

Leader's monthly bulletin – February 2022

Welcome to the February edition of the monthly bulletin, aimed at keeping you up to date on the main news stories from East Suffolk and, where possible, giving you a view of upcoming events and projects.

Steve Gallant

Leader of East Suffolk Council

Millions of pounds of investments approved for projects across East Suffolk

Investment worth over £339 million has been approved for projects across the district.

As part of our budget setting process, a programme of capital expenditure, including a General Fund Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, has been agreed.



Within the programme, over £118m has been allocated for planning and coastal management projects over the next four years, with a further £36.86m for economic development and regeneration schemes.

Some of the major projects to receive investment within this period include:

- £96m for permanent flood defences to protect homes and businesses in Lowestoft
- £50m for the Felixstowe North Garden Neighbourhood Regeneration Project, including a total of £44m to provide a new leisure centre and associated infrastructure
- £14.2m for the enhancement of Southwold Harbour and Caravan Park (subject to external funding)
- £6.4m on creating start up units for local businesses in Lowestoft
- £5.75m for the development of the South Seafront area and Martello Café, in Felixstowe
- £3.3m for Thorpeness flood defences (subject to external funding)
- £0.69m for Thorpeness emergency flood defence works



Projects already allocated funding from this year's budget include the replacement of beach huts in Lowestoft (£1m), the purchase of land to extend cemetery provision across the district (£395,000) and the development of sports hubs in Felixstowe (£197,000).

Levelling Up White Paper announcement

The first nine areas to be invited to agree new county deals have been announced as part of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper.

The areas invited to begin negotiations will be Cornwall, Derbyshire and Derby, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, Durham, Hull and East Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham, and Suffolk.

It is really pleasing that Suffolk is one of the nine areas to be chosen for a county deal. It offers significant possibilities in terms of addressing regional inequalities, maximising resources, and ensuring greater accountability, here in Suffolk, for powers previously held in Westminster.

Naturally, we are committed to ensuring that any deal benefits East Suffolk and its residents, and we're now looking forward to further discussions with our partners and the Government to consider how a county deal can work for our communities. It's important that any deal contains a policy and funding mix which can make a real difference, and we eagerly await the full details of the White Paper.

Closure of second homes tax loophole

We welcomed the announcement that a loophole which allowed some second homeowners to avoid paying either council tax or business rates is to be closed.

The announcement comes as a result of a two-year campaign following an article in The Times which exposed the loophole of second homeowners being able to register for business rates, then claiming relief by stating that their properties were available for let for 140 days each year but without actually having to let them.

Under tough new measures, effective from April 2023, those second homeowners will have to prove that their holiday lets are being rented out for a minimum of 70 days each year to access small business rates relief, where they meet the criteria.

Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts.

Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days per year to qualify for the relief.

East Suffolk Digital Business Festival begins next week

East Suffolk's annual business festival takes place from Monday 8 February to Friday 18 February and this year, the theme is 'all things digital'.

The festival will feature a range of easily accessible, 'bite sized' events which will provide an opportunity for local businesses to learn something new, find out what's happening in their area and learn where they can access local support programmes.

All events will be held online which means local businesses can access the support and information they need more conveniently and can just 'pop in' during their working day. Recorded events, podcasts and pre-recorded webinars will be made available throughout the two-week period.

Businesses can view the full programme and register at

<https://eastsuffolkmeansbusiness.co.uk/east-suffolk-digital-business-festival/>

Grant funding still available for businesses affected by Omicron

The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme is designed to support businesses offering in-person services, where the main service and activity takes place in a fixed rate-paying premises, in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sector.

Eligible businesses have until February 21 to apply for a grant of up to £6,000 through the scheme. More details, including full criteria and how to apply, can be found at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/covid-19-business-grants/



For those businesses not eligible for this scheme, there will be an Additional Restriction Grant (ARG) scheme published soon, to target help to other specific areas of need across the district. Details of the scheme will also be published on our website as soon as it is available.

The grants are part of a £1billion fund announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 21 December as part of a government support package, which also included the reintroduction of the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme and additional funding through the Culture Recovery Fund.

Youth Voice is back!

A scheme dedicated to involving young people in local issues which affect them is back and we want as many youngsters as possible to get involved and help make a real difference.

Youth Voice was designed to make it easier than ever for young people to share their thoughts and to see how these opinions can help shape their communities.

A new website has been created with a simple form for young people to have their say and it will also be widely promoted in schools and via social media – including a dedicated Instagram account. This will be alongside Youth Voice ‘collection boxes’ which have previously been placed in a variety of locations and used successfully to develop new ideas.

Any information which is provided is then shared with organisations and key decision makers who can help address the issues raised and help make a real difference, such as local councillors, East Suffolk Community Partnerships, Suffolk Police, and other key partners.

Anyone aged between 11 and 24, can share their thoughts online quickly and easily by filling out a short form at https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Youth_voice

Youth Voice is also on Instagram now so young people can see how their feedback is helping to make real changes in local communities by following [eastsuffolkyouthvoice](https://www.instagram.com/eastsuffolkyouthvoice).



The Communities Team is currently contacting sites, such as schools and youth clubs, which had 'Youth Voice collection boxes' installed prior to the pandemic to encourage them to reinstall these as the service relaunches.

Landmark building completed on Felixstowe's South Seafront

As part of ongoing investment in Felixstowe's South Seafront, the development of a new iconic building has now been completed, bringing an exciting new resort experience one step closer.



The building will house a new café named 'The Kitchen @ Felixstowe', run by our operational partners, The Kitchen @ Group, who are currently carrying out the internal fit out which will include a bakery counter, contemporary brasserie type menu and unrivalled sea views.

Once completed, the café will play a key role in helping the town as it continues recovering from the impact of Covid-19, attracting local people and visitors alike by offering indoor and outdoor dining with unspoilt views of the seafront. This will not only support tourism, but it will also help the economy by offering local employment opportunities, making the South Seafront an exciting place to visit, live, work, and invest.

Interactive tool allows public to monitor progress on delivering Local Plans

An interactive online feature has been launched for the public to track progress on the implementation of the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Local Plans.

It includes a range of monitoring data covering housing, economy, retails, natural environments and many more topics and can be accessed at

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dfbbb431cf6c44c88bc58975e59ce191>

Work begins on demountable flood gate

Construction has begun on a demountable flood gate on the South Pier in Lowestoft as part of wider flood defence work, which will see the construction of glass floodwalls around the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club and the South Pier.

Having started on Monday 17 January 2022, construction will continue until March. Following a summer break to prevent disruption during the busy tourist season, work will then recommence in October 2022. The walls are due to be completed in spring 2023.

‘Pop along’ to new events in Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth

Members of the Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth communities will be able to chat with local stakeholders in new ‘pop along’ events beginning this week.

The events will take place in the libraries in the three market towns and will enable residents to chat with a local councillor, an officer from our Communities Team and a representative from a local organisation.

The events will be a chance to have a chat in person and find out more about what is happening locally regarding groups, events, and projects. The ‘pop along’ events will repeat monthly and will run as a drop-in over two hours.

The first ‘pop along’ took place in Bungay earlier this week at Bungay Library (10am – 12pm) and will now run on the first Tuesday of each month.

The Halesworth ‘pop along’ will run on the third Tuesday of each month, starting on Tuesday 15 February at Halesworth Library (10am – 12pm), whilst the Beccles ‘pop along’ will run on the second Wednesday of each month, starting on Wednesday 9 February at Beccles Library (10am – 12pm).

Post Office conservation repairs has begun

Conservation repairs to the façade of the Grade II listed former Post Office on London Road North in Lowestoft, carried out as part of the Lowestoft Heritage Action Zones project, started on Monday 17 January 2022.

It was built as a central post office for the town and served to combine several of the more provincial post offices which existed across the town prior to the 1880s.



Planning and listed building consent has been approved for works to fix the roof, repair the windows, carry out conservation of stonework on the façade and reconfigure the ground floor windows to restore the entrance to the central bay of the building, as per the original design. This will incorporate repositioning the existing ramp which would greatly improve the appearance of the building.

These repairs will be funded through the London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone, financed by Historic England and East Suffolk Council, delivered in partnership with Lowestoft Town Council and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust.

Three fined for breaching planning enforcement notice

Three people have been sentenced after pleading guilty to breaching an enforcement notice issued by the Council.

The enforcement notice related to the change of use of land, without planning permission, at Bridge Farm, Top Street, Martlesham, from a mixed use for agriculture and storage of cars and containers, to the storage of vehicles, containers, caravans, trailers, boats, digger buckets, lorry backs, bricks, building materials, pallets, wall insulation, scrap metal, metal drums, lorry trailers, rubbish, tyres, and other miscellaneous items not associated with agriculture.

Two of the defendants were each fined £2,000 and ordered to pay £1,500 in costs and a court surcharge of £190, while the third was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £855 costs and a £100 court surcharge.

Read the full release with all the details at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/news/three-fined-for-breaching-planning-enforcement-notice/

Further funding to benefit community groups

Voluntary and community groups in Framlingham, Wickham Market and the surrounding villages can now apply for funding through the latest round of the Framlingham, Wickham Market and Villages Community Partnership Small Grant Scheme.

Applications are now open for the funding scheme, which is aimed at developing opportunities for young people and reducing social isolation and loneliness, which are two of the key priorities identified by the Partnership.

Applications are open until 7 March 2022 - grants of between £250 and £3,000 are available: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/community-partnerships/community-partnership-small-grant-schemes/

Funding

Some very exciting projects have received funding:

- Following a successful application for funding from the Woodbridge, Melton and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership's Small Grant Scheme, Hollesley Village Hall Committee has been awarded £10,000 towards replacing the roof, which was recommended following a building survey in 2019.
- Cllrs Peter Byatt, Janet Craig, Louise Gooch, Malcolm Pitchers, Linda Coulam, Andree Gee, Frank Mortimer and Trish Mortimer have jointly donated over £7,500 from their Enabling Communities Budgets to Citizens Advice in Lowestoft, allowing it to make environmental improvements to St Margaret's House, its distinctive Grade II listed building in the town centre.
- Framlingham Parochial Church Council was allocated £700,000 in funding from Community Infrastructure Levy to create a modern community facility for local people and groups on the site of St Michael's Community Rooms, in the grounds of St Michael's, Framlingham.
- A popular bench at the west of St Michael's Church Tower in Beccles has been replaced thanks to funding from the Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and villages Community Partnership. It was originally installed by Beccles Rotary Club in 2005 and has become a popular spot for local people to sit, chat and meet new people. Having fallen into disrepair, a replacement bench was needed and following a successful application for funding from the Community Partnership's Small Grants scheme, Beccles Rotary Club were awarded £436.00 to install a new bench and a plaque.

Surveys and consultations

We are currently running one consultation and, as always, we want to encourage participation as feedback from people in East Suffolk is invaluable and helps us ensure we're making the right decisions for our communities.

- **Worlingham Neighbourhood Plan**

Local residents are invited to comment on the Worlingham Neighbourhood Plan, ahead of it being submitted for independent examination. When finalised, the Neighbourhood Plan will be required to be used by anyone considering, or making, a planning application in the Worlingham Neighbourhood Area.

The consultation is open until 21 February at

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/worlingham-neighbourhood-area/

Follow us on social media

We keep our communities up to date in a variety of ways and social media has an important role to play. Please follow us and share our posts with your followers!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/eastsuffolkconservatives/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/easuffolktories?lang=en>

East Suffolk Conservatives website: <https://www.eastsuffolkconservatives.org.uk/>