



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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OPINION: The right project in the right place can bring benefits to our economy

A column by Cllr Richard Rout, Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

Looking out of my window as I write this, trying to make out the Birmingham skyline through the raindrops running down the pane (I'm here for the Conservative Party Conference), I think we can confidently say that the last knockings of summer are behind us. We are now truly ensconced in autumn, and probably sooner than we'd like, winter.

Some of our communities know too well the impacts that the rain can cause in terms of flooding, and the county council continues to work hard on mitigating these effects. But it is a different type of flooding I wanted to highlight today – the kind that emanates from the sea.

Although I live in a more land-locked part of Suffolk, I enjoy regular trips to the coast, whether for work or for pleasure. From Felixstowe in the south to Lowestoft in the north, and the multitude of spots in-between, we are a haven for coastal-related tourism, commerce and industry.

Suffolk really is a special place in this respect, bringing holiday-makers from around the country, whilst being recognised as a crucial player in securing the nation's low carbon energy future – regular readers will be familiar with the council's on-going challenges to solar farms, pylons and all the associated infrastructure, as we work hard to protect our communities.

But part of our coastline at Benacre, near Lowestoft, is under imminent threat from the sea. Preliminary work on flood defences has been underway at the site, near the A12 at Benacre sluice, which is close to being breached. Agencies have been working hard on immediate flood prevention measures, but a much bigger project is needed to protect the area. If nothing is done, dozens of local homes and hundreds of acres of farmland will be under severe threat in the very near future. The A12 would flood up to twice a day with the tides, essentially cutting the east of the county in two.

Left unattended, the repercussions would be catastrophic. There would be significant costs to the county council alone, from having to manage regular road closures, to delivering an alternative long-term solution to protect the A12.

So what is being done?

The good news is that the Benacre and Kessingland Managed Realignment Scheme has been drawn up. It's a £59 million project to be funded by a range of organisations, including a planned £2 million from county council, which has already been earmarked in our budget, and will be put before Cabinet next week for approval.

The final piece of the jigsaw came with yesterday's news that Sizewell C will commit £25 million to the project, meaning that all funding is now in place, and work is expected begin in the Spring next year.

This is great news on so many levels. The new defences against flooding will protect the A12, local homes, farmland and give security to the local economy and tourism. It will also create hundreds of acres of valuable inter-tidal habitat for wildlife and people to enjoy. It will create a new 82-hectare saltmarsh which will provide a habitat for sea-fish, invertebrates, wading birds and a wide range of other wildlife. It will improve 52 kilometres of local rivers and protect 11 million cubic metres of local freshwater from the

encroachment of sea water. The area will be open to walkers, bird watchers and nature lovers, giving a boost to local tourism.

Doing nothing was simply not an option. If this scheme did not go ahead, the impacts would not bear thinking about – particular around the flooding of the A12.

If you don't have cause to travel around that northern part of the county, imagine your nearest A-road being cut off twice a day for hours at a time, with all the additional pressures and complications that would bring.

I am genuinely delighted that this project can make its way to the finishing line. Much like the Gull Wing bridge which we have just delivered up the road in Lowestoft, it goes to show that not all infrastructure projects are divisive and controversial - the right project in the right place can bring huge benefits to a local area and its economy.

Building firm boss jailed over fake certificates

A building company director who falsified building work completion certificates during the sale of flats in a development in Newmarket has been jailed for more than three years.

Wayne Murfet, who was boss of Lors Homes, supplied 36 fake Building Control Completion Certificates to purchasers of flats on a complex called The Grosvenor in Newmarket High Street.

Following a case brought by Suffolk Trading Standards, Murfet was jailed (Tuesday, October 1st) at a sentencing hearing at Ipswich Crown Court for a total of three and a half years.

Sentencing, Recorder Emma Nash said that she took into account his previous good character and the impact on his family of custody, but she considered the fact that the purchasers would not have purchased the flats had it not been for the certificates.

Murfit was also disqualified from being a company director for seven years.

A hearing under the Proceeds of Crime Act will now take place next year after which Murfet's companies will be sentenced. Lors Homes has already been placed into liquidation. The court had heard how the certificates were supplied to purchasers of flats in the complex as part of the conveyancing process.

Trading Standards were alerted in 2019 by West Suffolk Council Building Control.

The certificates were similar to those issued by Building Control but had not been issued by them.

The certificates were supplied to the purchasers by their own solicitors, who in turn had received them via the developer's solicitors.

The buyers then purchased their properties believing them to have been signed off.

Since this discovery, West Suffolk Building Control inspected and found breaches of building regulations and fire safety concerns with the building.

As a result, a 24-hour waking watch had to be installed in the building.

The court heard the building had since been sold by the developer and West Suffolk Building Control was collaborating with the new owners to have things put right so that it meets building regulations.

During the investigation it then emerged a further false building control completion certificate had been supplied by Murfet to a purchaser of a property in Cambridgeshire through another company of his called Murfet (Burrough Green) Limited.

Murfet, aged 41, of Freckenham Road, Chippenham, had denied 12 lead counts of dishonestly intending to make a gain by failing to disclose information to the purchaser

which he was under a legal duty to disclose, namely that building works had not been certified as complete by Building Control of West Suffolk Council contrary to section 1 of the Fraud Act 2006.

He also denied two counts of making or supplying an article for use in fraud contrary to section 7 of the Fraud Act 2006.

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

“Building regulations are there to protect the public and Wayne Murfet chose to ignore those regulations.

“He is now paying the price, and I commend the diligence and hard work of Suffolk Trading Standards in him being brought to justice following what was a complex investigation.”

Government's new housing targets must put infrastructure first

Suffolk County Council has raised concerns in its response to the government's proposed reforms for planning policies for England.

In particular, it expresses fears about the lack of clarity around infrastructure, such as schools, transport, waste and community facilities when new housing developments are approved.

Last week, the government closed its consultation on plans to change the National Planning Policy Framework and other parts of the planning system.

The proposals include a significant increase in the number of new homes to be built across Suffolk – the government's own figures suggest that East Suffolk alone would see an 87% increase in the number new homes, compared those currently planned.

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

"Such a significant uplift in new homes in Suffolk, if not accompanied by the correct funding for affordable homes and infrastructure, will ring alarm bells with local residents.

"We've already seen from the new government that they are showing scant regard for Suffolk - with the approval of the Sunnica solar farm, the cancellation of our £500 million county deal and the withdrawal of Winter Fuel Payments. This cannot continue with huge pressure placed on the county with the new government's housing targets, without the appropriate infrastructure to sit alongside it.

"In my own division, the villages of Bramford and Great Blakenham have grown considerably, and many residents have commented that roads and other infrastructure only come after the homes, if it comes at all.

"This is simply not sustainable – infrastructure must be delivered in a timely manner. If residential developments emerge that are not included in local plans because of the new government's policy, then the onus must be on the developer to confirm how infrastructure will be delivered."

Suffolk County Council is already very active in securing developer contributions and delivering infrastructure. It secures Section 106 contributions as well as funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy from district councils - but this is to maintain a baseline level of service rather than make a positive overall improvement to infrastructure.

In its response to government, the council said that the simple question of "who pays" for the infrastructure needs to be answered when permissions are being granted. Local planning authorities should not be allowed to assume that other authorities and agencies will make up any difference.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards honour their heroes

Firefighters, staff, and volunteers have been honoured at Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's annual awards ceremony.

More than 50 long service and good conduct medals and clasps plus accolades and certificates for outstanding service to the community were presented in the ceremony at Trinity Park Showground in Ipswich on Wednesday October 2.

The awards also recognise the work of Suffolk County Council Trading Standards and emergency planning.

The Miles Hammond Trophy, awarded for excellence by an individual or team during an emergency incident, has been awarded to Firefighter Matthew Brown.

He was sitting in his car in Lowestoft when he saw a teenage girl knocked down as she crossed the road.

She was thrown into the air and landed 10 metres away. Matthew gave her CPR until an ambulance arrived. He also aided the driver of the car to prevent him becoming a target of hostility at the scene of the accident.

The Excellence in Community Safety Award was won by the Suffolk Trading Standards 'No Cold Calling Zone' team for its work in reducing doorstep crime and promote confidence in people who may have been subject to doorstep crime or who are more vulnerable to it.

There are now 217 such zones across Suffolk and since the launch of the first, in 2009, more than 34,000 households have been protected from cold callers, either by living in a zone or through stickers provided to individual households which give legal effect to the displayed 'no cold calling' request.

The Cabinet Member Award for Volunteer of the Year went to the Salvation Army, whose volunteers provide refreshments for firefighters at the scene of major incidents.

The team are on stand-by 24 hours a day to crew a response vehicle kept at Stowmarket fire station. On receiving the call they mobilise to buy fresh food and get to an incident within 40 minutes.

Over the years the team have provided thousands of firefighters with tens of thousands of hotdogs, sandwiches, soups, and hot drinks.

The Alan Soards Award for Best Fire Station went to Debenham fire station for its work in the aftermath of Storm Babet, despite being flooded itself.

A Lifetime Achievement award was made to Nigel Howlett of Suffolk Trading Standards in recognition of his 44 year career with the organisation which has seen him successfully investigate numerous rogue businesses.

They include car-clocking cases, where many miles were taken off vehicles; an investigation into a business producing counterfeit goods which required a visit to Dublin to obtain evidence; and the prosecution of a rogue builder for fraudulent trading against consumers on home improvement work.

A dozen Certificates of Merit were presented by Yvonne Gilchrist-Mason OBE, the High Sheriff of Suffolk, while Certificates of Long Service were presented by Councillor Liz Harsant, the Chair of Suffolk County Council.

Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey and Becky Heginbotham-Blount of Suffolk Resilience Forum presented awards marking the work of the forum, a multi-agency group providing strategic and operational guidance for major incidents.

