August 2025 Town and Parish Newsletter

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Warning over red light racers on Gull Wing Bridge

Motorists using the landmark Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft are being urged to stop at red warning lights as concerns grow over vehicles racing through to avoid a journey delay by it being raised.

There have been 112 breaches of the red safety lights, which signal the imminent lowering of the gates and raising of the bridge, between March and July.

Bridge operation staff began recording breach numbers from March after noticing incidents were becoming more frequent.

Breaches are recorded manually by staff in the bridge control tower and then checked against CCTV.

Recording of breaches began in March after staff noticed they were becoming more frequent.
On Friday June 20 there were two breaches in one day.

A van raced through and collided with the barrier, leaving it inoperable and needing urgent repairs to prevent disruption to both road and maritime traffic.

Fortunately, a temporary fix was able to be implemented, avoiding the need to close the bridge to either highway or maritime traffic while awaiting the delivery of replacement parts for a permanent repair. The council is now pursuing a claim for the costs of the immediate, temporary repair and a new replacement barrier against the company that owned the van. Later that day a private car also raced through, this time without incident.

The most recent breach, which involved a van narrowly avoiding the barrier, occurred on Wednesday July 17.

Ben Cook, Head of Contract Management and Commissioning for Suffolk County Council said:

“Staff have recorded 112 breaches of red lights between March and July 2025 alone following the opening of the bridge in September 2024.

“The majority of incidents occur between 6:30am and 3pm, often involving multiple vehicles tailgating through after the initial breach.

“While the numbers of red-light breaches remain relatively low, any instance of poor driver behaviour poses a risk to both safety and bridge operation.

“We are monitoring the situation closely and urge all motorists to respect the warning lights and drive responsibly or they may be subject to further action.”

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways, said:

“Any red traffic warning light is there for a reason and to gamble on racing through them just to avoid a few minutes wait is highly irresponsible.

“I would appeal to anyone who thinks it is OK to jump a red light to think again - treat these lights as you would the barriers on a railway level crossing, as a measure that is there for your safety and the safety of others.”

Under the Highway Code, flashing red lights are used at locations such as lifting bridges, level crossings, and airfields, and motorists MUST stop.

Failure to do so can result in penalty points on your driving licence, lead to a fine or, in serious cases, especially if it leads to an accident or endangers others, could result in disqualification or even criminal charges.

No legal action for the Gull Wing infringements have been issued yet, but bridge bosses are now considering introducing tougher measures that could include installing ANPR cameras.

The Gull Wing bridge spans Lake Lothing and opened to the public on September 7, 2024, being officially opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal on November 19.

Costing around £146 million the bridge, delivered by Suffolk County Council with Farrans Construction as the main contractor, has significantly reduced congestion and improved connectivity between the northern and southern parts of the town.

Spanning 345 meters in total, the bridge features a main bascule span that is 39.5 meters long, 22 meters wide, and 35 meters tall.

When raised it can accommodate marine vessels up to 32 meters wide.

From Parish Pews to Pixels

More than 400 years of the county's rich historical heritage will be at your fingertips from 8 August. Millions of records dating back to 1538 will be available online for the first time, with more additional local-interest records to follow.

Records digitised include full-colour, high-quality digital images of parish registers from across the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. They include key historical moments like the 1776 baptism of the artist John Constable and the 1846 burial of abolitionist Thomas Clarkson.

Until now, these baptism, marriage, confirmation, and burial records were only available on microfiche or in-person. Access will be free at The Hold in Ipswich – the home of Suffolk Archives and at Suffolk Community Libraries. Viewing from home will require an Ancestry subscription. Royalties will be used to support archive services.

The project has helped preserve fragile historic documents by reducing wear and tear. Suffolk Archives were also able to carry out conservation checks during the scanning process.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality said:

"This project is a fantastic step forward in making Suffolk's rich history more accessible. Whether you're overseas, have mobility challenges, or simply prefer to research from home, these records are now just a click away.

"By digitising these documents, we're not only preserving them for future generations but also helping people reconnect with their heritage. I hope this sparks even more interest in the stories held by Suffolk Archives."

Ancestry is known for its expertise in digitising genealogical records and its global reach, processing over one billion searches monthly. It's successfully partnered with numerous UK local authority archives over the past 15 years.

Simon Pearce, family history expert at Ancestry said:

"Ancestry's digitised collections now exceed 65billion records, meaning the possibilities to research ancestors around the globe continue to expand. Collections such as this important set of records from Suffolk will help us discover more information about the key events in our ancestors' lives and help to fill in the gaps in many family trees with connections to Suffolk. The collection is of huge importance to both the community in Suffolk and people with connections back to this county scattered all over the UK and the globe."

Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich said:

"I am delighted that Suffolk's parish registers and transcripts have been professionally digitalised with Ancestry. Suffolk Archives is the official record office for the diocese, and they store a huge amount of material. This service makes it easier to draw on the archives and ensure they are readily available to everyone."

There will be online and in-person how-to use Ancestry beginner sessions following the launch. These will be bookable online at www.suffolkarchives.co.uk

Lowestoft waste upgrades underway

Visitors to the recycling centre on Hadenham Road will still be able to book their slot and deposit waste as usual, without disruption.

New fire suppression equipment, construction of a food waste reception shed, and relocation of staff office space are among the main changes for the £3.4 million project. **"The upgrades at Lowestoft... demonstrate our continued investment in strengthening Suffolk's waste infrastructure."** Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste.

Work is due to be completed by Spring 2026 and has received a contribution through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) provided by East Suffolk Council of £751,642.

