

Report for Nedging PC 11.11.25 by Robert Lindsay, County Councillor

Daily Hadleigh to Stowmarket Bus route

I'm pleased that a timetable has now been drawn up for this proposed new service. Hadleigh Community Transport, operator of the 461 and 462, which stops at Naughton, does not want to take it on. Highways is in talks with the Transport Made Simple new owner of Konectbus (an East Anglian operator) to see if they are interested. If not it will be put to tender.

Donkey sanctuary looking for new home

I heard that horse and donkey charity French's Care Haven, which rescues unwanted animals and also offers mental health therapy for humans, is about to be evicted from the land it rents near Groton. On contacting founder Jann Turner, I learnt that it is seeking to purchase 20 acres of grazing land within a ten mile radius of Hadleigh. I said I would let my parish councils know in case they knew of anyone who might be interested in selling. Jann's contact details are on her website:

<https://www.frenchscarehaven.org.uk/>

Local nature recovery strategy approved

On 9 September, the council's Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk's nature priorities is private farmland, and the strategy does not make improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with landowners to support them and work to find investment for measures in the strategy. Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development.

Post May 2026, the new Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Predicted £20m needed from risk reserve to finance budget gap this year

After the second quarter of the financial year, the council is predicting that it will overspend by £20.4m by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, which it will balance by taking money from its Risk Reserve.

Alongside this is a forecast that the council's interest cost will increase to £4.9m to cover a surge in its "dedicated schools grant" debt. The soaring cost of education, particularly special needs education, is no longer being met by schools grant the council gets from Government. The Government has promised to review the level of the grant. But in the meantime, in common with many other education authorities across the country, the council now has to borrow to make up the shortfall. The schools grant debt is forecast to rise by £70m to a total of £168m by year end.

Other cost pressures for the council include placements for children in care, care purchasing and mental health services in adult social care.

Solar Together Scheme for 2025

The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points. The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015.

For more information and to register, visit <https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk/home>