

County Cllr Wilby February Report

First of all, I wish to thank all of the local volunteers and emergency services that helped out in the recent serious flooding that we had over the Christmas period in our town and surrounding villages. It was the worst flooding for many years and a review of how all agencies and authorities performed and worked together during this emergency will take place, also looking at how to prevent such devastating events happening again.

Wide-ranging plans to reduce the county council's carbon emissions from 11.6 million tonnes per year to zero by 2030 have been unveiled. Last year, the council adopted an environment policy. An update report to the council's cabinet reveals a series of measures are underway, including:

Plans to plant 1 million trees over five years, working with partners, communities and landowners

A 1.5 million investment in active travel, including cycling and walking

development of plans to demonstrate environmental best practice on the county council's

Burlingham Estate

Work with Norwich city Council and UK Power Networks on on-street electric car charging points

Further work to install LED streetlights across Norfolk

The council is also supporting development of a Norfolk and Suffolk 25 year Environment Plan to protect, conserve and enhance the region's environment

Upgrades to 15,000 main road streetlights across Norfolk, starting in 2021, is the next step in a successful scheme that has already seen CO2 emissions cut by 1,200 tonnes as a result as a move to LED technology over the last two years. More than 39% of all the streetlights that are owned by NCC have now received an upgrade with the next 15,000 set to add to that total starting early 2021. Over the last two years more than 11,000 lights have received an upgrade in a project that has seen NCC receive national recognition for its work, alongside partner Amey, receiving the CIHT East of England Sustainability Award in 2019. For each light that is upgraded to LED lights the average percentage energy saving is over 70%. Many of the LEDs can also be controlled remotely saving on staff and time.

Ash Dieback

A report came to NCC's cabinet in January which provided an update on the ongoing work, at a local and national level to tackle the worsening problem of the disease threatening one of the country's favourite trees. Expert studies now suggest that by 2023 half of all the 168,000 roadside ash trees will have advanced decline. The majority of those ash trees are privately owned with just over 20,000 owned by the county council. It's estimated that the cost of carrying out tree safety work, key biodiversity enhancement projects, strategic habitat restoration, awareness raising among landowners, inspecting and reporting, will be £1m over the next two years. The report stated that the overall programme is likely to run for many years beyond this initial period so NCC will develop a comprehensive 10-year programme.

NCC are working on a project to develop a team of Community Safety and Well-being Champions across Norfolk. The team of volunteers will help reduce the risk of fire, social isolation and loneliness, for our vulnerable residents, by performing fire checks in their local area. As part of the project, we would like to transform the local fire stations from being isolated buildings, to Community Hubs; owned by the community, for the community. For the pilot, we have engaged with Harleston Men's Shed and offered them the opportunity to have a piece of land behind the Fire Station, to build their shed on. The members will be able to volunteer to become Community Safety and Well-being Champions and undertake training, to carry out fire checks. Whilst carrying out these checks, the individuals will also be able to recognize and highlight if a person is at risk and engage the appropriate service.

Best Wishes, Martin