

As we all know, Sea link have a short consultation at present, ending in January 2025. It is vitally important that as many people as possible respond to this latest consultation and also write to the MP and write to Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State, Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ), 3-8 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2EG Emails should be sent to: Ed Miliband MP at Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk requesting a response acknowledgment. It is also apparent that not all landowners impacted or possibly impacted have as yet, received the updated paperwork.

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade/sea-link/our-proposals>

If you or anyone you know is a victim of abuse, Anglia Care Trust can provide help, advice or guidance 24/7 www.suffolkdahelpline.org.uk

Ask for Angela. If something doesn't feel right when you are out during the festive season or any time the ASK for Angela. Local Police officers work with businesses and licensed premises to improve safety, and feeling of safety, amongst women and girls on a night out. Ask for Angela is a discreet codeword you can use to ask pub and club staff for help. They will know you need some assistance and will do what they can to discretely help you get out of a situation. Get the word out but always call 999 in an emergency.

A reminder to those that have not yet completed the budget consultation to please do so before the 15th December, available on the SCC website.

Once again, thank you to all volunteers that do so much for everyone and to all those working/volunteering over the Christmas holiday. Wishing you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

Very best wishes

TJ

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

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

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

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

As a council, we have long argued that that this project should connect at the Isle of Grain. While it's good news for communities in East Suffolk that Nautilus will now connect elsewhere, like us they will want urgent clarity that another project won't take its connection here in Suffolk.

Suffolk was yet again bracing itself for the impact of another large energy project so there is some relief following this announcement. The council has always supported the need for the country to ensure energy security, but we're now seeing layer upon layer of uncoordinated energy projects impacting Suffolk, irreversibly damaging communities, their heritage, and environment. The risk of the government's headlong dash to decarbonise the grid by 2030 is that another project will simply take the place of Nautilus and there will be no respite for our coastal communities.

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

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

Royal opening for the Gull Wing bridge

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

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

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

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

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

On the bridge Her Royal Highness saw the bascule wings up close before going into the control tower. (Image: SCC)

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

The Princess is Patron of the Excelsior Trust, which restored and operates the boat.

Back on the bridge, The Princess was invited by Councillor Harsant to unveil a commemorative plaque recording her visit and officially opening the bridge.

Her Royal Highness presses the button in the control tower to open the bridge.

The Princess then met Jack Baldry, aged 16, Hayden Nicholls and Eva Ainslie, both 15, the Lowestoft young people who coined the name 'Gull Wing' in a competition for local schools.

They were Year 6 pupils at Somerleyton Primary School and took the inspiration for the name from the shape of the bascule span's beams and their resemblance to the wings of a gull.

Her Royal Highness meets the three Lowestoft school pupils who came up with the name 'Gull Wing' – Eva Ainslie, left, Hayden Nicholls and Jack Baldry. (Image: SCC)

Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council, said: “It was a great honour for Suffolk to welcome Her Royal Highness to Lowestoft to open this landmark bridge.

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

Minister for the Future of Roads, Lilian Greenwood said: “I know the importance of the Gull Wing Bridge to the people of East Suffolk. It will be transformational for local people and businesses.

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

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

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

Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Voucher Scheme in Suffolk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Features of the Scheme:

- **No/low cost:** No cost for homes under 98m². The scheme is funded by Suffolk councils – the most you will pay for a home bigger than 98m² is £30 for an assessment typically valued at over £250
- **No obligations:** There is no requirement to take forward any recommended work. However, an [interest free loan scheme](#) is available to help with energy efficient upgrades, for example insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing or heat pumps
- **Expert insights:** Detailed recommendations tailored specifically to the property being assessed
- **Trustworthy:** Funded by Suffolk councils and in partnership with Retrofit Coordination, a PAS 2035 accredited retrofit assessor and coordinator

Energy Savings Statistics:

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

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

New Deputy Chief Fire Office for Suffolk is appointed

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

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

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

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Henry Griffin.

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

His expertise includes strategic planning, workforce planning, and operational training.

Henry, who is married with three children, succeeds Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dan Fearn, who has retired.

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

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

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

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

Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey said: "Henry was appointed following a rigorous interview process of an incredibly strong field of candidates, it is no exaggeration to say that competition for this role was intense.

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

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Protection, said: "I congratulate Henry on his appointment, the quality of the candidates was extremely high. I have no doubt that he will continue to serve Suffolk well in his new role."

Thousands of Suffolk residents offered health checks

Thousands of Suffolk residents are being offered a free NHS health check by Suffolk GP Federation

Health Checks can help spot the early signs of problems that could raise the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia and other serious health conditions.

In many cases these conditions do not display any symptoms meaning people may be completely unaware they have them. By spotting issues early, residents can make positive changes to their lifestyles to keep fit and well.

