



To promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk



To strengthen our local economy



To provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer



To protect and enhance our environment

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New Europa Way link road in Ipswich gets start date

Works to build a new link road at Europa Way, connecting Sproughton Road with Bramford Road in Ipswich will begin on 9 September.

This scheme will include extending the existing Europa Way road to create the link road. This new section of road will include an off-road footpath and cycle path, with a new mini roundabout being built to connect the new extension of Europa Way to Bramford Road.

The scheme brings many benefits for local residents and aims to:

- Improve the transport network's reliability and safety
- Improve connectivity for sustainable transport modes such as pedestrians, cyclists and bus services
- Support Suffolk's economy by unlocking employment creation opportunities and planned growth
- Achieve a balanced development by installing green features to help avoid putting additional pressure on the surrounding environment, such as; installing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage surface water runoff

The construction work is programmed to commence on 9 September 2024 with the aim to complete the works and open the new link road by the end of April 2025.

The work will be carried out in phases and will use various traffic management methods for each phase. This is essential for the safety of road users, residents and our team.

To facilitate construction, temporary parking restrictions will be placed along part of Bramford Road. Suffolk Highways requests that vehicles are relocated from the marked area whilst the works are carried out.

Temporary traffic lights and pedestrian crossing points will be the main method of traffic management used during works on Bramford Road. Towards the end of the work it may be necessary for part of Bramford Road to be closed. Full details will be confirmed at a later date.

The full details can be read on the Suffolk County Council website here www.suffolk.gov.uk/europa-way-new-link-road.

A dedicate email address has also been created for any questions regarding these works, please email: EuropaWayLinkRoad@milestoneinfra.co.uk.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste, said:

"I am delighted to see these long-awaited plans come to fruition and works start on building such an important connection between these parts of Ipswich. The connection will provide so many benefits to those living, working and travelling around this part of Ipswich and will create plenty of opportunity for growth in business and sustainable travel.

"We look forward to keeping the local community updated with our plans and progress associated with the new link road, and welcome feedback as we navigate construction over the coming months."

Ensuring Suffolk remains a place where everyone can thrive

A column by Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality.

As I step into my expanded role overseeing Suffolk's environment, alongside my ongoing work in equality and communities, I'm truly excited about the opportunity to blend my passion for community wellbeing with a focus on protecting our natural surroundings.

For me, it's clear that community and the environment go hand in hand. By looking after our environment, we improve people's quality of life and leave a sustainable Suffolk for future generations. This belief shapes initiatives like our Local Nature Recovery Strategy, where we're working closely with local councils and businesses to restore habitats and protect wildlife across the county. By identifying key habitats and species, and implementing targeted conservation measures, it seeks to create resilient ecosystems that benefit both wildlife and people alike.

Within my division, I have seen first hand the importance of nurturing our local environment in a manner that both enriches and involves local communities. The new woodland and fruit bushes for Peoples Park and the Springlands estate in Sudbury came through sustained collaboration with my residents and in Great Waldingfield, by supporting the many hours of dedication by volunteers, endangered wildlife such as yellowhammers and newts with simple local schemes, the County Council and local communities can make a real difference.

I'm also inspired by the collaborative efforts seen in projects like the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Project, where I visited recently, and the Rendlesham Revealed Community Archaeology project. These initiatives not only protect our natural and historical treasures but also bring our communities closer together. The Rendlesham Revealed Community Archaeology project has engaged a wide range of local partners, schools, volunteers, and experts. Together, they've uncovered significant archaeological discoveries that shed light on our shared heritage. Community events, workshops, and exhibitions have brought people together to celebrate these findings, fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation for our local history and environment.

Our Carbon Charter is supporting local businesses to take climate action and reduce their carbon emissions. It's a team effort, no single business can single-handedly slow climate change, or reverse the decline in our wildlife. But together we can, and are, making a difference in Suffolk. The Charter itself recently won a national award, being recognised for the effect that is having on moving our economy towards a low carbon future, and praised it for its very practical approach to helping businesses transition to net zero.

