


 @SuffolkTories

 Suffolk Tories



November 2024 Town and Parish Newsletter

For more information on all stories visit:

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



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



To strengthen our local economy



To provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer



To protect and enhance our environment



Contents

Page 4 - Have your say on council budget

Suffolk County Council is seeking feedback from residents, businesses and community organisations as it prepares its budget for the next financial year.

Page 5 - More Ipswich projects underway as public safety, environment and education boosted

Suffolk County Council continues its investment in Ipswich by announcing a further five new improvement projects across the town.

Page 6 - Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loans now available

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

Page 8 - Suffolk Launches Good Health at Work Programme

Suffolk County Council has officially launched the Good Health at Work Programme, a new initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the working-age population across Suffolk.

Page 9 - Stronger Families Partnership keeps children out of care for the equivalent of 1,000 years

The Stronger Families Partnership supported 584 children at risk of being taken into care, or who have returned to their families from care, to remain safely with their families.

Page 11 - OPINION: We've started funding post-Babet changes, now it's time for the Government to step up

A column by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

Page 12 - Council welcomes news that the Nautilus Interconnector project will not be coming to Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the news that a major energy infrastructure project will no longer impact the Suffolk coast but has asked for urgent clarity on whether another project will simply take its place.

Page 13 - Council making net zero gains, but still work to do

Suffolk County Council continues to bring down its carbon emissions, with significant reductions from council-owned street lighting, vehicles and buildings.

Page 14 - East Anglian counties partner with US city of Virginia Beach for mutual business and economic growth

The counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex are partnering with Virginia Beach to boost transatlantic trade and cooperation through a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Page 15 - Suffolk celebrates as local organisations are awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service

It has been announced that five voluntary organisations in Suffolk have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Page 16 - Suffolk's new gritting fleet to keep county safe and moving during the colder weather 16

With temperatures forecast to drop this week, Suffolk's new gritting fleet will commence its winter season shortly, treating thousands of miles of roads to help minimise risk for highway users.



Page 18 - Royal opening for the Gull Wing bridge

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal formally opens the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft.

Page 19 - Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements and evidence of impact but recognises challenges

The Department for Education (DfE) met with senior leaders from Suffolk County Council and the NHS to review the impact of wide-ranging improvement plans for special educational needs and disabilities services (SEND).

Page 20 - Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Voucher Scheme in Suffolk

The Suffolk Retrofit Assessment Voucher Scheme launches, a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in homes across the county.

Page 22 - New study considers impacts of nuclear and major infrastructure projects

A new study published considers the impact of the construction of the nuclear power station, Hinkley Point C.

Page 24 - New Deputy Chief Fire Office for Suffolk is appointed

Henry Griffin led the service's response to the 2022 summer fires and will start his role in the New Year.

Page 25 - EPIC new strategy positions Suffolk at cutting edge of UK economy

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to review ambitious new plans which will position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation.



Have your say on council budget

The council has launched an online consultation to explain its current financial position and give Suffolk residents an opportunity to share their views on proposed Council Tax changes and spending priorities.

The consultation offers an opportunity to understand how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place, and how the council might generate more money to support essential services.

The council can increase its budget in two main ways: by receiving more funding from the government or by increasing Council Tax.

The consultation asks residents for feedback on which council services they have used recently, whether they support increasing Council Tax contributions, and which areas they would like to see prioritised in the council's budget-setting process.

Responses to the consultation will be considered alongside feedback from businesses, public sector partners and elected members, as well as advice from council officers, as it prepares next year's budget.

CLlr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

"The demand for council services, particularly adult and children's care, is rising every year, and while Suffolk County Council has managed its finances well for many years, public funding has not kept pace. Despite these challenges, we are committed to prioritising support for our most vulnerable residents, but this does mean that we continue to face difficult decisions about the other services we deliver.

"Councils across the country are facing critical funding issues. Whilst the Chancellor has announced some extra money for local government, we will not be told how much will come to Suffolk until later in the year. In the meantime, we must prepare to navigate another challenging budget, which will require new approaches and tough choices.

"That is why it's important that we hear from residents, businesses and other community groups in Suffolk. Your feedback will help us to plan for the future and ensure we make informed decisions on service priorities and Council Tax."

The consultation opens today, Friday 1st November, and closes on Monday 16th December 2024. To participate, visit www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025_26_budget

The results of the consultation will be included in a final report when the budget is set in February 2025.

More Ipswich projects underway as public safety, environment and education boosted

Suffolk County Council continues its investment in Ipswich by announcing a further five new improvement projects across the town. The latest projects focus on public safety, the environment and education.

Bringing the total number of projects underway to 13, the £2 million Ipswich Investment Fund awards Ipswich businesses, organisations, and community groups funding to deliver projects which deliver a multitude of benefits, including employment opportunities for young people, working with partners to develop the town's arts, culture and leisure offer and enhancing sustainable travel options.

