

Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Parish Council

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

18:00, Tuesday 21st May 2026

Present: Cllr John Rushman (JR) (Vice Chair), Cllr Paul Butler (PB), Cllr Brandon Mahon (BM), Cllr Linda Leong-Son (LLS), District Cllr Sarah Broughton. Clerk Justin Hook (JH), 1 representative from All Saints Resort (ASR), David Yates (DY) from the church, and 7 members of the public.

AGENDA

1. Election of Chair to preside over the meeting
Cllr John Rushman was elected as Chair.
2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2025
Minutes were approved. The Clerk had failed to print, so will sign at the next Parish Council meeting.

ANNUAL REPORTS

3. Parish Council Chair's Annual Report (Cllr. Clive Last)
The Chair's report was shared.

As we start our new year your Parish Council is pleased with the considerable progress we have made in the last year. Our administration, financial planning and communications have all been improved under the guidance of our new Parish Clerk, Justin Hook.

We look forward to a new 'West Suffolk' unitary authority, after the governments decision to back the three unitarities for West Suffolk, and the abolishment of existing district and county councils. Decision making for West Suffolk residents will now be much closer to home, with problems and opportunities that are so different for those the other side of Suffolk. Plans are starting to come forward for how that will look and the processes and stages involved.

Alongside county realignment, we are still very centred on our drive to merge 'The Fornhams' into a single Parish Council. We have communicated this proposal at every opportunity, as have our colleagues in Fornham All Saints, and we have received nothing but positive support. We had asked for this merger of equals to start in April 2026, but WSC decided that it would have to wait for their full Community Governance Review in 2027. WSC received the proposal favourably and are currently in a period of public consultation (until the end of June), with a final decision planned to be made later this year.

We have nonetheless set out in the coming year's plan, our aims for the combined villages, and a focused but limited budget. We have listened to our constituents and our aims will be;

- safety of our roads and pavements
- cleanliness and appearance of the villages
- support for village activities and facilities

The clearing and widening of the pavement network that circles the two villages has been a great success, with many residents commenting on how much better the villages look and how much safer the paths are to navigate. The Parish Council recognised the need to step in and take responsibility (at considerable cost), but the contractor, jointly engaged by the two PC's has done a fantastic job. Thanks to all involved, and especially Long's Farm who agreed to take the spoils of earth for us.

We also have the new volunteer group, like FAS already have, again under Justin's leadership, which will continue to tackle smaller jobs that will have a great impact on the village look, feel

and amenity. Well done to those volunteers who have signed up and helped – we actively encourage more folk to sign up and be a part of this great initiative.

We continue to focus on speeding traffic and under councillor's Mahon's leadership are working towards a coordinated group of 'slow down' signs throughout the two villages. The evidence shows that 95% of motorists slow down for these signs. We still don't have a solution for the morons who ignore the signs.

The same emphasis is applied to keeping the villages looking clean. We have paid-for litter picking and those who maintain our floral displays. These will continue and hopefully improve in the coming summer. Thank you to all our volunteers - official, unofficial, seen and unseen – you all play a major part, thank you.

The playing field and play equipment in FSM has been a topic of much debate. Whilst we have a small children's play area and adult fitness trail, both are poorly used and having had little work done to them, are now very costly to refurbish and maintain. Some immediate repairs to the play area have taken place this week, with a tidy up and refresh planned in the next month or two. The trim trail has been made safe and we will monitor and discuss again next year. We also have some minor maintenance works to carry out around the village, on benches, signs etc.

The grass cutting has begun. We are somewhat feeling our way with that, as WSC as we are in between contractors and WSC seem to have stepped in, greying the lines slightly. But you will hopefully see some marked improvements in the coming weeks.

We continue to support the various village's institutions as best we can within our budget, as we see them vitally important for the health of the village.

Whilst concentrating on the needs of our villagers we have to remember that we also represent a number of businesses in our parish, who bring varied jobs and vital rates income to the area. Sometimes, to balance their needs demands common sense and often compromise solutions. We have learnt quickly that it is difficult to please all of the people all the time and will ask for your understanding on some occasions.

Of equal importance is Local Planning. Whilst the long prepared 2041 plan was approved last July, National Government has decreed that it no longer meets their housing objectives for West Suffolk and a new 2043 plan has to be prepared within two years. The first call for sites to support this housing growth has just ended. The old target for West Suffolk was just over 750 homes per year. In the new plan, this is increased 56% to almost 1200 per year, with the majority targeted for Bury and surrounding villages. That's equivalent to a new Marham Park every two years. Five of those new estates at Rougham Hill, Westley, Barton Road, Rougham A14 side and Rougham Airfield are already approved. The Fornhams are the closest village to Bury and villagers need to follow the new plans closely and make their increased voice heard at an early stage.

I'd like to thank my fellow Cllrs for their hard work and commitment in supporting me as Chair, but also in representing you as villagers. They give up their time to be involved, attend meetings, take on responsibilities, and all voluntarily, so thank you.

Thanks to our Clerk for his efforts keeping everything running smoothly, and hopefully legally. And finally thanks to our County and District Cllrs for their ongoing support, advice and encouragement – and occasional funding ! Thank you.

4. District Councillor Report (Cllr. Sarah Broughton, West Suffolk Council)

Local plan is under judicial review. Initial call for sites for next local plan ended yesterday (20th May).

WSC spent £6.5 billion on the land for the expanded waste hub, to create extra parking and a bin storage area, and protect against future land-locking. Site is under the condition that it will only be used for the purposes in relation to the waste hub, no other uses.

New Better Recycling collections starting 1st June. Residents to get in touch with SB or Rh if any issues with bins or collections.

The whole project is costing lots, but was a central government initiative and some cost towards the new vehicles was claimed from them.

PB expressed that the tollgate junction appeared to be working well.

SB agreed it does appear to be running smoother after a couple of tweaks.

5. County Councillor Report (Cllr. Rebecca Hopfensperger, Suffolk County Council)

Full report received – see Appendix.

6. Police Report

No report received.

The Clerk expressed disappointment at the lack of response by the local police representatives. SB confirmed that the police used to attend or send reports.

7. Fornham All Saints Church

Report received from David Yates.

- 58 services at the church in the past year
- Many visitors commenting “glad you are open”
- Church guide recently updated
- 20 full grave plots and 65 ashes plots available still, then churchyard will be closed and Parish Council will take over its maintenance. At an estimated 5 burials per year, that’s a potential 4 year timeframe
- Church will be applying for a further £900 grant from the council to help towards the (circa.) £2200 churchyard maintenance costs each year

8. Community Groups / Organisations

Reports received and read out from;

Village Hall

Financially another difficult year when we were unable to increase our reserves.

We have been successful in our application to receive funding from West Suffolk Council for some external maintenance of the building. It has been identified that there are some cracks in the flint work around the rear door. In addition, some of the pointing needs to be replaced. We received a quote from H G Frost who will carry out the work. This needs to be completed by the end of September, to make use of the funding.

Groups – We continue to have some long-term groups but, unfortunately, we have had to say ‘goodbye’ to five groups, some of whom were closing due to lack of numbers. On a positive note, Lynne has managed to secure a new sewing group Fibre Fusion; a new WI group and a choir who will meet in the Hall in the autumn. Some Workshops are also booked. There continues to be bookings for family parties, but these have become less frequent.

Grounds – over a weekend last August the car park and the edge of the property were strimmed and cleared of weeds. The garden shrubs were pruned, and the area was tidied up.

Parking – this remains an issue regarding a neighbour who insists on using our parking bay at the front of the building despite being reminded that the Hall is private property and there are signs to indicate that the spaces are for the use of Hall users only. The Parish Council in the past has spoken to this person, and several letters have been issued. The Community Police Officer has been advised and has spoken to the person concerned.

Equipment – a table storage trolley was purchased through the funds received from West Suffolk Council. This is proving especially useful and keeps the tables away from the walls, causing damage.

Decoration – during the month of August the Main Hall underwent some decorative work. The Dado rail is often knocked, and paint was peeling off, therefore, it was stripped of paint (several layers from over the years) and sanded down. It was then varnished. This has reduced the need for annual painting.

The Small Hall continues to be used for storage of the chairs and tables and has now undergone some redecoration. The painting of the Kitchen is the next task.

In order to keep costs down, the Committee have undertaken small maintenance tasks, gardening, and decoration of the Hall themselves.

Our Hall Manager, Lynne Quelch, continues to do an excellent job of looking after the Groups; advertising for new groups; keeping the Social Media pages up to date, and maintaining the Hall to a high standard, as well as doing decorating and gardening. Thank you Lynne for your hard work and support.

Reports given by representative of the following groups;

The Computer Club, by Bernard Grimshaw

I founded the Fornham All Saints Computer Club in 2016 while serving on the Parish Council. After retiring, I wanted to contribute something practical to the village, and I recognised that many residents were struggling with everyday computer use. The club began with Windows support and later expanded to include iPads. I also provide training at the Great Barton Computer Club, where I have led the sessions for the past five years.

My professional background is in engineering production management, where I gained extensive experience using computers and integrating digital systems into products. Several years of study with the Open University strengthened my technical understanding, and in the last decade of my career I worked in software development, installation and training, while also providing technical support to a team of business consultants. This mix of engineering and hands-on software work underpins the practical approach I bring to the club.

We meet in the Community Centre, whose committee has been extremely supportive in providing fast broadband and a comfortable environment for learning.

Early financial help from the Parish Council and from our district councillor, Beccy, enabled us to cover our initial setup costs.

The club now has around 40 members in Fornham and over 50 in Great Barton, and both clubs offer similar services.

We operate on a formal basis with a small committee. I serve as Chairman and deliver the tutorials and technical support. We also have a Treasurer and two additional committee members who help run the organisation.

Membership is £25 per year. We aim to keep the fee low so that cost is never a barrier, but rising hall charges have required modest increases. Our main groups cover their costs with a small surplus, but the beginners' groups — which are intentionally small — often run at a loss. We continue them because they are essential for new learners.

Our programme provides four meetings each month at each venue:

- Two Windows sessions (beginners and main group)
- Two Apple/iPad sessions (beginners and main group)

A key benefit of membership is access to help when problems arise. Depending on the issue, I support members remotely, at their homes, or at mine. When a problem is outside my scope, I direct members to appropriate local services. This “triage” approach prevents unnecessary costs and gives members confidence that they have somewhere safe to turn.

Although many members live in the Fornhams, we also draw people from nearby villages and from Bury St Edmunds, which keeps the club active and sustainable.

Our meetings are usually tutorial-based. I demonstrate a topic, members work through practical exercises, and I provide detailed follow-up notes so they can practise at home. Internet safety remains the most popular subject, but recent priorities have included the transition to Windows 11 and understanding the rapid arrival of AI in everyday computing.

Overall, the club has become a valuable part of village life in Fornham All Saints, offering practical support, social connection, and increased digital confidence. We hope to continue providing this service for many years to come.

PUBLIC FORUM

Resident raised concerns regarding the tree and vegetation removal around the footpath from The Drift, along the A134 and down the old Thetford Road. The timing of the works was during nesting season and so much habitat has been lost.

Clerk confirmed that he had received further concerns from residents, and that he had tried to contact WSC, sadly with no response.

A planning application had been lodged for works to trees around the perimeter of the field, but works had begun prior to any approval.

The Clerk bumped into the contractor when walking and asked what was going on? The owner was clearing the field perimeter in order to install a fence. The contractor confirmed that the trees / bushes that they had been working on were young, unestablished stock which didn't require permissions, and that they had been carefully checking for nesting birds as they went.

The full works will have proper ecological survey completed.

PB questioned what the concerned resident would like to see happen?

Resident was concerned that a whole generation of birds could be lost

Suggestion was for council to write to the owner and contractor expressing concern, and requesting their response. It was hard not to be cynical and ask why now ? Was it the start of building works ?

Council to add to June agenda.

DY raised that he had seen a quad bike in the village spraying verges and kerbs.

Clerk confirmed it would have been SCC, and that they had made a decision to begin spraying again to keep weeds down.

Council to add to June agenda.

DY also raised the weeds along the verges by the church.

The Clerk confirmed he was working on a new grass cutting contract.

Meeting closed 18:45.

These minutes will be signed at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2026.

Signed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed:

Date:

Annual Town and Parish Newsletter 2025-2026

For more information on all stories visit:

[Suffolk County Council | Conservative Group \(suffolkconservatives.org.uk\)](https://suffolkconservatives.org.uk)

March 2025

Suffolk County Council confirms decision to bring Library Services back In-House **Page 7**

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will be bringing all 45 libraries back under its care and control.

200 new specialist SEND places for Suffolk **Page 8**

The creation of 200 new specialist places across the county for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is set to be considered by Suffolk County Council's cabinet.

April 2025

Suffolk County Council Signs the Power of Youth Charter – A Commitment to Empowering the Next Generation To Shape Their Future **Page 8**

Suffolk County Council has signed the Power of Youth Charter, joining a UK-wide movement to empower young people to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves, their communities, and society.

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife **Page 10**

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched for you to share your views.

May 2025

Council cites numerous concerns as it formally objects to north Suffolk solar farm plans **Page 11**

Suffolk County Council has submitted its formal objection to plans for EcoPower's large solar farm proposal in north Suffolk.

Suffolk Archives wins major Museums + Heritage Award **Page 12**

Suffolk Archives is celebrating after scooping the Community Engagement Programme of the Year title for its Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk project at the prestigious Museums + Heritage Awards last night.

June 2025

New Strategy Launched to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls in Suffolk **Page 13**

Partners across Suffolk have reaffirmed their shared commitment to tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence with the launch of a bold, united strategy aimed at making Suffolk a safer place for everyone.

