

# TUNSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

## SCC NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2024

### Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loans now available

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Suffolk County Council is offering interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run.

Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years – at 0% interest.

The £3 million project fully opened to homeowners across Suffolk on **1 November 2024**, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-homes-suffolk-loan/>

Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being.

Money for the loans comes from £3 million of funding received as part of the council's negotiations with the previous government to secure a County Deal.

It was allocated from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support an energy efficiency and energy generation 0% loan fund for people that cannot access grants currently available to low-income households.

The scheme supports Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, by increasing the number of properties which have energy-efficient and low carbon energy measures installed.

An increase in demand for energy efficiency measures will also help support businesses providing those services, meaning jobs, skills development and investment in the green economy.

Suffolk County Council is partnering with Lendology CIC to deliver the interest-free loan scheme. Lendology CIC is an experienced Social Enterprise Lender, managing similar schemes with councils across the country.

For more information and to apply for in an interest-free loan, visit <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-homes-suffolk-loan/>

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

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

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

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

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

## Suffolk's new gritting fleet to keep county safe and moving during the colder weather

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With temperatures forecast to drop this week, Suffolk's new gritting fleet will commence its winter season shortly, treating thousands of miles of roads to help minimise risk for highways users.

During the warmer autumn months, highway teams have been carefully planning for the winter gritting operations, preparing for the potential snow and ice that winter will bring. In total, there are 36 gritters ready for action, with two additional spare vehicles available to be deployed to any location, if needed.

Earlier this year, at the Suffolk Show, a competition was held to name the new gritters, and more information about the winning names, including Morgan Freezeman and Kieran McSpreader, can be found [here](#).

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

All gritters in the fleet use hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), which reduces carbon dioxide emissions by around 90%, supporting Suffolk County Council's continued commitment to protect and enhance our environment.

During the last winter season, Suffolk used around 7,822 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 198,594km/123,400 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth five times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 21,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any drop in temperature. Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations.

There are also 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network. This includes other bus routes where the service level is 5 days a week in the school term, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools.

P1 treatments are considered when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C, whilst P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather conditions.

Further details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes. All gritting decisions are based on forecast road surface temperatures, not air temperature, as the road surface temperature is often cooler and reflects the true risk to highway users. The timing and amount of salt we use considers factors such as traffic levels, wind and rain.

During the lead up to the winter season, our teams also dedicate their time to refilling grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. To date, we have filled over 50% of the total grit bins and will conclude the remaining refills over the next few weeks ahead of the commencement of the core winter season.

Suffolk Highways fills grit bins that are approved and owned by [parish and town councils](#), however, to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and request grit refills via [the reporting tool](#). Suffolk Highways do not fill private grit bins.

Suffolk's residents are requested to support us, as well as emergency services throughout the year, by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road – if we can't fit, we can't grit!

Drivers are reminded to always drive to the conditions; although the gritting teams have treated the roads, this doesn't mean they are completely risk-free.

Those wishing to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, should follow Suffolk Highways' X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook, to keep updated of our teams' movements this winter season. Safety messages will also be issued during spells of cold and wet weather.

More information on gritting can be found at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/check-which-roads-are-gritted](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/check-which-roads-are-gritted).

## Royal opening for the Gull Wing bridge

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

Crowds lined the bridge as Her Royal Highness unveiled a commemorative plaque formally opening the iconic structure. The new bridge opened publicly to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September, and is already bringing huge benefits through reduced congestion and improved mobility around the town, according to businesses and residents.

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

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

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

The Princess is Patron of the Excelsior Trust, which restored and operates the boat. Back on the bridge, The Princess was invited by Councillor Harsant to unveil a commemorative plaque recording her visit and officially opening the bridge.

The Princess then met Jack Baldry, aged 16, Hayden Nicholls and Eva Ainslie, both 15, the Lowestoft young people who coined the name 'Gull Wing' in a competition for local schools. They were Year 6 pupils at Somerleyton Primary School and took the inspiration for the name from the shape of the bascule span's beams and their resemblance to the wings of a gull.

The bridge was built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans and provides a long-awaited third crossing over Lake Lothing. It significantly eases traffic congestion in the town centre, shortening journey times, and improving journey reliability, and helping to attract new investment to Lowestoft.

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

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

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

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

- SEND Letter from DfE

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

Key achievements listed within the letter include improvements in the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); outstanding academic progress for children participating in the Raising Achievement – Delivering Better Value academic interventions; better coproduction between partners; and a significant reduction of permanent exclusions in primary schools and for children with EHCPs.

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

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

The progress meeting with the Department for Education was held on November 4 and reviewed work over six months since the publication of the Priority Action Plan, which was agreed following the Ofsted and CQC inspection in November 2023. This was the most formal review since the inspection. The next progress meeting will take place in May 2025.

## Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Voucher Scheme in Suffolk

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

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

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

Funded by Suffolk's Public Sector Organisations and delivered by public services provider Reed in Partnership in support of Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, the scheme will play a significant role in providing support, direction, and incentives for private homeowners to decarbonise their homes. Residents who own a home with an EPC band of below C can take up the offer of a voucher to claim an assessment from a PAS 2035 Retrofit Assessor who will identify the best measures that could be deployed in their home to improve energy efficiency. Such measures may include, for example, insulation, draft proofing, ventilation repairs, low carbon heating and energy generation (solar panels). The report will also incorporate analysis of the cost vs benefit of implementing the suggested improvements.

The voucher will entitle them to a cost-free assessment if the size of their property is smaller than 98m<sup>2</sup>, with a maximum additional charge of just £30 for properties bigger than this. Homeowners can check to see if their property has an existing Energy Certificate with an EPC band and record of their property size at [gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](http://gov.uk/find-energy-certificate). There is no obligation to take up the recommendations of the retrofit assessment report, but a new Council loan will provide up to £15,000 at 0% interest to those interested in making efficiency upgrades. The scheme will make available 637 assessments over an 18-month period, on a first-come-first-serve basis.

#### **Key Features of the Scheme:**

- **No/low cost:** No cost for homes under 98m<sup>2</sup>. The scheme is funded by Suffolk councils – the most you will pay for a home bigger than 98m<sup>2</sup> is £30 for an assessment typically valued at over £250
- **No obligations:** There is no requirement to take forward any recommended work. However, an [interest free loan scheme](#) is available to help with energy efficient upgrades, for example insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing or heat pumps
- **Expert insights:** Detailed recommendations tailored specifically to the property being assessed
- **Trustworthy:** Funded by Suffolk councils and in partnership with Retrofit Coordination, a PAS 2035 accredited retrofit assessor and coordinator

#### **Energy Savings Statistics:**

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

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

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