

## County Council report May 2024

### 400 Suffolk roads set for upgrade as largest ever surfacing project gets underway

Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year - almost doubling the number of roads completed last year, as Suffolk Highways' largest ever resurfacing programmes get underway.

With the start of the surface dressing programme beginning this week, 102 roads will be surface dressed, whilst a further 319 sites will benefit from a full machine resurfacing during the year.

Surface dressing is an efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective maintenance treatment that prolongs the life of a road surface – it restores skid resistance and seals the road surface from water, whilst removing potholes and improving level differences of the road.

The surface dressing project sits alongside the programmes for reactively repairing potholes and machine resurfacing roads, all complementing one another. During the past six months, Suffolk Highways has repaired over 9,000 potholes and resurfaced 41 roads, with a further 278 roads planned for resurfacing in this financial year.

New for this year, Suffolk Highways' supply chain partner, Hazell & Jefferies, has invested in new vehicles which allow the new surface to be laid in a safer and more efficient way. For example, the new vehicles eliminate the risk of hitting overhead cables or structures.

- For more information on surface dressing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Surface dressing](#)
- For more information on machine resurfacing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Road Resurfacing](#)

### 99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day

99.36% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 96.52% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 6,844 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2024.

Families who applied online can log in to the online service from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer unless they have indicated that they do not wish to. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today (16 April 2024).

## New Independent Chair appointed to drive forward SEND reform

Suffolk County Council can announce that Kathryn Boulton has been appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board.

The SEND Improvement Board was set up in response to the inspection of SEND services in Suffolk in November last year by Ofsted and CQC and is a requirement of the Improvement Notice that will be issued to Suffolk by the Department for Education. Made up of senior leaders from the council and NHS, board members will oversee the implementation and review of plans and services aimed at improving the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. It will also ensure the successful delivery of the Priority Action Plan, which was co-produced following the inspection and has been agreed by the Department for Education. [You can read this plan online.](#)

## More Suffolk homes eligible for energy improvements

More Suffolk households can access free home improvements to make them warmer, healthier and cheaper to run, thanks to Warm Homes Suffolk.

Residents and landlords of eligible properties can apply for energy efficient measures such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps.

Average funding of £18,000 is available for homeowners, and £12,000 for landlords and their tenants.

Warm Homes Suffolk is administered by Suffolk County Council, and delivered by East Suffolk Council, on behalf of all councils in Suffolk. It has been funding home energy efficiency improvements for two years, with funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

To be eligible, both of these conditions must be met:

- Homes must have an EPC rating of D, or below
- Homes are not heated by mains gas

And then either of the following conditions:

- Households have a combined pre-tax income of under £36,000 (this was previously £31,000)
- Homes are in a certain postcode (a [pre-qualified postcode checker](#) has been launched), which includes parts of:
  - Beccles, Bungay, Bury St. Edmunds, Felixstowe, Great Cornard, Haverhill, Ipswich, Kessingland, Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Rushmere St Andrew, Saxmundham, Sudbury

Once these conditions have been approved, an assessment of your home will identify which measures are best suited to your property. These will then be installed by trusted contactors, for free.

## Share your thoughts on the importance of nature in Suffolk

A new survey has been launched to find out which aspects of nature in Suffolk are most important to you.

Your responses will feed into Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a plan to help reverse the decline in nature across the county, and to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and the landscape.

- Nationwide, wildlife species have declined by 19% since 1970 ([State of Nature report](#))
- One in six species in Great Britain are at risk of extinction ([State of Nature report](#))
- Up to 70% of Suffolk's 22,000 ponds are neglected or abandoned ([Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#))
- Norfolk and Suffolk have over three times less ancient woodland than the national average ([Natural Capital Evidence Compendium for Norfolk and Suffolk](#))

To address this decline and to help nature recover, government has introduced legally binding commitments. There are 48 of these Local Nature Recovery Strategies across the country, led in Suffolk-by-Suffolk County Council.

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

Members of the public are invited to share their favourite nature spots to visit, what access is like, which habitats and species should be protected, and so on. You don't have to be a wildlife expert, but your thoughts will help the work to reverse the decline of nature in Suffolk.

Farmers, landowners, and land managers are also encouraged to submit practical, achievable proposals to support nature conservation, as well as sharing how land is currently managed, and any challenges faced applying for government funding schemes.

All responses will help build a picture across Suffolk to help protect and enhance our environment.

You can share your thoughts in the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy Survey by visiting <https://www.nsnrp.org/get-involved>, which closes on 30 June 2024.