



# The Norse Group Our CSR story so far

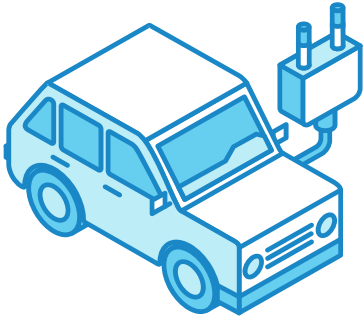




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# The Norse Way at a glance



**£20m**

investment in  
renewable energy



**170**

staff apprenticeships  
provided through our  
in-house Skills Hub



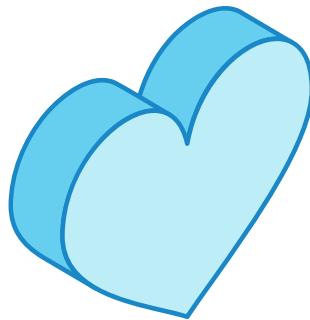
**£30,000**

Community Fund  
available for causes  
important to our staff  
annually



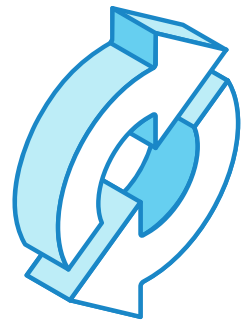
**14**

locations took part in  
the 2019 Norse Tidy Up



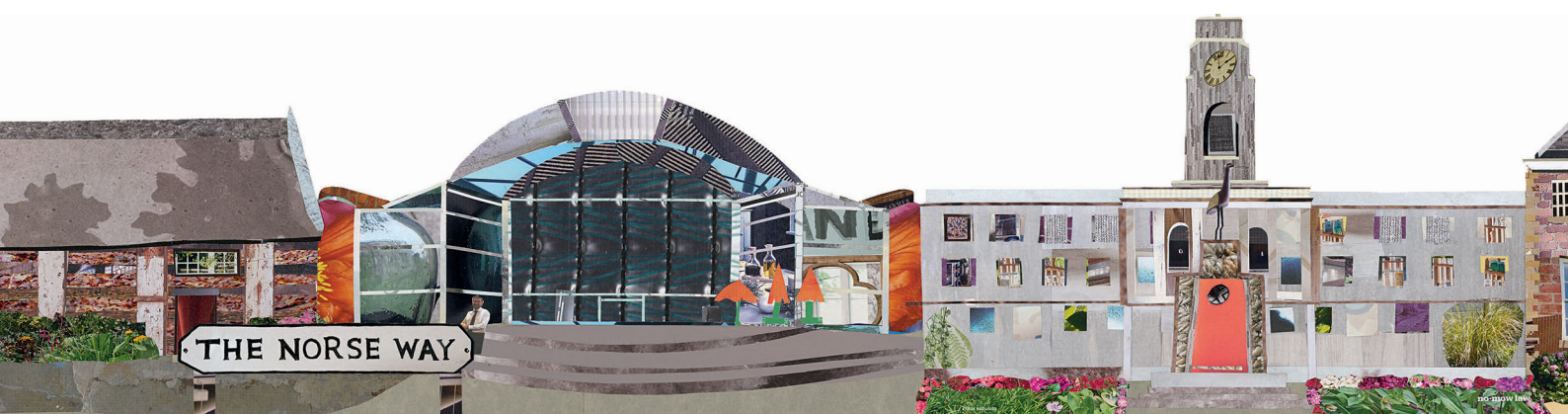
**8 hours**

volunteering each  
year available to staff



**10,000**

cups saved each year  
from landfill through  
adopting reusable cups





# About the Norse Way

The Norse Group delivers quality public services touching the lives of more than a million people across the country. It brings together facilities management specialist Norse Commercial Services, property consultancy NPS Group and care provider NorseCare.

Our commercial flair and public service ethos is known nationally for creating a powerful combination, improving services for our clients, saving costs and driving growth.

We employ more than 10,000 staff in England and Wales, with a turnover of more than £350m. We have been named by accountants Grant Thornton as the largest Local Authority Trading Company in the country.

As our roots lie in the public sector, we know there is great potential for ethical service providers in the marketplace who share and understand the public service ethos.

Our approach to 'Ethical Commercialisation' creates imaginative partnerships, which protect jobs and ensure quality public services are delivered in the most cost effective way possible, is set to continue to prosper in the future.

As well as our business expertise, we have long held a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) which helps us stand apart from our competitors. Our CSR strategy is called The Norse Way and the different elements of our Norse Way story are outlined here.

The Norse Way, is designed to promote staff wellbeing and help strengthen local communities. It's a positive and determined ethical stance and applies to us all - regardless of where we work. Our approach focusses on key areas we believe could have a long-term impact on our business and society such as supporting older people, wellbeing and preventing obesity, regeneration, employment and youth opportunity, skills and employee development, environmental management and building customer trust.

Whether it's how we deliver our services or our approach to recruitment, the way we work with our suppliers or look after our staff, everything we do is shaped by our four values:

**Quality**

**Innovation**

**Respect**

**Trust**



# Strengthening communities

We are passionate about strengthening local communities. As well as being there for our customers when they need us, we are committed to extending our impact and working together to tackle the challenges our communities face every day.

Our staff can take up to eight hours a year paid time off work to volunteer for a good cause. With thousands of volunteering hours on offer, we hope we are making a real difference!

We are also committed to improving the health of the communities we serve. Norse Catering is a Gold Food for Life provider, recognising our use of organic produce, ethical and environmentally friendly food, locally sourced ingredients and steps taken in providing healthy, well-balanced menus. Our school menus team and dietician in Norfolk have achieved a 25% sugar content reduction in Primary School recipes. Many members of our catering operations team are Sugar Smart ambassadors, with Kitchen Manager Jacqui Ritchie recognised for her commitment to providing nutritious school meals, winning the 2019 LACA Unsung Hero Award.

Norse is also working in partnership with Devon County Council on an initiative to promote people to maintain a healthy weight. Devon Norse's pedal powered 'Smoothie Bike' continues to support our commitment to the development of healthy lifestyles. In Norfolk, our catering division is eliminating the use of straws within primary schools by no longer pre-packing drink offers.

We have also been leading the way in reducing plastic waste, working closely with local authorities on single use plastic strategies.

A wide variety of internal changes have been implemented, with the elimination of sauce sachets, tetra bricks and plastic cutlery from our supply chain, as well as a reduction in the issuing of take away cups.

In recognition of our work with Georgeham Primary School in Devon - which became the first primary school to be accredited with "plastic-free" status in the UK – we have been awarded Plastic Clever status by Kids Against Plastic.

We also support Farmwise Devon at events each year, linking children with food and farming both by sponsorship and hands on involvement. In 2018 we were awarded the Cost Sector Catering (CSR) award for this work and have been runners up in 2017 and 2019.

In Norfolk, we have also worked with schools to plant a number of garden beds, enabling children to plant, grow and nurture fruit and vegetables that can then be prepared and served from the school kitchen.





# It's all about people

Supporting staff to live well is a key pillar of our social responsibility values and we run a number of initiatives throughout the year to help build a healthier and happier workplace.

The Group is an enthusiastic supporter of Project Search, a national initiative which helps students with learning difficulties make the transition to work and which can change the lives of those taking part.

Course leader Michele Claxton explains: "We see an enormous change in our students during the academic year. By the end, we have a group of young people fully equipped with the skills and confidence to enter the world of work."

We have a strong track record of recruiting people who have been unemployed and those who might otherwise face multiple barriers to breaking into employment.

The Group has also pledged to help armed forces personnel make a successful transition into civilian employment by signing the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant.

With the wellbeing of our staff in mind, we have recruited a network of more than 80 mental health first aiders to offer help to colleagues around the country.



# Improving skills

The Group is proud to be the leading agency in the Norwich International Aviation Academy, the first of its kind in the UK, creating an internationally recognised centre of excellence for education and skills. It is serving the UK's demand for increasing levels of aviation skills and helping to meet the well documented worldwide aviation skills deficit with places for hundreds of students.

We have a number of STEM ambassadors around the country who use their enthusiasm and commitment to bring subjects such as science, technology, engineering and maths to life with the aim of inspiring the next generation of engineers, surveyors and architects.

We want our staff to realise their full potential and invest heavily in their development in line with our organisational values.

We are making the most of the Apprenticeship Levy by being a registered apprenticeship provider. Our in-house Norse Skills Hub is helping to provide learning at work opportunities to about 170 staff.





# Sustainable development is at our heart

We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and recognise that, as a large organisation, we have a significant impact on the environment.

We will use the United Nations, Agenda 21, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), listed below, to help shape our corporate social responsibility programme.



Both NPS and NCS are accredited to ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management standard which helps organisations to identify significant environmental impacts and increase environmental performance, resource efficiency, waste management and decrease costs.

