

Report to Bungay and Wainford Parishes March 2024

from County Councillor Judy Cloke

Sadly my level of incompetence with matters technical whilst I wrote this report meant I lost it when half way through.

Flixton :

We have managed to get a quote from a local contractor to undertake the work at St Felix Rise , but East Suffolk Council has no money to pay for it . I have offered a contribution from my Locality budget, it is now a question of where the rest is found.

St Cross:

I have met with Cllr French Mullen and residents at a different spot in St Cross regarding erosion of the roadside verges and referred the matter to the Highways team, I await their reply.

St James :

I was approached by a resident regarding possible encroachment onto Highways land, this has been referred to the enforcement team who have the matter in hand.

Mettingham:

Following on from a previous meeting with Parish Councillors and a couple of Highways' officers in Low Road, I had another meeting - with Wayne this time - and we spent a long while discussing how the roads are flooding every time there is rain , where the water is running from, where it should be going to and who is responsible for maintenance of the ditches, also how the clearance of the grips will be funded. I hope to have more information next month.

Bungay:

Appalled at the state Priory Lane gets into at the Messenger gates whenever it rains , I complained again to Highways. I am told the flooding drain has been jetted and the resultant debris on the highway is the responsibility of East Suffolk Council to clear away. I was also told today (9th) there have been no further complaints about flooding at this spot -but then we have not had a huge amount of rain , either.

I have again pursued with Highways the issue of there being a stretch of Staithe Road where there are no yellow lines on either side, probably where the road is at its narrowest, the advice I have been given is that during Street Fairs, cones can be put out. I think there should be a more permanent solution and am looking into it. The plan which Wayne and I pulled together for traffic flows in the town would alleviate this problem.

I was really pleased to see the new Bungay magazine and so glad I – as then Chair of the Stakeholder group - asked Sheline to persist with pulling a plan together when she was so new to her post . I think she has done a terrific job and is to be congratulated.

I have been pleased to facilitate a road closure order for the RBL to parade through Bungay on 19 May.

Regrettably the EV chargers at the Community Centre have been taken out of use. This is because the providers were not paying their bills. It was not a decision we took lightly.

I will be so pleased when we get a better internet connection in this town !

As you will see, much of my inbox has been filled over the winter months with Highways' issues , whether it is flooding , potholes , destroyed verges , road sweeping , the list is endless and I understand the problem is nationwide.

Suffolk wide

Schooling:

This year parents and carers of 98% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred schools and 93% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7,867 applications from parents and carers indicating which secondary school they would prefer their child to transfer to in September 2024.

A new campaign urging Suffolk's drivers to switch off their engines when parked was launched on 1st March. The campaign against Idling focuses particularly on turning off engines outside schools to protect children's growing lungs from unnecessary pollution.

Pupils and staff at Castle Hill Infant and Junior School support Suffolk Idling Action campaign

Idling engines, where a car is stationary with its engine on, cause peaks in harmful pollutants which when breathed in overtime can lead to asthma, heart disease, cancer and stunt children's growing lungs.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pollution because their height puts them closer to exhaust fumes, they breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants and because their developing organs are more easily damaged.

If parents have a child who is already receiving SCC funded school travel, they must opt-in by 31 May 2024 to continue to receive it.

Families of children starting secondary school in September 2024 will receive an e-mail by the end of March if they are eligible for SCC funded school travel.

Lion Link:

Suffolk County Council believes that the failure of two National Grid offshore projects to coordinate with each other will cause irreversible damage to important landscapes in the county.

The council considers that the proposed LionLink and Sea Link projects could share infrastructure where cabling is already proposed to come onshore at Aldeburgh, by the Sea Link project which is at a more advanced planning stage.

LionLink is an interconnector being proposed by National Grid Ventures. Sea Link is an electrical cabling and infrastructure project being proposed by National Grid Electricity Transmission – a different member of the National Grid family.

However, the LionLink project published details on 6 March to say that it has no intention to coordinate with Sea Link at Aldeburgh, instead it is proposing a separate landing point at either Southwold or Walberswick.

The council's submission to the last non-statutory consultation for LionLink [can be read here](#). National Grid Ventures expected to submit a Development Consent Order application in 2025.

Pylons:

Suffolk County Council has formally objected to National Grid's plans for 29 km of electricity pylons and cabling between Bramford and Twinstead.

The Planning Inspectorate has just concluded its Examination period for the proposal (12 March), where the county council concluded that National Grid has failed to adequately safeguard Suffolk's environment and communities affected by the scheme.