The fund was established following cabinet approving recommendations from the Ipswich Policy Development Panel (PDP) back in March 2023. It was set aside to support the delivery of projects across the town, following engagement with a wide range of local partners and stakeholders.

Totalling nearly £600,000 in awarded funds, some of the projects within the third tranche, are as follows:

- **Belstead Brook Park Access Improvement** (£145,000 – IBC Greenways Countryside Project)

This will create a new improved access path from Bourne Park and Stoke Park Drive to Bobbits Lane and the wider Belstead Brook Park, and links to Jimmy's Farm, Suffolk Food Hall, the Shotley Peninsula, Alton Water and the wider countryside. The work will include timber boardwalks, levelling, surfacing, fencing, bollards to reduce antisocial behaviour.

Whilst also boosting biodiversity, with new ponds, scrapes, and ditches in Bourne Park Reedbeds Nature Reserve, along with new information boards.


- **Gipping River Path Environmental Enhancements** (£45,000 – IBC Greenways Countryside Project)

The enhancements here look set to refresh the pocket park and river path/cycleway, opposite the railway station. This will include vegetation management, new information boards, repairs to infrastructure, cleaning off graffiti, re-painting and other works to improve safety whilst maintaining biodiversity.

There will also be installation of a CCTV camera to deter anti-social behaviour.

- **Ipswich Waterfront streetlighting upgrades – further extension towards Dance East** (£40,860)

Continuation of the original project set up where Suffolk Streetlighting upgraded lighting at Albion Wharf, extending to Neptune Marina Apartments and Anchor Street Apartments.



This upgrade will extend towards Dance East and include new street lighting columns with contemporary low energy LED lanterns, all finished in black.

- **Let's Talk Reading** (£145,024)

The project aims to drive up literacy levels across Ipswich by organising events across a range of settings including parents and babies groups, early years, primary and secondary schools and adult literacy and coaching.

- **Wolsey 550 Education programme** (£193,000)

This is an 18-month public engagement programme and 12-month careers education project and uses resources to deliver creative arts careers workshops with project partners.

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

"It is fantastic to see the progress already being made with these projects as a result of funding committed by Suffolk County Council. There are now 13 projects underway with some fantastic organisations, all working collaboratively for the benefit of Ipswich residents.

"The later projects focus on public safety, the environment and education giving all areas a real and welcome boost.

"Our driving force behind this fund has focussed on the council's key objectives to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and to strengthen our local economy – we will continue to keep residents updated with dates and progress related to these projects."

Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loans now available

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

Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years – at 0% interest.

The £3 million project fully opened to homeowners across Suffolk on **1 November 2024**, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-homes-suffolk-loan/>

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emma Lower, CEO at Lendology CIC, said:

“We are delighted to be working with Suffolk County Council to deliver 0% interest loans to eligible homeowners. With over 20% of the UK’s carbon emissions coming from privately owned homes, supporting homeowners to spread the cost of energy efficiency measures is a fantastic step to reducing emissions across Suffolk”.

For more information and to apply for in an interest-free loan, visit <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-homes-suffolk-loan/>

Two free webinars have been organised if you’d like further information or have questions:

- 11 November, 2pm to 2:30pm: [Register for free Warm Homes Suffolk Loans webinar](#)
- 13 November, 5:30pm to 6pm: [Register for free Warm Homes Suffolk Loans webinar](#)



Suffolk Launches Good Health at Work Programme

Suffolk County Council has officially launched the Good Health at Work Programme, a new initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the working-age population across Suffolk.

Running initially for 18 months, the programme will provide essential support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), focusing on businesses whose employees are at the highest risk of health inequalities, such as those on low incomes or with long-term health conditions. The programme will be delivered by Get Set UK, a leading people services provider.

SMEs in Suffolk are encouraged to get involved and take advantage of the range of resources now available. Key elements of the programme include:

An Online Resource Hub – This hub offers employers access to practical tools, advice, and evidence-based strategies to create healthier workplaces based on good work principles like fair pay, job security, and opportunities for growth.

An Ambassador Network – Businesses can join a community of employers committed to promoting good work practices, with opportunities to collaborate and improve their workplace using a self-assessment framework to review their workforce wellbeing practices against a set of six standards. Participants can achieve tiered recognition, starting with a bronze award upon completing the first standard and progressing to silver and gold as they advance.

A Navigator Service – Providing one-on-one support, the Navigator Service helps SMEs assess their challenges and strengths, offering tailored advice and guidance to enhance their workplace and improve employee well-being.

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

Healthy employees mean a healthier business. The Good Health at Work programme has been developed to help Suffolk SMEs thrive in today's challenging environment. This new support service offers practical support and advice through free online resources and one-to-one personal business health checks. It's a complete service for any small or medium sized business in Suffolk, looking to become a healthier, happier workplace.

