

March 2024 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Public consultation on SCC's proposed devolution deal starts on 18th March

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18th March and run through until 26th May. The consultation will be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

Dragon Patcher lands in Suffolk to bolster response to rural potholes

Suffolk Highways has welcomed the new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk. The Dragon Patcher is a machine that releases compressed air which cleans the surface of the road, before heating the surface to a temperature that enables repair material to bond effectively with the road surface, allowing the pothole to be repaired with an aggregate and hot bitumen material. Compared with the traditional approach of repairing potholes, the Dragon Patcher can work five times faster. This trial is in addition to the potholes being repaired around the clock as part of our routine repair programme, during the past two months Suffolk Highways has repaired 2,851 potholes across Suffolk. Fuelled by the biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use and creates zero waste and has shown to provide significant carbon savings when compared to traditional patching techniques. The recent cold and wet weather has expectedly brought a huge spike in the number of potholes appearing across our roads and we are working around the clock to tackle the current levels we are seeing. The arrival of the Dragon Patcher in Suffolk will help bolster our efforts in getting these defects repaired, especially focusing on rural roads where we can repair higher numbers, in a fraction of the time. This new piece of kit is one way in which our new highways contract strives to provide better value for Suffolk's taxpayers and works to reduce impact on the environment. Once the trial ends in Suffolk, a decision will be taken on whether to roll out the technology across the county.

Councils' loft insulation offer for Suffolk homes

Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders have launched a Suffolk Loft Insulation offer, teaming up with builders' merchant Travis Perkins to offer Suffolk residents a significant reduction on loft insulation. There are four product options available, and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery. According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof. An effective way to reduce this heat loss, and heating bills, is to insulate your loft, attic or flat roof. Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime. Good insulation is a simple addition to immediately improve the warmth and comfort of your home. This should mean you have to put the heating on less, which will save you money and also be making a positive contribution to climate change. The offer is open to anyone and will close once the allocated funding has been spent. To find out more visit www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/. Simply fill out the [online order form](#) and Travis Perkins will be in touch to arrange payment and delivery. The Loft Insulation Grant is being funded by Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders and Travis Perkins and will help contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for Suffolk to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

More of Suffolk's tree cover and orchards to be restored

Suffolk County Council has secured funding of £201,213 from the government's Local Authority Treescapes Fund on behalf of Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council. The funding will go towards the planting of the trees, many of which are 'standards' around six feet in height when planted. The funding also covers three years of maintenance to help the trees become established. The Fund aims to restore tree cover in non-woodland areas which may have been impacted by issues such as disease, habitat degradation or ageing tree stock. Many of the proposed projects will involve their local community and pupils from local schools. We have now made three successful bids to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund on behalf of local councils, bringing in around half a million pounds to plant and maintain 7,604 trees in recent years. We are re-introducing tree cover where it has been lost. Successful tree-planting doesn't have to cover many acres of land – small residential plantings can have an equally significant impact on local residents and wildlife. Access to a green space helps improve our health and wellbeing, and can be havens for insects and support wildlife. It's crucial that we continue to protect and enhance our local environment, and help reverse the decline in Suffolk's biodiversity. Creating more orchards is one of the themes across the planting projects. Nationally, there has been a decline in the number of orchards because of commercial pressures and increased imports. This loss of orchards has impacts on the species they support, with less blossom and fruit for food, and less shelter and shading. It also means we are losing some of our heritage varieties and reducing genetic diversity. One example of this is the creation of a community orchard in Woods Meadow Country Park, near Lowestoft. Local varieties of apple, plum, gage and cherry trees will be sourced from the Suffolk & Apples & Orchards Project. The trees will be cared for by wardens, the Woods Meadow volunteer group, the local primary school, and local residents. The fruit will be available for the local visitors to the park to pick and eat, but also a good source of food for birds and wildlife.

Applications open for new Suffolk Business Board

Inspirational and influential local businesspeople are sought to form the board, which will represent the local business community and will help steer the local economic strategy to create a stronger and higher-skilled economy for Suffolk. The board will meet 4-6 times a year to help shape economic strategy and priorities for Suffolk, to oversee delivery of funded programmes such as business support and skills training for Suffolk, and to work closely with partners such as District councils, neighbouring counties, and national economic and trade bodies. The county council is seeking candidates who represent the diversity of Suffolk's people and economy, whether that be sector, geography, or business type. Expressions of interest should be emailed to businessboard@suffolk.gov.uk by Friday 22 March, with a short biography or CV and a brief cover letter outlining your interest in the opportunity and what area(s) of expertise you feel you could bring. Board membership is a voluntary position and terms are for up to three years from the date of appointment. The Business Board will be supported by a dedicated team of council officers. The new Suffolk Business Board will be a forum for business, education and local political leaders to shape a compelling economic strategy and identity for Suffolk, attract new investment and act as an advocate for Suffolk's economy at a national level. Successful candidates will be the voice of business in Suffolk, and their knowledge and experience will be invaluable in creating a stronger economy and better jobs for our county. The establishment of the Business Board follows the Government's announcement in 2023 that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would be integrated into upper tier local authorities. The Suffolk Business Board will succeed the existing New Anglia LEP Board which ceases on 31 March 2024.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk