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Parish
Newsletter

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Flood schemes cash from government welcomed by council

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways and Flooding, has welcomed confirmation by the Environment Agency of funding for flood relief schemes in Suffolk.

The agency has announced that it will be spending £68 million on projects across East Anglia, of which flood schemes in Suffolk have been allocated more than £14 million.

Flood relief schemes across Suffolk will receive a share of the money from the Environment Agency.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

“This is very good news as it means Suffolk County Council can continue to develop and deliver these important flood relief schemes.

“We have seen the devastating impact flooding can have on our communities and we know that we have to take measures to protect against it in the future, so I am very happy to see our schemes are being supported financially by the Environment Agency.”

Suffolk County Council projects to receive funding are the Sudbury Surface Water Flood Alleviation Scheme, which receives £300,000, while Leiston Surface Flood Water receives £202,000.

The Sudbury scheme will add another flood storage basin to one SCC constructed in 2022 which will reduce the flood risk for more than 20 homes.

The Leiston scheme will provide property level flood protection to a total of 40 households in the town and some surrounding villages that have either experienced internal flooding, or are at high risk of flooding. Homeowners have already received an initial survey and installation is expected to commence in the summer. Suffolk County Council is contributing £58,000 of project management support to deliver this work.

We have also completed a SuDs in Schools project, working in partnership with Anglian Water and Department for Education at three schools, including the High School in Leiston. The project has resulted in flood attenuation measures such as flood storage basins, rain gardens, and planters that store water from downpipes. It has also provided educational resources so pupils can use the features to study the curriculum. The overall project will cost £190,000, with £180,000 of this secured from external partners.

The Benacre and Kessingland flood risk management scheme receives £10,105,000 of funding from the Environment Agency.

This is a £64m project that will ensure the A12 is protected from coastal flooding, it is being implemented by Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board but Suffolk

County Council has provided £2 million and agreed to underwrite a further £2.7m to enable it to proceed.

Flood resilience schemes in Needham Market and Debenham as a result of Storm Babet also get funding - £560,000 in Needham Market and £81,000.

These projects, led by the Environment Agency, will fund flood doors and other measures to prevent flood water entering individual properties.

Suffolk County Council supported the EA to identify affected homes and promote the availability of this funding.

The council's Flood Investigations and Grants Team also administers a separate grant fund specifically to support those properties flooded during Storm Babet. This grant closes for new applications in May.

£4 million skills funding boost for Norfolk and Suffolk

Up to £4 million will be spent delivering free skills training to an extra 1,345 adults across Norfolk and Suffolk in 2025/26.

The funding has been allocated to Suffolk County Council by the Department for Education to support the continued success of the region's [Skills Bootcamps](#), which help people gain the skills they need to land well-paid jobs in high-demand industries.

The industry-led courses are key to driving economic growth in the region, supporting both the [Local Growth Plan for Norfolk](#) and the [Suffolk Economic Strategy](#). They are designed to address skills shortages in sectors like digital technology, construction, engineering, net zero and childcare.

The flexible and accessible nature of the Skills Bootcamps makes them ideal for adults looking to upskill, change careers or return to work. Courses last up to 16 weeks and offer a combination of online and in-person learning to suit a variety of schedules.

Each course is tailored to meet the specific needs of local employers, ensuring that learners are trained in areas where there are real job opportunities.

The funding also offers a boost to businesses, enabling them to train new staff or upskill existing employees. Many of the training costs are covered, and employers can work directly with training providers to create courses that align with their needs.

Cllr Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

"Securing this funding means that even more people across Norfolk and Suffolk will have access to high-quality training, leading to real job opportunities. Skills Bootcamps not only help

individuals develop valuable skills but also support businesses by providing the skilled workforce they need to succeed. This investment is a significant step towards a stronger, more resilient local economy and ensures that local employers have access to a job-ready workforce.”

To learn more about the success of learners and employers in the programme, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps/our-success-stories>

Applications for the next round of Skills Bootcamps will open soon.

For more information about available courses or to apply, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps>

Employers looking to recruit or upskill staff through the programme can contact Bev Wallman at bev.wallman@suffolk.gov.uk or skillsbootcamp@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Highways launches weeds and grass management programme for 2025

Spring has sprung and Suffolk Highways has commenced its summer maintenance works, which will see teams cut thousands of miles of grass verges and treat 2,300 miles of weeds.

Grass cutting is scheduled to start in May, with the grass verges alongside A and B roads across Suffolk being cut first and receiving two cuts each summer.

Verges alongside smaller roads, such as the county’s C and U class roads, will be cut once during the summer season.

Cutting is typically undertaken by tractors with a flail as this is the most efficient and effective way to undertake the vegetation works and dry weather is required as, similarly to household mowers, wet grass can clog the machinery.

These cuts are solely for safety purposes and district and borough councils will usually supplement these with amenity cuts throughout the year.

Suffolk Highways does not cut village greens, parks and open spaces, or rural verges that are not adjacent to the road.

Weed treatments have already commenced across the county.

Two treatments are applied to weeds in urban areas across Suffolk annually if it is deemed that the weeds may pose a safety risk due to obscuring visibility for road users or causing damage to pavements, kerbs, or surrounding walls.

Weeds in rural areas are not included in the annual weed treatment programme but will be treated on a site-specific basis if they are identified as being harmful or noxious.

All weed treatments are weather dependent and cannot be applied in high winds or if rain is forecast due to this reducing the effectiveness of the treatment.

Glyphosate is currently used for the treatment as this is not harmful to people or pets and has proved to be more effective than alternatives previously trialled in Suffolk.

However, a substitute for this is still being sought to support Suffolk County Council's continued ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"Summer maintenance, such as weed treatments and grass cutting, forms a significant part of Suffolk Highways' workload, with us spending £1.9m on these soft estate activities each year, which is around 12% of our annual revenue budget.

"As part of our ongoing commitment to providing value for money for Suffolk residents, careful consideration has been given to where we cut and treat. We would also ask that landowners play their part by ensuring that any vegetation on their property does not spread on to the highway or obstruct visibility.

"Last year, we cut more than 7,000 miles of grass, which is the equivalent distance of London to Singapore, and applied more than 34,000 weed treatments across the county, both of which are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our summer maintenance teams."

Further information on the [grass cutting programme](#) and [weed treatment programme](#), including the planned dates for this to take place in local areas, can be viewed on the council's website.

6,000 on-street and community EV chargepoints for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with operator Believ, will deliver around 6,000 new public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints across the county.

Beginning in Summer 2025, thousands will be installed on residential streets, with many locations suggested by local residents following a survey last year.

The county council has also worked closely with district and borough councils and communities to identify further suitable sites.

The majority will be bollard-style units at the kerbside, suitable for long-stay or overnight charging. Drivers will be able to benefit from an overnight off-peak tariff, and a dedicated resident's tariff which features discounted charging at all times.

Public car parks will also see a number of rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoint installations, allowing for quicker charging.

The county council has made this project possible with a successful £5.3 million bid to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. This roll-out will use a proportion of this funding with a further £16 million of funding provided by operator, *Believ*.

Councillor Philip Fairclough-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality said:

"25% of Suffolk households don't have a driveway, and park on their street. This is a significant barrier for people who would like an EV, as they have no convenient way to charge.

"We are providing a solution by installing chargepoints on their street, or very nearby. Our ambition is to provide them with a public chargepoint within a 5-10 minute walk or wheel.

"There are around 1.5 million EVs on the country's roads and we need thousands of new public chargepoints in Suffolk, and we need them quickly - around 5,400 by 2030, and 12,000 by 2040. Working with *Believ*, our new installations will bring a significant reduction to those numbers.

"The benefits of EV ownership go beyond helping residents and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and their impact on climate change. It means together we can contribute to [Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan](#), improving Suffolk's air quality and enabling us to live healthier lives."

Suffolk County Council is the first local authority in England to both award their LEVI main funding tender, and subsequently sign a contract with an operator, meaning the installation of chargers can begin at pace.

Following a competitive procurement exercise, *Believ* will install, operate and maintain the chargepoints, which deliver 100% renewable energy.

They will also support the installation of rapid charging infrastructure at key community locations, building on the county council's successful 'Plug In Suffolk' project which launched in 2018.

In advance of all on-street chargepoint installations, local residents will receive letters with details of the work due to take place, including details on timescales.

Suffolk's authorities supporting sustainability in schools

32 of Suffolk's schools attended a conference to help them write their climate action plans and deliver sustainability initiatives.

The Suffolk Sustainability in Education conference, held at St Joseph's College in Ipswich, is the first of three events in the East of England to support schools to deliver on the objectives set out in the Department of Education's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy.

The government has said that all schools should have a Sustainability Lead and Climate Action Plan in place by the end of this academic year.

The event was co-organised by the Suffolk Sustainable Schools Network, an initiative funded by Suffolk's public sector organisations and delivered by Suffolk County Council, to support the delivery of Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan.

Feedback from the conference was hugely positive, with one delegate stating they were "so grateful" and "feeling much less overwhelmed" by the process.

Councillor Gerald Kelly, Chair of the Suffolk Councils' Environment Portfolio Holders' Group, said:

"We know that developing climate action plans is a new and complex challenge for most schools, so Suffolk's public sector leaders wanted to support them through the process.

"The conference was a fantastic opportunity for school leaders to investigate ways to reduce their carbon emissions, improve biodiversity onsite, adapt to more extreme weather and improve provision for climate and green careers education.

"This is one way that Suffolk's local authorities are delivering the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, by promoting collaborative climate action in schools and communities to reach Suffolk's ambition of achieving net zero emissions by 2030."

Keynote speeches included updates from Joe Billington, Head of the Sustainability Unit at the Department of Education, and from Talia Hardie from Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK) who gave an insight on youth perspectives from her role as a Cambridge student and Climate Action Plan co-ordinator.

Delegates had the opportunity to engage in a variety of workshops including climate literacy training, climate action planning, community climate action through schools, greening the curriculum and behaviour change for sustainability.

Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager at SOS-UK, said:

"This is a pivotal year for sustainability in education, with the deadline looming for all schools to have completed a Climate Action Plan and early indications from the Government's Curriculum and Assessment Review that the new curriculum will rightly place a much greater emphasis on tackling the climate crisis.

"Events like Suffolk Sustainability in Education play a vital role in supporting teachers on their climate education journey and it was a fantastic to see SOS-UK represented at the conference by young activist Talia Hardie, who is helping to amplify youth voice and ensure students are meaningfully included in conversations about the issues that will affect them most."

Special thanks to The Science Hub for administrating the event and key sponsor, Barkers Associates. Further events to support Suffolk's schools will be taking place in the future, you can keep up to date with these at www.greensuffolk.org

Suffolk County Council Signs the Power of Youth Charter – A Commitment to Empowering the Next Generation To Shape Their Future

Suffolk County Council has signed the Power of Youth Charter, joining a UK-wide movement to empower young people to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves, their communities, and society.

The **Power of Youth Charter** led by the [#iWill Movement](#) outlines a bold vision: that all children and young people should be empowered to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their lives. By signing the Charter, Suffolk County Council is making a public commitment to putting young people at the heart of its decision-making, championing youth voice, and working collaboratively to support youth social action.

The #iWill Movement is a collaboration of over 1,000 organisations and 700 young #iWill Ambassadors & Champions from across the UK, supported by charities [UK Youth](#) and [Volunteering Matters](#). The movement brings together organisations and individuals to empower more young people to take part in social action—making a positive difference in their communities and wider society. By championing youth voice and participation, the movement aims to ensure all young people, regardless of background, are supported to lead change.

At a meeting of Suffolk’s Youth Parliament, Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services signed the Charter, alongside Cllr Liz Harsant, Chairman of Suffolk County Council and Cllr Nathan Wilson, on behalf of Suffolk County Council.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, said:

“I firmly believe that young people should be involved in the decisions that affect them.

“By signing the Power of Youth Charter, Suffolk County Council is making a commitment to our young people, to create more opportunities for their voices to be heard, to shape their own futures and ultimately to ensure that we are making decisions with our young people, not for them.”

Suffolk’s Youth Parliament is run by young people for young people aged between 11-18 years old, to represent the views of young people at a local and national level. Also signing the Charter at the meeting were Kayleb Wright, Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) for Suffolk Coastal and Waveney and Hermione Cartwright, MYP for Mid Suffolk.

In a joint statement, they said:

“We are delighted to be involved in this movement, as youth representatives. We believe that this could move the future of youth voice and empower young people in making decisions that affect their futures.”

By signing the Charter, Suffolk County Council will work alongside over 350 other organisations already part of the #iWill Movement, committing to growing the Power of Youth.

Stephen Skeet, Director of Business Development and Partnerships for the #iWill Movement, said:

“We are delighted that Suffolk County Council have signed the Power of Youth Charter, recognising the vital role young people play in leading positive change. This commitment marks a significant step in empowering more young people across the county to shape their future and their communities.

“In 2023, Ipswich became the UK’s first Town of Youth Social Action — a milestone achieved in partnership with the #iWill Movement and Volunteering Matters. With Suffolk County Council’s strategic backing, we’re excited to build on this momentum and work towards establishing the UK’s first County of Youth Social Action, where young people’s voices and leadership are central to civic life.”

The Charter focuses on five key commitments:

1. **Prioritising social action:** Creating opportunities for young people to lead positive change, especially those from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds.
2. **Opening up decision-making:** Offer opportunities which ensure young people have influence over the decisions that affect them.
3. **Working with other organisations:** collaborating with other organisations to reach more young people and strengthen opportunities.
4. **Evidencing the impact of youth social action:** Sharing stories, data and learning to show the positive impact this has on young people, their communities and our organisation.
5. **Recognise and celebrate young people:** We will use our communication channels to advocate for and celebrate young people as positive and powerful changemakers

To learn more about the Power of Youth Charter and how your organisation can get involved, visit www.iwill.org.uk

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school place on National Offer Day

99.36% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 96.27% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 6,695 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2025.

Families who applied online can log in to the online service from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer unless they

have indicated that they do not wish to. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today (16 April 2025).

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, said:

“We are pleased to confirm that once again the majority of families have been offered a place at one of their preferred schools with most being offered a place at their first preference school.

“We appreciate that not all families may have received a place at their preferred school. If this is the case and a parent or carer’s preference for a Suffolk school has been refused, their child’s name will automatically be added to the waiting list for that school. Parents and carers will also be advised how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so.”

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel, they will receive an email by 9 May 2025 with details of how to opt-in.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately. Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School Admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

For further information on how to view your offer online and guidance on what to do if you have not received your preferred offer, please read the [School admissions FAQ page](#).

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national ‘nature network’, proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

This has been coordination with Norfolk, through the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#). The two counties are working together to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and connect across the landscape.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

“Last summer, over 1,500 Suffolk residents shared their thoughts on how we can all help Suffolk’s nature recover, to help us put together this draft strategy for Suffolk.

“Having now drafted that strategy, we’re keen to involve our residents and communities across Suffolk by receiving their own insights, so that we can amend as necessary and approve a final strategy later this year.

“Suffolk has pockets of diverse nature and unique landscapes, and this strategy will help link together those isolated areas that need improving and restoring. It will support landowners, land managers and farmers to work together for the benefit of the county’s natural environment.

“It is a project which will not only benefit flora and fauna, but us as Suffolk residents - we can mitigate the risks to homes and businesses against inland flooding, create new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and support farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities.”

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community.

There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken.

Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

Infrastructure reform could silence Suffolk’s communities in ‘energy onslaught’

Suffolk County Council has serious concerns about proposed reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, as announced by government (Wednesday 23 April).

It is part of plans to cut by a year, the delivery of clean energy projects, public transport links, and other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

This has potential for a significant impact on Suffolk’s communities who are at the forefront of many NSIPs including solar farms, offshore energy and nuclear.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

Instead, there will be statutory guidance for developers with an expectation that consultation and engagement will still take place, prior to submitting an application.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

“These proposals to remove the duty on energy developers to consult with councils and local communities, are staggeringly tone deaf.

“Our communities need more and better consultation - not less. If the Secretary of State wants more opposition from local people to his decarbonisation targets, this is precisely the way to do it.

“For countless NSIPs past and present in Suffolk, local communities are rarely given the consideration and respect they deserve. These proposed changes claim to recognise community voices, but I fail to see how removing consultation can help make residents feel more involved.

“The minister may claim that these reforms will stop communities ‘feeling fatigued and confused’ with technical documents. However, I suspect these feelings are likely to be replaced with ones of anger and being ignored.

“Project proposers for large scale solar farms and the like, will be rubbing their hands together knowing that they can bypass community engagement completely and go straight to submitting their application. Engagement and consultation takes time and costs money, and given the amateurish approach we are already seeing from solar developers in the county it is highly unlikely that they will be willing to do this.

“Staggeringly, even if a developer chooses to undertake a voluntary consultation, the government is also proposing removing the duty to listen to what has been said.

“To publish such a radical amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill just 24 hours before oral evidence was to be heard, has given no time for proper public scrutiny. It is an act of cowardice and only serves to further undermine public faith in the planning process.

“Our county is facing an energy project onslaught. I have previously described Suffolk’s NSIP landscape as the Wild West – these proposed reforms sadly just reinforce my view.”

Suffolk County Council will be submitting written evidence to the Bill Committee outlining its concerns and opposition to the proposed changes.

OPINION: Suffolk’s Local Offer to Care Leavers

Column by Councillor Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services.

There are around 900 Suffolk children in the care of Suffolk County Council.

Children come into care for all sorts of reasons, of the children I have spoken to it can be because they have been bereaved, because their parents are unable to care for them due to their own challenges, or because they are not safe at home. The children in care that I have met are the most resilient and brilliant children.

Leaving care can also be a difficult transition.

Care Leavers often do not have the help of a family, to seek out new opportunities, find somewhere to live, and support them to develop the skills to get them ready for life. That's where we come in.

Local Authorities have a collective responsibility to actively promote the life chances of children in care and care leavers and provide them with the best possible care and protection, as if they were our own children. This is known as being a 'Corporate Parent' and it means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care and every care leaver.

Put simply: we want our care leavers to have the same opportunities as other children, because they deserve that.

It can be actions that may seem little – simply being a listening ear or offering advice on every day issues can make a huge difference to a young person who has not had the family support that many of us may take for granted.

Most young people leave the care of the local authority at the time of their 18th birthday, but our support continues beyond this, as any parent's support would - to help our young people to adapt to independent living; be that through support to access further education, employment or housing.

Suffolk County Council's Leaving Care Service works in close partnership with other agencies, such as health, schools and colleges, employers and the voluntary sector to identify relevant opportunities for all care leavers across the county and beyond.

Working with our care leavers around the county, Suffolk County Council has agreed a Local Offer to care leavers, which describes what they are entitled to, what Suffolk County Council provides, and how care leavers can access support from a range of services, including support with accommodation, financial advice, wellbeing and relationship support.

Turning 18 can feel daunting, with lots of familiar things coming to a sudden end. Our Staying close team works with young people to help them plan and prepare for moving on once they are 18. The team can support our young people with a smooth transition into housing, place they can call home, alongside a package of emotional and practical support as they transition into adulthood and develop the skills they need to achieve independence.

The Local Offer also includes support to ensure our young people have the skills and access to resources they need to take their first step into training or employment.

One way we do this is through The Family Business.

The Family Business is Suffolk County Council's innovative employment model, providing care leavers with employment opportunities. We do this by behaving as if they were our own children; being their champions and using our vast network to open the door to opportunities that they may not otherwise have access to.

It includes ring-fenced apprenticeships within Suffolk County Council, employment opportunities with local businesses, and a bespoke training and support programme through an 8-week Skills Academy, which prepares our young people for work to set them on the path to success.

Since its launch in September 2023, the Family Business has grown with more employers coming on board.

If you can support a Care Leaver with employment opportunities, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at thefamilybusiness@suffolk.gov.uk.

To learn more about The Family Business, watch our film detailing the impact of the support employers could provide.

The Family Business is Suffolk County Council's innovative employment model, designed to empower care leavers on their journey to success. It includes ring-fenced apprenticeships, employment opportunities with local businesses, and a bespoke training and support programme.

Our [Local Offer to Care Leavers can be found here](#).

New water rescue equipment unveiled as public urged to 'Be Water Aware'

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has invested in specialist, state-of-the-art equipment to enhance the speed, safety, and effectiveness of its water rescue response.

The Service has acquired two Zodiac ERB 400 powered rescue boats and three Extreme Sleds from Ionic Rescue.

The Zodiac ERB 400 boats are lightweight, high-performance vessels designed for swift deployment and excellent manoeuvrability in challenging water conditions. The Extreme Sleds are durable, versatile inflatable sleds built for rapid deployment in demanding environments, including fast-moving water and mud/soft ground rescue operations.

In addition to the new equipment, SFRS maintains older Zodiac rescue boats and Ionic Extreme Sleds for training purposes, which can also be used in real-life emergency incidents.

The Service has also introduced a dedicated water rescue vehicle, co-designed by its fleet technicians and users, to support the mobilisation of the new equipment.

While these new assets enhance the Service's capability to respond effectively in water rescue emergencies, public protection extends beyond reactive measures - prevention is just as critical.

Therefore, SFRS is supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Be Water Aware campaign, running from 28 April to 4 May. This annual initiative aims to raise awareness of the risk of accidental drowning and provides essential safety advice ahead of the warmer months when incidents of drowning tend to increase.

Key water safety tips include:

- Never swim alone
- Check weather conditions before entering the water
- Avoid alcohol consumption before swimming
- Always supervise children near water
- Be aware of hidden dangers in open water, such as strong currents or submerged objects
- Pay attention to safety signage near water, which can provide crucial warnings

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Protection, said:

"Suffolk's waterways, while undoubtedly beautiful can also pose a significant risk to safety. This increases substantially during warm weather when people are more drawn to the idea of coastal and inland swimming.

"The new equipment will enhance the Service's water rescue capabilities, affording the public even greater protection when temperatures rise this year. Of course, SFRS would rather people didn't get themselves into difficulty in the first place, which is why it supports the Be Water Aware campaign, urging everyone to share water safety tips with their friends and families to keep them safe from harm."

Following two recent rescues, SFRS is also urging members of the public who are planning to head out on boats during the warmer weather to check tidal times and weather patterns in advance. Whether kayaking, paddleboarding, or using a motorboat, it is vital to carry sufficient supplies, including drinking water, lifejackets, communication devices, and fuel if applicable.

Conditions on the water can change rapidly, and being prepared can make the difference between an enjoyable day out and a potentially life-threatening emergency.

For further information about the campaign, please visit [Be Water Aware - NFCC](#)