

Suffolk County  
Councillor  
November 2023  
Town and Parish  
Newsletter

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Suffolk County Council has received further Government funding to continue the work of its Centre of Excellence, which supports other local authorities with NSIPs.

## Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7<sup>th</sup> November), Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.

The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads.

Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs.

It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2 out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads.

The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment.

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

"This major investment looks set to improve roads across the county where people live. These smaller roads are often in estates or off the beaten track in our villages and are in need of some love and attention.

"By investing in resurfacing these types of roads, rather than repairing them when potholes appear, it aims to reduce ongoing maintenance costs, our carbon footprint and disruption on our roads. It also aims to encourage more people to consider sustainable ways of getting about, such as walking and cycling.

"Our highways teams are currently prioritising sites and identifying the roads which we will target with this investment. If the extra investment is agreed we will look to deliver this larger programme of works over the course of the next year."

## Government backs A12 road improvements with funding commitment

The government has today (31<sup>st</sup> October) confirmed funding for a transformative package of improvements as part of Suffolk County Council's A12 Major Road Network scheme.

The scheme will see upgrades to the key roundabouts from the A14 at Seven Hills, east of Ipswich, north to the A1152 at Woods Lane, and a new dual carriageway section replacing the existing single carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079.

It will also deliver improvements to bus links and walking and cycling connections to reduce the issue of severance for communities on either side of the A12 – for example, where the A12 separates houses from local employment and retail areas.

The Department for Transport has committed to funding up to £ 54 million of the scheme's estimated £ 64 million total cost. The remainder of the cost will be funded by local development contributions, including from Sizewell C and Brightwell Lakes.

### **Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:**

"Suffolk County Council has fought long and hard for this scheme, so I am pleased that the government has announced its commitment to fund most of the cost of the project. These improvements will future-proof the A12 and deliver major benefits to local communities and to people travelling around Suffolk, the road being a link between our two largest towns, Ipswich and Lowestoft.

"Also, it is a critical bottleneck in accessing the East Suffolk coast, which is the location of several Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including Sizewell C. This funding will allow us to meet the timescales of Sizewell C and minimise congestion and network disruption during its construction.

"I would like to thank the government for recognising the importance of this scheme, the positive impacts of which will be far-reaching."

## These are now difficult times, so help us decide next year's budget

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

Do you have a couple of minutes to spare, to answer 3 questions?

Suffolk County Council has just launched an online consultation as we plan our budget for next year, and we would welcome your thoughts: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget)

Around 2,700 Suffolk residents and businesses completed the survey last year. That gave us an excellent insight into your priorities, with social care services for adults and children being high on that list. This aligned with the council's thinking, and we invested an additional £50m in these areas for this current year.

It should only take a few minutes to finish, and as you complete the survey, it explains where the council gets its money from, how it spends money, the financial challenges that local councils are facing this year, and how we can raise funds and spend the budget next year.

This year we have around £688m to spend on everything that we do. 75% of all that money is spent on people's services alone, so for example care for adults and children, public health and communities.

So, if you or someone you know has received housing support, a care package, has their child taken to school, had SEND support, had a health visitor, visited a library or received some mental health support, that is where some of that 75% is spent. We are proud of these services, as they provide support to those who need it most across Suffolk.

This leaves 25% of the budget to spend on everything else that we do, such as running a fire and rescue service, providing all the staffing, technology and infrastructure to help run all the public services, as well as maintaining roads and pavements, addressing climate change, waste services, bus services, and much more.

Hopefully you can start to get a feel for the incredible variety of public services that the council provides, and the scale of the task to fund them all to the level we would like. This is always a challenge, and to be honest is a year-round activity, it's not just something we turn our attention to for a few months at this time of year.

What has made this challenge even more difficult this year, is general costs going up globally. Just like you, the council is experiencing things being more expensive. Gas and electricity bills have increased, and the items and services that it needs to buy have gone up too.

In addition, more and more Suffolk residents are depending on the services the council provides, particularly care for adults and children. All this ultimately means that to maintain the current levels of our services, more money is needed in the council's budget.

So how do we raise more funds to support these services? Firstly, we always look to save money where possible. For many years, the council has had excellent financial management, constantly adapting to operate in a more cost-effective way, whilst not losing any frontline services. In fact, many teams within the council are continuing to make savings this year, and are on course to make savings of £20m.

We have also built-up appropriate reserves, to use when difficult times arise. These are now difficult times, and those reserves are having to be used. But the council cannot keep doing that.

We can then look to secure more money from the government. Along with many councils across the country, Suffolk County Council lobbies government to ask for more funding. I have regular contact with Suffolk's MPs to explain the council's situation and they lobby on our behalf. The council's leaders also speak directly with government to explain where

support is needed. However, in the current climate, the government is being asked for more money from nearly every quarter, and there is only so much to go round. Clearly, there are challenging decisions to be made at all levels and we recognise that. So, we always strive to make the council as efficient as possible and deliver the best possible services with the money available to us.

The majority of the money the council receives each year (58%) comes from your contribution to Council Tax. Next year, we could ask for a greater contribution from you in your Council Tax bill. This would give more money to spend on all the services that we provide, from care for adults and children, to maintaining our road and pavements. Each 1% increase in Council Tax raises an additional £3.9m and costs a Band B taxpayer an extra 22 pence per week.

Our survey ultimately asks whether you would support an increase in Council Tax next year.

If the council doesn't generate enough funds through all these different means, then some of the services that we currently provided will have to be delivered differently, reduced, or in some cases cease.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts through our survey at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget)

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### Council's concerns for LionLink's impact on Suffolk coastline

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SCC has submitted a second, extensive response to proposals for LionLink, an energy project which could see considerable impacts on Suffolk's coastal communities and natural environment.

- The proposed northern landing points at Southwold and Walberswick are wholly unacceptable
- This project should be considered and examined jointly with the Sea Link project

Plans would see the project coming onshore near Southwold and Walberswick, with a cable route affecting Southwold and Reydon. This would affect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The council believes that this is wholly unacceptable.

The LionLink project aims to connect multiple offshore wind farms in the North Sea, instead of individual wind farms connecting one-by-one to the shore. The project is a joint venture between the UK and the Netherlands, supplying energy to both countries.

The council believes that there should be more co-ordination with other offshore projects, particularly Sea Link, which could be considered and examined jointly with LionLink.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:**

“The impact of LionLink on our local communities, businesses and natural environment would be substantial.

“The option to bring the project onshore at Southwold or Walberswick is unacceptable. It’s close to people’s homes, access to the road network is challenging and is located in the AONB on the borders of Minsmere.

“Neither can we support the proposed cable route which is a considerable distance from the substation at Friston which it would need to connect to. Construction would have a significant impact on the highly sensitive landscape of the Wang River and Blyth River Valleys. The cable route would also cross the A12 twice, which is a concern with the disruption that would cause.”

Suffolk County Council has been calling for better coordination of energy projects, such as LionLink, for years. Just last week (24 October), the council announced it is preparing its response to Sea Link, another significant offshore electricity connection which could affect Saxmundham and Aldeburgh.

#### **Councillor Rout continues:**

“The LionLink website states that it is ‘a vital step toward an integrated North Sea grid’, however I fail to see how there is any integration with other similar projects – LionLink, Sea Link and Nautilus are all being addressed in isolation, despite all originating from National Grid.

“We fully support these ambitions to improve the country’s energy security, but the lack of coordination across these different projects is a concern. It would seem logical to coordinate the LionLink and Sea Link proposals, which would reduce the burden on our local communities and enable the Planning Inspectorate to consider both projects at the same time.”

The council’s submission to the second non-statutory consultation for LionLink [can be read here](#). The consultation closes on Friday 3 November 2023, with National Grid Ventures expecting to submit a Development Consent Order application in 2025.

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### **Rogue builder is jailed following Suffolk Trading Standards probe**

A rogue Suffolk builder who dishonestly took nearly £600,000 from customers to finance a lavish lifestyle has been jailed for more than four years following an investigation by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Alan Middleton and his wife Katie enjoyed holidays to Gibraltar and the Italian Grand Prix, regular visits to London, hiring caravans at a holiday park, and shopping trips. He even paid for a Gibraltar holiday for people who worked for him.

It is calculated he received in the region of £592,000 from customers before being brought to justice when he was jailed at Wood Green Crown Court in London.



Middleton, 45, of Merlin Close, Rugby, Warwickshire, but formerly of Saxmundham, traded as GK Builders, G & K Builders, Middleton Building Services, AGM Custom Construction and AGM Bespoke Construction Limited, and operated across Suffolk.

He admitted five counts of fraud by false representation, one of theft, one under the Insolvency Act for obtaining payments over £500 whilst an undischarged bankrupt, and one offence under the Company Directors Disqualification Act for setting up a limited company as a bankrupt.

The court heard one contract was worth £380,000 with £70,000 VAT while another was for £210,000 with VAT of £45,000, despite Middleton not being VAT-registered.

He also used a forged Federation of Master Builders insurance document to suggest he was insured to perform works.

Middleton was jailed for a total of four years and six months and disqualified as a director for five years by Recorder Sailesh Mehta.

He and his 34-year-old wife also pleaded guilty to two counts of fraudulently obtaining a mortgage for themselves worth £400,000.

For these offences he was jailed for 12 months, to run concurrently.

Mrs Middleton received a nine-month sentence, suspended for 18 months, and was ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £140.

They pretended they were not in a relationship and that Mrs Middleton earned a salary of £108,000 to obtain a mortgage, something that would not otherwise have happened because of Mr Middleton's poor credit history.

Suffolk Trading Standards began their investigation after receiving reports of customers who had paid for building work only for it to have been never completed.

Middleton would tell his victims he would only work on one property at a time, but consumers quickly became aware he was working on multiple projects to the detriment of their own building works.

The investigation also uncovered Middleton was using various tactics to extract more money from customers, including falsifying supplier invoices and using a fake VAT number.

In addition, he had previously declared himself bankrupt but failed to disclose this to consumers despite it being a legal obligation.

Once Middleton realised Suffolk Trading Standards was investigating him, he reverted to using the name Alan Middleton for business, having previously used Gary Middleton.

**Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:**

“Middleton is now reaping the consequences of his actions and I hope his sentencing goes some way towards providing justice for those he exploited.

“Customers trusted him, but he abused that trust in a way that left them picking up the pieces.

“Not only would he disappear part-way through a job, causing untold distress when his victims had to finance the completion of his work, what work he did carry out was often to a poor standard.”

Anyone who believes they may have been the victim of a fraudulent or substandard trader should contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

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### Your chance to shape the future of Suffolk’s Library service

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An opinion piece by Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities.

Suffolk has a nationally recognised Library service, and I am proud that we are seen as leading the way for other library services.

We know that Libraries play an integral role in our communities, offering so much more than books; from places to meet others, learn new skills and get involved in activities at all ages, libraries play a special and unique role in people’s lives.

The contract with our current provider ends in May 2025 and since that contract began, the needs of local people have changed. We are therefore taking this opportunity to seek views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The value of the new contract will be circa £80m over 12 years and this means that we are required to undertake a competitive procurement process.

Last week, Suffolk County Council launched a consultation asking Suffolk Residents to tell us what they want from their library services in the future.

Holding a public consultation as part of the procurement process gives an opportunity for Suffolk residents and workers to share their views on what they value in the current service and how they would like to see it develop in the future.

The feedback will ensure the changing needs of our communities are reflected within the tender for the future contract.

The council has undertaken thorough engagement with over 30 organisations including Suffolk Libraries staff, key service users, schools and partner organisations prior to launching this consultation. I would like to thank those organisations who have helped to shape the consultation questions to make sure that we get the most out of the consultation.

As a largely rural county, it's important that everyone in Suffolk has an opportunity to access library services, wherever they live.

A key focus of the consultation is the council's Library outreach services, which include three mobile library vehicles, serving more than 500 stops across rural parts of the county each month, for the pickup and exchange of books.

The mobile library vehicles are coming to the end of their life and therefore changes will need to be made as part of the new service, to ensure we can continue to deliver mobile libraries and other Outreach services. This could include replacing the existing vehicles with smaller, more agile and economically friendly vehicles, making it easier to drive on rural roads and helping us to reach more people.

Library Outreach services also include Pop-up Libraries, and a home library service run by local volunteers for Suffolk residents that find it difficult to access a library building or mobile library.

The consultation will seek views on how Library Outreach services could be run in the future and we want to explore whether our residents would benefit from a like for like service, or a different mix of mobile and pop-up library services.

We will be increasing the value of the new contract to take into account increased service costs, management of the Library Outreach service, and to allow for innovation in future years. The term of the new contract will be 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 6 years.

Whether you are an avid user of your local library, or if you do not currently use your library regularly but would like to make more use of it – we want to hear from you! This is your chance to shape the future of library services in Suffolk.

Please visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation) to give your feedback, before the closing date of Friday 26 January.

Easy read and translated versions of the consultation are available on request, please email: [Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk)

Those who cannot access the consultation online, can request a printed copy, or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

## County Councils remain united against Norwich to Tilbury onshore option

Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Council leaders are urging National Grid to reconsider their preferred onshore option following findings of a recent review.

The councils jointly commissioned and have now published an independent report into the Norwich to Tilbury project, which proposes the construction of a new high voltage electricity transmission line between Norwich in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex.

Leaders of the three county councils are now asking National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) and the electricity system planner, National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) to consider the findings.

The report, by Hiorns Smart Energy Networks, reviews the options considered by National Grid, including the preferred option of a pylon line between Norwich and Tilbury.

The total length of the line would be 183 kilometres. This would consist of around 158 kilometres of new overhead line supported by 520 pylons. There would be also four sections of underground cabling. These underground sections would run through, and in the vicinity of, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. National Grid's proposals also include a new substation on the Tendring Peninsula, to allow the connection of offshore wind farms.

Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Councils, accept that the transmission network in East Anglia needs reinforcing to support the transition to net zero, and provide energy security. However, they remain concerned that the need for, and timing of, the current proposals is uncertain and not robust.

This uncertainty brings into question the need case for National Grid's preferred option, of a land-based pylon line. All three county councils have expressed their concerns that this option will harm the local economy, environment and the health and wellbeing of their communities.

The review focused on a re-appraisal of the need case for the project; that need case was developed by National Grid Electricity System Operator.

The review looked into the need and timing of the proposals. It also looked into National Grid's decision that a terrestrial route, comprised mostly of overhead lines and pylons, would be preferable to an integrated offshore option.

The review supported National Grid's position that there is a need for additional electricity transmission capacity to connect renewable and low carbon energy generation in the East Anglia region.

However, it challenged the delivery date of 2030, and suggested that the need for additional transmission capacity would be closer to 2035, or beyond. This supports the concerns raised by the three councils.

While this potential delay to the need for Norwich to Tilbury is likely to reduce the cost of National Grid developing an integrated offshore alternative, the report concludes that the most economical option for meeting the need for future transmission capacity remains onshore overhead lines, and pylons.

The Hiorns Smart Energy Networks final report is available to read in full [here](#).

Given the uncertainties around the need for, and timing of, the Norwich to Tilbury Project, all three council's strongly recommend that National Grid carefully consider the Hiorns report, and its potential implications for the project.

**Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:**

“The effects of pylons and all the associated infrastructure cutting across all three counties cannot be underestimated. The impact on local communities and businesses will be significant, along with consequences for wildlife, our visitor economy and protected landscapes.

“This will come in the short-term through building works, disruption and disturbance of habitats - but most notably in the long-term for future generations who will suffer from construction that they cannot reverse, all for a project that could have less impact if it went by sea.

“To ensure the UK's energy security, our clear preference is for a coordinated, offshore centred approach, delivered at pace to minimise onshore works in Suffolk.”

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## Celebrating environmental excellence: Suffolk Awards launched

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The Awards celebrate the achievements of Suffolk's residents, businesses, schools, communities, and organisations who are protecting our environment and reducing their carbon emissions.

The Awards, organised by Suffolk County Council, recognise the incredibly valuable environmental work that is being done throughout Suffolk, by bringing people together, sharing ideas and inspiring one another.

This year, nominations for those working in agriculture and farming are particularly welcome.

Categories for the 2024 Awards are:

- Waste Reduction and Recycling Award
- Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscape Award
- Greenest Business Award
- Greenest Small Business Award
- Greenest Community Award
- Green Hero Award (People's Choice award)
- Greenest School Award
- Green Tourism Award

Nominations are now [open online](#) and close on 31 January 2024, with winners announced at an event to be held on 27 March 2024, at The Hold in Ipswich.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:**

“Every time we run these Awards, it's a joy to discover the work of local businesses, schools and communities who commit so much energy to protect our environment and help make Suffolk an even better place to live.

“This year, I'd particularly welcome nominations that recognise the fantastic work that takes place in the county's agriculture and agribusiness sectors. We're extremely proud of Suffolk's rural nature and would like to celebrate the sustainable practices among our county's diverse agricultural and food production community.

“As a county and country, if we're to meet the challenge of adapting to a changing climate and protect our environment, we need to collaborate and address these issues that face us all. Our Awards will recognise those who are doing just that.”

The winner of last year's Green Community Award was Bury Bike Train, a project for children to ride their own bikes to and from school in a group, supported by adult cyclists.

As is now tradition, the Green Hero Award, will recognise individuals who have taken it upon themselves to lead the way in working for the environment. It's the only award for which both the nominees and the winners are chosen by the public.

Nominations can be submitted online at [www.greensuffolk.org/awards](http://www.greensuffolk.org/awards)

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## Success for Suffolk at National Social Worker Awards

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An article by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, and Councillor James Reeder Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services.

Social work is vital to keeping children and adults safe. Social workers help people live good, independent lives as part of the community. We are incredibly proud of social workers in Suffolk and the fantastic work they do which is why we are delighted to congratulate the winners of this year's Social Worker of the Year Awards.

The Social Worker of the Year Awards is a national event celebrating the excellence and compassion of social workers. Suffolk had a remarkable year with our applications, securing victory in three categories at the awards ceremony held on 3 November 2023 in London.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Victoria Veale, who was honoured as the Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year. Victoria has earned the admiration of her colleagues and the individuals she serves for her unwavering trust and empathy in her work. Her dedication is evident through her achievement of a First-Class honours degree in social work while simultaneously working full-time in the apprenticeship

program. Since September 2022, she has been an integral part of the Adult and Community Services Learning Disability and Autism Specialist Support Team, making a substantial impact by supporting individuals through highly complex situations.

When asked about being a social worker, Victoria said:

“I don’t just love social work I love working in Suffolk and being given the opportunities I do not believe I would have got anywhere else. I am passionate about supporting the people of Suffolk. While I am newly qualified, I have worked for Adult Social Care in Suffolk for almost eleven years!

“I absolutely would recommend becoming a social worker. It is a tough job, and it isn’t always wins and successes but when you keep going and build relationships with people who otherwise felt marginalised by professionals, they are the reason I keep doing what I’m doing!”

Secondly, we congratulate our Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) team for winning the Silver award for Adult Services Team of the Year. The DoLS team ensures people who cannot consent to their care arrangements in a care home or hospital are protected. Care arrangements are assessed to check that they are necessary and in the person’s best interests. This achievement reflects the team's tireless efforts and steadfast commitment to the people they serve.

Finally, we celebrate the Make a Change Team, who received the Silver award for Team of the Year in Children's Services. The team is committed to identifying and reducing harm from all forms of child exploitation and have been recognised for their outstanding work within the local authority. Their dedication and expertise in engaging with young people at risk and delivering long-term support, has led to impressive outcomes. This includes a 91% reduction in exploitation risk for young people supported by the team.

Once again, congratulations to all the winners of this year's awards. Suffolk's success at this event serves as an inspiration for our county's residents to consider a career in social work. While it can be challenging, it is also incredibly rewarding, as social work has a profound, positive impact on people's lives, both those receiving support and those providing it.

For more information on becoming a social worker, please visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/socialwork](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/socialwork).

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### Extra £108 million for Suffolk’s roads welcomed

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Government announcement - which is part of a Department for Transport plan to pump £609 million into highway maintenance in the East of England. £107,590,000 has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year.

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

“Today’s news is extremely welcome and will certainly help us to make Suffolk’s road better for everyone. We still need to understand the detail in full. But so far, what we know is very positive and will make a significant difference to our road network.”

The funding is part of the Government’s Network North plan, with money redirected from HS2 funding. Transport Secretary Mark Harper MP today set out his £8.3billion national long-term plan to resurface 5,000 miles of roads across the country.

Other projects in the East of England set to benefit from the Network North money includes the transformation of the Ely Junction to give an extra six freight trains per day access to the Port of Felixstowe and [upgrades to key roundabouts on the A12, from Seven Hills to Woods Lane](#). A new dual-carriageway section will be built to replace the existing single-carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079.

## 4.7 million litres of water and 8,412 drains cleared since Storm Babet battered Suffolk one month ago

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4.7 million litres of water has been pumped away and 8,412 highways drains cleared of post-storm debris since Storm Babet hit Suffolk one month ago.

The scale of work undertaken since the storm includes:

- Clearing and jetting of 8,412 drains
- Removing 121 trees blocking roads
- Cleared flood water from 198 locations
- Repairing 1,200 road and pavement potholes
- Contacting landowners about blocked private watercourses and roadside ditches, which are generally their responsibility to maintain.

The areas worst hit by the storm, including Debenham, Framlingham, Needham Market and Cavendish have all had their drains blitzed to clear tonnes of silt, leaves and other debris that has been washing into them as flood waters have subsided.

After drains are cleared, water from large tankers is run through them to check they are operating and if they are not, high pressure jets can be brought in to clear any blockages. In extreme cases, cameras are used to locate hidden blockages and then work is scheduled to dig up the pipes and fix the issues.

**Councillor Steve Wiles, Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways Drainage and now also providing an additional focus on wider flood prevention post-storm Babet, said:**



“Storm Babet was an exceptional and sustained downpour, with water running off fields and overwhelming riverbanks and roadside ditches, and exceeding the capacity of road drains as more than a month’s worth of average rainfall for East Anglia fell in just 24 to 36 hours.

“The deluge of rain has needed significant additional work to clear and I am thankful to our highways staff for their hard work, especially in the areas worst hit.

“There is a significant amount of work being done by our district and borough council colleagues to help residents recover from the floods, including making payments from the Government’s flood relief programme. Eligible residents will start receiving grants and council tax discounts during November.

“In the coming months and years, there will be much work for councils, emergency services and residents to ensure they are as prepared as possible for extreme weather.”

Suffolk County Council is also pumping an extra £10 million into drain and gully clearing projects.

135 drainage sites were addressed during 2022/23 and 89 new projects are currently in the design phase with the county council’s new highways partner Milestone. This is in addition to Suffolk’s annual drain clearing programme which saw 111,000 drains cleared last year.

The county council has also gathered over 800 reports of flooding to homes and businesses, to enable owners to access funding from the Government. Suffolk councils are working together, with Suffolk County Council collecting information and assessing the reports, and the district and borough councils distributing the funding to eligible property owners.

Eligible residents who experienced exceptional property flooding during Storm Babet and have reported this to the county council, will start receiving financial support during November.

## Suffolk County Council’s Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission

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Suffolk County Council has been awarded an indicative overall rating of “Good” for the quality of its Adult Social Care services.

Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard.

Earlier this year CQC announced that 5 local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, including Suffolk, had volunteered to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot, to help CQC develop the new model of inspection to help assess councils against the requirements of the Care Act. This model would then be rolled out across the country with all 153 Local Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care being inspected by the commission.

The assessment process began this summer with a request for information to each local authority taking part in the pilot. This collected the written evidence needed to allow CQC to understand how each council is delivering its adult social care services. Following on from this initial ask, the County Council was then required to arrange over 40 different meetings including 4 staff drop-in sessions, with over 150 people, including staff, partners, providers, carers, and people with lived experiences. These meetings allowed the CQC inspection team to meet people directly and ask questions to help further evidence the quality of social care services provided.

CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available, the good relationships between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs.

**Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"I am delighted, this is a fantastic result for Suffolk County Council, especially for those colleagues working within Adult Social Care.

"I am especially pleased to see areas like Safeguarding rated as good, this is a real acknowledgement of the hard work SCC and partners have put in place over the last few years to learn from every incident and work closely together as a system to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable in our community.

"I believe this rating is also a testament to the high levels of financial investment we as a council have consistently put into Adult Social Care over the years, especially during the dark days of the pandemic, and shows how through imagination and service transformation, we are delivering on our priority to put people's health and wellbeing at the top of our agenda as a local authority.

"Of course, there is always more that can be done with something as complex as Adult Social Care and we certainly won't take this overall rating for granted. There are challenges ahead which this report touches upon, but what this rating ultimately should do is give us all confidence that we have the right people and processes in place to provide good quality Adult Social Care services for the people of Suffolk."

**James Bullion, CQC's chief inspector of adult social care and integrated care, said:**

"At this assessment of Suffolk's health and social care services, CQC found dedicated and resilient front-line staff who were committed to delivering high-quality care and support. They were supported by effective leaders who had created a positive culture and used data to inform strategic decisions and drive action.

"People shared the positive experiences they had using the local authority's services, saying they were compassionate, flexible, and focused on their individual needs.

“It was also encouraging to see Suffolk County Council’s integration with local health partners, and the clear focus they all had on prevention. It was exciting to see them working on innovative approaches in this area, for example using digital equipment to reduce the need for formal care interventions, and increase independence and well-being.

“Moving mental health staff back from the local NHS trust into the local authority was seen as a really positive move. Staff said it had enabled them to be more responsive and provide more holistic and person-centred mental health care and support for Suffolk’s residents.

“However, there were also some areas where we’ve told them to make improvements, like improving access to their contact centre which was causing delays in assessments.”

“Suffolk County Council should be really pleased with this assessment, and it means they have a great foundation on which to build more improvements. We look forward to returning to see how they’ve done this.”

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## 1,400-year-old temple discovered at Suffolk royal settlement

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A rare, possible pre-Christian temple from the time of the East Anglian Kings, has been found at Rendlesham, near Sutton Hoo in Suffolk.

The discovery was made this summer by Suffolk County Council’s Rendlesham Revealed community archaeology project, which is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, made possible by National Lottery players.

Last year the project uncovered the remains of a large timber Royal Hall, confirming the location as a royal settlement of the East Anglian Kings.

This year’s excavations also uncovered evidence of fine metalworking associated with royal occupation, including a mould used for casting decorative horse harness similar to that known from the nearby princely burial ground at Sutton Hoo.

The royal compound was found to have been more than twice the size than was previously thought, bounded by a 1.5 kilometre-long perimeter ditch that enclosed an area of 15 hectares (the equivalent to about 20 football pitches).

The royal residence was part of a wider settlement complex covering 50 hectares which is unique in the archaeology of 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century England in its scale and complexity.

This year’s breakthrough caps a three-year campaign of excavation that transforms expectations and understanding of the period.

The site at Rendlesham is identified as an East Anglian royal centre by The Venerable Bede in his ***Ecclesiastical History of the English People***. Bede records that King Redwald, who died c AD 625 and whose grave is thought to be the Sutton Hoo ship burial, maintained a temple in which there were altars to pre-Christian Gods alongside an altar to Christ – although he does not specifically say this this was at Rendlesham.

This summer's excavations also revealed:

- The foundations of three new timber buildings (including the probable cult house, or temple)
- Evidence of 7<sup>th</sup> century metal working, including the discovery of waste products and a fired clay mould to make decorative horse harness
- Two graves of unknown date
- Enclosures and evidence of earlier settlement and activity from the Neolithic (4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC), Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods
- A Second World War searchlight emplacement

These archaeological discoveries show that Rendlesham has been a favoured location for human settlement and activity for 6,000 years from the fourth millennium BC to the present day, but that it was most important when a royal centre during the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

The most recent archaeology encountered was a Second World War searchlight emplacement, part of a searchlight battery recorded on US Force aerial photography from December 1943.

**Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology, said:**

"This year's findings round off three seasons of fieldwork which confirm the international significance of Rendlesham's archaeology and its fundamental importance for our knowledge of early England.

"Everyone involved in the project can take pride that together we have achieved something remarkable. Over 200 volunteers from the local community were involved this year, bringing the total number of volunteers to over 600 for the three-year fieldwork programme, including from the Suffolk Family Carers, Suffolk Mind, and local primary school children from Rendlesham, Eyke and Wickham Market.

"I'd like to thank the landowners and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service for enabling this project, along with the archaeological contractors Cotswold Archaeology. And of course to all National Lottery players who made possible the grant of £517,300 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund."

Excavations are now complete and the trenches at the site backfilled, with work already underway to analyse the finds with provisional results in 2024.

To find out more about the Rendlesham Revealed project visit: [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham)

## Violence against Women and Girls – Let's Change the Story

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An opinion piece by Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities.

Violence Against Women and Girls has a devastating impact on its victims. Crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, revenge porn and others occur all too often.

Suffolk County Council is proud to support the Sue Poole Award, which recognises innovation, achievement and commitment in the field of Violence Against Women and Girls and was presented earlier this month as part of the Suffolk Constabulary's annual Exceptional Policing Award.

Sue Poole worked tirelessly to support adults and children affected by the impact of domestic abuse. The Award is sponsored by the family of the late Sue Poole along with Suffolk County Council and is awarded in Sue's memory.

This year's winner is the Leeway Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Suffolk Team.

Leeway works in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies across Suffolk, ensuring that the victims voice and needs are at the centre of all they do.

The IDVA team supports adults at high risk of Domestic Abuse that have been referred through the Police and other public protection agencies. The team addresses the risk, completes safety or crisis planning and coordinates a multi-agency response to ensure that all areas of support are covered.

The award panel, made up of members from Suffolk's Violence Against Women and Girls steering Group, noted that Leeway's Suffolk IDVA team are extremely dedicated to supporting those who are at high-risk of Domestic Abuse, with the whole team going above and beyond for victims, survivors and children.

The team work with specialist agencies to get the best outcomes for all those they support, including children and young people, LGBTQ+ and older victims.

They are the voice of those they support, to get the best outcomes through court proceedings and multi-agency meetings.

I was delighted to present the Sue Poole Award to Leeway's IDVA Team at the awards ceremony on 8 November and it was good to discuss with the team the important impact of the work they do.

Looking to some of the other work happening in Suffolk, we are once again supporting this year's White Ribbon Campaign.

This year, we are encouraging individuals and organisations to make consistent choices and actions to #ChangeTheStory for women and girls, so that they may live their lives free from the fear of violence.

Violence experienced by women and girls takes many forms. Some behaviours and words may seem 'harmless' but normalising them ignores the short and long-term effects on women and can lead to more extreme violence.

According to data collated by Hourglass, one in six older people (65+) in the UK are victims of abuse. That's over 16% of our mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, grannies, grandads, friends and neighbours. Older victims also sadly on average, experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61. Through this year's White Ribbon Campaign, Suffolk County Council is shining a light on support available to older people.

Libraries in Suffolk are also supporting the White Ribbon campaign. Set up through Suffolk County Council's Domestic Abuse Champions Network - which now consists of more than 1300 Domestic Abuse Champions - all our Libraries continue to offer "Safe Spaces" for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

Safe Spaces provide an accessible safe and discrete environment where anyone, whether they are experiencing domestic abuse themselves, or if they're worried about someone else, can speak to someone in the library in confidence and be referred to the organisations who can support them. A visit to the library may offer someone the chance to get away from their abuser and so provides an ideal opportunity to speak to someone in confidence.

Visit <https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/> to find other safe spaces in Suffolk.

Culture change doesn't happen overnight, but by working together, we can end violence against women and girls in our lifetimes. Being allies with women every day shouldn't be underestimated, even the smallest actions can affect big change.

White Ribbon Day (25 November), begins 16 days of action to highlight support available for women and girls, both nationally and locally. Those wishing to pledge their support for the White Ribbon campaign should visit <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/>, or follow Suffolk County Council's social media channels, using the hashtags #ChangeTheStory and #LookCloserSuffolk for further information on how to get involved in the county's 16 days of action.

If you are experiencing abuse, or are worried about a relative, friend or colleague, please call the Suffolk Domestic Abuse 24 Hour helpline for support on 0800 9775690 or visit <https://www.suffolkdahelpline.org.uk/>

Perpetrators can contact the Respect Phonenumber on 0808 802 4040 for confidential advice on how to stop hurting the one they love.

## Almost £1 million extra committed to investigating significant flooding following Babet

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Suffolk County Council has committed almost £1 million of funds to bring in additional flood investigation specialists as the response to Storm Babet continues.

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.

As lead local flood authority, the 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 any actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events.

In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around three or four of these investigations. Following Babet, up to 100 look set to be needed.

### **Councillor Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's leader, said:**

"The impact of this truly unprecedented event is still being felt across the county and will continue to do so for months to come, so it is important that we recognise that and increase our resources appropriately.

"These investigations help us to work with communities to establish the cause of flooding in the worst hit areas and identify ways to manage the risk better in future."

### **Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways Drainage and Flood Recovery, said:**

"Our teams continue to work incredibly hard to help our flood-hit communities get back to their feet following the recent storms.

"This increase in resource will mean we can do even more with our communities and, importantly, quicker."

The Government has now confirmed the arrangements for the DEFRA-funded scheme which means flooded property owners can apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding. Suffolk County Council will therefore start to promote, administer and audit the scheme.

## The Way to Go team celebrate one year of social prescribing

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Following a busy project set-up phase which included attending events and engaging with over 2,000 people, the pilot is now ready to start receiving referrals from GP practices, social prescribers, and voluntary sector organisations as it enters its second year.

Suffolk County Council were awarded £1.495 million in November 2022 from Active Travel England (the executive agency sponsored by the Department for Transport) to run the three-year pilot. Since September, 48 low-intensity walking and cycling group sessions have taken place in various locations across the two towns including Christchurch Park, Murray Park, Normanston Park, Sparrows News and Kensington Gardens. Many more cycling and walking group sessions will be offered over the coming months as the pilot increases its capacity, including an 8-week cycling for health course and bike maintenance courses.

Social prescribing, sometimes known as community referral, is a way of connecting people to local activities, groups and services which will benefit their health and wellbeing. Health professionals (such as GPs and practice nurses) can refer people to a link worker who will work with the individual to access local sources of support. Residents can also self-refer. One of the main aims of social prescribing is to support people to take greater control of their own health, improving both their physical and mental health.

Feedback to date from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. One participant said: "I'm enjoying the cycling so much, it's such fun. Now my family want to join the family cycling group having seen how much I'm enjoying myself!"

**CLlr Alexander Nicoll, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"There is a growing body of evidence that social prescribing has a positive impact on mental health and physical wellbeing, and I am pleased to see this reflected in the success of the pilot project in Suffolk. Not only can social prescribing ease the burden on our healthcare services, it empowers people by giving them more choice and control over their lives and, by coming together with others for group activities, an increased sense of community and belonging. I look forward to seeing what the project achieves as it enters its second year."

For more information, please see <https://thewaytogosuffolk.org.uk/social-prescribing/> or telephone The Way To Go Suffolk helpline on 01473 260060.

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## Suffolk Highways prepared for the County's cold snap

With 39 gritting lorries, around 17,000 tonnes of salt and a winter team of over 80 people, our depots are ready to spread salt and treat over 2,000 miles of roads across the county.

Suffolk Highways has been carefully planning for the arrival of the colder weather, including training and hiring drivers, checking the routes and preparing the gritting lorries for action. The service is responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads (except trunk roads), roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations.

They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools.



The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather.

But gritting the priority network isn't all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by [parish and town councils](#) and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool.

Suffolk Highways is encouraging residents to make sure their cars are winter ready and ensure they drive to the condition of the road, as a treated road may still have some ice forming particularly in areas where there is water runoff from adjacent land.

**Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding, said:**

"As the temperatures continue to fall, our highways teams are ready for whatever the weather throws our way. Each year, however severe, the highways teams deliver a successful winter operation, keeping the roads clear to ensure our residents are kept safe and our county moving.

"I encourage residents to do their bit and support our teams by driving to the conditions and parking considerately, leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road - if we can't fit, we can't grit.

"To find out where Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang, Spread Sheeran and the rest of our fleet are gritting, you can follow our whereabouts on social media."

More information on gritting can be found, here: [Check which roads are gritted in Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#), and details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes.

Suffolk Highways' winter gritting efforts forms part of the county council's wider 'Winter Matters' campaign, which has launched today, which offers advice to help Suffolk residents stay warm, safe and well this winter.

From stopping the spread of winter illnesses, to heating your home for less, residents can find advice at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters) to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council's social media channels throughout winter, follow Suffolk County Council on Facebook or @SuffolkCC on X, using the hashtag #WinterMatters.

## Council's Centre of Excellence to go nationwide

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The council has successfully bid for £99,000 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund, which will be spent on more events and materials to upskill and share good practice with councils around England, with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Suffolk's Centre of Excellence was established in August 2022 and has already engaged with 16 local authorities across the East of England, with 429 representatives attending webinars and a conference, held at The Apex in Bury St Edmunds. The new funding will now extend these offers across the country.

The council was recognised by the Government last year for its knowledge and expertise when engaging with NSIPs such as Sizewell C, Lowestoft's Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades and offshore wind farms.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for finance and environment, said:**

"The volume of NSIPs that Suffolk County Council is involved with continues at pace. Many of these concern huge projects for the country's energy security, such as offshore wind and the infrastructure that is needed to bring all that power onshore for millions of homes and businesses.

"We have a very experienced team, which works on some of the largest projects in the UK. As a county council, our responsibility is to appropriately challenge these schemes to minimise their impacts on communities and maximise local opportunities, such as funding, training, amenities and jobs.

"This recognition from Government for our outstanding contributions to NSIPs will allow us to continue sharing good practice and extend our offer to colleagues around the country, from parish councils to unitary authorities."

The county council has long recognised that town and parish councils, who have limited resources, can easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of NSIPs - the new funding will enable bespoke guidance to be published in partnership with Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The funding will also allow previous work to continue, such as updating and creating more accessible guides for local authorities, and progress guidance materials for developers.