

## **December 2024 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

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

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. This loan scheme will help hundreds of Suffolk residents to make their homes more energy efficient. It will put money back in their pockets, by saving on their energy bills. We all have a responsibility to ensure homes can cope with the changes in climate, keeping people cooler in summer and warmer in winter, and ultimately reducing our carbon emissions. This loan scheme is one way we're helping people to do that – and at the same time, they are benefitting from improvements to their homes. One of the other highlights is that more than the initial £3 million will be generated for loans – when people make their repayments, the money goes back into the pot and is available for someone else. We hope it will be accessible for many years. 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. 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/>.

### **Local organisations are awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service**

It has been announced that five voluntary organisations in Suffolk have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service. Created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and previously known as The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), the Award has been shining a light on the fantastic work of voluntary groups from all across the UK for many years.

Equivalent to an MBE, KAVS is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life. The local organisations are:

#### Ipswich Outreach

Supporting the homeless people of Ipswich to improve their health, wellbeing and life opportunities.

#### Let's Talk Reading

Working to improve literacy of children and adults in Ipswich.

Website:

#### Still Good Food

Rescuing surplus food, reducing waste and redistributing it to benefit the community.

#### Tattingstone Good Neighbour Scheme

Providing vital support, promoting social interaction and community integration in Tattingstone.

#### The Caribbean and African Community Health Support Forum

Promoting a community legacy of health and wellbeing in Suffolk.

Speaking after the announcement The Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, Lady Clare, Countess of Euston, said: "I send my heartfelt congratulations to all the organisations that have been awarded a King's Award for Voluntary Service this year. The work they do within our communities is absolutely vital and it is wonderful to see them formally recognised in this way."

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

With temperatures forecast to drop, Suffolk's new gritting fleet will commence its winter season treating thousands of miles of roads to help minimise risk for highway 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. 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 SCC'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. 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. 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).

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

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

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