

## SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – NOVEMBER 2020

*Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division*



- **£228,000 FOR TREE-PLANTING, PROTECTING HEDGEROWS & VERGES ACROSS SUFFOLK**

Suffolk's natural environment will receive investment for tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife. £228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work. Working with The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Wardens, landowners, and county farm tenants, the funding will support the planting of around 100,000 trees, including replanting hedgerows in suitable locations across Suffolk over the next 18 months. It will also help establish around 10 community tree nurseries, which will support more planting in years to come. Local volunteers will be supported to collect seeds, set up nursery beds and grow trees in their communities.

The funding will also be used to trial better ways to manage roadside verges for wildlife. This includes exploring the use of new technology and cutting techniques, as well as developing new partnerships with parishes and landowners. The funding will help expand the existing Roadside Nature Reserve network managed by the council with the help of volunteers, seeing a 25% increase in the overall length of verges managed for wildlife. People in Suffolk can have their say on plans for a 'healing' woodland space in memory of those who died from Covid-19. A survey has now been launched online for people to share their thoughts and preferences on what they would like to see. Among the questions people can answer are whether they believe there should be multiple woods

The survey will run online until 25 November. The council will then collate and publish the results with a plan for the next steps. [Visit the website here to take part in the survey.](#)

- **NEW CYCLE PARKING INSTALLED THANKS TO GOVERNMENT'S EMERGENCY ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND**

New cycle parking has been installed in two Suffolk towns thanks to the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund to help make cycling safer and easier. One of the positives to come out of the COVID-19 crisis is the noticeable increase in people cycling. Whether that is for commuting to work to avoid overcrowding the transport network, for leisure, or as part of daily exercise. This has resulted in reduced congestion and improved air quality, as well as supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Suffolk County Council has used some of their grant from the fund to install cycle parking bays in Stowmarket and Sudbury. In Stowmarket the parking bays have been installed outside the John Peel Centre, at the Stricklands Road junction with Ipswich Road and on Wilkes Way.

In Sudbury the parking bays have been installed on North Street near the Masonic Hall, King Street near to Rees Café and by the Belle Vue artwork. The locations of the cycle parking were selected in partnership with Sudbury Town Council and Stowmarket Town Council.

In line with the Department for Transport guidelines, the county council is delivering a raft of measures across the county to encourage active travel. This includes alterations to road layouts and providing temporary footpaths and cycle lanes, as well as offering free family cycling sessions and bike maintenance vouchers.

To keep up to date with how Suffolk County Council is making it safer and easier for residents to choose active travel – walking and cycling – visit [suffolk.gov.uk/walkingandcycling](https://suffolk.gov.uk/walkingandcycling)

#### • **COUNCIL LEADER HAILS ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT, ROADS & HOUSING, DESPITE COVID-19**

COVID-19 has not stopped Suffolk County Council from protecting Suffolk's natural environment the council's leader said on 22 October. In his third executive statement to the council, Councillor Matthew Hicks thanked the authority's staff and councillors who have taken to kitchen tables, spare rooms and bedside tables to keep council services running and protect Suffolk's most vulnerable adults and children throughout the pandemic.

#### **Speaking at the meeting, Councillor Hicks said:**

"I want to pay special thanks to our outstanding staff, who time and time again have gone above and beyond expectations to support those who have been affected by the pandemic, and to ensure people across Suffolk get the tailored support and service they need to stay safe and well. "Many staff, including our carers, social workers, foster families and firefighters, to name a few, continued to work at the height of the pandemic, facing exceptionally difficult conditions, delivering the same quality of care, compassion and professionalism, despite such uncertainty. "I know I speak for every county councillor when I say we are exceptionally grateful to all our staff at this time."

He recognised that despite the challenges, the council has:

- Created new school places for children with special education needs, with 210 young people attending new, special units at schools in East Suffolk, West Suffolk and Ipswich.
- Made it possible for 98% of premises in Suffolk to access superfast broadband, with a plan for the remaining 2%.
- Maintained a stable budget, despite the increasing demand and cost of running public services.
- Agreed a new model for Family Hubs in Suffolk, releasing funding tied up in buildings to reinvest in more staff to help people.
- Fought for Suffolk's interests in the development of Sizewell C and other energy projects.
- Secured the funding and appointed a company to build the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft.

#### **On the council's work to protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions, Councillor Hicks said:**

"I am extremely pleased with the progress and momentum we have put into strengthening our environmental credentials this year, as part of our commitment towards addressing the climate emergency which we declared last March. "I am also very pleased to confirm that the first three Suffolk 2020 projects have been launched to support local communities and focus on key environmental priorities. We are increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points offered across the county, with particular focus on rural areas. It is my hope that the, at least, 100 additional charging points will give Suffolk one of the best, if not the best, rural charging networks. We are creating a series of 'quiet lanes', reducing the number of motorised vehicles using certain single track lanes, and have committed funding to plant at least 100,000 trees in the next 18 months, improve our maintenance of trees and hedgerows, and manage our roadside verges better for wildlife."

On the council's major programme to resurface a quarter of Suffolk's road network within four years, he said:

"In August this year, a fresh new road surface was laid in Eye as we accomplished our commitment to surface 1000 miles of Suffolk's road over a four-year period. A commitment we have delivered ahead of time."