We are also actively prioritising initiatives that integrate community and environmental objectives. In September we will launch our Culture Project Fund to support community-focused arts and culture groups. This fund aims to improve community health, boost our local economy and promote environmental care. We're keen to work with organisations/projects that actively support the environment as well as working with support hard to reach communities and isolated individuals. Our aim is to strengthen our communities whilst educating and connecting people with nature.

In addition, we are celebrating the natural environment and communities from around the world at The Hold this summer as they are hosting the Brick Wonders: 'Around the World in LEGO® bricks' exhibition. Created by Warren Elsmore, the exhibition not only showcases replicas of iconic structures like the ancient wonders and modern landmarks but also natural wonders such as the Aurora Australis and the Great Barrier Reef. Through events like this, we aim to inspire greater appreciation for our heritage and care for our surroundings.

In summary, my expanded role marks a pivotal phase in our council's commitment to nurturing strong communities and safeguarding our environment. From funding community projects that emphasise environmental sustainability to actively involving residents in

nature conservation efforts, we are fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship among our communities.

Ultimately, our goal is to enhance the quality of life in Suffolk by making our communities healthier, more resilient, and more vibrant places to live. Through ongoing dialogue and proactive engagement, we are ensuring that Suffolk remains a place where everyone can thrive.

Major scrapyards fire most likely sparked by discarded battery, fire investigators conclude

The fire at Sackers in Gipping Road, Great Blakenham, on Thursday, August 8, resulted in a major response by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. The fire at Sackers saw 14 appliances and more than 80 firefighters deployed to deal with it.

It was brought under control late on Thursday and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service subsequently launched an investigation into the cause.

This has established that the most likely cause was a battery which had made its way into a pile of scrap metal.

If batteries, or electricals containing batteries, are not properly separated they can end up being crushed in the waste and recycling process.

When punctured they can self-combust, setting fire to any surrounding dry and flammable waste and recycling.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Protection, said:

“This was a major incident that caused massive disruption to a great many people and saw firefighters put themselves potentially in harm’s way as they bravely dealt with it.

“We all use batteries, we all benefit from them, and therefore it is everyone’s responsibility to dispose of them safely.

“I would urge people to learn from this incident – please, when you get rid of a battery, do it properly.”

At the height of the Sackers fire there were a total of 14 fire engines - around 80 firefighters at the scene, which included appliances from Essex and Norfolk.

Local residents and businesses were advised to keep doors and windows closed for nearly 24 hours as a massive smoke plume, which could be seen for miles, rose above the site.

Trains were also severely affected as rail services from Ipswich to Norwich, Cambridge and Ely were cancelled owing to the potential danger from the fire to the adjacent railway track.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) said in May that lithium-ion batteries thrown in household rubbish bins had led to more than 1,200 fires in the UK waste system in the last 12 months, compared to 700 in 2022.

In June last year operations were disrupted at Haverhill waste transfer station in Homefield Road after fire broke out amongst 50 tonnes of rubbish and which is thought to have been caused by a battery.

Waste batteries and electrical items should never be thrown into household waste.

Instead, they can be recycled at any of Suffolk's 11 Recycling Centres, as well as other local recycling banks. Many supermarkets also accept them.

Electricals containing batteries that tend to be discarded the most are smaller, frequently used and often cheaper electricals like toothbrushes, shavers, chargers, and toys.

More information can be found at the Suffolk Waste Partnership website <https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/>

Council formally objects the latest Sea Link plans

Suffolk County Council has formally objected to National Grid's Sea Link project, because of proposals for the building of a new bridge and for construction work to take place on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The scale of a new permanent access bridge across the River Fromus is deemed hugely disproportionate. Plans show that it could be up to six metres in height with a span of over 150 metres, including embankment.

Updated plans from National Grid also revealed that core working hours are being proposed to include 7am to 5pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

In response to Sea Link's latest public consultation which has just closed, the council has submitted a 29-page document outlining these and a variety of other potential impacts, that the scheme would have on local communities and the environment.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:

"The scale of the proposed bridge near Saxmundham is inappropriate, bringing with it unacceptable impacts on the landscape, the adjacent heritage such as the Grade II listed Hurt's Hall, and the water environment".

"We expect National Grid to carry out and publish a full review of alternative routes as soon as possible. At the very least this would show all options have been looked into, and the least harmful choice has been selected."

"Our communities are likely to be impacted by Sea Link, and many other energy projects, for years to come. To hear that this project is planning to carry out construction work for 10 hours on Sundays and Bank Holidays, is unforgivable – residents and businesses need respite, or their wellbeing will suffer."

In its response, the council adds that roads will be subject to construction traffic seven days a week. This provides no relief for locals or visitors who want to enjoy the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths National Landscape, and will disrupt local amenities and tourism.

National Grid expects to submit its application for development consent in early 2025.

Suffolk residents will be able to access electric vehicles on a short-term basis, from next summer

A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this autumn.

Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge.

Members of the public interested in this project are urged to sign up to the mailing list to receive updates as the project progresses - [Plug in Suffolk Car Clubs - Mailing List](#).

Car Clubs have already offered people in other parts of the UK access to local, low-emission vehicles without the expense of owning one. Local communities in these areas have already experienced many benefits including improved air quality, reduced congestion and increased mobility for those without access to their own car.

Current providers remain reluctant to fully fund electric community vehicles in rural and semi-rural areas like Suffolk as they do not yet have the real-world data to support the usage.

The project is funded by Suffolk's public sector organisations, helping deliver on two of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan's goals; a reduced number of cars on the road and an increased proportion of vehicles on the road that are low or zero emission. Additional charge point funding is being provided by the Department for Transport's On Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS).

Councillor Neil MacDonald, Chair, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, says:

"Suffolk residents have been asking about the possibility of bringing Car Clubs to Suffolk following the recent success of the Car Club trial in Oxfordshire, therefore I am looking forward to the launch of our trial.

I am hoping that many individuals and families will benefit from the scheme and help to bring electric community vehicles permanently to our county."

Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) reported:

'We estimate that, in 2022, each car club vehicle in the UK replaced around 22 private cars.' (CoMoUK Annual Car Club report 2022)

Public warned over how best to dispose of old batteries

A column by Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection.

It is my great honour to have been recently appointed to the Cabinet with the portfolio for public health and public protection.

So allow me to introduce myself. My name is Steve Wiles; I have been a County Councillor serving Suffolk and the wonderful town of Felixstowe since 2017.

After many years of travelling for business purposes I set down roots in the heart of a wonderful seaside community and now dedicate my time promoting our County and my own division here in Felixstowe.

Over the past three years I have been kept busy as deputy cabinet member looking for improvements to the county's drainage and flooding issues.

My new role in public health and public protection brings many different challenges which I look forward to facing head-on.

I feel very fortunate to have been appointed to this particular portfolio as I have always been greatly impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the people who work in these hugely important areas.

There could be no better example of this than what we saw from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service as it tackled the fire at the Sackers recycling plant at Great Blakenham in Ipswich.

This was a huge fire which at one point saw 14 fire engines, around 80 firefighters, working in hot, demanding conditions. The smoke plume could be seen for miles across Suffolk, which indicates just how severe a fire it was.

It's perhaps only when you really see the damage that fire can do up close that you realise just how serious a business it is.

On the same day as the Great Blakenham fire, there was a serious fire in my hometown of Felixstowe. I was invited by firefighters to see the damage to the property afterwards, and it was sobering to see the mess that was left behind.

There is so much we can do to prevent fires. Simple steps such as making sure your property has smoke alarms fitted, and that the batteries work, make all the difference.

Similarly, safe disposal of batteries is also very important. Don't be tempted to dump in the bin, because they get into the recycling system and when crushed they can cause fires.

Instead, please take them to any of Suffolk's 11 Recycling Centres, as well as other local recycling banks. Many supermarkets also accept them.

With regards to the Public Health side of my role, this plays a crucial role in safeguarding and enhancing the lives of our residents, and again, I am honoured to take on this responsibility.

A key initiative is the recently launched 'Feel Good Suffolk' service, a comprehensive programme designed to support residents in quitting smoking and managing their weight.

These areas are critical for improving health outcomes and reducing the risk of chronic diseases, and I encourage anyone who feels they need it to take full advantage of the resources and support available. You can find out more at www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk

We have also been running our Small Changes, Big Difference campaign, which emphasises how even modest lifestyle adjustments can lead to significant health improvements.

Whether it's cutting back on alcohol, incorporating more physical activity into your day, or making healthier food choices, these small steps can have a profound impact on overall wellbeing.

To support this, we've partnered with Drink Coach, a service that helps residents understand their relationship with alcohol and provides practical advice on how to reduce consumption.

As we move into the autumn, our focus will also be on encouraging residents to take up their winter vaccines, which are essential in protecting our community from seasonal illnesses such as flu and COVID-19. Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of these viruses.

Through initiatives like Feel Good Suffolk and Small Changes, Big Difference, we are building a healthier, more resilient Suffolk.

I look forward to working closely with the community and our health partners to continue promoting public health and wellbeing throughout the county.

Rogue Suffolk builder who conned thousands of pounds from customers is sentenced

A rogue Suffolk builder who conned customers by taking deposits worth over £17,000 for work that was never carried out has been sentenced following a prosecution by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Jack Doran repeatedly fobbed off complaints with excuses as to why work was not being done.

Doran, 40, traded as JD Roofing and General Building Ltd of Manor Road, Felixstowe, but his home address is in Harlow, Essex.

At Ipswich Crown Court on Monday August 12 he was given six months suspended sentence, suspended for 18 months by Judge David Wilson.

This was reduced from nine months due to an early plea.

Doran was also ordered to complete 240 hours of unpaid work over the next 18 month, ordered to attend a rehabilitation course to avoid future offending, and told to pay £2,500 compensation, to be split £500 per consumer and paid at £100 month starting from October 1.

He was disqualified as a director for five years.

Doran had previously admitted defrauding customers by taking 50% deposits and additional payments for roofing services and materials not provided, and dishonestly incurring debts in the course of trade, both contrary to the Companies Act 2006.

Suffolk Trading Standards was first contacted about him in April 2022 where a customer from Felixstowe complained they had paid £5,900 for work to replace a roof but which had not been carried out.

In August 2022 a second complaint was received where a customer in Felixstowe paid just over £4,000 for work that never happened.

Neighbours of the first complainant were then identified as further victims.

They paid £1,200 deposit in advance but no work at all was carried out on their property and no scaffolding installed.

All victims received invoices or estimates at the beginning of contracts that stipulated 50% deposits up front, all payable to a bank account in the name of JD Roofing & General Building Ltd.

During the contracts, and despite work not proceeding, at least two of the victims were talked into making further payments under pressure that the business was struggling financially and without further payments the work could not continue.

One paid £1,247 and then another £150 was requested. A second victim paid a further payment of £750 after initially paying £1,440.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:

“The actions of Jack Doran have caused financial loss and significant undue stress to his victims and their families. I would like to thank the victims in this case for coming forward and supporting the investigation.

“The consumers trusted the business and they were let down. Doran pocketed thousands of pounds paid to him in good faith and he then spun a web of lies and excuses as to why he was not carrying out the agreed work.”

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

“This is another great result for our Trading Standards Team and sends a clear message that rogue traders are not welcome in Suffolk.

“Residents are reminded to always thoroughly research any individual or business before hiring them to carry out work and to always be cautious when paying money upfront.

“I would strongly encourage anyone looking for a trader to get a range of quotes from reputable traders either through recommendations from people you trust, or a Trading Standards approved trader from our Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme.”

After sentencing, one of Doran’s victims, who has asked to remain anonymous, said:

“Jack Doran lied to us, and I feel let down, disappointed, and stupid for being so easily manipulated.

“My trust in builders has been eroded. Throughout the process of continually giving excuses for not starting the work, our patience and tolerance were completely abused.”

The victim said they had contacted Doran after he put an advert on Facebook following a major storm, offering to repair roof damage.

They added:

“Doran’s estimate of a simple two-day job was rubbish, as the job eventually needed some major rebuilding. Not only did this cost us considerably more, but over that time the cost of materials increased vastly.

“We are pensioners with a limited income. The fact we were conned makes me feel vulnerable and wary that in the future we could be exploited.”

Anyone who believes they are a victim of a rogue trader or are concerned that a neighbour or family member may be, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

To find a trader that you can trust, consult the Suffolk Trusted Trader directory and choose with confidence: trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/

Preparing for the new school term can be both exciting and daunting

A column by Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND.

In just two weeks, pupils across Suffolk will head back to school after the six-week summer holidays. I hope that families and teaching staff have had an enjoyable, relaxing break and are feeling prepared for the new school year.

I want to begin offering my best wishes to students who received their A-Level, BTEC and T-Level results last week. Young people should be very proud of their efforts, they are a testament to their hard work and dedication as well as the commitment of teaching staff to deliver the best education and support to our young people, throughout their school careers.

I would also like to wish good luck to all students receiving their GCSE results on Thursday. I hope that you achieve the results you need to progress to the next stage of your education or training.

If students have not received the results they expected, there is lots of helpful information at www.thesource.me.uk. It is most important to remember that no matter what grades you receive, you always have options to choose from.

The start of a new school year can present challenges for families and schools alike. The prospect of walking back through the school gates after the summer holidays, or indeed for the first time, can be both exciting and daunting.

While many children and young people will be looking forward to going back to school, I know some families may be feeling anxious and that it can feel quite difficult for many children and young people. It is normal to feel anxious, and there is a lot of support out there to help children manage the transition back into school, including a suite of top tips for families on the Suffolk County Council website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/wellbeing-in-education.

These resources have been written by our Psychology and therapeutic team and were co-produced with the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum. They include advice for families with primary and secondary aged children as well as guidance for families with children who have additional needs and/or anxiety. The resources are broken down into five top tips and I have pulled out five top tips which I think are really helpful to remember:

1. Starting conversations about going back to school sooner rather than later will ensure there is time for children to share their worries, think through problems and allow you to find solutions together.
2. The things we as parents worry about are not always the same as our children so ask them what they need to feel prepared.
3. Taking small steps to try and introduce routines early is a great way to prepare for the return to school. Bedtimes, waking times and mealtimes may well have changed during the holidays so adjusting these gradually to establish a routine to prepare children for the new school term will help them.
4. Using visual prompts and timetables and checklists with personalised themes can help with preparation and reduce feelings of worry.

5. Planning and knowing what to expect on their first day back. Who will be there and what will happen on their first day.

As well as these resources, InOurPlace offer online courses dedicated to improving emotional health and wellbeing in parents, children, teenagers, adults and grandparents. They have produced a suite of online training and information for parents to support children with the transition to primary or secondary school, called 'Moving Up'. Families in Suffolk can access online training and resources from InOurPlace for free by visiting www.inourplace.co.uk/movingup and using the access code WOLSEY.

We have been sharing links to these resources on our social media channels and will continue to do so over the next couple of weeks as schools return. I hope that parents find these useful.

I wish children, young people and all school staff the very best as they return to school.

Solar Together launches in Suffolk

Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers.

Suffolk residents can join the group-buying scheme, which offers solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points, as well as retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate. The scheme allows homeowners to increase their independence from the national grid.

It's free to register here, and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation. Suffolk's councils are working in partnership with iChoosr, experts in sustainable energy transition, to make the transition to clean energy as cost-effective and hassle-free as possible.

