

September 2026

Parish Report

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Wildfires and firefighting capacity

Only a week after the Reform UK administration at the council made the decision to scrap its Climate Emergency Declaration, a wildfire broke out on Dunwich Heath which took several days to get under control and has caused an enormous amount of damage to rare heathland habitat in one of the most beautiful and much-loved parts of the county. Suffolk Fire and Rescue worked with firefighters from all over the country to get it under control: at the height of the fire there were 120 firefighters tackling the blaze. Displaced residents needed shelter and support, so the local community rallied to open up village halls to help, and local farmers brought in water by tractor to terrain that could not be reached by fire engines. This is only one of many climate change-related incidents attended by blue light services over the summer, where intense heat and lack of rain have made the Suffolk countryside a tinder box for fires. Whatever the cause of the fire, it is climate change that created the conditions for this fire and others to burn so quickly and for so long, and to be so difficult to get under control. There have been claims in the press and online that rewilding causes wildfires, but the evidence shows the opposite – rewilded areas retain water better and remain green during hot weather. In any case, Dunwich Heath is a traditionally managed nature reserve and is not a rewilding site.

Following the fire, the Suffolk Fire Brigade Union wrote to the Prime Minister to explain that fire services need more investment in equipment in order to fight wildfires: systems to collect water, clothing that is less heavy, and boots for outdoor terrain when crews are required to walk for miles. He also highlighted the need to increase firefighter capacity in the light of the number of fires, and that more 4x4 vehicles would be useful. Suffolk currently receives less than average funding from the government for its fire service, although it is one of the driest areas in the country and is therefore more likely to be hit by wildfires in our increasingly hot, dry summers.

Help to replace ageing heating systems

Suffolk public sector organisations (including all Suffolk councils) are partnering with Switch Together, a community group-buying scheme, to make it easier for Suffolk residents to replace ageing gas, oil or LPG boilers with heat pumps. Through the government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme, eligible homeowners

in England can receive a grant of £7,500 toward an air source heat pump, or £9,000 for households currently heating with oil or LPG. The grant is applied for upfront by the installer, so residents do not need to claim it back or repay it. The scheme is open to homeowners and small business owners in England who are replacing a fossil fuel heating system and hold a valid Energy Performance Certificate with no outstanding major insulation recommendations. It is not means-tested, so there is no income threshold to qualify, and the scheme is currently scheduled to run until 31 December 2027. Switch Together works by bringing residents together so that installers compete to win their business which secures better prices than homeowners could negotiate individually. Once registered, residents receive a free, no-obligation personal offer, and their installer then handles the grant application on their behalf. Switch Together's group-buying savings apply on top of the government grant. Every installation is carried out by a Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited installer. For more information about the scheme, please visit the Sustainable Suffolk website: <https://sustainablesuffolk.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/switch-together-suffolk/>

Energy efficiency loans

Homeowners across Suffolk can now apply for a loan to help fund energy efficiency improvements to their homes, thanks to a partnership between Suffolk County Council and Lendology. The Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme offers eligible homeowners access to loans from £2k to £15k at a fixed interest rate of 2.2% Annual Percentage Rate (APR), with repayment terms of up to seven years. Borrowers may also repay their loan early without penalty, subject to eligibility and loan terms. The funding is designed to support residents who want to improve the energy performance of their homes while spreading the cost of installation over a manageable period.

The loan can be used for a range of energy efficiency measures, including:

- Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems
- Solar battery storage
- Solar thermal systems
- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Double and triple glazed windows and doors
- Loft, wall and floor insulation
- Ventilation systems when installed alongside insulation measures

The scheme aims to help residents reduce their energy bills and make their homes better insulated. For more information about the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme, please visit the Lendology website: <https://www.lendology.org.uk/partner/suffolk-council/>

High Streets Matter: support for market towns

Suffolk County Council is offering extra support to small independent and hospitality businesses across the county via its new High Street Matter programme. This will offer 75 businesses a package of one-to-one advice, funding opportunities and peer networking, with a view to help them become more resilient so high streets can thrive. Interested businesses can find out more and register here: <https://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/suffolks-high-streets-matter/>

Public consultation on cuts to Healthy Child Service

Finally, Suffolk County Council's public consultation on proposed changes to its Healthy Child Service has been extended by a month. The proposed changes include cessation of the Young Person Pathway and Family Nurse Partnership, which provides specialist support to parents under the age of 21 after

they have a baby. The proposals also include removal of the Community Staff Nurse role from Health Visiting teams, and the School Nursing service becoming term-time only. The consultation now runs until 18 October, with a decision likely to be made at Cabinet in November.

You can read through the proposals and respond to the consultation here if you have not already done so: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/healthy-child-services-consultations>

Over 140km of Suffolk roads treated as 2026 surface dressing programme comes to an end

Suffolk Highways has completed its 2026 surface dressing programme, treating 141 km of roads across the county to help protect and extend the life of Suffolk's highway network. The programme saw more than 750,000 square metres of road treated – equivalent to over 100 full-sized football pitches – across 86 sites in all areas of Suffolk. Surface dressing is a fast, efficient and sustainable way to maintain roads. It seals the road surface, restores skid resistance and helps protect against water damage, extending the life of roads and reducing the need for more costly repairs. The 2026 programme also provided an opportunity to trial new approaches to surface dressing and communicating with road users. Variable Message Signs (VMS) were used at busier sites to provide advance warning and live information to road users. The trial was successful and will help inform how Suffolk Highways communicates about future works. A product called Lockchip was also successfully trialled at nine sites across Suffolk: it's designed to help seal down the newly applied surface and reduce loose chippings following treatment.

In other Highways news, the council is trialling a pothole repair machine supplied by JCB, the Pothole Pro. It's engineered to cut, crop and clean defects using dedicated attachments to a standard wheeled tractor unit, preparing each pothole for permanent filling by a road crew in as little as eight minutes. In previous years, the same machine was tested and rejected as uneconomic or inefficient by other county councils. However, since their administrations changed to Reform UK, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire CCs have adopted it after all. It was revealed earlier this year that JCB donated £200,000 each to Reform UK and to the Conservative Party in the run-up to the May 2026 local elections.

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/scc.green/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/suffolkgreens/>

Group Website - <https://suffolkgreens.org.uk/>

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue->

[safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood](#)

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>