Councillor Chris Chambers said:

"The county council is continuing to make considerable progress and investments in recycling in Suffolk.

"Some of these developments have been customer-facing, such as at Haverhill, Foxhall, and plans for a new centre in Ipswich. Others, like the upgrades at Lowestoft, are more behind-

the-scenes - but all of them demonstrate our continued investment in strengthening Suffolk's waste infrastructure.

"With Simpler Recycling and food waste collections coming to all Suffolk's homes next year, we are preparing the Waste Transfer Station at Lowestoft to receive food waste collections from bin lorries in parts of East Suffolk, which will then be taken to the new anaerobic digestion plant in Reydon."

Councillor Mark Packard, East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management and the Chair of the CIL Spending Working Group, said:

"East Suffolk Council is happy to contribute £751,642 of Community Infrastructure Levy to these upgrades. The Levy is collected from new housing developments in East Suffolk and therefore it is right that this is spent on improving our infrastructure.

"Waste management impacts every home in East Suffolk and with the advent of the collection of glass and food waste from each home we have needed to add to our recycling capacity."

The government's Simpler Recycling initiative will standardise recycling practices across all local authorities in England and make recycling easier, more consistent, and more effective.

New council boundary proposals mean 3 councils, 3 sets of salaries and the same old story for Suffolk

- District and borough councils' new boundary proposals criticised as costly and unworkable
- Creating 3 new councils in Suffolk would lead to increased costs and carry safeguarding risks
- One new unitary council for Suffolk is best for county

The proposed map comes following repeated calls from Suffolk County Council for clarity on how their suggested 3-council model will be formed. The map is essential information for Suffolk residents to ensure they fully understand the proposals being put forward.

Under their suggested boundaries, Ipswich would form a unitary council with Hadleigh, Kesgrave and Felixstowe (known as South Suffolk); Bury St Edmunds would be grouped with Sudbury, Haverhill, Newmarket and Brandon (known as West Suffolk) and Lowestoft would find itself with Woodbridge, Eye and Stowmarket (known as East Suffolk).

Alongside the map, the districts and borough have not released any information of what impact these proposed boundaries would have on council tax rates – with Ipswich residents currently paying the highest rate of district or borough council tax in the whole country.

Cllr Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local

government reform and NSIPs, said:

*"*We have been asking the district councils for their proposed council boundaries since March. Given what they've released today, I can see why they've kept them secret for so long. Their proposals are chaotic, confusing, and ultimately unworkable. They will mean higher council tax across the county, but particularly in places like Felixstowe, Hadleigh, Kesgrave the villages south of Ipswich and the Shotley peninsula, more money spent on senior staff and administration and less money going on frontline local services in Suffolk.

"The financial figures that the districts and borough are putting forward are optimistic to the point of being dangerous. We must never lose sight of the fact that the key care services we deliver support some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Spurious assumptions to support an argument to protect their perceived political fiefdoms have no place in this debate.

"Breaking up key expensive care services, that are currently delivered county wide, won't just cost more as they employ new senior teams, it will put the most vulnerable in our community at risk. They will create a postcode lottery for care, drive up costs and create boundaries where they don't currently exist.

"The districts and borough have finally given into pressure to publish their plans, but what they have brought forward just means three sets of salaries and the same old story from local government. I remain as convinced as ever that One Suffolk is the only solution with the best interest of Suffolk's residents at its heart*."*

Residents are being encouraged to have their say on the future of councils and public services in Suffolk by completing Suffolk County Council's survey. You can also complete the survey by visiting a Community Library or by calling **0345 603 1842.** The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Responses will inform the One Suffolk business case, which will be submitted to Government in September.

Suffolk gas engineers recognised for bravery after rescuing teen from house fire

Stephen has received a certificate of commendation from *The Society for the Protection of Life from Fire*, following a nomination by recently retired Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Crew Manager Glen Saunders - one of the first firefighters on scene with Ipswich East fire station's Blue Watch.

As Glen Saunders was not aware at the time of the key roles played by Joseph and Jack in the rescue, only Stephen was nominated for the Society's award.

However, in recognition of the vital part all three men played, Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey has invited all three to the Service's annual awards ceremony in October, where they will be formally presented with a commendation for their bravery.

Recalling the incident, Glen Saunders, said:

"A total of four fire engines were mobilised, but by the time we arrived, Stephen, Joseph and Jack had already extinguished the flames - preventing the fire from spreading throughout the rest of the house.

"While we strongly advise against members of the public tackling fires themselves, had they not acted as they did that day, we could very well have been attending a loss of life incident."

Stephen Hobbs described the moment they intervened:

"The three of us were working as a repair team across the road from a house on Grange Farm Road when I noticed large amounts of black smoke coming from an open upstairs window.

"I ran to the house while Jack ran to our van to get our onboard fire extinguisher. I banged hard repeatedly on the front door in case anyone was home.

"Thankfully, it woke the only occupant who had been asleep in the room that had caught alight. He let me in, and while Joseph helped him get away from the house, Jack and I were able to put out the fire."

Despite suffering smoke inhalation, the occupant made a full recovery.

It was later determined that the fire, which caused extensive damage to the bedroom, had been caused by a hair dryer left switched on, which subsequently overheated.

Chief Fire Officer, Jon Lacey, said:

"I look forward to welcoming Stephen, Joseph, and Jack to our awards ceremony later this year, where we can formally thank them for what they did. They showed outstanding bravery, quick thinking and teamwork, and their actions undoubtedly saved a life and prevented considerable damage to the property.

"Although they acted largely on instinct, as gas engineers accustomed to working with a highly flammable and combustible substance, they had the benefit of fire safety training provided by Cadent."

Their training was also acknowledged by **Vicky Grieve, Network Director for Cadent in the East of England, who commented:** "We are extremely proud of Steve, Joseph and Jack for their fast-thinking and bravery when faced with this incident.

“As soon as they realised that something was wrong, they sprang into action and were able to use their training to ensure the safety of the occupant and extinguish the fire. They stayed calm throughout yet showed true heroism."

While both Cadent and SFRS have praised the men’s actions, Jon Lacey was also keen to use the opportunity to highlight wider public safety messages.

“Despite the positive outcome achieved that day, our advice to the public upon seeing or suspecting a fire is always to call 999 and ask for the fire service, then stay a safe distance away until our crews arrive.

He continued: “We hope this incident serves as a reminder to always take fire safety at home seriously. Please unplug heat-generating appliances after use, keep escape routes clear, and test smoke alarms monthly.”

Echoing that messaging, **Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, added:**

“Stephen, Joseph and Jack acted with incredible courage and presence of mind in a situation that would have overwhelmed many. Their instinct to help, combined with the safety awareness gained through their work, made a life-saving difference.

“While this story had a positive outcome, it’s also a timely reminder of how unpredictable fire can be, and why prevention, through simple steps like turning off appliances and checking alarms, remains so important.”

Council welcomes reduced timetable for road closure at Ipswich housing scheme

Suffolk County Council has welcomed confirmation that the full road closure of Westerfield Road in Ipswich is to be slashed following a revised programme submitted by developers Bellway Homes.

The works, which are required as part of Bellway’s Westerfield Grove development, will now be reduced from 17 weeks to just eight weeks, having originally been scheduled as a 24 week full closure.

Suffolk County Council officers worked with Bellway to reduce the 24 weeks to 17 weeks by combining phases of work, extending working hours, and aligning utility works with highway improvements.

After further requests, Bellway has now revised its plans further, meaning the full road closure will only apply for eight weeks, with the remainder of the 17-week programme managed under temporary traffic lights.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, said: "I thank Bellway for meeting with us and engaging with the local community.

"I am very pleased that the duration of the works has been reduced, and I hope Bellway will maintain clear and consistent communication throughout the closure to ensure any concerns that arise are promptly addressed."

Under the updated schedule:

- Weeks 1–3 (from 26 August): Partial closure with temporary traffic lights
- Weeks 3–11 (from 16 September): Full Road closure (pedestrian access maintained)
- Weeks 11–17 (from 11 November): Partial closure resumes with traffic lights

One of the most significant changes under the new programme is the relocation of a proposed foul sewer.

The original plans proposed excavating through the centre of Westerfield Road to install a new sewer.

Suffolk County Council asked Bellway to explore alternative routing options within the development boundary.

Bellway reviewed the scheme and identified a revised route within the site, removing the need for extensive excavation in the highway and helping to significantly reduce disruption for residents.

Councillor West thanked Suffolk County Council's Network Assurance team for their proactive approach in reducing disruption wherever possible.

"Our officers have worked tirelessly to reduce the scale and duration of these works," he said.
"Their efforts in coordinating activity, extending working hours, and negotiating programme improvements were instrumental in getting the closure period down from 24 weeks to 17, paving the way for this latest improvement."

OPINION: Wishing all Suffolk students well with the next step of their education and careers

On Thursday, students across Suffolk will receive their A-Level, BTEC and T-Level results. I would like to wish all students the very best of luck, I know you have worked very hard towards this and I wish you every success as you take the next step in your education or career.

I would also like to wish good luck to all students receiving their GCSE results next week. I hope that you achieve the results you need to progress to the next stage of your education or training.

If any students are unsure what to do after receiving your results, there is a lot of really helpful information at www.thesource.me.uk

If you don't achieve the results you were hoping for, we encourage you to contact your university or college for a chat. If you have been unable to get the place you wanted at a university or further education college, the regular UCAS clearing process is open until 1 September. The most important thing to remember is that no matter what grades you receive, you have lots of options to choose from.

I'd like to also take a moment to praise the dedication and commitment of teaching staff who deliver the best education and support to our young people, throughout their school careers. Thank you.

In just three weeks, pupils across Suffolk will head back to school after the six-week summer holidays. I hope that families and teaching staff have had an enjoyable, relaxing break and are feeling prepared for the new school year.

The start of a new school year can present challenges for families and schools alike. The prospect of walking back through the school gates after the summer holidays, or indeed for the first time, can be both exciting and daunting.

While many children and young people will be looking forward to going back to school, I know some families may be feeling anxious and that it can feel quite difficult for many children and young people. It is normal to feel anxious, and there is a lot of support out there to help children manage the transition back into school, including a suite of advice for families on the Suffolk County Council website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/wellbeing-in-education.

Our Psychology and therapeutic team, alongside Suffolk Parent Carer Forum have produced these resources. They include advice for families with primary and secondary aged children as well as guidance for families with children who have additional needs and/or anxiety.
I have pulled out five top tips which I think are really helpful to remember:

1. Starting conversations about going back to school sooner rather than later will ensure there is time for children to share their worries, think through problems and allow you to find solutions together.
2. The things we as parents worry about are not always the same as our children so ask them what they need to feel prepared.
3. Taking small steps to try and introduce routines early is a great way to prepare for the return to school. Bedtimes, waking times and mealtimes may well have changed during the holidays so adjusting these gradually to establish a routine to prepare children for the new school term will help them.
4. Using visual prompts and timetables and checklists with personalised themes can help with preparation and reduce feelings of worry.
5. Planning and knowing what to expect on their first day back. Who will be there and what will happen on their first day.

As well as these resources, InOurPlace offer online courses dedicated to improving emotional health and wellbeing for parents, children, teenagers, adults and grandparents. They have produced a suite of online training and information for parents to support children with the transition to primary or secondary school, called 'Moving Up'. Families in Suffolk can access online training and resources from InOurPlace for free by visiting www.inourplace.co.uk/movingup and using the access code WOLSEY.
I hope that parents find these resources useful.

I wish children, young people and all school staff the very best as they return to school.

Hotel owner admits fire safety offences

Protection officers first visited the hotel on 17 April 2024 during refurbishment works and discovered that paying guests were being accommodated overnight. This contravened an earlier fire risk assessment which stated that no persons were to sleep at the premises until the works were completed.

As a result of not heeding this advice, protection officers issued a Prohibition Notice to prevent anyone from sleeping at the premises, and an Enforcement Notice requiring the deficiencies to be addressed.

The breaches identified included:

- A fire alarm system displaying faults and not in working order
- An obstructed fire exit
- Breaches in fire-resistant construction affecting protected escape routes
- Inadequate fire safety signage
- An inadequate fire evacuation plan

At the hearing, Mr Rose pleaded guilty to all five offences.

Jon Lacey, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer, said:
"Fire safety laws exist to protect lives. By ignoring professional advice and allowing guests to stay in a building with such serious safety failings, Mr Rose put their safety at significant risk. "We will always take enforcement action where necessary to keep people safe."

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, commended the team's work:

"This case underlines why fire safety regulations must be taken seriously and enforced with vigour when ignored.

"I applaud the Protection Team for their persistence and vigilance, and for taking such swift and decisive action to protect the public from potential harm."

Both the Prohibition and Enforcement Notices have now been complied with.
Sentencing has been scheduled for 7 November 2025 at Norwich Magistrates' Court.

OPINION: Protecting Suffolk's thatched treasures from fire

There's something timeless about a thatched roof. They bring character to our villages, charm to our countryside, and a sense of heritage that makes Suffolk such a beautiful place to live. In fact, thatching is enjoying a revival, with more homeowners choosing to restore or preserve these traditional roofs.

But while thatched homes are picturesque, they also come with some very particular risks. Sadly, we've seen a couple of thatch fires in Suffolk in recent weeks - stark reminders that once a blaze takes hold, it spreads rapidly through the thatch and is extremely difficult to put out. Too often, the result is devastating and can cause irreparable damage to a home. The good news is there's a lot you can do to protect yourself. Prevention is the best defence, and by taking some sensible precautions you can dramatically reduce the chances of a fire breaking out.

Chimneys: your first line of defence

Most thatch fires begin in the chimney. That's why regular maintenance is so important. Get your chimney swept by a qualified professional at least once a year, and more often if you use it regularly. Look out for warning signs such as staining on plasterwork, soot in the loft, or deposits on the chimney breast - these may mean something is wrong.

Structural improvements can make a big difference too. Raising the height of your chimney, adding a pot, or lining the flue will all help stop sparks or heat from reaching the thatch. As a rule of thumb, the top of your chimney pot should be at least 1.8 metres above the thatch. Extra distance means extra safety. Always seek advice from a qualified chimney engineer before making changes.

Fires and wood burners

If you enjoy an open fire or wood burner, a few simple habits will keep you safer. Only burn well-seasoned wood, damp logs release moisture and gases that create tar inside your chimney, which is highly flammable. Use a stove pipe thermometer to make sure your burner is running at the right temperature - too hot and sparks can escape, too cool and you risk dangerous build-ups of soot and tar.

Never use petrol or paraffin to start a fire and always use a fire guard. Before going to bed or leaving the house, make sure the fire is fully extinguished. And remember - children should never be left unattended near open flames.

Electrical safety

Electrical faults are another common cause of fires in thatched homes. Don't overload

sockets and unplug chargers once you have finished with them. Avoid charging laptops or phones overnight. Look out for flickering lights, scorch marks, or loose wiring, and have your system checked periodically by a qualified electrician.

Bonfires, fireworks, and contractors

If you live under thatch, steer clear of bonfires, fireworks, and sky lanterns - they are simply too risky. It's also worth reminding your neighbours about this, as their actions could put your home in danger.

When having building work done, set some ground rules with contractors. Tools like blowtorches and heat guns should never be used anywhere near a thatched roof - all it takes is a single spark in the wrong place to cause catastrophe.

Kitchen safety

Two thirds of house fires begin in the kitchen. The advice here applies to everyone, but it's especially important in a thatched home. Keep flammable items like tea towels away from hobs, never overfill chip pans, and keep a fire blanket nearby.

Alarms and escape plans

Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they're installed in the right places and kept in working order. Fit alarms on every floor of your home, including the loft space, and test them weekly. Ten-year battery alarms are a good option. In addition, make sure you have a clear fire escape plan. Talk it through with your family so everyone knows what to do and how to get out quickly if the worst happens.

Help is at hand

Owning a thatched property is something to be proud of but keeping it safe requires a little extra care. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service offers free home safety visits, tailored to thatched homes, where we can help you spot risks and make changes that keep you safe. To book your visit, call our Prevention Team on **01473 260588**. It could save not just your home, but your life.

Together, we can continue to protect Suffolk's unique character and ensure our rural communities remain safe and resilient. You can find out more about thatched property safety on our website: www.suffolk.gov.uk.

Former agency social worker sentenced for fraud

Beatrice Eduah pleaded guilty to one offence of fraud by abuse of position between June and November 2023. In short, she committed Job contract fraud in that whilst working for SCC she was also being paid to work on multiple dates for other Local Authorities.

The Judge was scathing of her in his sentencing comments today and referred to her as a fraudster and a thief. He also made reference to the victims of the fraud namely the Local Authority but more importantly vulnerable adults.

He has deferred sentence until 13 February 2026. In that time, Ms. Eduah must acquire paid work and set any salary aside in a separate bank account with such funds being utilised to repay SCC. If she is unable to obtain work, then she must bring documentary proof of every role she has applied for and the corresponding rejection letters. The Judge pointed out that the Court were becoming experienced in defendants who supply false documentation produced via AI and said that independent checks would be made of any documentation supplied to ensure its veracity.

She pleaded guilty on 19 May 2025 at Cambridge Crown Court to one charge of fraud, contrary to Section 4 of the Fraud Act 2006, over the period June 2023 to November 2023; namely dishonestly abusing her position as an agency staff member of Suffolk County Council with the intention of making a gain, by omitting to declare that she was working full-time for two other Local Authorities, representing that she had the capacity to work for SCC full-time basis when she did not.

Concerns were raised by a recruitment agency who contacted the Council in November 2023 to advise that Eduah had a placement with Suffolk County Council and one other local authority, both full time with Eduah submitting timesheets to both authorities for the same hours.

A criminal investigation was launched by the Council's Counter Fraud Service which found that during Eduah's employment at Suffolk County Council, she had also worked full-time for one other local authority, and for a period of three weeks had been employed for full-time work at Suffolk County Council and two other local authorities. Timesheets were submitted by her for each of these roles, which showed that the same hours had been logged across the authorities. Neither authority was aware that she held an additional employment at each authority. The investigation also found that when Eduah applied for the role with Suffolk County Council, she omitted from her CV the fact that she was already employed full time with two other local authorities.

In order to facilitate her fraud, Eduah dishonestly communicated with her line manager about the need for unpaid time off from her Suffolk role on five separate occasions when in fact she worked full-time at another local authority during these absences. This included stating that she was abroad due to a family members' death when in fact she was in the UK working for the other local authority.

Speaking after the sentence was handed down, **Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Care, said:**

"Social Workers are key to the successful delivery of Adult Social Care services across our county, we trust them with the care and support of our loved ones, including some of the most vulnerable in our society. When that trust is broken, when they behave dishonestly

and counter to the ethical standards we rightly expect and demand, it is right they are properly punished by the courts.

“My thanks to the Counter Fraud Service and Legal team at the county council for pushing this investigation and to the other local authorities who worked with us to get this result.”

Rogue plumber jailed for defrauding customers

Grant Phillips took over £30,000 from twelve customers between April 2021 and October 2023 while operating under three different business names. A few customers managed to receive partial refunds but the total loss to the victims still stands at over £22,000. Phillips traded as Superdry Plumbing & Drainage, Rhino Plumb and Plumb Fix, operating around East Anglia before being brought to justice in a prosecution by Suffolk Trading Standards.

He was sentenced to 26 months in prison at Ipswich Crown Court on Wednesday 20 August 2025.

He had previously admitted at Ipswich Magistrates Court on Monday 3 June 2024, to fraudulent trading contrary to Section 9 of the Fraud Act 2006 - trading fraudulently by failing to provide materials for work or not completing projects.

Phillips, 45, previously of Bath Road, Felixstowe but now of Heron Road, Ipswich, was prosecuted by Suffolk Trading Standards after customers complained to the Citizens Advice Helpline and Action Fraud. Victims said payments were made to Phillips for home improvement projects that were not completed or were substandard, requiring expensive remedial work. He also took money for materials which were not provided, were not as ordered or were not suitable.

The losses ranged from around £200 to more than £4,400.

Some victims were elderly and had commissioned home improvement projects to improve accessibility to bathroom facilities in their homes. Some were not able to afford to complete the project or have the work re-done for a lengthy period and one elderly victim found it difficult to trust another trader in her property.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member responsible for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

“I congratulate Suffolk Trading Standards on bringing this man to justice. People who commission building work to be done need to be able to do so with peace of mind.
“When that trust is breached it can have a devastating impact on the victims, so I am very pleased to see that the actions of this particular trader have been duly punished.”

Graham Crisp, Suffolk County Council’s Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:

"Phillips victims, some of them vulnerable, suffered financial loss and great personal worry and stress because of his actions and I am pleased that the sentence reflects that.
"He badly let these people down and it took great courage on their part to come forward and report him. The public can rest assured that we will always take action whenever we can in cases like this."

Mr Crisp advised people to use the Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme when having work done. It is a business partnership scheme where participants have completed a full vetting process and agree to trade fairly under a Code of Practice.

This covers transparent quoting and conducting work, only charging a fair and reasonable price, and dealing with complaints promptly.

For details go to trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/

Guide published to support developers in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has updated its "Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk", following a consultation over the summer.

It has been updated and redesigned in line with the feedback and takes account of legislative and policy changes.

The guide is there to support developers appreciate the myriad ways which a new project will affect local communities and its financial implications on local authorities.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste

The guide sets out what developers should consider, including financial contributions, to help reduce the impact of new projects on communities and the county council.
For example, new housing would have a knock-on effect on things like the local environment, education, waste services, local amenities, highways, and flooding, and therefore cost implications for local authorities.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste, said:

"When a major planning application is proposed, it will have an impact on local infrastructure, services that local authorities provide, and associated costs.