Suffolk challenges Government on Planning reform at a National Infrastructure Conference **Page 14**

At its prestigious national infrastructure conference at The Hold in Ipswich on 11 June 2025, Suffolk County Council has challenged Government on the emerging Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

£8m funding for Bus Service improvements

Page 15

Suffolk County Council has secured a grant of £8m from the Department for Transport for new and enhanced bus services in the county.

[LOCAL] Improvements identified to boost walking and cycling thanks to Active Travel

Page 16

West Felixstowe and the road between Capel St Mary and Copdock could see boosts to walking and cycling and improved road safety.

July 2025

Suffolk's once-in-a-generation, state-of-the-art fire control room goes live

Page 17

A new era in emergency response has begun in Suffolk, as Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveils its cutting-edge control room in Ipswich, introducing faster, smarter and more resilient 999 operations.

[LOCAL] Council secures funding for sustainable libraries and schools

Page 18

Suffolk Community Libraries in Lowestoft, Brandon, and Stowmarket are the latest buildings to benefit from funding to make them more sustainable and energy efficient.

August 2025

Council remains opposed to pylon project, as application submitted

Page 20

National Grid has formally applied to build its Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, but Suffolk County Council remains firm that it is not an appropriate scheme.

[LOCAL] Lowestoft waste upgrades underway

Page 21

Upgrades are underway at the Lowestoft Recycling Centre and Waste Transfer Station ahead of government's Simpler Recycling changes coming in 2026.

[LOCAL] New and Improved bus services coming to Suffolk this month

Page 21

17 new or enhanced bus services will launch across the county between 31 August and mid-September, with a further 7 expected to go live later this year.

September 2025

Suffolk's vision for nature recovery

Page 26

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been drafted following a successful consultation earlier this year.

32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project

Page 27

The successful Solar Together Suffolk scheme is now open for registration for 2025.

Second year of £500,000 Culture Project Fund launched **Page 28**

Suffolk County Council is pleased to announce the second year of its £500,000 Culture Project Fund. This initiative is aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects in our local communities across the county.

Ambitious new plan to Get Suffolk Working **Page 29**

An ambitious new plan to tackle economic inactivity and boost employment across the county will be considered by Suffolk County Council's cabinet.

One Suffolk plan submitted to government **Page 30**

The business case, setting out the proposal for a single unitary authority in Suffolk, explains how One Suffolk would save the county £39.4 million a year and enhance local services.

[LOCAL] Active Travel works to improve pedestrian safety by Ipswich Waterfront **Page 31**

The works will re-locate pedestrian crossings used to access the popular entertainment area.

[LOCAL] New homes for Newmarket under way **Page 32**

Construction of 50 new homes on the old St Felix Middle School site in Newmarket is progressing, with a show home expected to be open in the new year.

[LOCAL] Gull Wing Bridge celebrates first anniversary **Page 33**

The award-winning Gull Wing Bridge, which has transformed traffic in Lowestoft, is celebrating its first anniversary.

October 2025

Councillors approve historic devolution deal, paving the way for major investment for Suffolk **Page 34**

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk.

Suffolk celebrates five years of investment in the National Cycle Network **Page 35**

The county looks to the future after five years that has seen £5 million invested in the network.

November 2025

Suffolk County Council announces £63m A12 highway improvement proposals **Page 37**

A full planning application for improvements between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge will be submitted later this month.

Project Celebrating Disability in Suffolk gets £139k grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund **Page 38**

Suffolk Archives has been awarded a grant of £139,107 to deliver Beyond Labels: Celebrating Disability in Suffolk which will shine a light on the lives,

achievements, and challenges of people with disabilities across the county - past and present.

December 2025

Council secures £2.9 million from DfT Incentive Fund for 2025/26

Page 39

Suffolk gets extra Government funding under a scheme that rewards excellence in highways asset management and efficiency.

Inspectorate satisfied with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's improvement progress

Page 40

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has confirmed it is satisfied with the progress Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is making to address improvements identified during its previous inspection

Suffolk secures more than £26 million bus funding over three years

Page 41

Government funding for public transport in Suffolk is confirmed for three years.

£12m Active Travel funding over four years announced for Suffolk

Page 42

Suffolk County Council schemes promoting walking, cycling and wheeling receive funding for another four years from the government.

[LOCAL] Objection lodged to Red House Farm planning approval over school funding shortfall

Page 43

Suffolk County Council has formally objected to Ipswich Borough Council's proposed planning approval of over 1,000 new homes at Red House Farm on Westerfield Road, part of the Ipswich Garden Suburb development, due to a significant shortfall in funding for essential education infrastructure.

[LOCAL] Scheme to boost biodiversity and tackle flooding on the River Tin at Bungay

Page 44

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with the River Waveney Trust, has secured more than £50,000 for a natural flood management plan.

[LOCAL] New heating solution for central Ipswich

Page 45

Some of central Ipswich's key workplaces and community buildings could be heated in a revolutionary way, thanks to a new heat network.

January 2026

Suffolk County Council proposes new 20mph speed limit policy for communities

Page 46

A scheme to make it easier to introduce 20mph speed limits is to be considered by councillors.

Department for Education acknowledges progress - and sets clear expectations for Suffolk's SEND improvement

Page 47

The partnership responsible for overseeing and delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk has been praised for making important improvements by the Department for Education.

[LOCAL] County Council set to approve much-needed provision for children with complex needs

Page 48

Suffolk County Council is set to discuss the development of a new children's home in Saxmundham, for children with complex needs, at its Cabinet meeting on 27 January.

February 2026

Council budget protects frontline services amid rising costs and demand

Page 50

Suffolk County Council has agreed an £850 million budget for 2026/27, prioritising and protecting frontline services despite rising costs, increasing demand and continued shortfalls in national funding.

[LOCAL] County Council continues to back Newmarket sports hub

Page 51

Suffolk County Council remains committed to helping provide Newmarket residents with a local sports facility, on the site of the new Edmundham Homes development on Fordham Road (the former St Felix Middle School site).

[LOCAL] New SEND school and centre of excellence to be built in Bury St Edmunds

Page 52

A new special school for Bury St Edmunds has been given the go-ahead.

[LOCAL] Council objects to LionLink slamming lack of coordination and fears for communities

Page 53

Suffolk County Council maintains its objection to LionLink plans, with concerns for the many negative impacts on local communities and environment.

March 2026

[LOCAL] Two new crossings approved for key Haverhill route

Page 55

Suffolk County Council is to install new crossings to improve safety on the Railway Walk.

[LOCAL] New safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists between Ipswich Hospital and The Waterfront

Page 56

Works are scheduled to start in April and will see improved junctions, pedestrian crossings and traffic calming measures.

March 2025

Suffolk County Council confirms decision to bring Library Services back In-House

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will be bringing all 45 libraries back under its care and control. The decision, made at the Cabinet meeting, will ensure continued access to high-quality, community-focused library services across the county. As part of this move, the council plans to:

- Keep all 45 libraries open
- Maintain opening hours
- Create job security for all frontline staff
- Secure a sustainable future for Suffolk's library services

In addition to continuing its core library services, the council is investing £200,000 in mobile libraries, with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk.

Libraries have long been at the heart of Suffolk's communities. They are essential spaces for learning, connection, and support, and the council is committed to ensuring they remain hubs that bring people together. The focus is on building upon the excellent services already provided, strengthening libraries' role as trusted local resources that meet the evolving needs of residents.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council envisions libraries becoming even more integrated into the wider community, serving as convenient access points for a range of essential council services. This includes providing information and support around Adult Social Care, offering health and social care services, facilitating Family Hub activities, and promoting digital inclusion. The aim is to make it easier for residents to access vital services and support, all within the welcoming, familiar setting of their local library.

"This was an incredibly difficult, but important decision for the future of our Library Service.

"Libraries are more than just places to borrow books—they are community spaces where people can access vital services, learn new skills, and build connections.

"With this decision, we are securing a bright future for all 45 libraries across the county, ensuring they remain accessible, vibrant, and sustainable for generations to come."

Suffolk County Council would like to express its sincere gratitude to Suffolk Libraries, who have run the library contract for the past 12 years. Their passion and hard work have been integral to the success of library services in the county, and the council appreciates all they have done to support local communities. We look forward to welcoming library staff back into the county council and continuing to support them in delivering outstanding services to the public.

We would also like to thank the 1,250 volunteers whose commitment has been essential in delivering high-quality services to residents across Suffolk. As we transition the library service back under council control, we remain fully committed to working with our volunteers. Their invaluable contributions will continue to play a central role in the future of our libraries, and we are excited to explore new opportunities to expand volunteer involvement.

The library service will officially return to Suffolk County Council control on 1 June 2025.

200 new specialist SEND places for Suffolk

The creation of 200 new specialist places across the county for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is set to be considered by Suffolk County Council's cabinet.

An extra 100 places could open this year, and another 100 new places by September 2026, with future plans being drawn up. These places will be spread across Suffolk and tailored to meet need and demand.

The plan to be presented to Cabinet next Tuesday April 1st, outlines how £18.6million could best be spent to support the growing population of SEND children and young people who need specialist education. Over the last five years, Suffolk pupils accessing special schools and units attached to mainstream schools has increased by over 40%.

The proposal includes £3million to be spent on small groups and units in mainstream schools from September 2025 and £12million to be spent on developing satellite units linked to existing special schools across Suffolk from September 2026. The remaining £3.6million is earmarked for further SEND provision.

In the past five years, 1,025 new specialist SEND places across Suffolk have been agreed.

Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND at Suffolk County Council, said:

"We know the importance of making sure that children are in the right provision for their needs at the right time. We haven't always got this right and keeping up with the ask for new places is challenging, and costly, but we continue to revisit our plans and redirect resources when needed.

"It's reassuring to see the level of support we get from headteachers who are willing to open specialist units linked to their mainstream schools. We remain thankful for these offers."

On top of these new 200 places, future plans will continue to be drawn up. Using the recently published Joint SEND Needs Assessment report, work is underway to create a Joint SEND Sufficiency Plan, written in conjunction with health, social care, inclusion and transport. This will establish how future Department for Education SEND capital money should be spent.

These plans will be discussed at the cabinet meeting on Tuesday April 1 at 2pm. [Read the Cabinet papers.](#)

April 2025

Suffolk County Council Signs the Power of Youth Charter – A Commitment to Empowering the Next Generation To Shape Their Future

Suffolk County Council has signed the Power of Youth Charter, joining a UK-wide movement to empower young people to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves, their communities, and society.

The **Power of Youth Charter** led by the #iWill Movement outlines a bold vision: that all children and young people should be empowered to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their lives. By signing the Charter, Suffolk County Council is making a public commitment to putting young people at the heart of its decision-making, championing youth voice, and working collaboratively to support youth social action.

The #iWill Movement is a collaboration of over 1,000 organisations and 700 young #iWill Ambassadors & Champions from across the UK, supported by charities UK Youth and Volunteering Matters. The movement brings together organisations and individuals to empower more young people to take part in social action—making a positive difference in their communities and wider society. By championing youth voice and participation, the movement aims to ensure all young people, regardless of background, are supported to lead change.

At a meeting of Suffolk’s Youth Parliament, Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services signed the Charter, alongside Cllr Liz Harsant, Chairman of Suffolk County Council and Cllr Nathan Wilson, on behalf of Suffolk County Council.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, said:

“I firmly believe that young people should be involved in the decisions that affect them.

“By signing the Power of Youth Charter, Suffolk County Council is making a commitment to our young people, to create more opportunities for their voices to be heard, to shape their own futures and ultimately to ensure that we are making decisions with our young people, not for them.”

Suffolk’s Youth Parliament is run by young people for young people aged between 11-18 years old, to represent the views of young people at a local and national level. Also signing the Charter at the meeting were Kayleb Wright, Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) for Suffolk Coastal and Waveney and Hermione Cartwright, MYP for Mid Suffolk.

In a joint statement, they said:

“We are delighted to be involved in this movement, as youth representatives. We believe that this could move the future of youth voice and empower young people in making decisions that affect their futures.”

By signing the Charter, Suffolk County Council will work alongside over 350 other organisations already part of the #iWill Movement, committing to growing the Power of Youth.

Stephen Skeet, Director of Business Development and Partnerships for the #iWill Movement, said:

“We are delighted that Suffolk County Council have signed the Power of Youth Charter, recognising the vital role young people play in leading positive change. This commitment marks a significant step in empowering more young people across the county to shape their future and their communities.

“In 2023, Ipswich became the UK’s first Town of Youth Social Action — a milestone achieved in partnership with the #iWill Movement and Volunteering Matters. With Suffolk County Council’s strategic backing, we’re excited to build on this momentum and work towards establishing the UK’s first County of Youth Social Action, where young people’s voices and leadership are central to civic life.”

The Charter focuses on five key commitments:

1. **Prioritising social action:** Creating opportunities for young people to lead positive change, especially those from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds.
2. **Opening up decision-making:** Offer opportunities which ensure young people have influence over the decisions that affect them.
3. **Working with other organisations:** collaborating with other organisations to reach more young people and strengthen opportunities.
4. **Evidencing the impact of youth social action:** Sharing stories, data and learning to show the positive impact this has on young people, their communities and our organisation.
5. **Recognise and celebrate young people:** We will use our communication channels to advocate for and celebrate young people as positive and powerful changemakers

To learn more about the Power of Youth Charter and how your organisation can get involved, visit www.iwill.org.uk

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

This has been coordination with Norfolk, through the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#). The two counties are working together to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and connect across the landscape.

"Last summer, over 1,500 Suffolk residents shared their thoughts on how we can all help Suffolk's nature recover, to help us put together this draft strategy for Suffolk.

"Having now drafted that strategy, we're keen to involve our residents and communities across Suffolk by receiving their own insights, so that we can amend as necessary and approve a final strategy later this year.

"Suffolk has pockets of diverse nature and unique landscapes, and this strategy will help link together those isolated areas that need improving and restoring. It will support landowners, land managers and farmers to work together for the benefit of the county's natural environment.