Businesses can explore the available resources and learn more about the Good Health at Work Programme by visiting www.goodhealthatwork.co.uk



Stronger Families Partnership keeps children out of care for the equivalent of 1,000 years

The Stronger Families Partnership which delivers innovative family therapy has as of 30th September supported 584 children at risk of being taken into care, or who have returned to their families from care, to remain safely with their families.

The Partnership – made up of Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, and Family Psychology Mutual – has cumulatively saved the equivalent of 1,000 years of days in care.

With over 105,000 children in care across the UK, and about one child in care in every 140 in England, too many children are being separated from their family. Research suggests that looked-after children tend to experience significantly poorer life outcomes than other children, affecting areas including mental and physical health, education and socioeconomic circumstance.

As well as limiting life chances, the growing population of children in care is putting local authority resources under increasing pressure; nationally all 151 councils with children's services responsibility overspent on their budgets following growing demand to remove children to care.


Since 2019, 584 families have completed Stronger Families' evidence-based clinical interventions, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and FFT Child Welfare (FFT CW), remaining out of care for over 365,000 cumulative days as of 30th September 2024.

Stronger Families' approach enables families to address challenging patterns of behaviour and communication in order to build their capacity for sustainable, positive change. The delivery works to prevent family breakdown and give families the tools to cope, so that children can remain safely with their families and experience reduced involvement with children's services.

The programme's tracking process monitors number of care days saved alongside other measurable impacts that go beyond at-risk children to benefit whole families: the 365,000-day milestone saw 93% of children not entering/re-entering care during the tracking period, and a majority reporting improved family functioning.

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have taken bold steps to support this innovative and collaborative outcomes-based approach, which champions a more flexible, tailored, data-driven delivery model, and better value for money.

Keeping these families together is directly linked to cost reductions for the local authorities in both care costs avoided (where children are on a trajectory to care) and immediate cost savings (where children have been reunified with their families). During the initial 18-month tracking period, the delivery saves between £39,000 and £88,000 per family that successfully completes the intervention, in relation to the estimated cost of supporting a



child in care – amounting to a total net savings to date of at least £29.4m. When compared to pay-for-inputs approaches, outcomes-based family therapy delivers an average 25% better outcomes for 80% more families at 20%-50% lower cost per family, keeping more children safely out of care.

Of the service, one young person reflected: “The therapist helped us understand each other. Thank you so much for your help, I appreciate it millions. [I] don't know what we'd [have] done without you.”

Robbie Smyth, Director at Stronger Families said:

“We are absolutely delighted to have kept young people we supported out of care for an enormous one thousand years’ worth of days since 2019, strengthening the relationships of so many young people and families.

“The milestone goes to show just how effective outcomes partnership can be – not only in supporting individuals and families to create long-term, positive change, but in providing a clear partnership blueprint for the entire system to support families in personalised, sensitive, and effective ways. Thanks to our partners Family Psychology Mutual, Family Functional Therapy LLC and to Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, for embracing innovation.”

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

“Families tell us that the work the Stronger Families Partnership is doing alongside wider children’s services in Suffolk, provides help that really, really matters.

“Working with families that are facing a wide range of pressures and that have the potential to result in family breakdown and young people potentially needing to become Looked After, the partnership is supporting more families to safely stay together.

“It’s an achievement that Suffolk County Council is proud to be a part of.”

For more information on the Stronger Families Partnership, visit [Stronger Families | Bridges Outcomes Partnerships](#)

OPINION: We've started funding post-Babet changes, now it's time for the Government to step up

A column by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

This time last year, communities across the country were dealing with the fallout from the destructive effects of Storm Babet. Many parts of rural Suffolk were among some of the worst to be hit.

Now considered to be an unprecedented rain event with a month's worth of rain falling in 24 hours (shortly after a very wet three days in itself) and flooding of more than 900 homes and businesses, Storm Babet was the worst on record in our county's history. The flood water battered our roads, cars and homes – leaving a trail of destruction and challenges for many residents.

Homeowners and businesses who were most seriously affected – some even needing to vacate their homes - have had to start the long and arduous process of rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

As county council cabinet member with responsibility for our roads and flooding services, I know very well the challenges communities are facing due to the more extreme weather we're seeing and the damage that storms have had on our infrastructure.


Since Storm Babet, Suffolk County Council and its partners have been working to engage with communities, repair roads and clear drains, whilst also ensuring residents and business owners get access to the financial aid made available through the government.

An added challenge when dealing with a flooding event of this size is that we as the lead flood authority have a duty to carry out Section 19 flood investigations in the communities that have been most adversely affected. In any normal year, I could count on one hand how many flood investigations we carry out. This year however, there are around 50 locations in total.

Shortly after the storm, Suffolk County Council committed an extra £1 million to bolster our floods team, enabling them to carry out this increase in flood investigations. However, it quickly became clear that more money would be needed to carry out the preventative works that were made as recommendations.

These recommendations could include creating flood water retention ponds in land above villages and green spaces within communities to capture water and slow the flow into residential areas. It could also be installing flood doors and non-return valves on drains to stop water entering properties that are particularly at risk of flooding.

We are also making a concerted effort to engage with landowners with advice and guidance, especially those with responsibilities to maintain ditches and streams on their



properties. These recommendations are the reason I asked Suffolk County Council's cabinet to agree to commit a further £1.5 million to carry out this important work – an ask that was unanimously supported.

It's a good start, but unfortunately this is nowhere near enough. Our flooding reports have identified that a further £20 million would be needed to complete all the work that's necessary – a figure that the county council just cannot afford. So far, Suffolk County Council has committed more than £13.75 million for work to aid recovery from Storm Babet. But it's unreasonable to assume that councils, who are already financially stretched, should or even could carry the entire cost. That's why the leader of the council and I have written to the flooding minister, Emma Hardy MP, and demanded the government step up and plug the funding gap.

In the meantime, I have instructed our highways and flooding teams to develop a plan to deliver the first phase of works which have been identified in the 10 investigation reports published since Babet.

One of the key areas we are focussing on is the bolstering of Suffolk Highways' resources to deliver more planned and reactive maintenance on the county's roads and footpaths. Extensive highway repairs and maintenance work has already been completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs.


Our teams have been working hard to repair the damage it caused, investigate what happened and to help reduce the flood risk in future. These measures take time, preventative flooding work is complex and costly and requires lots of agencies to work together.

Despite limited resources and budgetary challenges facing all county councils, we have managed to find extra money to tackle flooding and deliver more for our residents. But this challenge is steep and the government must act and provide extra funding to ensure Suffolk's residents don't face uncertainty when these extreme weather events occur.

Council welcomes news that the Nautilus Interconnector project will not be coming to Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the news that a major energy infrastructure project will no longer impact the Suffolk coast but has asked for urgent clarity on whether another project will simply take its place.

In July, a consultation was announced by the energy regulator Ofgem for the Nautilus interconnector. The overall project would involve a new subsea cable allowing electricity to flow between the UK and Belgium. The plans would see the project make landfall between Sizewell and Thorpeness, with cables running to Friston, where the interconnector would be sited, connecting to the Grid at an as-yet unbuilt substation.



It has been announced today by Ofgem that, following the consultation, the Nautilus interconnector, proposed by National Grid Ventures, will now come ashore at the Isle of Grain in Kent. This connection point had been preferred by Suffolk County Council for a long time and had the strong support of Suffolk's coastal communities.

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

“As a council, we have long argued that that this project should connect at the Isle of Grain. While it's good news for communities in East Suffolk that Nautilus will now connect elsewhere, like us they will want urgent clarity that another project won't take its connection here in Suffolk. Suffolk was yet again bracing itself for the impact of another large energy project so there is some relief following this announcement. The council has always supported the need for the country to ensure energy security, but we're now seeing layer upon layer of uncoordinated energy projects impacting Suffolk, irreversibly damaging communities, their heritage, and environment. The risk of the government's headlong dash to decarbonise the grid by 2030 is that another project will simply take the place of Nautilus and there will be no respite for our coastal communities.”

The council will carefully consider the regulator's Nautilus decision, particularly in light of the Sea Link project, which is currently being developed by National Grid Electricity Transmission.

Council making net zero gains, but still work to do

Suffolk County Council continues to bring down its carbon emissions, with significant reductions from council-owned street lighting, vehicles and buildings, but there is still work to do to reach its ambitious target of net zero by 2030.

A new report going to the council's Scrutiny Committee (21 November) reviews progress since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. The reports finds that emissions across the areas within the council's direct control, such as energy consumption in council buildings and vehicles (categorised as Scope 1 & 2 emissions), have fallen by a further 8% over the past year, contributing to a 43% drop since 2019. When taking account of the council's switch to a renewable electricity tariff, this becomes a 75% reduction.

However, when calculating its overall net zero progress, the council also reports on many emissions where it has influence but less direct control. These are known as Scope 3 emissions. These include things like home to school transport, home-working, and staff commuting and travel for work in their own vehicles.

These make up 65% of the council's reported emissions, which the council is currently projecting will reduce by 48% by 2030m showing the scale of the remaining challenge.

Since 2019, when it declared a climate emergency, the council's carbon reduction successes include:

- Street and traffic lights down by 57%
- Diesel and petrol vehicles down by 50%
- Gas and oil use in buildings down by 37%
- Staff commuting down by 30%
- Electricity use in buildings down by 25%

Nationally, the council is making impressive strides with its own estate, standing out as one of the three leading county councils in England for reductions on Scope 1 & 2 emissions, according to analysis of published reports.

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

“Overall, our carbon emissions have decreased by 7,740 tonnes CO₂e since 2019, which is encouraging. We’re making great progress in areas where we have most control, such as our buildings, vehicles and energy use. We are also seeing a long-term reduction in our costs - saving more than £500,000 on energy bills for our buildings alone as a result of this work.

