

# Cllr Karen Soons



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## March 2022 Parish Newsletter

**Temporary road closure link** can be found on [the temporary road closures page](#).

### **Council focuses on children's services, adult care and the environment, as budget confirmed**

Suffolk County Council has approved its financial budget for 2022-23, alongside its first-ever full Net Zero carbon budget.

Both items were passed at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 17 February 2022, providing a focus on children's services, adult care and the environment.

The council's budget will rise by 4.5% (from £598.2m to £625.4m), with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The Net Zero carbon budget will allow the council to measure its carbon emissions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions it makes. This will mean it can report each year on its progress, tracking its ambitions towards Net Zero.

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

"Today was the first time the council chamber has witnessed a financial budget and a carbon budget being approved. It is important to give our Net Zero Carbon Budget equal weighting to our financial budget – it highlights our commitment to responding to our climate emergency declaration.

"Our financial budget means will not see any reductions in our services, and we're further investing where it is most needed. Our aim is always to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk and provide value for money."

The overall increase of 2.99% to council tax, will see a Band D property's bill rise by 80 pence per week. The council's Cabinet had the option to increase the adult care element of council tax by a further 1%, but decided against this.

### **Councillor Rout explained:**

“By paying this extra each week, we are all helping the council to provide its key services, and helping support those who need it most.

“We recognise Suffolk residents are seeing increases in the cost of living, whether at the supermarket, on the high street, and of course with energy bills. We did not feel it right to ask everyone for even more from their council tax bill - there is a balance to be had.

“We have been facing huge challenges, particularly the increase in demand on children service’s and adult care. But we are confident that our budget addresses these challenges without the need to ask even more from our residents.”

The Net Zero Carbon Budget will enable the council to more accurately measure its progress to being Net Zero by 2030, and how it can reduce its carbon emissions. Suffolk County Council has a long history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and services.

This has led to reductions in carbon emissions in recent years, through projects such as replacing fossil fuel boilers with bio-mass units, installing solar panels and solar hot water systems, rainwater harvesting, updating lighting and improving insulation.

### **Councillor Rout added:**

“Suffolk is well-regarded nationally for its response to climate change, not many other local authorities have committed the same resources to creating in an in-depth carbon budget, as we have.

“But we have much more work to do, it’s incredibly challenging to have an exact figure for every last gram of CO2 that the council emits. Our officers have worked incredibly hard to collate data so far, giving us a baseline against which we can measure our future emissions. We’ll continue to improve how we gather this data so that we can see our progress to Net Zero by 2030.”

Some of the detail of the budget, includes:

- £1.1m increase for the family services budget, specifically to address recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review
- £1m additional funding for Suffolk Highways over the next four years, for example to fund road signs and responsible verge cutting
- £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes (over the next three years)
- £10m to improve footpath quality and access (over the next three years)
- £12.8m to decarbonise the buildings that SCC owns (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

A net increase in Government Grants of £6.0 million, or £20.7 million once the £14.7 million of one-off COVID-19 Emergency Grant received in 2021-22 is excluded. Of this £20.7 million, £11.7 million relates to additional grant funding for social care

75p of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends goes towards supporting those who need it most through Adult Care, Children’s Services, and Public Health.

The remaining 25p in every £1 is then used to cover the cost of other vital services, including Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, road maintenance, footpaths, waste services, libraries and addressing the challenges surrounding climate change, to name just a few.

### **Council's commitment to further enhancing Suffolk's natural environment**

It was announced on February 1<sup>st</sup> that Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment.

Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment, as it confirms plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land and assets, by 2030.

This means it will be progressing its work around managing highway trees, planting more hedgerow, nature-based flood management solutions, roadside nature reserves, and much more.

The council already planted 100,000 trees last year, and is on course to plant another 100,000 this year. It has also put in around 20 kilometres of mixed species hedgerow.

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

"Biodiversity is in decline nationally, and across the globe. These plans are not just about stopping its decline here in Suffolk, but reversing it. By 2030 we want to see much more biodiversity on our estate than there is now.

"The council can have great influence on the natural environment, as we are a significant landowner, we are the highway authority and we build new housing.

"We have made a lot of progress in recent years, not least with our tree planting, having committed to £400,000 from our Suffolk 2020 Fund. Just a few months ago we secured more funding from the Forestry Commission, on behalf of our borough and district councils, to plant trees in neglected and disused community spaces, bringing them back to life.

"We will ensure we manage our highway verges for biodiversity wherever we can; we will support our county farm tenants to enhance biodiversity across our farm estate; we will deliver twice the biodiversity net gain required through our housing programme.

"By working with our partners and local communities, we can help wildlife to thrive, increase habitats and species across the county, and reverse the decline we've seen."

#### **Ben McFarland, Head of Conservation, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, said:**

"To tackle the twin crises of the climate and biodiversity emergencies it's essential that nature is embedded into our collective decision-making. This bold, ambitious plan from Suffolk County Council does just that.

"We need at least 30% of our land and sea in recovery for nature by 2030. Showing leadership, working collaboratively, and acting on carbon and nature together will underpin a healthy and thriving Suffolk for everyone. This is a hugely positive step forward for our county."

The plans will also help work towards the council's ambitions of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030, with Suffolk's nature being an integral part of the carbon cycle.

The policy's ambitions stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at the impact of street lighting, to how it procures goods and services.

One example of the positive changes that the council will make, is to stop using Glyphosate in all highway maintenance operations. This will happen as soon as it is able to deploy a suitable alternative, and at the latest by 2023 for routine weed treatment programmes. The council will work with other local authorities, both locally and through the Local Government Association, in reaching this goal as soon as possible.

The proposals were agreed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022, following the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel which was set up in July 2021.

### **'Women don't do such things!' – new women's history free exhibition to open at The Hold**

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, a new exhibition was announced at The Hold. Step back in time and walk in the footsteps of Suffolk women past and present who have broken down barriers in their lives throughout history.

'Women Don't Do Such Things!' is the new free exhibition at The Hold in Ipswich, telling the stories of pioneering Suffolk women, and opens on Friday 4 February 2022.

From activists to doctors, archaeologists to pilots, visitors to the exhibition will be able to experience these and many more moving and poignant stories of women who have challenged expectations and led change.

#### **Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Heritage at Suffolk County Council, said:**


"The 'Women Don't Do Such Things!' exhibition offers a fascinating insight into the lives and experiences of some inspiring women from Suffolk.

"Suffolk Archives have put together a full programme of events to support the exhibition including curator tours and craft workshops, as well as talks from our archivists and local historians. This is a great chance to find out more about local history, and to come and visit The Hold, and bring that history to life."

The exhibition includes 'Women Like You': a photo mosaic portrait of the leader of the suffragette movement, Emmeline Pankhurst, produced by Suffolk artist Charlotte Newson. On loan from Manchester Town Hall the portrait work is made up of photos representing what women of today want in comparison to the suffragette movement over 100 years ago.

Displays exploring the Women's Land Army in Suffolk during World War Two have been compiled by local historian Nicky Reynolds, and will include original Women's Land Army uniform, documents, and photographs.

A special event will also be held at The Hold to launch a new film by documentary maker Holly Brega about the Women's Land Army in Suffolk about The Land Girls and Horses of Suffolk.



The exhibition includes contemporary artworks and displays telling women's stories. A selection of works produced by members of the More than Mum group run by the Future Female Society, reflects the women in the group and their own personal journeys supported by the society.

It will also showcase female leaders in Suffolk's community today. Franstine Jones was awarded a BEM in the New Year's Honours list for her work as a volunteer and trustee at the National Black Police Association and for her services to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Suffolk.

Placards from the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 will also be on display as part of the exhibition. The placards were part of the peaceful Black Lives Matter protest in Woodbridge and were tied to the outside of the Shire Hall in the town, and have been donated to Suffolk Archives as part of their contemporary collecting.

### **Public consultation launched in walking and cycling scheme in Sudbury**

Between February 3<sup>rd</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup>, members of the public can have their say on a Suffolk County Council proposal to improve walking and cycling in Sudbury.

The enhancements are being proposed for a section of Melford Road at its junction with Girling Road and Gainsborough Road.

#### **The scheme includes:**

- Widening footways to create a cycle way on both sides of Melford Road
- Moving the bus stop north of its current location on the west side of Melford Road
- Installation of tiger crossings – a separate crossing to the existing zebra crossing, which allows for cyclists to cross without needing to dismount
- 'Copenhagen'-style crossings, which will provide a separate path across the junction of York Road and Beaconsfield Road
- Widening of the triangle island to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Melford Road and to provide space for planting.

It is proposed to extend the scheme along Girling Street, which public views are also being sought on.

The scheme has been designed to improve connectivity for walking and cycling between residential areas, schools, and the town centre.

#### **Councillor Alexander Nicoll, deputy cabinet member for Transport Strategy at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"This scheme seeks to improve the gateway to Sudbury town centre, connecting people with quieter walking and cycling routes through North Street.

"It gives an opportunity to provide a place-shaping project, creating better walking and cycling environments for people to encourage them into our town centres in a low-carbon way.

"We are keen to hear the views of the public which will help us develop the scheme."



The six-week consultation will run from **February 2 to March 16**.

Members of the public can [respond online](#), by contacting Suffolk County Council's on **0345 603 1842** or by emailing [transport.schemes@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:transport.schemes@suffolk.gov.uk).

### **Residents urged to support Suffolk spectacular**

Suffolk is set to stage a host of exciting Jubilee celebrations during 2022 – bringing the county's communities together to mark this momentous milestone.

Her Majesty The Queen will become the first ever British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, on Sunday 6 February, after 70 years of service.

The unprecedented anniversary will be celebrated throughout the year, with a four-day UK bank holiday taking place from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June to enable people to commemorate the occasion.

Plans are already in place for a Festival of Suffolk – the county's biggest ever community event. This year-long spectacular will incorporate much-loved existing events, such as the Suffolk Show, alongside dedicated Jubilee celebrations, including a race day and torch relay. Details on the latest line-up can be found at: [www.festivalofsuffolk.org/](http://www.festivalofsuffolk.org/).

### **Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare, Countess of Euston commented:**

"I am delighted that Suffolk is providing a wealth of Jubilee events for everyone to enjoy.

"This will not only unite communities in joyful celebration but will also create a powerful legacy to increase the visibility of our county and improve local lives for many years to come."

A highlight of the festival is the Big Jubilee Lunch, set to take place on Sunday 5 June. The initiative encourages people to come together and celebrate, either by hosting their own street party or simply enjoying a cup of tea with a neighbour.


To help facilitate this, Suffolk County Council has set up a dedicated webpage: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent) and will waive its fees for any road closures for events on this day, as well as providing free assistance with traffic management for all applications received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March.

The council is also supporting the Queen's Green Canopy in Suffolk, which aims to plant over 775,000 new trees in 2022 – one for each resident in the county.

Almost a quarter of a million trees have been planted to date, with everyone urged to visit [suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/](http://suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/) and find out how they can 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' either directly or via one of the many organisations taking part in the scheme.

In addition to using the Jubilee as an opportunity to create a greener county, a focus on





health and wellbeing will also form an important part of the celebrations, with plans for themed parkruns across Suffolk and a County Community Games tournament currently in development.

While primary school children across the county can participate in a Time Capsule Competition – enabling them to showcase how their school, students, teachers, and community have changed over the Queen’s reign.

Schools have until 11 February to express their interest in the competition: [www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/education/time-capsule/](http://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/education/time-capsule/) and must submit their entry by 25 March, ahead of the winner being announced on 1 April.

The winning school will get the opportunity to visit The Hold – home to 900 years’ worth of Suffolk’s history – which will also house their time capsule entry to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

**Councillor Graham Newman, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, said:**

“On behalf of Suffolk, I’d like to wish Her Majesty The Queen our heartfelt congratulations on the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne.

“Her Jubilee celebrations are even more poignant after a challenging few years, with Covid preventing us from doing many of the things that we all hold so dear.

“The Festival of Suffolk provides the perfect opportunity for us to spend time with loved ones or visit our favourite places again, and I’d encourage everyone to take part in what’s set to be a splendid series of events for our county.”