We have set clear objectives to:

- **reduce energy usage and increase use of low carbon energy (electricity and all types of fuels) (SDG 13)**
- **reduce water consumption (SDG 12)**
- **procure sustainable resources (SDG 12)**
- **minimise waste creation and recycle where practicable (SDG 13)**
- **protect habitats and ecosystems (SDG 15).**

We have a strong track record of supporting local schools, tenants and businesses to save money, energy and carbon through innovative delivery solutions and technologies, and have made a £20m investment in renewable energy projects in both the public and private sector (SDG17). Our initiatives have allowed a number of schools to have low carbon energy without the need for upfront capital.

The award-winning Carrowbreck Meadow near Norwich is an environmentally sustainable housing development built to Passivhaus

standards, which exceeds requirements for air tightness five times over (SDG 9).

We operate a number of electric vans in different parts of the country and have included fuel additives to our fleet to reduce fuel consumption in its vehicles (SDG 7, 13).

We have accessed Government funding to introduce biomass boilers powered by wood pellets at some of our residential homes, saving carbon, reducing running costs and greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 7, 11, 12).

We encourage staff to take an interest in the environment, by supporting Walk to Work Day in April and World Environment Day in June. Office workers also take part in our annual Norse Tidy Up in September. The latest in 2019 was held at 14 locations - our biggest Tidy Up so far.

We intend to go further than statutory legal compliance, and during 2020/21 will set out our 'Clean Growth Strategy'. We will mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt activities, where practical, to increase our use of low carbon energy sources in line with the Government's Clean Growth Strategy and target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 (SDG 8).



# Buying locally and sustainably

Our Norse Way strategy contains a commitment to supporting local suppliers and small and medium sized businesses.

Our school meals service in Norfolk buys 84% of its meat, fruit and vegetables from within East Anglia and all poultry, pork and beef we use within our catering service is traceable right back to the farm and is Red Tractor assured.

Similarly, schools in Devon are required to keep a daily record of food waste where we have achieved a 23% reduction in food waste in a year. All fresh meat, ice cream and dairy products come from West Country farms.

We ensure that timber is procured from sustainable sources. We encourage our tender processes to include weighted scoring for quality, corporate responsibility and Health & Safety, ensuring we work with suppliers that share our values. That way, we use controlled purchasing to benefit the local community and environment.

The company is running a number of initiatives around the country to reduce waste. A move in Devon to encourage staff to buy reusable cups at civic sites in exchange for a discount on hot drinks

has saved at least 10,000 cups per year going to landfill. Our catering division is eliminating the use of straws within primary schools in Norfolk.

We have reduced the use of plastic containers in our primary school 'pick 'n' mix' lunches by 95% and Norse Catering has launched a 'Bring Your Own Lunchbox' scheme to the sites we serve under which customers receive 10p off their meal price if they use their own lunchbox instead of a card takeaway box.

We have a long history of working constructively with small and medium sized businesses and are building on the many positive local proactive initiatives which already exist. We always try to fix terms of payment with our suppliers in advance and abide by the agreed terms of payment. Local and ethical supplies are important to us. In fact, one of our suppliers in Devon produces ice cream at a factory powered by an anaerobic digester from food waste. Another unique initiative in Devon involves waste cooking oil being converted into an industrial lubricant.





# Helping good causes

We have a Community Fund and our staff are encouraged to apply for support to a good cause that's close to their heart.

Grants are often in the region of £750 and successful applications can be anything from sports clubs seeking new kit to local charities seeking new equipment.

We also sponsor individuals who are talented children of parents or grandparents who work for us.

Staff at our joint ventures around the country frequently support local and national charities either by fund raising in the workplace or by putting their volunteering hours allowance to good use.

The Group also supported Restart a Heart Day in October and in 2019 trained more than 50 staff in life-saving techniques.

## The impact of our Community Fund

Over the past year, around £30,000 has been provided to help community groups around the country flourish.

Many sporting organisations have been supported by the Fund including football, rugby, basketball, BMX, archery and amateur boxing clubs. This has helped to pay for a variety of equipment and kits, as well as improving facilities at a number of locations.

Successful applications have also been made by staff who volunteer in other community organisations, such as first responders in rural Norfolk. First responders are on hand to provide immediate assistance to people who have suffered emergencies such as heart failure before an ambulance arrives.

The Community Fund is set to assist in fundraising efforts for equipment, ensuring first responders provide the best possible service to patients.

A sea life rescue charity in North Norfolk was awarded a grant by the Fund, thanks to the efforts of a staff member who volunteers as a qualified marine medic. After a difficult year for the local seal pups, Seal and Shore Watch is set to train and equip more volunteers, meaning more seals and wildlife can be rescued.