"The government's National Planning Policy Framework outlines that developers will financially support local authorities, allowing infrastructure to support the new project and allow for growth.

"We have been regularly updating our guide since it was originally published in 2011. It's there to support developers appreciate the myriad ways which a new project will affect local communities and its financial implications on local authorities."

The "Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk" can be found on the Suffolk County Council website.

New and Improved bus services coming to Suffolk this month

These routes have all been suggested by the community through the council's "scheme on a page" initiative and have been funded through the 2025/26 Local Authority Bus Grant from Department for Transport. The grant is made up of £2.8m revenue for delivering these new or enhanced services and a further £5.3m capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste, said:

"I'm delighted to launch these new and improved routes for Suffolk in the coming weeks. We know that they will make a huge difference to local people, because they have all been suggested by Suffolk Communities. These changes represent the biggest positive change to bus services across the County since 1998 and along with our previous route improvements, show our commitment to supporting local communities and the bus industry."

Among the services launching on 1 September, is the enhanced First number 70 route, which currently operates between Orford and Grundisburgh. The enhanced service will improve journey options from Sutton Heath and Melton to several locations including Grundisburgh, Woodbridge and Rock Barracks:

- The number of daily journeys provided for Grundisburgh will increase and include an hourly off-peak service and a later journey back from Ipswich at 19:40.
- The number of daily journeys provided for Rock Barracks will also increase, with an hourly off-peak service including a later journey back from Ipswich via Grundisburgh at 19:40. This will provide the planned influx of personnel at the base with much needed travel options.

Councillor Chris Chambers, added: "The enhanced number 70 route is the culmination of two years of work and initially came to us as three separate bids from Woodbridge Town Council, Melton Parish Council and Sutton Heath Parish Council, alongside MoD at Rock Barracks.

"Those bids told us that transport links needed to improve in the area and we've worked hard with local communities to bring those proposals together and achieve something which will make a real difference to benefit people living in Sutton Heath, Rock Barracks, Melton and Woodbridge."

Maj Alex Mason, 2IC 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, of Rock Barracks in Woodbridge, said:

"Woodbridge Station warmly welcomes the successful local authority bid for funding to improve the local bus services at Sutton Heath, particularly in support of the growing number of Gurkha families moving into the area.

"This investment will make a meaningful difference to the daily lives of our serving personnel and their families, many of whom rely on public transport. Improved access to schools, healthcare, and community services will help new families feel more connected and supported as they build their lives here.

"The news follows the recent success of the Freedom of Woodbridge parade, where our soldiers were honoured to march through the town in recognition of their service and strong ties with the local community. The warm reception from residents was a powerful reminder of the deep bond between 23 Para Engr Regt and the town of Woodbridge.

"We are proud of the close partnership between the Army, local councils, and the wider community, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact of these enhanced services in the months ahead."

The funding has also enabled the council to introduce new services in areas which had seen local bus services cancelled or reduced.

Councillor Chambers, continues: "As in the case of Newmarket and Marham Park, the grant has enabled us to re-introduce routes in areas which had been facing cancellation of their bus routes.

"We are very grateful to DfT for providing the funding to enable us to make a huge positive difference in improving transport links across our communities, and we are hopeful that this and schemes like it can continue in the future.

"I would encourage anyone who has an idea to improve bus links in your village to get in touch - share your ideas with us through our scheme on a page initiative. As well as new or enhanced bus routes, we are also open to supporting ideas involving transport infrastructure and longer-term investment."

Members of the community can suggest ideas for new or enhanced bus routes, or infrastructure projects such as bus stop improvements, for consideration at: www.suffolkonboard.com/news/2024/06/bus-service-improvement-plan-where-should-the-money-be-spent/.

A full list of the new and enhanced services funded through the Local Authority Bus Grant 2025/26 can be seen below:

Operator	Number	Route	Change	Commencing

Ipswich Buses	1	Waitrose - Greenwich - Town Centre	Addition of Sunday service	31/8/25
Ipswich Buses	3E	Town Centre - University of Suffolk - Nacton Road - Greenwich	Addition of Sunday evening service	31/8/25
Ipswich Buses	92	Ipswich - Holbrook - Brantham - Manningtree	Planned reduction in service withdrawn, new peak AM journey from Brantham to Manningtree	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	93	Ipswich - Capel St Mary - East Bergholt - Colchester	planned reduction in service withdrawn.	N/A - ongoing
Ipswich Buses	4	Town Centre - Broke Hall - Bixley	Increased peak-hour frequency	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	5	Town Centre - Foxhall Road - Ipswich Hospital	Increased Mon-Fri frequency	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	7, 16	Ipswich Town Centre – Dale Hall – Castle Hill – Anglia Retail Park and Ipswich Town Centre – Belstead Road – Halifax	Increased peak-hour frequency, additional trips	1/9/25
Ipswich Buses	15/15A	Town Centre - Station - Maidenhall - Pinewood - Chantry	Increased frequency	1/9/25
Chambers	Was 90, 91, now 50	(Ipswich -) Hadleigh - Sudbury	New Sunday Sudbury – Ipswich service plus additional Sudbury – Hadleigh Mon-Sat journeys	31/8/25
Chambers	Was 84, 753, 784, now 43/X43	Bury St Edmunds – Sicklesmere – Lavenham – Acton - Sudbury – Great Cornard - Leavenheath – Stoke-by-Nayland – Nayland - Colchester	New Sunday and evening journeys for Sudbury – Colchester section. Daytime Mon-Sat services retimed to give better frequency for Stoke By Nayland and	31/8/25

