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Statement on behalf of all Suffolk councils regarding Afghan refugees

Statement on behalf of all Suffolk councils.

“On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Whilst the full details are yet to be confirmed, it is crystal clear that the Government needs local authorities everywhere to step up and support this national effort.

“All councils in Suffolk are committed to this cause. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk, in addition to ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children and other refugees entering the UK. In the coming days and weeks, the district, borough and county councils will continue working with the Government to do what we can to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees.

“Times like this call for acts of humanity. Suffolk will play its part.”



Make one simple change today in a bid to tackle climate change

COP26 will bring into focus the need for us all to reduce our carbon emissions in order to slow climate change

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

In early November, the eyes of the world will be on the UK. Glasgow, to be exact.

This is when the COP26 conference takes places.

COP26 is the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties. It will be a momentous event and I expect some significant decisions and agreements to be made, as the world continues to combat climate change and reduce its carbon emissions.

But how will an international event affect each of us in Suffolk? Although COP26 will be an event attended by Presidents and Prime Ministers, it will impact us all.

COP26 will bring into focus the need for us all to reduce our carbon emissions in order to slow climate change. This has been the message for a long time of course, but we must all be changing our behaviours and choosing to use less energy.

And I do mean all of us.

Global industry, national corporations and governments must lead the way to enable us all to make greener choices. But slowing climate change is everyone's responsibility, we each have a duty to tackle this situation and play our part.


I'd suggest that there is at least one simple change or choice we can make immediately, which will help. My challenge to you is to make that one change today.

This could be to replace one meat-based meal each week with a plant-based one. Or start to swap over your traditional lightbulbs for LED ones. Or switching your gas or electricity tariff to one which uses 100% renewable energy. Or plan your food shopping so that you throw away less food. Or make purchases from businesses that are committed to reducing their carbon emissions. Or just boil the water you need for that morning coffee or cup of tea.

For me, making some of these changes has been a learning experience. I've discovered that it's easy to live with a plug-in vehicle without a home charger - I just need to plan my trips and use the chargers at the workplaces I visit. It was a change I made with trepidation but charging infrastructure is continually improving.

My partner is vegetarian and while I'm not, I enjoy some meat-free meals each week. Equally important for me is shopping local and making locally-sourced food choices. When I do eat meat or dairy, I choose local grass-fed options.

I now have LED lightbulbs at home and have installed smart sensors. The biggest change we've made is turning our back on fast fashion and spending a little more on clothes produced in this country and to a higher standard. It's too easy to order multiple cheap items online, only to return most of them! Shopping local isn't just good for the local economy but it's better for environment too.



I am not claiming that by doing these simple things, we are going to reverse climate change overnight. The point is to challenge the status quo in our lives and start to change our behaviours.


And yes, organisations like Suffolk County Council must lead by example. We continue to lobby Government to make the bigger changes necessary which enable each of us to make greener choices.

Suffolk County Council has been addressing climate change challenge for many years, but we know that the organisation must be doing more and doing it more quickly. This is agreed across all Suffolk's authorities which is why, together, we have recently approved the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan - a document to keep us accountable in our ambition to make Suffolk a carbon neutral county by 2030.

I'm proud of the work Suffolk County Council has been doing for a number of years now. We are planting trees and hedgerows. We are supporting businesses with advice and funding to reduce their carbon emissions. We are running schemes to reduce the cost of solar panels on homes. We are providing the infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. We are providing greener ways to travel. We are installing electric vehicle charging points in rural areas. There is much, much more besides, but we are working hard to develop this work.

Don't worry if you're still not sure what it means to you, your business or your community. With COP26 just three months away, organisations and authorities across Suffolk are planning events across the county to talk net zero and being carbon neutral. Whether at the start of your net zero journey, or you're looking to make the next step, these events will guide and inspire you.

The www.greensuffolk.org website will be updated soon with these Suffolk events. I'd recommend it as a great place to start finding out more.



Suffolk plans climate change events ahead of COP26

It was announced on August 11th that in the build-up to COP26, events around Suffolk will showcase local businesses and people who are tackling climate change, to inspire others to follow. The events aim to encourage businesses and residents to do more personally and professionally to reduce carbon emissions and therefore slow the increase of climate change.

One of the events confirmed to be taking place in Suffolk is the visit of the national Zero Carbon Tour, organised by Planet Mark. The Tour sees a fully electric 'Carbon Battle Bus' making visits around the country before arriving at the COP26 conference.