Councillor Gerald Kelly, chair of Suffolk's Environment Portfolio Holders Group, said:

"Solar Together Suffolk has been successfully running for six years now, seeing hundreds of solar and battery installations across the county.

"A recent survey of Suffolk customers showed that the main reason for their installation was to do good for the climate and environment, followed by saving money on bills and reducing their reliance on the grid.

"Homes account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk's CO2 emissions. Through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, we are helping homeowners and landlords make their homes and lifestyles as sustainable and energy efficient as possible. This can be through improving insulation, how homes are heated, electric vehicle infrastructure, or solar panels and batteries."

Richard from Bures, near Sudbury, recently shared his experience with Solar Together Suffolk and said:

"Excellent! Solar Together Suffolk took all the hassle of finding a provider, and the group-buying secured me a better discount than trying to do this on my own. It was a no-brainer."

How does it work?

- Householders can register online to become part of the group for free and without obligation at solartogether.co.uk/suffolk
- Approved UK solar PV suppliers participate in a reverse auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
- After the auction, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Marie-Louise Abretti, Solar Together UK Business Manager, added:

“With energy prices continuing to fluctuate, residents of Suffolk are looking for opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills, and increase their independence from the grid. The Solar Together group-buying scheme offers a straightforward way to make an informed decision and to access a competitive offer from a trusted, vetted provider.”

iChoosr has been collaborating with UK councils since 2015 on its Solar Together scheme, aiming to accelerate the energy transition nationwide. The initiative aims to encourage residents to partake in the collective purchase of solar PV and battery storage systems. To date, Solar Together has installed 13,750 solar panels in Suffolk, reducing carbon emissions by 27,100 tonnes over 25 years – equivalent to 15,000 cars off the road in that time!

iChoosr’s schemes have been delivered in partnership with local authorities in five countries. More than 180 schemes have led to 178,000 residents installing solar PV systems.

Small improvements needed as children’s services’ Ofsted report published

Ofsted has published its report into Suffolk County Council’s children’s services. The report rated the service as ‘requires improvement to be good’.

The ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services) report conveys a mixed picture across Suffolk. Importantly, inspectors concluded that children’s safeguarding is strong and that the experiences and progress of children in care were good. They also reported that ‘children in care thrive’.

However, they highlighted weakness in some of the processes and systems in place. These included inconsistencies with the way first contact with children and young people is processed, and the quality and support to children aged 16 and 17 who present as

homeless. It also found inconsistencies in the level of understanding that care leavers have about the range of support available to them.

The report outlined seven points for improvement, which have either been implemented already through small amends to systems or processes, or are in progress.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services at Suffolk County Council, said:

“It is disappointing that Ofsted didn’t find all our services to be consistently good.

“However, what really counts is that the report shows that our children are safe and well-taken care of and - in particular - our children in care are thriving.

“We need to improve some of our processes and systems, and address inconsistencies in the way we do things. These things can be improved with small uncomplicated amends and a plan of action agreed by Ofsted.

“I was delighted to read the extent of praise for staff throughout the report, including the strength of relationships with the children and families we work with, and their sensitivity and compassion. This public recognition is huge testament to their hard work and dedication.”

The inspection looked at four areas; the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; the experiences and progress of children in care; and the experiences and progress of care leavers. Although the majority of the report is positive, three of these were graded as ‘requires improvement to be good’. The experience and progress of children in care was ‘good’.

Following publication of the report, an action plan will be sent to Ofsted by the end of September and a partnership board will be set up to oversee improvements. The council will also carry out a quality assurance review of systems and processes.

You can read the report [here](#).

Sunnica challenge ends as two councils pull out

Judicial review proceedings from four local councils against the Sunnica solar farm project will not be pursued after West Suffolk Council and Cambridgeshire County Council chose to withdraw from the process.

Suffolk County Council had written to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP, regarding his decision to approve the Sunnica solar farm.

The pre-action protocol letter was the first step in potential judicial review proceedings against the Sunnica solar farm project, in a bid to secure appropriate funding for work that the council will have to do as a result of the scheme.

The council believes that, in his haste to approve the application in just a matter of days, the Secretary of State ignored the council’s funding arguments.

The new Secretary of State has shown scant regard for the communities affected, and for the local authorities who must pick up considerable amounts of additional work as a result of the project.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:

“We must not forget that this is the worst scheme we have ever dealt with and the developer has, to date, shown no interest in properly meeting our costs or properly engaging with local communities...

“This will mean that the developer, Sunnica, only has to pay a minimal amount to cover costs that will be forced upon the council, as a result of their project going ahead.”

This comes at a time when local authorities are having to make difficult financial decisions across all service areas, in order to prioritise supporting the most vulnerable in their communities, through adult social care and SEND.

Suffolk County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council remained committed to seeing through the legal challenge but were left in an impossible position to continue.

With West Suffolk Council and Cambridgeshire County Council abandoning the process, the cost of legal fees for the two remaining councils versus the likely financial return in a successful outcome was no longer a justifiable use of public funds.

Although both councils still had the desire to take things forward, the loss of two councils in the group action is damaging to the process as a whole.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:

“We are deeply disappointed by West Suffolk Council and Cambridgeshire County Council choosing not to challenge the outrageous decision by the government to approve the Sunnica solar farm that spans our two counties.

“The Sunnica solar farm was approved by the new government against the recommendation of the independent Planning Inspectorate, who said it should be thrown out. In pulling out of this challenge, the two councils have demonstrated they are intent on serving the interests of the government over the interests of local communities and taxpayers.

“Those councils may suggest now going cap in hand to the developer but that has little chance of success. We must not forget that this is the worst scheme we have ever dealt with and the developer has, to date, shown no interest in properly meeting our costs or properly engaging with local communities.”

Councillor Anna Bailey, Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council, said:

“I am unbelievably disappointed with the decisions of Cambridgeshire County Council and West Suffolk Council to pull out of the Group action. They have expended public funds, the legal position has not changed, and yet they are now refusing to finish what we started. What a waste and what a let-down for local residents.

“Now local taxpayers are going to have to foot the bill for the costs to the councils of this unwanted, appalling development; Cambridgeshire County Council and West Suffolk Council have seriously let the side down by allowing that to stand without challenge.

“There is still a long way to go with this application and the developer still has a huge mountain to climb before they send in the diggers to the food production fields of rural East Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. East Cambridgeshire District Council will work to do all it can to mitigate the impact of this development, secure local benefits and to stand by its residents.”

All four councils had earlier received a response from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP, to their pre-action protocol letter in a bid to secure appropriate funding.

That reply outlined the government's position to defend their decision to grant permission for the Sunnica project. The councils maintain their position that the Secretary of State made a legal error, but cannot now test the case in court.

New era for Lowestoft as Gull Wing set to open

Lowestoft's Gull Wing bridge will open to the public with a community walkabout on the bridge on Saturday 7th September, heralding a new era of connectivity and regeneration for the town.

The new bridge, which was built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans, represents a significant step forward for Lowestoft and promises to bring both immediate and long-term benefits to the town, its businesses and residents.

It not only addresses longstanding issues with traffic congestion but will also act as a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new investment and positioning Lowestoft as a dynamic and forward-looking commercial centre and community.

By providing another route over Lake Lothing, the Gull Wing bridge will significantly ease traffic congestion in the town centre, shortening journey times and improving journey reliability. Modern cycle and pedestrian facilities on either side will encourage more sustainable modes of transport and better connect communities on the north and south of the waterway.

The bridge is expected to attract new businesses and trade to the area, create new job opportunities, and to streamline logistics and transportation, laying the foundation for continued growth in the town and surrounding area for many decades to come.

The Gull Wing's bascule span being installed (CHPV Offshore Film & Photography)

To celebrate this important milestone for Lowestoft, members of the public are invited to experience the Gull Wing before it opens to traffic. From 9am to 11:30am on Saturday 7th September, the bridge will be open exclusively to pedestrians. It is hoped this opportunity will allow the public to experience the unique scale and design of the bridge up close, as well as grab a selfie and check out the views, without any traffic.

From noon, the bridge will open to vehicles as well, with vintage Lowestoft buses from the East Anglian Transport Museum leading the way.

Parking is not available so those planning to attend the event are encouraged to use public transport or travel by foot where possible.

A rolling road closure will be in effect on the morning of Sunday 8th September, as the Tour of Britain crosses the Gull Wing during their preliminary ride-out ahead of the final stage between Lowestoft and Felixstowe.

The formal civic opening and naming ceremony for the bridge is set to take place on Tuesday 19th November. Additional details will be provided closer to the date.

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“The people of Lowestoft have waited for a third river crossing over Lake Lothing for a long time. Suffolk County Council promised we would build a new bridge, and I am delighted to announce today that we have delivered on that promise.

“The Gull Wing will not only serve as a vital transportation link between north and south, but also stands as an iconic new landmark for the town, representing a new era of development and prosperity for Lowestoft. I look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on our community.”

Tristram Browne, Project Manager at Farrans, said:

"Our team is proud to have delivered the iconic Gull Wing Bridge for the town of Lowestoft. We have been able to leave a lasting legacy not only with the completion of the bridge but also through our programme of social value and stakeholder engagement. During the delivery of this project we have employed 76 local people, provided apprenticeships, volunteered on local community projects and donated significant sums to local charities.

“We have brought the region on the journey of the bridge build with us, creating some memorable sights with the arrival of the bridge and bascule sections. It has been a pleasure to work on such a complex, technical project and we would like to thank the local community for their support.”

Two Suffolk flood investigation reports published in latest response to Storm Babet

The investigations into the flooding which occurred in Needham Market and Wickham Market during October 2023 have analysed what caused these events and recommend what could be done to alleviate flooding there in the future.

In Needham Market, over 45 residential and commercial properties were internally flooded. In Wickham Market, it was 40 properties. In both communities, infrastructure and services were disrupted.

The investigations found that the areas were severely impacted by flooding due to the intensity of rainfall that overwhelmed the natural flow routes and the capacity of watercourses and drainage infrastructure. This situation was compounded when overland flow paths converged with the water from rivers that had burst their banks.

Key recommendations for both areas, which include short, medium and long term proposals aimed at individual homeowners, community groups, landowners and Risk Management Authorities, include:

- Implementing community flood plans
- Maximising use of grants available to make properties more resilient to flooding
- Removing blockages in watercourses and drains (private and publicly owned)
- Investigating potential improvements to drainage infrastructure (private and publicly owned)

- Creating new natural flood management features (e.g.: storage ponds and planting that 'slows the flow' of flood water)
- Further modelling to better understand flooding within the location (Wickham Market only).

These actions could help mitigate local flood risk.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"The impact of Storm Babet is still being felt across the county with some people still not back in their homes. Communities such as Needham Market and Wickham Market have suffered as a result of this storm and these in-depth investigations will help us work with them and other communities to lower flood risk and build resilience ahead of future flood events." "We recognised the importance of carrying out these investigations thoroughly following Storm Babet, so invested an extra £1 million of funds to bring in additional specialists.

"I also urge anyone who suffered internal flooding as a result of Storm Babet to apply for the £5k grant to make their homes more resilient to future floods. Applications can be made until April 2025 and anyone interested should make contact with us at floodgrants@suffolk.gov.uk.

"Suffolk County Council has a duty to investigate significant flooding under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations help to establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused or exacerbated the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure and make recommendations for actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events.

Since the storm, targeted recovery work has been carried out across the county to ensure damaged highway infrastructure is repaired, those whose properties were flooded get help and that investigations can start which will identify how to reduce flood risk. In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around three or four of these flood investigations. However, following Babet approximately 50 have been commissioned."