“NHS health checks really are an effective way of spotting issues or risks early, while encouraging those identified as being at a higher risk to take preventive action. The NHS Health Check provides a real opportunity for people to take control of their own health.”

Cllr Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council

“Even if you feel fine, just being over 40 raises the risk of being unwell. A free NHS health check can help you find out about any small problems before they become big.” “We are sending health check invites by text to eligible people aged 40 to 74 years who live in Suffolk. However, we don’t want anyone to miss out so we’re issuing a call to anybody who thinks they may be eligible, but hasn’t received an invite, to visit our website and book an appointment.”

Julie Smith from Suffolk GP Federation

Residents who do not have any pre-existing conditions such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or an irregular heartbeat, are eligible. The check only takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Everybody attending a check will be told about their risk of getting illnesses and will receive personalised advice to help them keep fit and well.

To find out more visit www.suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/nhs-health-checks/

Suffolk prepped and ready for whatever winter brings

Column by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council’s cabinet member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding

The cold snap has finally reached us, this was clear as I stood on a freezing and windy Cornhill in Ipswich, chatting to residents at our final Local Matters event of the year last week. With conversation heavily focussed on what we are doing to prepare residents and services for the wintry weather, I thought it would be the right time to talk about our winter preparations.

One of the biggest seasonal services the county council delivers is the gritting of our roads, treating thousands of miles to help minimise risk for those travelling during winter.

Months before now, highways teams carefully plan for gritting, in total, there are 38 gritters ready for action. You may recall reading that we renamed some of our gritting fleet following a competition we held earlier in the year with Suffolk school children, winning names included Morgan Freezeman, Kieran McSpreader and Spread Sheeran.

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

All gritters use hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), which reduces carbon dioxide emissions by around 90%, supporting our continued commitment to protect and enhance our environment.

During the last winter season, we used around 7,822 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 123,400 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of earth over five times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 21,000 tonnes of salt across the county and is well prepared for what the winter has to bring.

Our highway teams are responsible for gritting over half the whole road network in Suffolk, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations. We also treat bus routes leading to rural villages and schools when there is a sustained period of cold weather.

All gritting decisions are based on forecasted road surface temperatures, not air temperature, as the road surface temperature is often cooler and reflects the true risk to those travelling on our roads. We are also in the process of refilling grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads.

Suffolk Highways fills grit bins that are approved and owned by parish and town councils, however, to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and request grit refills via the online highways reporting tool.

Please do park considerately and leave enough room so that our gritters can treat the roads – if we can't fit, we can't grit!

I must stress that drivers should always take extra care this time of year and drive to the conditions; although the gritting teams have treated the roads, this doesn't mean they are completely risk-free.

Aside from highways, services across the council have also been busily preparing for winter. The demand on our Adult Social Care services always increases. If you have an elderly or vulnerable neighbour or a relative, please look out for them - they may need help with shopping, clearing paths, walking a dog or to see a friendly face.

When it comes to our schools, headteachers will always make every effort to ensure that their school remains open. However, in extreme conditions it can be very difficult, or even impossible, for pupils and staff to get to school. Individual schools make their own arrangements if they do need to close, therefore the best place to check if your child's school is open (or partially open) is via that school's website. When schools tell us about their decision to close, we publish information about any closures on our website.

Our fire service encourages those with open fires to ensure these are safe and guarded and that chimneys and flues are cleaned and serviceable, electric blankets should be bought new and tested every three years.

And lastly, be vigilant when it comes to the blight of scammers, online auction sites or social media marketplaces can be rife with counterfeit goods or products that don't meet the UK's safety laws. These often haven't been properly tested and could pose a serious risk of fire, serious injury or even death.

Residents can find advice at www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council's social media throughout winter.

[New study considers impacts of nuclear and major infrastructure projects](#)

A new study published today (28 November 2024) considers the impact of the construction of the nuclear power station, Hinkley Point C.

Published: 28 Nov 2024

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

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

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

Learning from Hinkley Point C provides vital information for new nuclear sites that follow on – be it large scale, small modular or nuclear fusion projects. Many of the findings are also applicable to other major infrastructure projects, including all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cllr Rout continues:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- [SEND Letter from DfE](#)

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

Key achievements listed within the letter include improvements in the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); outstanding academic progress for children

participating in the Raising Achievement – Delivering Better Value academic interventions; better coproduction between partners; and a significant reduction of permanent exclusions in primary schools and for children with EHCPs.

The Department for Education also outlined key areas for development including governance and use of data; ensuring that improvement work continues at pace, specifically with regard to timeliness and quality of EHCPs; achieving consistency across all families so that improvement is felt by all; and that the voice of children and young families continue to be heard at the heart of decision making.

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

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

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

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

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

This was the most formal review since the inspection.

The next progress meeting will take place in May 2025.