Councillor Richard Rout, member of the Suffolk Climate Change, Environment and Energy Portfolio Holders' Group, and deputy leader and cabinet member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I'm delighted that Suffolk has been chosen to be part of the national Zero Carbon Tour, as I'm proud of all the climate change work that is going on here. I want more people to hear about it. Although many local authorities declared climate emergencies in the last couple of years, I want people to know that Suffolk has been addressing climate change for many years before that.

"But we must all be doing more to reduce our carbon emissions. Which is why colleagues from across the county have recently worked hard to produce and approve the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan. This gives Suffolk's public sector organisations a framework and commitment to each pursue our own net zero strategies, whilst working together for the benefit of Suffolk. Together, we are supporting and guiding our residents, communities and businesses to make the changes required to best set Suffolk on the path for carbon neutrality by 2030.

"I think the COP26 conference will be an influential moment in our ambitions for Suffolk to achieve net zero by 2030. Coupled with the recent IPCC global warming report, it should focus everyone's minds that each resident and business must be doing more and doing it more quickly."

The purpose of the Zero Carbon Tour is to discuss the concept of net zero carbon and why it is critical for businesses. Suffolk's businesses, organisations and community groups will share their stories about how they have started their journeys to net zero. This will inspire and give confidence to those considering how to reduce their carbon emissions.

Steve Malkin, Founder and CEO, Planet Mark, said:

"There is no doubt, we are living in a seminal and historic moment in time. 2020 – 2030 has been coined the Decade of Action, a period in which we need to tackle the climate crisis and halt biodiversity loss. The global pursuit of net zero carbon emissions is a huge undertaking, and only possible with help from businesses and communities alike.

"We are excited to bring the net zero message to Ipswich, and share the 'carbon stories' of organisations, community groups and individuals playing their part in creating a sustainable future for Suffolk, the United Kingdom and beyond."

It will be visiting the University of Suffolk in Ipswich on 1 September 2021 and [you can register your place here](#).

This event and others are taking place across Suffolk in the lead up to COP26, as part of Suffolk's collective campaign of Creating The Greenest County, and be net zero by 2030. As part of the Suffolk

Climate Emergency Plan, these events look to encourage collaborative action by educating and engaging with residents and businesses to develop net zero journey.

Other events which are being planned in Suffolk in the lead up to COP26 include:

- August/September – Webinars for Suffolk’s voluntary sector (Suffolk County Council)
- 1 September – Zero Carbon Tour visits Ipswich
- 12 October – Ten Steps to Net Zero (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce)
- 21-22 October – Local Energy Showcase (Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council)
- TBC October - A Greener NHS day
- 12 November – Greenest County Awards (Suffolk County Council)
- 23-25 November – Low Carbon Homes

All events are subject to change, visit www.greensuffolk.org for the latest details and information about starting your journey to net zero.



Suffolk's new Chief Fire Officer appointed

On August 12th, Jon Lacey was appointed to the post of Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety.

Starting in November, Jon will lead Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and its staff, as well as having responsibility for Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards and emergency planning services and being a member of the corporate leadership team.

Jon will bring a wealth of experience to Suffolk, gained from a 24 year career with fire and rescue services. He began in 1993 as an on-call firefighter with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, before becoming a wholetime firefighter.

He is currently Assistant Chief Fire Officer at West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and has responsibility for Prevention, Protection and Response, as well as the county council's Resilience and Emergency Team, a service like Suffolk's Joint Emergency Planning Unit.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities at Suffolk County council, said:

"I welcome Jon's appointment, he will bring great experience and knowledge to Suffolk. The role is a very important one to keeping Suffolk safe - of course he will lead our Fire and Rescue Service, but also has responsibilities across the council, including Trading Standards and emergency planning. It is an exciting time for him to be joining us, following the Service's 'Good' rating by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the investment we are putting into operational equipment and new fire stations."

Nicola Beach, Suffolk County Council Chief Executive, said:

"I am delighted that Jon has accepted the offer to join us in Suffolk. We put all candidates through an extremely thorough process over a number of weeks, in front of wide-ranging and diverse panels. Jon presented himself very well during interviews and presentations and we all felt that he is someone who brings strong experience to the team and someone we would enjoy working alongside."

Dan Fearn, Suffolk's Deputy Chief Fire Officer will continue in the role of Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director on an interim basis until Jon starts his role in November.



Suffolk targets devolution talks with Government

It was announced on August 17th that public sector leaders in Suffolk say they welcome early discussions with Ministers about a possible devolution deal for Suffolk.

In a joint letter sent to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, the leaders of all of Suffolk's six councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore, said:

“Suffolk has already demonstrated its credibility as a place where Government will find strong and ambitious delivery partners.

“The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) group...has a track record of effective partnership working. These robust relationships enable more innovative ways of working, including exploring opportunities for devolution as part of a County Deal.

“Suffolk...is an ideal place to help Government demonstrate how levelling up can work in diverse geographies. Suffolk has a strong offer to make to Government and we would welcome early discussions with MHCLG Ministers to explore proposals for a County Deal ahead of the White Paper being published.”

The Government wrote to councils in July 2021, setting out its ambition to make available to county areas the kind of devolved decision-making powers and public funding currently enjoyed by larger cities and urban areas. It's part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and will see a White Paper published in the coming months.

Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council and chair of the SPSL, said:

“Suffolk is known for working well together. Whether it's partners joining forces during the COVID-19 pandemic, pooling public funding for the greater good or developing shared strategic priorities, collaboration is what we're good at.

“From inclusive economic growth and community safety to climate change and strong communities, we're focused on collaborative actions that deliver the biggest and best additional benefits for our communities.


“We believe this makes Suffolk a strong contender to work with the Government as part of its Levelling Up agenda.”


It is understood that Suffolk's approach involving all councils is rare among other expressions of interest being submitted to Government, a point that has been welcomed by the county's seven MPs.

In an accompanying letter to Robert Jenrick MP, they said:

“We are...writing to wholeheartedly support the vision set out, collectively, by Suffolk County Council and all of Suffolk's District and Borough Councils. We believe this unity of purpose behind taking the next step in devolution through a County Deal can not just help persuade you that we should be in the vanguard of the next stage of devolution, but also that Suffolk can use such a deal to deliver better services locally.

“This is not a recent or short-lived view. For many years local leaders in Suffolk at all levels have worked more closely together, and have put forward constructive propositions for further





improvements. We hope to work with you on your forthcoming White Paper to show that strong local leadership and strengthened local governance can deliver better.”

Read a copy of [the letter sent to Robert Jenrick MP](#) (PDF, 207KB), as well the [supportive letter from Suffolk’s seven MPs](#) (PDF, 205KB).



Suffolk homeowners can cut carbon emissions as successful solar panel buying scheme returns

On August 25th it was announced that Suffolk residents will come together to invest in renewables through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Suffolk, in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from pre-approved installers.

This innovative scheme builds on three years of the highly successful Solar Together programme run in Suffolk. Since 2018, the scheme has installed solar panel systems in 1,028 households across the county. On average, homeowners have saved 33% on installation costs, £263 on energy bills in year one, and stopped harmful carbon emissions entering the atmosphere.

Suffolk residents have until 27 September 2021 to register their interest, for free and with no obligation, to join the group-buying scheme to have solar panels installed at their home. Not only does Solar Together Suffolk offer solar panels, but also optional battery storage and retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels.


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

“I’m delighted that we’re able to run Solar Together Suffolk for another year, as we have seen a real appetite amongst residents to play their part and invest in ways to reduce their carbon emissions. This is one of the many schemes we are offering, as Suffolk County Council aims to make the county net zero by 2030.

“The council itself has had solar panel installations for many years, which are located on around 100 of our properties. We have also been trialling battery storage too. This means that we rely less on the grid for our energy, by harnessing energy from the sun. Suffolk’s councils have worked together for many years to reduce carbon emissions and slow climate change. We now do this through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, and with COP26 on the horizon we will all need to focus on how we can all lower our carbon footprint and help make Suffolk a carbon neutral county.”

How does it work?

- Until 27 September: Householders can register to become part of the group, for free and without obligation, at www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk
- 28 September: Pre-vetted UK solar PV installers participate in an auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
- After the auction, registered households will receive a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.



Suffolk County Council brings [Solar Together Suffolk](#) to residents as part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, on behalf of all of Suffolk's local authorities. This is in partnership with independent experts iChoosr to make the transition to clean energy as cost effective and hassle-free as possible. Across the UK, iChoosr has delivered almost 5,000 installations to date and over 80,000 tonnes of avoided lifetime carbon emissions.

Marie-Louise Abretti, iChoosr UK Solar Manager added:

“The Solar Together group-buying scheme offers a simple process and the reassurance of a trusted and vetted installer for residents of Suffolk who are looking for ways to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills and increase their independence from the grid.”

What other Suffolk residents have said:

“All very painless and straightforward. Being part of a large group gives you the confidence that problems will be resolved should they arise, but none did!” Peter, Bury St Edmunds; 16 panels installed.

“Excellent! Solar Together Suffolk took all the hassle of finding a provider, and the group-buying secured me a better discount than trying to do this on my own. It was a no-brainer. Richard, Bures St Mary; 24 panels installed.



Suffolk health chiefs alarm as covid cases shoot up ahead of sunny bank holiday weekend

On August 26th it was stated that the number of Covid cases in Suffolk have risen by 22% in the last week and this increase is set to continue.

This has prompted Suffolk's Director of Public Health to issue an urgent warning ahead of the Bank Holiday weekend.

Stuart Keeble made the warning after Suffolk's weekly case hit 231.1 cases per 100,000 population.

This is in comparison to 189.9 per 100,000 the previous week and is a steep rise compared to case growth in the East of England.

In the week to 25 August, there were 1,904 new cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk, compared to 1,597 cases up to 18 August. Each of the five districts have experienced a week-on-week increase, with a high number of cases recorded in Newmarket and Lowestoft in the last two weeks.

Areas around north Newmarket have the highest weekly rates with 702.7 cases per 100,000 population and Lowestoft and Kirkley are the second highest with 517.1 cases per 100,000 population. Other areas around Lowestoft are also seeing higher than average cases (Gunton West with 392.5 per 100,000 and Lowestoft Central 379.1 per 100,000).

There has also been an almost doubling in the case rate in Suffolk's 60+ population over the last month with a rate of 80.9 per 100,000 on 19 August, up from 42.2 per 100,000 on 17 July.

The number of hospital beds occupied by positive patients has also risen in Suffolk's four hospitals with 76 patients and there have been two COVID-19 deaths in the most recent week of data.


Ahead of the Bank Holiday Weekend, Mr Keeble, Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council, is encouraging people to enjoy the weather but warning them do it carefully and with consideration for other people. This including sticking to Covid-safe measures, such as mask wearing and keeping your distance.

Mr Keeble said:

"We want people to get out and about this bank holiday weekend – whether that's building sandcastles at the beach, enjoying a proper pint with friends or going on adventures throughout our beautiful county. But we need everyone to do so carefully, and be kind to people who are still very vulnerable to COVID. Sadly, this disease is still very much in our communities – and while it is hugely important that we live our lives to the fullest and enjoy all that Suffolk has to offer, we must do this with caution.

"This means wearing a mask or keeping your distance when you feel it is appropriate or to protect vulnerable people around us. Every act of kindness and consideration to those around you, helps us keep one another safe and stop the spread of the virus."

A new video has been launched by the Suffolk Resilience Forum ahead of the Bank Holiday to encourage people to **Add Kindness** to their daily lives and help keep people Covid-safe. [View it here](#). The **Add Kindness** campaign aims to encourage people to act with consideration for others when out and about. This may include wearing a mask, or keeping your distance, when appropriate.



Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service adds four new enhanced appliances to its fleet, fitted with solar panels

On August 27th Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled its state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to equip firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

Four new “enhanced rescue tenders” will be based at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Newmarket and Princes Street (Ipswich), giving cover across the county and strengthening the emergency response across Suffolk’s communities.

The new equipment and vehicles are also the latest innovations in green technology, supporting Suffolk County Council’s climate emergency declaration and ambitions to be net zero by 2030. The fire appliances are the first in Suffolk to be fitted with solar panels, have more fuel-efficient engines and also carry battery powered hydraulic rescue equipment.

Dan Fearn, Temporary Chief Fire Officer, said:

“This is a significant investment in the Service’s capability to deal with many types of rescues, including those on Suffolk’s roads. To make sure we get the best equipment possible, we’ve carried out extensive operational testing and spent time getting feedback from staff.

“The equipment carried on-board is dedicated specialist equipment for carrying out rescues, ranging from car crashes to building collapses and making the scene of an incident safe.

“My team is made up of exceptional operational and non-operational staff. I want to give them the best possible equipment so that they can carry out their work to the best of their ability.”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection, & Communities, said:

“The vehicles are strategically placed across the county to deliver the fastest response to the community of Suffolk. I’m delighted that we’ve been able to add this next-generation equipment to our growing fleet. We have also recently introduced three new command support vehicles and we have further investment in the pipeline.

“Suffolk County Council aims to be a net zero authority by 2030, and I applaud the Service for setting an excellent example by embedding this ambition in its procurement.”

