

SENT ON BEHALF OF THE NORFOLK RESILIENCE FORUM

Residents in Norfolk are being thanked for continuing to staying at home and helping fight the spread of Covid 19, but they need to keep up the good work.

Tom McCabe, Chair of Norfolk's Strategic Co-ordination Group, said: "People across Norfolk have done an excellent job so far during this difficult period, staying at home, staying safe and helping to slow the spread of this virus. But our efforts will only be effective if everyone continues to do their part. We need to follow the rules and stay at home to help save lives. We have come so far, lets' not spoil it now."

The Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) is made up of organisations across Norfolk including councils, the blue light services and the NHS, who have been working together to coordinate Norfolk's response to Covid 19 and remind residents that this Bank Holiday weekend will be an Easter unlike any before, as residents are asked to stay away from popular beauty spots and avoid socialising in person.

Norfolk Chief Constable Simon Bailey said: "While the vast majority of people are adhering to the guidelines and I would like to thank them for that, we know a small minority have not. I know it will be difficult for communities this weekend, especially as many of us would have been planning to get together with friends and relatives - but it is vital people understand that this is a public health emergency, not a public holiday. This Easter break people must stay at home and continue social distancing. This means no gatherings of friends or family, stay in with those in your household and get together with others online instead."

Greg Preston, Head of Prevention, Protection and Emergency Planning at Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service said: "We know how tempting it is to have a barbecue when the sun is shining but we would urge you to consider whether this is absolutely necessary this Bank Holiday weekend. Accidental fires can happen so easily when barbecues are used in dry weather and are not fully extinguished or misused."

Members of the NRF have been shown encouraging signs that residents are taking their responsibilities to stay at home seriously, with traffic volumes falling more than 85% in the last week of March.

However, there are worrying signs that a minority are starting to ignore advice, with a 5% increase in volumes of traffic on Saturday and Sunday this weekend compared to the weekend before.

Dr Louise Smith, Norfolk County Council's Director of Public Health, said: "We are asking to stay at home, like everyone living in Norfolk. Most people are staying at home, and are not making journeys or going out when it isn't necessary. This is what you can do to protect yourself and your friends and family - your decisions and actions matter. You may think you're one individual making one decision, but in fact you're one of over 900,000 people in Norfolk making a decision. It only works when all of us make the right one to protect themselves and protect others. Let's stay home together."

The call for residents to continue to stay at home comes as doctors and nurses on the frontline fighting coronavirus prepare to spend the bank holiday away from their loved ones, helping patients at the county's hospitals instead.

Professor Nancy Fontaine, NNUH's Chief Nurse and Director of Infection Prevention and Control, said: "Our teams are working flat out to treat people with this virus, and the messages of support we've received from the public have been amazing: thank you to everyone who has been in touch or taken part in Clap for Our Carers. Now we're coming up to a critical time: we need to be in the hospitals this weekend to beat this, but you need to stay at home. By respecting the lockdown you can help us keep the virus from spreading and ensure our teams can give treatment to those who need it."

People should only leave the home for a small number of reasons:

- shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible
- one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household
- any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid or escape risk of injury or harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- travelling for work purposes, but only where you cannot work from home