

Report for Lavenham PC by County Councillor Robert Lindsay 1.5.25

Hole in Water Street pavement

Action is creaking on with this collapse of the historic brick culvert. Because it is listed, highways engineers have had to consult Suffolk archaeologists, Historic England and Babergh Heritage before designing any repair work.

I chased two weeks ago and was told they had just heard back and that those three are all urging that as much of the brick culvert as possible be retained.

The engineers had wanted to remove a 6 metre section of the culvert to minimise the risk of future collapses. Now, they are instead planning on replacing just the damaged parts with a concrete half pipe. This is apparently what they did with the earlier collapse of the culvert just below the entrance to the gas station car park.

As of writing they were still drawing up the plan and I have not been given a schedule for the works.

Local Government centralisation

A few more small facts are filtering out from central Government about this massive rejig of local government. It is becoming clear that the mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk will be able to levy a precept on the council tax so cost savings projected from eliminating some senior officers from district and borough councils in Suffolk may well be counterbalanced the extra costs of the Mayor.

As before, county council is insisting on one unitary for the entire county while districts and boroughs have requested two or three across Suffolk.

My discretionary budgets all spent but new sums from April 1st

My discretionary budgets for the previous four years are all spent.

But because of the delay in the election, I will have a fresh £6k for local highways spending and £6k for community “locality” grants for the next financial year.

Increasing School Places for SEND Students

On Tuesday 1 April, Cabinet voted to increase the number of school places in the county for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

1. £18.6m to be spent creating about 100 places would be created within existing mainstream schools, from next academic year.
2. Up to £12m to create 100 places the following year in “satellite” locations of existing special schools in Suffolk.

Since the Cabinet report was tabled, the government has announced that Suffolk will receive an extra £9.4m to invest in new SEND school places.

Plans will now be drawn up by the Local Area SEND Partnership on how to spend the money.

£4m for “skills bootcamps”

The Department for Education has allocated Suffolk County Council up to £4m to be spent delivering free skills training to an extra 1,345 adults across Norfolk and Suffolk this year. Courses last up to 16 weeks and offer a combination of online and in-person learning. Employers can work directly with training providers to create courses that align with their needs. Those interested in taking part in the Skills Bootcamps can find more information here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps>

6,000 Public EV Chargepoints Planned

Suffolk County Council will be installing around 6,000 new public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints across the county.

From the summer, thousands of charging points will be installed on residential streets, with many locations suggested by local residents following the survey which was undertaken last year, or by liaison with communities and district/borough councils.

The majority of installations will be bollard-style units at the kerbside, suitable for long-stay or overnight charging, when drivers will be able to benefit from an overnight off-peak tariff, and there will also be a dedicated resident's tariff which features discounted charging at all times.

Public car parks will also see a number of rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoint installations, for quicker charging. This project has been made possible due to a successful £5.3 million bid by SCC to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. This summer's roll-out will use a proportion of this funding, with a further £16 million of funding provided by the chargepoint operator, *Believe*.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The County Council is asking the public to comment and respond to its draft new plans to help restore and enhance nature. You can view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken. Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations