

Report for Parish Councils, Sep 2026

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1. Suffolk awarded £564,000 for major bus franchising study

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £564,000 by the Department for Transport to undertake a major feasibility study into bus franchising across Suffolk. The work will explore a range of options to determine whether greater local control over routes, fares and service standards could improve public transport provision. The study will include engagement with residents, local councils, businesses and transport operators, with no cost to Suffolk taxpayers.

2. Highways

JCB Pothole Pro Demonstration: Suffolk County Council continues to explore innovative ways of improving the speed and efficiency of pothole repairs across the county. As part of this work, a demonstration of the award-winning **JCB Pothole Pro** machine will take place in Ipswich on **1 September**. The specialist machine combines the processes of cutting, cropping and cleaning potholes into a single operation and can prepare a pothole for permanent repair in around eight minutes. It is capable of repairing approximately 250 square metres of road surface per day and has been specifically designed to help highway authorities tackle maintenance backlogs more efficiently. Subject to successful evaluation, Suffolk County Council is exploring the possible deployment of up to seven of these machines across Suffolk over the coming months, which could significantly improve repair capacity and reduce repair times.

Highways Staffing Update: I am pleased to report that the vacant highways engineering post which had been contributing to delays in surveying and assessing reported highway defects has now been filled by an experienced highways engineer. This additional resource should help improve response times for inspections, enable defects to be reviewed more quickly and support the timely progression of repairs across the network. Residents are encouraged to continue reporting potholes and highway defects through the Suffolk Highways reporting system, as these reports remain essential in helping prioritise repair programmes.

3. A140 and Transport Infrastructure

Residents travelling along the A140 may be aware of ongoing work to develop proposals for improvements at the A140/A1120 junction at Earl Stonham. The junction has long been identified as a location with congestion and road safety concerns. Suffolk County Council has approved the next stage of scheme development, including detailed design work and preparation of a business case to secure Department for Transport funding. If approved, the scheme could significantly improve traffic flow and safety on this important route serving communities throughout north Suffolk.

4. Sustainable Suffolk Heat Pump Scheme

Residents across Suffolk who are considering replacing ageing heating systems may be interested in a new initiative being delivered through **Sustainable Suffolk** and the **Switch Together** group-buying scheme. Eligible homeowners can access:

- A Government Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant of **£7,500** when replacing gas or electric heating systems.
- A grant of **£9,000** for properties currently heated by oil or LPG.
- Additional savings through collective purchasing arrangements.
- Free, no-obligation quotations from accredited installers.

This initiative is particularly relevant to many rural properties throughout Hartismere where homes are not connected to the gas network and rely on alternate sources of heating. Residents interested in learning more can visit the Switch Together and Sustainable Suffolk websites for further information.

5. EcoPower Suffolk Update

EcoPower Suffolk has confirmed that the statutory consultation for the proposed Solar Farm closed on 16 August 2026, with hundreds of responses received from residents, parish councils and stakeholders. The project team is now reviewing all feedback alongside environmental, technical and planning assessments. The developer has advised that consultation feedback will help inform the next stage of the project and may result in changes to the proposals. A further Community Liaison Group meeting will be held once the review is complete to present the findings and any proposed amendments to the scheme. As your County Councillor, I will continue to monitor the project and keep parish councils informed of any significant developments.

6. Supporting Hartismere Residents

During the past few months I have:

- Continued to meet and correspond with residents regarding highways, planning, transport and public service issues.
- Raised highway maintenance concerns and requests for intervention across the division.
- Worked with parish councils and community groups on local priorities.
- Attended council meetings, briefings, and community events on behalf of residents.
- Continued discussions with council officers and Cabinet Members regarding infrastructure and service delivery improvements.

7. Division Contact and Support

If you have specific issues regarding local county services, school transport allocations, or unresolved highways defects, please contact me with your relevant case reference numbers.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk
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