His Majesty's Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, Mark Pendlington, presented HM The King's Long Service and Good Conduct Medals, which are awarded for 20 years service to Firefighter Neil Bonham, Watch Manager Kevin Chambers, Firefighter Bryan Cooper, Crew Manager Gareth Cossey, Area Manager Henry Griffin, Firefighter Gary Naylor, Crew Manager Richard Plant, Firefighter Shelly Pleasance, Watch Manager Kirsten Thorpe, Firefighter Carl Vearer and Firefighter Darren Wood.

30 Year clasps were awarded to Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dan Fearn, Firefighter Les Field, Crew Manager Peter Goodhand, Watch Manager Steve Mullen (retired), Firefighter Stefan Saunders, Area Manager Andy Smith, and Station Manager Mark Walker.

40 Year clasps were awarded to Watch Manager Martyn Hazelwood, Watch Manager Paul Jolland, Crew Manager Paul Kerridge, and Station Manager Russell Punchard.

A minute's silence was observed in memory of Firefighter Steven Fisk, an on-call firefighter with Halesworth fire station, who passed away in September.

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

"I am hugely honoured to be able to help recognise the hard work and dedication to public service of this special group of people.

"It is no exaggeration to say that their hard work and devotion to what they do is what allows the rest of us to live our lives in safety. Society owes them a great deal."

Suffolk launches pothole prevention programme ahead of winter weather

Suffolk County Council has launched a pothole prevention programme to target areas of Suffolk's road network that could worsen when the winter weather hits.

Teams with additional resources and the latest technology have already started visiting and treating locations susceptible to deterioration or where there are smaller defects that could grow as the colder and wetter weather strikes.

Building on the success of earlier trials with the Roadmender Elastomac and Dragon Patcher machines, teams will be deployed across Suffolk to use this equipment in addition to our usual Safety Defect Service that deals with larger defects as they occur.

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

"Cold and wet weather often wreaks havoc with our roads, which is why we have taken proactive steps and developed a targeted campaign to tackle and provide resilience to our road network ahead of this winter.

"This week we launched an additional programme of repairs in areas which pose a higher risk of potholes forming during the winter months. The aim of the programme is to treat areas of Suffolk's roads earlier with the goal of reducing the number more substantial defects that may cause safety concerns to road users throughout the winter.

"These plans have been carefully worked up over recent months to ensure we can get ahead of pothole repairs between now and December prior to the drop in temperatures, mostly in January, February and March, where the largest number of potholes form. I look forward to sharing progress with residents."

Highways workers using the Roadmender Elastomac system will target urban roads that are at higher risk of damage to locate cracks and smaller potholes and carry out repairs. Unlike traditional methods, which require potholes to be saw-cut, excavated and asphalt to be compacted on top, Elastomac is a flowable material used to seal the repaired area.

Once applied, this adhesive, flexible material bonds with the existing road surface, preventing water getting in the cracks and extending the road's lifespan. The process is more sustainable and efficient, reducing material movement and waste by 90%, lowering costs and minimising disruption.

With the Dragon Patcher machines, these clean the surface of the road using compressed air, preparing it for repair with an application of aggregate and hot bitumen material, and will target rural roads.

Fuelled by biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use, generates zero waste, and has demonstrated significant carbon savings compared to traditional patching techniques.

The locations have been carefully chosen, focusing on areas with a higher risk of potholes forming during winter. Highways teams will be working when weather conditions allow, from 7am to 5pm, moving across the county to treat the more vulnerable areas. Whilst the repairs are underway, traffic will be managed temporarily by staff on site, and there may be waiting times of up to 15 minutes.

Highways authorities up and down the country experience an inevitable rise in potholes during the winter months. Water seeps into cracks in the road surface which freezes, expands then breaks up the road surface. The purpose of this preventative programme is to seal treated areas of Suffolk's road network to reduce water getting into cracks reduce the overall number of potholes forming.

For more information on our targeted project, please visit the [pothole prevention programme page](#).

Council to offer interest-free loans to make homes more energy efficient

Suffolk County Council will offer interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run.

Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps will all be possible with loans of up to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of 7 years at 0% interest.

The £3 million project will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can [register your interest now at Lendology](#).

Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

"This loan scheme will help hundreds of Suffolk residents to make their homes more energy efficient. It will put money back in their pockets, by saving on their energy bills.

"We all have a responsibility to ensure homes can cope with the changes in climate, keeping people cooler in summer and warmer in winter, and ultimately reducing our carbon emissions. This loan scheme is one way we're helping people to do that – and at the same time, they are benefitting from improvements to their homes.

"One of the other highlights is that more than the initial £3 million will be generated for loans – when people make their repayments, the money goes back into the pot and is available for someone else. We hope it will be accessible for many years."

Money for the loans comes from £3 million of funding received as part of the council's negotiations with the previous government to secure a County Deal.

It was allocated from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support an energy efficiency and energy generation 0% loan fund for people that cannot access grants currently available to low-income households.

The scheme supports Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, by increasing the number of properties which have energy-efficient and low carbon energy measures installed.

An increase in demand for energy efficiency measures will also help support businesses providing those services, meaning jobs, skills development and investment in the green economy.

