



February 2019

The Great East Swim North

Sport – places open for the Great East Swim

Further to the section in last month's update on the value of sport to the Suffolk economy it has been announced that there are 96 places available on the 2019 Great East Swim programme, which starts in March and culminates on the 22 June 2019 at the Great East Swim at the Alton Water reservoir near Ipswich.

The programme is open to individuals who are aged 18 years and over who are not currently physically active. The programme takes place at Crown Pools in Ipswich and Haverhill Leisure Centre, Haverhill, between March and June. Individuals who sign up for the programme will receive an extensive package of support which aims to provide them with the confidence, stamina and self-belief to complete their personal challenge and become active for life. To apply for a place on the programme people can visit www.suffolksport.com/greastswim and complete the registration form. The programme coordinator will then be in touch directly to discuss the programme in more detail. Applications close on Friday 22 March 2019.

This will be the eighth year that the programme has been run, during which time over 370 individuals have completed the challenge of swimming either half a mile or 1 mile in open water at the Great East Swim.

Suffolk's roads warming to £300,000 thermal patching technology

Suffolk Highways is celebrating road repair success following a £300,000 investment in Nu-phalt Thermal Patching technology. The investment, which has been funded from the extra £9.67 million received from central government in the autumn, has aided the county's Highways teams to carry out more effective, longer-lasting repairs to Suffolk's road surface.

Over the last month, Suffolk Highways has deployed three thermal road repair machines which have repaired approximately 1,700 potholes county-wide. The process includes an eight-minute heating cycle of the road surrounding the defect allowing for the existing road surface to be heated to 200 Celsius. The surface is then raked, topped up with bitumen binder and pre-heated material, then compacted. This all takes place within the service's much-favoured 15-minute temporary closure.

The process does not require excavation of the highway, meaning no dust or noise, and better still, no waste material. The result also means there are no surface joints, which can be prone to faster deterioration.

Following its success, Suffolk Highways is now looking to accommodate this technology by adapting some of its own fleet to self-deliver this repair technique from March.

Beyond the investment in Nu-phalt Thermal Patching technology, the £9.67m of funding will enable a programme of work. This includes improvements and repairs to the pavements in the town centres of Stowmarket, Felixstowe and Haverhill and drainage work to solve long-term flooding problems on the A12 – Wangford bypass, the A143 – Bury St Edmunds Compiegne Way, and the A1120 – Cedars Link Stowmarket.

The funding will also be used for better quality, long-lasting white lining on the A146 Lowestoft, A1092, A1021, A1141, A1095 and the A1120. On rural roads, when preparing roads for next summer's surface dressing, the funding will allow for work to clear drains and gullies, cut back hedges, cut grips and clean signs.

Green light to develop more specialist education placements in Suffolk

On 29 January 2019, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet agreed recommendations to move forward with creating more specialist education places in Suffolk.

Suffolk will need between 300 to 400 places for children with additional needs between now and 2020, and this figure is likely to continue to increase. The demand for specialist education places in Suffolk is rising rapidly due to the county's population growth, advances in medicine, and the increasing complexity of specialist needs. The recommendations include three new special schools and 36 specialist units attached to existing mainstream schools, which combined will create over 800 new specialist education places in the county. The Cabinet also agreed that a clarified education pathway for specialist provision is created to assist families in understanding what the local offer is.

Following the approval of the recommendations, the proposal to borrow up to £45.1 million to fund the new places will now go to the county council's Capital Strategy Group to be reviewed. If agreed, the decision will go back to Cabinet in the Spring for final sign-off so the recommendations can be rolled out.

County Council budget meeting – 14th February

On 14th February the County Council meeting will debate the budget for the coming financial year, 2019/20. This was agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 29th January and had previously been debated at the Scrutiny meeting on November. Traditionally there are no other items on the agenda for this meeting and the normal times for the main speeches are extended. This will be my 18th budget debate.

I expect that there will be many pleas for the funding of the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB's) to be reviewed in this coming year. Other topics may be brought up but the universal concern seems to be on the CAB's and, having heard the many presentations, I will listen to the debate and, if appropriate, add my own concerns.

During my recent illness I was too unwell to attend but was able to watch one of the Council meetings online. I got so engrossed in it that when the minutes were published I was surprised that I was not listed as attending! The meetings are webcast and can be a fascinating insight.

Jane Storey

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