Businesses can also benefit from the occasion by attending the Suffolk Business Expo, scheduled for Monday 20 June to Friday 1 July. The event – organised by Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Chamber, and other partners – aims to showcase Suffolk businesses, whilst helping them to capitalise on the expected increase in tourists to the county and bounce back from Covid-19.

## **Suffolk cements commitment to keeping its communities safe**

A new strategy was announced on February 7<sup>th</sup> outlining how Suffolk will address Violence Against Women and Girls has been published today.

The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, the police, Suffolk’s Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

All board members hold a shared ambition to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities.



### **One domestic abuse survivor said:**

“Unless you have been in this predicament, I don’t think you can fully comprehend how life changing the whole experience is and how necessary the support system is.”

Much work has been done on preventing VAWG since the launch of the county’s first strategy in 2018, which led to the establishment of Suffolk’s 24/7 domestic abuse helpline, additional accommodation for survivors and the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Unit to help offenders address and alter their behaviour.

However, with recent figures showing an increase in sexual offences and domestic violence nationally, the board recognises the need to continue to drive forward positive change through effective partnership working.

Suffolk’s new VAWG Strategy outlines how this will be achieved in the county, with four key objectives – prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators, and strengthening the system – forming the basis for its approach.

Relevant strategies, policies, and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the police and Government’s response to VAWG, have also been reflected to enable Suffolk to complement the national effort.

In addition, the strategy will be accompanied by an action plan for 2022 – 2025 to help ensure meaningful activity. This has been informed by members of the board, local charities, and domestic abuse survivors – who praised the system for enabling them to co-create proposals and have their say.

To support the board in implementing both the strategy and action plan, Suffolk County Council has contributed £350,000 towards this.

### **Councillor Andrew Reid, Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Board and Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities, commented:**

“Although Suffolk remains a safe place to live and work for many, crimes against women and girls are still happening daily, with these often underpinned by outdated attitudes and prejudice.

“Whilst much work has already been done to tackle this horrific behaviour, we will not stop until every woman and girl in Suffolk feels safe in their community or at home.

“I welcome the new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to help achieve this aim and would like to thank all those who have been involved in its creation, especially the survivors who have been instrumental in helping us to shape proposals to stop others from being victims of this devastating abuse in future.

“It’s great news that the strategy will also be supported by significant funding from our council – cementing our continued commitment to protecting our communities.”

Whilst the strategy is focused primarily on preventing VAWG, due to these crimes often disproportionately affecting this gender, work will still be undertaken to support men and boys, as well as those that are transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming.

The strategy is available to [view online here](#).



## Good news for Suffolk Government gives the green light to negotiate a County Deal

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, on February 8<sup>th</sup>, explained why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor. He said:

In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal.

This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.


We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.

Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.

Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly



supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

### **Council welcomes renewed Government efforts to reduce impact of offshore wind on Suffolk communities**

It was announced on February 8<sup>th</sup> that the Government recognises Suffolk's communities need to see tangible and substantive benefits from the Offshore Transmission Network Review.

Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council have welcomed the renewed effort, announced by the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on 31 January, to try to ensure that Suffolk communities benefit from coordinated connections of offshore wind before 2030.


As part of a webinar on the Offshore Transmission Network Review, it was announced that BEIS officials would be initiating a program of activity working with offshore wind developers, inter-connectors, and the onshore transmission owner, facilitated by the trade body Renewable UK, to explore more ambitious regional coordination with a specific focus on East Anglia.

It was acknowledged during the webinar, that proposals currently put forward by developers identifying early opportunities for coordination, particularly in East Anglia, could go further.

This work will run in parallel with the Holistic Network Design (HND), expected to be published in June 2022, which will set out the required onshore network reinforcements and how the connections of future offshore wind projects coming through the seabed leasing process will be coordinated.

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

“I am pleased that the Government has recognised that Suffolk's communities need to see tangible and substantive benefits, from the Early Opportunities Workstream of the Offshore Transmission Network Review. I remain very concerned that many of what are called, the ‘in-flight’ projects, do not seem to have been prepared to work effectively, with BEIS and others, to create the pathfinders needed, to deliver coordination, and reduce impacts on our communities.”



## **£6.4 million project to ‘Reclaim the Rain’ and tackle flooding**

It was announced on February 15<sup>th</sup> that Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils were successful in winning £6.4 million to implement innovative sustainable water management projects.

Both councils placed a joint bid into Defra’s 6-year Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and were 1 of 25 successful projects chosen to take part.

The joint project, named ‘Reclaim the Rain’ sets out to improve flood and drought resilience in at least six small rural communities across Norfolk and Suffolk.

Norfolk and Suffolk both face considerable surface water flood risk, while also being the driest region in the UK. The project will deliver beneficial flood water reuse by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment combined with nature-based flood management solutions.

The project will involve both partner organisations and the community in the development of suitable flood water reuse schemes. The schemes will address the community’s needs in terms of flood risk and water resource requirements, and could result in provision of:

- Habitat creation and restoration;
- Rain Gardens;
- Rainwater Capture and Reuse for community, agriculture or business use;
- Retrofitted sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- Smart Leaky Water Butts and more...

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

“Flooding is a very real and challenging issue across many areas in Suffolk and there is much we are doing to minimise the plight this has our residents. This project will take our efforts to the next level by working with communities to capture that excess water and put it to good use. We live in the driest part of the UK, so every drop that falls on it is precious – any way that we can find a more sustainable use for this water will benefit us now and in years to come.

“I very much welcome the funding to enable us to do this, and congratulate officers and communities across the two counties, in what will no doubt be a fascinating and innovative 6-year programme.”

To find out more about Reclaim the Rain and how you can get involved, visit: [www.reclaimtherain.org](http://www.reclaimtherain.org).

## **Halfway mark reached as over 20,000 Suffolk streetlights replaced**

It was announced on February 16<sup>th</sup> that Suffolk County Council’s programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs has reached the halfway mark.

Contractor, Bouygues Energies & Services begins work in Ipswich.

To date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns and are well on the way to successfully delivering the project on budget and to programme timescales.

These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, Suffolk County Council is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated.

The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the end of the project.

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

"I recently visited the team working in Ipswich and am very impressed to see the speed at which they are moving across the county to get this work completed. This is one of the many pieces of work we're doing to become a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030.

"The project will see a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy, reducing light pollution as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety. A big thank you to all involved so far, and I wish the team continued success as the project progresses towards completion."

**Iain Blackmore, Strategic Director at Bouygues Energies & Services, said:**

"As we continue to support Suffolk County Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030, we are proud to have now completed 20,000 street lighting upgrades. Switching to LED street lighting should reduce the electrical energy cost for the local authority by at least 76% and more than double the lighting's lifespan. It's a real pleasure to work in partnership with such a forward thinking authority."

Keep a look out for signs in your area to see where the teams are working next and follow [@Suff\\_highways](https://twitter.com/Suff_highways) on Twitter for regular updates.

## **Plans for a large solar farm are seriously flawed and can't be supported, say Suffolk County Council**

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, Suffolk County Council published its concerns over plans for a large solar farm in West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire.

Cabinet papers released today state that plans for the 2,792-acre Sunnica solar farm project are unacceptable in their current form. The paper claims it is impossible for the Government to fully evaluate the significance and degree of the impact of the site because several key assessments are inadequate. A link to the papers can be found [on the committee minutes page](#).



Plans to build the Sunnica solar farm are currently with the Planning Inspectorate for examination. In time, the Planning Inspectorate will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy who will, ultimately, be responsible for making the final decision. The recommendations made in this Cabinet paper, if agreed, will form part of Suffolk County Council's initial submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

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

“Suffolk County Council is totally committed to renewable energy and it plays a key role in our climate change pledge.


“However, this commitment cannot come at any cost. Each project must be reasoned and considered. We will always examine the scale of the project and the impact it may have on those who live nearby.

“Unfortunately, we cannot support this solar farm because the size of the development hasn't been justified and the fact that the planning application is seriously flawed. Amongst many things, it fails to assess the full range of harm to the landscape and surrounding area. If consented, Sunnica will permanently change the character of a unique part of Suffolk which has been shaped by agriculture and horse racing.”

The examination by the Planning Inspectorate is expected to begin in spring 2022 and last for six months, following which a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Secretary of State is expected to make a decision around spring 2023.

Suffolk County Council is a statutory consultee, along with West Suffolk Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Along with overall concerns about the scale of the development, the council raises these key issues to be addressed by the developer:

- Landscape and visual amenity: The council expects the developer to provide a more thorough presentation of key areas of impact, and to work with the local authorities to reduce these impacts and propose more ambitious mitigation proposals
  - Transport and access: The submitted material is not acceptable, with the assessments being seriously flawed. There needs to be credible evidence of impact and required mitigation
  - Socio-economics and land use: The submitted workforce modelling is unsound as a basis for the Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan. Contrary to the applicant's assessments, the Council does not anticipate employment and socio-economic benefits of any significance
  - Community impacts: A project of the scale and nature proposed will change the character of an area which has been shaped by a unique combination of agriculture and horse racing. The Environmental Statement does not recognise this
  - Ecology and nature Conservation: The council requires that existing gaps in the assessments are closed.
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The Cabinet papers also highlight the risk posed to council resources if the applicant does not provide a fair funding deal. Local councils are usually funded by developers to provide feedback on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, but the applicant has not agreed to fully pay the council's costs.

This paper will be discussed by Cabinet on 1 March 2022.

## **Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service swoops into The Big Hoot**

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been announced as a proud sponsor for Suffolk's biggest ever mass participation public art event – 'The Big Hoot'.

The Big Hoot Ipswich 2022 is the third art trail brought to Ipswich by St Elizabeth Hospice in partnership with creative producers Wild in Art, following the success of Pigs Gone Wild 2016 and Elmer's Big Parade Suffolk 2019.

As part of the Big Hoot 2022, 50 ornately decorated owl sculptures, featuring designs celebrating all things Suffolk, will be scattered throughout Ipswich showcasing the wealth of artistic talent of the county and beyond, as part of the biggest free art event in Suffolk which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to the town.

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption's owl, named 'Big Hoot-Little Hoot' will represent the care that foster carers and adopters provide to children in the local community. The owl which features a baby owl nestling safely under the wings of its parent, will be painted by artist, Sandra Reynolds and perfectly depicts the loving and nurturing nature of foster carers and adoptive parents caring for Suffolk children.

In addition to The Big Hoot, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service will take part in the Little Hoot. The Little Hoot is predominantly aimed at schools who design their owl and fundraise for St Elizabeth's hospice. However, as a focus on Suffolk's children in care and adopted children, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been gifted an Owl by local business Highway Assurance. Children in care will be able to take part in a drawing competition to design the owl and the winning design will be chosen by The High Sheriff of Suffolk, Edward Creasy, and Highway Assurance Managing Director, Robert Watton. The owl will then be painted by a local artist to reflect the winning design before being proudly displayed at the Suffolk show along with 59 other Little Hoots, ahead of joining the trail in Ipswich over the summer, launching on 19 June.

### **Suffolk County Councillor James Reeder cabinet member for Children's Services said:**

"I'm delighted that Suffolk Fostering and Adoption are participating in The Big Hoot to raise awareness of the fantastic work our foster carers and adopters provide for Suffolk children in the local community. We also hope that through a range of competitions and fun activities surrounding the event it will help us with our urgent need to attract more foster carers and adopters in Suffolk."

"The loving nature of the big owl caring for the little owl beautifully depicts what being a foster carer and adoptive parent is like. With love, care and support from foster carers and adoptive parents, children and young people can truly flourish and reach their full potential before flying the nest."

**Liz Baldwin, corporate sponsorship and fundraising manager at St Elizabeth Hospice, said:**

“We’re delighted Suffolk Fostering and Adoption will once again be supporting the hospice and taking part in our upcoming Big Hoot art trail.

“Suffolk Fostering and Adoption share key values with the hospice and provide vital care to children within the local community. Their participation in the event will help to raise awareness of the vital services they provide and hopefully inspire people to find out more about becoming a foster carer or adopter.”

Suffolk’s children and young people’s service currently have over 850 children in care and with more children coming into care in Suffolk every year, the need for foster carers and adoptive parents to come forward has never been greater.

These children need someone who can understand what they have been through, look at the world through their eyes and provide warmth, consistency and emotional support.

To find out more about fostering or adopting in Suffolk, visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/fosteringandadoption](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/fosteringandadoption) or call 01473 264800.


## **Thank you to responders who kept us safe and Suffolk moving during the storms**

**February 22<sup>nd</sup> - a column by Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council.**

As I write this on Monday morning, many thousands of you will still be dealing with the aftermaths of a very stormy few days. Whether this was the impact of Storm Dudley, Eunice or Franklin, Suffolk have been absolutely battered by three storms in just four days. Many homes are still without power, with many more dealing with broken roof tiles, fences and upended trees.

Suffolk faced an unprecedented deluge of strong winds and torrential rain in a very short time, but our collective response once again stood-up quickly, worked together and kept people safe and the county moving. It was an enormous endeavour and I would sincerely like to thank everyone involved in the response. Suffolk’s councils, including Suffolk Highways, health bodies, utility companies and emergency services were incredibly busy responding to the storms. Work continued all weekend and the clean-up is still underway today. It was a substantial challenge, but once that we responded to very well – and I am very thankful to you all.

Just to give you an extent of our response, at 5pm on Friday, Suffolk police had dealt with 339 calls to 999 and 431 to 101 and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service attended 51 incidents. As I write, Suffolk Highways have reported one of their busiest periods with 342 reports of fallen trees and road obstructions. Teams have worked overnight to clear the debris and keep the roads clear. Nearly 15,000 homes lost power at some point on Friday or over the weekend and UK Power Networks has been working round the clock to restore power. Our home lost power on Friday until Sunday, so I recognise how disruptive this is. One priority for Suffolk partners is making sure that vulnerable residents without power, are safe and secure. We have been working with UK Power Networks to map where these vulnerable homes are and the welfare vehicle has been out and about dispensing information, hot drinks and enabling mobile phones to be charged. This is also supported with door knocking.



You will have seen that on Friday morning, the Suffolk Resilience Forum – of which we are a partner – declared a major incident. Forum partners, including councils, health bodies, utility companies and the emergency services, made the decision following an assessment of the situation with Storm Eunice. Parts of Suffolk were placed in the red warning zone early Friday morning, which meant there was a significant risk of disruption and danger to life. Forecasters expected gusts of wind of up to 80mph between 10am and 3pm.

The declaration of a major incident formalises joint-working and resource sharing arrangements amongst organisations across Suffolk. It's criteria is met when 'an event or situation, with a range of serious consequences, requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agencies'. It means that the incident is beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life, essential services and the environment. We had previously declared a major incident with our COVID 19 response. It was very clear from early on that the power of Storm Eunice needed the same response - it demanded a fully coordinated response with all blue light and multi-agency partners. The major incident was closed on Saturday morning, but partners continued to work together to clean-up and resolve issues, whilst also reviewing and responding to current weather conditions.

The fact that partners have been working so closely together throughout the pandemic, meant that the structures, lines of communications and governance were already in place to step-up our storm response quickly and effectively. Suffolk has, historically, worked well with partners. We recognise the power and benefit of a collective approach and work hard to get it right. We know it delivers enormous positives to Suffolk residents.

For those of you that suffered as a result of the storm, I hope you are able to restore things quickly, with limited impact and thanks again to all those who worked so hard over the weekend in challenging conditions.

**In the event of bad weather, members of the public are encouraged to:**

- Report fallen trees and obstructions on roads and paths to Suffolk Highways on **0345 606 6171**
- Avoid coastal areas due to an increased risk of erosion posing danger to life
- Plan their journey well in advance and check for travel disruption before leaving. Visit <https://one.network/> and using the 'Weather' layer to find out about road closures
- Following [@SuffolkCC](#) on Twitter or Suffolk County Council on Facebook
- Monitoring the weather forecast at [www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/forecast/uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/forecast/uk)
- Get the latest information on Orwell Bridge closures at [www.twitter.com/highwayseast](http://www.twitter.com/highwayseast)
- Get advice on flooding and flood alerts at [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood) or on Floodline: **0345 988 1188**. More information on Twitter at [@envagencyanglia](#)