			Leavenheath. All journeys via West Suffolk and Colchester hospitals.	
Chambers	49	Acton Lane (near Health Centre) – Tesco – Chaucer Avenue bus gate – Town Centre	New Sudbury town service	1/9/25
Chambers	Was 375, now 45	Sudbury - Alpheton - Shimpling - Bury St Edmunds	Upgrade from Weds only to run Mon-Sat, route change to cover West Suffolk Hospital	1/9/25
Mulleys	M40	Thurston - Great Barton - Bury St Edmunds	New hourly service	4/7/25
Mulleys	M77	Marham Park - Westley Estate - Bury Town Centre	Extension of existing town service to run earlier and later plus covering Marham Park.	4/7/25
BorderBus	521	Aldeburgh - Thorpeness - Saxmundham - Halesworth	Increased Saturday frequency and extended to Beccles	TBC
Dan's Coach Travel	DB1	Stowmarket - Bury St Edmunds	Addition of Saturday service	TBC
The Voluntary Network	NTC	Exning - Studlands Estate - Newmarket Town Centre - Railway Station	New Mon - Sat service	15/9/25
The Voluntary Network	225	Newmarket - Dullingham - Thurlows - Haverhill	New Mon-Fri service converting current demand responsive option to scheduled route. Also provides peak journey on new NTC town service above.	15/9/25
The Voluntary Network	TBC	Linking High Lodge, the Town Centre and Country Park	New three day per weeks service linking estates,	15/9/25

		with the housing areas	town centre, country park and High Lodge	
Simonds	72	Gislingham - Diss	New Friday shopping service	5/9/25
Fareline	460	Gislingham - Stowmarket	New Thursday shopping service	TBC
Hadleigh Community Transport	461, 462	Hadleigh - Whatfield - Bildeston - Stowmarket	Increase to daily operation and add more journeys	TBC
TBC	482	Framlingham - Stradbroke - Eye - Diss	New Mon-Sat service	TBC
First	800	Ipswich Park & Ride	Revised route in Ipswich taking in University of Suffolk and Ipswich Hospital (Garrett Anderson Centre rather than Woodbridge Road). Some journeys extended to Adastral Park. 1 journey per hour extended to Rendlesham via Martlesham, Woodbridge and Melton.	1/9/25
First	70	Orford – Sutton Heath – Melton – Woodbridge – Grundisburgh – Ipswich.	Additional journeys from Sutton Heath and Rock Barracks to Melton and Woodbridge with connections onwards to Ipswich.	1/9/25
First	TBC	Lowestoft town service	Resumption of service to Gunton area withdrawn in 2019.	2/11/25

OPINION: Putting People at the Heart of Care: Celebrating Community Catalysts in Suffolk

At Suffolk County Council, our ambition is clear: to ensure that every person needing care can make use of high-quality, personalised support that enriches their life. This is why I am thrilled to celebrate the extraordinary work being carried out in Suffolk by **Community Catalysts**, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting the development of community micro-enterprises providing bespoke care and support for local people.

A Partnership That Delivers Real Local Choice

Since launching in the Waveney district before expanding across the whole of the county, the Community Catalysts initiative has brought meaningful change by promoting local, community-based care options. By working with people who wish to set up their own small-scale care businesses, the project supports those who seek to offer care and support such as home help, companionship, household support, or creative community-led activities. This scheme also supports established local groups aiming to diversify or expand their offerings. The Community Micro-Enterprise Development Programme in Suffolk has (to date) resulted in the development of 160 new or existing community micro-enterprises that are offering over 5,260 hours of support to 1,100 people (with additional capacity available). This programme is underpinned by our 'People at the heart of care' vision, which values personalised solutions and empowers people to choose what works best for them. Community Catalysts bring that vision to life by cultivating a directory "Small Good Stuff": not one-size-fits-all care, but tailored, homely support rooted in community itself.

Spotlight: HandS Help and Support

One of the most inspiring stories to emerge from this work is that of Lenka Bashford, who launched HandS Help and Support in West Suffolk earlier this year. After contacting her local Catalyst, Amy, Lenka benefited from invaluable guidance on everything from marketing and training to insurance, regulations, DBS checks, and accessing funding.

By April, Lenka had begun providing support to four local clients, delivering 25 hours of highly personalised care every week. Over half of her enquiries came through Small Good Stuff, Community Catalysts' directory of local care and support. Rosie who is living with dementia and has benefitted from using Lenka's support has found new joy, companionship, and confidence, while Rosie's daughter remarked that through Lenka's efforts, "Mum is a person again, with a life to talk about and experiences to share." Lenka's journey has given friends and families in Suffolk a shining example of how creativity, compassion, and personalised care can transform lives.

Building Capacity Across Suffolk

Community Catalysts' impact does not stop there. Their Small Good Stuff directory for Suffolk now features enterprises such as Lisa Fowler Home Support (covering Sudbury and nearby areas), Megakare Ltd (operating across towns from Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds), and Small Steps Support and Care Services (working in and around Bury St Edmunds). One

particular enterprise, Suffolk Home Help, offers a wide range of services, from companionship, decluttering, and meal support to gardening and community outings, and carries recognised training credentials as well as Doing It Right Standards, thanks to their Community Catalysts development experience.