Suffolk County Council is partnering with Lendology CIC to deliver the interest-free loan scheme. Lendology CIC is an experienced Social Enterprise Lender, managing similar schemes with councils across the country.

For more information and to register your interest in an interest-free loan, visit [Lendology's website](#).

Suffolk residents encouraged to share views on new Local Transport Plan

Suffolk's communities helped shape a new draft of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan by sharing their views back in February of this year and the county council is now seeking feedback on the final proposed document.

The plan which details activity between 2025-2040 sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

Alongside this county-wide plan, the county council has produced fifteen 'Area Transport Plans' and a 'Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' which are the funded implementation plans for the wider Suffolk Local Transport Plan. These plans outline how the Local Transport Plan's vision and objectives will be delivered in key locations across the county.

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

"After engaging with Suffolk's residents earlier this year about their travel habits, I am delighted to be able present to them an updated Suffolk Local Transport Plan for the next 15 years.

"The plan presents the county council's vision for transport in Suffolk, highlighting the challenges and opportunities we have and the measures available to respond to them – this is why it's important we consider the views of all before we formally adopt our fourth document and its associated plans.

"We value the views of the local community and interested parties, so please share your thoughts, even if you only wish to comment on a small part of the plans."

The consultation is available via www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP and the consultation will close on Monday 25 November 2024. The Local Transport Plan and its associated plans will then be presented to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet in 2025.

Rendlesham Revealed inspires classroom archaeology activities

Suffolk County Council's successful Rendlesham Revealed archaeology project is expanding its legacy to primary schools across the county.

Rendlesham Revealed was a four-year, community archaeology project which made significant new discoveries about life in Suffolk and Anglo-Saxon England.

It uncovered the remains of a large timber Royal Hall, confirming the location as a royal settlement of the East Anglian Kings. At the same site, a rare, possible pre-Christian temple from the same period was also discovered.

Among the volunteers were over 287 schoolchildren from five local schools, who were actively involved in excavating the site near Sutton Hoo, and helped clean and sort the finds that were dug up during the *Rendlesham Revealed* project.

Following on from the project's success, an educational outreach officer will be going into primary schools to deliver hands-on archaeological activities with real artefacts excavated from Suffolk.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

"Rendlesham Revealed was such a triumph in terms of the historical finds that were uncovered – and how it helped to cement Suffolk as an integral part of royal Anglo-Saxon life.

"And for me, the involvement of the local community, charity groups and volunteers was equally as successful – especially the children that played their part in helping us understand our local history.

"Although the digs have now come to a close, the project's legacy is living on in Suffolk's schools. It's really exciting to be able to take hands-on archaeology into primary schools, and hopefully inspire children through the history on their doorstep."

Schools can find out more about this opportunity by contacting archaeology.education@suffolk.gov.uk or visiting <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/archaeology-education>. There will be a charge to schools for the service.

To find out more about *Rendlesham Revealed* and archaeology in Suffolk, visit heritage.suffolk.gov.uk.

Suffolk County Council set on major investment to further protect Suffolk from flooding as it calls on Government to 'step up'

Suffolk County Council has announced its intention to invest another £1.5 million to carry out important flooding prevention work.

- Council set to agree £1.5 million to deliver first phase of works identified in initial flood investigation reports
- Authority calls on Government to recognise ongoing impact of Storm Babet and fund £20 million of further prevention work urgently needed
- Extensive work already completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs.

The commitment comes as initial flood investigation reports have identified that a further £20 million is needed to complete the work – a figure that the county council can't afford. The council has therefore written to the Flooding Minister, Emma Hardy MP, and demanded the government step up and plug the funding gap.

- [Read the council's letter to DEFRA](#)

Examples of the kind of projects that could be delivered include:

1. Creating flood water retention ponds in land above villages and green spaces within communities to capture water and slow the flow into residential areas.

2. Installing flood doors and non-return valves on drains to stop water entering properties that are particularly at risk of flooding.
3. Help landowners with advice and guidance, especially those within responsibilities to maintain ditches and streams on their properties (known as 'riparian ownership').
4. Bolstering Suffolk Highways' resources to deliver planned and reactive maintenance on the county's roads and footpaths.

Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"Since Storm Babet, our teams have been working hard to repair the damage it caused, investigate what happened and to help reduce the flood risk in future. This preventative work is complex, costly and requires lots of agencies work together.

"Despite limited resources and budgetary challenges facing all county councils, we have managed to find extra money to tackle flooding and propose investing a further £1.5 million to deliver work identified in our investigations. However, this isn't enough and - so steep is the challenge facing areas like Suffolk, who were hit hard by Storm Babet - the government must act and provide extra funding. This is why we've written to the Flooding Minister asking for additional money. The government needs to step up to the plate and help us ensure Suffolk's residents don't face uncertainty when these extreme weather events occur.

"I saw firsthand how devastating the impact of Storm Babet was for many families and businesses across Suffolk. The finished flood investigation reports give us a clear understanding of what work needs to be done and at what cost. It is right that we continue to increase our resources appropriately, but unless the government acts too we will not be able to go as far as our residents deserve."

Storm Babet struck between October 18 and 21 last year and caused substantial flooding and disruption across Suffolk. A month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours, flooding more than 900 homes and businesses. The impact of the storm was exceptional and demanded an urgent multiagency response.

So far, Suffolk County Council has committed more than £13.75 million for work to aid recovery from Storm Babet.

Suffolk County Council has made several achievements as part of our continued commitment to reduce flood risk.

The council has already committed £12.25 million, including:

- £1 million on bringing in additional flood investigation specialists
- £1.25 million for repairs to Suffolk's highways following the flood damage
- £10 million funding, which was committed in 2021, to address long-standing drainage issues over three years. This complements £2 million a year invested in drainage repairs and improvements funded from the Department for Transport maintenance grant.

The council has completed seven location-based flood investigations, with an estimated 50 to complete. This compares to an average of three or four investigations in an average year. These reports provide a detailed account of events for each flooding location and recommendations for other organisations, landowners, businesses and residents.

Carried out extensive works on Suffolk's highways. Specifically:

- Cleared 96% of highway drainage gullies across Suffolk, more than 111,000. This involves lifting the iron grates and sucking up the debris that has washed off the roads
- Attended more than 3,500 emergency call outs for flooding related incidents – an unprecedented number. This includes pumping an estimated 2.5million litres of water from the roads, removing 53 tonnes of debris and clearing 121 fallen trees
- Rolled out the [DEFRA-funded Recovery Scheme](#) which meant that flooded property owners could apply for up to £5,000 to make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding. Suffolk County Council is administering the scheme on behalf of government. [Applications are open until April 2025](#).

The new money is set to be agreed by the council's Cabinet on 5 November.

Deadline approaching for secondary school places in Suffolk

Parents and carers have until Thursday 31st October 2024 to submit an application to secure their child's place at a secondary school for September 2025.

Applying after the closing date significantly reduces a child's chances of getting a place at their preferred school.

Last year, Suffolk County Council received 7,867 on-time applications from parents and carers indicating which secondary school they would prefer their child to be educated at from September 2024 in Year 7. 93% of applicants received an offer for their first preference school and almost 98% of applicants received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, said:

"It is important for parents and carers to complete and submit their application by the closing date of 31 October 2024 as this will give them the best chance of securing a place at one of their preferred schools.

"Parents and carers should carefully consider which secondary schools to apply for on behalf of their child. We recommend they apply for more than one school, and up to three schools can be listed on the application."

A completed application must be submitted for every child requiring a Year 7 place at a secondary school. For families who are planning to move house or think their circumstances may change before next September, it is still important to make an application on time using the child's current address. Further information to help parents and carers with this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

Parents and carers should apply online as they will receive an email confirming that their application has been received. If they are unable to apply online, they should complete a paper application (CAF1), however these cannot be acknowledged, so it is suggested parents and carers obtain proof of postage.

Before making a school application, parents and carers need to carefully consider how they will get their child to and from school. School travel eligibility is based on a child attending their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available and where the distance

criteria is met. This might not be the catchment area school. To find out more about SCC's School Travel Policy please visit www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel.

Families who apply online will be able to log on to the Online Service on the National Offer Day (Monday 3rd March 2025) to see their offer of a school place. An email confirmation will also be sent on the day. For those who completed paper applications, offer letters will be sent out by second class post on the National Offer Day.

Applications can be made at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions, where further advice and guidance is also available.

Fostering is...Everything

Fostering can mean everything to those involved. That is the message of a powerful new fostering film from over 100 councils.

'Everything' was launched on 17 October 2024. It is the seventh film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering. The 'Everything' project is the largest collaboration yet, with participants from Cumbria to Devon and Lancashire to Suffolk.

Cllr David Roach, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption, said:

"The 'Everything' project has given our fostering service an amazing film that shows the long-term impact fostering can have, with relationships between carers and children lasting well into adulthood.

"All councils need to recruit more foster carers – in Suffolk we have a particular need for more foster carers for teenagers - and by collaborating to produce this emotionally powerful film, we will show people how rewarding and life-changing fostering is.

"The message is the same for all of us – we need more people to step forward and become foster carers. 'Everything' will help us to reach more people in our communities and encourage them to find out more about this really rewarding role.

"We are committed to giving vulnerable children and young people we care for the best chance to thrive, which for the vast majority of them is with local fostering families."

'Everything' follows foster carer Mike and his family on a journey through time with two of the children they have looked after, who are now adults. A surprise 60th birthday party for Mike gives Will and Zara a chance to reflect on how being fostered made a difference to their lives, thanking him for everything.

Thanks to footage shot on a genuine old camcorder, we are taken to the 1990s, to see how Will settles into the family. We also jump back to the 2010s, when a young Zara is being taught to play the guitar by Mike, something that comes full circle when she performs a song at the party. Mike's son Chris is involved throughout, showing the important role the children of foster carers play.

The concluding message of the film is that what you do with your life could forever change someone else's – encouraging people to foster in order to make that change.

The film was developed with the input and insight of foster carers and people with care experience, was produced by Reel TwentyFive and project managed by public sector media partner CAN/Rachel Brown.

Sarah Thomas, Chief Executive of the Fostering Network says:

"The Fostering Network has been proud to support the collaborative film projects since 'Giants' in 2017. It's great to see local authority fostering services pooling resources to produce another amazing film. 'Everything' will help to amplify their message about the chronic shortage of fostering households, encouraging more people to come forward and foster.

One of the main characters in the film, Chris, shows how important other family members are when it comes to fostering. This is something we champion throughout October, which is Children of Foster Carer's Month."

'Everything' is the latest in a series of film collaborations that started in 2017 with 'Giants', which was supported by a small number of local authorities in the midlands and has now grown into a national project across England, reflecting the need to recruit more foster carers.

More time to get your Suffolk solar panel and battery storage quote

Over 3,100 Suffolk residents have signed up for a quote from the Solar Together Suffolk scheme for solar panel and battery storage installation – and the deadline for registration is now extended to 15th November 2024.

This gives more homeowners the opportunity to save on their energy bills, cut carbon emissions and boost local renewable energy generation.

Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying a fair price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers, without the hassle of shopping around themselves.

On offer are solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points, as well as retrofit battery storage for anyone who already has solar panels installed and is looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate.

Registration to the scheme is free, 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, and enabling homeowners to increase their independence from the national grid.

How does it work?

- Homeowners can register online by 15 November 2024 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.

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.

Suffolk residents urged to share their views on local pharmaceutical services

Suffolk County Council is calling on residents to share their views on local pharmaceutical services as part of a regular review to ensure that these services continue to meet the evolving needs of the community.

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), which is undertaken every three years in line with statutory requirements, is a comprehensive report designed to assess current pharmaceutical services and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

Feedback gathered through this survey will help the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS England, and Integrated Care Boards make informed decisions about future service provisions, including any potential new pharmacy openings.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Protection said:

“Pharmaceutical services play a vital role in the health and well-being of our communities. It is essential that we regularly assess these services to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our residents and are accessible to everyone. By completing this survey, people can have a real say in the future of their local healthcare services, and we encourage as many people as possible to get involved.”

Pharmaceutical services in Suffolk are delivered through community pharmacies—sometimes referred to as chemists—which include those located in supermarkets, online pharmacies, and specialist medical appliance contractors. These pharmacies not only dispense medicines but also offer essential healthcare advice and support, often serving as the first point of contact for health concerns.

Residents can complete the survey online by visiting <https://bit.ly/4f4PUYC>. The deadline for submissions is 8th November 2024.

By contributing to this important review, residents can help ensure that pharmaceutical services in Suffolk remain fit for purpose and responsive to the needs of the community.

Suffolk Highways unveils new gritting fleet named by county's young people

With winter approaching, Suffolk Highways has welcomed 38 new gritters to replace its existing fleet, including Kieran McSpreader, Albert Brinestein and Morgan Freezeman.

The new gritters have a digital operating system with the latest route map planning software, ensuring they are winter ready to keep Suffolk's roads safe and moving in the event of ice or snow.

A competition to name the gritters was launched at this year's Suffolk Show, with winning entries including Salty, Gritty McGrit Face and Grit Britain, being unveiled during a recent ceremony in Ipswich.

There are also multiple Suffolk-related names in the fleet, such as Spread Sheeran, Lizzie Gritzzini and Grit Rhys Jones in recognition of some of the county's famous residents.

They are not the only celebrities to be honoured, as Gritney Houston, Spready Mercury, Keanu Freeze, Lewis Caploughdie, and David Attenbrrrrrr are set to grace Suffolk's roads in the coming weeks and months.

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

"I am delighted that Suffolk Highways has welcomed 38 state-of-the-art gritters to its fleet, with the names chosen by our county's young people likely to raise a smile when they are spotted out and about this winter.

"Although last winter season was milder than previous years, Suffolk Highways still gritted over 3,200 miles of road, roughly the distance from London to Dubai, in response to road temperatures being forecast to drop below one degree celsius on 62 occasions.

"This is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our winter maintenance drivers, who often work around the clock or sacrifice time with their loved ones to ensure that Suffolk's roads are gritted and ready for use by highway users. However, we all still need to play our part by driving to the conditions and preparing our own vehicles for winter."

Whilst the weather has been warmer in recent weeks, Suffolk residents may get a glimpse of the new gritting fleet when they carry out their test grit runs in the coming days.

Further information on winter maintenance carried out by Suffolk Highways, including which roads are gritted, can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/check-which-roads-are-gritted.

Have fun and stay safe for Halloween and Bonfire Night

It's the time of year for spooky fun and fireworks and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has issued advice on how everyone can enjoy themselves in safety.

Halloween and Bonfire Night are events for fun and activities, but they can also be a time for some scary fire safety hazards.

It's best to go to an organised fireworks display but if you do buy fireworks make sure they are from a licensed or registered seller.

