

October 2016



## Welcome to the ninth edition of Highways Matters.

In recent weeks there has been a significant amount of media coverage about roadworks in the county that are perceived to be unnecessary or taking too long to be completed.

However, the majority of these sites were works being carried out by public utilities to repair, upgrade or provide connections to gas, electric, telephones, water mains or sewers – all essential services for local residents.

The main cause of these problem roadworks seems to be emergency work, such as repairs to faulty cables, burst water mains or collapsed sewers, which by their nature are unplanned and our team doesn't receive advance notice.

Some have suggested a permit scheme for emergency works, however this would not prevent the works from happening and would add a bureaucratic process, creating extra costs for the council and the utility company which would be passed on to the customer!

Suffolk County Council's Network Assurance Team handles some 175,000 electronic communications relating to around 21,000 work activities on the county's highway network per year. It takes a significant amount of co-ordination to keep disruption and inconvenience to a minimum.

Remember that you can find information about all roadworks in Suffolk, and who is doing these works, by visiting [roadworks.org/](http://roadworks.org/).

The third edition of Highways Matters explained that the bulk of the responsibility to make sure that public utility work is carried out correctly, and ensure that the public are kept informed, rests with the utility companies – not the county council. Visit the [‘How we're working for you’ highways web page](#) to read this and previous editions of Highways Matters in the Councillor newsletters section.

What is clear to us is that the maintenance of our highways is of great importance to Suffolk's residents and road users, and that is why it remains one of Suffolk County Council's top priorities.

In this edition of Highways Matters you can read about the highways maintenance that has been completed and what lies ahead for the maintenance and improvement of Suffolk's highway infrastructure including:

- Surface dressing – 2.5 million square metres of Suffolk's roads treated this summer
- Local Highway Budget schemes – with a proposed budget for 2017/18 and a new team in place to progress projects
- Flooding and drainage – update on problem sites
- Updates to the highways reporting tool
- Highways Maintenance Operational Plan – give us your feedback on our new approach

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Stiel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the bottom of the name.

## Surface Dressing

Earlier this year Suffolk County Council allocated an extra £10 million to highway maintenance spread over 2016/17 and 2017/18, to top up the funding it receives from central government.

The most cost-effective way to spend the additional funding was to focus on surface dressing, and this is in keeping with the asset management approach agreed by cabinet in November last year. This is a low-cost way of extending the life of a road surface by around 10 years, by applying a layer of bitumen (to seal up the existing surface from damaging water ingress) and topping this off with a layer of granite chippings to provide durability and tyre grip.

[Click here to read more about the surface dressing programme in Suffolk and how this has both saved money this year, and avoided the need to spend £8.4million in future years.](#)

## Local Highway Budget schemes

All 75 Suffolk County Councillors receive a funding allocation each financial year, for the delivery of minor local highway improvement and traffic management schemes. The total £500,000 funding in 2016/17 comes from the Department for Transport's 'Integrated Transport' capital allocation associated with the delivery of Suffolk's Local Transport Plan.

[Read more about the Local Highway Budget schemes and the team in place to progress these projects.](#)

## Flooding and drainage

Due to environmental changes, there have been increasing incidences of flooding occurring on or slightly off the public highway. Whilst part of the inability for current drainage systems to cope is due to the increased intensity and duration of wet weather (which prevents rainwater soaking into adjacent ground), it is also because some parts of those systems are in need of major maintenance or replacement – particularly soakaways.

[Click here to read about the additional resources being put in place to tackle these drainage and flooding problems.](#)

## Highway Maintenance Operational Plan

How Suffolk's highways are maintained is important to all Suffolk residents and road users, and we have launched a community engagement on the standards that we use to do this.

As the local highway authority, Suffolk County Council has to fulfil a number of statutory duties including the duty to maintain the public highway to enable the safe passage of users.

Our Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) sets out the standards that Suffolk Highways will operate to when maintaining the county's roads.

[Click here to read more about the Highway Maintenance Operational Plan and give feedback on the plan.](#)

## Highways Reporting Tool

