

Suffolk County Councillor Report

Superfast broadband Coverage continues to grow

On 24 August 2018, it was confirmed that 98% superfast broadband coverage will be achieved in 2020.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, Jo Churchill, MP for Bury St Edmunds and Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach, were joined by representatives from West Suffolk Council, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Church of England, Country Land and Business Association (CLA), National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Better Broadband for Suffolk Team to confirm plans to reach 98% coverage in 2020.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, said:

“We have now confirmed that we will achieve 98% superfast broadband coverage by the end of 2020, which highlights our commitment to connecting Suffolk. We have already seen an increase in delivery, with 137 new structures built last quarter. This equates to approximately 3,000 additional premises receiving a new superfast broadband connection.

“With this agreement in place, Openreach will continue to ensure that we meet our ambitious goal. In the meantime, we will continue to look for further funding opportunities to work on delivery to the final 2%.”

To check if a property can now access superfast broadband, people can visit the website at www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com and check the coverage for that area. The roll out is ongoing and Suffolk County Council is committed to delivering full coverage as quickly as possible.

It is important to remind people that a switch to fibre broadband is not automatic. Each household or business will need to contact an internet service provider to upgrade their connection.

Councils call for power companies to co-ordinate

On 24 August, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council issued a joint statement calling for better coordination of power project planning in east Suffolk.

Suffolk local authorities have used the response to Scottish Power Renewables current consultation to call for energy firms to co-ordinate their work plans better to reduce the disruption on local communities.

In their joint response, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council have highlighted the power company’s plan to site a substation in Friston, despite fierce local opposition, as an example of the piecemeal approach to the planning of these projects – and how local needs are being ignored.

East Suffolk is becoming increasingly important nationally for providing electricity for the nation, with a series of major projects in the pipeline. Estimates suggest that this area will be responsible for a quarter of the country’s electricity supply by the 2030s. But the infrastructure projects to generate and produce this electricity obviously have a major effect on the environment and the local communities.

In addition to the existing Sizewell B nuclear power stations and sub-stations for the Galloper and Greater Gabbard offshore wind farms, the area is now expecting the Sizewell C nuclear power station plus two sub-

stations for Scottish Power Renewables East Anglia Offshore 2 and 1 (North) schemes; two inter-continental connector converter stations for National Grid Ventures and a single major National Grid Transmission substation connecting these to the pylon lines.

In responding to the current consultation being run by Scottish Power Renewables, the local authorities have highlighted the cumulative effect of all these projects – and appealed for the power companies to work together to minimise disruption.

The Councils state they support and embrace the principle of low carbon energy generation and the trading of energy across a European wide transmission network and want to help them be delivered if the local dividend is for the benefit of the whole area.

Therefore, the Councils are committed to working together to ensure that where such schemes are brought forward they will have a positive impact on Suffolk, and East Suffolk in particular; supporting significant local growth by delivering:

- Substantial economic benefits
- Significant and sustained training and skills opportunities
- Substantial community benefits.

Read the [full joint response](#) (PDF, 148KB).

Suffolk students celebrate improved GCSE achievements

Self-reported statistics from Suffolk schools, released on 23 August, show that more students in Suffolk have achieved expected levels of GCSE attainment in English and maths this year.

The majority of GCSEs results are now graded from 9 to 1, (previously A to G) with 9 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. The expected standard for pupils to achieve is now a grade 4 and above (previously a C grade and above), with grade 5 considered a ‘strong pass’.

More than 7,000 students in Suffolk were entered for GCSE results. According to self-reported results collated from around 80% of schools in Suffolk, 67% of students achieved a grade 4 and above in English and maths this year. The figures state 2% more students have achieved the expected standard for English and maths, compared with last year.

Suffolk’s Attainment 8 figure has risen again this year by 1.5. The county’s Progress 8 figure is therefore expected to remain above the national average, when verified by the Department for Education in the Autumn.

Some schools have made significant gains compared to last year:

- Bungay High School: 11% increase to 67% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and maths
- Claydon High School: 10% increase to 72% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and maths
- Samuel Ward Academy, Haverhill: 12% increase to 64% of pupils achieving the threshold for English and maths
- Thomas Gainsborough School, Great Conard: 9% increase to 70% achieving the threshold for English and maths
- King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmunds: 8% increase to 76% achieving the threshold for English and maths

Debenham High School has again reported the highest number of students achieving a grade 4 and above in English and maths at 88%.

The self-reported figures also show an increase in the number of disadvantaged students achieving the threshold measure in English and maths. Approximately 3% more students in Suffolk achieved the measure this year compared to last year.

These figures are based on self-reported data from schools and academies to Suffolk County Council. The results are subject to validation by the Department for Education.

Another year of outstanding results for Suffolk students

Self-reported A-level figures, released on 16 August, show that Suffolk pupils have once again performed well with the number of A*-E grades awarded above the national average.

Almost 3,000 pupils were entered for A-levels in Suffolk. Although yet to be verified, the figures show that 98.1% of A-levels taken in the county have been awarded an A*- E grade, compared with 97.6% nationally.

Suffolk maintains its position, and continues to be above the national average, while the national figure reported today shows a decrease of 0.3%

Early indications also show that Suffolk's Academic average points per entry has risen by 0.2 compared with this time last year.

Pass rates remain high across the county, with St Benedict's Catholic School in Bury St Edmunds and Sir John Leman High School in Beccles both reporting a 100% pass rate (A*- E grade achieved).

There has been a 3% increase in Suffolk students achieving the top grades of A* or A. Farlingaye High School in Woodbridge made a significant gain with 36% of its students achieving the top grades.

A level and Applied General figures are based on self-reported data from schools and academies to Suffolk County Council. The results are subject to validation by the Department for Education in the New Year.

Councillor and former Stowmarket mayor Anne Whybrow has died

On 14 August 2018, Councillor Anne Whybrow died after a long illness.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, expressed his sadness following Anne's death.

"Anne was first elected to the County Council in 2006 to represent the Stowmarket South division. She was elected in May 2017 to the Bosmere division.

"She performed her community role admirably. She served on a large number of committees over the years and was Vice Chairman of the Council in 2012-13. She was held in high esteem and was testament to what a good councillor should be.

"Anne always showed much courage, strength and determination and will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with her family and friends at this very sad time."

Lake Lothing Third Crossing another step closer

On 10 August it was announced that the Lake Lothing Third Crossing Project in Lowestoft has reached another milestone, with the planning application now accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.

This approval of Suffolk County Council's application for the development consent order means that the next key stage of the project can begin.

As a project of national significance, it now has the involvement of the Planning Inspectorate. They are inviting people and businesses to formally offer their views on the project, by registering as an 'Interested Party' (<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/lake-lothing-third-crossing/?ipcsection=relreps>). People will have until 24 September to register.

The Planning Inspectorate will now look to appoint an inspector (the Examining Authority) and a preliminary meeting will be scheduled, along with producing a timetable for the next stage of the project. Anyone who has registered as an Interested Party will be notified of the meeting.

The following stage is the 'Examination Period', which will last up to six months. This is when Interested Parties are invited to provide more details of their views in writing, which will be carefully considered by the Examining Authority. The Planning Inspectorate will then submit its recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will have three months to decide whether to grant or refuse development consent.

Support now available for young people in Suffolk leaving residential care

Thursday 9 August saw the launch of the 'Staying Close' pilot scheme. Young people leaving residential care in Suffolk will now be able to stay closer to their children's home under this new government trial.

The scheme will ensure young people from the age of 15 start thinking about their future and planning for independent living with the assistance and support of residential care workers and those they have established relationships with.

Often this detailed planning doesn't happen until a young person is close to the time they need to move on from the home, which sometimes leads to unnecessary distress and anxiety about the future. Resources are now focused on early intervention of move-on support to reduce this anxiety. The pilot also offers young people the opportunity of keeping in touch with residential care workers and their children's home for emotional and practical support.

Funding for the three-year pilot scheme was awarded by the Department for Education following a highly competitive national bidding process. Suffolk County Council invited The Ryes Children's Home in Sudbury to join them in piloting the scheme to test how this move on care can be achieved for children who want to remain living close to their home.

[Read more about the 'Staying Close' pilot scheme.](#)

Suffolk's tourist trade booming as economy hits £2bn mark

Suffolk's tourism trade has seen its biggest boom for a decade – with the visitor economy reaching the £2 billion mark for the first time.

Interim figures released on 8 August by Visit Suffolk show that tourism grew by at least five per cent in 2017, more than double the year before.

Overnight visits and lengths of stay for tourists were also up by more than 4 per cent. Figures show visitors now spend more money on each trip to the county than ever before, with the value of the day market up more than seven per cent.

The number of jobs in the county's tourism sector rose by 6 per cent to 42,428. This means 13.6 per cent of all employment in Suffolk is in the tourism sector.

Amanda Bond, Visit Suffolk's brand manager, said these results would not have been achieved without the continued backing for the county-wide offer from all the district authorities, Suffolk County Council, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Destination Marketing/Management Organisations (DMOs).

Upcoming We Are Listening events

Suffolk residents are invited to come along and chat with the Leader of the Council, other county councillors and senior managers about their concerns and ideas for the county of Suffolk. The following We Are Listening events are scheduled for the remainder of 2018:

- **Framlingham:** Tuesday 18 September
- **Bury St Edmunds:** Wednesday 26 September
- **Haverhill:** Friday 12 October
- **Ipswich:** Thursday 25 October