September 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Energy efficiency loans available for Suffolk residents

Homeowners across Suffolk can now apply for a loan to help fund energy efficiency improvements to their homes, thanks to a partnership between Suffolk County Council and Lendology. The Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme offers eligible homeowners access to loans from £2,000 to £15,000 at a fixed interest rate of 2.2% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) loan, with repayment terms of up to seven years. Borrowers may also repay their loan early without penalty, subject to eligibility and loan terms.

The funding is designed to support residents who want to improve the energy performance of their homes while spreading the cost of installation over a manageable period.

The loan can be used for a range of energy efficiency measures, including:

- Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems
- Solar battery storage
- Solar thermal systems
- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Double and triple glazed windows and doors
- Loft, wall and floor insulation
- Ventilation systems when installed alongside insulation measures

Installing energy efficiency improvements can help homeowners reduce their energy bills and create warmer, more comfortable homes. A well-insulated and energy-efficient property can also have positive benefits for residents' health and wellbeing, particularly during colder winter months. For further information about the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme and how to apply, visit the Lendology website.

Local Government Reorganisation

Following the latest Government decision to withdraw its previous plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk I am concerned at the continued uncertainty surrounding the future structure of local government in the county. The decision means that the previous proposal for three new unitary councils in Suffolk is now being reviewed, following months of work by local councils and their staff to prepare for reorganisation. The council reorganisation process that the Labour government has pursued has been chaotic from start to finish. They seem incapable of following advice or making proper decisions. I have long argued that a single unitary council for Suffolk would be smarter, simpler and better for our local residents, businesses and communities. Whether the new Secretary of State now arrives at the same decision remains to be seen. The only thing we can be sure of is that this latest u-turn means more chaos, delay and uncertainty for all of us who live and work in Suffolk, including local councils and their staff - on whom this is taking a huge toll. I will continue to monitor the Government's next steps, ensuring that the interests of Suffolk's residents, businesses, communities and local government staff remain at the centre of the process.

River Gipping path improvements complete as full 17-mile route reopens

Suffolk County Council has completed improvement works by the River Gipping at Creeting St Peter and Sproughton, making the route safer, more accessible and more resilient to flooding while reopening the full 17-mile Gipping Valley River Path. Works at Creeting St

Peter included upgrading wooden footbridges and boardwalks with new recycled plastic versions, while works at Sproughton included riverbank repairs, path widening, accessible ramps and a new footbridge. The 17-mile route connects Stowmarket and Ipswich railway stations and passes Needham Market station, while linking to a wider network of walking routes across Suffolk. The River Gipping has a long history of navigation. In 1793, the river was canalised with the construction of 15 locks, helping barges travel between Stowmarket and Ipswich and supporting the area's industrial development. The project was delivered through a partnership involving local authorities, contractors, parish councils, landowners and volunteers. The completed works ensure residents and visitors can continue to enjoy one of Suffolk's most popular riverside walking routes, connecting communities, wildlife habitats and local heritage along the River Gipping. For more information about the Gipping Valley River Path, and other walks, visit the Discover Suffolk website.

Concerns in LionLink Consultation Response

The Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council has submitted its response to National Grid Ventures' targeted consultation on proposed changes to the LionLink project, welcoming a number of improvements while maintaining its fundamental objection to a landfall at Walberswick. We recognise that several changes represent genuine improvements, including the removal of construction works from Manor Field, the reduction in the number of listed buildings close to the proposed landfall and a significant reduction in predicted night-time noise levels. It also welcomes the proposed changes to the Lymballs Lane access arrangements and the inclusion of Benhall Railway Bridge within the project's Order Limits. However we argue that these changes are refinements to a scheme whose fundamental problem remains unresolved: the choice of Walberswick as the landfall location. LionLink has flexibility over where it makes landfall and that the full comparative assessment of alternative locations, including sites outside nationally designated landscapes, should be published before any application is submitted. It also reiterated the importance of coordinating LionLink with the neighbouring Sea Link project to minimise disruption and cumulative impacts on local communities. The response raises particular concerns about the remaining impacts on Walberswick, including night-time construction noise, the village's reliance on the B1387 as its main access route, archaeological risks and the proximity of the works to homes and heritage assets. We are calling for stronger, binding commitments on construction traffic, emergency access, working hours and independent monitoring. On Benhall Railway Bridge, we support finding a permanent solution but oppose relying on repeated temporary structures. We argue that the alternative northern access route via the Sizewell Link Road should be developed as a primary option, potentially avoiding bridge closures altogether. If bridge works are required, the Group says they should be permanent, coordinated with Sea Link and properly assessed for their impact on residents, traffic and local communities. We have also called for outstanding archaeological and engineering assessments to be completed and published, further scrutiny of the proposed western cable corridor, and stronger coordination between LionLink and Sea Link where infrastructure can be shared. While that the latest proposals contain improvements, they do not resolve the fundamental concerns about locating the LionLink landfall at Walberswick.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division
Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk