

Report for Bildeston PC by Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor 8.4.24

Newberry Farmhouse

As you know Highways have offered the option of charging the community/owners £4k for a feasibility study to see what, if anything, can be done to stop lorries hitting this house. I am due to meet officers shortly to discuss this to see if there is any point funding this from my limited locality budget. I have asked about the feasibility of getting a weight restriction for the High Street, and have been told that it will not be supported since there is no suitable alternative route to divert lorries to on a permanent basis.

Libraries Consultation

On Tuesday 25 March, Cabinet reviewed the results of the recent consultation about the Suffolk library service. Recent pop-up libraries in village halls did not score highly in the consultation and it is unlikely these will form part of the service in future. It is also likely that mobile libraries will run from smaller vehicles in future. The successful bidder for the new libraries contract is likely to be announced in November, with the new contract starting from June 2025.

Water Management in Suffolk

A report to Scrutiny Committee detailed how East Anglia is considered a Serious Water Stressed Area by the Environment Agency. By 2050, the demand for water here is forecast to outstrip supply. Demand will be 2538MI/d (mega litres per day) but the amount available will be only 1700MI/d. Housing developments are guaranteed a water supply but commercial ones are not.

The report included plans to preserve water or generate new supplies, including reducing water company leaks, two new reservoirs in South Lincolnshire and the Cambridgeshire fens, plus a small new reservoir in North Suffolk, and an increase in water transferred around the region.

My group's view is that there is not enough emphasis on water companies cutting their own leaks, nor on encouraging water saving measures for the public. It was noted that Essex and Suffolk Water had already declared a moratorium for new industrial/commercial connections to the supply in the Hartismere area of mid Suffolk.

New electric vehicle on-street charger funding

Suffolk County Council has won a £7.3m Government bid for electric vehicle chargers. Suffolk residents without off-street parking will supposedly benefit from £5.9 million to support EV charging, and a further £1.4 million will be used to develop the county's existing EV charging network in community locations.

Suffolk residents are invited to 'nominate' their street for consideration for on-street charging points with this online form. I do not know the criteria they are using to prioritise sites. But I would not want to see charging points installed on already narrow pavements. In villages, car parks are the best place for them.

[:https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/requestchargepoint/](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/requestchargepoint/)

Floods, drainage and potholes

Storm Babet, followed by extreme rainfall – including the fifth wettest February on record, combined with spells of freezing weather, and the fact that Highways changed its contractor at the start of October, have created a perfect storm. The number of reports of action needed on the reporting tool rose by 82% in the current financial year, while drainage and flooding issues increased by 364% in the past five months compared to a year ago.

Buses

Although it's pleasing that the 753 between Sudbury and Bury recently won some new funding, the exercise the county council launched, asking parish councils to bid, threw into stark relief the lack of any strategic planning on the part of the county council for bus investment.

A consultation on the county's local transport plan (last updated 2011) closes on 8 April. However, the survey simply asks questions about your preferred mode of transport, rather than about where bus routes need to be.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>

SEND update – “Priority Action Plan” produced

The Priority Action Plan the council had to produce after its SEND service failed inspections has now been published. There has also been a recent announcement that Suffolk County Council is set to receive an additional £10.9 million to create new specialist school places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the county.

You can read the priority action plan here: <https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/asset-library/suffolk-priority-action-and-improvement-plan-final.pdf>