A Strategic Boost for the Future

June saw an important milestone with the release of the Suffolk County Council Care Market Strategy 2025–2030. The strategy explicitly recognises community micro-enterprises as a central pillar of Suffolk's future care market: a tremendous acknowledgement of their value and a firm commitment to building on this approach. As I have said previously, Suffolk County Council doesn't just deliver local services – but with our countywide reach, associated economies of scale, and with the support of social enterprises like Community Catalysts, we are able to help new hyper-local micro-enterprises set up and grow.

What This Means for Suffolk

Thanks to Community Catalysts:

- Choice and personalisation are at the forefront, giving people local, flexible, and meaningful care alternatives.
- People with ideas for caring services can now access free mentorship, support, and guidance to set up well-structured, sustainable enterprises.
- Families and peoples across Suffolk benefit from care grounded in community, delivered by other people who know and understand them.
- The county's care landscape has grown in diversity, resilience, and dynamism, and now has solid strategic backing.

Looking Ahead

Recently we filmed some micro-enterprises as part of our Coffee and Care video campaign who talked about their experience of setting up their businesses, I look forward to sharing those with you all soon, but it fills me with pride to see the imaginative and compassionate ways care is being reimagined in Suffolk communities. As Cabinet Member for Adult Care, I warmly encourage anyone in Suffolk who has ever thought, *"I could help my neighbours, but I do not know how to begin,"* to reach out to Community Catalysts.

If you are considering setting up your own micro-enterprise to provide care or support in Suffolk, I urge you to get in touch with Community Catalysts for free, expert advice on how to get started. You can also explore existing care and support options through the Small Good Stuff Suffolk directory, which lists local enterprises already making an impact in their communities.

- Find out more and get in touch here: www.communitycatalysts.co.uk
- Email: suffolk@communitycatalysts.co.uk

Together, we are transforming how care is given and received. We are building a Suffolk where kindness, independence, and community go hand in hand, and that is something truly worth celebrating.

Suffolk communities help fire service raise over £13,000 for Fire Fighters Charity

This impressive total — smashing the original £10,000 target — was achieved by full-time and on-call firefighters at 16 stations, who together washed around 1,000 cars as part of a national campaign promoted by the charity, which provides vital physical, mental, and social support to UK fire service personnel and their families.

SFRS firefighter Ed Crawford, who also serves as the Service's Fire Fighters Charity co-ordinator, is thrilled with the outcome: "I knew our target was ambitious, so surpassing it by over £3,000 is truly incredible.

"I couldn't be more grateful to everyone who took part — whether you washed cars or donated money — you've provided an indispensable lifeline to firefighters when they need it most."

Amounts raised at each station:

- Brandon - £727.37
- Bungay - £750.41
- Bury St Edmunds - £841.12
- Clare - £640.55
- Elmswell - £530.00
- Eye - £471.00
- Hadleigh - £781.23
- Halesworth - £673.57
- Haverhill - £639.00
- Lowestoft - £1,263.42
- Newmarket - £861.76
- Orford - £630.44
- Stowmarket - £902.00
- Sudbury - £484.36
- Wickhambrook - £450.00
- Wrentham - £415.60

There was an additional £1,154.55 donated via QR code and £1,000 sponsorship from Bury St Edmunds-based brewer, Greene King.

Matt Starbuck, Managing Director for Brewing & Brands and Supply Chain at Greene King, said:

“As a long-established Suffolk business, we are proud to support initiatives that benefit those who work and live in our home county. We are therefore delighted to have helped SFRS raise funds for a charity that is dedicated to firefighter welfare.”

Jon Lacey, Chief Fire Officer at SFRS, said:

“I am incredibly proud of the dedication and team spirit shown by our crews and would like to thank all those who helped us raise such a fantastic amount for such a worthwhile cause. “This includes Ed, who I’d like to praise for his ongoing commitment to the charity and our corporate sponsor Greene King, whose generous donation helped pay for much needed supplies.”

For more information about the Fire Fighters Charity, visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk.

Council remains opposed to pylon project, as application submitted

Primarily, the county council maintains that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme, not 114 miles of pylons cutting through countryside, sensitive landscapes and communities in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.
Previously, SCC has formally and strongly requested that National Grid pauses the Norwich to Tilbury proposals, to allow for effective consideration of offshore alternatives.

“When the full details of National Grid’s application are published next month, we hope they reflect many of the concerns raised by us, and local communities, from consultations and discussions.” **Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs**

The application for the Development Consent Order - essentially planning permission - was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) by National Grid on Friday 29 August.
PINS has 28 days to determine whether or not to accept the application. Should it be accepted, full details of the project will then be published, with the six-month Examination period likely to begin in early 2026. If consent was then granted, construction could begin in 2027.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs, said:

“In its current guise, the Norwich to Tilbury pylon project is not suitable. The less damaging alternatives, such as offshore transmission or high voltage direct current undergrounding, have never been fully considered.

“Such a significant and impactful project should not be determined simply for being the cheapest and fastest solution. The Hiorns Report concluded that proposals were premature and would not be needed until the mid-2030s.

“When the full details of National Grid’s application are published next month, we hope they reflect many of the concerns raised by us, and local communities, from consultations and discussions. We have highlighted the need for numerous local mitigations, issues around airfields, construction traffic, public rights of way, removal of existing pylon lines, the list goes on.

“For example, we consider there to be a robust case for undergrounding where the line crosses the Waveney Valley – only to be told earlier this year, that this was not going to happen, and that was that without any alternative mitigation proposed.”

Suffolk County Council’s response to previous consultations for the Norwich to Tilbury project can be found at suffolk.gov.uk