May 2025 Town and Parish Newsletter

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Council to recommend formal objection to Sea Link project

At its cabinet meeting on 13 May 2025, members will be recommended to object to the current proposals for the nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP), which do not adequately address significant issues, including:

- the proposed use of Benhall Railway Bridge on the B1121 for access
- the impacts of the proposed River Fromus crossing, causing significant adverse effects on the local landscape character and heritage assets, including the Grade II listed Hurts Hall and Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist
- the inclusion of 7am-5pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays within the core working hours
- a lack of coordination with other projects, most notably the proposed LionLink project

"We support the principle of these projects to help bring energy security to our country – but we will not allow our communities to be swept aside without due consideration."
Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs

In line with the county council's Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy, cabinet members will be recommended to recognise the importance of the Sea Link proposals as part of the required infrastructure to connect low carbon energy generation developments that will reduce carbon emissions and support the UK's energy security.

However, this should not be at the cost of the issues which have been identified and need resolving. This is primarily with local communities in mind and the impacts the project would have on them, under the existing plans.

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

“I will be recommending to colleagues, that our only position is to continue to object to the current Sea Link plans. We will then do so in front of the Planning Inspectorate during the official Examination.

“One of our key objections is that National Grid's entire plans are predicated on a transport strategy involving bringing huge HGVs over the Benhall Bridge. A structure which can't take large loads, may not be suitable for over-bridging and crosses the important east Suffolk railway line.

“Their failure to provide substantive detail about this, despite repeated meetings with them on the issue, has been hugely disappointing."

The county council has continually made itself available to work with National Grid on the project but has ultimately objected to the plans during various consultations up to this point.

Councillor Rout continues:

“What I find particularly vexing is the lack of coordination with other NSIPs, particularly National Grid’s own LionLink project. We can see that any level of integration could considerably reduce many of these specific issues and community impacts.

“We support the principle of these projects to help bring energy security to our country – but we will not allow our communities to be swept aside without due consideration.

“They are the ones who will feel and see the impacts of these huge projects – if they are to go ahead, despite our objections, we must make sure we do our utmost to get the best outcomes for local residents and businesses.”

It is expected that the Planning Inspectorate will carry out the Examination phase of the planning process late in 2025, or early in 2026.

Proposal to create one new council for Suffolk reaches latest milestone

Work will continue on proposals to scrap Suffolk’s six councils and replace them with a new, single, fit for purpose, authority delivering all public services - after the Government encouraged further work on the plan.

The proposal, which independent analysis by accounting firm PwC shows would save over £104 million in just five years and £26 million a year thereafter, has been reviewed by the Government. The money saved could be reinvested in vital public services. Ministers have urged the proposal to be developed further ahead of the final plan being signed off in September 2025.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:

"The Government is encouraging all councils in Suffolk to continue to develop proposals for reorganisation. It's clear from their interim feedback that our single unitary council for Suffolk proposal best meets the criteria, and any alternatives will have to work hard to justify the risks of breaking up critical services like social care, creating new council boundaries and smaller population sizes.

"This is all quite apart from the significant extra cost of having more than one council. All the evidence shows that one council for Suffolk is the only viable option to deliver significant savings that can be reinvested into frontline services. In the first five years, early independent figures suggest a single council will save £104 million, while breaking Suffolk into three, as the districts and borough suggest, will cost taxpayers an additional £52 million. To be clear - their proposal would cost more than the current 50-year-old system!

"The savings from creating a single unitary council can be reinvested into frontline public services that benefit residents and ensure their council tax is as low as possible. The funding could be reinvested in services like pothole repairs, waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, parks and leisure, supporting town centres, school placements and travel and street cleaning.

"But this isn't just about money, it's about people too. A single council will absolutely be able to reflect and serve the whole of Suffolk, rural and urban, and our plans will clearly show how local priorities and residents' voices can and will be central to decision making.

"If we're going to create a truly sustainable and effective council structure for Suffolk, then one new council is not just the only viable option, but also the best one."