On housing, he said:

"As the third largest landowner in Suffolk, the county council is in a prime position to support the growing local need for new housing and the supporting community infrastructure. I am really pleased that a great deal

has been achieved during the last 18 months towards meeting my commitment to explore potential development opportunities and generate income for the county council.

“As an illustration of what’s to come, we have now handed over the site at Chilton Woods near Sudbury to a commercial house builder to develop 1150 homes over the next 10 years, offering numerous community benefits including new school provision, new sports facilities and community woodland with children’s play areas. We will invest the income from this site in a range of council services.

“Two further large schemes are currently being planned in North Lowestoft and West Mildenhall with consultations planned for later this year. These schemes will include over 2,000 new homes, with new schools and an array of supporting community facilities.”

Building on work in the past 18 months, Councillor Hicks pledged to continue working collaboratively with district and borough councils, other public sector partners, businesses, and residents to find the best ways of delivering services to the people that need them most.

**Ending his executive statement, Councillor Hicks said:**

“My passion and my commitment remain as strong as ever. My approach is centred on the principles of listening, collaborating, being open and transparent, being supportive, and taking a pragmatic view when it comes to taking tough decisions.”

[Read Councillor Matthew Hicks’ speech in full \(PDF, 113KB\)](#)

[See the speech delivered on the recording of the October 2020 meeting of Suffolk County Council.](#) The full speech starts at 01:23:00.

- **CHANGES SUBMITTED FOR SIZEWELL C PROJECT TO CUT HGV CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC**

Significant changes have been put forward to the plans for the Sizewell C nuclear power station, to cut the number of lorries on Suffolk’s roads and curb its impact on the environment. EDF Energy has submitted 14 changes to the twin reactor project, with the full details released on 16 October. A 30-day public consultation will take place next month. The main changes involve making more use of rail and sea to deliver construction materials for the massive project, with an increase in trains and alterations to the proposed beach landing facility.

EDF also plan to reduce the use of AONB land on the Sizewell estate by working closely with Sizewell A, which is being decommissioned, and by using existing land for critical buildings that need to be moved to allow construction to get under way. In addition, EDF is proposing additional land for the creation of fen meadows to further increase the ‘net gain’ in biodiversity following completion of the project.

The changes are a response to feedback from Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council, as well as residents, MPs and other stakeholders. The consultation on the changes will start on 16 November. The consultation will be operated in strict accordance with the pandemic guidelines. The next stage in the process is the public examination, which is unlikely to start until next year.

Other steps taken to improve the benefits from the project include an increase from 1,000 to 1,500 apprenticeships; the launch of Young Sizewell C to provide links through education into training and jobs with Sizewell C and other regional companies; a pathway for students leaving education now to start work on Hinkley Point C and then move to the Sizewell C project in an advanced role; and allocating an apprenticeship levy to enable local firms to take on apprentices in critical skills areas for the region.

- **ADOPT EAST LAUNCHES**

14 October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo’s, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership.

The Adopt East alliance will deliver the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners. The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity. Adopt East is committed to providing good quality adoption support services to support all families with their adoption journey.

To find out more about the Adopt East Alliance [visit the Adopt East website](#).

- **COUNCILS READY WITH TEST AND TRACE SUPPORT PAYMENT FOR MOST VULNERABLE**

Councils in Suffolk are helping administer a Government scheme to provide financial help to those on low incomes and benefits who must self-isolate. Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments, and how to apply, can be found on District and Borough Council websites. If you have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate, you are under a legal obligation to do so, and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Those who are eligible will need to meet all the following criteria:

- Told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- Employed or self-employed.
- Cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; and/or Pension Credit.

Applications are made for one person only and any further applications within the same household must be made by each individual. Payments are subject to tax but not National Insurance. People must make the application within 14 days of the last day of their NHS test and trace self-isolation period.

Applicants should ensure that they have the below information available before starting the application:

- NI number
- 8-digit test and trace ID number
- Recent bank statement, proof of self-employment, or wage slips.

If asked to do so by Test and Trace, you must self-isolate by law. Failure to do so will mean you are no longer eligible for the payment and steps will be made to recover the funds.

Please visit the [NHS Test and Trace](#) website for more details of the NHS Test and Trace self-isolation requirements for those:

- Testing [positive](#)
- Those who have been in [contact with someone](#) who has tested positive and now has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Visit your District or Borough Council websites for details on how to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment:

- Babergh District Council [www.babergh.gov.uk](http://www.babergh.gov.uk)
- East Suffolk Council [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk)
- Ipswich Borough Council [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk)
- Mid Suffolk District Councils [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk)
- West Suffolk Council [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

- **SUPPORT TO HELP BUSINESSES PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19**

Since 12 October, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), working with Suffolk councils, has been speaking to businesses to offer guidance and advice on how they can manage risk and protect workers, customers, and visitors from COVID-19.

All of Suffolk's district councils, working together as part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum's Safer Places Group, have agreed to work in partnership with the HSE to enable them to support thousands of businesses more quickly through a targeted approach. Both the HSE and the councils are also working alongside local public health authorities to support the understanding of any patterns in confirmed coronavirus cases in the area.

The checks, which will be by telephone but with follow-up visits where required, will see the HSE give advice and guidance to manage risk and protect workers, customers, and visitors. Where some businesses are not managing this, action will be taken. This can range from the provision of specific advice, to issuing enforcement notices, to stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply, to prosecution.

For further information on how to manage the risk of coronavirus in different business sectors please read the Government guidance at [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:  
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