

SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL
SCC NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2025

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.

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.

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.

OPINION: Protecting Suffolk's thatched treasures from fire

Councillor Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, writes: -

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."

People are 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.

The “Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk” can be found on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).

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.

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.

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.

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

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