The advice from SFRS is:

- Keep costumes away from candles and flames as they can be flammable. If clothing does catch fire, children should 'Stop, drop and roll' and this could be practiced with parents at home before the event
- Make sure you can be seen in dark. During both Halloween and Bonfire Night, use reflective tape and glowsticks to make yourself more visible, especially when near roads
- Consider using a battery-powered candle for your pumpkin for extra safety
- If using candles, ensure they are fully extinguished before you leave the house
- Ensure escape routes are kept clear of Halloween decorations
- Never return to a lit firework or throw them into bonfires
- Stand well back from fireworks and bonfires
- It is not recommended to give sparklers to children under five
- Always wear gloves when holding sparklers
- Hold sparklers at arm's length, away from the face
- Always have a bucket of water or sand nearby to put the sparkler in, hot end down, once it has gone out
- Never throw a sparkler onto the floor

Organised fireworks displays are more fun and safer than hosting your own fireworks or bonfire party.

However, if you are planning on using fireworks for a private event please familiarise yourself with the [Fireworks Safety Code](#) to ensure you keep everyone safe.

Suffolk Trading Standards advise people to only buy fireworks from licensed or registered retailers and not from unknown sellers on social media sites, and to check labelling to ensure you have enough space to use them safely.

Halloween costumes for children should only be bought from a reputable retailer. Check the product for safety markings and look for a flame-resistant label.

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

"I hope everyone has a happy Halloween and Bonfire Night but, most importantly, a safe one.

"Items such as naked-flame candles and fireworks can have disastrous consequences if misused so please do follow the safety advice as it there to help you."

For more information go to [StayWise](#), which brings together the educational resources of the emergency services and other safety-focused organisations, or [Spark](#), the SFRS safety education website.

Anyone with concerns about the safety of a product should report it to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

HRH The Princess Royal to open Lowestoft's Gull Wing Bridge

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal will officially open The Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft on Tuesday 19th November.

The new multi-million-pound bridge, which opened to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September, represents a significant step forward for Lowestoft and is already benefitting the town according to local businesses and residents.

Built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans, The Gull Wing Bridge has provided a long-awaited third crossing over Lake Lothing, which has significantly eased traffic congestion in the town centre, shortened journey times, and improved journey reliability.

By streamlining logistics and transportation in the town, the bridge is also expected to act as a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new investment and positioning Lowestoft as a dynamic and forward-looking commercial centre and community.

Timings and event details will be provided closer to the time.

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

"The Gull Wing is a truly impressive and significant piece of engineering. Since it opened to the public last month, it has been fantastic to hear so many people tell us how the bridge has reduced traffic congestion and made travelling around Lowestoft easier.

"We are honoured that Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal will come to Suffolk to officially open The Gull Wing Bridge, marking an historic occasion in Lowestoft's history."

"I look forward to welcoming The Princess Royal alongside everyone else who, over the years, helped to make this bridge possible."

Suffolk residents encouraged to have their say on walking, wheeling and cycling improvements

Residents in Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Copdock and Capel St Mary are being encouraged to view and feedback on proposals to improve walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure within their communities.

The proposed schemes, which form part of funding awarded to the county council by Active Travel England, have been developed to give residents more choice in how they travel for both local, shorter journeys as well as longer ones.

In addition to providing more travel choice, the proposed improvements will also make it safer and easier for residents to walk, cycle and wheel, improve air quality by reducing congestion, and make the roads less busy for those who have to use them.

The consultations are live and will run until 20 December 2024:

- Bury St Edmunds - the proposed improvements are situated along a 2.7-mile-long route which starts in the east of the town at Barton Road and finishes in the west at Newmarket Road. This is an important link between residential and business areas and the town centre, and whilst there are already a number of good walking and cycling paths in place, there are some places where they need improving.

- Felixstowe - the proposed improvements are in the west of the town around the Maidstone Road and Grange Road area. This gets very busy at school drop-off and pick-up times as two primary schools are located here - SET Felix school and Grange Community school.
- Copdock and Capel St Mary - this route is around 3.5 miles long and starts at Whights Corner on London Road in Copdock and finishes at the junction of The Street and Cedar's Lane in Capel St Mary. London Road has plenty of space to improve the existing walking and cycling paths which will create a better link between the two villages. The planned improvements will also connect into the cycle route to and from the Ipswich Park and Ride service.

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

"The county council has been very successful in winning funding from central government to improve active travel infrastructure across Suffolk, and by engaging with residents it allows us to fully understand their needs and concerns prior to implementing these improvements.

"Ultimately, we want to be able to provide more sustainable travel options for our residents to make walking, wheeling, and cycling trips easier, safer, and more convenient.

"I am glad to share this consultation with residents and I encourage them to take a look at the proposals and let us know their thoughts."

To access the information regarding the consultations and to have your say, please visit:

- Bury St Edmunds: <https://arcg.is/1uWu15>
- Felixstowe: <https://arcg.is/1z8uqr0>
- Copdock and Capel St Mary: <https://arcg.is/OXHjSW>

Council calls on Chancellor to back local government in Autumn Budget

In a letter to the Chancellor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cllr Richard Smith MVO, highlights that public funding is not keeping pace with the demand for public services, particularly in areas like children's and adult care which now account for 77 pence of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends.

Cllr Smith notes that, despite significant savings achieved by the council over the last five years, the budget gap has grown unsustainably and calls on the Chancellor to address the funding crisis and spare residents from the need for steep council tax increases.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, said:

"We accept fully how demand for funding for public services is universal, with all eyes looking towards the Treasury for urgent financial relief. Local Government, and with it, Suffolk County Council, is a critical part of that demand – with vital frontline public services struggling to cope with ever increasing demand, rising costs and diminishing financial resources."

Cllr Smith says the council endorses submissions made by the Local Government Association, County Councils Network and Society of County Treasurers, each calling for urgent action to safeguard public services.

Cllr Smith continues:

“The council feels it essential that the pressures facing local authorities are fully recognised by government and reflected in the local government settlement. It would be of great concern if, instead, the government chooses to lift the council tax referendum limit and pass the cost to local residents.

“We eagerly anticipate your Autumn Budget statement on Wednesday and trust that, however challenging, you will back local government with the financial resources it needs to continue to provide vital public services.”

Suffolk’s Arts and Culture organisations urged to apply for new Culture Project Fund

A column by Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality.

This September, we launched the Suffolk County Council Culture Project Fund, a £500,000 initiative aimed at supporting arts and museum projects across the county. This fund is a significant investment in our cultural sector, and it reflects our commitment to improving the wellbeing and resilience of our communities. I want to see Suffolk’s arts organisations, cultural groups, and community leaders thrive, and this fund is designed to make that possible.

The fund will provide vital financial support to a range of projects, both large and small, that align with our key priorities—health and wellbeing, economic development, environmental sustainability, and value for money. I believe in the power of culture to improve lives, and that’s why we’re encouraging arts and culture organisations across Suffolk to apply.

One of the main goals of the Culture Project Fund is to create stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities. We know that arts and culture play a critical role in enhancing people’s mental and physical health, reducing isolation, and fostering connections between individuals and groups.

We particularly want to support projects that reach our most vulnerable residents—whether that’s people who are isolated, living on low incomes, or from marginalised communities.

We also recognise the important role that arts and culture play in driving Suffolk’s economy. Through the Culture Project Fund, we’re aiming to support projects that develop skills, create jobs, and promote local social enterprises. We want to see Suffolk’s cultural organisations not just surviving but growing and contributing to the county’s wider economic development.

Whether you’re working on a community art project, launching a new museum exhibition, or setting up a creative social enterprise, we want to help you succeed. This fund is designed to provide flexible support, with three tiers of grants to suit different types of projects—

from small grassroots initiatives to larger, more established programmes. We're offering small grants up to £1,500, medium grants up to £15,000, and large grants up to £50,000.

I've worked hard to ensure that this fund is accessible to as many organisations as possible. We know that applying for funding can be a daunting process, so we've streamlined the application process to make it easier for everyone to apply. Whether you're a registered charity, a community interest company, a non-profit, or a freelance professional working in the arts or museum sector, we want to hear from you.

We're particularly keen to see applications from organisations that focus on reaching people who may not normally have access to cultural opportunities. This is about making arts and culture available to everyone, no matter their background or circumstances.

The Culture Project Fund is a fantastic opportunity for arts and cultural organisations across Suffolk to make a real difference in their communities. I believe in the power of culture to transform lives, and I'm excited to see the innovative and inspiring projects that will emerge from this fund.

Applications are now open, and we urge all eligible organisations to apply. This is your chance to secure funding that can help you create projects with a lasting impact.

For more information or to apply, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund or contact our Arts & Museum Team at cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk.

Loft Insulation Offer gives Suffolk residents 50% off eco-friendly insulation

According to The Energy Saving Trust, an uninsulated home loses up to a quarter of its heat through its roof.

An effective way to reduce this heat loss, and your heating bills, is to insulate your loft.

For the second year running, Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders have provided funding to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills.

The Suffolk Loft Insulation Offer enables homeowners in Suffolk to receive a 50% discount (up to £200) and free delivery on orders of 200mm or 370mm wide eco-friendly, itch free thermal insulation rolls from High Loft, the UK's leading eco loft insulation brand.

Last year, the project enabled over 5,000m² of roofs in Suffolk to be insulated. This year, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership want to double that figure. The offer is open to anyone in Suffolk and will only close once the allocated funding has been spent. Simply go to highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution and fill in the form to receive your discount code.

The Loft Insulation Offer is being funded by Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders and High Loft and will help contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for a net zero Suffolk. To find out more visit greensuffolk.org.

To order, simply [visit the High Loft website](#) and fill in the form to receive your discount code.

Products available for 50% discount up to £200 are:

- [200mm Width](#) - Eco Friendly Itch Free Thermal Insulation Roll

8m x 200mm x 110mm (1.60m²)

- [370mm Width](#) - Eco Friendly Itch Free Thermal Insulation Roll
8m x 370mm x 110mm (2.96m²)