Bell ringers at a 15th century church in Devon are another grateful recipient of the Fund's support, enjoying their local chimes once more thanks to fundraising efforts. A new set of six bell ropes has been installed at St Mary's Church in Sydenham Damerel, allowing the bells to be rung without the worry of a damaged rope breaking or causing someone an injury.

Many more community based organisations have reaped the benefits of the Fund over the past year, ranging from a community café (pictured below) to a charity which runs Surf Therapy courses for children who are referred for mental or physical reasons to build their confidence.



# Volunteering in action

Staff across the country have dedicated thousands of hours of their time volunteering for good causes, making a real difference in the community.

A community garden facility in Lowestoft is one of a number of projects that Norse volunteers have been involved in over the past year. A pair of young apprentices gave up their time to help to refurbish the facility, providing a recreation room for local green-fingered enthusiasts.

Another volunteering project, saw a team of volunteers carry out a cottage makeover at the National Trust's Blickling Estate in North Norfolk. The cottage, which had been empty for some time, required a new kitchen and bathroom, along with a large garden clearance. With the Trust not having the staff available for the task, ten Norse volunteers stepped in, to carry out the works.

Volunteers have also put their hours to good use by assisting in the refurbishment of a respite care facility in Newport for children with severe disabilities (pictured below). Following extensive refurbishment work by contractors, volunteers from Norse stepped in to help tidy up the site and the centre's play space and garden, and paint fencing so that the finished article was ready for children and families to use.





## Encouraging a healthy and active workforce

We run a series of events each year aimed at promoting staff wellbeing such as our New Year Challenge and Wellbeing Week. Staff have also learnt vital lifesaving skills, with CPR training sessions taking place at multiple locations.

Dozens of staff started 2020 in style by taking part in the Group's 2020 New Year Challenge during January. We received many inspiring examples of people giving up smoking or alcohol, doing more exercise, or being kinder to the environment by walking to work. The judge's favourite entry for this year was Waveney Norse's Peter Lang, who did a physical activity every day of the month for charity, completing an amazing nine hours of running, eight hours of cycling and ten hours of walking in the process.

Our Wellbeing Week in 2019 highlighted a number of messages including healthy eating, the benefits of keeping physically active and the importance of a good night's sleep.

Many staff successfully completed the Couch to 5k Challenge in the lead-up to the week, keeping physically active over the summer (pictured below). Colleagues in Devon had the use of a smoothie bike and fruit boxes were delivered to more than 90 Norse Group locations. Staff at Fifers Lane had the chance to sample sessions on healthy eating, the importance of sleep and give yoga a try.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic our Wellbeing Week was scaled back and went virtual in 2020, focusing on supporting everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

Our commitment to mental health extends to tackling workplace stress. By equipping staff to better recognise signs of stress through mental health training, we can provide improved support for colleagues in need of help. This builds on examples of good practice we already have across the Group and gives more of us the confidence to begin a conversation in the first instance.



# Volunteering in action

We are aiming to have at least one Dementia Champion at each of the main offices across our Group and we usually support Dementia Awareness Week in May, organised each year by the Alzheimer's Society. Our nominated Dementia Lead has trained staff from around the country as part of our commitment to become a more dementia friendly workplace.

The Group has also made more than 100 Dementia Friends, with people gaining a much better understanding of the condition which affects 850,000 people in the UK.

In Barnsley, our staff have successfully created 50 Dementia Friends – who largely work for us in front line roles such as caretakers, cleaners and porters – and are actively working with the South Yorkshire Dementia Action Alliance to support local events within the community.

We were also proud to see 20 more Norse staff become Dementia Friends at sessions held at NorseCare's Lydia Eva Court care home in Gorleston in 2019. Staff met residents and learned how dementia progresses, gaining new confidence at spotting signs of dementia and acting on concerns.

In Norfolk, our Head of Catering Operations has recruited an additional 26 young Dementia Friends by forging a link between a local primary school and a NorseCare residential home. The initiative has continued to go from strength to strength, with pupils and residents from the care home coming together to enjoy a special lunch. All new NorseCare staff are encouraged to become a Dementia Friend when they join us as part of their learning and development plan and all our care schemes have a Dementia Lead. They not only work within our homes, but also play an important role in raising awareness of dementia and in creating dementia-friendly communities. The Norse Group has been awarded the In Good Company Quality Mark Plus for its work tackling loneliness in Norfolk. Judges gave our application a Plus mark, which is only awarded to organisations going the extra mile.









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