

**Cllr Asa Downing**

**Suffolk county councillors report**

**Aug/sept**

- **Ipswich County Library set for first major refurbishment in 40 years**

Ipswich County Library is set for its first major refurbishment in 40 years, thanks to an almost £900,000 investment that will transform the landmark building for a new generation of residents.

The plans have been shaped by feedback from library users and include a completely refurbished children's library, along with improvements to make the building more modern, welcoming and accessible for people of all ages.

The refurbishment aims to improve the experience for current users, attract new visitors and help ensure the library continues to meet the needs of the community for years to come.

More information about the plans will be shared in the coming months.

The project includes a £500,000 grant from the Government's *Libraries Improvement Fund*, which will be combined with investment from The Clore Duffield Foundation, The Wolfson Foundation and local developer contributions.

Suffolk Community Libraries is one of just 28 library services across England to receive the government grant, which is part of the Government's *Arts Everywhere Fund*, managed by Arts Council England on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The project marks the biggest investment in Ipswich County Library for more than four decades and will give one of Suffolk's best-used community and cultural spaces a new lease of life.

- **Energy efficiency loans available for Suffolk residents**

Homeowners across Suffolk can now apply for a loan to help fund energy efficiency improvements to their homes, thanks to a partnership between Suffolk County Council and Lendology.

The Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme offers eligible homeowners access to loans from £2,000 to £15,000 at a fixed interest rate of 2.2% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) loan, with repayment terms of up to seven years.

Borrowers may also repay their loan early without penalty, subject to eligibility and loan terms.

The funding is designed to support residents who want to improve the energy performance of their homes while spreading the cost of installation over a manageable period.

The loan can be used for a range of energy efficiency measures, including:

- Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems
- Solar battery storage
- Solar thermal systems
- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Double and triple glazed windows and doors
- Loft, wall and floor insulation
- Ventilation systems when installed alongside insulation measures

Installing energy efficiency improvements can help homeowners reduce their energy bills and create warmer, more comfortable homes.

A well-insulated and energy-efficient property can also have positive benefits for residents' health and wellbeing, particularly during colder winter months.

For further information about the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme and how to apply, visit the [Lendology website](#).

## **• River Gipping path improvements complete as full 17-mile route reopens**

Walkers and local communities can once again enjoy the full length of the Gipping Valley River Path after major improvements and repairs were completed at two key locations.

Suffolk County Council has completed improvement works by the River Gipping at Creting St Peter and Sproughton, making the route safer, more accessible and more resilient to flooding while reopening the full 17-mile Gipping Valley River Path.

Works at Creting St Peter included upgrading wooden footbridges and boardwalks with new recycled plastic versions, while works at Sproughton included riverbank repairs, path widening, accessible ramps and a new footbridge.

The 17-mile route connects Stowmarket and Ipswich railway stations and passes Needham Market station, while linking to a wider network of walking routes across Suffolk.

The River Gipping has a long history of navigation. In 1793, the river was canalised with the construction of 15 locks, helping barges travel between Stowmarket and Ipswich and supporting the area's industrial development.

The project was delivered through a partnership involving local authorities, contractors, parish councils, landowners and volunteers.

The completed works ensure residents and visitors can continue to enjoy one of Suffolk's most popular riverside walking routes, connecting communities, wildlife habitats and local heritage along the River Gipping.

For more information about the Gipping Valley River Path, and other walks, visit the [Discover Suffolk website](#)

## • **Families invited to get moving at Suffolk in Motion travel experience day**

Residents are invited to discover new ways to travel around Suffolk at a free family-friendly event taking place this autumn.

Suffolk in Motion will be held on Saturday 10 October, from 10am to 3pm, at the London Road (Copdock) Park and Ride, offering visitors the chance to explore a range of transport options available across the county.

Delivered by Suffolk County Council in partnership with Believ and Urban Fox, the event will showcase sustainable and affordable ways to travel, helping people to make informed choices about how they get around Suffolk.

The day will feature a range of interactive activities and displays for all ages, including:

- Balance bikes for younger children
- A stamp trail around the event
- Pedal-powered Scalextric racing
- Pre-bookable bike health checks with the Bike Doctor
- Information about local walking groups and wellbeing walks
- Test drives and displays of new and used electric vehicles (EVs)
- Opportunities to try out e-bikes
- Advice from local EV owners on charging, running costs and ownership
- Information on local pay-as-you-go electric car clubs

Everyone attending will also be entered into a free draw, with many prizes including a signed Ipswich Town FC shirt and an afternoon tea for two.

## • **Cutting edge pothole-busting machine put to test as council launches new plan to put Suffolk communities first**

Suffolk County Council will today start trialling new pothole machinery as part a new plan to bring more innovation into the way public services are delivered for residents.

The JCB Pothole Pro - a specialist 3-in-1 machine designed to deliver speedy and permanent pothole repairs – is on free loan from JCB.(at no cost to SCC)

It is engineered to cut, crop and clean defects using dedicated attachments, preparing each pothole for permanent filling in as little as eight minutes.

The trial is an example of the county councils new plans to significantly change the way it works – putting the needs of Suffolk communities above all else.

This will include more common sense in decision-making, slashing bureaucracy and unnecessary spending, being more responsive to residents, getting things done quicker and protecting Suffolk's precious way of life.

## **• Over 140km of Suffolk roads treated as 2026 surface dressing programme comes to an end**

86 sites completed across the county as Suffolk Highways delivered its 2026 surface dressing programme.

Suffolk Highways has completed its 2026 surface dressing programme, treating 141 kilometres of roads across the county to help protect and extend the life of Suffolk's highway network.

The programme saw more than 750,000 square metres of road treated – equivalent to over 100 full-sized football pitches – across 86 sites in all areas of Suffolk.

Surface dressing is a fast, efficient and sustainable way to maintain roads. It seals the road surface, restores skid resistance and helps protect against water damage, extending the life of roads and reducing the need for more costly repairs.

A product called Lockchip was also successfully trialled at nine sites across Suffolk. Lockchip is designed to help seal down the newly applied surface and reduce loose chippings following treatment.

Both trials have provided valuable experience and will help Suffolk Highways consider how these approaches can be used in future surface dressing programmes.

## **• An end to LGR;**

- The Government has just announced that it is withdrawing its decision to implement local government reorganisation in Suffolk. The decision is also being withdrawn in Essex, Norfolk and Hampshire. The Government will now review its approach.
- It has also announced it has paused LGR work in 14 other areas, pending review.

The Government say it follows updated and privileged legal advice and changes of ministerial positions.

- **Local issues**

More locally Ive been meeting regularly with Highways and trying to come up with some better solutions to speeding and speed reduction zones around the villages.

Speaking to residents across a few of the villages about some other highways issues mainly around parking or enforcement.

Valencia waste is still currently not operating and we will continue to monitor this as it changes.

Brett aggregates are now in talks to continue their mining and excavating licenses through SCC.

Old Norwich road ANPR cameras are on-going and will hopefully be part of the wider Ipswich ANPR network starting early next year.

The road closures and fibre work in Henley has started and hopefully doesn't cause any major issues to business and residents going forward.

The petition around Bramford for free (SCC)school travel has reached around 500 signatures, and is being looked at from previous data and policy changes.