More than one council would cost more

Creating two or even three councils for Suffolk, including a Greater Ipswich, has also been proposed by the five district and borough councils in Suffolk. If three were created, it would mean expanding Ipswich's current boundaries to include areas like Felixstowe, Woodbridge and possibly even Needham Market – as well as the villages in between. But having multiple councils would actually cost money, not save it, and the costs will take years to get back. A key part of this calculation is the cost of breaking up critical public services such as social care. The national report by PwC has shown that the financial cost of breaking up services into three councils would be over £150 million, not to mention the risk to vulnerable people caused by the upheaval.

Suffolk celebrates VE Day and why we should come together

As VE Day, Victory in Europe Day, approaches, it's a moment to pause and reflect on what this day means to us as a nation and as a county.

On 8 May 1945, people poured into the streets to mark the end of the war in Europe. It was a day of joy, relief, and unity after nearly six years of conflict. 80 years later it's that shared spirit that still draws us together to mark VE Day as a community.

VE Day is also a moment to remember the extraordinary sacrifices made by those who served, not only the armed forces, but also the many men and women who supported the war effort here at home.

They stepped forward when it mattered most, often in the most difficult of circumstances, and helped secure a future for the generations that followed.

I have been involved with the military for the past 40 years and continue to work closely with the Army at Wattisham.

This makes VE Day especially close to my heart. This year, I will be taking a moment to reflect not only on the sacrifices made during the Second World War, but also on those currently deployed on operations in support of our nation and its close allies.

I will also be thinking about the commitment and sacrifice of service men and women from Suffolk, whose dedication to duty in both the past and present continues to inspire us all.

I know that across Suffolk, gatherings, street parties and commemorations will be taking place from Brandon to Felixstowe and Beccles to Woodbridge, people are coming together to reflect on our past and celebrate the values we hold in common.

There is even a Beacon lighting event at the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds.

It is heartening to see so many people getting involved. Whether large or small, these events speak to a shared commitment to honouring our shared history.

It's in these celebrations that we're reminded of the strength of community. Suffolk has always had a strong sense of togetherness, and events like these show it in action. They bring people of all ages and backgrounds together, encouraging conversations, celebration and remembrance.

While VE Day is a time to look back, it also reminds us of the importance of nurturing the bonds that hold our communities together today.

The war years were defined by collective effort neighbours looking out for one another, people stepping in where help was needed, and communities working as one.

That spirit still lives on in Suffolk, and it's something we should be proud of and continue to strengthen. Events like VE Day are a powerful reminder of how much we can achieve when we act together with shared purpose.

So, as Thursday approaches, I encourage everyone to take a moment to join in however they can whether that's attending a local event, helping with preparations, or simply connecting with friends and neighbours in the spirit of the day.

Let's celebrate together, not just to honour the past, but to look forward with renewed appreciation for the strength and spirit of our Suffolk communities.

Council cites numerous concerns as it formally objects to north Suffolk solar farm plans

The 250-megawatt solar farm and battery energy storage system will be spread out over 1,500 acres at multiple sites in the parishes of Occold, Eye, Brome and Oakley, Stuston, Thrandeston, Mellis, Burgate, Thornham Parva, Gislingham and Yaxley.

The report outlines many concerns, including:

- Numerous parcels of Grade 2 agricultural land to be lost
- Significant impacts on multiple communties and sensitive habitats and landscapes, such as Mellis Common
- Numerous sites of high archaeological sensitivity
- Cable corridors causing irreversible damage

"Frankly, there are serious questions about whether [this scheme] should ever have seen the light of day."
Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs

Furthermore, the county council strongly recommends that EcoPower publishes an interim design report by the end of June 2025. This would provide refined plans in light of further assessment work to be conducted, and the responses to this non-statutory consultation.

This would go some way to providing reassurance and clarity regarding the proposals to the local community. It will also allow all concerned to review more details, in timely fashion, ahead of the statutory consultation expected later this year.

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

"My primary concern remains for the many local communities, who are already feeling the direct impact of the proposals of this scheme – which hasn't even been given approval, let

alone been built. Frankly, there are serious questions about whether it should ever have seen the light of day.

“It seems that the aim of this project is for it to be delivered as fast as possible, encouraged by the government’s unrealistic obsession to decarbonise the grid by 2030.”

Suffolk County Council recently expressed its concerns in response to government proposals concerning reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

Councillor Richard Rout continues:

“In many ways, this EcoPower proposal can be a litmus test for how well communities are, or I fear aren’t, engaged with.

“Even before government’s latest plans to eliminate public engagement, this solar farm project was going to be running on the least amount of consultation possible.

“It is in EcoPower’s gift to work with local authorities, communities and organisation, beyond what is demanded of them by the current planning process. However, as a council our firm objection to projects that remove any of Suffolk’s best quality agricultural from food production, remains steadfast.”

EcoPower anticipates running its statutory consultation in Autumn 2025.

Suffolk man guilty of selling counterfeit goods

John Cooper, 65, of Rowan Close, Haverhill, who traded as John’s Menswear, sold fake designer goods that included the brands Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Gant, Tommy Hilfiger, Fred Perry and Lacoste. Cooper pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing in January 2024 at Cambridge Crown Court to five offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994.
At a hearing at Cambridge Crown Court yesterday, the Court sentenced Cooper to 9 months in prison, suspended for 12 months. He was also ordered to complete 75 hours of unpaid work.

The hearing was heard in front of Recorder H Cohen who granted an Order under the Proceeds of Crime Act for Suffolk Trading Standards to investigate the financial benefit made by John Cooper from the sale of the counterfeit clothing.

An investigation was launched by Trading Standards following the seizure of 768 clothing items from a stall run by Cooper at Bury St Edmunds market in August 2023. The clothing

included shirts, t-shirts, polo shirts, shorts, underwear and hats, with an estimated street value of £21,171.16. The equivalent retail value of the seized goods if they were genuine items is estimated at £61,589.81.

John Cooper first came to the attention of Suffolk Trading Standards in March 2023 when the trademark representative React Services UK alerted the service to the stall in Bury St Edmunds. Trading Standards contacted Cooper and advised him of his obligations and provided guidance on how to check the stock he was selling was legitimate. Cooper denied that the goods were counterfeit, claiming that they were last season's stock, as well as second hand, vintage, and refurb stock.

Covert test purchases of clothing were carried out on the stall which were confirmed to be counterfeit, which resulted in the raid on 9 August 2023.

Further investigations found that Cooper was also advertising the fake goods from a Facebook Group.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

"Not only is counterfeiting an illegal activity, it also takes away custom from legitimate, local, hardworking businesses. I am fully supportive of the action taken by the council's trading standards team in bringing this individual to task.

"Counterfeit goods may appear to be a cheap alternative, but they are, by their very nature, inferior products and anyone involved in counterfeiting in Suffolk should expect a visit, loss of the goods they have purchased and potential legal action."

Graham Crisp, Suffolk County Council's Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, added:
"I would like to praise the Trading Standards team for all their hard work in this case and for bringing this offender to justice. I would like to thank React Services UK Limited for their assistance in the investigation, providing us with vital witness statements and I also offer my thanks to Suffolk Police for their support during the seizure of the goods."

Anybody with information on individuals selling counterfeit goods can contact the Trading Standards team in confidence by calling Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

New Touring Exhibition Celebrates the Herring Girls

An often-overlooked part of our maritime history, these hardy women played a huge role in the economy and community of fishing towns in Scotland and East Anglia.

The exhibition is a joint initiative with the High Life Highland's Archive Service, Tasglann nan Eilean (the Hebridean Archives), and Norfolk Record Office with grant funding from Lloyd's Register Foundation.

It’s the result of volunteer research and the gathering of tales and photos and will tour locations around the region this summer.

Between 1850-1950 herring fishing was a huge industry, exporting millions of barrels of cured herring across Europe and employing thousands of people. The season started in Western and Northern Isles in May and gradually made its way clockwise round the coast of Scotland and England, with the season finishing in December in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

At the peak of the herring industry around 6,000 women from the Highlands and Islands would travel around the country, swelling local populations during their time in any given port with most travelling on special trains.

Known as the Scotch Girls south of the border, they were employed primarily to gut, cure, and pack the fresh catch within 24 hours of being caught. It was back breaking and highly skilled work. They were in high demand, becoming seasoned travellers and often marrying and settling far from home as they followed the fleets.

“I am pleased that Following the Fish will be touring around Suffolk. It’s a fascinating exhibition that shines a light on the important role the herring girls played in communities and the fishing industry around the UK. Their hard work and determination had a lasting impact, and it’s great to see their stories being shared and remembered here in Suffolk.” Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality

Lorna Steele-McGinn from High Life Highland has been working with all the other archive services to collate the stories, images and artefacts for the exhibition.

She said: “With so many women away from home it’s been fascinating to hear about the journeys they made, the juggling of work and home life, and the memories of fathers, grandparents and other community members bringing up children in their mothers’ temporary absence. Following the Fish is a wonderful exhibition which celebrates these hard-working women and preserves their legacy.”

One of the Scotch Girls, as they were known south of the border, packing herring. Touring exhibition Following the Fish brings their unsung stories to life.

Following the Fish will be on display at The Hold in Ipswich from 22 May to 30 May. It will be on display in The Street, so can be viewed from 8.30am-5pm, Monday-Saturday. From June-October it will visit The Long Shed in Woodbridge; Felixstowe Museum / Landguard Fort; Lowestoft's Maritime Museum and East Point Pavilion; and Norfolk Record Office. Dates to be confirmed.

Waterfront gets street lighting upgrade thanks to Ipswich Investment Fund

Lighting along Ipswich Waterfront has had a £129,000 upgrade thanks to a £2 million investment fund.

The work in Albion Wharf has seen 25 new low energy LED lanterns installed between Neptune Marina apartments and Anchor Street apartments.

The LED lanterns can be remotely monitored and controlled by Suffolk County Council's central management system, being dimmed at pre-determined times to maximise energy savings whilst ensuring the right light is in the right place and at the right times.

The columns have a 25-year design life and have been made possible through the Ipswich Investment Fund, which was established following recommendations from the Ipswich Policy Development Panel (PDP).

The Ipswich Investment Fund was granted by Suffolk County Council and is a £2 million pot to support projects across the borough.

It focuses on boosting employment, arts/culture, and sustainable travel, with the first project being the waterfront streetlighting upgrades.

Ownership of this area consisted of multiple organisations including the county council, Ipswich Borough Council, the University of Suffolk, and Associated British Ports.

All organisations worked closely together to enable the project to progress.

Streetlights owned by the borough council were already present for part of the route and the additional new lighting in Albion Wharf means it is now present from Dance East to Patteson Road, a distance of 0.7 miles.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said: "I am very pleased that we have completed the first project to benefit through our Ipswich Investment Fund.

"This is an area of town used by many residents and visitors, so it was important that a high standard of streetlighting was installed.

"One recommendation from the joint Policy Development Panel was to identify ways to improve the look and feel of neighbourhoods and the town centre through better street-lighting, so I am glad we have been able to do this in such a high-profile area."

The lighting columns, finished in black, match those installed within the town centre.

They are hinged to allow future maintenance without the need for cherry pickers and are installed in retention sockets to enable quick removal and installation.

The installation work involved approximately 500m of trenching, often in concrete, and associated underground cabling.

OPINION: Mental Health Awareness Week 2025: The Power of Community in Supporting Mental Health

From 12 to 19 May, we mark Mental Health Awareness Week—a time to reflect on the importance of mental wellbeing and the crucial role our communities play in supporting those experiencing poor mental health. This year's theme, *Community*, highlights the value of local connections in helping people maintain and improve their mental health.

In Suffolk, we recognise that mental health is not just an individual concern—it's a shared responsibility. Our communities form the foundation of mental wellbeing. Whether it's a friendly neighbour, a supportive workplace, or a local activity or hobby group, these connections provide a sense of belonging and purpose.

The Importance of Community

Research consistently shows that strong social connections are linked to better mental health outcomes. People who feel connected to others are less likely to experience loneliness and isolation—two major risk factors for poor mental health. Communities offer safety, solidarity during difficult times, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully.

Across Suffolk, we see powerful examples of communities coming together to support mental health. Initiatives like peer support groups and community wellness programmes equip individuals with the tools and networks they need to manage their wellbeing. These programmes not only offer practical support but also create spaces where people feel valued, heard, and understood.

Suffolk County Council's Commitment

At Suffolk County Council, we are committed to promoting mental health and wellbeing countywide. Our *Keep Well and Active* initiative encourages residents to take part in activities that support mental health, including physical exercise, social engagement, and lifelong learning. We work closely with local organisations to ensure mental health services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to community needs.

One of our key priorities is reducing the stigma around mental health. By encouraging open conversations and providing education, we aim to build a culture where seeking help is viewed as a strength, not a weakness. This approach is essential to ensuring more people feel comfortable accessing the support they need.

How You Can Get Involved

Mental Health Awareness Week is an opportunity for each of us to support the wellbeing of our communities. Simple actions—like checking in on a neighbour, attending a local event, or volunteering with a mental health organisation—can make a real difference.

Earlier this week, I read a blog by Jon Neal, CEO of Suffolk Mind, on how even a little running can positively impact mental health. Jon shares how running once a week helps him manage stress and lift his mood. It reminded me of how much better I feel after a walk through the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds—taking time to enjoy the spring greenery, birdsong, and local wildlife. With the weather especially pleasant at the moment, now is the perfect time to step outside and enjoy some of nature's natural mood boosters. If you get the chance, I'd encourage you to read Jon's blog on the Suffolk Mind website. They also offer a range of helpful resources for maintaining good mental health.

This week is a chance for everyone in Suffolk to take time to focus on their own mental wellbeing and find ways to support friends, family, and neighbours. Whether it's a walk in the park, a weekend BBQ, or a family games night, small steps can foster stronger, more supportive communities.

Together, we can build a Suffolk where mental health is prioritised—and where everyone feels supported and valued.

Looking Ahead

As we move beyond Mental Health Awareness Week, let's continue to invest in the communities that help strengthen mental wellbeing. By staying connected, offering support, and advocating for mental health, we can create a lasting difference.

In Suffolk, we remain committed to keeping mental health at the top of our agenda. Through collaboration, compassion and community, we can create a future where everyone can live a mentally healthy life.

For more information on mental health services and support in Suffolk, please visit Suffolk County Council's Mental Health and Wellbeing webpage. You can also find out more about Mental Health Awareness Week on the Mental Health Foundation's website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk.

It's time to shine the light on communities in Suffolk

The Suffolk Community Awards 2025 will recognise and celebrate all those who have improved the quality of life for communities across Suffolk.

The Suffolk Community Awards, now in its sixth year, is brought together by Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils.
This year's award ceremony is set to be another prestigious, heart-warming event showcasing the excellent work and achievements of individuals and groups across Suffolk, being recognised by 18 awards, including a new entry which will recognise one local councils' response to climate change.

Other award categories range from youth participation and young person of the year to community building, contribution to volunteering, most active communities and council, councillor, young councillor and clerk of the year.

Nominations are now open and must be made by **Sunday 13 July** at www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk

Once received, all nominations are carefully considered and judged by an expert panel before being announced at the award ceremony which will take place on Tuesday 23 September from the Museum of Food in Stowmarket. The event will be hosted by former BBC Radio Suffolk breakfast presenter, Mark Murphy MBE.

David Hepper, Winner of last year's Councillor of the Year, said:

"I have always tried to involve myself in the various concerns in the village, because I firmly believe that by doing so you get much more out of life – to be part of a community, rather than just being a resident. Being a Parish Councillor is part of that, and it was flattering to be recognised, and the award gave me confidence that I must be doing something right."

The Suffolk Community Awards event organisers said in a joint comment:

"Volunteers, community leaders and organisations across Suffolk are the beating heart of the county. Their hard work, dedication and innovation makes Suffolk a better place to live and work. Our 3 organisations greatly value the massive contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to our wonderful county. That is why we work together to host these awards. To recognise and celebrate their outstanding contribution to Suffolk life."

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, cabinet member for Equality and Communities at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I am incredibly proud that Suffolk County Council is once again supporting the Suffolk Community Awards.

"These awards are a vital opportunity to shine a light on the remarkable efforts of our volunteers, community leaders, and local organisations. Their dedication continues to make Suffolk a fantastic place to live and work, and it's a privilege to recognise their exceptional contributions to our communities."

To make a nomination for the Suffolk Community Awards, go to www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk

Suffolk Archives wins major Museums + Heritage Award

The judges said: “Comprehensive, thoughtful and effective, this winning engagement programme successfully reached beyond its organisation’s traditional audience, achieving impressive results with a strong legacy.”

Co-curated with diverse local community groups, it explored historical and contemporary migration experiences to Suffolk since the end of the Second World War.

Engagement programmes included art installation The Journey, created with local groups, artists, and schools. The flock of 125 birds, each decorated to represent a unique migration story, is currently on show The Hold in Ipswich – home of Suffolk Archives, which is a Suffolk County Council service.
There was a free exhibition which included items from Suffolk Archives’ collections, as well as some on loan from communities across the county that celebrated different foods, clothing, traditions, and culture. There were also oral history recordings, stories of migrant entrepreneurs, and archive materials from the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality.

Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said: “This award win is a great example of how engaging with local communities across the county to bring together diverse voices can tell the migration stories have shaped Suffolk’s history.

“Congratulations to everyone involved with this incredible collaboration between Suffolk Archives, local community groups, and artists.”

The Museums + Heritage Awards celebrate the very best in the world of museums, galleries, and cultural and heritage visitor attractions. This year’s shortlist included entrants from across the UK and 14 other countries.

Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk was made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Suffolk Archives’ current exhibition is Departures, which explores emigration from Suffolk. It runs at The Hold, on Ipswich’s Waterfront, until 31 May with a programme of tie-in events. Visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk for more details.

OPINION: Celebrating the Power of Relationships; Foster Care Fortnight

Over the weekend I joined 13 families for our annual Foster Care Walk in Bury St Edmunds as part of Foster Care Fortnight. It was a brilliant day out which included games, sticker

collecting and even an appearance from Spider-Man! A huge thanks to our fabulous Suffolk Fostering staff for making it all possible!

The power of those meaningful connections between a foster carer and a child transforms lives and that is the theme of this year's Foster Care Fortnight: **'The Power of Relationships'**. From the bond between a foster carer and a child, to the vital support of social workers, friendships within the fostering community or the connections with birth families - these relationships shape lives, create stability, and open up new possibilities for the future. It could be helping a young teenager navigate their teenage years through to their independence, or Kinship fostering, when someone cares for a child if they are a family member, friend or have a connection to the family.

Across Suffolk, hundreds of foster carers open their homes to provide love, stability, and care to children and young people in need.

It's been a busy time for the service; our Emergency Foster Care Hub, launched in March and is supporting our children in care.

This is a year-long pilot programme, which will enable children and young people a safe stable home, for a period of 14 days whilst professionals work to understand their needs, and plan for the longer-term, reducing the likelihood of multiple moves and offering children more security and stability.

We are very excited to be working alongside three very experienced, skilled, and dedicated fostering households, who offer invaluable feedback, and insight, alongside the children's voices, and we hope that this pilot can be incorporated as a permanent structure to support and improve outcomes for Suffolk's looked after children.

