

October 2021 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Showcasing Suffolk's environmental achievements as the UK hosts COP26

On September 8th Suffolk County Council launched Creating the Greenest County Awards 2021. Creating the Greenest County is now more important and more relevant than ever - going green, reducing carbon and protecting biodiversity are choices we must all be making. The United Nations COP26 event in November will rightly focus on the international agreements that need to be in place, and the 2021 Creating the Greenest County Awards will bring this huge issue into a Suffolk focus and give us encouragement and inspiration to make changes to how we live our lives and secure a better future. As Suffolk works hard towards its net zero carbon 2030 target, the Awards provide an excellent opportunity for individuals, businesses, communities, schools and voluntary organisations to be celebrated for the environmental work they do to combat climate change, or simply for improving the area where they live. Nominations for the Creating the Greenest County Awards are now open and nominations can be submitted online at greensuffolk.org/awards. This year's categories will include biodiversity and landscape, business, community, schools and waste and recycling, and we will be recognising our county's green heroes. Many individuals have taken it on themselves to lead the way in making change, voluntary organisations have formed to help transform their local communities and businesses are taking their environmental responsibilities even more seriously. Since its inception in 2007, Creating the Greenest County has seen Solar PV generation becoming mainstream without government subsidy, the world's largest wind farm operating from our coast and virtually no waste going to landfill. 500 businesses have been accredited and over 900 supported to develop carbon reduction plans and the county is embracing the move towards electric vehicles. We can see the reality of climate change across the globe on a daily basis but are proud that the majority of organisations involved in Creating the Greenest County have declared a Climate Emergency and made a strong commitment to achieving net zero emissions. The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan sets out the collaboration required to achieve our aspirations and the Awards recognise those that have gone above and beyond to support this. We have launched this year's awards at E.J. Barker and Sons at Lodge Farm, who won the Biodiversity and Landscape award in 2019 and are sharing their best practice at COP26 this year. The Awards are a chance to celebrate the people, organisations and communities that are making Suffolk the Greenest County. This is a great opportunity to shine a light on anyone who inspires others to make Suffolk a better place for its residents and its wildlife. It could be someone who has inspired you to live more sustainably, or an organisation which has transformed its business operations to be carbon neutral. The award ceremony will be held at The Hold in Ipswich on 12 November 2021. If your business would like to sponsor the awards, please contact creatinggreenestcounty@suffolk.gov.uk or 01502 521406.

Work begins to replace street lights in Suffolk and save energy in the County

On September 13th, Suffolk County Council and Bouygues Energies & Services (Bouygues E&S) have started work replacing 43,400 street lighting lanterns in Suffolk with LED lanterns. SCC and Bouygues E&S joined forces to create a flagship partnership with the aim of reducing energy, minimising light pollution, bringing down ongoing maintenance costs for the Authority and providing the best value to residents. SCC expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on these assets by around 76 percent, saving more than 1.7 million pounds a year. The upgrade of the lighting system will include a further rollout of SCC's central management system which will allow lights to be switched on or off and dim individual or groups of lights. This smart technology will increase the control the Authority has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs. The system will also automatically flag any lights that are not working which reduces the need for night-time inspections. The Street Lighting LED Upgrade contract commenced in May 2021 and the scope of works includes:

Survey

Design to latest British and European Standards

Supply and installation of new LED Street Lighting with wireless control system

Removal of existing luminaires

Updating inventory

Verification.

All roles are being advertised locally to Suffolk and social value activities undertaken throughout the period of the contract will include volunteering days, tree planting and presentations to local school children.

After a successful mobilisation period, where local people from within Suffolk make up the majority of our new team, we are excited about starting this large-scale LED street lighting upgrade and being a pivotal partner for the Authority in reducing its carbon emissions. To follow the project updates please visit via Suffolk Highways twitter: [@Suff_highways](https://twitter.com/Suff_highways)."

