

Susan Glossop – Parish council AGM report

Skills

Jobs and skills fairs

We continue to work in partnership with the Department for Work and Health to deliver Jobs and Skills Fairs across West Suffolk - the last one took place in Newmarket in October 2022, where there were 24 employers/support organisations and 103 jobseekers in attendance. The next one will take place at the Mildenhall Hub on 28 February, from 10am-12.30pm, and for the first time will incorporate a wellbeing element – this will include local volunteering opportunities and activities; the Multiply project (which aims to help people improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work, and also provides employment advice and wellbeing support); the Literacy Trust will be on hand to offer advice and support about reading; the NHS will be there to discuss health and wellbeing; and there will be other employment, money and debt advice available too.

Careers inspiration

Officers continue to support West Suffolk schools with careers inspiration, which is vitally important in shaping the student's futures - for example, we supported the mock interviews at Castle Manor Academy in Haverhill and a Post-16 Careers Fair at Breckland School. We also collaborate with West Suffolk College in delivering the Skills Escalator Days (SEDs) across West Suffolk. Since the last report, there were SEDs at West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds in October 2022, where 350 primary school students from Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding rural areas were inspired. Volunteers from a variety of industries, from augmented reality to emergency services (including staff from Economic Development and some other departments), hosted bite-sized interactive sessions to Year 1 pupils giving them an insight into a range of different jobs. Planning is now underway to deliver SEDs in Haverhill on 23 and 24 May and in Newmarket in September (date TBC).

Choose Hospitality

'Choose Hospitality' is being delivered in partnership with West Suffolk College, as part of the Visitor Economy Network Initiative (VENI) programme. The aim of the project is to celebrate the varied career options on offer within the sector and encourage young people to consider a career in the industry. The winning students from the Junior Chef competition have now completed their fully-funded, 8-week Junior Chef course and the feedback received has been excellent. As a result of gaining additional funding, the competition runners-up started their fully-funded course in January 2023. Choose Hospitality joined in the Skills Escalator Days in October, with students making homemade lemonade and pancakes. We have started visits into secondary schools, with Newmarket Academy students taking part in a hands-on, inspirational session in January. On 18 March, we are delivering an event for families (by invite only) at Edmunds Restaurant, West Suffolk College, where families will learn new cooking skills, prepare a meal to take home and receive an inspirational talk from a hospitality expert on the variety of careers available locally.

Enterprise Challenge

Working in partnership with Menta and Babergh/Mid Suffolk District Councils, we are delivering an Enterprise Challenge pilot with a selection of young people in years 9-11 at secondary schools. In West Suffolk, County High in Bury St Edmunds and

Mildenhall College Academy are involved. The project is an opportunity for students to develop enterprise skills within a supported framework, that includes a wealth of resources and working with local business people, local authorities, and a network of mentors. Students will be submitting their enterprise idea (in whichever way they see fit, for example through a traditional business plan, video content, social media, mood board, existing web page, podcast, presentation or computer programme), which will then be judged by myself as well as some local entrepreneurs. Presentations of awards will take place in March. In order to really immerse themselves in the world of enterprise, the team at County High also spent time at Menta's @Inc co-working space in Bury St Edmunds, which proved to be both exciting and inspirational to the students.

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP)

The Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce are working with the Department for Education to put employers at the heart of the local skills agenda with the launch of the LSIP. The LSIP involves all businesses, whatever sector they are in, and looks at all skills needs. There is also a focus on four specific sectors and themes that are the agreed local priorities for workforce skills development: Agrifood/Tech, Workforce Digital skills, Net-Zero/Climate Adaption skills, and Soft skills. These have been selected to reflect the economic contribution, prospective growth and productivity, and through consultation. The Economic Development team are promoting this to businesses, but please can you support this effort. Businesses can get involved in a

1. If skills issues are a major concern to your business, then contact Sara.hinchliffe@norfolkchambers.co.uk to arrange a 1-2-1 discussion by telephone or in person to explore in more detail. You can also register to take part in one of our focus groups (details TBA soon).
2. If you have any questions, you can contact the Economic Development team (Kirsty.pitwood@westsuffolk.gov.uk).

Infrastructure

Bury Rail Station – cycle parking.