"It is a project which will not only benefit flora and fauna, but us as Suffolk residents - we can mitigate the risks to homes and businesses against inland flooding, create new green spaces to

improve our health and wellbeing, and support farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities.”

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community.

There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken.

Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

May 2025

Council cites numerous concerns as it formally objects to north Suffolk solar farm plans

The 250-megawatt solar farm and battery energy storage system will be spread out over 1,500 acres at multiple sites in the parishes of Occold, Eye, Brome and Oakley, Stuston, Thrandeston, Mellis, Burgate, Thornham Parva, Gislingham and Yaxley.

The report outlines many concerns, including:

- Numerous parcels of Grade 2 agricultural land to be lost
- Significant impacts on multiple communities and sensitive habitats and landscapes, such as Mellis Common
- Numerous sites of high archaeological sensitivity
- Cable corridors causing irreversible damage

“Frankly, there are serious questions about whether [this scheme] should ever have seen the light of day.”

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs

Furthermore, the county council strongly recommends that EcoPower publishes an interim design report by the end of June 2025. This would provide refined plans in light of further assessment work to be conducted, and the responses to this non-statutory consultation.

This would go some way to providing reassurance and clarity regarding the proposals to the local community. It will also allow all concerned to review more details, in timely fashion, ahead of the statutory consultation expected later this year.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

“My primary concern remains for the many local communities, who are already feeling the direct impact of the proposals of this scheme – which hasn’t even been given approval, let alone been built. Frankly, there are serious questions about whether it should ever have seen the light of day.

“It seems that the aim of this project is for it to be delivered as fast as possible, encouraged by the government’s unrealistic obsession to decarbonise the grid by 2030.”

Suffolk County Council recently expressed its concerns in response to government proposals concerning reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

Councillor Richard Rout continues:

“In many ways, this EcoPower proposal can be a litmus test for how well communities are, or I fear aren’t, engaged with.

“Even before government’s latest plans to eliminate public engagement, this solar farm project was going to be running on the least amount of consultation possible.

“It is in EcoPower’s gift to work with local authorities, communities and organisation, beyond what is demanded of them by the current planning process. However, as a council our firm objection to projects that remove any of Suffolk’s best quality agricultural from food production, remains steadfast.”

EcoPower anticipates running its statutory consultation in Autumn 2025.

Suffolk Archives wins major Museums + Heritage Award

The judges said: “Comprehensive, thoughtful and effective, this winning engagement programme successfully reached beyond its organisation’s traditional audience, achieving impressive results with a strong legacy.”

Co-curated with diverse local community groups, it explored historical and contemporary migration experiences to Suffolk since the end of the Second World War.

Engagement programmes included art installation The Journey, created with local groups, artists, and schools. The flock of 125 birds, each decorated to represent a unique migration story, is currently on show The Hold in Ipswich – home of Suffolk Archives, which is a Suffolk County Council service.

There was a free exhibition which included items from Suffolk Archives’ collections, as well as some on loan from communities across the county that celebrated different foods, clothing, traditions, and culture. There were also oral history recordings, stories of migrant entrepreneurs, and archive materials from the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality.

Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said: “This award win is a great example of how engaging with local communities across the county to bring together diverse voices can tell the migration stories have shaped Suffolk’s history.

“Congratulations to everyone involved with this incredible collaboration between Suffolk Archives, local community groups, and artists.”

The Museums + Heritage Awards celebrate the very best in the world of museums, galleries, and cultural and heritage visitor attractions. This year’s shortlist included entrants from across the UK and 14 other countries.

Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk was made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Suffolk Archives’ current exhibition is Departures, which explores emigration from Suffolk. It runs at The Hold, on Ipswich’s Waterfront, until 31 May with a programme of tie-in events.

Visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk for more details.

June 2025

New Strategy Launched to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls in Suffolk

While Suffolk remains a safe county in which to live, work, and visit, the reality is that Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence continue to affect too many people. These crimes are often driven by harmful attitudes and gender-based stereotypes that disproportionately impact women and girls. However, the strategy recognises that anyone, regardless of gender identity, can be a victim and that support must be inclusive and far-reaching.

The new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy places the experiences of victims and survivors at its heart. Shaped through extensive engagement with victim-survivors, support services, and frontline professionals, the strategy sets a clear and ambitious vision:

For everyone in Suffolk to play their part in preventing and identifying Violence Against Women and Girls, creating the safety we all deserve.

To achieve this vision, the strategy is built around four key ambitions:

- Stop the abuse before it starts
- Support every survivor
- Hold abusers accountable
- Build a united front

In March 2025, the Suffolk Safer and Stronger Communities Board formally endorsed the strategy, marking an important milestone in the county's coordinated response to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

“These are complex issues that require a joined-up approach, with action across all parts of our community. This strategy provides a shared vision and a plan for how we can work together to create lasting change in Suffolk.”

Help is available, whether you are currently experiencing abuse, have recently left an abusive relationship, or are concerned about someone you know, you are not alone. A wide range of local, specialist support services is available [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) | Suffolk Constabulary](#)

For more information, and to read the full strategy, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/Suffolk-VAWG-Strategy-2025-28.pdf>

Suffolk challenges Government on Planning reform at a National Infrastructure Conference

The Council and other speakers raised concerns that proposed changes to the NSIP regime were not suitably robust to manage the significant changes which NSIPs can bring to host communities, particularly with the proposed replacement of a statutory duty for pre-submission consultation with statutory guidance.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

"I'm proud that Suffolk County Council continues to lead the way with its NSIP expertise and influence and can bring together colleagues and speakers from around the country. "Suffolk has one of the greatest concentrations of NSIPs in the UK, and for me it's important to ensure that local communities are considered first-and-foremost by local authorities, project promoters and government. "Today there were some robust discussions around government's proposals to scrap the statutory duty to consult for NSIPs. "This is something that the county council fundamentally disagrees with - our communities need more and better consultation, not less. "We welcome any opportunity to further engage with Government to share our expertise as to what meaningful engagement should look like."

Delegates from across the country attended the Conference to hear speakers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), legal experts, and industry leaders discussing the emerging

Planning and Infrastructure Bill, effective communication with project promoters, and the importance of local impact reports.

The conference further cements Suffolk County Council's recognised role as a Centre of Excellence for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) for its expertise when engaging with projects, such as Sizewell C, the Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades, solar farms and offshore wind farms.

The conference was sponsored by Cornerstone Barristers, Howes Percival, National Infrastructure Planning Association and Sharpe Pritchard.

Following the success of this year's conference, it will take place again in June 2026.

£8m funding for Bus Service improvements

The funding from the Department of Transport's Local Authority Bus Grant can be used to create new bus services or enhance existing routes.

Following on from previous grants from the Department for Transport to improve bus services, totalling £3.7m of revenue funding between 2023 and 2025, the new grant which has been allocated for 2025/26 comprises of:

- £2,805,076 revenue for delivering new or enhanced services.
- £5,229,805 capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

This money will enable Suffolk County Council to invest up to £5 million in capital projects to increase bus priority on congested streets, make improvements to bus stops and gain a better understanding of the journeys people are taking, paving the way for more innovative fare offers in the future. The council also plans to upgrade the current Real Time Passenger Information system, giving live updates on when buses will arrive at stops across the county.

The remaining £2.8 million will be spent supporting the existing services on the county's bus network and working with bus companies to finalise a number of route improvements and new services, set to launch later this year.

The previous funding has created and enhanced more than 15 routes across the county, through the council's Bus Service Improvement Programme (BSIP). These included the first Sunday and evening service between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds for more than 20 years and direct links from Haverhill and Mildenhall to the West Suffolk Hospital.

Successful bids will be contacted in the coming days with new and enhanced services coming online later this year.

"We have seen the positive impact from the previous BSIP funding and our close work with parish councils and local community groups, to enhance and set up new bus links – in many cases the first links in many years allowing people to access goods and services using public transport."

Cllr Chris Chambers, Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste

Cllr Chambers continued: "This new round of funding will enable us to continue to improve bus journeys in the county and support our ambition to help make public transport a viable alternative to the car for more Suffolk residents.

"We are also aware of the recent cancellations of services in Newmarket and Marham Park, and we are working with local providers and the community to find solutions, utilising the funding from Department for Transport. We have an excellent track record of supporting services when needed and hope to reach a solution soon."

A full list of enhanced and new services funded with the previous BSIP funding can be found at: [Bus Service Improvement Plan - Suffolkonboard](#) including videos from services who received BSIP round 1 funding.

Details of successful bids for the latest round of funding will be posted on Suffolk On Board.

[LOCAL] Improvements identified to boost walking and cycling thanks to Active Travel

Improvements to boost walking and cycling and improve road safety in two parts of Suffolk are taking shape following consultations with the public.

Designs to encourage walking, cycling, and wheeling are being progressed for West Felixstowe and on the road between the villages of Copdock and Capel St Mary.

Following two public consultations, which took place in 2023 and 2024, the schemes are now being refined to take into account the feedback received.

They are part of a package of schemes across Suffolk that the council is working on following funding from Active Travel England.

The scheme for West Felixstowe covers the area around three schools - SET Felix primary school, Grange Community primary school and The Bridge school.

Following feedback from residents and students from Felixstowe High School, Suffolk County Council is now reviewing the designs to:

- Retain existing levels of on-street parking within the neighbourhood
- See if shared-use paths for pedestrian and cyclists are appropriate or if there is an alternative solution to provide safe space for cycling
- Consider how to improve traffic flows along the northern section of Maidstone Road
- Ensure the design of the junction of Maidstone Road and the High Road allows people to cross
- Ensure spaces outside SET Felix and Grange primary schools create a safe environment for families accessing them
- Consider if there are sufficient safe crossing points for pedestrians
- Consider where 20mph limits might be appropriate to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists and adding in design features to support this
- Decide on how to prioritise different elements of the scheme for delivery

The council will now review the designs before moving on to fully detailed plans ready for construction, which it is hoped will begin during 2025. More details are available on [the Suffolk County Council website](#).

The scheme for Copdock and Capel St Mary is along a 3.5 mile route between Whights Corner on London Road in Copdock and finishing at the junction of The Street and Cedar's Lane in Capel St Mary.

Based on feedback from the consultation, Suffolk County Council is now reviewing the designs to:

- Give the easiest possible access to Copdock village hall and best location of the proposed crossing
- Ensure residents on London Road can access their driveways without compromising the safety and convenience of people walking and cycling

- Ensure there is sufficient room for HGVs to turn in and out of London Road
- Consider extending the designs past Whight's Corner to link up to the existing cycle route to the Ipswich Park and Ride Service at Copdock
- Consider how to encourage reduced speeds on London Road
- Consider the design of the existing zebra crossing outside Capel St Mary primary school

Work is now underway to identify funding sources for this scheme. More details on the plan can be found at the [Suffolk County Council website](#).

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste said: "Public consultations help us shape and design the urban environment for the benefit of the people living and working within it and I thank everyone who contributed.

"These proposed improvements for Felixstowe and from Copdock to Capel St Mary are the latest chapter in the story of how Suffolk residents continue to benefit from more than £10 million of funding from Active Travel England to date.

"Through this funding we can make it easier for people to travel around Suffolk more sustainably."

July 2025

Suffolk's once-in-a-generation, state-of-the-art fire control room goes live

Delivered in just 18 months, a short timeframe for a project of this scale, the initiative involved building a brand-new contact centre from the ground up, recruiting and training an entirely new team, and implementing bespoke configurations tailored to all the communities in Suffolk.

The new control room, powered by cutting-edge technology from Motorola Solutions, now serves as a future-ready, cloud-enabled hub for managing critical 999 emergency calls across the county.

The decision to invest in a new control room for the county was made in 2023, following recognition that the previous system was no longer fit for purpose. The legacy system's increasing fragility meant the fire service could no longer depend on or guarantee the resilience that Suffolk's communities deserve.

The new control room includes several helpful new features that will support Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service in responding to emergencies more effectively:

- Better preparation for major incidents – The system helps the team respond more quickly and manage operations more smoothly during large-scale emergencies, like floods and wildfires, which are becoming increasingly common in the UK.
- Remote access – Staff can now securely log in to the control system from any location, making it easier to set up mobile command centres or offer support remotely when needed.
- Improved call and data handling – A new system stores and organises control room voice recordings more securely, keeping all key information in one place and linking it to the right incidents.

- Stronger regional teamwork – The control room is part of a wider hub with Hertfordshire and Norfolk fire services, allowing the teams to support each other and share the load during busy periods, such as when multiple 999 calls are received simultaneously.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Protection, who unveiled a commemorative plaque at a ceremony attended by fire service colleagues, senior council officers and emergency services partners, said:

“This is an incredible achievement - it demonstrates our commitment to innovation and protecting Suffolk’s residents with the very best emergency response services.

“Delivering this in just 18 months is a testament to what’s possible when teams collaborate with a clear vision and shared purpose.”

Jon Lacey, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service’s Chief Fire Officer, said:

“This project is about making sure every call for help is answered with speed, precision, and care. Bringing services back into the county was a decisive move to put Suffolk’s residents and public value at the heart of emergency response.

“The new control room features advanced dispatch technology, upgraded communications systems, and enhanced data sharing capabilities – ensuring faster, smarter coordination during emergencies.

“I’m immensely proud of everyone who played a part in delivering this project successfully.”

Fergus Mayne, U.K. and Ireland country manager at Motorola Solutions, said:

“Demand on the fire and rescue service has evolved over the years. Our cloud-hosted Guardian Suite of computer-aided dispatch and integrated communication control system software benefits the three fire and rescue services by bringing all communications together into a robust and efficient environment, supporting faster, more coordinated emergency responses.”

Alex Norris, Minister for Fire, said:

“This new control room marks a major step forward for fire and rescue in Suffolk, improving the effectiveness and co-ordination of emergency responses across the county.