Next week will also mark one year of Foster East which we are proud to be a part of.
As a collaboration of 11 local councils in the East of England we work together to make sure foster carers and the children they look after can thrive.

We are working to ensure that anyone who is considering fostering for their council has access to the very best training and support as they complete the application process and become a foster carer.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce a partnership with John Lewis, who have teamed up with us to promote fostering and children's activities. Their generous grant funding will enable us to host more social and community events throughout the year, helping to strengthen our fostering community. These events will also give children the chance to experience exciting new activities such as high ropes, tree trekking, canoeing, and caving.

We also have the Hop to it! Suffolk 2025 trail launching next month, in aid of St Elizabeth Hospice and created in partnership with Wild in Art. From 21 June – 29 August, 60 decorated hare sculptures will take over Ipswich and the surrounding areas for the summer,

each featuring unique designs. For the first time, this year's trail also features neighbouring locations including Woodbridge, Felixstowe, Beccles and Lowestoft.

We are delighted to be taking part in the trail once again and through the efforts of our staff and partners we have already raised more than £1,000 for St Elizabeth Hospice via a number of fundraising activities including a sponsored cycle.

We'll be releasing more details about where you can spot our Fostering and Adoption stargazing hare soon, so keep an eye on our social media channels to be the first to know! In Suffolk, we have around 900 children in the care of Suffolk County Council. We need more Foster to provide safe, nurturing homes - whether for a night, a few months, or several years. By fostering, you can make a lasting difference in a young person's life.

If you would like to find out more about fostering with your local council, please visit our website: www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk or call us on **01473 264800.**

Suffolk must avoid a "postcode lottery" of services and create one new council

Creating a new, single council for Suffolk will eliminate the risks of a postcode lottery of essential and life-saving public services, the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Cllr. Matthew Hicks, has said today.

Speaking at the county council's Annual General Meeting, Cllr Hicks criticised proposals to create two or even three councils – which he argued would lead to "artificial borders" within the county. He said:

"Any suggestion of disaggregating or creating artificial divisions within this single market—leading to a postcode lottery in care services or pitting one side of the county against another—is not something we should pursue with any seriousness. The only option is for one Suffolk, and this is coming over loud and clear as we talk with people across our county.

"Now is not the time to create postcode lotteries of essential services, with authorities squabbling over finite pools of financial and human resources."

He emphasised that Suffolk had secured the opportunity to choose a bold new future that generations can be proud of and warned about throwing this opportunity away. He said:

"We cannot afford to throw this opportunity away by choosing to recreate multiple layers of bureaucracy and complexity, with unnecessary multiple local authorities. We cannot risk the disaggregation and dismemberment of our adult social care services from the essential economies of scale it needs to continue to provide good quality care and support services to our most vulnerable residents. We cannot afford to throw away hundreds of millions of pounds of efficiency savings which could be used to invest further in essential services."

Closing his speech, Cllr Hicks recommitted himself, and his administration, to lead Suffolk through to a bold new future, saying:

"Now is the time for visionary leadership. This council has a responsibility to get this right for the people of Suffolk, to create a future that we and future generations can be proud of - and that's what this administration will do."
You can read his full speech and watch the full council meeting on the councils' YouTube channel.

Dementia Marketplace 2025

On Wednesday 25th June 2025, Care Development East, in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB), will host the third annual Dementia Marketplace—a free, one-day event offering practical advice, support, and information for anyone affected by dementia.

Held from 10:00am to 3:30pm at Trinity Park Conference & Events Centre, Ipswich.

Dementia is the UK's biggest health and social care challenge—and it's growing. One in three people born in the UK today will develop dementia in their lifetime. By 2040, 1.4 million people are expected to be living with the condition. Early diagnosis is key—it unlocks treatment, support, and care that can make a real difference.