Greater Anglia are planning to install approximately 75 additional cycle parking spaces outside the new entrance to Bury Station as part of a successful bid for Cycle Rail funding. Match funding will also be provided from West Suffolk's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Suffolk County Council. In addition to the cycle parking a new foot/cycle path will be created linking the new station entrance to Fornham Road.

Transport East ` State of Rail in the East`

As part of the first phase of Transport East's long-term plan to transform rail connections across the East, the State Of Rail in the East report has been published. The report explores the role of rail in the region for both passengers and freight, demonstrating the areas of strength and identifying gaps for further exploration.

The report was funded by the Department for Transport and was informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, including feedback from West Suffolk, alongside robust technical analysis.

Suffolk Corridor Study

Publication of this Network Rail study is expected to detail short to medium term potential improvements on the rail line between Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds. In addition to this, discussions were had with Greater Anglia and Network Rail to provide

more services to the existing train services to stop at Kennett, which has now been implemented.

A11 Fiveways – Road Investment Strategy 3 bid

The A11 Fiveways Junction scheme is among the 32+ pipeline schemes being considered for inclusion in the Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3). All schemes within the pipeline remain uncommitted until the Department for Transport (DfT) has finalised this strategy, which is due to be published in 2024. Only then will we know which schemes will be taken forward. Consultants working for National Highways have finalised the options identification work and are submitting the results for the DfT's consideration. Although this is a separate proposal to the A11 Safety Improvement scheme, the interaction between the two schemes has been considered.

A11 Safety Improvement Scheme

In summer 2022 National Highways consulted upon four central reservation (right turn) gap closures along the A11 in proximity to Tuddenham and Barton Mills, (between Fiveways and Red Lodge). They are now refining this information and hope to consult again soon.

The four gap closures are proposed for safety reasons. They comprise: Newmarket Road (north) gap, Newmarket Road (south) right turn off A11, Newmarket Road (south) right turn onto A11 and Herringswell Road gap. Between October 2014 and September 2019 there were 34 collisions on this section of A11, including four fatal collisions and one serious injury collision with 20 of the collisions at or near the four main junctions.

If the gaps are closed it is expected that traffic will reroute and some local roads like the A1101 (Bury to Fiveways), Red Lodge A11 junction (Warren Road and Elms Road), Tut Hill in Bury St Edmunds and Icknield Way Newmarket (Kentford to Lackford road), will experience an increase in traffic. Elsewhere traffic will reduce. National Highways are exploring mitigation options for changes to traffic flows, new signage to alert drivers of the layout changes, vegetation clearance and ways to improve non-motorised accesses for pedestrians and cyclists.

The busiest gap is Newmarket Road (north) gap which has 159 vehicles using it at its evening peak, usually rat-running from long distances. National Highways expect there will be little change in traffic around the Mildenhall area as a result of the proposed gap closures.

With the gap closures, journey times and distance travelled will increase by up to 3 miles, taking up to 4 minutes longer than present journeys.

Traffic modelling indicates that there is little capacity impact on the new routes, except on the A1101 Bury towards the Fiveways roundabout. Speed camera data from elsewhere shows this is not as effective as gap closure in reducing fatalities.

National Highways are planning their next consultation for the end of February 2023.

West Suffolk Business Festival .

- This year's dates confirmed as 2-13 October 2023
- The Leader of the council will officially open the festival at the Menta opening event and close the festival at the Bury Free Press Business Awards.
- We are now working with the festival partners on this year's schedule of events.
- Partners this year include MENTA, The Federation of Small Business (FSB), The Epicentre, West Suffolk Manufacturing Group, Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Hethel Innovation, West Suffolk College, Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, and the Bury Free Press.

Town Centres

- We continue to monitor the vacancy rates across the West Suffolk towns and these are beginning to improve with West Suffolk vacancy at 6.6% against a national average of 11.7%. Interest in units especially in Bury St Edmunds remains strong with several new openings so far in 2023.
- However we are hearing of a number of closures on the horizon with particular concern around Haverhill town centre.

Screen Suffolk

- The Screen Suffolk contract has now been renewed with FilmFixer for a further 5 years which ensure that the local authorities across Suffolk have a dedicated film office to promote and manage both public and privately owned locations. We understand there is a strong pipeline of filming ahead and West Suffolk continues to receive a number of these.