SCC says the proposals do not go far enough to mitigate the impact of the scheme, and that supervision of construction would be inadequate.

Public transport:

The council has been awarded £1.8 million per year for two years – a total of £3.6 million – from the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 (BSIP 2, renamed from BSIP+) to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk.

Schemes awarded funding include:

- Enhancements of the 84 and 753 services connecting Sudbury to Colchester and Bury St Edmunds
- Enhancements of the 521 service connecting Halesworth, Saxmundham and Aldeburgh
- A re-route of the 14/15 service from Haverhill to Bury St Edmunds to serve West Suffolk Hospital and to increase frequency
- Enhancements to the Buzzabout community transport service serving villages north of Lowestoft
- New services connecting villages between Stowmarket and Mendlesham and surrounding villages
- Development of a new demand-responsive transport service to connect Brett Valley villages with commercial services in Hadleigh and Lavenham
- New services from Bramford to Ipswich and Stowupland to Stowmarket
- Enhancements to the operation of the Beyton/Thurston/Elmswell/Woolpit taxibus

Devolution:

People across Suffolk are being asked for their views on a proposed, in principle, devolution deal that would hand Suffolk greater decision-making powers and control of more than half a billion pounds of public funding.

In December 2022, Suffolk County Council and the Government signed an in-principle deal to transfer certain powers and funding from London to Suffolk.

Residents and businesses can now share their views about important aspects of the deal, including:

- Control of a new investment fund worth £480m over the next thirty years
- Local control of the Adult Education Budget each year (worth £9.4m in 2025/26)
- £5.8m one-off funding to prepare brownfield sites for development
- Multi-year transport funding plus an additional £500,000 over two years to finalise Suffolk's Local Transport Plan.

If agreed, the proposed deal would also mean that, for the first time, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk – rather than by county councillors. Once every four years, residents would vote to elect both their local county councillor (as they do now) and the leader of the county council.

Supporting information and details on how to respond are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution. The consultation opens at 2pm today.

Once the consultation has closed, Suffolk county councillors and Government ministers will consider a report on findings as part of the decision-making process on whether or not to proceed with Suffolk's devolution deal. A decision is expected in July 2024.

EV Charging:

Suffolk County Council has secured millions of pounds of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county.

The county council has been allocated the money after successful bids to the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking.

Suffolk residents without off-street parking will benefit from £5.9 million to support EV charging, and a further £1.4 million will be used to develop the county's existing EV charging network in community locations.

Homes without a driveway face challenges when it comes to charging an EV - in some cases it is just not possible, and it is unsafe and hazardous to run cables across pavements. Along with inconvenient access to public charging, these are common reasons that people give for not choosing an EV.

However, the funding will start to provide solutions to some of these issues, with opportunities to develop:

- kerbside charging points
- community charging hubs
- car park charging points
- fast and rapid charging point infrastructure improvements

Suffolk residents are invited to 'nominate' their street for consideration for on-street charging points, using [this online form](#). Although not every road may be suitable, suggestions from residents will help indicate where there is demand for charging points.

Solar Farm:

Suffolk County Council has called for greater transparency and fairness for communities following the release of new plans for a 750-acre solar farm in Mid Suffolk.

Although not published yet, Elmya Energy UK plans to build the White Elm Solar Farm, which covers a 750-acre site in the Mendlesham, Wickham Skeith and Thwaite area. The solar farm would produce 200MW of electricity, include battery storage, and take up land the equivalent of 425 football pitches.

The proposed solar farm will be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, therefore the decision will be determined by the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Net Zero, and not Suffolk County Council, who will only be a statutory consultee.

Plans by Elmya Energy UK are expected shortly.

The Roadmender has arrived !

The Roadmender has arrived in Suffolk, as the county sees a 34% increase in pothole repairs through extra investment, more resource, and new ways of working.

The county council has been working to repair the increasing number of potholes which have been breaking out following very wet and cold weather recently. One way in which the council is increasing its repair rate is by trialling new methods of fixing potholes.

Suffolk Highways welcomed 'Highway Workforce' with their Roadmender Elastomac solution - a repair method which results in sealed, longer-lasting pothole repairs; which are quicker to carry out.

The trial which began on 11 March, is eco-friendly and lowers the carbon footprint of repairs by 80% is effectively supporting Suffolk Highways in its fight against the rising number of potholes on the county's roads.

The 'Roadmender' works on both asphalt and concrete roads and is designed for repairs to all types of road defects and is capable of overlaying areas with multiple defects in a single visit. The process is more efficient, reducing material and waste by 90% and avoiding unnecessary disruption on roads.

Judy Cloke

9 March 24