Independent review highlights failings in some of Suffolk's SEND services

An independent report into parts of Suffolk's special educational needs (SEND) provision was published on September 20th. This report has been written by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and parent carer network. The review looked at processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of SEND provision and was commissioned by Suffolk County Council in June. The report lists strengths and weaknesses of the service and includes nine recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are now being worked through and implemented by Suffolk County Council and other partners who help deliver SEND services. The review has found that we must change what we are doing in a number of areas. I would like to say sorry to any child or young person, and their families, who we may have failed. Our priority now is to implement these recommendations with pace, efficiency and impact. We have begun to make these changes, but it will take time before the impact of the changes are felt. We are grateful to the team at Lincolnshire for their findings and recommendations, which we accept wholeheartedly, and for their support and advice. Suffolk County Council commissioned this review after the May elections because of concerns that our SEND services were not performing well. As we anticipated, the report has shown that SEND services in Suffolk are not good enough, and I want to apologise to those children and young people we have let down. I want to be clear that this report does not cover all SEND services and many children or young people who have specialist educational needs in Suffolk are very well served, but significant changes must be made following this hard-hitting report. We must learn from this report and implement fundamental change as quickly as we can. The review was commissioned following a significant increase in correspondence from parents and carers earlier this year. An Action Plan based on the recommendations is now being implemented. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country. Other recommendations include staff training, reviewing the process for allocating specialist placements and working with education leaders and parents and carers to understand the demand for specialist provision and use data and local intelligence to inform sufficient planning.

New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements

On September 20th it was announced that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling. For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required. The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers'

time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates. Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents. During the last 16 months through the pandemic, it was important that we managed access to Suffolk's Recycling Centres in a safe and organised fashion to ensure the safety of residents visiting to recycle their waste as well as that of our staff and contractors working on site. I am very pleased that sites are now back to full capacity and the new booking system will allow us to make adjustments to the system to make best use of all available slots at every site. The system has been developed with our customers in mind, with staff taking on board the views and comments received through regular customer feedback and interactions over the past year. Our site teams have done a great job in maintaining high levels of customer service during such difficult circumstances and as we begin to recover from Covid as a county. I am pleased to launch this new online service to help people access the services they need, when and how they want to. To make your booking, visit suffolkrecycling.org.uk.

Illegal cigarettes seized in Trading Standards crackdown

It was announced on September 17th that thousands of illegal cigarettes had been seized from shops in Lowestoft and Beccles as part of a Trading Standards crackdown. More than 12,000 cigarettes were sniffed out by tobacco detection dogs at three shops in the town, with over 8000 of the cigarettes and 8kg of hand rolled tobacco found under a manhole cover in the rear of one the premises. The operation was supported by Suffolk Police, Norfolk Trading Standards and Wagtail UK. A total of 12,440 cigarettes and 18.45kg of hand rolled tobacco were seized from the stores. All the items are suspected to be illegally imported into the UK without duty being paid and do not comply with the legal packaging and labelling requirements. Several of them are also suspected to be counterfeits of popular brands, which are likely to contain harmful substances and may not self-extinguish - presenting increased health and safety risks. The seized products will now be fully assessed as part of the investigation to determine the exact offences that have been committed. Test purchases had been carried out before the raids with all three selling to covert officers. Intelligence was received that the premises were selling illegal tobacco. Test purchases and a thorough search of the premises and grounds by the team led to the discovery of the tobacco products. Far from being a victimless crime, illegal tobacco trading creates a cheap source for children and young people, undermines the reduction of smoking, and affects the trade of legitimate retailers. We strongly encourage members of the public to recognise the adverse health, economic and social impacts of the illicit trade of tobacco products. The sale of illegal tobacco is also linked to organised crime which results in dealers going to extreme lengths and using very sophisticated methods to hide the tobacco products from trading standards.

People are urged to look for:

Packaging that is not plain olive green

A lack of health warnings

Text on the packet that is not in English

Cheap prices

Unknown brands

If you suspect someone is selling illegal tobacco in Suffolk, please report it to the [Citizens Advice Consumer Service](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) on 0808 223 1133.

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