“I want to thank everyone involved for their hard work and dedication in delivering this project. It is a clear example of how investment and innovation in our fire services can lead to meaningful improvements in public safety.”

[LOCAL] Council secures funding for sustainable libraries and schools

They will see low-carbon heat pumps installed, replacing aging fossil fuel boilers to reduce maintenance costs and significantly lower emissions.

Suffolk County Council recently secured £675,000 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, delivered by Salix, for these improvements. The scheme is run by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

“These improvements are not only reducing carbon emissions and cutting running costs, but they’re also creating better, more resilient and comfortable spaces for staff and residents to enjoy.”

In November 2021, the county council committed to invest £12.8 million to decarbonise buildings across its estate. Libraries have been a priority for this work, seeing upgrades to reduce energy use, cut carbon emissions, and ensure these much-loved community spaces are fit for the future.

Community Libraries across Suffolk have seen the installation of solar panels, enhanced heating and lighting controls, and improved insulation. A recent project to upgrade the lighting at Bury St Edmunds library has been positively received and has already reduced electricity usage.

“Suffolk Community Libraries are the beating heart of many parts of Suffolk, and I’m proud that they are now also champions of sustainability.

“These improvements are not only reducing carbon emissions and cutting running costs, but they’re also creating better, more resilient and comfortable spaces for staff and residents to enjoy.

“Libraries are at the forefront of the county council’s ambitious programme to reduce our energy consumption, deliver value for money, as well showcasing the council’s commitment to more sustainable community spaces.

“This forward-thinking approach has also helped us to unlock further development opportunities. In several instances, our initial investment has enabled access to additional grant funding, driving further improvements to building fabric and interior spaces.”

The county council’s success in securing the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding also extends beyond libraries.

An additional £215,000 was awarded from the from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to install heat pumps at Barningham and Hadleigh Beaumont Primary Schools, supporting long-term energy efficiency and helping reduce the maintenance burden for school leaders.

These projects will provide valuable insights as Suffolk County Council continues to work with schools across the region to deliver sustainable energy solutions.

Ian Rodger, Director of Public Sector Decarbonisation for Salix, said:

“We’re delighted to work with Suffolk County Council as it makes great strides to ensure its public buildings are future-proofed.

“We are keen that the council can reduce its carbon footprint, reduce running costs as well creating more comfortable places in which to live, work and enjoy.”

For more information on the Council’s decarbonisation programme, visit [Climate action - Suffolk County Council](#)

August 2025

Council remains opposed to pylon project, as application submitted

Primarily, the county council maintains that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme, not 114 miles of pylons cutting through countryside, sensitive landscapes and communities in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.

Previously, SCC has formally and strongly requested that National Grid pauses the Norwich to Tilbury proposals, to allow for effective consideration of offshore alternatives.

“When the full details of National Grid’s application are published next month, we hope they reflect many of the concerns raised by us, and local communities, from consultations and discussions.”

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs

The application for the Development Consent Order - essentially planning permission - was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) by National Grid on Friday 29 August.

PINS has 28 days to determine whether or not to accept the application. Should it be accepted, full details of the project will then be published, with the six-month Examination period likely to begin in early 2026. If consent was then granted, construction could begin in 2027.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

“In its current guise, the Norwich to Tilbury pylon project is not suitable. The less damaging alternatives, such as offshore transmission or high voltage direct current undergrounding, have never been fully considered.

“Such a significant and impactful project should not be determined simply for being the cheapest and fastest solution. The Hiorns Report concluded that proposals were premature and would not be needed until the mid-2030s.

“When the full details of National Grid’s application are published next month, we hope they reflect many of the concerns raised by us, and local communities, from consultations and discussions. We have highlighted the need for numerous local mitigations, issues around airfields, construction traffic, public rights of way, removal of existing pylon lines, the list goes on.

“For example, we consider there to be a robust case for undergrounding where the line crosses the Waveney Valley – only to be told earlier this year, that this was not going to happen, and that was that without any alternative mitigation proposed.”

Suffolk County Council’s response to previous consultations for the Norwich to Tilbury project can be found at [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

[LOCAL] Lowestoft waste upgrades underway

Visitors to the recycling centre on Hadenham Road will still be able to book their slot and deposit waste as usual, without disruption.

New fire suppression equipment, construction of a food waste reception shed, and relocation of staff office space are among the main changes for the £3.4 million project.

“The upgrades at Lowestoft... demonstrate our continued investment in strengthening Suffolk’s waste infrastructure.” Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste.

Work is due to be completed by Spring 2026 and has received a contribution through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) provided by East Suffolk Council of £751,642.

Councillor Chris Chambers said:

“The county council is continuing to make considerable progress and investments in recycling in Suffolk.

“Some of these developments have been customer-facing, such as at Haverhill, Foxhall, and plans for a new centre in Ipswich. Others, like the upgrades at Lowestoft, are more behind-the-scenes - but all of them demonstrate our continued investment in strengthening Suffolk’s waste infrastructure.

“With Simpler Recycling and food waste collections coming to all Suffolk’s homes next year, we are preparing the Waste Transfer Station at Lowestoft to receive food waste collections from bin lorries in parts of East Suffolk, which will then be taken to the new anaerobic digestion plant in Reydon.”

Councillor Mark Packard, East Suffolk Council’s Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management and the Chair of the CIL Spending Working Group, said:

“East Suffolk Council is happy to contribute £751,642 of Community Infrastructure Levy to these upgrades. The Levy is collected from new housing developments in East Suffolk and therefore it is right that this is spent on improving our infrastructure.

“Waste management impacts every home in East Suffolk and with the advent of the collection of glass and food waste from each home we have needed to add to our recycling capacity.”

The government’s Simpler Recycling initiative will standardise recycling practices across all local authorities in England and make recycling easier, more consistent, and more effective.

[LOCAL] New and Improved bus services coming to Suffolk this month

These routes have all been suggested by the community through the council’s “scheme on a page” initiative and have been funded through the 2025/26 Local Authority Bus Grant from Department for Transport. The grant is made up of £2.8m revenue for delivering these new or enhanced services and a further £5.3m capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

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

“I’m delighted to launch these new and improved routes for Suffolk in the coming weeks. We know that they will make a huge difference to local people, because they have all been suggested by Suffolk Communities. These changes represent the biggest positive change to bus services across the County since 1998 and along with our previous route improvements, show our commitment to supporting local communities and the bus industry.”

Among the services launching on 1 September, is the enhanced First number 70 route, which currently operates between Orford and Grundisburgh. The enhanced service will improve journey options from Sutton Heath and Melton to several locations including Grundisburgh, Woodbridge and Rock Barracks:

- The number of daily journeys provided for Grundisburgh will increase and include an hourly off-peak service and a later journey back from Ipswich at 19:40.
- The number of daily journeys provided for Rock Barracks will also increase, with an hourly off-peak service including a later journey back from Ipswich via Grundisburgh at 19:40. This will provide the planned influx of personnel at the base with much needed travel options.

Councillor Chris Chambers, added: “The enhanced number 70 route is the culmination of two years of work and initially came to us as three separate bids from Woodbridge Town Council, Melton Parish Council and Sutton Heath Parish Council, alongside MoD at Rock Barracks.

“Those bids told us that transport links needed to improve in the area and we’ve worked hard with local communities to bring those proposals together and achieve something which will make a real difference to benefit people living in Sutton Heath, Rock Barracks, Melton and Woodbridge.”

Maj Alex Mason, 2IC 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, of Rock Barracks in Woodbridge, said:

“Woodbridge Station warmly welcomes the successful local authority bid for funding to improve the local bus services at Sutton Heath, particularly in support of the growing number of Gurkha families moving into the area.

“This investment will make a meaningful difference to the daily lives of our serving personnel and their families, many of whom rely on public transport. Improved access to schools, healthcare, and community services will help new families feel more connected and supported as they build their lives here.

“The news follows the recent success of the Freedom of Woodbridge parade, where our soldiers were honoured to march through the town in recognition of their service and strong ties with the local community. The warm reception from residents was a powerful reminder of the deep bond between 23 Para Engr Regt and the town of Woodbridge.

“We are proud of the close partnership between the Army, local councils, and the wider community, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact of these enhanced services in the months ahead.”

The funding has also enabled the council to introduce new services in areas which had seen local bus services cancelled or reduced.

Councillor Chambers, continues: “As in the case of Newmarket and Marham Park, the grant has enabled us to re-introduce routes in areas which had been facing cancellation of their bus routes.

“We are very grateful to DfT for providing the funding to enable us to make a huge positive difference in improving transport links across our communities, and we are hopeful that this and schemes like it can continue in the future.

“I would encourage anyone who has an idea to improve bus links in your village to get in touch - share your ideas with us through our scheme on a page initiative. As well as new or enhanced bus routes, we are also open to supporting ideas involving transport infrastructure and longer-term investment.”

Members of the community can suggest ideas for new or enhanced bus routes, or infrastructure projects such as bus stop improvements, for consideration

at: www.suffolkonboard.com/news/2024/06/bus-service-improvement-plan-where-should-the-money-be-spent/.

A full list of the new and enhanced services funded through the Local Authority Bus Grant 2025/26 can be seen below:

Operator	Number	Route	Change	Commencing
Ipswich Buses	1	Waitrose - Greenwich - Town Centre	Addition of Sunday service	31/8/25
Ipswich Buses	3E	Town Centre - University of Suffolk - Nacton Road - Greenwich	Addition of Sunday evening service	31/8/25
Ipswich Buses	92	Ipswich - Holbrook - Brantham - Manningtree	Planned reduction in service withdrawn, new peak AM journey from Brantham to Manningtree	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	93	Ipswich - Capel St Mary - East Bergholt - Colchester	planned reduction in service withdrawn.	N/A - ongoing
Ipswich Buses	4	Town Centre - Broke Hall - Bixley	Increased peak-hour frequency	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	5	Town Centre - Foxhall Road - Ipswich Hospital	Increased Mon-Fri frequency	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	7, 16	Ipswich Town Centre – Dale Hall – Castle Hill – Anglia Retail Park and Ipswich Town Centre – Belstead Road – Halifax	Increased peak-hour frequency, additional trips	1/9/25

Ipswich Buses	15/15A	Town Centre - Station - Maidenhall - Pinewood - Chantry	Increased frequency	1/9/25
Chambers	Was 90, 91, now 50	(Ipswich -) Hadleigh - Sudbury	New Sunday Sudbury – Ipswich service plus additional Sudbury – Hadleigh Mon-Sat journeys	31/8/25
Chambers	Was 84, 753, 784, now 43/X43	Bury St Edmunds – Sicklesmere – Lavenham – Acton - Sudbury – Great Cornard - Leavenheath – Stoke-by-Nayland – Nayland - Colchester	New Sunday and evening journeys for Sudbury – Colchester section. Daytime Mon-Sat services retimed to give better frequency for Stoke By Nayland and Leavenheath. All journeys via West Suffolk and Colchester hospitals.	31/8/25
Chambers	49	Acton Lane (near Health Centre) – Tesco – Chaucer Avenue bus gate – Town Centre	New Sudbury town service	1/9/25
Chambers	Was 375, now 45	Sudbury - Alpheton - Shimpling - Bury St Edmunds	Upgrade from Weds only to run Mon-Sat, route change to cover West Suffolk Hospital	1/9/25
Mulleys	M40	Thurston - Great Barton - Bury St Edmunds	New hourly service	4/7/25
Mulleys	M77	Marham Park - Westley Estate - Bury Town Centre	Extension of existing town service to run earlier and later plus covering Marham Park.	4/7/25
BorderBus	521	Aldeburgh - Thorpeness - Saxmundham - Halesworth	Increased Saturday frequency and	TBC

			extended to Beccles	
Dan's Coach Travel	DB1	Stowmarket - Bury St Edmunds	Addition of Saturday service	TBC
The Voluntary Network	NTC	Exning - Studlands Estate - Newmarket Town Centre - Railway Station	New Mon - Sat service	15/9/25
The Voluntary Network	225	Newmarket - Dullingham - Thurlows - Haverhill	New Mon-Fri service converting current demand responsive option to scheduled route. Also provides peak journey on new NTC town service above.	15/9/25
The Voluntary Network	TBC	Linking High Lodge, the Town Centre and Country Park with the housing areas	New three day per weeks service linking estates, town centre, country park and High Lodge	15/9/25
Simonds	72	Gislingham - Diss	New Friday shopping service	5/9/25
Fareline	460	Gislingham - Stowmarket	New Thursday shopping service	TBC
Hadleigh Community Transport	461, 462	Hadleigh - Whatfield - Bildeston - Stowmarket	Increase to daily operation and add more journeys	TBC
TBC	482	Framlingham - Stradbroke - Eye - Diss	New Mon-Sat service	TBC
First	800	Ipswich Park & Ride	Revised route in Ipswich taking in University of Suffolk and Ipswich Hospital (Garrett Anderson Centre rather than Woodbridge Road). Some journeys extended to Adastral Park. 1 journey per hour extended to Rendlesham via	1/9/25

			Martlesham, Woodbridge and Melton.	
First	70	Orford – Sutton Heath – Melton – Woodbridge – Grundisburgh – Ipswich.	Additional journeys from Sutton Heath and Rock Barracks to Melton and Woodbridge with connections onwards to Ipswich.	1/9/25
First	TBC	Lowestoft town service	Resumption of service to Gunton area withdrawn in 2019.	2/11/25

September 2025

Suffolk's vision for nature recovery

Suffolk County Council is one of 48 responsible authorities in England, appointed by The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to lead on preparing its LNRS.

The council's cabinet will seek to approve it for publication at their meeting on Tuesday 9 September.

The strategy's aim is to address the decline in nature, identify ways to help it recover and deliver wider benefits such as reducing flood risk.

“This is an important document; it will hopefully be the catalyst to reversing the decline in Suffolk's nature.”

