

November 2025 SCC report

I had the honour, as one of your **Local Authority representatives**, to speak at last week's **Open Floor Hearings**, and I would like to convey my sincere thanks to everyone who also took that opportunity.

The proposed **Sea Link National Grid project** poses a severe and lasting threat to this area, with the potential to irreversibly damage our countryside, local economy, and community wellbeing. This project is being advanced but as yet there is **no justification for proceeding at such pace or scale** without clear evidence of need.

Until **Sizewell C** is completed and its true generation capacity and grid requirements are fully understood, the Sea Link and Lion Link projects must be **paused**. To advance now would be premature, environmentally damaging, and socially unjust. Our coastline, wildlife, and rural heritage deserve considered, evidence-based planning.

You can listen or read submissions on the below link.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN020026/documents?itemsPerPage=25>

Any written submissions and details supporting the hearings so far must be submitted by deadline 1a 26th November.

Please note - All interested parties are now invited to submit written representations and any comments on the relevant representations already submitted by deadline 1, 18th November.

Remembrance Sunday.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in the **pivotal and poignant Remembrance Day commemorations**. Your dedication and care bring the whole community together in shared reflection and gratitude. It is moments like these that remind us of the strength, unity, and compassion that define our communities. Together, we honour those who served, those who sacrificed, and the enduring spirit of remembrance that continues to unite us all.

Best wishes

TJ

Remembering Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

Suffolk County Council today pays tribute to Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro.



"Melanie was first elected to represent the Pakefield Division at Suffolk County Council in May 2017 and was re-elected in 2021.

"From June 2021 to May 2024, Melanie brought her enthusiasm and insight to the role of Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology. She had a real appreciation for Suffolk's heritage and natural beauty, and she approached her responsibilities with care, thoughtfulness, and quiet determination.

"Over the years, she made a significant and lasting contribution to the Council's work, but far more than that her commitment to the Broads Authority and the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority was appreciated by all.

"Those who knew Melanie will remember her not only for her service, but for her warmth, kindness, and sense of fun. She had a rare ability to connect with all people, and her spirit and genuine decency transcended politics. She was, quite simply, lovely to work with and to know.

"Her loss will be deeply felt across the Council and by all who had the privilege of calling her a friend.

"On behalf of the Council, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Melanie's family, friends, and all who were close to her at this very difficult time.

"We will remember Melanie with immense gratitude for her dedication to Suffolk and with affection for the warmth and humanity."

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"Melanie was a truly valued and much-loved member of Suffolk County Council, who cared deeply about Pakefield and Lowestoft and coastal communities.

"As the local councillor for Pakefield since 2017, Melanie brought energy, optimism, and compassion to everything she did.

"She was passionate about her work and always had time for others - whether supporting residents, contributing to committees, or championing Suffolk's heritage and natural environment as Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology.

"Melanie had a warmth and kindness that made a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her positivity and generosity of spirit reached across political boundaries, and she was respected and admired by colleagues from all sides of the Council.

"Her passing is a tremendous loss to Suffolk County Council and to the many people who had the privilege of knowing her. My thoughts, and those of my group are with Melanie's family and friends at this very sad time."

Suffolk County Council objects to Sea Link as Examination begins

As official proceedings on the scheme's application for development consent begins, the council makes its opposition clear.

Suffolk County Council opposes the Sea Link project.

Suffolk County Council has made clear its objection to the Sea Link project, as the Planning Inspectorate begins official proceedings on the scheme's application for development consent.

The first Open Floor Hearing, saw the beginning of the Examination phase which began on Wednesday 5 November at Snape Maltings. This was an opportunity for people present their views in person to the Examination panel.

The county council maintains that development consent should not be granted, and it continues to object to the Sea Link proposals.

Councillor Richard Rout presented a summary of the council's concerns, the reasons for its objection are:

- Inadequate road access arrangements
- Poor-quality design of the converter station and its integration with the surrounding landscape
- Cumulative impacts of the scheme, its relationship and timing with other projects
- Disproportionate proposals for a new bridge
- Impacts of the scheme on the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

"Today was the first of a number of representations that the county council will make during the Examination process – our position is that we still have substantive concerns, and object to Sea Link.

"Despite our best efforts, engagement on this project with National Grid has been both difficult and disappointing. As a result, many issues are not properly addressed or resolved.

"We have repeatedly raised a variety of concerns, from significant local impacts such as those on the Grade II listed Hurts Hall and Grade II St John the Baptist Church, to much wider fundamental issues about the timing of this project alongside other nationally significant infrastructure projects in our county.

"The concerns of the county council and of the communities that we represent, have been too readily dismissed. This has been a serious disappointment for officers and councillors alike, especially after effective engagement with National Grid on other projects.

“Now we have the opportunity to present our detailed concerns and mitigations, directly to the Planning Inspectorate, and will do so for the good of Suffolk and its residents.” The Examination stage is expected to take up to six months.

Councillors Rout's speech can be read in full below:

My name is Councillor Richard Rout and I am Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects at Suffolk County Council.

I'd like to thank you for providing this opportunity for me to address you in person about the SEA link project.

Before setting out some key issues I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the development of this project, and the Council's engagement with it.

I think it would be fair to say, that from my point of view, the process has not been satisfactory, despite the fact that the Council is engaging with National Grid Electricity Transmission on two other projects, Bramford to Twinstead, and Norwich to Tilbury.

As I said at our Cabinet meeting on 13 May 2025 to consider the Council's Relevant Representations, the response to engagement from key members of National Grid's SEA Link project team has too often been dismissive and high-handed.

This unhelpful and, at times, intransigent, approach, both in relation to the concerns of the Council and of the communities that it represents, has been a serious disappointment for officers and councillors alike, especially after effective engagement with Grid on other projects.

Following the Cabinet meeting there was an in-person meeting between the Council Leader and a National Grid Board Director, and some progress has been made, however, substantive concerns remain.

Overall, engagement on this project has been both difficult and disappointing, as a result many issues are not properly addressed or resolved, that I believe could have been, if the applicant had taken a more constructive approach.

So, while the full and comprehensive details of the Council's concerns are set out elsewhere, I will take this opportunity to highlight a selection of the key issues:

- Access arrangements for the converter station site remain unsatisfactory
- The ability of the Benhall Road bridge, over the railway, to support delivery of the project remains at best questionable and unresolved
- Likewise, the use of a permanent bridge over the River Fromus to allow access to the site for construction
- Operation of the converter station is wholly disproportionate, and unnecessarily damaging to the environment
- Landscape, and heritage assets, notably the Grade II Listed Hurts Hall and Grade II* Listed St John the Baptist Church in Saxmundham.

Both the harm of the proposed access arrangements, and the engineering viability of those arrangements, mean that Suffolk County Council maintains its position that an alternative access route which integrates with the consented Sizewell Link Road would be a significantly more robust

alternative both for this project, and any future projects, than what is being proposed by the applicant.

The design of the converter station and its integration with the surrounding landscape, as currently presented, lacks ambition, respect, or care, for the local environment and communities.

Initial consultation on the design of the converter hall offered a range of innovative possibilities, which were not subsequently progressed in the submitted application.

If the innovative design on offer at consultation was not offered without any realistic assessment of how it could be delivered in practice, I suggest this implies an inappropriately casual approach on the part of the applicant.

This impression is only reinforced by the fact that the applicant failed to publish the feedback of the Design Review Panel, so as to demonstrate transparency of process or to contribute to building public confidence in the project.

In terms of working hours, the council believes seven days a week and on Public Holidays is unacceptable due to the lack of respite for local residents from the impacts associated with construction activities, including disruption to local roads and public rights of way (PRoW) used for recreational activities at a time when they are most frequently used.

Disappointingly, regarding the potential delivery of the substation in Friston under the Sea Link DCO, the Applicant has not committed to undertake construction under the working hours agreed under the SPR consent which does not include Public Holiday and Sunday working.

We also have strong concerns over the cumulative impacts of the scheme, its relationship and timing with other projects and the consequent impact on socio-economics, tourism, and the environment, need to be effectively assessed.

The Council disagrees with the applicant's assessment that the local labour force is of low sensitivity, as there are existing skills shortages that are exacerbated by consented and constructing projects, including Sizewell C.

Likewise, the applicant needs to undertake an effective and robust cumulative assessment of the impacts of traffic from overlapping NSIP projects on the Suffolk coast, rather than presuming that these other consented projects have already fully mitigated their harm.

Finally, the impacts of the scheme on the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape must be dealt with effectively, but not only that; the applicant must ensure that the Secretary of State can meet the duty to "seek to further the purposes of the designation", when making the decision on this proposal. This issue also remains unresolved.

For all these reasons, and others set out in detail elsewhere, Suffolk County Council is of the view that development consent should not be granted and continues to object to the scheme.

Suffolk County Council announces £63m A12 highway improvement proposals

A full planning application for improvements between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge will be submitted later this month.

Suffolk County Council has unveiled a full planning application for a package of highway improvements worth in the region of £63 million along the A12.

The works will be between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge.

They aim to enhance transport connectivity, safety, and accessibility for all users, including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport passengers.

Suffolk County Council is responsible for this section of the A12 and the proposals feature significant upgrades to the 6.8 mile (11km) stretch.

Key elements of the scheme are:

- Highway upgrades to improve traffic flow and safety, including enhancements to seven road junctions.
- Construction of a mobility hub at Adastral Park, designed to support sustainable travel options and improve public transport integration
- Replacement of the Martlesham footbridge with a new non-motorised users bridge to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
- New signalised bus link junction north of Anson Road, connecting the A12 and Main Road via Portal Avenue
- Dual carriageway upgrade between the A12/B1438 Ipswich Road junction and the A12/B1079 Grundisburgh Road junction, including a new layby, shared use footway/cycleway, and agricultural accessway
- New shared use footway/cycleways at Portal Avenue and north of A1152 Woods Lane, along with improved crossing facilities at key junctions
- Additional highway features, such as maintenance bays, traffic signs, upgraded signals, and pedestrian crossings

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport

Strategy, said: “This council is committed to enhancing local infrastructure, aiding sustainable economic recovery and developing growth.

“These proposals are a transformative infrastructure investment which reflect the council’s dedication to improving regional mobility, reducing congestion, and promoting sustainable transport.”

The proposals have been drawn up following two public consultations since the scheme was first outlined in 2020.

They will be formally submitted to the council’s planning directorate on November 14.

Members of the public and interested stakeholders can submit their views regarding the planning application after this date.

Comments should be sent to: Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX, or via email to planning@suffolk.gov.uk

New waterworks proposals to affect large area of Suffolk

A new consultation on proposals from Essex and Suffolk Water for a new pipeline network and underground drinking water reservoirs, is reaching out to over 100 towns and parishes across north-east Suffolk.

The developing projects are designed to ensure future supplies of drinking water for the East of England, one of the driest regions in the UK. It will help to alleviate the shortage of water supply for new businesses and new homes in north-east Suffolk.

Essex and Suffolk Water's "Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project" is made up of two key elements, the development of a new Advanced Water Recycling Plant, north of Lowestoft, capable of producing 11 million litres per day of purified recycled water, and strategic network enhancements that will support a more reliable and resilient water supply for the region.

There is an urgent need for water in parts of our region... but these will be significant developments and we will be paying particular attention to proposals for coordinating with other significant infrastructure projects in the county.

A network of proposed pipelines, connecting existing infrastructure to proposed pipelines and buried reservoirs, will reach from Bungay down to Leiston and Saxmundham and as far west as Eye. The project includes two underground drinking water service reservoirs, located near Eye and Heveningham.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

"There is an urgent need for water in parts of our region, notably the Hartismere Water Resource Zone, that is holding back business growth and we acknowledge the need for this kind of water security project.

"But these will be significant developments across much of north and east Suffolk, and we will be paying particular attention to proposals for coordinating with other significant infrastructure projects in the county.

"Numerous Suffolk communities continue to experience a barrage of these large projects – Sizewell C, Sea Link, LionLink, offshore wind, solar farms and pylon routes.

"Project promoters have an absolute responsibility to coordinate with each other to mitigate the disruption to the everyday life of our residents – for example, reducing impacts by integrating transport and infrastructure challenges.

"These are not just an inconvenience to local people, but have many subsequent effects, such as disruption to local businesses, issues with access and rights of way, and health and wellbeing."

Local communities and parishes are being encouraged to familiarise themselves with the plans and contribute to a consultation which launched on 29 October and is open until 10 December 2025.

Councillor Richard Rout, continued:

"Large infrastructure projects place significant strain on local communities, who are constantly addressing consultations, hearings, or experiencing issues with works currently underway.

"But their local knowledge is crucial for these projects, it is the only way that developers can understand the on-the-ground issues and where mitigations need to be made.

“Suffolk County Council will be reviewing the proposals and submitting our response to the consultation – we encourage local parishes and communities to do the same.”

Information and consultation details for Essex and Suffolk Water’s “Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project”, can be found at www.suffolkwaternetwork.co.uk

Nature recovery roadmap launched for Norfolk and Suffolk

County councils in Norfolk and Suffolk have launched their respective Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).



These aim to address the region’s decline in nature, identify ways to help it recover and deliver wider benefits such as reducing flood risk.

Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council have worked closely together, and formed the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#), to identify common themes to address the decline in nature and opportunities to enable it to recover.

The two authorities join 46 other responsible authorities in England, appointed by The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to lead on preparing a LNRS.

Through Norfolk and Suffolk’s joint Nature Recovery Partnership, we’ve built a very strong foundation from which to lead, support and drive nature recovery action across the region.

Together all these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

"I'm grateful to local nature experts, farmers, interested organisations, other local authorities and members of the public who have contributed their local knowledge and expertise to help create these in-depth strategies.

"There are significant changes on the horizon with the appointment of a mayor and new unitary councils across our two counties. But through Norfolk and Suffolk's joint Nature Recovery Partnership, we've built a very strong foundation from which to lead, support and drive nature recovery action across the region."

Councillor James Bensly, Norfolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, said:

"The publication of these strategies is a significant milestone, and the product of several years of considerable work across the county councils in Norfolk and Suffolk.

"There will be many benefits to the outcomes of these strategies – primarily reversing the decline in nature.

"But their impact will be felt in many other ways, such as mitigating inland flooding risk, creating new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and supporting farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities." The strategies can be found on the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#) website.

This is a joint news release from Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies set out a plan to:

- **connect, enhance** and **expand** priority habitats
- **reconnect** fragmented landscapes
- **recover** and **protect** key species
- **support** sustainable farming and land management
- **restore** wetlands, rivers, and peatlands
- **safeguard** and **enhance** coastal habitats
- **expand** woodland and tree cover
- **integrate** nature into towns and cities
- **empower** communities and landowners
- **deliver** co-benefits for climate, health, and the economy.



Gritters get ready as Suffolk prepares for winter

Column by Councillor Paul West, Cabinet member for Operational Highways, Flooding and Ipswich



With winter fast approaching I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you about what we are doing to prepare residents and services for winter, especially the gritting of our county's roads – an essential service delivered to ensure Suffolk doesn't grind to a halt during the colder weather.

Gritting is one of the biggest seasonal services the county council delivers, treating thousands of miles of road to help minimise risk for those travelling during wintry weather. Gritting wagons being loaded up at one of Suffolk County Council's highways depots.

As I write this column, our teams are busy getting ready to carry out countywide treatments throughout the evening.

The gritting season officially started on October 1, and despite the weather having been relatively mild so far you may well have seen gritting vehicles out and about on the roads as drivers familiarise themselves with the routes in preparation for when they go out for real.

We typically store around 22,000 tonnes of salt in barns across Suffolk to ensure we are well prepared for winter.

The campaign for 2024/25 saw a total of 10,091 tonnes of salt used to treat 81,484 miles of roads – the equivalent of driving from London to Sydney and back near four times.

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

Our drivers roles are seasonal, running for the length of the gritting season from October to April, and they are based at the various highways depots across the county.

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.

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 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.

Also, 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!

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.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service encourages those with open fires to ensure these are safe and guarded and that chimneys and flues are cleaned and serviceable. Also, electric blankets should be bought new and tested every three years.

You 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 also be regularly shared on the council's social media throughout winter.

New £10m Natural Environment Grant Fund launched in East Suffolk

A new £10m grant scheme has been launched to support environmental enhancement projects along the East coast. Published: 23 Oct 2025

- **Mitigation fund, part of Sizewell C's Deed of Obligation, ensures the protection and enhancement of the natural environment**
- **Grants will be awarded to support landscape and biodiversity improvements**
- **Dedicated online grant portal available to applicants all year-round**

A new £10m grant scheme has been launched to support environmental enhancement projects along the East coast.

The Natural Environment Improvement Fund (NEIF) is designed to mitigate the landscape and visual impacts of Sizewell C, the new nuclear power station under construction near Leiston in Suffolk.

An awards panel has been established to oversee the fund, comprising representatives from East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Sizewell C, Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape, and Natural England.

Grants will be distributed throughout Sizewell C's construction phase, and during the first three years of its operation.

Sizewell C will fund NEIF as part of its Deed of Obligation.

I look forward to awarding grants to local community groups and others to help ensure Suffolk remains a truly great place for people and nature.

Natalie Singleton has been appointed Project Officer within the Suffolk & Essex Coasts & Heaths National Landscape Team to assess grant applications and make recommendations to the panel.

Natalie said:

"East Suffolk is home to landscapes recognised for their natural beauty, from rare coastal habitats such as vegetated shingle to heathland and ancient woodland. The Natural Environment Improvement Fund offers an exciting funding opportunity for the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and beyond. I look forward to working with applicants to support initiatives which protect and enhance these special habitats and places, their cultural heritage and the wildlife they support."

The panel will meet regularly to review applications and award grants.

At least 50% of the funding will be allocated to eligible projects within the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and the Suffolk Heritage Coast within East Suffolk.

The fund aims to:

- Deliver sustainable long-term management and maintenance of woodlands, hedges, and other established vegetation
- Enhance ecology, biodiversity, and wildlife
- Improve habitat connectivity and resilience
- Contribute to the conservation and enhancement of landscape character

Tom Daly, NEIF panel member and Cabinet Member for Energy and Climate Change, East Suffolk Council, said:

“The NEIF is an example of giving environment and nature proper regard in this project. Along with other mitigations and landscape commitments, it is a welcome acknowledgement that this huge development must be done with the future of our countryside very much in the foreground. I am pleased to be on the NEIF Panel and look forward to helping applicants make a lasting difference with this sizeable fund.”

Richard Rout, NEIF panel member and Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, added:

“The people of Suffolk are understandably concerned by the impact that energy projects like Sizewell C will have on their lives. The Natural Environment Improvement Fund will seek to help address the impacts caused by Sizewell C, especially within the national landscape. As a member of the Panel set up to distribute this major new fund, I look forward to awarding grants to local community groups and others to help ensure Suffolk remains a truly great place for people and nature.”

The launch of this major new fund marks a significant step in ensuring that the natural environment in East Suffolk is protected and enhanced for future generations.

Applications are welcome for both single-year and multi-year projects. A [dedicated online portal](#) is available, providing full details of the fund, eligibility criteria, relevant geographic areas, and all materials required to prepare and submit an application.

While the fund will remain open for applications throughout the year, cut-off dates for panel reviews will be clearly published within the application pack and on the portal.

Julia Pyke, Joint Managing Director of Sizewell C, said

“This fund reflects our commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment throughout the construction and operation of our power station. By supporting sustainable projects that improve habitat connectivity, conserve landscape character, and boost ecological resilience, we aim to leave a lasting positive legacy for local communities and wildlife. We look forward to working with our partners and applicants to deliver significant and meaningful environmental benefits across the Suffolk coast.”

Find out more at sizewellc.com

This is a joint news release on behalf of the Natural Environment Improvement Fund partners.

Mapping project reaches major digital milestone

The first phase of Suffolk's Definitive Map digital consolidation project has been completed.

Suffolk County Council has reached a major digital milestone in putting the county on the map.

It has completed the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) consolidation project, using modern background mapping to prepare the updated legal record of public rights of way (PROW) such as footpaths, bridleways, and byways in Suffolk.

The consolidation project is the process of preparing a new digital DM&S that incorporates all legal changes since the previous issue.

Sealed legal copies of the Definitive Map and Statement for Suffolk are now held at The Hold.

Moving away from hand-drawn maps and written notes, the council has created new versions of the maps from a digital database using specialist software against Ordnance Survey Mastermap base mapping.

It has involved checking and digitising more than 10,500 individual routes across the county, ensuring they reflect the effects of more than 2,600 legal orders, including complex public path order packages.

This ensures that Suffolk's PROW network — which extends across thousands of miles of countryside — is properly recorded and accessible for generations to come.

The updated Definitive Maps are clearer and easier to interpret and working from a digital database makes it easier to share data with a wide range of partners, including user groups, councils, developers, the National Trust, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission.

Working copies of the maps are available for the public to view and download from the [Rights of Way and Access pages](#) of the Suffolk County Council website.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, said: “The conclusion of this project marks the end of many years of dedicated and meticulous work for the team and I congratulate them on their hard work.”

The second phase of the project will now commence, establishing a rolling programme of consolidation to incorporate future legal changes and addressing mismatches between the Definitive Map parish boundaries and current administrative boundaries.

Suffolk's first DM&S was produced in the 1950s and was divided into 19 former rural and urban districts. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 now places a statutory duty on councils to continually review the legal record of rights of way.

The first consolidated map was completed for Ipswich in 2009.

Since then, progress has continued steadily, with the sealed legal copies now held at Suffolk's Records Office, *The Hold*.

The working copies are available to view in hard copy by prior appointment at Phoenix House in Ipswich, which houses the highways department for SCC, and on [the county council's website](#).

Suffolk residents safer than ever thanks to 70% increase in home fire safety visits

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has boosted Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) in the county by 70% in just two years, rising from 2,755 in 2022/23 to 4,673 in 2024/25.

This increase in tailored fire safety advice and support comes as Candle Fire Safety Week (20– 26 October) coincides with Diwali, the Festival of Lights (20 October), celebrated by Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities, when homes are illuminated with candles and oil lamps (diyas).

The timing serves as a timely reminder of the importance of fire safety, particularly when using open flames in the home. **Preventing fires, protecting lives**

Despite being one of the smallest fire prevention teams in the country, the SFRS Prevention Team, led by Group Manager Lee Wilkins, has transformed home fire safety delivery across Suffolk.

The growth in HFSVs reflects improvements in working practices, stronger community engagement, staff training, and targeted support for vulnerable residents, ensuring help reaches those most at risk.

“Our focus is always on protecting residents where the risk of harm from fire is greatest – in their homes,” said Lee Wilkins, Head of Prevention. “Every visit and educational session increases the likelihood that domestic fires can be prevented.

He continued: “With nearly 850 accidental fires each year across England started by candles, this week is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone to take simple precautions. Keep candles and oil lamps (diyas) away from flammable materials such as curtains, decorations and soft furnishings, place them on stable surfaces out of reach of children and pets, never leave them unattended, ensure they are properly extinguished, and make sure smoke alarms are installed and working.”

Children and young people at heightened risk

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable in domestic fires. According to the Home Office, over 350 children under the age of 11 are injured and seven are killed in accidental fires in the home each year.¹

Many of these incidents result from the accidental misuse of equipment or open flames, highlighting the need for targeted education and preventative measures.

To address this, the Prevention Team delivers the SPARK programme, designed by the Service's Youth Education and Development Manager, Claire Watkins. The programme provides fire safety advice tailored to each Key Stage, ensuring it is both age-appropriate and engaging.

Schools are selected based on local fire and safety incident data and the needs of communities facing higher levels of risk, ensuring that safety messages reach children and young people aged 4–19 who need them most.

Since its launch in September 2024, SPARK has already been delivered to over 5,700 children and young people in the 2024–25 academic year alone - an **850%** increase compared with previous years.

Protecting the county's most vulnerable residents

For Suffolk residents, individuals who qualify for a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) are visited by a specialist practitioner or operational firefighters who will help create a tailored home fire safety plan. Those deemed most at risk also receive free smoke alarms or specialist equipment.

This includes the elderly, individuals with hearing or sight impairments, those with limited mobility, and people living with dementia, who may have a reduced ability to respond quickly to fire hazards.

A study published in the *Journal of Fire Sciences* found that fire injury risk increases with age, being more common in older individuals. ² This is supported by data from the Home Office, published in 2024, which reported that in the year ending March 2024, 37% of all fire-related fatalities in England occurred among people aged 65 years and over, with a fatality rate of 10.9 per million for those aged 80 and over compared with 4.2 per million for the general population.

³

Factors contributing to this elevated risk include physical frailty, cognitive impairments, and the use of medications affecting alertness and mobility. ⁴

To help identify the most vulnerable in the community, the team has integrated with Safelincs, an online platform that allows residents or their carers to complete a virtual home fire safety check.

Based on the data entered, the platform alerts the Prevention Team to those considered most vulnerable and at higher risk. This approach ensures fire safety support reaches as many people as possible while prioritising additional resources for those who need it most. People deemed as low risk will still receive a bespoke Home Fire Action Plan.

Recognition and award success

The team's achievements were recognised earlier this month with a Cabinet Member Award for Team Achievement, which was presented to them at this year's Service Awards by **Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Safety, Councillor Steve Wiles**, who said:

"The Prevention Team's work exemplifies the highest standards of dedication and professionalism. Their tireless efforts have a real, measurable impact on community safety, keeping residents across Suffolk safer in their homes.

"The team's achievements demonstrate the difference that focused, proactive prevention work can make, and they set a benchmark for home fire safety for services across the country."

For more information about home fire safety or to check your eligibility for Home Fire Safety Visit, visit [Check if you're eligible for a home fire safety visit - Suffolk County Council](#), call 01473 260588 or email fire.businesssupport@suffolk.gov.uk.

References:

1. Home Office. (2022). *Fire safety for parents and child carers (accessible version)*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-for-parentsand-child-carers/fire-safety-for-parents-and-child-carers-accessible-version>
2. Smith, J., et al. (2023). *Fire injury risk and age: a review*. Journal of Fire Sciences.
3. Home Office. (2024). *Detailed Analysis of Fires in England, April 2023 – March 2024*. UK.
4. Jones, L., et al. (2022). *Older adults and fire risk: contributing factors*. NFPA Journal.

Have your say on Suffolk County Council's 2026/27 budget

Suffolk County Council is inviting feedback from residents, businesses and community organisations as it prepares its budget for the 2026/27 financial year.

An online consultation has been launched to explain the council's current financial position and offer Suffolk residents the chance to share their views on proposed Council Tax changes and spending priorities.

The consultation explains how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place and potential ways to generate additional income to support essential services.

The council can increase its budget in two main ways: through additional government funding or by raising Council Tax.

Residents are asked to share feedback on which council services they've used recently, whether they support an increase in Council Tax contributions and which areas they believe should be prioritised in the budget-setting process.

All responses will be considered alongside input from businesses, public sector partners, elected members and council officers as part of the budget planning for the next financial year.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

"Councils across the country are facing significant financial pressures, and Suffolk is no exception.

"Every year, the demand for council services – especially adult and children's services – continues to grow. Suffolk County Council has a strong track record of managing its finances responsibly, but public funding has not kept pace with rising demand.

"We remain committed to supporting our most vulnerable residents, and this means that we must sometimes make difficult decisions about other services.

"Local government reorganisation will help reduce duplication and free up money to reinvest in services. Until then, we must continue making informed, balanced decisions about Council Tax and spending priorities.

"That's why it's important we hear from Suffolk's residents. Your views will help shape our priorities and ensure we make the right choices for our communities."

The consultation opens today, Tuesday 14 October 2025, and closes on Tuesday 25 November 2025. To take part, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget

The results will be included in a final report when the budget is set in February 2026.

I had the honour, as one of your **Local Authority representatives**, to speak at last week's **Open Floor Hearings**, and I would like to convey my sincere thanks to everyone who also took that opportunity. The proposed **Sea Link National Grid project** would devastate Aldeburgh and the surrounding villages — destroying our countryside, tourism economy, and community wellbeing under the false urgency of "net zero." Until **Sizewell C** is completed and its outcomes understood, this reckless project must be **paused**. Our coastline, wildlife, and rural peace are far too precious to sacrifice for political speed and profit.

The proposed **Sea Link National Grid project** poses a severe and lasting threat to this area, with the potential to irreversibly damage our countryside, local economy, and community wellbeing. This project is being advanced but as yet there is **no justification for proceeding at such pace or scale** without clear evidence of need.

Until **Sizewell C** is completed and its true generation capacity and grid requirements are fully understood, the Sea Link and Lion Link projects must be **paused**. To advance now would be

premature, environmentally damaging, and socially unjust. Our coastline, wildlife, and rural heritage deserve considered, evidence-based planning.

SCC November 2025 report