office in King’s Lynn and plans to open another two offices in the region this year. Areas on which the office will be focusing include food processing, agriculture and horticulture – including seasonal workers – and legal and commercial recruitment. The company has a turnover of more than £9m a year and currently employs 32 staff.

Middleton Aggregates, King’s Lynn – sells sand from three quarries, employs 60 people – is shipping 3,000 tonnes (equivalent of 100 articulated lorry-loads) to the Falkland Islands for use on a runway scheme through the company Tarmac. Normally the company sells the sand for asphalt production in East Anglia – usually within 60 or 70 miles of the quarries. The deal is worth about £40,000 to the company, which sells between 40,000 and 50,000 tonnes of this grade of sand a year. Across its three quarries the business sells between 300,000 and 400,000 tonnes of sands annually.

The recession has taken its toll on the business, with a fall in turnover and staff. The company’s turnover peaked at £10m in 2007-08 and fell to £8.3m in 2008-09. The company believe turnover this year will be between £5.5m and £6m.

Ethel Austin (fashion chain) and Au Naturelle (homeware chain), King’s Lynn– will be closing after going into administration. The firm called in administrators because of the economic downturn, competition from rival budget chains such as Primark and Matalan, and a slump in business due to the adverse weather during the January sales hitting profits. This is the second time in two years that Ethel Austin has gone into administration and will see 129 stores close in total.

Chopstix noodle bar, Madhouse women’s fashion store and milkshake specialists ‘ShakeAway’ are all setting up in Ling’s Lynn town centre.

Red Lion Inn, Caston near Watton – public house – may reopen after closing in 2007 after plans to restore the pub were submitted. The plans cover an extensive refurbishment of the building and re-launching it as a “quality destination for eating and drinking at the heart of the village”.

The Modernizer, King’s Lynn – home renovation business – saw a strong 2009 with a slow down in November and December, but has seen a pick up in work since the new year.

Premier Sport, Shropham near Attleborough – franchise offering professional sports training to more than 100,000 children in after-school clubs across the country each week, with 300 coaches currently – is recruiting 200 more coaches. The business expects turnover to grow by 20 percent by the end of the financial year – up from the £4m recorded in May 2009.

Other Information

Norfolk

The Norfolk Rural Community Council (RCC) is submitting a report to the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership asking local authorities, businesses and voluntary organisations to outline new measures to tackle issues affecting Norfolk's rural communities. A lack of affordable housing, a poor skills base and limited access to services are among the problems that affect the 59 percent of Norfolk families who live in rural communities.

Rail passengers between Norwich and London will have access to Wi-Fi connections on their trains after a £546,000 deal was agreed. National Express East Anglia is to introduce the facilities on all intercity services to the capital by the end of the year after receiving a £246,000 grant from the East of England Development Agency, and Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, to pay the costs of installing the equipment, while the rail operator will meet the £200,000 a year running costs.

Under the plans, first class passengers will get free access, while there will be a small charge for standard class users, which has yet to be determined.

In February the Norwich in Ninety campaign was launched, to encourage the Department for Transport to include certain improvements in the new Greater Anglia franchise.

Produced in Norfolk – social enterprise working to protect rural skills and jobs thereby sustaining rural communities. The company, which is a co-operative, was formed in 2005 with support from Defra and is now financially self sustaining – are behind a new project called FORWARD. This project aims at offering people over 50 who are not working at the moment the chance to build their confidence, and learn new skills, by getting work at a variety of different rural businesses across the county and north Suffolk. Jobs range from brewing beer to beekeeping, making bread and grafting trees. There are 25 Produced in Norfolk members signed up to the project who will be involved in delivering training to applicants over the next six months.

Greater Norwich

Babcock International – engineering firm – is to set up a wireless broadband service in Norwich. The network is aimed at offering faster broadband speeds to home and business users in virtually every part of the city via a chain of small rooftop antennas. The project will enable broadband service providers to offer connection speeds of up to 30Mbps – far higher than the 3.6Mbps average currently enjoyed in the city.

Rackheath eco-town project – scheme for around 4,150 eco-homes which are designed to meet housing needs while also tackling climate change – has received £9.5m funding from a share of £37.5m to pay for 600 "eco-homes. If planning permission is received, a total of 200 of the homes could be built in Rackheath from next year.

Added to this there will be a further contribution of between £2m and £6m in 2010/11 and £400,000 from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Nearly half the cash will be used to start a project to “retrofit” the 850 existing homes in the Rackheath area with energy saving devices and also fund a rapid transport link into Norwich and cycle routes. The rest will pay for a joint sustainable water study with the Environment Agency.

Norwich has reached the final shortlist to become the first UK City of Culture alongside Birmingham, Sheffield and Derry/Londonderry. The title would provide a major boost for tourism and attract new investment to the county. Some estimates suggest it could generate up to £200m for the economy of the winning city.

A £5.2m plan to double the size of the Postwick park and ride was narrowly approved this month by councillors amid fears about its financial viability and the damage it will cause to the countryside. Norfolk County Council want to add 500 spaces for cars and 20 bus/coach spaces.

Norwich could be acclaimed as a science city within two decades – but only if University of East Anglia academics develop a “culture of innovation” according to Walter Herriot. Walter is the new chairman of Norwich Research Park’s Enterprise from Innovation Board.

Seven market towns in south Norfolk and north Suffolk are being given the chance to bid for substantial grants to boost the local economy. The Market Towns Initiative, launched by the Waveney Valley Local Action Group will allow each town to bid for a minimum of £40,000 of funding to make its ideas a reality.

Other Areas

Construction work has been completed on a new outer harbour in Wells. The scheme was conceived as a way to improve tidal access times to Wells and was a key factor in the decision of Norwegian-owned energy firm Scira to set up an operational base in the town. The first boats are due to arrive in April for the technicians who will service the 88 turbines of Scira’s Sheringham Shoal offshore wind farm, due to be operational by the end of 2011. The project cost Scira and the Wells Harbour Commissioners about £1.2m.

The Rural Enterprise Valley project (REV) – launched more than three years ago to give a multi-million pound jump-start to the advanced engineering and motorsports businesses along the A11 - has received a £1.25m boost from the European Development Fund. This brings the total value of the project to £3m,

with additional funding from Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council and Shaping Norfolk's Future.

Following the launch of the project in November, businesses will be offered a range of services including a free environmental survey of their premises, an action plan highlighting potential savings and the opportunity to join buying co-operatives.

March Headlines

All Trades Training, Rackheath Industrial Estate – construction training company – has seen rapid growth after securing a government contract under the Future Jobs Fund, which will see it help 165 unemployed young people into work. In addition to training, participants are found work for six months, working 25 hours a week at £5.80 an hour, which will involve working on social housing projects and other building sites.

Living Fuels, Hockwood – green energy company which converts waste cooking oil into fuel – is hoping to invest close to £2m in expanding its operations in East Anglia this year.

Shred Station, Norwich – confidential data shredding on client's premises in tailor made vans – is on course to hit a turnover of £1m within two years after expanding its fleet of vehicles.

Pocket Places, Norwich – mobile phone travel guides, employs five people – has sold a stake in the business to Norwich-based software development firm Illusion Media and will now share an office.

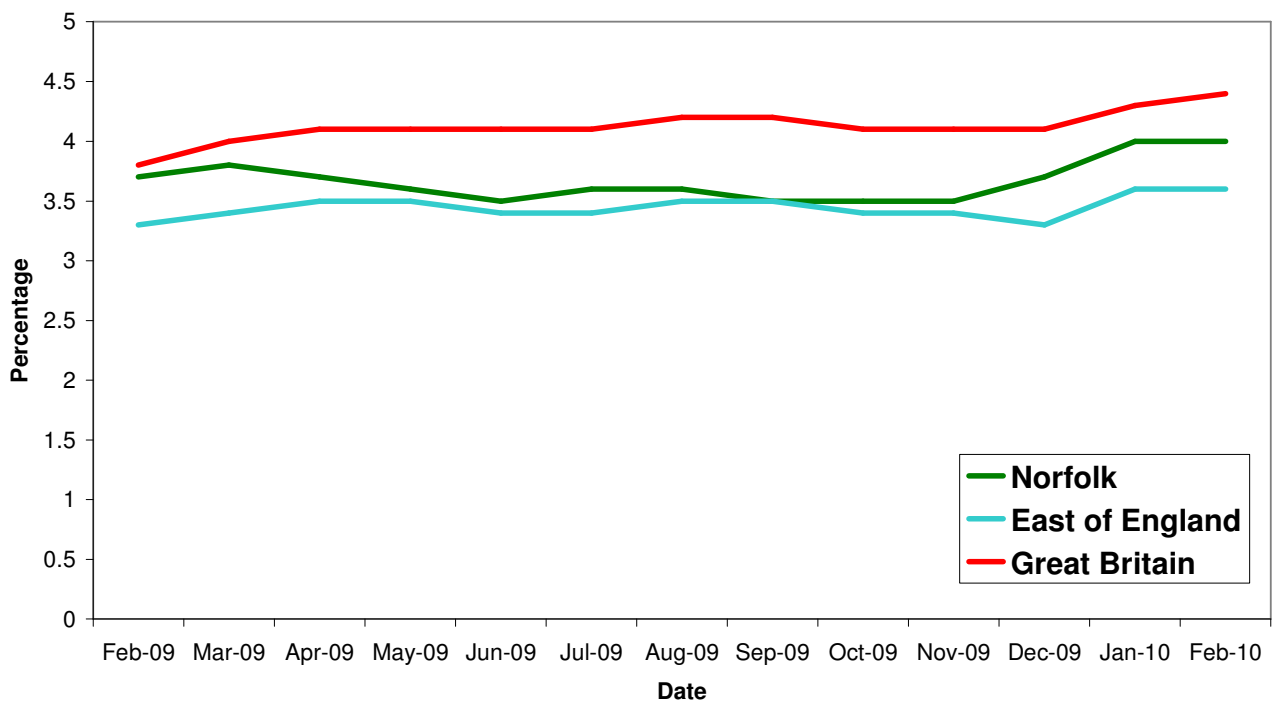
Unemployment

Key Facts

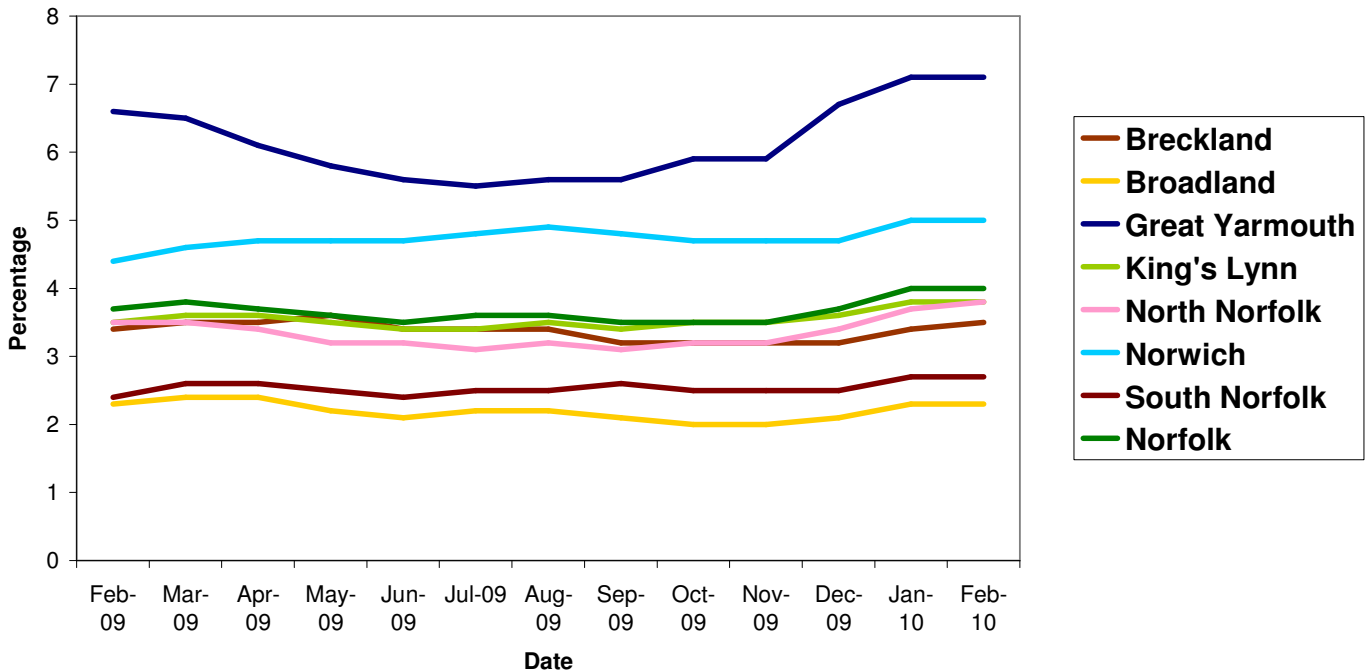
Norfolk JSA claimant count was 19,920 in February, up 189 or 1% since January 2010 and up by 1,758 on the year, a 9.7% increase since February 2009.

Source: Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics

All people claiming JSA



All people claiming JSA



Source: Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics

Area	Count	%age of working age population	Change in count year on year	%age change in count year on year
Norfolk	19,920	4.0	1,758	9.7%
Breckland	2,682	3.5	132	5.2%
Broadland	1,662	2.3	27	1.7%
Great Yarmouth	3,866	7.1	269	7.5%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk	3,117	3.8	267	9.4%
North Norfolk	2,051	3.8	145	7.6%
Norwich	4,675	5.0	696	17.5%
South Norfolk	1,867	2.7	222	13.5%

Source: Job Centre Plus

7,580 claimants in February 2010 were from the Norwich Job Centre Plus office, a 13 percent rise from 2009, an increase of 0.6 percent since January 2010.

Redundancies

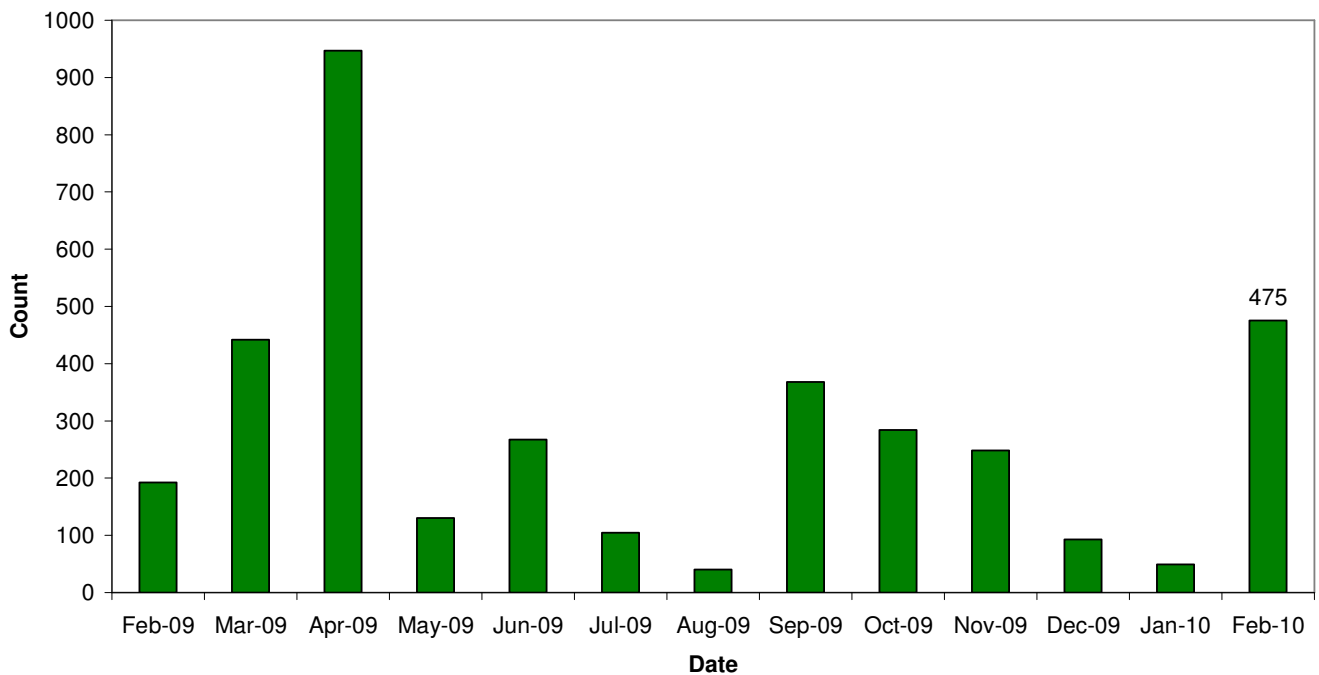
Key Facts

There have been 6,822 redundancies notified to Job Centre Plus between July 2008 and 28 February 2010, with an increase of 869.4% since January 2010. Of these 53% have been in Norwich, 1.5% in Broadland and 2% in South Norfolk.

Sectors with increases in redundancies this month include insurance and financial services (40), construction (20), haulage and distribution (45), food processing (188) and the public sector (173).

Source: Job Centre Plus

Norfolk redundancy notifications



Job Adverts (EDP)

Date	Pages	Public Sector Jobs (council, education, NHS, healthcare)	Private Sector Jobs	Third Sector Jobs
4 th February 2010	7	64 (41.56%)	73 (47.40%)	17 (11.04%)
11 th February 2010	6	59 (18.15%)	259 (200 temporary) (79.69%)	7 (2.15%)
18 th February 2010	7	67 (49.62%)	56 (41.48%)	12 (8.89%)
25 th February 2010	7	93 (57.41%)	63 (38.89%)	6 (3.70%)

Unless figure or positions stated each advert is counted as one position

3,710 jobs in Norfolk were notified to Job Centre Plus. Of these 66 percent were full time positions. Notified vacancies were up 32.5 percent from January's total.

In terms of district vacancy notifications:

- Broadland had 267, a drop of 78 percent since last year and a 28 percent increase from January.
- Norwich had 1,209, a drop of 2 percent since last year and a 16 percent increase from January.
- South Norfolk had 399, a decrease of 25 percent since last year but a 40 percent increase from January

Industry	Norfolk	
	February 09	February 10
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	33	27
Manufacturing	52	258
Electricity, gas and water supply	0	11
Construction	278	79
Wholesale and retail trade	348	251
Hotels and restaurants	357	463
Transport, storage and communication	136	104
Financial intermediation	148	84
Real estate, renting and business activities	2,302	1,275
Public administration/defence/compulsory social security	747	141
Education	74	196
Health and social work	533	533
Other community, social and personal service activities	208	282
Extra-territorial organisation and bodies	11	1
Column Total	5,227	3,705

Industry sectors with falls in job vacancies

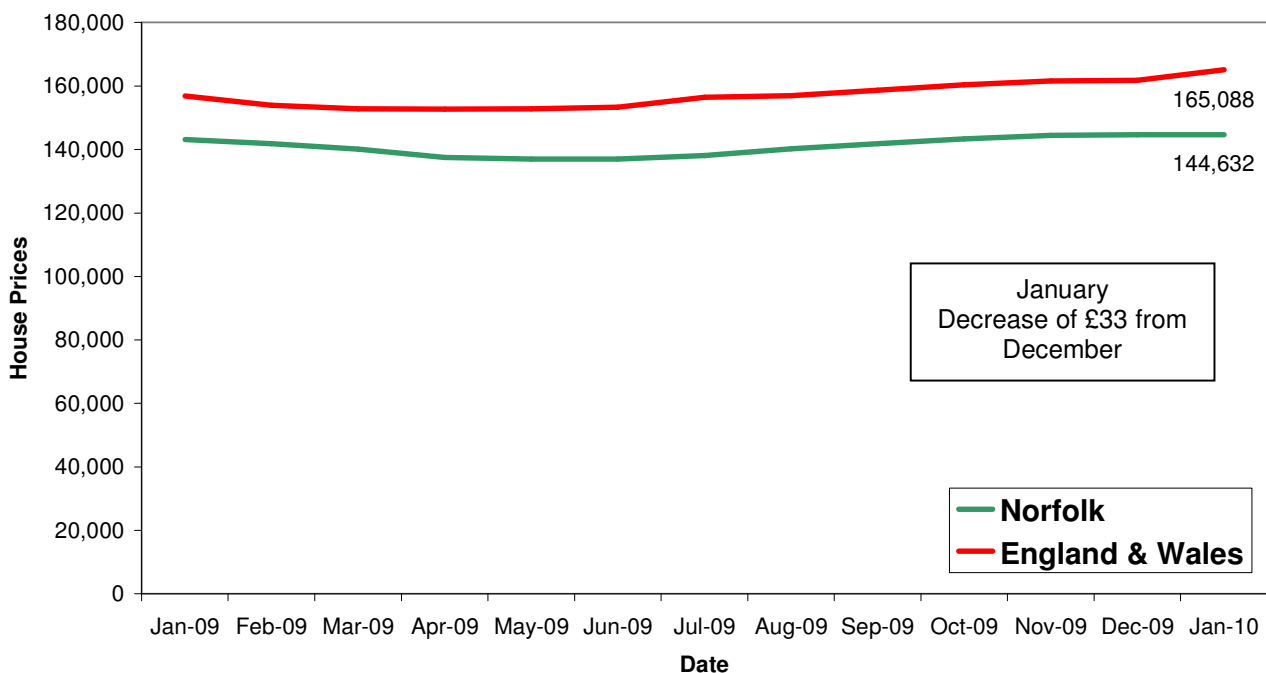
Housing

Key Facts

- UK house prices decreased by 1.5% in February. This was the first decline since June 2009 following seven consecutive monthly increases.
- Average House price £166, 857

Source: Halifax House Price Index

House Price Trends



Source: Land Registry

There has been a debate in Fakenham as to whether the town's need to attract businesses and create jobs outweighs its need for new homes. New Hall Properties plans to build up to 50 homes, 45 percent of them as affordable housing, on empty industrial land. But the company's application was refused by North Norfolk District Council last February because the site is designated for employment use.