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Suffolk County Councillor

Carlford Division

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Parish Newsletter

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Conservatives help ensure investigation into council's judicial review decision-making process

At Suffolk County Council Scrutiny Committee, two separate referrals on how the Council's decision to judicially review the Government was administered were discussed. The two referrals were brought separately by Conservative Group Leader, Richard Rout, and Councillor Martin Cook, Leader of the Labour Party Group.

Cllr Richard Rout's referral asked the committee to consider whether the decision to commit the Council to the judicial review should have been treated as a 'key decision' under the Council's constitution and relevant regulations. His referral raised concerns about the significance of the decision for communities across Suffolk, the potential expenditure of up to £500,000, how the decision was classified and publicised, and the financial basis for committing Council reserves to the litigation.

Following the discussion, a vote was taken which split down party lines – six Reform councillors voted against looking into it further, while the six opposition councillors, including two Conservatives, voted in favour of forming a Task and Finish Group to investigate the matter thoroughly. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julia Ewart, used her casting vote to ensure the investigation will happen.

Councillor Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group, said:

"There has been widespread dissatisfaction around how the Council handled the decision to launch a judicial review against the Government, in terms of transparency, proper classification of the decision and communication with councillors. Although the Monitoring Officer issued a Section 5A Report on where two breaches of the law occurred, its remit was narrow and backward-looking. Therefore, I'm pleased the committee has decided to launch a thorough investigation which will hold all involved properly to account.

"This is not about revisiting the Judicial Review or determining whether it was right or wrong to launch it. It's about ensuring full transparency, public accountability and proper processes around future decisions, and learning from the mistakes, or missteps, that were made.

"It's disappointing that despite promising 'openness and accountability' when they were elected, all six Reform councillors voted against looking into this further. However, thanks to the Chairman's casting vote, their attempts to shut down scrutiny were thwarted.

"Getting processes correct and ensuring decisions are made fully in the open impacts all of us as councillors and the work we do on behalf of our residents. I'm confident that this piece of work will help improve how the Council is administered going forward and better enable councillors, and the public, to hold Suffolk County Council to account."

Suffolk Conservatives will continue to contribute to the investigation being undertaken by the Task and Finish Group established by members of the Scrutiny Committee, helping to ensure that the issues raised are examined thoroughly and that any lessons identified can inform how the Council handles similar decisions in the future.

'We cannot blindly vote on a referendum that could commit millions of Suffolk taxpayers' money', Say Conservatives

During today's Suffolk County Council meeting, the Conservative Group abstained from supporting the administration's motion on holding a non-binding referendum on asylum accommodation in Suffolk alongside the next local elections on 6 May 2027.

The proposed referendum that could cost Suffolk taxpayers more than £650.000, generates concerns due to the lack of information surrounding the proposal and raises questions whether this represents value for money, particularly when the Reform UK administration already reported a £7.8 million overspend and is currently forecast to go below the minimum reserves threshold.

The proposal of this referendum follows the Home Office announcement of building an asylum seeker accommodation in RAF Barnham. The Conservative Group has made clear from day one that it echoes the concerns raised by the local community in Barnham and its Parish Council, regarding the impact this site will have in the community and opposes the use of RAF Barnham to house asylum seekers.

Cllr Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group, said:

"We will always support seeking the views of Suffolk residents on key issues, provided it is legal and affordable to do so. However, too little background work was done by Reform UK ahead of today. County Council staff suggest the cost of this referendum will be a minimum of £650,000, while district council sources put the cost at between £1 million and £2 million.

"On the legal basis for such a referendum, our reading is that the Council does not have the power to hold a referendum or use the electoral register unless the question relates to Council services, which the housing of asylum seekers does not. We put this legal question to the Council ahead of the meeting, but they declined to answer.

"Given the lack of information and the administration's failure to approach Barnham Parish Council to ascertain whether it would support such a referendum, we felt we had no option but to abstain. We support Barnham residents and continue to oppose the use of RAF Barnham to house asylum seekers.

"Moreover, we support the Parish Council in considering whether a parish poll is the right way forward for the village. The Parish Council and local councillors, including Cllr Richardson at the County Council and Cllr Smith at West Suffolk Council, have been at the

forefront of local opposition to housing asylum seekers at RAF Barnham and have sought to approach the issue in a calm and considered manner. It is in that spirit that we must continue, because this issue is far too important to be used as a political campaign."

Local Cllr Harry Richardson, from Blackbourn division, commented:

"We believe that local residents should remain at the heart of this discussion, and that RAF Barnham and the concerns of its residents must not be used to promote Reform UK's political campaign ahead of the next local elections.

"I was disappointed by the tone of the debate in the chamber today, particularly from administration councillors who seemed to be using our local community as a platform for their own ambitions and a particular political agenda.

"RAF Barnham is, of course, the wrong location for housing single male asylum seekers, and I will work with anyone who wants to oppose these proposals in a sensible and constructive way. However, Barnham and its hard-working residents must not be used as a political football by Reform UK, which did not even afford Barnham Parish Council the courtesy of informing them that this motion was coming."

The Conservative Group will continue to stand with Barnham residents and oppose the use of RAF Barnham for asylum accommodation. However, any action taken by the current administration must be lawful, transparent and represent value for Suffolk taxpayers.

County Council approves Conservative motion on the contribution of Suffolk's Town and Parish Councils and Parish meetings

Suffolk County Council has approved the Conservative motion, with 60 votes in favour, recognising the important contribution of Suffolk's town and parish councils and parish meetings in representing residents and supporting local communities.

The motion also calls for a constructive approach when a town or parish council, or a parish meeting, identifies that a County Council service or asset could be managed to a higher standard or provide better value for local residents.

Following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the One Suffolk proposal, the Conservative Group highlighted the importance of strengthening communication between the County Council and town and parish councils, helping local issues to be addressed more quickly and effectively.

Cllr Beccy Hopfensperger, Deputy Leader of the Suffolk Conservative Group, said:

“Town and parish councils and parish meetings are often the first point of contact for our communities. They understand the needs and concerns of their residents and play an important role in representing local people.

“This motion recognises the contribution they make across Suffolk and the importance of the County Council working hand in hand with local representatives.

“Following the Government’s decision on LGR, we believed it was important to address a key concern identified during the previous Conservative administration: the need to listen to and work closely with our town and parish councils and parish meetings.”

Cllr Joe Mason, Deputy Leader of the Suffolk Conservative Group, said:

“Our town and parish councils are often closest to the communities they serve. They are usually the first to become aware of local issues and have the knowledge and capacity to propose effective solutions for their communities. This motion provides an opportunity to strengthen that partnership.

“Approving this motion is an important recognition of the role that our town and parish councils and parish meetings play. The next step is ensuring that this commitment translates into meaningful cooperation and action across Suffolk.”

Suffolk Conservatives demand answers over Healthy Child Services consultation and call for Cabinet Member to meet community nurses

Cllr Bobby Bennett, on behalf of the Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council, has sent an open letter to Cllr June Mummery, Cabinet Member for Coastal Affairs, Communities and Public Health, calling for the evidence supporting the current Healthy Child Services consultation to be published and for a meeting with affected community nursing staff to hear their views.

The letter follows last week’s Suffolk County Council meeting, where Cllr Bennett questioned Cllr Mummery about the consultation, its potential impact on the Young Parent's Pathway, and her decision not to meet with the community nurses affected by the proposals. However, Cllr Bennett says she was unable to obtain answers to these questions.

In her letter, Cllr Bennett reiterates concerns that the consultation may not provide sufficient information for people to submit informed responses. She also stresses the importance of listening to the community nurses directly affected before the consultation closes.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Shadow Spokesperson for Children’s Services, said:

“It is right that consultations are conducted fairly, but this cannot mean leaving fundamental questions unanswered or refusing to listen to the people directly affected.

“I have repeatedly been told that there is insufficient information available for consultees to make an informed response. When I asked at Full Council to be directed to the evidence behind this consultation, I was unable to obtain an answer.

“I am therefore asking the Cabinet Member to publish the evidence base on which this consultation has been built, so that residents, staff and other stakeholders can respond on an informed basis.

“I am also calling for a meeting with our community nurses before the consultation closes. Listening to their experiences and explaining the reasons for the consultation does not mean prejudging its outcome. It means ensuring their voices are heard.”

Suffolk Conservatives are urging Cllr Mummery to respond to these requests as a matter of urgency, emphasising the importance of transparency and ensuring that the staff directly affected have an opportunity to share their views before the consultation closes.

Redmere Wind Farm team to consider meeting in Suffolk in early 2027 following Conservatives’ request

The Redmere Wind Farm project team has confirmed, in response to a letter from the Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council, that it will explore holding a public meeting in Suffolk in early 2027, with Beck Row or Mildenhall among the potential locations for the next stage of community engagement.

Conservatives had previously expressed their disappointment that Suffolk was not included in the initial stage of drop-in meetings organised by the Redmere team in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, despite Suffolk residents also being affected by the proposal.

Cllr Joe Mason, Deputy Group Leader and Shadow Spokesperson for Highways, Transport Strategy & Property, said:

“The Redmere team has responded to our letter and acknowledged our concerns about Suffolk being excluded from the initial stage of community engagement. They have confirmed that further information about the project’s design and developing proposal will be shared when it becomes available, including future engagement with the affected communities.

“We believe it is important to represent the thousands of Suffolk residents who want to be part of this discussion. We have called for a public meeting to be held locally, giving residents the opportunity to hear directly from the project team, ask questions and raise

their concerns. We want to make this happen and hope the Redmere team will guarantee this.

“Redmere has also acknowledged the concerns we raised about the potential impact on agricultural land and wildlife, as well as the proximity of the proposed development to RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall. They have said that these matters will be considered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment, alongside future engagement with the Ministry of Defence.

“While we are still waiting for the current administration to take the lead in requesting a meeting for Suffolk residents too, we hope this response will be a step towards securing one and ensuring local people are not left out of the conversation again.”

The Conservative Group will continue to press for a public meeting in Beck Row or Mildenhall and for Suffolk residents to be fully included in the next stage of community engagement.

Suffolk Conservatives say new Local Government Reorganisation decision is an opportunity to get it right for Suffolk

Following the latest announcement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), confirming that a new decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will be made for Suffolk in early 2027, with shadow elections in May 2028 and a new authority established in May 2029, the Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council is calling on the Government to seize this opportunity to get LGR right for Suffolk.

With the Government preparing to make a new decision, the Conservatives believe this is a chance to look again at the options, learn from the strengths of existing councils and make sure the final decision delivers the best possible outcome for Suffolk residents.

Cllr Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group, said:

“We have always supported the One Suffolk proposal we put forward when Local Government Reorganisation was first introduced in Suffolk. Of the two options in front of the Government, a single unitary authority offers the best opportunity to bring our county together and give Suffolk a clear direction for the future.

“But we also know there are things we can learn from the experience of our existing councils. There are many services our district and borough councils deliver incredibly well, and there are things the county council doesn’t do well enough. As we move into the next stage of this process, we need to look at what works across Suffolk and make sure we take the best of that forward. This is about getting the future of local government right for our residents and ensuring Suffolk has an authority that is ready to work with the future Mayor of Suffolk and Norfolk.

“Suffolk has been marched up and down the local government reorganisation hill too many times, at vast expense to local taxpayers. This is a shambles of the Government’s making. What residents, businesses, local councils and voluntary organisations need is certainty. They need to know what happens next, and we should all be focused on getting the best possible outcome for Suffolk.”

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Spokesperson for LGR, Devolution, Farming and Rural Affairs, said:

“Suffolk has done its homework. The previous administration at Suffolk County Council, alongside the district and borough councils, developed two business cases and presented them to the Government. We cannot simply throw all that work away and start from zero. I am more than sure that the One Suffolk proposal we delivered is the best option for our county. Creating a single unitary authority that integrates all services and is more efficient will be the best outcome for Suffolk.

“Local Government Reorganisation is one of the biggest changes to how local authorities will operate and deliver services in Suffolk. This decision will affect jobs, families and vulnerable residents who rely on local services every day. We need certainty about the future, protection for our frontline services, and a clear commitment to putting residents first.

“The Government needs to bring this uncertainty to an end. We are talking about the future of Suffolk and how local services will be delivered for years to come. Our residents deserve clarity, and our councils need to know what lies ahead so they can plan for the future and focus on the needs of their communities.”

Up to 3,000 learners to gain engineering and construction skills

The Lound Civil Campus project at East Coast College, will establish a dynamic training hub in collaboration with regional employers, focused on addressing current and future skills needs in the civil and construction trades.

The project will be funded by £2.1m from the Asset Skills Enhancement and Capability (ASEC) Fund, a £7.8 million pot secured through the planning process for Sizewell C and managed and allocated by Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council and Sizewell C in partnership to enhance the supply of skills related to Sizewell C, alongside regional needs and aspirations.

The campus will deliver a wide range of training opportunities, to boost skills and support workforce development across the sector. It will cater to new entrants, career changers, and existing workers seeking to up-skill, ensuring inclusive access to high-quality vocational education.
The project has been designed to be delivered in multiple phases. The £2.1m ASEC funding has supported Phase 2 of the project, the implementation of a Technical Operators area. Work to deliver this site is already underway.

Phase 3, which includes the partial refurbishment of the previous site infrastructure to provide a new training area for construction-specific learning, is expected to commence within six months of the start of the previous phase.

Have your say on plans to expand family hub services across Suffolk

Suffolk currently operates 29 family hubs (17 full-time and 12 part-time). These will be renamed under the Government plans as Best Start Family Hubs.

The plans form part of the Government's Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme. It is supported by more than £6.5million funding from the Department for Education.

Under the new model, families would receive support in their communities through 17 Best Start Family Hub Sites and 33 Best Start Network Sites. The 17 hub sites will be in fixed buildings and operate full-time hours, and the network sites will use existing community assets, such as 23 libraries across Suffolk, and operate on part-time hours.

On Thursday 15 October, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet was asked to approve the launch of a statutory consultation on the new Best Start proposals, which will run for six weeks.

Final approval of the plan will then be sought from Cabinet early next year.

Under the Childcare Act 2006, the council must carry out a consultation before making decisions that could result in significant changes to designated Children's Centre services or buildings.

In particular, the consultation relates to proposed changes affecting 32 sites that were previously designated Children's Centres. Proposals for these sites include:

- 17 buildings becoming Best Start Family Hubs
- 3 buildings becoming Best Start Network Sites
- 6 buildings to be explored for early years/childcare use
- 2 buildings to be explored for SEND/education use
- 4 buildings to cease delivering a family hub offer, with services moving to alternative community venues

Government gives vote of confidence to Suffolk's progress on SEND reform

The decision means Suffolk can now move forward with a new programme of reform designed to provide support earlier, strengthen inclusion in mainstream schools, and improve outcomes for children and young people across the county.

In addition, the Government has also agreed to write-off 90% of historic SEND debt in the county. This amounts to £148million.

Across England, local areas were invited to submit plans showing how they would reform SEND services in line with the Government's national SEND reforms. Suffolk's plan was developed by the Local Area SEND Partnership, which is made up of Suffolk County Council, NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board, education providers, and parents and carers.

The approved plan sets out how Suffolk will work with schools, early years settings, colleges, health services and families to create a more inclusive system where children can access the right support at the right time, closer to home.

A major focus of the programme is helping more children and young people have their needs met successfully within their local mainstream school wherever appropriate.

The reforms will support schools to become more inclusive, strengthen staff confidence and capability, and improve access to specialist advice and support when it is needed. The ambition is to ensure that more children can thrive in their local school community, while still having access to specialist support where required.

The reforms will be delivered alongside Suffolk's important SEND improvement work and will build on progress already underway across the county.

One example of the new reforms is Suffolk's £2million investment in Inclusion Bases in mainstream schools. These bases will help schools intervene earlier, provide enhanced support for children with SEND and strengthen inclusive practice across the education system.

Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services at Suffolk County Council, said:

"This is a really significant moment for Suffolk and an important vote of confidence in the direction we are taking.

"We know we have some way to go, but the Government are supportive of our plans.

"We want children and young people with SEND to get the right support earlier, in the right place and at the right time. That means working alongside schools to build a more inclusive education system where more children can have their needs met successfully within their local communities.

"We know families want support that is easier to access, more consistent and delivered earlier. This reform programme builds on the improvement work already underway across Suffolk and will help us create a system that is more responsive, more inclusive and focused on improving outcomes for children and young people."

Ed Garratt OBE, Chief Executive, NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board, said:

"This programme is about much more than services. It is about creating a system that works better for children, young people and families.

"Health, education and care partners all have a part to play in helping children thrive, and this programme gives us a stronger framework for working together around children and families.
"By identifying needs earlier, providing support closer to home and strengthening inclusion in local settings, we can improve experiences for families and deliver better outcomes for children and young people across Suffolk.

"The voices of children, young people and families will continue to shape this work as we move from planning into delivery."

Suffolk's latest financial position identified a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of approximately £163.839million on 31 March 2026. The grant expected is projected at £147.455million.

'Feel Good' in Suffolk as smoking rates fall below national average

The latest figures from The Office for National Statistics show that adult smoking prevalence in Suffolk has fallen from 10.5% to 8.5% over the past year, putting the county below the national average of 9.5%.

The fall in smoking rates comes after a successful year for stop smoking support in Suffolk. In the last financial year, more than 2,600 people stopped smoking with help from local services, including Feel Good Suffolk, the county's free stop smoking service.

Feel Good Suffolk is delivered through a unique partnership of Suffolk County Council's public health team, Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, West Suffolk Council, NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board and Abbeycroft Leisure.

Georgina Howe, Feel Good Suffolk's Strategic Manager, said:

"Smoking is still a big public health issue and the leading cause of preventable death and disease. We're therefore delighted to learn that fewer people in Suffolk are now smoking compared to a year ago. It shows that, working with our partners, Feel Good Suffolk is making a difference and helping even more people to quit across the county. The fact the percentage of adults who smoke in Suffolk is now less than 10% and less than the national average feels like a big step. This is down to a lot of hard work and dedication by our team since we launched three years ago. I'd also like to thank all the organisations we work with across Suffolk who support our work.

“It’s also down to the commitment and success of those who’ve stopped smoking. It’s not easy and for most people it takes several attempts to find the method that works for them. We still need to work hard to make sure those who still smoke and need our support know we're here to help.

“If you’re thinking about quitting or know someone who is – you’re three times more likely to be successful with our help and it’s free. So, even if you’ve tried before, please do reach out to us. We’re here to help!”

Anyone who is ready to stop smoking can find out more about the free support available from Feel Good Suffolk at feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk/stop-smoking

New wellbeing trail at Orwell Country Park helps people connect with nature

The Pipers Vale Wellbeing Trail opens today (10 October 2026) to coincide with World Mental Health Day 2026. Developed by Suffolk County Council, with support from Ipswich Borough Council, Forestry England and Green Light Trust, the trail is part of a wider programme to establish the Orwell area as a destination for nature, walking and wellbeing.

The self-guided trail encourages visitors to engage more deeply with their surroundings through a series of mindfulness and nature-connection prompts. Along the route, people are invited to pause and reflect through themed prompts including Breathe, Pause, Be Still, Notice, Awaken Senses, Stand Firm, Find Wonder, Connect, Restore and Wander.

Research shows that connecting with nature can help people feel calmer, more grounded and more present. The trail offers a free and accessible way for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy those benefits while exploring one of Suffolk's most valued green spaces.

Drawing on Forestry England's wellbeing trail concept and shaped by feedback from participants involved with Green Light Trust, the trail has been tailored to reflect the unique landscape and character of Orwell Country Park.

As owner and manager of the park, Ipswich Borough Council played a key role in delivering the project, including installing the new trail signs.

The trail forms part of a wider programme that is helping to strengthen the Orwell area's reputation as a place for nature, walking and wellbeing. It connects with the King Charles III England Coast Path, the 5.5-mile Ipswich Waterfront Walk and a range of access and landscape improvements that are making it easier for residents and visitors to explore the area's green spaces, waterfront and natural environment.

First look at Suffolk's new £3.6m fleet of fire engines

The new vehicles are the latest phase of the Service's fleet replacement programme and will replace some of its oldest appliances, helping to ensure firefighters have access to modern vehicles equipped with the latest operational and safety features.

The investment follows the successful introduction of eight new engines in 2024 and forms part of the Service's long-term fleet replacement strategy.

Featuring a number of operational and safety enhancements, the new additions boast touchscreen pump controls, LED scene lighting, hot hand wash units, tyre pressure monitoring, and blind spot collision alerts. Additional improvements include automated ladder head gantries and bronze water pumps designed to reduce corrosion and maintenance requirements.

Built by 'Emergency One' on Volvo FL816 chassis, the 16-tonne Type B pumping appliances have been designed to respond to a wide range of incidents and are the same specification as appliances already operating within the Service.

Henry Griffin, Suffolk Fire and Rescue's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, said:

"This is an important milestone for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service as we prepare to introduce 11 new fire appliances into frontline service across Suffolk.

"These vehicles represent a significant step forward in our fleet replacement programme and will support firefighters in responding to a wide range of incidents across the county. Designed around operational requirements, they incorporate a number of enhancements that will benefit crews on the incident ground.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the contribution of Matthew Parsons, our Asset and Commissioning Manager. Matthew has led this project since its earliest stages, working closely with operational colleagues, fleet teams and suppliers over the past few years to help bring these appliances into service."

The appliances will now undergo final preparations before being allocated to fire stations as part of the planned vehicle cascade.

Suffolk residents urged to check flood risk and prepare ahead of winter

Suffolk residents are also encouraged to make themselves aware of their responsibilities on their property, and the things that they can do to reduce the impacts of flooding.

As climate change brings more frequent periods of intense rainfall, flooding is becoming an increasing risk across the country, as many Suffolk communities experienced during Storm Babet in October 2023.

The Environment Agency says:

“6.3 million properties in England sit in areas at risk of flooding. And as our climate keeps changing, that risk keeps growing. Between April 2025 and March 2026 alone, we issued over 3,400 flood alerts, around 1,000 flood warnings, and 3 severe flood warnings.”

Suffolk County Council continues to support communities through its role as Lead Local Flood Authority. Alongside Suffolk Highways' programme of maintaining more than 150,000 highway gullies, the council is securing funding and delivering projects that help reduce the impact of flooding on residents, businesses and critical infrastructure.

This includes natural flood management schemes, developed with farmers and landowners, that slow the flow of water through the landscape and reduce flood risk for downstream communities – for example a number of recent projects are underway in Debenham, which felt the impact of Storm Babet.

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with Norfolk County Council, has also pioneered the Reclaim The Rain project - testing new ways of managing and harnessing water in small rural locations, including projects with Boxford Village Hall and Little Blakenham Village Hall.

There are a number of resources available online:

- Maintenance of ditches and other watercourses - responsibility often lies with the landowner
- Highway drainage in Suffolk - find out when gullies near you are due to be attended
- Flood Smart Living Handbook – advice, guidance and measures you can take to reduce the risk of flooding
- Flood risk checker – find out if your property is at risk of flooding using the Environment Agency national mapping
- Report a flood in Suffolk - how to report a flood problem and what will happen after you've reported the problem

For more advice and information for Suffolk, search for “flooding” on www.suffolk.gov.uk Follow the Environment Agency on Facebook for more about flooding during Flood Action Week www.facebook.com/environmentagency

Working with nature to reduce flooding in Debenham

Projects at Crows Hall and Elm Farm were awarded £122,219 of funding from The Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee’s Local Levy, with initial designs funded by Defra’s Water Environment Improvement Funding.

Many partners have been involved in successfully bringing these natural flood management projects to life, with Suffolk County Council in its role as Lead Local Flood Authority securing funding to oversee the projects.

The schemes are designed to intercept surface water flows, that would otherwise contribute to flooding within the village during periods of peak rainfall. Surface water flows are intercepted through a series of deliberately leaky debris dams and water attenuation features.

They complement a number of other flood resilience projects that are both constructed and proposed for the Debenham area. While they cannot guarantee complete protection from flooding, they will significantly reduce flood risk to people and property.
They complement a number of other flood resilience projects that are both constructed and proposed for the Debenham area. While they cannot guarantee complete protection from flooding, they will significantly reduce flood risk to people and property.

The projects also complement the "Recovering the Deben from Source to Sea" programme - an initiative from the East Suffolk Catchment Partnership, hosted by the Essex and Suffolk River's Trust.

This works along the entire river to improve its health, from restoring natural riverbanks to reconnecting habitats for wildlife.

Helen Dangerfield, Director at the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, said:

"The River Deben is a vital part of our local environment, and natural flood management helps protect it by slowing the flow of water naturally. As well as reducing flood risk, these measures support wildlife, improve water quality and help the river cope with the challenges of a changing climate."

Following the S19 Flood Investigation Reports carried out after Storm Babet, Suffolk County Council continues to work with landowners and partners to identify further opportunities for natural flood management across the county.

Partners of the project include East Suffolk Water Management Board (IDB), Environment Agency, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, Suffolk County Council, Sustainable Water Solutions, Water Management Alliance, and the private landowners as members of the Upper Deben Farm Cluster.

Green light for A12 multi-million pound upgrade as scheme gets planning permission

Suffolk County Council has approved a full planning application for highway improvements on the A12 worth around £63 million.

The works will take place between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and the Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge.

The plans feature significant upgrades to the 6.8 mile stretch to improve transport connectivity, journey times, safety, and accessibility for all users, including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport passengers.

A key feature will be to turn the road from single carriageway to dual carriageway between the two junctions with the B1438 and the B1079.

The council's Development and Regulation Committee gave unanimous approval today (Tuesday October 20) to the scheme.

The council will now formally submit its business case to the Department for Transport (DfT) and, subject to DfT approval, work may start around autumn 2027.

If approved by DfT, central Government will provide up to £54.067m, with the remainder coming from developers and the county council.

Key elements of the scheme are:

- Highway upgrades to improve traffic flow and safety, including enhancements to seven road junctions.
- Replacement of the Martlesham footbridge with a new non-motorised users bridge to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
- New bus link junction north of Anson Road, connecting the A12 and Main Road via Portal Avenue
- Dual carriageway upgrade between the A12/B1438 Ipswich Road junction and the A12/B1079 Grundisburgh Road junction, including a new layby, shared use footway/cycleway, and agricultural accessway
- New shared use footway/cycleways at Portal Avenue and north of A1152 Woods Lane, along with improved crossing facilities at key junctions
- Additional highway features, such as maintenance bays, traffic signs, upgraded signals, and pedestrian crossings

The proposals were drawn up following two public consultations after the scheme was first outlined in 2020.

'Sea Link is a hammer blow for East Suffolk communities', say Conservatives after Government approves project

Following the latest announcement from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero granting consent to the Sea Link Development Consent Order (DCO) application today,

Suffolk Conservatives have expressed their rejection and disappointment with the final decision.

During the previous Conservative administration at Suffolk County Council, the Conservative Group advised that this development should not be granted consent by the Secretary of State, given the significant concerns raised by local communities. These included the impact on residents' wellbeing and safety, the suitability of the proposed access route, and the potential harm to Suffolk's landscape and heritage assets, including the Grade II listed Hurts Hall and the Grade II* listed St John the Baptist Church in Saxmundham, alongside a range of other environmental and community concerns.

Cllr Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group, said:

“This approval is a hammer blow for communities in East Suffolk and it’s deeply concerning that the Labour Government has failed to listen to the many valid concerns put forward. While small concessions were won over things like working hours, major objections - like the use of the Benhall railway bridge and proposed bridge over the River Fromus remain. I’m afraid this is just another case of the Government riding roughshod over local communities in their desperate bid to chase their net zero ambitions.

“While we were in the administration at Suffolk County Council, we expressed the significant concerns we had about this project, even with the modifications the applicant submitted. We presented evidence of the concerns raised by residents. It seems that the Government decided not to listen to the people directly impacted.

"Residents deserve to have their concerns heard, particularly when a project of this scale could have a lasting impact on their communities, local landscapes and heritage. We are also concerned about the combined impact of the increasing number of major energy projects planned for the Suffolk coast. With Sizewell C and ScottishPower Renewables’ offshore wind farms approved, Sea Link now consented, and LionLink moving through the planning process, many local communities are facing the reality of multiple major developments on their doorstep at the same time.

"It is this cumulative impact that wears people down and permanently changes our coastal and rural landscapes. The government must start to consider the mental wellbeing of residents being asked to live with this scale of change.”