“With the successes we’re having with reducing emissions and energy bills in our own buildings and operations, I hope we can be an example to other Suffolk businesses that, no matter what their size, can succeed on their net zero journeys too.

“Although our latest report suggests that we are not on currently course to meet our net zero target across all scopes, as new products, services and opportunities become increasingly available, I think greater reductions will be achievable.

“It’s no secret that there’s still much work to do. Specifically, the Scope 3 emissions that we report on, which is our biggest challenge to achieving net zero.


“While most of these emissions are beyond our direct control, we still include the data in our overall progress as they are still driven by council activity.

“Despite these challenges, we remain firmly committed to carbon reduction and continue to embed climate action in everything that we do.”

East Anglian counties partner with US city of Virginia Beach for mutual business and economic growth

The counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex are partnering with Virginia Beach, a US city with booming technology and renewables sectors, to boost transatlantic trade and cooperation through a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Virginia Beach is the largest city in Virginia, about the size of Bristol, halfway down the US East Coast.



The MOU was signed yesterday (Tuesday 12 November 2024) at the US Embassy in London by the three County Council Leaders: Norfolk’s Kay Mason Billig, Suffolk’s Matthew Hicks, and Essex’s Kevin Bentley. Signing for Virginia Beach was the City’s Deputy City Manager, Amanda Jarratt.

Amanda said:

“There is a huge amount of common ground between East Anglia and Virginia Beach. Our city is one of the main hubs for the US offshore wind industry, as well as technology sectors like software and cybersecurity – and companies from East Anglia are already doing well there”.

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

“The success of companies like Chorus Intelligence in the US market shows what is possible through international collaboration. With Suffolk’s delivery in clean energy, advanced manufacturing and tech innovation, supported by hubs like OrbisEnergy and Innovation Martlesham, we look forward to working with Virginia Beach to share knowledge and drive growth in both regions.”

One of the companies present at the event was Suffolk-based IT firm Chorus Intelligence, whose **Chief Executive Neil Chivers said:**

“We set up our US operation in Virginia Beach in 2021 and it couldn’t have gone better.”

The three counties see the partnership extending across business, research, academia and training. It supersedes a 2021 MOU between the now defunct New Anglia LEP and the US city, which included a joint presence at conferences and trade shows, business webinars, and advice on offshore wind training from East Coast College in Lowestoft.


Several offshore wind farms are under construction along the US East Coast, including the largest, Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind off Virginia Beach. This attracted the UK subsidiary of Cadelar, formerly Seajacks based in Great Yarmouth, which provides jack-up vessels for their construction, to also establish a US presence there.

Several initiatives are under discussion for 2025 and beyond, including assistance for US investors and exporters interested in East Anglia.

Suffolk celebrates as local organisations are awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service

It has been announced that five voluntary organisations in Suffolk have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II’s Golden Jubilee and previously known as The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), the Award has been shining a light on the fantastic work of voluntary groups from all across the UK for many years.



Equivalent to an MBE, KAVS is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life.

The local organisations are:

- **Ipswich Outreach**
Supporting the homeless people of Ipswich to improve their health, wellbeing and life opportunities.
- **Let's Talk Reading**
Working to improve literacy of children and adults in Ipswich.
Website:
- **Still Good Food**
Rescuing surplus food, reducing waste and redistributing it to benefit the community.
- **Tattingstone Good Neighbour Scheme**
Providing vital support, promoting social interaction and community integration in Tattingstone.
- **The Caribbean and African Community Health Support Forum**
Promoting a community legacy of health and wellbeing in Suffolk.

Speaking after the announcement **The Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, Lady Clare, Countess of Euston, said:**

“I send my heartfelt congratulations to all the organisations that have been awarded a King's Award for Voluntary Service this year. The work they do within our communities is absolutely vital and it is wonderful to see them formally recognised in this way.”


Suffolk's new gritting fleet to keep county safe and moving during the colder weather

With temperatures forecast to drop this week, Suffolk's new gritting fleet will commence its winter season shortly, treating thousands of miles of roads to help minimise risk for highways users.

During the warmer autumn months, highway teams have been carefully planning for the winter gritting operations, preparing for the potential snow and ice that winter will bring. In total, there are 36 gritters ready for action, with two additional spare vehicles available to be deployed to any location, if needed.

Earlier this year, at the Suffolk Show, a competition was held to name the new gritters, and more information about the winning names, including Morgan Freezeman and Kieran McSpreader, can be found [here](#).

The new fleet is equipped with advanced digital systems and the latest route planning software to support winter maintenance drivers and enable them to grit their routes efficiently and effectively.



All gritters in the fleet use hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), which reduces carbon dioxide emissions by around 90%, supporting Suffolk County Council's continued commitment to protect and enhance our environment.

During the last winter season, Suffolk used around 7,822 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 198,594km/123,400 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth five times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 21,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any drop in temperature. Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations.

There are also 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network. This includes other bus routes where the service level is 5 days a week in the school term, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools.

P1 treatments are considered when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C, whilst P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather conditions.

Further details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes. All gritting decisions are based on forecast road surface temperatures, not air temperature, as the road surface temperature is often cooler and reflects the true risk to highway users. The timing and amount of salt we use considers factors such as traffic levels, wind and rain.


During the lead up to the winter season, our teams also dedicate their time to refilling grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. To date, we have filled over 50% of the total grit bins and will conclude the remaining refills over the next few weeks ahead of the commencement of the core winter season.

Suffolk Highways fills grit bins that are approved and owned by [parish and town councils](#), however, to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and request grit refills via [the reporting tool](#). Suffolk Highways do not fill private grit bins.

Suffolk's residents are requested to support us, as well as emergency services throughout the year, by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road – if we can't fit, we can't grit!

Drivers are reminded to always drive to the conditions; although the gritting teams have treated the roads, this doesn't mean they are completely risk-free.

Those wishing to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, should follow Suffolk Highways' X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook, to keep updated of



our teams' movements this winter season. Safety messages will also be issued during spells of cold and wet weather.

More information on gritting can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/check-which-roads-are-gritted.

Royal opening for the Gull Wing bridge

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal has officially opened the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft.

Crowds lined the bridge as Her Royal Highness unveiled a commemorative plaque formally opening the iconic structure.

The new bridge opened publicly to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September, and is already bringing huge benefits through reduced congestion and improved mobility around the town, according to businesses and residents.

On arrival at the offices of Suffolk County Council at Riverside, Her Royal Highness met the High Sheriff of Suffolk, Mrs Yvonne Gilchrist Mason OBE, Councillor Anthony Specca, the chair of East Suffolk Council, Mayor of Lowestoft Councillor Nasima Begum, MP for Lowestoft Jess Asato, and Councillor Liz Harsant, the chair of Suffolk County Council.

The Princess was introduced to people and teams that worked on the bridge project, including with the planning, design and construction.


During a tour of the bridge itself, The Princess Royal saw the bascule wings up close before going into the control tower. Here, Her Royal Highness pressed a button raising the bridge and allowing through The Excelsior, a traditional Lowestoft fishing smack.

The Princess is Patron of the Excelsior Trust, which restored and operates the boat. Back on the bridge, The Princess was invited by Councillor Harsant to unveil a commemorative plaque recording her visit and officially opening the bridge.

The Princess then met Jack Baldry, aged 16, Hayden Nicholls and Eva Ainslie, both 15, the Lowestoft young people who coined the name 'Gull Wing' in a competition for local schools. They were Year 6 pupils at Somerleyton Primary School and took the inspiration for the name from the shape of the bascule span's beams and their resemblance to the wings of a gull.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

["It was a great honour for Suffolk to welcome Her Royal Highness to Lowestoft to open this landmark bridge.](#)



“It is a wonderful piece of engineering that is already bringing significant benefits to the town and will do so for decades to come, so it was only fitting it should receive a Royal visit to formally mark its opening.”

Minister for the Future of Roads, Lilian Greenwood said:

“I know the importance of the Gull Wing Bridge to the people of East Suffolk. It will be transformational for local people and businesses.

“Our £73 million investment in this iconic structure will improve journey times through the town, and better connect communities to spread growth as we embark on our decade of national renewal.”

The bridge was built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans and provides a long-awaited third crossing over Lake Lothing.

It significantly eases traffic congestion in the town centre, shortening journey times, and improving journey reliability, and helping to attract new investment to Lowestoft.

Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements and evidence of impact, but recognises challenges

The Department for Education (DfE) met with senior leaders from Suffolk County Council and the NHS to review the impact of wide-ranging improvement plans for special educational needs and disabilities services (SEND).

Following the meeting, a letter was sent from the DfE outlining the extent of progress made within SEND services across Suffolk over the past six months.

In summary, it ‘welcomes the improvements and the evidence of impact’ and recognises ‘the considerable challenges that remain to reach the required targets’.

- [SEND Letter from DfE](#)

SEND services in Suffolk are delivered by the Local Area Partnership, made up of Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, with the support of schools and colleges.

Key achievements listed within the letter include improvements in the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); outstanding academic progress for children participating in the Raising Achievement – Delivering Better Value academic interventions; better coproduction between partners; and a significant reduction of permanent exclusions in primary schools and for children with EHCPs.

The Department for Education also outlined key areas for development including governance and use of data; ensuring that improvement work continues at pace, specifically

with regard to timeliness and quality of EHCPs; achieving consistency across all families so that improvement is felt by all; and that the voice of children and young families continue to be heard at the heart of decision making.

The letter recognised that the Local Area Partnership was ‘very open about the areas it felt still needed considerable further improvement to meet the needs of all children and families more effectively and has clear plans in place for driving this’.

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

“We are working closely with the Department for Education, which continues to offer support and expertise, while carrying out the important job of monitoring our progress.

“It is good news that they recognise the scale of our improvement and the impact we are having on children and young people across Suffolk. Improving how we deliver SEND provision is our number one priority and we continue to invest millions into getting it right.

“We acknowledge we still have work to do, and the Department for Education recognises that we have clear plans in place to drive this.”

The progress meeting with the Department for Education was held on November 4 and reviewed work over six months since the publication of the Priority Action Plan, which was agreed following the Ofsted and CQC inspection in November 2023.

This was the most formal review since the inspection. The next progress meeting will take place in May 2025.


Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Voucher Scheme in Suffolk

The Suffolk Retrofit Assessment Voucher Scheme launches, a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in homes across the county.

Homeowners in Suffolk will be able to apply for a voucher that covers the cost of a professional retrofit assessment on their home property. These assessments are the first step towards making their home more energy-efficient, lowering their energy bills and reducing their carbon footprints.

The retrofitting of all homes to EPC band C (or above) by 2035 is a stepping stone on the journey to achieving national net zero targets by 2050. Retrofit refers to any improvement work on an existing building to improve its energy efficiency.

Funded by Suffolk’s Public Sector Organisations and delivered by public services provider Reed in Partnership in support of Suffolk’s Climate Emergency Plan, the scheme will play a significant role in providing support, direction, and incentives for private homeowners to decarbonise their homes.



Residents who own a home with an EPC band of below C can take up the offer of a voucher to claim an assessment from a PAS 2035 Retrofit Assessor who will identify the best measures that could be deployed in their home to improve energy efficiency.

Such measures may include, for example, insulation, draft proofing, ventilation repairs, low carbon heating and energy generation (solar panels). The report will also incorporate analysis of the cost vs benefit of implementing the suggested improvements.

The voucher will entitle them to a cost-free assessment if the size of their property is smaller than 98m², with a maximum additional charge of just £30 for properties bigger than this.

Homeowners can check to see if their property has an existing Energy Certificate with an EPC band and record of their property size at gov.uk/find-energy-certificate.

There is no obligation to take up the recommendations of the retrofit assessment report, but a new Council loan will provide up to £15,000 at 0% interest to those interested in making efficiency upgrades.

The scheme will make available 637 assessments over an 18-month period, on a first-come-first-serve basis.

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

“These home energy efficiency assessments are a great way for Suffolk residents to find out exactly how they can save money on their energy bills, as well as reducing their carbon emissions.

“We all have a responsibility to ensure that homes can cope with the changes in climate, and these assessments will help provide people with the information they need to make those important improvements.

“Once their assessment is completed, they can also make use of the interest free loan scheme we recently announced to help fund these improvements and put money back into their pockets by saving on their bills.”

Key Features of the Scheme:

- **No/low cost:** No cost for homes under 98m². The scheme is funded by Suffolk councils – the most you will pay for a home bigger than 98m² is £30 for an assessment typically valued at over £250
- **No obligations:** There is no requirement to take forward any recommended work. However, an [interest free loan scheme](#) is available to help with energy efficient upgrades, for example insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing or heat pumps
- **Expert insights:** Detailed recommendations tailored specifically to the property being assessed

- **Trustworthy:** Funded by Suffolk councils and in partnership with Retrofit Coordination, a PAS 2035 accredited retrofit assessor and coordinator

Energy Savings Statistics:

- **Insulation:** Proper insulation can reduce heating costs by up to 40%
- **Efficient Appliances:** Switching to energy-efficient appliances can save households up to 30% on their energy bills
- **Overall Savings:** Households implementing comprehensive energy-saving measures can reduce their energy consumption by up to 50%

How to Apply: Residents can apply for the vouchers by visiting suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk. Applications will be open from 22 November 2024, and vouchers will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

New study considers impacts of nuclear and major infrastructure projects

A new study published considers the impact of the construction of the nuclear power station, Hinkley Point C.

The building of Hinkley Point C began in March 2017, with work currently nearing peak construction. EDF Energy estimates the first unit being operational “near the end of the decade”.

The [Hinkley Point C Peak Construction: Impacts Monitoring and Auditing Study \(2023-24\)](#) was commissioned by the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group (NNLAG), a collection of 10 councils across the UK, whose areas already host or are likely to host nuclear new build projects.


It aims to help local authorities understand how construction of a nuclear power station can affect their area.

The document will be a useful reference point for project promoters, their teams, the government, and local authorities, be it for nuclear or other infrastructure projects, to better plan for and implement their projects in a way that maximises benefits and minimises negative impacts, to the advantage of all involved.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council, Chair of the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group, said:

“Learning from Hinkley Point C provides vital information for new nuclear sites that follow on – be it large scale, small modular or nuclear fusion projects.

“Many of the findings are also applicable to other major infrastructure projects, including all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).



“There is not much research available about the implementation of NSIPs, so this study will further inform and shape the debate of what good execution and monitoring of NSIPs should look like. This applies to the government’s national NSIP reform or any individual project being developed in the country.”

Led by renowned Professor John Glasson at Oxford Brookes University, this is the second study of its kind commissioned by NNLAG, following [Oxford Brookes University’s initial study of early years construction of Hinkley Point C in 2018/19](#).

The latest study assesses the actual socio-economic and biophysical impacts at peak construction (as measured by the size of the workforce) and to compare those with predictions. It also seeks to explain any differences, how they can be managed and provide recommendations for future planning and assessment processes.

Cllr Rout continues: “Our thanks go to Professor Glasson and the Oxford Brookes University team, as the study is helping us all to learn lessons, to reduce community impacts and increase benefits in our local communities.

“It is already showing its value in real terms. For example, in Suffolk there are many similarities with Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C, which has recently begun construction on our doorstep and has the potential to bring numerous benefits to the county.

“As a result of the report, we are watching - with some concern - the increase in workforce numbers at Hinkley Point C. We will be looking for reassurances and strong monitoring mechanisms to ensure that, should an increase of the maximum workforce at Sizewell become likely, additional mitigation is in place before this occurs.”

The report recognises the difficulty in predicting all impacts of a large infrastructure project, and therefore calls for an adaptive approach. It provides a number of recommendations of good practice for such projects, including:

- An independent body preferably provides the auditing of the monitoring information against predictions
- All monitoring and auditing information should be publicly available, and ‘published’ on a regular basis
- Monitoring and auditing reports provide a vital resource for future major project developments in all their various sectors; there should be a repository for such reports
- Rigorous monitoring and auditing can be resource intensive, therefore a light and proportionate approach using publicly available data and focusing on significant impacts can provide a useful way forward, with developer and local authority co-operation.



New Deputy Chief Fire Office for Suffolk is appointed

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has appointed Henry Griffin as its new Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Henry is currently Area Manager for People & Resources at SFRS, with which he has served for 20 years, and will take up his position in the New Year.

He has led initiatives such as introducing electric vehicles to the fire service fleet, implementing cultural improvement programmes, and managing major incident responses including for the summer fires of 2022.

His expertise includes strategic planning, workforce planning, and operational training. Henry, who is married with three children, succeeds Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dan Fearn, who has retired.

He said:

“I am delighted to be appointed to this role. I am a native of Suffolk and proud to have served with SFRS all my career.

“I began as a firefighter at Newmarket Fire Station and to now be made Deputy Chief Fire Officer is a real honour for me. I would like to thank Dan Fearn for the service he has given to Suffolk and wish him well in his retirement.

“I look forward to continuing to serve our staff, this county, and its community in a fire service of which I and all my colleagues are proud to belong to.”

Henry was chosen following a selection process of seven sections, culminating in an interview with members of Suffolk County Council.

Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey said:

“Henry was appointed following a rigorous interview process of an incredibly strong field of candidates, it is no exaggeration to say that competition for this role was intense.

“I am delighted for him personally and I look forward to working with him in his new role, in which I have no doubt he will excel.”

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

“I congratulate Henry on his appointment, the quality of the candidates was extremely high. I have no doubt that he will continue to serve Suffolk well in his new role.”



EPIC new strategy positions Suffolk at cutting edge of UK economy

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to review ambitious new plans which will position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation.

Suffolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk's unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher
- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: Economic wellbeing, Productivity, Inclusivity, and Clean growth.

Mark Pendlington, Chair of the Suffolk Business Board, said:

"This strategy is all about boosting opportunity and growth as we plan a massive collaborative effort to secure a prosperous and sustainable economic future for Suffolk.

"It reflects the views of many hundreds of leaders from across business, local authorities, education, health and the voluntary sector, all of whom have shared their ideas and expertise, and have been very clear about the challenges and opportunities we face.

"We all recognise Suffolk's role as a key driver of the UK economy and are determined to promote Suffolk as one of the best places in the country to live, work, learn and invest."

The strategy identifies several key areas for economic growth:

- **High Growth sectors:** Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county's agri-food and drink sector is set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county's ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- **Emerging and Value Growth sectors:** Suffolk's technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.

- **Tech Convergence:** Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk’s continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of public funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

“This new strategy represents a bold vision for Suffolk’s future – a county in which, by proving its competitiveness and levels of productivity, we can all be proud.

“For residents, it means better jobs, improved infrastructure and greater access to skills training, creating opportunities for everyone. For businesses, it fosters a dynamic environment driven by innovation, sustainability and cutting-edge technologies like AI and clean technology.

“Together, these efforts ensure Suffolk isn’t just a leader in growth but an exceptional place to live, work, learn and invest.”

The Suffolk Business Board was mobilised in May 2024, following the government guidance that the work of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership should be brought to a close. The Business Board comprises 17 members representing business, education, voluntary sector and local government and is responsible for the economic strategy for Suffolk and steering of former LEP-led functions.

The Economic Strategy will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December 2024. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>