

£2.5m saved on energy costs as LED streetlight project nears completion

A project with the aim of replacing all 43,400 streetlights across Suffolk with sustainable, longer-lasting, and cost-saving LED bulbs nears completion.

It has saved more than £2.5 million pounds so far. The change to LED streetlights supports Suffolk County Council's aim to reduce carbon, light pollution, and bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the council, all whilst providing the best value to residents.

It was expected that the council would reduce costs by around 76%, however, the target was exceeded, with 77.64% savings made to date.

In June 2021, Bouygues Energies and Services were announced as the partner to deliver the project to upgrade 43,400 Suffolk streetlights with new, reduced energy LED lanterns. The total number of upgraded streetlights is currently at 40,692 excluding any of the Ipswich Borough Council, or Town/Parish council owned streetlights. There are approximately 1,700 upgrades outstanding, which includes any remaining heritage lantern upgrades. It is hoped that around 1200 of the remaining lanterns will be completed by the end of the year.

Prior to the commencement of the project, Suffolk Highways contacted towns and parishes to provide them with the opportunity to have their parish-council owned street-lighting upgraded at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns are also being upgraded as part of the project.

The upgrade of the lighting system will include a further rollout of SCC's central management system which will allow lights to be switched on or off and dim individual or groups of lights.

New scheme 'multiply Suffolk' to offer adults a chance to improve their numeracy skills

On November 15th, new initiative named Multiply Suffolk, which will offer adults an opportunity to improve their numeracy skills, was launched in Suffolk.

The scheme is for those who do not already have a GCSE grade C/4 or higher in Maths or equivalent. Adults can sign up for free courses and activities including Money Management and Numeracy for Parents/Carers. Unaccredited, informal learning as well as Level 1 and Level 2 accredited learning is available to residents on either a part-time or intensive basis and are offered in flexible settings to fit around people's lives.

Multiply Suffolk has been created thanks to a £3.7m government investment from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund aimed at boosting opportunities for more people to progress and secure well-paid jobs. SCC's Multiply Suffolk Team will work with subcontractors Realise Futures and Menta to deliver the scheme.

Suffolk supports significant scams settlement

Suffolk Trading Standards is helping to compensate victims across the county who lost thousands of pounds to an online fraudulent sweepstake scheme discovered by the United States Government.

The Next-Gen sweepstake sent tens of millions of personalised documents to unsuspecting recipients across the world promising prizes of up to \$2 million in exchange for a fee of between \$9 to \$140.

Many victims made several payments before realising they had been scammed, and it is estimated that consumers collectively lost more than \$110 million since Next-Gen began its operation in 2013.

Upon discovering the fraudulent activity, the US Federal Trade Commission worked with international partners, including the UK's National Trading Standards Scams Team, to enable them to obtain the evidence needed to take Next-Gen to court.

Almost \$25 million will be returned to victims of the scam, with over \$631,000 (£523,075) paid out via prepaid Mastercard debit cards to those in the UK.

Winter Gritting

Column by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding.

Despite experiencing what feels like the mildest winters we have had in very long time, our highways teams have been carefully planning our winter gritting operation for months to ensure we are prepared for whatever the weather throws our way.

On Sunday evening, 36 gritters including the public-named Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang and Spread Sheeran went on their first run of the season, a county-wide treatment of priority 1 roads which took place as the road surface temperatures were forecast to drop below 0°C.

The gritting treatment of our roads in Suffolk is vital to ensure people can continue to travel and do so safely during the wintry weather. During the 2021/2022 winter season, Suffolk used around 9,388 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 129,367 miles - which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth over five times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 24,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any further drop in temperatures.

Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations. They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools. The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of hazardous conditions.

This entire operation is one which requires extremely careful pre-planning and running throughout, every single decision to grit or not is based upon forecasted road surface temperatures, whilst also considering the impact of other factors, such as wind and heavy rain.

But gritting the priority network isn't all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled the 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by parish and town councils and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to contact Suffolk Highways.

Suffolk's residents can also do their part to support us with our gritting efforts by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road - if we can't fit, we can't grit!

Anyone who would like to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, all gritting activities will be posted to Suffolk Highways' Twitter and Facebook accounts - so I encourage you to give us a follow and keep abreast of all our teams movements this winter season.

To find out more about which roads are gritted, how we deal with the network in the event of snow, or grit bins, please visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/gritting.