

'We can help you', says charity

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Haverhill charity, REACH Community Projects, wants pensioners struggling with costs this winter to get in touch and seek help.

The cut off for eligibility to receive Winter Fuel Payments (WFP) – between those on Pension Credits and those not – has presented challenges to many elderly who are borderline and who perhaps don't realise it or find difficulty with the processes of government.

REACH's CEO, Henry Wilson, said: "While it's been several months since this change was announced, we are finding that many people are simply not used to having to apply for benefits.

"It may be unfamiliarity with the system, lack of digital communication ability, ill health or just frailty that has prevented those in most need from attaining what is rightfully theirs."

Helen Montgomery, a REACH community outreach advisor, recently helped a couple in their late 70s, who faced losing WFP but didn't know how to apply for Pension Credit.

After discovering that the couple fell short of qualifying for Pension Credit by just 75p, Helen helped them



REACH community outreach advisor, Helen Montgomery, helped secure £500 in extra monthly benefits for a couple in their 70s after they missed out on qualifying for a Winter Fuel Payment. The charity is urging other pensioners worried about their winter bills to get in touch. Picture: Contributed

apply for Attendance Allowance, a Council Tax reduction and a water rates reduction.

Helen said: "These were all approved, and this has secured almost £500 a month for Irene and George – almost double the value of Pension Credit!

"For the older couple it is truly life-

changing on a day-to-day basis.

"Irene pointed out that not only can they have the heating on without dreading the bill, but now, when they go shopping, they can just put the items in their basket without discussing each one and worrying whether they have enough pennies."

In addition to getting out there and helping in a practical way, REACH is campaigning for a more sympathetic and gentler approach from the Government.

So, the strong message from REACH to struggling pensioners is to get in touch on 0800 009 6710 or via info@reachhaverhill.org.uk

Opposition voiced to solar farm proposal

Newmarket town councillors have tabled their opposition to proposals to site a 3,700 acre solar farm between Newmarket and Haverhill.

Councillors were asked for their view on the Kingsway Solar project, which, if approved, would result in a solar farm bigger than Sunnica and the largest in the UK, by the Planning Inspectorate.

The solar farm would be built on three parcels of land near Balsham, West Wrattling and Weston Colville.

Newmarket's deputy mayor Cllr John Harvey said: "As much as we support solar power, the scale of this is horrendous and would put Newmarket in danger of being surrounded by solar panels.

"Added to that is the impact on the environment, the potential dangers of storage batteries and the loss of valuable agricultural land."

Councillors had previously objected to the Sunnica farm, which was later approved against the recommendations of the planning inspector, and wrote to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer expressing its concerns over food security in the wake of the loss of agricultural land.

It received no response so councillors agreed to contact him again to reiterate their concerns.

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