

## **April 2024 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **New Suffolk campaign urges drivers to switch their engines off**

A new campaign urging Suffolk's drivers to switch off their engines when parked has launched today (1 March 2024). The campaign against Idling particularly focuses on turning off engines outside schools to protect children's growing lungs from unnecessary pollution. Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pollution because their height puts them closer to exhaust fumes, they breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants and because their developing organs are more easily damaged. Children living in highly polluted areas are four times more likely to have reduced lung function in adulthood, improving air quality for children has been shown to halt and reverse this effect. A study published in January 2024, found that hospital admissions among children were "significantly associated" with exposure to higher levels of air pollution over a two-week period and that only around half of them would have needed hospital care if pollution had been within legal limits. Research shows that idling engines produce up to twice the amount of exhaust emissions compared to when a vehicle is moving. In a survey carried out in Suffolk at the end of 2022, 35% of respondents said they never switch their engine off when parked or stationary. The evidence is there, pollution is damaging our health and damaging the environment. Switching our engines off when parked is a simple action we can all take and it's been proven to make a huge difference to air quality, particularly outside schools. This campaign is just one of the actions Suffolk County Council and its partners are taking, through our joint Air Quality Strategy work, to improve air quality in the county for residents and visitors alike. Suffolk County Council has joined forces with schools across the County along with Babergh and Mid Suffolk, East Suffolk, Ipswich and West Suffolk Councils to deliver the campaign. [www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/airquality](http://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/airquality)

### **Parents can now opt-in for Suffolk County Council funded school travel for 2024/2025**

If parents have a child who is already receiving SCC funded school travel, they must opt-in by 31 May 2024 to continue to receive it. Families of children starting secondary school in September 2024 will receive an e-mail by the end of March if they are eligible for SCC funded school travel. If parents have a child starting primary school in September 2024, they should not opt-in until they receive the offer of a school place. If they are eligible for SCC funded school travel they will be contacted by 10 May 2024. It is important that parents opt-in for SCC funded school travel by 31 May 2024 to ensure that transport is in place for the start of the new school year. If your child is starting secondary school in September, we will contact you by the end of March to let you know if they are eligible. If your child already receives SCC funded school travel, you must opt in every year to continue to receive it. If a child is not eligible for SCC funded school travel but their parents wish to purchase a spare seat, they may do so from 1 July 2024. To opt-in or for more information on the SCC school travel policy please visit: [www.suffolkonboard.com/opt-in](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/opt-in)

### **Empowering Suffolk's Future: Have your say on proposed devolution deal for Suffolk**

People across Suffolk are being asked for their views on a proposed, in principle, devolution deal that would hand Suffolk greater decision-making powers and control of more than half a billion pounds of public funding. In December 2022, Suffolk County Council and the Government signed an in-principle deal to transfer certain powers and funding from London to Suffolk. Residents and businesses can now share their views about important aspects of the deal, including:

Control of a new investment fund worth £480m over the next thirty years

Local control of the Adult Education Budget each year (worth £9.4m in 2025/26)

£5.8m one-off funding to prepare brownfield sites for development

Multi-year transport funding plus an additional £500,000 over two years to finalise Suffolk's Local Transport Plan.

If agreed, the proposed deal would also mean that, for the first time, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk – rather than by county councillors. Once

every four years, residents would vote to elect both their local county councillor (as they do now) and the leader of the county council. This is an important and empowering decision about the future we want for Suffolk. A decision of this significance deserves considered input from the broadest range of people possible, which is why the consultation is open for 10 weeks. I urge everyone to take time to read the details of the deal and then complete to have their say in this consultation.” Supporting information and details on how to respond are available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution).

### **Suffolk to benefit from huge £7.3 million EV investment**

Suffolk County Council has secured millions of pounds of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county. The county council has been allocated the money after successful bids to the Government’s Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. Suffolk residents without off-street parking will 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. Homes without a driveway face challenges when it comes to charging an EV - in some cases it is just not possible, and it is unsafe and hazardous to run cables across pavements. Along with inconvenient access to public charging, these are common reasons that people give for not choosing an EV. However, the funding will start to provide solutions to some of these issues, with opportunities to develop:

- kerbside charging points
- community charging hubs
- car park charging points
- fast and rapid charging point infrastructure improvements

Suffolk residents are invited to ‘nominate’ their street for consideration for on-street charging points, using [this online form](#). Although not every road may be suitable, suggestions from residents will help indicate where there is demand for charging points. The recent [EV:Ready Report](#), which the county council commissioned on behalf of all local authorities in Suffolk, suggests a need for 2,000 standard chargers and 40 to 60 rapid charging stations in Suffolk by 2030, to meet the demand of the EV transition. The LEVI funding will enable the council to play its part in moving Suffolk closer to those numbers, building on all our EV achievements so far – for example, the county council has been working on the county’s EV charging infrastructure since 2018 when we launched the Plug In Suffolk project. Supporting Suffolk’s residents, businesses and visitors to move to EVs goes beyond just using less petrol and diesel. It’s about improving Suffolk’s air quality and enabling us to live healthier lives, and reducing the impacts of climate change which have once again been brought into sharp focus by the many storms and flooding events we’ve seen in recent months.

### **Communities deserve transparency and fairness with all energy plans**

Suffolk County Council is calling for greater transparency and fairness for communities following the release of new plans for a 750-acre solar farm in Mid Suffolk. Although not published yet, Elmya Energy UK plans to build the White Elm Solar Farm, which covers a 750-acre site in the Mendlesham, Wickham Skeith and Thwaite area. The solar farm would produce 200MW of electricity, include battery storage, and take up land the equivalent of 425 football pitches. The proposed solar farm will be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, therefore the decision will be determined by the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Net Zero, and not Suffolk County Council, who will only be a statutory consultee. Plans by Elmya Energy UK are expected shortly. New solar projects are coming in by the back door, and greater transparency and fairness for our communities is essential.

### **Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division**

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