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Other Suffolk local authorities, nature experts, farmers and a wide range of interested organisations have contributed to Suffolk's strategy, along with members of the public.

The process of creating the strategy began in 2022 and has had over 50,000 Suffolk engagements recorded at over 250 events. This culminated in a public consultation in Spring this year, with over 500 responses.

“What this process has shown us, is that nature truly means a great deal to the people of Suffolk.

“There is a clear passion for caring for wildlife, but also recognition of the physical and mental health benefits of a thriving natural environment.

“I’d like to thank members of the public, landowners and experts for their contributions, enabling us to agree priorities for nature recovery in Suffolk and propose the actions to reverse this decline.

“This is an important document, it will hopefully be the catalyst to reversing the decline in Suffolk’s nature. In turn, this can help in many other ways by mitigating inland flooding risk, creating new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and supporting farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities.”

Suffolk has worked very closely with Norfolk County Council, who are also preparing their own LNRS. The authorities formed the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership, to identify common themes and opportunities to enable nature recovery support.

Subject to approval by the cabinet at Suffolk County Council, the LNRS will then be shared with district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for a final consultation before publication by the end of October.

32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project

The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions. It is backed by Suffolk County Council and all local borough and district councils.

Solar Together Suffolk has been running for seven years, and in that time has:

- installed 32,024 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households
- installed 1,768 battery storage systems
- reduced 1,900 tonnes of carbon emissions across the county

“Homes still account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk’s CO2 emissions. But we are helping homeowners and landlords reduce these through initiatives like Solar Together Suffolk, and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.”

It’s free to register with Solar Together Suffolk and receive an installation quote - there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation.

The project helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers, and increases their independence from the national grid.

The scheme not only offers solar panels, but also battery storage and EV chargepoints. Customers who have already invested in solar panels can also get quotes for battery storage, to get more from the renewable energy they generate.

“Solar Together Suffolk has installed an impressive 11.7 MW of solar panels across Suffolk homes.

“Many Suffolk customers have told us that the main reason for installing solar panels was for the benefit of the climate and environment, followed by saving money on bills and reducing their reliance on the grid.

“Homes still account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk’s CO2 emissions. But we are helping homeowners and landlords reduce these through initiatives like Solar Together Suffolk, and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

“We want to help residents make their homes and lifestyles as sustainable and energy efficient as possible – whether through improving insulation, how homes are heated, electric vehicle infrastructure, or solar panels and batteries.”

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

“With energy prices continuing to fluctuate, residents of Suffolk are looking for opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills, and increase their independence from the grid.

“The Solar Together Suffolk group-buying scheme offers a straightforward way to make an informed decision and to access a competitive offer from a trusted, vetted provider.”

Second year of £500,000 Culture Project Fund launched

Suffolk County Council is pleased to announce the second year of its £500,000 Culture Project Fund. This initiative is aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects in our local communities across the county.

This fund’s goal is to improve the cultural landscape in Suffolk, benefiting communities through diverse and impactful initiatives that align with the council's key priorities: health and wellbeing, economic development, environmental protection, and value for money.

The fund offers three tiers of grants:

Small grants up to £1,500

Medium grants up to £10,000

Large grants up to £20,000

This inclusive approach ensures that both grassroots ventures and larger, more established organisations have equal opportunities to access funding. Eligible applicants include Arts and Museum organisations which operate as skilled freelancers, registered charities, community interest companies, non-profits, and social enterprises based in Suffolk.

The fund supports both capital and revenue projects, with a maximum of £10,000 available for capital expenditure.

"The second year of the Culture Project Fund marks a significant investment in the future of Suffolk’s cultural sector and underlines our commitment to investment in Arts and Museums . By supporting projects that focus on our key priorities, we aim to create happier, healthier, and more united communities.

“This fund is about more than just arts and culture, it’s about building resilience, fostering inclusion, and boosting the wellbeing of our residents. We’re excited to see the positive impact these projects will have on our county.”

The culture project fund will support projects that have been designed to reach, engage and inspire people and communities to take part in and enjoy arts and museums. The fund is particularly to support projects that reach some of our most vulnerable people and communities with an application process that is streamlined and accessible. This includes activities designed for those on low incomes, isolated individuals, and marginalised groups, the fund aims to support projects that enhance both mental and physical health, creating resilience and improving overall wellbeing through inclusive and accessible activities.

Furthermore, the fund aims to strengthen Suffolk's economy by supporting projects that enhance skills development, promote social enterprises, and attract visitors. By focusing on these areas, the Council seeks to foster a thriving cultural sector that contributes to the county's growth.

For information on what was funded in 2025.26 see [Culture project fund - Suffolk County Council](#)

Key Dates:

Fund opens for applications: 15 September 2025

Medium and Large grant applications deadline: 28 November 2025

Medium and Large grants awarded by: End February 2026

Small grant presentations: Announced end of March 2026

Suffolk County Council encourages all eligible organisations to apply. For more information or to apply, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund or contact the Arts & Museum Team at PH&C Culture Project Fund cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk

Ambitious new plan to Get Suffolk Working

At the heart of the draft Get Suffolk Working strategy is the launch of Connect to Work, a major new programme designed to support people with health conditions, disabilities and complex barriers into sustainable and meaningful employment.

Backed by up to £9.5 million in funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Connect to Work aims to support more than 2,700 Suffolk residents over the next five years.

The programme will offer tailored training, personalised support and job placements, helping people find meaningful work that aligns with their strengths, aspirations and work experience.

Connect to Work forms a key part of the wider Get Suffolk Working strategy – Suffolk's local response to the government's national Get Britain Working initiative, which seeks to reduce economic inactivity and help people find good work.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills, said:

"There is strong evidence that being in work improves health and wellbeing and helps prevent social exclusion. Our economy also depends on a strong, skilled workforce for it to grow and thrive.

"Get Suffolk Working brings those priorities together with a practical, inclusive plan that helps people overcome barriers to employment. Everyone deserves the chance for a meaningful, secure and fairly paid job. This plan will help to make that possible."

The plan has been developed in partnership with the DWP, the Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board, and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, with Suffolk County Council acting as the accountable body.

The plan focuses on stronger collaboration between health, skills, and employment services to build a more joined-up and inclusive system that works for all residents.

The cabinet will be asked to approve the draft plan and delegate authority to the Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board to finalise and oversee its delivery. The final plan is expected to be published by the end of October 2025.

Get Suffolk Working will complement and enhance existing local strategies – including the Suffolk Economic Strategy, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and integrated care and health strategies – ensuring public investment delivers the maximum impact for residents and employers across Suffolk.

One Suffolk plan submitted to government

One Suffolk – the business case put forward by Suffolk County Council for a single unitary authority that is smarter, simpler and better – was issued to government today (Thursday 25 September).

One Suffolk proposes scrapping Suffolk's six councils, made up of the districts, borough and county council, and replacing them with a single new council that would deliver both local and county-wide services. This comes in response to the government's drive for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across the country.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

"We are confident that One Suffolk will save Suffolk £39.4 million each year, enabling the new unitary authority to deliver bold new initiatives such as a £40 million new deal for market towns and Ipswich and a full review of car parking and markets.

"Meanwhile, the opposing plan for three unitaries would cost an eye-watering £145.3 million more than the current two-tier system, and their business case lacks robust, local evidence.

"Thank you to everyone who has engaged with and supported the One Suffolk plan. I'd urge you all to read out business case and let us know your thoughts – and of course to take part in the government-run consultation once it is live."

The foundations of the One Suffolk business case are built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than relying on generic national modelling.

Among the many benefits in the One Suffolk business case is the proposal for a new deal for market towns, including Ipswich. This would be backed by a £40m capital investment fund, alongside a review of car parking charges and markets conducted in consultation with traders, businesses and representative bodies.

The One Suffolk campaign engaged communities from across Suffolk, with 8,189 responses to our Residents' Survey. This made it the largest survey response rate for the county council in the past decade.

The next step in the process of local government reorganisation will be for government to consult on the preferred options for unitary authorities in Suffolk, before taking a decision on which proposal to take forward.

Read the business case:

- [One Suffolk Business Case](#)

[LOCAL] Active Travel works to improve pedestrian safety by Ipswich Waterfront

Works by Suffolk Highways to improve pedestrian safety near Ipswich Waterfront are set to begin.

The Active Travel scheme in Bridge Street and College Street will see pedestrian crossings giving access to the Waterfront relocated to make them more easily accessible.

As the gateway to The Waterfront, the works will act as a springboard for future wider public realm and development works at adjoining St Peter's Dock, allowing the space to be reimagined as part of wider development plans for the area.

The works are due to start on Monday September 22 and consist of:

- **Relocating the pedestrian crossing on College Street** so that it is in line with the footpath connecting St Peter's Street and Bridge Street
- **Relocating the pedestrian crossing on Bridge Street** so that it is in line with the entrance to St Peter's Dock
- **Permanently pedestrianising the temporarily blocked off section of road** which runs adjacent to the Bridge Street roundabout
- **Associated works**, including rerouting electrical services, carriageway resurfacing and reinstatement of road markings

They are scheduled to run until Friday November 28.

A range of traffic management methods will be in use at different times along College Street and Bridge Street during the works.

This includes lane closures during the day and full road closures at night.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Ipswich and Operational Highways, said: "The Waterfront is a hugely popular location in Ipswich and safe pedestrian access to it is paramount.

"With the existing crossings it has become apparent that they need to be re-aligned on the road to ensure people use them fully and aren't tempted to just cross the carriageway.

"Inevitably these works may result in some disruption to motorists, for which we apologise in advance, but the end result will be a safer road environment for all."

Full road closures will take place on Tuesday September 30 and Wednesday October 1 between 7pm and 5am, Thursday November 20 between 7pm and 5am, and Wednesday November 26, between 7pm and 5am.

During these times, the road will be closed between:

- College Street: Full extent
- Key Street: From College Street to Slade Street
- Foundation Street: From Star Lane to College Street
- Foundry Lane: Full extent
- From Star Lane to Key Street

To allow residents access while the closure is in-place, there will be a suspension of the one-way system on College Street and Key Street, allowing road users to travel from both ends.

This will be controlled by operatives at each end of the closure, who will assist road users with access when required.

Full details of the works can be found on the [One.Network](#) website.

Active Travel England is responsible for raising standards of cycling and walking infrastructure and managing the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects that improve both health and air quality.

In February it awarded Suffolk County Council a further £0.9 million from Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund in its latest round of funding.

This is to be used on projects such as better footpaths and crossing points, maintaining and improving walking and cycling infrastructure, and traffic calming measures.

The county council is now considering suitable local schemes, which will be announced in the coming months.

[LOCAL] New homes for Newmarket under way

Edmundham Developments, a joint venture between Lovell Partnerships Limited and Suffolk County Council, is delivering the development of 2, 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes.

Building work on Astley Place began in May 2025, with the first show home and the marketing suite planned to open in early 2026.

On Wednesday 3 September, members of the Suffolk County Council Housing board were given a tour of the site.

“There’s a really positive buzz around this development, people in the local area are keen to know how things are progressing and have been enquiring about availability for some time now.”
Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste

Homes are built to exceed modern standards, combining thoughtful design, high specification and future ready technology to deliver lasting comfort and performance.

Triple glazed windows and doors are fitted throughout, alongside enhanced insulation to both the external walls and ground floors to offer exceptional thermal performance.

Each home features a highly efficient air source heat pump system, photovoltaic panels and underfloor heating for the ideal balance of comfort and control.

Matthew Goakes, Area Director, Lovell, said:

"Newmarket is a fantastic location and, combined with the quality of homes being built, we have already seen huge interest from people already living in the local area. Astley Place is the first development to come to the market, by Edmundham Developments.

"Working alongside Suffolk County Council, we are excited to see the development progressing and can't wait to welcome members of this new community to their new homes."

Shared ownership of properties will be available - a government-backed scheme to help those who can't afford to buy outright, to get onto the property ladder.

Astley Place is named after Sir John Astley, a notable 19th century figure in Newmarket's racing history. He raised funds to build the first Astley Institute and, as a steward for the Jockey Club, revised racing rules and rebuilt the Rowley Mile Stands.

For more information about Astley Place and Edmundham Developments, visit www.edmundham.co.uk

[LOCAL] Gull Wing Bridge celebrates first anniversary

Since being opened to traffic on September 7, 2024 the bridge has significantly reduced congestion and improved connectivity between the northern and southern parts of the town.

It has performed more than 1,000 lifts in its first year of operation, with more than 350 vessels travelling under the span without causing delay to traffic during the summer.

It has also won awards - the 2025 Bridges Design and Construction Award for projects over £10 million, and a Highly Commended honour at the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transport award. It is also currently shortlisted in the Best Transport Project category for the British Construction and Infrastructure Awards 2025, which are being held in October 2025.

The bridge crosses Lake Lothing and the East Suffolk railway line and comprises of eight spans, including the largest hydraulically driven rolling bascule bridge in the world.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said: "The Council was delighted to deliver this third crossing of Lake Lothing, with the benefits being felt across the town and surrounding areas almost immediately.

"By taking the pressure away from the existing crossings, Gull Wing has transformed travel times, supporting local businesses and the local economy.

"Modern cycle and pedestrian routes flank the carriageway along the bridge, encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, providing a significant step forward for Lowestoft, its residents, and businesses."

Work began on the bridge in April 2021, having been an aspiration since the early 20th century.

Lowestoft's new landmark was in the spotlight within 24 hours of opening as the cycling tour of Great Britain passed over it.

It was then formally opened by Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne The Princess Royal on November 19.

Spanning 345 metres in total, the bridge features a main bascule span that is 39.5 metres long and 22 metres wide. It sits 12 metres clear above high tide when closed and can accommodate marine vessels up to 32 metres wide.

When it is required to open for larger vessels, there is a typical delay of around six minutes. The opening of the bridge has relieved congestion as through traffic no longer has to use the existing Bascule Bridge in Lowestoft town centre, or the crossing at Oulton Broad. The name 'Gull Wing' was coined by Somerleyton Primary School pupils Eva Ainslie, Jack Baldry, and Hayden Nicholls in a competition for local schools.

They took the inspiration for the name from the shape of the bascule span's beams and their resemblance to the wings of a gull.

October 2025

Councillors approve historic devolution deal, paving the way for major investment for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk - which will bring £1 billion to the counties in the next 30 years - following overwhelming support from councillors earlier today (Thursday 2 October).

The new mayoral combined county authority (MCCA) would have access to a starting annual investment fund of £37.4 million - funded by the government. This is in addition to devolved funding from Whitehall to deliver public services.

The investment fund would enable the new mayor to support a wide range of long-term, locally-driven projects that will boost economic growth, improve infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for residents. This could include transport infrastructure, housing and education and skills.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:

"For too long, Suffolk, and indeed Norfolk, has been a devolution desert. Alongside local government reorganisation, this gives us a rare opportunity to reshape governance, improve the lives of our residents, and ensure that Suffolk has the strong, unified voice it needs – and deserves – on the national stage.

"Two weeks ago, we discussed our proposal for One Suffolk, a single unitary authority for our county. This sustainable model, effective delivery and credible voice is precisely what One Suffolk would deliver. It would be smarter simpler and better. It would be a strong voice for our county. And it would be the most effective partner for the new mayor.

“Through both devolution and local government reorganisation, we are re-shaping local governance in our county. We are setting up Suffolk for future prosperity and growth, and we are giving Suffolk that single, loud voice so that it can no longer be overlooked by those in Westminster.”

The proposal to establish an MCCA received overwhelming backing by councillors at the full council meeting – with 98% voting in favour of the motion.

Speaking during the full council meeting, Cllr Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council’s leader, said:

“This is a historic day. The scale and the impact of the decisions we make as a Cabinet is often significant – but there is something truly significant about today’s decision – that has the potential to be transformative for some 1.7 million residents in Suffolk and Norfolk.

“We have a unique deal on the table – one which binds devolution with an even bigger change in the form of local government reorganisation – to which we gave our strong backing just two weeks ago.

“By supporting this proposal, we are taking a bold step towards a brighter future for Suffolk and Norfolk.”

In the future, Suffolk and Norfolk will be able to access multi-year, cross government funding that would enhance the investment fund and enable better tailoring of that money to benefit local needs and opportunities.

Earlier this week the Suffolk Business Board gave its endorsement to the proposal to create an MCCA, calling it a ‘transformative opportunity to unlock growth’.

The Business Board, comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development.

Suffolk is one of six areas on the devolution priority programme. Alongside local government reorganisation, devolution will bring in the biggest change to local government for over 50 years.

The next step in the devolution process will be for councillors at Norfolk County Council to vote on the proposal on Thursday 16 October. If they consent, government will formally lay a Statutory Instrument, enabling the MCCA to be formed.

Elections for the new mayor would then be held in May 2026.

You can watch the cabinet meeting on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMpJrEQcU0w>

Suffolk celebrates five years of investment in the National Cycle Network

Suffolk County Council is proud to mark five years of dedicated investment in the National Cycle Network – a key part of the county’s infrastructure supporting safer, greener, and more accessible travel for all.

In that time Suffolk County Council has secured more than £5 million to enhance the network across the county.

This work has been delivered in partnership with Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans), the national charity responsible for maintaining and developing the Network. Together, they have delivered improvements in signage, route safety, and connectivity - helping thousands of residents and visitors walk, wheel, and cycle more confidently and more often.

Key areas of improvement include routes from Ipswich Hospital to the Waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and areas within Woodbridge as part of the town's active travel project.

The Network plays a crucial role in connecting Suffolk's towns, villages, and countryside — linking historic market towns, scenic coastal paths, and rural communities. It not only offers a low-carbon transport alternative but also encourages healthier, more active lifestyles.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council is excited to announce proposals for two pilot Quietways - low-traffic rural routes designed to form part of the Network and provide an even more comfortable and attractive experience for people choosing active travel. These Quietways, funded by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, via Active Travel England are currently being explored between Carlton Colville and Barnby, and Onehouse to Woolpit.

Councillor Alexander Nicoll, Suffolk County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said: "We are committed to delivering a high-quality active travel network that works for every community in Suffolk.

"These schemes align with national standards and support our long-term ambitions under the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

"Whether you're commuting, exercising, or simply enjoying the outdoors, we want active travel to be the easy and natural choice for everyone in Suffolk."

Matt Barber, Head of Growth and Partnerships at Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, said: "We are extremely grateful for the support shown by Suffolk County Council, and we are delighted that this commitment to improving the National Cycle Network is continuing.

"We know that across Suffolk thousands of people enjoy using the Network each year, helping to improve their health, whilst cutting congestion and carbon emissions.

"However, we also know that for many the lack of safe, accessible infrastructure is the reason they cannot regularly walk, wheel, or cycle – this is why we are delighted to be piloting two Quietway projects in Suffolk; allowing us to test out low-cost interventions as we attempt to connect up more of our villages and communities."

November 2025

Suffolk County Council announces £63m A12 highway improvement proposals

Suffolk County Council has unveiled a full planning application for a package of highway improvements worth in the region of £63 million along the A12.

The works will be between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge.

They aim to enhance transport connectivity, safety, and accessibility for all users, including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport passengers.

Suffolk County Council is responsible for this section of the A12 and the proposals feature significant upgrades to the 6.8 mile (11km) stretch.

Key elements of the scheme are:

- Highway upgrades to improve traffic flow and safety, including enhancements to seven road junctions.
- Construction of a mobility hub at Adastral Park, designed to support sustainable travel options and improve public transport integration
- Replacement of the Martlesham footbridge with a new non-motorised users bridge to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
- New signalised bus link junction north of Anson Road, connecting the A12 and Main Road via Portal Avenue
- Dual carriageway upgrade between the A12/B1438 Ipswich Road junction and the A12/B1079 Grundisburgh Road junction, including a new layby, shared use footway/cycleway, and agricultural accessway
- New shared use footway/cycleways at Portal Avenue and north of A1152 Woods Lane, along with improved crossing facilities at key junctions
- Additional highway features, such as maintenance bays, traffic signs, upgraded signals, and pedestrian crossings

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport Strategy, said: “This council is committed to enhancing local infrastructure, aiding sustainable economic recovery and developing growth.

“These proposals are a transformative infrastructure investment which reflect the council’s dedication to improving regional mobility, reducing congestion, and promoting sustainable transport.”

The proposals have been drawn up following two public consultations since the scheme was first outlined in 2020.

They will be formally submitted to the council’s planning directorate on November 14. Members of the public and interested stakeholders can submit their views regarding the planning application after this date.

Comments should be sent to: Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX, or via email to planning@suffolk.gov.uk

Project Celebrating Disability in Suffolk gets £139k grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund

The project has been made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we will honour the resilience and contributions of people with disabilities, while also helping wider communities better understand the barriers they face today.

Beyond Labels will collect and preserve personal stories, alongside the histories of organisations, schools, and charities that support disabled people to create a record that celebrates disability while sparking conversations about inclusion, accessibility, and equality.

This exciting initiative begins with the recruitment of a dedicated project officer and volunteers, the launch of a community forum, and a programme of activities designed to capture and share lived experiences.

As part of the project, Suffolk Archives, a Suffolk County Council service, will work with local schools and community groups, offering free workshops that teach skills in recording, organising, and preserving archives. There will also be workshops around the county that provide opportunities for participants to co-create projects that amplify disabled voices and educate others about the challenges faced in daily life.

It also includes cataloguing and selective digitisation of existing disability-related records, making them more accessible to the public and ensuring that Suffolk Archives reflects the diversity of society today.

A key outcome will be a free public exhibition at The Hold on Ipswich Waterfront, running from February to May 2026. Co-curated with local communities, this exhibition will celebrate the stories collected through the project and encourage greater awareness and empathy across Suffolk.

Cllr Nadia Cenci, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Communities, said:

"I'm delighted that this project has received the backing of the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Beyond Labels is not only about uncovering Suffolk's disability history, but also about celebrating the people with disabilities living in our communities today. By sharing their voices, we can build greater understanding and help more people feel a sense of belonging in Suffolk."

Liz Bates, Director, England, Midlands and East at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:

"We are pleased to support Suffolk Archives with a grant of £139,000 to collect and explore stories of people with disabilities working with local schools and community groups. Thanks to National Lottery players this project will be able to preserve and highlight experiences of life in the UK that might otherwise go unrecorded."

December 2025

Council secures £2.9 million from DfT Incentive Fund for 2025/26

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £2.9 million from the Department for Transport's 2025/26 Incentive Fund for best practice in highways management.

The fund, introduced by the current government, rewards local authorities that demonstrate excellence in highway asset management and efficiency.

The award builds on the council's strong track record of success in previous years, where it has consistently secured the maximum available funding under similar schemes.

Under the Incentive Fund scheme authorities must report:

- Highway maintenance spend over the past five years
- Road condition data, with trend analysis
- Pothole repair statistics for the last five years
- A 2025/26 resurfacing plan
- Show a balance of preventive against reactive maintenance
- Coordination with utilities to reduce disruption
- Climate resilience efforts
- Adoption of best practices and innovation

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, said the award reflected the council's commitment to delivering a high-performing, cost-effective highways service that prioritises long-term sustainability and value for money.

"We are pleased to have met the detailed requirements of the government's incentive fund and that they have given the green light to the maximum funding – it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our highways teams.

"By embracing innovation and best practice, we have positioned Suffolk as one of the leading authorities in the country for highway asset management – and we have now been endorsed in our endeavours by the government.

"This investment will help us maintain and improve our network for the benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors."

Suffolk County Council will spend a total of £47.3 million on highways maintenance in 2025-26.

The Suffolk Highways 2025/26 surface dressing programme treated a total of 90 sites covering over 90 miles of road.

Similarly, this year's resurfacing programme will deliver works across 57 locations covering more than 11 miles.

So far, 22 of the 58 resurfacing sites have been delivered with the remainder coming by the end of the financial year.

Inspectorate satisfied with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's improvement progress

In a letter received this week following an October revisit, inspectors recognised early positive change across leadership, governance and organisational culture, supported by a comprehensive action plan developed with staff and representative bodies.

Inspectors also noted the significant investment and support from Suffolk County Council - totalling £1.6 million over two years, which has enabled new posts, development programmes and organisational reforms to be put in place.

While acknowledging that meaningful cultural improvement takes time, the inspectorate confirmed it is satisfied with the service's progress to date.

Jon Lacey, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer, said:

"We welcome the inspectorate's recognition of the progress made so far, which reflects the hard work and commitment of our staff and leaders.

"We are building a positive, inclusive and values-led culture, and while we are encouraged by this feedback, we know we are only partway through our improvement journey.

"Our focus now is on continuing to embed change, strengthening leadership behaviours, and ensuring that improvements become sustainable and consistent across the organisation."

Since the inspection last year, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, has:

- Secured £1.6m investment from Suffolk County Council to support improvement.
- Recruited nine new posts, with eight further roles in progress.
- Developed a comprehensive 37-goal improvement plan addressing all recommendations.
- Introduced new governance boards and improved oversight of progress.
- Delivered leadership development, training and 360-degree feedback programmes.
- Increased staff engagement through surveys, feedback processes and enhanced internal communications.
- Commissioned external peer support and challenge to promote learning and transparency.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

"It is reassuring to see the Inspectorate recognise the meaningful progress being made.

"The council's £1.6 million investment is supporting improvements in leadership, communication and culture, and it is encouraging to see positive change emerging.

“There is more work ahead, but strong foundations have now been put in place, and we will continue supporting the service as it delivers the high standards our communities expect.”

To read the letter from HMICFRS in full, please visit: [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service: Cause of concern revisit letter - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#).

Suffolk secures more than £26 million bus funding over three years

Millions of pounds of investment is to take place in Suffolk’s bus network over three years following allocation of Government funding.

Services, ticketing, and infrastructure will all benefit under the package worth nearly £27 million between 2026 and 2029.

Suffolk County Council will receive a total of £26,813,760 under the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG).

This funding will enable the continuation and expansion of new and improved services introduced over the past two years through LABG support and its predecessor, the Bus Services Improvement Grant (BSIP), many of which were shaped by community feedback.

Suffolk will receive:

- 2026/27 - £8,849,119
- 2027/28 - £8,937,920
- 2028/29 - £9,026,721

The funding is split into two areas.

Revenue investment will focus on:

- Maintaining and growing enhanced services based on local suggestions.
- Increasing publicity and travel information to help residents make informed choices.

Capital funding will deliver:

- Renewal and expansion of Real Time Passenger Information across Suffolk.
- Improved ticketing options and accessibility in partnership with bus operators.
- Investigations into bus priority measures to reduce journey times and encourage modal shift.
- Upgraded bus stops with new shelters, better footway links, and accessibility enhancements—many suggested by local communities.

Local authorities will have flexibility to use LABG funding to meet local needs—whether by reducing fares, introducing new routes, investing in zero-emission buses, or improving bus stops and stations.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said:

“Certainty of funding allows Suffolk to work with operators on multi-year plans to transition to electric buses, improving air quality in town centres and ensuring more reliable operations.

"With guaranteed funding in place we can deliver the improvements our communities have asked for—better services in our towns and rural areas, and more accessible stops.

"This investment will help us make bus travel a more attractive, reliable, and sustainable choice for everyone."

Last July Suffolk County Council announced a £2.8m investment in new bus routes and improved services following announcement of LABG funding of £8 million for 2025-26.

As well as new routes, some services gained increased frequency and a Sunday schedule added.

Alongside the £2.8m revenue for delivering new or enhanced services, the county council also previously announced £5.2m of capital funding from the DfT for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

For more details of public transport in Suffolk go to the [Suffolk On Board](#) website.

£12m Active Travel funding over four years announced for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has been awarded more than £12 million over four years by Active Travel England to continue its work promoting sustainable travel.

Active Travel England (ATE) works with local authorities and other bodies to help them put in place infrastructure and facilities that make it easier for more people to walk, wheel and cycle, more often, on local journeys.

It has awarded Suffolk a total of £12,537,098 for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 to invest in footpaths, infrastructure, and cycle lanes.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport Strategy said: "This is a fantastic amount of money for important schemes and a vote of confidence by ATE in the work we are doing.

"Congestion and pollution are the bane of our bigger towns, which is why it is important that we develop a network of measures to encourage people out of the car wherever possible.

"We have to make it easier for residents and businesses in our towns to get around without having to rely on private vehicles which do so much to clog up our roads.

"Reducing congestion frees up road space for the traffic that does need to be there and creates a cleaner, better environment for everyone."

National Active Travel Commissioner Chris Boardman said: "The aim of Active Travel England is to give people more everyday choice in how they get around, by creating safe, accessible and welcoming streets.

"We are not just building infrastructure — together, we are creating communities: places where parents feel confident letting children travel independently, and where older people can reach local shops with ease. We are building life back into our streets."

In Spring 2023 ATE awarded SCC £7.9 million to develop active travel schemes, followed later that year by £1.495m as part of the then-government's national walking and cycling Social Prescribing pilot.

A further £3.7 million active travel funding was awarded in February this year.

The money has been used in a variety of ways, including most recently new pedestrian crossings in Bridge Street and College Road by Ipswich Waterfront.

Improved cycle routes include from Ipswich Hospital to the Waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and within Woodbridge as part of the town's active travel project.

The latest ATE award for future funding to Suffolk is part of [a funding package for councils in England](#) totalling more than £626 million.

The announcement comes days after the Department for Transport announced it was awarding Suffolk nearly £27 million to run and enhance [bus services and infrastructure](#) between 2026 and 2029.

[LOCAL] Objection lodged to Red House Farm planning approval over school funding shortfall

The proposed Section 106 contributions will only provide a maximum of £12.2 million for education, falling well short of the £16.9 million required to provide sufficient nursery and school places for the new community. This leaves a funding gap of approximately £4.7 million, putting the future provision of local school and early years places at serious risk. Due to delivery timescales, any shortfall in infrastructure funding will become a liability that any successor council will ultimately have to absorb.

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

"It is vital that all families in Ipswich have access to nurseries and schools, and that new developments meet the cost of the additional demand they create. Without full funding, many families will be forced to travel outside their neighbourhood to access a school place, and the Local Education Authority will be at risk of being unable to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient childcare and school places."

Suffolk County Council has already called on Ipswich Borough Council to reconsider and reprioritise infrastructure contributions in favour of education, reviewing all contributions to ensure the needs of children and families are met.

The County Council warned back in October that, without this, it cannot support the current planning application and would consider its legal position regarding any Section 106 agreement that does not address these concerns. Ipswich Borough Council has refused and is pushing to approve the plans with the shortfall left unresolved.

Councillor Reid, continued:

“Suffolk County Council has no option but to formally object to these plans. The County Council does not take this step lightly and we understand the pressure Ipswich Borough Council is under to meet housing targets, but the basis for our objection is clear and in line with national planning policy – the wellbeing of children and families must come first.”

[LOCAL] Scheme to boost biodiversity and tackle flooding on the River Tin at Bungay

A natural flood management scheme is to be installed on a flood-prone river in north Suffolk.

The River Tin, named locally as ‘Tin River’ is a tributary of the River Waveney that has long contributed to flooding across the Bungay area.

Now, Suffolk County Council, in partnership with the River Waveney Trust, has secured more than £50,000 from the East Anglian Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

The work will deliver a number of features to enhance biodiversity and reduce flood risk to Bungay. Delivery is expected in 2026.

The Tin River catchment area covers around 17 square miles, with the river flowing through Bungay before connecting to the River Waveney.

Tin River has been heavily modified over the years through straightening and deepening. The channel often runs dry in the summer but is susceptible to rapid rises in water levels during storms, overwhelming the system, and resulting in flash flooding.

The nearby A144 floods regularly - sometimes along a 500-metre stretch - causing disruption to residents, businesses, and agricultural operations.

Downstream, the town of Bungay continues to face surface-water flooding risks, with a number of residential properties being at risk of flooding.

The works will take place along the river at two separate locations and will comprise of a range of natural features.

This includes reconnection of a meadow to the floodplain, construction of a new pond to create water storage, and installing a series of leaky barriers - dams made from natural woody materials, designed to allow water to spill naturally onto the meadow during heavy rainfall, slowing flow, increasing infiltration, and reducing downstream flood risk.

Matt Hullis, Head of Environment Strategy for Suffolk County Council, said: “The Tin is a small but ecologically significant tributary of the River Waveney.

“Recent conservation projects have enhanced its role as a wildlife corridor, making it an important part of Suffolk’s river landscape.

“The measures we are undertaking will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses, and transport routes; increase water storage and slowing flow, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity across its catchment area.”

Angela Lamb of the River Waveney Trust said: “We are really pleased to be working in partnership with Suffolk County Council, local landowners and the community of Bungay to develop projects on Tin River. It is a fantastic opportunity to create more diverse habitat, improve water quality and have a positive impact on downstream flooding.

“Developing these two sites is just the start of wider plans; we are looking for further opportunities within the Tin River catchment to re-establish natural river processes.

“It is not possible to prevent all flood events from Tin River, but we can reduce that impact by slowing the flow of water through its tributaries and by finding more places for natural water storage within the landscape upstream of St John's Road.

“We are focused on developing a catchment-wide project that creates a wildlife corridor through an agricultural landscape, some of which is accessible by public footpaths, so it's good news for wildlife and the people of Bungay.”

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said: “These important works are good news for the public and the environment.

“Flooding severely disrupts road networks through closures, structural damage, and traffic delays, hindering transportation and emergency response.

“These works will also enhance wetland and meadow habitats, giving the public restored views of the river from local footpaths and increasing wildlife presence in the revitalised wetland areas.”

[LOCAL] New heating solution for central Ipswich

Suffolk County Council has been leading on the feasibility of a heat network project since 2021, and has now secured £10 million from the government's Green Heat Network Fund to make it a reality.

“The project will work by harnessing natural occurring heat from the River Gipping, and delivering the energy to buildings across Ipswich.”

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs

Heat networks using renewable energy have the potential to heat homes and workplaces in a way that improves local air quality, reduces carbon emissions, and, as part of a wider package of measures, delivers secure and affordable energy.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

“This will be a significant project for Ipswich, one which the county council is proud to have been leading on for a number of years, and has now secured a successful funding bid.

“By taking energy from the River Gipping, there is the potential to provide over 35 GWh of heat each year to public buildings across Ipswich – enough to power around 40 buildings in the first phase, ranging from offices to community buildings.

“We have been in discussions with a number of potential beneficiaries, and the first buildings could be connected as early as 2028.

“This can deliver hugely positive upgrades to the town: affordable energy for businesses, protection from volatile energy markets, jobs and growth for the local economy and placing Ipswich as one of the country’s forward-thinking towns when it comes to ensuring local energy security.”

As part of the project, the county council will be continuing to work with local colleges and the university to support the development of green skills locally, offering vocational and academic training and qualifications in the district heating sector, and supporting over 50 local jobs.

Learning from the project will then allow the potential for expansion of the network in other parts of the town, as well as other locations in Suffolk.

The county council is committed to working through the shared Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, helping to deliver cleaner power and supporting local industry and commerce in the local public and private sector – delivering for residents, the community and environment.

January 2026

Suffolk County Council proposes new 20mph speed limit policy for communities

A new 20mph speed limit policy to enhance road safety and improve quality of life across Suffolk’s communities is to be considered by county councillors.

Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet is to discuss a proposal to give communities greater opportunity to reduce the speed limit, where appropriate, in residential and high-pedestrian areas to 20mph.

Studies have shown that reducing speed limits can significantly decrease the number and severity of road accidents.

Slower speeds also contribute to a more pleasant and liveable community, encouraging outdoor activities and fostering a sense of neighbourhood cohesion.

However, the proposal says that 20mph limits can be unpopular with motorists, and with police enforcement capacity limited it was important that such schemes were introduced with community backing to ensure as much local support as possible.

Communities, typically parish or town councils, will be invited to come forward with proposals for 20mph limits, supported by their local county councillor and backed by local engagement.

This could include formal surveys or consultation through neighbourhood plans to demonstrate community support.

It is anticipated that these community led schemes will be locally funded.

As part of the new system Suffolk County Council has developed assessment criteria to consider observed average traffic speeds, the role and character of the road, and the presence of vulnerable road users.

Where average speeds are already low, there will be a presumption in favour of a 20mph limit, often supported by clear signage.

Where speeds are higher, additional measures such as traffic calming may be required to ensure good compliance.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said: “This revised policy aims to strike the right balance between local choice and effective delivery of a 20mph limit, helping communities create safer, healthier places to live.

“The current process is complex and lengthy and results in fewer locations meeting the success criteria.

“This new policy approach will provide communities with a tool kit to implement speed reduction when appropriate to make Suffolk roads safer.”

The Cabinet will consider the proposal at its meeting on Friday January 9, and the full paper can be read on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).

Department for Education acknowledges progress - and sets clear expectations for Suffolk's SEND improvement

In a recent stocktake visit, officers from the DfE reported progress in governance, quality assurance and timeliness, leadership and multi-agency working. They praised a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and laid out a number of recommendations for further improvement.

SEND services in Suffolk are delivered in partnership by Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum and education settings.

The findings of the stocktake visit have been published in a letter addressed to Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Executive Director of Children & Young People's Services at Suffolk County Council, and Dr Ed Garratt OBE, Chief Executive Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board. You can read the letter [here](#).

The DfE acknowledged work to clear the backlog of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) by January and the fact that plans will be delivered above the national average for timeliness. Officers noted a need to ensure that plans reflect families' views and lead to timely, appropriate support.

However, whilst noting considerable improvement evidenced by data, the DfE emphasised the need to translate activity into measurable impact for families, acknowledging that too many families are yet to feel the benefit of this. It also reported that families still experience frustration, especially around statutory processes and communication, and that some planned activities have yet to start, including work to prepare children for adulthood, but steps for effective action are being developed to address this. Concerns also remain about waiting times and assessment for neurodevelopmental needs.

Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Executive Director of Children & Young People's Services at Suffolk County Council, said:

“We welcome the Department for Education's recognition of the progress made across Suffolk, while being clear that we must go further and faster to ensure families genuinely feel the difference.

“Scrutiny from the Department for Education is extremely important as it holds a mirror to every area of reform, offering expertise and sharing best practice from across the country. We know that progress is being made and we are heading in the right direction, but it is doubly reassuring that colleagues at the DfE agree.

“Our priority now is translating those improvements into real, measurable impact for all children and young people with SEND and their families.”

Dr Ed Garratt OBE, Chief Executive Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board, said:

“Improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND depends on strong, joined-up working across education, health and care.

“The progress highlighted in the stocktake reflects the benefits of closer integration, shared leadership and clearer accountability across the system. We are committed to continuing this work, particularly in strengthening mental health and neurodevelopmental pathways and ensuring that children, young people and families receive the right support at the right time.”

Sue Willgoss, chair of trustees for the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum, statutory co-production partner, said:

“Some parents and carers appreciate that there has been progress in some areas, but many families are still not experiencing the consistent, high-quality support they need.

“It is vital that improvements in process are driven by genuine co-production, matched by quality and better lived experiences for families. Once meaningful change is established, it needs to be embedded so the same old problems don’t appear again.”

The DfE letter sets out clear next steps for the partnership, including:

- Producing the Local Area Inclusion Plan by 29 January 2026. This replaces the current Priority Action Plan and brings together all strands of improvement work into a comprehensive framework designed to deliver better outcomes across education, health and care
- Delivering a clear strategy for preparing for adulthood and transitions
- Clearing the EHCP backlog and achieving national average timeliness
- Completing a SEND sufficiency strategy (to support specialist places where required and to work with local mainstream schools to support SEND learners) by December 2025
- Strengthening communication, co-production and use of lived experience

The next review of SEND services by the DfE is scheduled for the end of the spring term.

[LOCAL] County Council set to approve much-needed provision for children with complex needs

Papers published today set out plans for the new provision, which will provide purpose-built Ofsted-registered accommodation, improving outcomes for children and reducing reliance on high-cost, private placements.

Following a successful bid, £1.4m of Department for Education funding has been secured for the project, which will be match-funded with a further £1.4m from Suffolk County Council.

Nationally, councils are facing growing demand and increasing complexity of need. Suffolk is facing the same pressures, with more children coming into care, and children entering care later with lived experiences meaning that they often require more specialist care and support at higher costs.

A lack of choice in the current care market means there is a critical need for local, Ofsted-registered placements for children with complex needs in Suffolk.

If approved, the new accommodation will deliver much-needed additional capacity to support children with complex needs in Suffolk. The proposed home will provide a stable, therapeutic and nurturing environment, designed to improve the health, education, and behavioural outcomes for the children cared for.

The numbers of children in Suffolk County Council's care fluctuate on a daily basis. There are currently around 900 children in care in Suffolk, with approximately 20 requiring residential accommodation.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, said:

"Like many County Councils, Suffolk is seeing a rise in the number of children and young people with complex needs who need the right care and support. This is a growing challenge for local authorities across the country, with these pressures only likely to increase.

"The new provision proposed at Saxmundham will provide much needed additional capacity to support these children and young people, avoiding the need for private care arrangements which can come at a much higher cost.

"Increasing our in-house accommodation will help more Suffolk children to continue living close to where they would call home, whilst providing the bespoke care and support that they need."

It is estimated that the current cost for a child with complex needs living in private provision is approximately £16.4k per week. In the proposed accommodation, this cost would reduce to approximately £12k per week, offering a saving of up to £4.4k per child per week.

The papers outline that for two children living at the accommodation, this would represent an annual saving of £454.8k and by Year 3, a potential saving of £1.4m.

Cllr Bennett added: "It is our duty to ensure we are getting the best value for money, so that our limited budget can be spent on delivering for children and families who need it the most."

If Cabinet gives its approval for the development, planning approval will be sought for June 2026, with construction to complete in September 2028 and Ofsted registration by the end of 2028.

Suffolk County Council is due to discuss the development of the new provision at its Cabinet meeting of 27 January.

February 2026

Council budget protects frontline services amid rising costs and demand

Demand pressures, particularly in adult and children's social care, are expected to add £32.2 million to the council's costs next year. As a result, around 77 pence of every £1 the council spends will go directly towards services for people, including public health.

The remaining 23 pence in every £1 will fund all other services, such as fire and rescue, highways and waste management, alongside the staff, infrastructure and technology that support service delivery across the council.

To deliver a balanced budget, councillors approved £46.5 million of savings. These will be achieved through service improvements, more efficient ways of working, and a reduction in employer pension contributions, made possible by the strong performance of the council's pension fund. This reduction in employer contributions will not reduce employees' pension benefits.

Councillors also agreed a 4.99% increase in the county council's share of Council Tax, comprising a 2.99% general increase for county-wide services and a further 2% Adult Social Care Precept to help meet rising care costs.

For households, this means weekly Council Tax bills will increase by £1.23 to £25.90 for a Band B property – the most common in Suffolk – and by £1.58 to £33.30 for a Band D property.

Combined with a forecast 1% increase in the taxbase, the Council Tax changes will generate an additional £27.4 million for the council in 2026/27.

Alongside day-to-day spending, councillors approved a revised three-year capital programme, reduced from four years to reflect local government reorganisation planned for 2028. The programme will continue to fund essential projects such as school expansions and infrastructure improvements, while also investing in improvements to bus services, public rights of way, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills, said:

"This has been one of the toughest budgets this council has ever had to set. Government funding has gone up only slightly, and, because that increase is below inflation, in real terms we are receiving less. That puts even more pressure on our ability to protect essential services.

"We have made the reluctant decision to increase Council Tax. We know residents are facing their own pressures, but the government's finance settlement assume councils will raise Council Tax to the maximum. If we don't, we risk losing vital grant funding, and that would force even harder decisions.

"Even with those challenges, we have set a responsible and realistic budget that protects key services and continues to invest in Suffolk's future. But it also underlines a wider truth: council

finances remain under real strain, and many of the long-term solutions – including long-overdue SEND reform – can only come from central government.”

Councillors approved the budget at their meeting on Thursday 12 February 2026, following Scrutiny’s examination of the proposals on 13 January and Cabinet’s decision on 27 January to bring them to Full Council for approval.

The meeting can be watched back on [the council’s YouTube channel](#). The budget papers can be viewed at committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk.

[LOCAL] County Council continues to back Newmarket sports hub

This is despite West Suffolk Council – responsible for providing such sports facilities – last week branding the site as unsuitable, which was met with shock and disappointment by county councillors and officers.

This is not the position of the county council, which is still prepared to support the sports facility at the St Felix site, and contribute a promised £2 million towards the project, as well as including the value of the land for the facility.

“The county council is committed to continuing to work together and playing our part to give Newmarket residents their much-needed facility at this site.”

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

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

“Newmarket’s residents would be the ones let down by the abandonment of a sports facility at the St Felix site. But the county council still believes it is a credible and workable opportunity, and will pursue it with West Suffolk Council.

“Residents have been waiting for nearly a decade for such an amenity, and I don’t agree with West Suffolk Council’s recent, and seemingly rushed, announcement to abandon it, and the stated challenges that they say they face.

“They have had ample opportunity up until now, to raise these concerns about the delivery of a new sports facility subsequent to the delivery of housing on the site - and have approved it, in principle, on multiple occasions in previous years.

“I am also disappointed with West Suffolk Council’s handling of this situation. Their announcement was made without the county council being allowed to respond - despite clear assurances that we would be given that opportunity.”

During the planning of the new homes at the Edmundham Developments ‘Astley Place’ site, works were tailored with a new sports facility in mind. Electrical and foul water pumping infrastructure was oversized, to accommodate the needs of such a resource.

The building compound was designed to be re-used during construction of the sports facility, and top soil and aggregates from the housing development could also be used during the new construction.

Councillor Chris Chambers continues:

“I and local county council members are surprised and disappointed that it appears such planning has only taken place over recent months, leading to West Suffolk Council to make a rushed conclusion that the site is unsuitable.

“It’s regrettable that West Suffolk Council’s work on this site did not happen much earlier - we had primed it for a seamless programme of work alongside the housing development.

“But although we’re not in the ideal situation that we had put in place, the county council is committed to continuing to work together and playing our part to give Newmarket residents their much-needed facility at this site.”

[LOCAL] New SEND school and centre of excellence to be built in Bury St Edmunds

Run by Eastern Education Group and funded by the Department for Education, the school in Glastonbury Road will provide 90 places for students aged 14 to 19-years-old with special educational needs and disabilities

In a first for Suffolk, the new school will also become a centre of excellence and hub for SEND guidance, offering expertise to mainstream schools. Examples of this approach include providing outreach staff to work with mainstream schools and offering specialist expertise and training opportunities.

This hub model is increasingly encouraged by the Department for Education and is reflected in guidance from Ofsted around inclusive practice and system leadership. It launches Suffolk County Council’s ambition to implement this model across the county with a number of other education settings.

This news comes just a week after it was announced that Suffolk County Council and Unity Schools Partnership will open a new SEND school in Saxmundham for 126 students with severe learning difficulties.

Both new provisions have been agreed by Suffolk County Council in line with its SEND sufficiency plans, which outline how specialist provision should be delivered across the county.

This new special school in Bury St Edmunds will share a site with Chalk Hill School special school which is due to open in Easter 2026. Chalk Hill will occupy the former Horringer Middle School building, while the second school will be built by the Department for Education on a field on the site. Eastern Education Group will run both schools.

Dr Nikos Savvas OBE DL from Eastern Education Group said:

“We are incredibly proud to be leading this transformational development for young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Suffolk.

“This new school is not only about providing high-quality specialist places in Bury St Edmunds, it’s about rethinking how expertise is shared across the whole system.

“As a Group, we have already led two SEND schools to improved Ofsted ratings, demonstrating our commitment to high standards, strong leadership and continuous improvement. We will bring that same ambition and care to this new provision.

“By establishing a centre of excellence and outreach hub, we will work alongside mainstream schools to strengthen inclusive practice and ensure more young people can thrive within their local communities. Collaboration, early intervention and high expectations will be at the heart of everything we do.

“Together with our partners at Suffolk County Council and the Department for Education, we are creating provision that will deliver meaningful impact for families now and for years to come.”

Reflecting on the new school, Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND at Suffolk County Council, said:

“This is a significant and very welcome step forward for SEND provision in Suffolk. The new school in Bury St Edmunds will not only provide much-needed specialist places, but it will also introduce an innovative centre of excellence model that strengthens support across all our mainstream schools.

“By working as a countywide hub - offering outreach, specialist expertise and high-quality training - this provision will help build confidence, skills and inclusive practice right across Suffolk. It means earlier intervention, better outcomes for families, and fewer young people needing to leave their communities to access the support they deserve.

“Coming so soon after the announcement of the new school in Saxmundham, this demonstrates real momentum in delivering our SEND sufficiency plans. Together, these developments show our commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in Suffolk can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time.”

[LOCAL] Council objects to LionLink slamming lack of coordination and fears for communities

At its meeting on 24 February 2026, the county council’s cabinet approved a 23,000-word response to National Grid’s statutory consultation on LionLink, which closes on 10 March 2026.

Their selection of Walberswick as a landing site for the project demonstrates staggeringly bad judgement. It is a wholly inappropriate location and the construction impacts on this very special part of our Suffolk coast will be stark.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs

Amongst its objections to the current plans are:

- disappointment that onshore cable routeing could not be shared with Sea Link

- the choice of Walberswick as a landing site and the long cable route to Saxmundham
- construction on a continuous basis including night-time working
- construction traffic use of the unsuitable Benhall Bridge
- private haul route which would cross the Fromus river and impact the setting of Hurts Hall
- multiple negative, highly sensitive consequences in terms of built heritage, archaeology, ecology, tourism, highways access, public rights of way, water courses and vegetation loss

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

“I find National Grid’s inability, or stubbornness, to fully coordinate with their own sister Sea Link scheme, frankly infuriating. We have been calling for this for years.

“Their selection of Walberswick as a landing site for the project demonstrates staggeringly bad judgement. It is a wholly inappropriate location and the construction impacts on this very special part of our Suffolk coast will be stark.

“The project, in addition to a long and complex cable corridor, would also put further strain on Saxmundham and Friston and exacerbate many of the transport concerns we have regarding the Sea Link scheme.

“The Secretary of State may still be minded to rush through an approval for LionLink, but through our consultation response, we are highlighting a host of issues. Hopefully National Grid will act on these to reduce the impacts on local residents, businesses and the environment.”

National Grid’s public consultation is open until 10 March, and the county council is encouraging anyone affected by the scheme to submit their views.

Councillor Richard Rout continues:

“We encourage all local communities to take part in the LionLink consultation. This is the last meaningful chance to help steer the project’s design, routing and purpose ahead of the application being lodged.

“We fully understand that people are feeling consultation fatigue, after being asked to respond again and again to different projects - something that better coordination between Suffolk’s major schemes might have helped to prevent.”

An application for a Development Consent Order is expected to be submitted by National Grid Ventures later in 2026.

March 2026

[LOCAL] Two new crossings approved for key Haverhill route

Suffolk County Council has approved plans to progress two new crossing schemes in Haverhill, improving safety and accessibility for people walking, wheeling and cycling.

The proposals focus on key crossing points along the Railway Walk — an important traffic-free route used by residents travelling across the town, including pupils travelling to and from school. With the growth of Haverhill in recent years, use of the Railway Walk has increased significantly. However, several road crossings along the route have been identified by residents as feeling difficult or unsafe.

Following engagement with local councillors and a review of traffic conditions, the County Council will now move forward to detailed design on improved crossings at:

- Howe Road – A new parallel crossing is proposed. This type of zebra crossing allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely. The location is particularly important for families and pupils accessing The New Cangle Primary School.
- Suffolk Regiment Way – A signalised toucan crossing is proposed. Given the traffic volumes and vehicle speeds on this road, traffic signals will provide a controlled crossing point for people walking and cycling.

The schemes have now received approval to progress to detailed design.

Construction dates will be confirmed once the designs are finalised and subject to the usual statutory processes.

Funding for the crossings will come from the County Council's Local Transport Grant, supporting delivery of the Local Transport Plan (2025), which prioritises safer and more sustainable travel options across Suffolk.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport Strategy, said: "I am delighted that these works are to take place and I congratulate Haverhill councillor Joe Mason for his hard work in them doing so.

"Encouraging more people to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips supports better physical and mental health, helps reduce congestion and improves air quality, which is why this sort of investment in infrastructure is so important."

Suffolk County Council will continue working with local councillors and residents to explore further improvements for walking, wheeling and cycling in Haverhill, focusing on the town's priority routes and safety concerns.

[LOCAL] New safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists between Ipswich Hospital and The Waterfront

Better pedestrian crossings and road junctions are on their way to a key route in Ipswich thanks to a package of improvements to be installed by Suffolk County Council.

Work on the programme of schemes between Ipswich Hospital and The Waterfront is scheduled to start next month.

The works are being funded by Active Travel England and will enhance safety, and accessibility and aims to encourage more people to walk, cycle and wheel.

The project includes upgrades to existing infrastructure and improvements at busy junctions. A public consultation was held in summer 2024 to gather feedback from residents, stakeholders and partners.

That feedback was used to help shape the designs of the improvements and reflect local priorities while continuing to meet the scheme's core objectives.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said: "Improving the route between Ipswich Hospital and the Waterfront strengthens connections between two key destinations used daily by residents, workers, and visitors.

"Encouraging more people to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips supports better physical and mental health, helps reduce congestion and improves air quality.

"This scheme will also support local businesses, particularly along Foxhall Road, by creating safer, more attractive streets that can increase footfall and local spending."

Construction is scheduled between April and August 2026 with timelines designed to minimise disruption.

The route follows Back Hamlet, Grove Lane, Foxhall Road, Wellesley Road, Marlborough Road, Cauldwell Hall Road, Freehold Road and Newbury Road.

Works are planned to take place at:

- **Cauldwell Hall Road**
Following requests for an improved crossing, a parallel crossing – a zebra crossing with a dedicated cycle lane – is to be installed
- **St John's Road**
The junction will be tightened to help slow vehicle speeds and improve safety, directly responding to concerns about driver behaviour
- **Freehold Road**
Westbound cyclists will be able to either use the crossing or enter the route via a new dropped kerb south of Freehold Road

- **Grove Lane**

A signalised crossing will be installed on the southern side of Finbars Walk, and a new two-way cycle track will be introduced on the west side of the road. Works will be coordinated with planned footway maintenance on Grove Lane and Foxhall Road.

- **Foxhall Road**

In addition to speed humps and traffic calming measures, a new 20mph speed limit will be introduced from Grove Lane to Foxhall Road. Improvements outside local shops will be delivered using Active Travel funding and Ipswich Borough Council Towns Fund investment.

Suffolk County Council is co-ordinating works with Cadent's planned gas main replacements to reduce repeated road closures.

During the Grove Lane works, additional road and footway maintenance will also be carried out to maximise efficiency.