What to Expect:

- Marketplace – Information and advice from over 40 dementia-related services and support groups
- Expert Speaker Sessions – Short, accessible talks throughout the day
- Innovation Room – New for 2025, come see, and try out a range of equipment and digital care technology to help keep people as safe and independent for as long as possible. It will also include the launch of Reverie a new cutting-edge Virtual Reality (VR) app designed with and for people with dementia featuring customised Suffolk film content
- Supervised Activities Room – A safe space for people with dementia while carers explore the event

Opening at 10:00am with a short welcome from:
- Gareth Everton, Executive Director for Adult Social Care
- Eugene Staunton, Deputy Director, SNEE ICB

Speaking about the Dementia Marketplace's return, Cllr Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care said:

"I am pleased to see the Dementia Marketplace return this year, as it is an important event that truly showcases the incredible support available for people living with dementia, as well as their families and carers. With an ageing population here in Suffolk, it is absolutely essential that we continue to do all we can to help people find the support they need to live well with dementia—and events like this play a key role in making that happen."
Cllr Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care

Event Details:
Venue: Trinity Park, Ipswich, IP3 8UH
Date: Wednesday 25th June 2025
Time: 10:00am – 3:30pm (drop-in)
Entry is free, please book your ticket today via Eventbrite.

Suffolk is open for business

Last week I joined business and public sector leaders from across Norfolk and Suffolk at UKREiiF - the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum. This three-day event in Leeds brought together thousands of investors, developers, and policymakers to share ideas and build the partnerships that will shape the UK's future.
I was proud to be part of a panel of local leaders flying the flag for Suffolk, making the case for why this region is one of the best places in the UK to live, work, invest and grow.

And my message was clear: Suffolk is open for business.

Suffolk is already a national powerhouse. We have a £21billion economy and are home to more than 35,000 businesses, many of them world-class and countless others ready to grow.

Our region is seeing huge amount of investment in the energy sector, with Sizewell C and offshore wind leading the way. We need to harness this investment, deliver high quality jobs, and true legacy benefit, whilst ensuring projects are coordinated and our rural communities and landscapes are protected.

We're leaders agri-food and advanced manufacturing and our ports, led by the Port of Felixstowe, handle 36% of the UK's containerised trade, making us a vital gateway to global markets. BT's world-renowned research labs at Adastral Park are at the forefront of advances in cybersecurity, AI and space-based technologies. Suffolk truly is a place where big ideas happen.

But we weren't at UKREiiF just to talk about what we do well already, but to look to the future.

That future is being shaped by the Suffolk Business Board, established last May following the integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership into the county council. The Board brings together business leaders, academia, the voluntary sector, and local government to drive

innovation, growth, and skills across Suffolk. I was joined at UKREiiF by Mark Pendlington and Oliver Paul both on the Board and two of our leading business voices, both passionate about Suffolk's potential.

The Board has hit the ground running. Earlier this year, it published the ambitious Suffolk Economic Strategy, designed to build on Suffolk's strengths by attracting investment into our key sectors and encouraging major companies to set up and expand here. This isn't just a plan on paper. It's already translating into action.

At UKREiiF, we showcased some of the concrete opportunities emerging from the strategy, from unlocking land for over 11,500 new homes on brownfield sites to supporting innovation hubs around our ports and market towns. These aren't distant ambitions. They are shovel-ready, investor-ready projects that will drive Suffolk forward.

Crucially, our growth plan is aligned with Norfolk's, reflecting the strong economic ties between our counties. Both Suffolk and Norfolk have thriving rural areas and growing urban centres, with Ipswich and Norwich ranked among the UK's top ten growth locations.

Working together will be essential – particularly as we enter a new era of devolution. Next May, residents will elect a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk, who will have a seat at the Prime Minister's Council of the Nations and Regions – a real opportunity to shape national policy from the local level. Joint devolution business plans are already being developed, with key investment priorities for the new Mayor to champion to help drive housing, infrastructure, and business growth in the years ahead.

What we heard at UKREiiF confirmed what we already knew. Investors are looking for places with a clear vision, a united voice, and a pipeline of projects ready to go. Suffolk ticks all those boxes.