

## **February 2016 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Tour of Britain's £4.5 million boost to regional economy**

It's been confirmed that Suffolk and Norfolk economies received a bumper windfall of around £4.5 million as a result of hosting stage 7 of the Tour of Britain last September. This was the first time in three years that Suffolk and Norfolk had hosted the Tour, following the hugely successful stage in 2012, in which London Olympic Gold Medallist, Bradley Wiggins took centre stage. Areas of the local economy which attracted the most significant expenditure were food and drink, petrol/parking, local travel, shopping, accommodation and merchandise. Around 86% of spectators on the day were from the East of England, with the remaining 14% visiting from further afield. The Suffolk stage of the route showcased some of the most picturesque Suffolk countryside and attracted around 110,000 spectators. The knock on effect of events such as these is that people are inspired to get on their bike and give cycling a go for themselves, helping with Suffolk's aspiration to become the most active county in England. Feedback has suggested that around 66% of those who came to watch the Suffolk stage have been inspired to cycle more. Three hours of live TV coverage, along with repeat highlight programmes of the stage were broadcast internationally through 13 TV stations, showcasing the two counties to an estimated global audience of 116,487,600. Looking ahead to the summer of 2016, it has now been confirmed that the Women's Tour return to Suffolk for the third year, with the grand depart being hosted by Southwold on Wednesday 15 June. The route will then head out through Halesworth, Beccles and Lowestoft before crossing the border into Norfolk.

### **Forthcoming consultation events will bring focus to need for new A12 link road**

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce held two 'business breakfast' consultation events for all local businesses based along the A12 route between Ipswich and Lowestoft to learn more about the impacts that the current state of the route has upon them. The free-to-attend events were managed by the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Councils. It is hoped that the consultation will draw together information from local businesses, particularly concerning: the impact that the current state of the A12 has on business; the difference specific improvements might make; the costs incurred relating to unreliable and delayed journey times; the investment likely to result from improved more reliable access and future employment growth. Recognised as a key strategic link in East Suffolk, the success of the A12 is essential for continued business growth. Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Councils have committed £500k to build a strategic business case to Government for funding to improve part of the A12 between Ipswich and Lowestoft. Of course, the need for a new bypass for the villages of Marlesford, Little Glemham, Stratford St Andrew and Farnham was an area of discussion at these events. This has been commonly referred to as The Four Villages Bypass (4VBP) but after considering the benefits and drawbacks of retaining the current scheme name, the decision has been taken to rename the scheme as **Suffolk's Energy Gateway**, to reflect its national significance. The county council will be making the case to the Department for Transport for this scheme to be centrally funded, given the importance of this strategic corridor that links Ipswich to the Suffolk coast, and benefitting from a wide range of businesses involved in the energy sector. It is hoped that Suffolk's Energy Gateway will lead to much needed improvements in transport links, which will be critical in unlocking the full economic potential of the Suffolk Coast, ensuring jobs for local people and the continued prosperity of east Suffolk.

### **Suffolk Highways to begin work on Ipswich Rail Station's forecourt**

Work to improve the forecourt at Ipswich Railway Station is set to provide a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, whilst making the station more accessible and giving the best possible first impression of the county town. The project, being undertaken by Suffolk Highways, starts in February and will last for 25 weeks. Key aims are to provide a better balance of accessibility to the station, protecting vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers, and improving the flow of traffic flow, all of which are major issues currently for the station. Plans include: designated short-stay and drop-off parking for cars, new bus waiting shelters with real-time passenger information located directly outside the station, a sheltered waiting area for taxi customers, a dedicated parking area for motorbikes, more space for pedestrians and cyclists and additional sheltered cycle parking. The forecourt project is anticipated to cost in the region of £1million and will be jointly funded by Suffolk County Council, Abellio Greater Anglia and Ipswich Borough Council. Work is expected to be complete by early July. Aside from work to the forecourt, Abellio Greater Anglia are undertaking work to redevelop the station building, which will result in a more spacious layout with new retail outlets in the booking hall, improved waiting facilities and customer information.

**Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division**

**Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk**