

Cllr Elaine Bryce, Carlford Division

August 2021 Parish Council Report

Introduction

August is traditionally the time when many of us take the opportunity to take a break and recharge our batteries and I hope that many of you have taken the opportunity to have a well earned break. With uncertainty still remaining around travel, it's been heartening to see so many people enjoying what we have on our own doorsteps here in Suffolk and further afield in the UK, providing a much needed boost to our domestic tourism sector.

In the lead up to COP26, this reports focusses on a number of climate and environmental issues, which I hope you will find to be interesting reading.

Highways related issues continue to dominate my caseload at the moment, including verge cutting and footpaths, but I am pleased to be able to continue to report a number of successes across the Division. That said, if there are any particular issues or queries remaining in your Parish, please do not hesitate to contact me and I shall do my very best to expedite them on your behalf. My door is always open and I shall do my best to try and help.

With best wishes,
Elaine

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Statement on behalf of all Suffolk councils regarding Afghan refugees

Statement on behalf of all Suffolk councils.

“On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Whilst the full details are yet to be confirmed, it is crystal clear that the Government needs local authorities everywhere to step up and support this national effort.

“All councils in Suffolk are committed to this cause. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk, in addition to ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children and other refugees entering the UK. In the coming days and weeks, the district, borough and county councils will continue working with the Government to do what we can to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees.

“Times like this call for acts of humanity. Suffolk will play its part.”

Make one simple change today in a bid to tackle climate change

COP26 will bring into focus the need for us all to reduce our carbon emissions in order to slow climate change

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council.

In early November, the eyes of the world will be on the UK. Glasgow, to be exact.

This is when the COP26 conference takes places.

COP26 is the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties. It will be a momentous event and I expect some significant decisions and agreements to be made, as the world continues to combat climate change and reduce its carbon emissions.

But how will an international event affect each of us in Suffolk? Although COP26 will be an event attended by Presidents and Prime Ministers, it will impact us all.

COP26 will bring into focus the need for us all to reduce our carbon emissions in order to slow climate change. This has been the message for a long time of course, but we must all be changing our behaviours and choosing to use less energy.

And I do mean all of us.

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Global industry, national corporations and governments must lead the way to enable us all to make greener choices. But slowing climate change is everyone's responsibility, we each have a duty to tackle this situation and play our part.

I'd suggest that there is at least one simple change or choice we can make immediately, which will help. My challenge to you is to make that one change today.

This could be to replace one meat-based meal each week with a plant-based one. Or start to swap over your traditional lightbulbs for LED ones. Or switching your gas or electricity tariff to one which uses 100% renewable energy. Or plan your food shopping so that you throw away less food. Or make purchases from businesses that are committed to reducing their carbon emissions. Or just boil the water you need for that morning coffee or cup of tea.

For me, making some of these changes has been a learning experience. I've discovered that it's easy to live with a plug-in vehicle without a home charger - I just need to plan my trips and use the chargers at the workplaces I visit. It was a change I made with trepidation but charging infrastructure is continually improving.

My partner is vegetarian and while I'm not, I enjoy some meat-free meals each week. Equally important for me is shopping local and making locally-sourced food choices. When I do eat meat or dairy, I choose local grass-fed options.

I now have LED lightbulbs at home and have installed smart sensors. The biggest change we've made is turning our back on fast fashion and spending a little more on clothes produced in this country and to a higher standard. It's too easy to order multiple cheap items online, only to return most of them! Shopping local isn't just good for the local economy but it's better for environment too.

I am not claiming that by doing these simple things, we are going to reverse climate change overnight. The point is to challenge the status quo in our lives and start to change our behaviours.

And yes, organisations like Suffolk County Council must lead by example. We continue to lobby Government to make the bigger changes necessary which enable each of us to make greener choices. Suffolk County Council has been addressing climate change challenge for many years, but we know that the organisation must be doing more and doing it more quickly. This is agreed across all Suffolk's authorities which is why, together, we have recently approved the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan - a document to keep us accountable in our ambition to make Suffolk a carbon neutral county by 2030. I'm proud of the work Suffolk County Council has been doing for a number of years now. We are planting trees and hedgerows. We are supporting businesses with advice and funding to reduce their carbon emissions. We are running schemes to reduce the cost of solar panels on homes. We are providing the infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. We are providing greener ways to travel. We are installing electric vehicle charging points in rural areas. There is much, much more besides, but we are working hard to develop this work.

Don't worry if you're still not sure what it means to you, your business or your community. With COP26 just three months away, organisations and authorities across Suffolk are planning events across the county to talk net zero and being carbon neutral. Whether at the start of your net zero journey, or you're looking to make the next step, these events will guide and inspire you.

The www.greensuffolk.org website will be updated soon with these Suffolk events. I'd recommend it as a great place to start finding out more.

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Suffolk plans climate change events ahead of COP26

It was announced on August 11th that in the build-up to COP26, events around Suffolk will showcase local businesses and people who are tackling climate change, to inspire others to follow. The events aim to encourage businesses and residents to do more personally and professionally to reduce carbon emissions and therefore slow the increase of climate change.

One of the events confirmed to be taking place in Suffolk is the visit of the national Zero Carbon Tour, organised by Planet Mark. The Tour sees a fully electric 'Carbon Battle Bus' making visits around the country before arriving at the COP26 conference.

Councillor Richard Rout, member of the Suffolk Climate Change, Environment and Energy Portfolio Holders' Group, and deputy leader and cabinet member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I'm delighted that Suffolk has been chosen to be part of the national Zero Carbon Tour, as I'm proud of all the climate change work that is going on here. I want more people to hear about it. Although many local authorities declared climate emergencies in the last couple of years, I want people to know that Suffolk has been addressing climate change for many years before that.

"But we must all be doing more to reduce our carbon emissions. Which is why colleagues from across the county have recently worked hard to produce and approve the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan. This gives Suffolk's public sector organisations a framework and commitment to each pursue our own net zero strategies, whilst working together for the benefit of Suffolk. Together, we are supporting and guiding our residents, communities and businesses to make the changes required to best set Suffolk on the path for carbon neutrality by 2030.

"I think the COP26 conference will be an influential moment in our ambitions for Suffolk to achieve net zero by 2030. Coupled with the recent IPCC global warming report, it should focus everyone's minds that each resident and business must be doing more and doing it more quickly."

The purpose of the Zero Carbon Tour is to discuss the concept of net zero carbon and why it is critical for businesses. Suffolk's businesses, organisations and community groups will share their stories about how they have started their journeys to net zero. This will inspire and give confidence to those considering how to reduce their carbon emissions.

Steve Malkin, Founder and CEO, Planet Mark, said:

"There is no doubt, we are living in a seminal and historic moment in time. 2020 – 2030 has been coined the Decade of Action, a period in which we need to tackle the climate crisis and halt biodiversity loss. The global pursuit of net zero carbon emissions is a huge undertaking, and only possible with help from businesses and communities alike.

"We are excited to bring the net zero message to Ipswich, and share the 'carbon stories' of organisations, community groups and individuals playing their part in creating a sustainable future for Suffolk, the United Kingdom and beyond."

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It will be visiting the University of Suffolk in Ipswich on 1 September 2021 and you can register your place on [the event website](#).

This event and others are taking place across Suffolk in the lead up to COP26, as part of Suffolk's collective campaign of Creating The Greenest County, and be net zero by 2030. As part of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, these events look to encourage collaborative action by educating and engaging with residents and businesses to develop net zero journey.

Other events which are being planned in Suffolk in the lead up to COP26 include:

- August/September – Webinars for Suffolk's voluntary sector (Suffolk County Council)
- 1 September – Zero Carbon Tour visits Ipswich
- 12 October – Ten Steps to Net Zero (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce)
- 21-22 October – Local Energy Showcase (Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council)
- TBC October - A Greener NHS day
- 12 November – Greenest County Awards (Suffolk County Council)
- 23-25 November – Low Carbon Homes

All events are subject to change, visit www.greensuffolk.org for the latest details and information about starting your journey to net zero.

Suffolk homeowners can cut carbon emissions as successful solar panel buying scheme returns

On August 25th it was announced that Suffolk residents will come together to invest in renewables through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Suffolk, in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from pre-approved installers.

This innovative scheme builds on three years of the highly successful Solar Together programme run in Suffolk. Since 2018, the scheme has installed solar panel systems in 1,028 households across the county. On average, homeowners have saved 33% on installation costs, £263 on energy bills in year one, and stopped harmful carbon emissions entering the atmosphere.

Suffolk residents have until 27 September 2021 to register their interest, for free and with no obligation, to join the group-buying scheme to have solar panels installed at their home. Not only does Solar Together Suffolk offer solar panels, but also optional battery storage and retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels.

Suffolk County Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

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“I’m delighted that we’re able to run Solar Together Suffolk for another year, as we have seen a real appetite amongst residents to play their part and invest in ways to reduce their carbon emissions. This is one of the many schemes we are offering, as Suffolk County Council aims to make the county net zero by 2030.

“The council itself has had solar panel installations for many years, which are located on around 100 of our properties. We have also been trialling battery storage too. This means that we rely less on the grid for our energy, by harnessing energy from the sun. Suffolk’s councils have worked together for many years to reduce carbon emissions and slow climate change. We now do this through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, and with COP26 on the horizon we will all need to focus on how we can all lower our carbon footprint and help make Suffolk a carbon neutral county.”

How does it work?

- Until 27 September: Householders can register to become part of the group, for free and without obligation, at www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk
- 28 September: Pre-vetted UK solar PV installers participate in an auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
- After the auction, registered households will receive a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Suffolk County Council brings **Solar Together Suffolk** to residents as part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, on behalf of all of Suffolk’s local authorities. This is in partnership with independent experts iChoosr to make the transition to clean energy as cost effective and hassle-free as possible. Across the UK, iChoosr has delivered almost 5,000 installations to date and over 80,000 tonnes of avoided lifetime carbon emissions.

What other Suffolk residents have said:

“All very painless and straightforward. Being part of a large group gives you the confidence that problems will be resolved should they arise, but none did!” Peter, Bury St Edmunds; 16 panels installed.

“Excellent! Solar Together Suffolk took all the hassle of finding a provider, and the group-buying secured me a better discount than trying to do this on my own. It was a no-brainer. Richard, Bures St Mary; 24 panels installed.

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Suffolk's new Chief Fire Officer appointed

On August 12th, Jon Lacey was appointed to the post of Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety.

Starting in November, Jon will lead Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and its staff, as well as having responsibility for Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards and emergency planning services and being a member of the corporate leadership team.

Jon will bring a wealth of experience to Suffolk, gained from a 24 year career with fire and rescue services. He began in 1993 as an on-call firefighter with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, before becoming a wholetime firefighter.

He is currently Assistant Chief Fire Officer at West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and has responsibility for Prevention, Protection and Response, as well as the county council's Resilience and Emergency Team, a service like Suffolk's Joint Emergency Planning Unit.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities at Suffolk County council, said:

"I welcome Jon's appointment, he will bring great experience and knowledge to Suffolk. The role is a very important one to keeping Suffolk safe - of course he will lead our Fire and Rescue Service, but also has responsibilities across the council, including Trading Standards and emergency planning. It is an exciting time for him to be joining us, following the Service's 'Good' rating by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the investment we are putting into operational equipment and new fire stations."

Nicola Beach, Suffolk County Council Chief Executive, said:

"I am delighted that Jon has accepted the offer to join us in Suffolk. We put all candidates through an extremely thorough process over a number of weeks, in front of wide-ranging and diverse panels. Jon presented himself very well during interviews and presentations and we all felt that he is someone who brings strong experience to the team and someone we would enjoy working alongside."

Dan Fearn, Suffolk's Deputy Chief Fire Officer will continue in the role of Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director on an interim basis until Jon starts his role in November.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service adds four new enhanced appliances to its fleet, fitted with solar panels

On August 27th Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled its state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to equip firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

Four new "enhanced rescue tenders" will be based at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Newmarket and Princes Street (Ipswich), giving cover across the county and strengthening the emergency response across Suffolk's communities.

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The new equipment and vehicles are also the latest innovations in green technology, supporting Suffolk County Council's climate emergency declaration and ambitions to be net zero by 2030. The fire appliances are the first in Suffolk to be fitted with solar panels, have more fuel-efficient engines and also carry battery powered hydraulic rescue equipment.

Dan Fearn, Temporary Chief Fire Officer, said:

"This is a significant investment in the Service's capability to deal with many types of rescues, including those on Suffolk's roads. To make sure we get the best equipment possible, we've carried out extensive operational testing and spent time getting feedback from staff.

"The equipment carried on-board is dedicated specialist equipment for carrying out rescues, ranging from car crashes to building collapses and making the scene of an incident safe.

"My team is made up of exceptional operational and non-operational staff. I want to give them the best possible equipment so that they can carry out their work to the best of their ability."

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection, & Communities, said:

"The vehicles are strategically placed across the county to deliver the fastest response to the community of Suffolk. I'm delighted that we've been able to add this next-generation equipment to our growing fleet. We have also recently introduced three new command support vehicles and we have further investment in the pipeline.

"Suffolk County Council aims to be a net zero authority by 2030, and I applaud the Service for setting an excellent example by embedding this ambition in its procurement."

Easing of restrictions when visiting Suffolk's Recycling Centres

Suffolk is set to continue on its path of working towards full capacity at recycling centres as Monday 19 July brought an end to lockdown.

Much like many other recycling centres across the country, Suffolk's Recycling Centres have been operating a socially distanced system during the pandemic.

From 19 July, there have been some changes to the rules when visiting the county's recycling centres, but residents will still need to book, pending a full review of arrangements.

The changes will take place in two phases to enable a managed increase in the number of bookings and to ensure that sites are operating safely and effectively.

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Phase one from Monday 19 July

- The one visit per week rule will remain in place, but an extra 3,760 slots will become available per week
- Cars with small trailers will now be able to book a 15 min car slot (750kg max gross weight, single axle and unbraked) and will also be allowed at Haverhill Recycling Centre
- Cars with large trailers will now book a 30 min large trailer/van slot (over 750kg max gross weight, double axle or braked), apart from at Haverhill Recycling Centre due to its size
- Vans without trailers will be able to book at all Recycling Centres (including Haverhill). Vans must book a 30 min van slot
- Vans with trailers are still prohibited from using any of the recycling centres
- Social distancing will be removed from all sites. Cars can park next to each other (as directed by site staff) and restrictions on number of people on walkway/gantry removed
- Staff will be able to assist visitors if requested. (All staff will wear FFP3 standard face coverings when assisting and follow good practice on Covid hygiene)
- More than one adult will now be allowed to unload per vehicle
- Guidance will remain for the public to continue wearing face coverings if possible. Face coverings for staff remain optional except when assisting the public

Phase two from Monday 16 August (In addition to changes in phase 1)

- An additional 4,500 slots will be made available per week, taking Suffolk's Recycling Centres to full capacity (weekly total to 27,422)
- Removal of one visit per week rule for household waste
- Trade waste will remain restricted to one visit per week (to ensure fair usage of the system which is mainly designed for residents' household waste)

A customer survey from March 2021 revealed 91% of booking system users were satisfied or very satisfied (with a further 4% being neutral) and 92% of customers had a problem-free experience when using the booking system.

Councillor Richard Smith Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:

"I am really pleased that from 19 July we are able to start increasing capacity at our recycling centres by reducing some of the restrictions we had in place so we can soon be back to full capacity. We are doing this in two phases to ensure that our sites are operating safely and smoothly.

"In response to overwhelming customer satisfaction, the booking system will remain in place for the moment at all of Suffolk's Recycling Centres. We have received many compliments about the staff on our sites and I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication for what has been a difficult year."

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Suffolk County Council begins procurement process for next Highways Service contract focusing on developing local skills and talent

Suffolk County Council has begun the process of finding its next long term Highways Services partner. The council is looking for a partner to deliver key operational projects after the current contract ends on 30 September 2023.

As part of preparations up to this point, the council has worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk based on the range of outcomes the council wants to achieve from any new contract process.

The council is looking to develop a contract that utilises a blended 'hybrid' approach, enabling the council to enter into one contract that covers the majority of Highways Service functions and two contracts with specialist providers for streetlighting and traffic signals (ITS). The council will be looking for the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

The whole contract development process will take just over two years to complete. Once the appropriate tender documents have been prepared outlining the council's requirements, initial advertisements will go out in December 2021. Discussions will begin with any interested prospective contractors in early 2022. Following such a rigorous tendering process, the council hopes to be able to award its chosen contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023.

The procurement process needs to begin now to provide enough time to go to the market to seek relevant specialist companies which may be interested in tendering for the contract which is worth in the region of £800m - £1 billion over a projected 20 year period.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, Cllr Paul West said:

"This is the beginning of the process today towards finding the right partners to deliver aspects of Suffolk's Highways Services beyond the end of the current contract in 2023. We want to get the best value for money for Suffolk taxpayers and ensure that the contractors we choose through the hybrid contract approach are the best fit for what we want to achieve and deliver.

"We have learnt a great deal from our existing contract arrangements and going forward I want to ensure this new contract enables more young people across Suffolk to access apprenticeships and relevant work experience opportunities through the Kick Start scheme. We want to find the right partner who shares our ambition and ideas to innovate in improving delivery of services, communicating with customers and sharing our commitment to reducing carbon use as part of the Climate Emergency.

"In preparing for this contract we have rightly spent time considering how other local authorities manage their Highways contracts and which process would be best for Suffolk as we look towards finding the right long term service delivery partner."

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Suffolk targets devolution talks with Government

It was announced on August 17th that public sector leaders in Suffolk say they welcome early discussions with Ministers about a possible devolution deal for Suffolk.

In a joint letter sent to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, the leaders of all of Suffolk's six councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore, said:

"Suffolk has already demonstrated its credibility as a place where Government will find strong and ambitious delivery partners.

"The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) group...has a track record of effective partnership working. These robust relationships enable more innovative ways of working, including exploring opportunities for devolution as part of a County Deal.

"Suffolk...is an ideal place to help Government demonstrate how levelling up can work in diverse geographies. Suffolk has a strong offer to make to Government and we would welcome early discussions with MHCLG Ministers to explore proposals for a County Deal ahead of the White Paper being published."

The Government wrote to councils in July 2021, setting out its ambition to make available to county areas the kind of devolved decision-making powers and public funding currently enjoyed by larger cities and urban areas. It's part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and will see a White Paper published in the coming months.

Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council and chair of the SPSL, said: "Suffolk is known for working well together. Whether it's partners joining forces during the COVID-19 pandemic, pooling public funding for the greater good or developing shared strategic priorities, collaboration is what we're good at.

"From inclusive economic growth and community safety to climate change and strong communities, we're focused on collaborative actions that deliver the biggest and best additional benefits for our communities.

"We believe this makes Suffolk a strong contender to work with the Government as part of its Levelling Up agenda."

It is understood that Suffolk's approach involving all councils is rare among other expressions of interest being submitted to Government, a point that has been welcomed by the county's seven MPs.

In an accompanying letter to Robert Jenrick MP, they said:

"We are...writing to wholeheartedly support the vision set out, collectively, by Suffolk County Council and all of Suffolk's District and Borough Councils. We believe this unity of purpose behind taking the next step in devolution through a County Deal can not just help persuade you that we should be in the

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vanguard of the next stage of devolution, but also that Suffolk can use such a deal to deliver better services locally.

“This is not a recent or short-lived view. For many years local leaders in Suffolk at all levels have worked more closely together and have put forward constructive propositions for further improvements. We hope to work with you on your forthcoming White Paper to show that strong local leadership and strengthened local governance can deliver better.”

Read a copy of **the letter sent to Robert Jenrick MP** (PDF, 207KB), as well the **supportive letter from Suffolk’s seven MPs** (PDF, 205KB).