



### **Suffolk County Council – A brief Look Back**

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#### ***March 2021***

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- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL SECURES £3.1M FOR BUILDING DECARBONISATION INITIATIVE.**

Suffolk County Council (SCC), working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has been successful in gaining over £3M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre.

The council's Children and Young People service also reviewed their portfolio of school buildings along with Concertus. This review resulted in the submission of grant applications for nine schools across the county, all of which were successful. This grant scheme aligns with BEIS' new mission and priorities: fighting coronavirus, backing business, unleashing innovation, and tackling climate change. Through this scheme, it is supporting the council's own commitment to be net zero by 2030 along with the Government's own net zero goals and encouraging further green investment within the UK.

Packages of work vary from building to building, but many include the fitting of solar panels and battery storage, as well as improvements to wall or roof insulation and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to move away from the use of fossil fuels for source of heating.

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#### ***February 2021***

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- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CABINET CONFIRMS ITS SUPPORT FOR FREEPORT EAST**

On February 23, the cabinet of the county council confirmed its support for the creation of a new Freeport (Freeport East). The Freeport would cover both the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich as part of the Government's aim to create a number of Freeports across the country to drive job creation, investment and international trade post Brexit. A Freeport includes secure customs zones and tax sites where business can be carried out inside a country's land border, but where different tax and customs rules apply. These rules mean Freeports can potentially reduce administrative burdens and tariff controls, provide relief from duties, import taxes, and ease tax and planning regulations.

Freeport East has several unique aspects which make its bid for Freeport status particularly strong. This includes global and regional connectivity, with 36% of all the UK's container traffic passing through the Port of Felixstowe, unrivalled international connections, particularly with Asia, strong connectivity to the

Midlands and the North, thereby supporting the government's "levelling up agenda" in these areas. The bid also stands out as supporting other national objectives such as the development of new technology and the push for clean energy. The Port of Felixstowe has recently won funding to trial a pilot 5G network and has strong research and development links with Cambridge and Essex Universities. There are also strong links with the energy sector and the emerging hydrogen economy.

- **16 NEW COVID-19 RAPID TESTING CENTRES TO OPEN IN SUFFOLK**

On the 19 February it was announced that a further 16 rapid testing centres for COVID-19 were to open in Suffolk, bringing the total number of centres to 28. The 28 centres use 'lateral flow' testing to identify people who may have coronavirus but who do not have symptoms. The tests are for people who do not have symptoms of coronavirus and cannot work from home. It's because one in three people with coronavirus do not have symptoms so regular testing is vital in breaking the chain of infection and keeping Suffolk safe.

There are already 12 facilities open, including at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich, the STEM Centre in Western Way at West Suffolk College, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill Arts Centre, St Etheldreda's parish centre in Newmarket, and Kirkley & Pakefield FC in Lowestoft.

- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL PUSHES AHEAD TO NEW LEVELS OF DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AS IT LAUNCHES SENSOR "GATEWAY" ROLL-OUT.**

Suffolk County Council launched a new initiative on Friday 19th February, deploying 'gateways' to build a network that covers all of Suffolk. This will enable individuals or organisations to measure things like temperature, sound and movement via sensors linked to the Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN). The network is being built in partnership with Norfolk County Council and funded by the New Anglia LEP. Once finished, the network will be made up of almost 100 'gateways' or data receivers and transmitters fitted to public sector buildings across the county. This will make Suffolk's rollout part of the largest free to use LoRaWAN deployment in the UK. Norfolk County Council launched its part of the network last September.

Businesses and individuals can buy their own sensors, adapt them to measure different things like visitor numbers, weather data and temperature, and tap into the gateways for free.

- **HIGHWAYS DOUBLES DRAINAGE BUDGET FOLLOWING £27.2M ANNOUNCEMENT**

On February 17 it was announced that Suffolk Highways allocated an extra £2m to support the fight against flooding. Drainage and flooding, Rights of Way bridges and resurfacing of roads in Suffolk have been allocated extra funds for the 2021/22 financial year following Department for Transport's funding announcement. Keen to progress more drainage schemes across Suffolk to support the fight against flooding, Suffolk Highways has allocated an extra £2m – double its current budget allocation – in order to help tackle the worsening flood problems being experienced across the county.

Suffolk Highways also looks set to bolster its resource to support in the repairing or replacement of seven Rights of Way bridges across the county with an additional £800k, whilst committing a further £3.4m to the county's surface dressing programme. Although the budget is less than the 2020/21 allocation, Suffolk Highways prudently prepared for a decrease and allocated a tentative £21m for the 2021/22 financial year.

- **SUFFOLK 2020 FUND PROJECT EMBRACES LOVE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS – DISCOVERING SUFFOLK**

The Discovering Suffolk project was launched in January 2021. The aim of the project is to raise further awareness of the range of great walking routes, areas of interest and the variety of landscapes that form Suffolk's beautiful countryside through public rights of way and points of access. Given the experiences many people have faced over the last year living through the pandemic, it was recognised that exercise and wellbeing is a fundamental element in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, Suffolk's countryside offers a freely accessible means for many of us to experience nature and stay healthy.

The key element of the Discovering Suffolk project is the development of a smartphone app alongside a range of supporting QR codes fixed to rights of way signposts located along different routes to promote walking, cycling and exploring in Suffolk's countryside. Discovering Suffolk builds on our changing behaviours when visiting the countryside, as people become ever more interested in local exploration and taking short walks and cycling exercises during the pandemic. The project will continue to promote the Discover Suffolk website as new content, information and advice continues to be added to the current offer, promoting walking routes and cycle rides through local communities. The project seeks to actively engage new audiences who are not aware of the options available on their doorstep or have perhaps only begun to explore the local countryside beyond their neighbourhood.

Work will shortly start on developing the Discovering Suffolk App and setting the sites for the QR code points around the county. After development, the new, free App will provide access to the full range of Discover Suffolk outdoor guides with over 100 walks across the county. The App and QR codes will include audio, video, imagery and fun activities to further enhance people's enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of Suffolk's natural and built environment.

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## **DECEMBER 2020**

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- **SUFFOLK WINS THE MOST INNOVATIVE FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE AWARD**

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Suffolk won the Most Innovative Family Information Service award at the National Association of Family Information Service Awards (NAFIS), 2020. The award highlights the work undertaken to adapt Suffolk's online Community Services Directory, **Suffolk InfoLink** ([www.suffolk.gov.uk/infolink](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/infolink)), to meet the public's rapidly changing needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Community Information Team and teams across the children and young people's directorate worked together with thousands of community partners to collate and provide information to support to the public. Many service providers in the voluntary and community sector were quick to adapt their offer and were supported to use Suffolk InfoLink to promote these opportunities to the public.

There are 7000 community organisation records provided on InfoLink allowing teams to communicate information quickly to thousands of sector partners, and the voluntary sector, and report progress to relevant government departments. On a week-by-week basis Suffolk InfoLink was updated to highlight which childcare providers were open for vulnerable children, and key workers such as NHS staff during the first National Lockdown which was an essential element of the Covid rapid response.

As well as helping key workers to find childcare, these developments also supported Suffolk's Track and Trace, Home but Not Alone and the Suffolk Advice and Support Service and provided 'easy to use' access to essential information including financial help and food banks.

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## **November 2020**

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- **LOWESTOFT'S GULL WING SECURES GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, WORK TO START IN THE NEW YEAR**

Construction of Lowestoft's Gull Wing bridge will get underway early in 2021, following final approval of the scheme on Wednesday 25 November by the Government. The Gull Wing project team at Suffolk County Council received official confirmation that its full business case has been approved, meaning that the £73.39m funding from the Department of Transport can now be accessed. With this final milestone now reached, the contract with building and civil engineering contractor, Farrans, will be signed. Other formalities such as formally acquiring land can also be completed, paving the way for construction work to start in the new year.

- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL DELIVERS ITS LARGEST DIGITAL CARE SUPPORT PROJECT IN RECORD TIME**

On November 12 it was announced that Suffolk County Council successfully delivered the largest digital care project in its history, from procurement to delivery in just 16 weeks. Working alongside care technology specialists, Alcove and Rethink Partners, the council delivered over 750 Carephone devices to elderly and vulnerable people, both in and outside of formal care settings, to help them, their families and care providers stay in touch during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Carephone service is provided through the Alcove Video Carephone, a simple communication device that allows people with little or no technological ability to have two-way video contact with care workers, family members and other approved service providers. The project also worked to deliver comprehensive training to both the user and their care providers on how to get the most use from this new technology.

This technology is helping to keep families connected, easing the pain of separation that all families have felt at some point since the pandemic started. It also provides essential welfare reassurance for the family and is helping to reduce incidents of poor mental health on both sides of the call. This project has also indicated that this technology can have a positive measurable impact on the devastating effects of loneliness in older and vulnerable people.

It has also helped to maintain and enhance the communication chain between care giver and care receiver. The benefits of this project continue to be felt and have provided us with clear insight about how we can use this technology to improve care outcomes, especially over the oncoming winter.

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## **October 2020**

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- **ADOPT EAST LAUNCHES**

14 October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo's, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership. The Adopt East alliance will deliver the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners.

The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity. Adopt East is committed to providing good quality adoption support services to support all families with their adoption journey.

- **COUNCIL ANNOUNCES £228,000 FOR TREE-PLANTING, PROTECTING HEDGEROWS AND VERGES ACROSS SUFFOLK**

In October, it was announced Suffolk's natural environment will receive investment for tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife. £228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work. Working with The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Wardens, landowners, and county farm tenants, the funding will support the planting of around 100,000 trees, including replanting hedgerows in suitable locations across Suffolk over the next 18 months. It will also help establish around 10 community tree nurseries, which will support more planting in years to come. Local volunteers will be supported to collect seeds, set up nursery beds and grow trees in their communities.

The funding will also be used to trial better ways to manage roadside verges for wildlife. This includes exploring the use of new technology and cutting techniques, as well as developing new partnerships with parishes and landowners. The funding will help expand the existing Roadside Nature Reserve network managed by the council with the help of volunteers, seeing a 25% increase in the overall length of verges managed for wildlife.

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### *September 2020*

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- **THE HOLD WELCOMES FIRST VISITORS AND OPENS INAUGURAL EXHIBITION**

Monday 28 September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront. This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building.

The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups. The public are currently able to access 'front of house' areas, including archive inspired displays, the café, shop, and toilets, including a new Changing Places facility.

First year History students were some of the first to try out the new facilities, with lectures and seminars beginning in the new facilities. The main area, known as 'The Street', as well as the café and shop, enjoyed a steady trickle of curious visitors and passers-by. On 2 October, the long-awaited Exhibition Gallery also opened to visitors. The inaugural exhibition, *Global Events: Suffolk Stories*, examines how Suffolk has responded as a community to key global events over the past 100 years.

It focuses on the arrival of American service people during the 'Friendly Invasion' of World War Two, as well as the rising tensions and public messaging of the Cold War period, and the collective community response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020.

Through original archival documents, photos, music, and film, visitors will be able to explore the similarities and differences between these three global events and understand how Suffolk has changed as a result.

- **COUNCIL ANNOUNCES £300,000 FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS IN RURAL SUFFOLK**

On September 23, it was announced that 100 fast charging points for electric vehicles will be installed in rural parts of the county by Suffolk County Council. The council will be reaching out to interested parish and town councils and non-profit organisations to put in fast chargers where there are currently none. The funding will cover the installation and set-up costs, meaning very little expense for the hosts and possibly creating a source of income for them. This project is the first to benefit from the council's Suffolk 2020 Fund, which was announced earlier this year. This is a £3m fund for the council's own projects to bid into. Projects must help address the council's climate emergency declaration and must improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come.

The £300,000 award will link into the council's existing Plug In Suffolk project, which was launched in February 2019. It is the UK's first 'fully open' public fast charging network for electric vehicles, meaning drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register their details.

The fast-charging points supplied by Plug In Suffolk do not require any registration, membership or apps - drivers simply park, plug in and charge using contactless payment. There have already been expressions of interest for charging points from around 20 suitable sites. In the coming weeks, officers from Suffolk County Council will be contacting town and parish councils to investigate more possible locations.

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### ***August 2020***

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- **SUFFOLK CELEBRATES 1,000 MILES OF NEWLY SURFACED ROADS**

On the 5 August, it was announced that Suffolk Highways completed its 1,000th resurfaced mile, following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network. In 2017, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a four-year period; in a bid to improve the quality of roads, reduce the number of potholes and to help stop potholes from forming in the first place. The commitment also makes sound financial sense, as preventing the deterioration of road surfaces by machine surfacing or surface dressing helps reduce the need to spend more money on reactive maintenance repairing potholes now, and in future years. The 1,000th mile was laid at Horham Road in Eye.

- **NEW RESOURCES WILL HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE LINK BETWEEN MOVEMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH**

New resources have been published to help young people in Suffolk understand how movement and physical activity can improve their emotional wellbeing. The resources, which include a handy, pocket-sized information card, have been developed for young people with input and feedback from young people.

Made possible by Suffolk Mind and the Suffolk Most Active County Partnership, with assistance from Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's engagement hub, the resources provide essential information about seven ways young people can improve their mental health through movement.

They also include three simple and effective ideas that young people can try straight away to help them take control of their mind and mood through movement, as well as a range of key local contacts for further support.

- **COUNCIL PROPOSES UNPRECEDENTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, Suffolk County Council aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030. At its meeting on 14 July 2020, the council's Cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition. The plans include dozens of changes and new ways of working, from making its pool car fleet all-electric, to making it mandatory for all future committee decisions to consider the net zero ambition. Being 'net zero' means that the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions. The council will adopt a more detailed method to measure its carbon emissions output, so that it can more accurately track its progress on an annual basis.

In March 2019, Suffolk County Council was the first authority in the county to declare a climate emergency. One of the council's priorities after this declaration was to set up a policy development panel (PDP). The panel met regularly, discussing the changes and challenges the council faces in reducing its carbon emissions. The panel included councillors from outside the Conservative group and invited experts to share their experiences and insights. It is this panel that has compiled the recommendations.

Amongst the recommendations, Suffolk County Council will continue its work with all other local authorities and agencies, under the umbrella of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which was formed in 2007. With all local authorities having now declared a climate emergency, they will use their combined powers, duties, influence and leadership, continuing their work together to achieve the net zero ambition for emissions from all of Suffolk.

- **VANS, TRAILERS AND TRADE WASTE NOW ACCEPTED AT NINE OF SUFFOLK'S RECYCLING CENTRES**

As of 1 July 2020, people with vans, trailers and trade waste can now book to visit nine of Suffolk's 11 recycling centres. All visitors will need to pre-book an appointment online, where they will be asked what type of vehicle they will use and whether they are bringing household or business waste. To prevent queuing on neighbouring roads, people without a booking will not be able to enter the site. Social distancing measures also operate on site.

Currently, appointments for vans, trailers and trade waste are unavailable at Haverhill and Leiston Recycling Centres. These are smaller sites and have fewer appointments available.

There are a number of restrictions in place to help support social distancing at sites and to make sure waste is dealt with efficiently. These include:

- Vans with trailers will not be allowed on any site.
- Only one visit per household or vehicle within seven days. This allows more visitors on site, while maintaining social distancing and protecting the health and safety of site staff and users.
- Trailers must be no more than 750kg max gross weight, single axle and unbraked. No other trailer size or type is permitted.
- All waste should be pre-sorted to make your visit as quick and simple as possible and to maximise recycling.

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## June 2020

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- **FIRST BUSINESS BENEFITS FROM COUNCIL'S FREE SOLAR PANEL SCHEME**

In June, a Lowestoft-based charity was the first organisation to benefit from free solar panels, as part of Suffolk County Council's Renewable Energy Fund. Nirvana Health and Fitness, on Pinbush Road in Lowestoft, is now hosting a 70kWp solar panel installation and is benefitting from zero-carbon electricity.

The council's £400,000 Renewable Energy Fund is open to eligible businesses looking to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint through solar power. Successful applicants will have solar panels supplied and installed for free. Once the panels are installed, the business is sold electricity at a better rate than their existing tariff, so they will see immediate savings. The Fund itself benefits from income generated by the sale of the solar-generated electricity. This means money goes back into the pot, allowing more solar panel applications to be considered by the Fund and installed across Suffolk.

- **BETTER BROADBAND FOR SUFFOLK REACHES 100,000<sup>TH</sup> CUSTOMER AS THIRD PHASE CONTRACT IS AGREED**

By June 3, more than 100,000 households across Suffolk were using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme. The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises so far, since being launched in 2010. It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk stands at more than 96 per cent, with plans currently in place to reach 98 per cent coverage before the end of the year. The team has plans to go even further, after today announcing an additional phase of work, to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk.

The work will be carried out by Openreach – operator of the UK's largest phone and broadband network, used by the likes of BT, Sky, Plusnet and TalkTalk – and is set to start as soon as deployment under the current contract ends. Work will continue until September 2022.

Faster broadband provides many benefits including staying in contact with friends and family through video conferencing services, easier web browsing and online shopping, the ability to stream high-definition video and work from home. Covid-19 has led to many of these benefits becoming even more crucial during times of social distancing and will have a large part to play during the recovery phase.

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## May 2020

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- **DISCOVER SUFFOLK'S HISTORY WITH NEW SUFFOLK HERITAGE EXPLORER WEBSITE**

On 20 May, Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service announced the launch of its new Suffolk Heritage Explorer website at [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk). This offers users a completely free resource of interesting, up-to-date information on the archaeology and history of Suffolk. The new website includes an upgraded searchable interactive map and a database of known archaeological sites, which can be used to discover more about Suffolk's history from the comfort of your home. Alongside free downloadable publications and resources, there is updated guidance and best practice advice on finds recording and access to the county's archaeological archives.



The website features key archaeological sites and projects, such as Suffolk's World War II heritage. You can find out more about the internationally significant Anglo-Saxon site at Rendlesham, its 12 years of ongoing archaeological research and results, with podcasts and archaeological reports.

A dedicated section on Ipswich also summarises the town's development through the ages, featuring the recently completed 'Urban Archaeological Database' with useful archive and planning guidance. There are also lots of downloadable activities for families and children.

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### *April 2020*

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- **GOVERNMENT OPENS COVID-19 TESTING SITE ON OUTSKIRTS OF IPSWICH**

On 17 April, as part of its national COVID-19 testing programme, the Government opened a 'Drive Thru' testing facility on the outskirts of Ipswich. Based on the existing Park and Ride site at Copdock Mill, off the A12 and A14 Junction, it was one of up to 50 sites created around the country. This is a Government-led programme, supported by the Suffolk Resilience Forum and partners in Essex.

- **MORE THAN 98% OF PUPILS RECEIVE A PREFERRED PRIMARY SCHOOL ON NATIONAL OFFER DAY**

On 16 April, it was reported that over 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of the schools preferred by their parents. Suffolk County Council received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020.

Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

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### *March 2020*

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- **SUFFOLK WINS FUNDING FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF A12 IMPROVEMENTS**

On 13 March, it was announced that Suffolk has secured £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport, to develop an Outline Business Case to take forward its plans to improve the A12.

Announced during the Government's budget, Suffolk County Council has been successful in winning £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) to take forward its plans to improve the A12 East of Ipswich. This project is specifically looking to increase capacity and improve overall traffic flow at junctions and will explore the potential for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the A12.

With the funding secure, Suffolk County Council's Transport Strategy Team will now begin work to develop the outline business case which, following public consultation, will be used to make a further bid to central government for funding to deliver the scheme.

It was also announced in the budget that the DfT have given their approval for Suffolk County Council to develop and submit a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for a project to dual the A12 between

the Seckford and Dobbies roundabouts near Woodbridge. Whilst this does not include any funding at this stage, the SOBC will enable SCC to bid for future funding for this project too.

- **ACCESS FOR ALL AT SUFFOLK RAIL STATIONS**

Following successful bids for funding, Needham Market and Bury St Edmunds rail stations will now receive improved access to platforms for its passengers. A partnership of stakeholders including Greater Anglia Trains, Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and the Needham Market Group has secured Access for All funding – a government funding programme for schemes to improve station access.

For Needham Market, the station will receive an upgrade to improve access to the Ipswich-bound platform 2. At the Bury St Edmunds station, the funding will provide a new accessible entrance on the north side of the station, linking the new car park with the station concourse. Plans for improvements to the Bury station have received support from Greater Anglia Trains, Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Trust and other local organisations.

Following the funding announcement, all parties involved are now committed to making the initiatives happen as soon as possible.

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:

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