

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman : M Booty,
Tel: 07712 048925
e-mail: cllr.mike.booty@bunwell-pc.gov.uk

Clerk : Mrs Margaret Ridgwell,
Tel : 01603 871636
e-mail: clerk@bunwell-pc.gov.uk

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6TH MAY 2026

Cllrs Present: Cllr M Booty, Cllr P Palmer, Cllr D Ward, Cllr R Watson, and Cllr J Worth. Cllr M Crouch sent his apologies. The Parish Clerk, District Councillor Suzanne Wateridge, County Councillor Catherine Rowett and 4 members of the public attended.

Chairman's Report – Chairman, Cllr Mike Booty, said that since he became Chairman in May last year, two councillors had had to stand down from the Parish Council, but two new Councillors had been appointed. We now have 6 members but still have room for 3 more and would welcome new councillors. He mentioned the National Strategic Infrastructure Projects, such as the Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Project and that although the Parish Council has no right to veto any planning applications and has no official role in the development of these projects, we do all we can to represent our residents, given that all councillors are volunteers with day jobs. The Parish Council are actively looking to improve the play equipment and increase the use of the playing field. A survey has been delivered to all households asking for their feedback on developing more facilities. Two local football clubs are interested in using the playing field and we would welcome approaches from other team sport groups. The Playing Field is a wonderful resource for the community, and the Council is determined to encourage more use of the area in the future. We are very grateful to our District Councillor, Suzanne Wateridge, for providing a grant for half of the cost of renovating the external toilet at the Village Hall, to provide much-needed facilities for visiting teams. We will endeavour to obtain as much grant funding as possible to help improve our facilities in the future.

St Michael's and All Saints' Parish Church. Unfortunately, Rev John Madinda was unable to attend but a summary of his report was read out and is attached to these minutes.

Bunwell Allotments Charity. The Chairman of this Charity, William Easton, sent a report in which he spoke about when the trust was set up in the early 19th century to distribute fuel to the poor of the parish from the proceeds of rented land. Over the years this has changed, and money is available at the end of each year to be divided amongst those people who have been residents of Bunwell for 3 years, are 70 years of age or have become widowed or to anyone suffering extreme hardship. The Balance Sheet is shown on the attached report.

Finedale Foods Limited. Director and Owner, Edward Miles, was unable to attend but had sent a report giving details of the food products produced in Bunwell, that they have a workforce of 30 people and that there are plans to provide more storage at the rear of the site. The company continues to grow steadily and invest in improved equipment.

Report from PC Planning Development Group. The Chairman of this Group, Phil Gledhill, had sent in a full report which is attached to these minutes. This gives details of the Greater Norwich Local plan which identified the homes, jobs and infrastructure that needs to be planned across South Norfolk, also the Village Clusters Housing Plan, which should be adopted in late 2026. This is for two sites along Bunwell Street for 15 and 20 houses approximately. Meanwhile, individual dwelling construction continues if approved.

Report from the PC National Grid Pylon Scheme Group. A full and comprehensive report from the Group is attached to these minutes. It is four years after the Norwich to Tilbury project proposal was first aired to the public and it is currently in the formal examination stage. Following the Development Consent Order in August 2025 the Planning Inspectorate is reviewing the proposal with hearings underway. The examination stage is set to continue for 6 months, followed by a recommendation to the Secretary of State. Should the project be agreed, construction is set to begin in 2027 with a completion date of 2031. Local activity continues to represent the worries of local residents who remain desperately concerned about the devastating impact on their environment, the disruption of the construction phase and on their ability to sell their homes, should they need or wish to do so. Residents' voices have not been heard. The Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk Pylons Action Group continue to mount a well-organised campaign of opposition to the proposals, advocating instead for more sustainable and less destructive alternatives for transmitting offshore wind energy.

Annual Report from County Councillor Catherine Rowett. Her full report is attached to these minutes, but subjects covered included her work with the parishes fighting bad infrastructure and promoting good energy for real people. She has helped to instigate improved bus services in the area and funded schemes to improve road safety in local villages. She has supported nature recovery and enhancement schemes in our area and argued for a reduction in the number of verge cuts and use of weedkiller on council pavements in the County. She spoke about the rising cost of heating oil and encouraged householders with an annual income of less than £35K to apply for a grant from the County Council. Other topics covered included the Local Government Reorganisation, the County Councils Network response to the National Planning Framework and Land Use Framework. Catherine Rowett is now standing down as a County Councillor and the Chairman thanked her for all her hard work and dedication to the residents of her Ward.

Annual Report from District Councillor Suzanne Wateridge. Her full report is attached to these minutes, but she said it had been a pleasure working for the four parishes of Aslacton, Bunwell, Carleton Rode and Great Moulton over the past two years. She mentioned the various Community Grants which she has helped local villages to apply for and the successes which have come about. She said that Renewable Energy Projects are probably the biggest issue affecting her ward over the past year, and she is advocating for local residents who will be directly affected by these schemes. She was thanked by the Chairman for all her hard work on our behalf.

The Chairman raised the question of how best to use the Community Infrastructure Levy income from building developments to enhance the facilities in the village and the very generous bequest from Peter Haylock. Mr Haylock was a member of the Parish Council and a resident of Bunwell for many years. When he passed away, he very kindly left the sum of £120,000 to be used for the village. The conditions of the bequest state that: *The sum of One Hundred and Twenty Thousand Pounds (£120,000) to the Trustees of Bunwell Parish Council, Bunwell Norfolk to distribute or use for the benefit of the Village Hall, any voluntary community services and/or organisations operating within the village, for the benefit of Bunwell residents, and the wish that the funds are used for capital projects with lasting impact and benefit to the village of Bunwell, with the provision that no sum is made available for the benefit of any specific individual or political or religious group or organisation which may be operating in the village at any time.* The Chairman asked residents to let the Parish Council know of any ideas of how this money could be spent for the benefit of the village. He encouraged residents to take part in the decision-making in the village by considering becoming a Parish Councillor.

He thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said that the Parish Council will continue to do their best to ensure Bunwell residents' interests are looked after to the best of the Council's ability in the future and invited them to stay for the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Report from the Parish Council Chairman May 2025 to May 2026

Changes to Councillors

I became the Chair of the Parish Council in May 2025 and at that time there were five councillors – John Chapman having stood down after his tenure as Chair. One councillor, Sarah Spooner has since stood down.

We have been fortunate enough to recruit two new councillors: Phillip Palmer and Julie Worth. This brings us to six, a relatively healthy number, but we still have room for three more. If any other residents want to serve, please let us know.

National Strategic Infrastructure Projects

The Parish Council has no right to veto any planning applications and has no official role in the development of National Strategic Infrastructure Projects. All we can do is try to represent our residents as best we can, given that we are all volunteers with day jobs.

The Norwich to Tilbury pylon project (part of the Great Grid Upgrade) has now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and will, no doubt, proceed with minor changes.

The Tasway Enery Park raised its head last year, causing a great deal of stress and anxiety to many residents. Thankfully that project is now on ice, pending any changes to connections to the Norwich to Tilbury grid. This may resurface in the coming years.

These projects have eaten up time and resources that the Council would otherwise have spent on local issues.

Dog Bins & Fouling

We are aware of growing concerns about dog fouling in Bunwell. We try to provide adequate disposal bins but there is little that we can do if dog walkers fail to use them. If residents witness dog fouling, we would encourage them to report it and we will try to persuade the dog owners to behave responsibly.

Footpaths

We lost our footpath warden when Sarah Spooner stepped down, but I am pleased to report that we have now appointed a new footpath warden - Katherine Womack.

The Village Hall and Playing Field

Use of the Village Hall is steadily increasing, and the Hall seems to be in a good financial state after recovering from the Covid hiatus.

We are actively looking to improve the play equipment and increase the use of the playing field. Cllr Crouch, our play area warden, has been working very hard to get feedback from residents about developing more facilities.

We are currently in discussion with two local football clubs about their future use of the playing field. We would welcome approaches from other team sport groups, and we will try our best to meet their requirements.

The playing field is a wonderful resource for the community, and it is unfortunate that it has not been used more. The Council is determined to encourage more use of the playing field.

Finances

The Parish Council appears to be in a good financial position. Our thanks go to our excellent Clerk, Margaret Ridgwell, for all her good work.

Earlier this year we found out that we were to receive a legacy from John Haylock's estate to the tune of

£120,000. The conditions of the legacy restrict its use to ‘capital projects for the benefit of all residents’. We are in no rush to spend this money; we would rather take time to consult with the local community and use the money wisely.

Projects & Grants

One issue that I have been trying to address is getting as much grant funding as we can to help improve our facilities. This is not easy, as the deadlines for submitting proposals can be quite tight.

The approach that I have been attempting to implement is to formulate plans before the grants are announced – so that we are ready to apply promptly. This is not straightforward given the time it takes to get a fully costed and agreed project together.

Projects that we are currently working on include:

- Changing facilities for team sports on the playing field;
- A possible BMX track around the playing field;
- A Nature Recovery project on the playing field;
- Improving access from the village centre to the School and Hall.

If anyone has any ideas about other projects that we could take on, then please let us know.

We have had one small success so far, the renovation of the external toilet at the Village Hall. Our thanks go to our District Councillor, Suzanne Wateridge, for providing a grant for half of the cost.

Mike Booty

cllr.mike.booty@bunwell-pc.gov.uk

01 May 2026

REPORT FROM ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, BUNWELL, 2026

No	Item	Activities	Comments	Conclusion
1	Introduction	First I would want to thank all in the team ministry such as Margaret Smith, Rev Paul Schwier, and all the retired clergy, Bishop David Gillett, Canon Martin Smith, Canon Bob Baker , Rev Jennifer de Riverol, members of the PCC’s and all those who have supported the events in the Team, last year leading into this year. I also would like to give special thanks to our new Rural Dean Revd Michael Windridge, our Archdeacons and our bishops for all their support. Thank you to all who help to make our services a success, for those who read during services, those who lead prayers, those who clean and arrange flowers, those who welcome people and hand out books and orders of services, those who ring the bells, our organists – and those who prepare	This has been another eventful, challenging but also an encouraging year	I hope and pray that as we enter into the new year we can be encouraged by our strengths, work on our weaknesses and use the opportunities which come up and be able to address the challenges which we have encountered in the past year.

		<p>and serve refreshments; many thanks. I would also like to thank all the Parish Councils for their generous support towards the upkeep of the Churchyards.</p> <p>This annual report covers activities since we last had our APCM's. This report includes Sunday and mid-week services and other special services, concerts and other areas of ministry such as the schools.</p>		
2	Developments	<p>In 2018 I had reported that, "in the past year, the planned step towards forming a Team Ministry which brings together the 5 churches of the Pilgrim Benefice and the 3 churches of the Long Stratton Team was completed and we are now a team known as the Long Stratton and Pilgrim Benefice Team Ministry.</p> <p>Today following a few years of reorganisation and consultation, I am reporting that we are now back to being "The Pilgrim Benefice consisting of 6 Parishes of the Old Pilgrim Benefice, plus an addition of Wacton from the old Long Stratton Benefice". This has been a frustrating period, and we are still waiting for the Pastoral Scheme to be completed.</p>	<p>This current situation came about following the Diocese initiated reorganization of the Benefices and deaneries. It was partly due to a shortage of ordained clergy and partly due to decline of congregations and Parish Share collections</p>	<p>As part of the process, our neighbouring deanery [the Humbleyard] was dissolved and last year the Long Stratton and Pilgrim Benefice was suspended, which meant we could not make any significant steps until we knew what shape our benefice would take.</p>
3	Sunday services	<p>However, we are grateful that in the past year, following the reorganization, the pattern for our Sunday services was reviewed and we have made no changes. It was agreed at the Church Warden's meeting on the 3rd June 2024. that the services will be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every first and third Sunday of the month the service will be held at All Saints Church Carleton Rode, St Michaels and All Angels Great Moulton and All Saints Wacton. • Every second and fourth Sunday of the month the service will be held at St Michaels Great Moulton, and St Michaels and All Angels Bunwell. • Tibenham will have only one Sunday a month on the third Sunday of the month. 	<p>Aslacton maintained their decision of having one service a month during the winter months of January to March.</p> <p>We also maintained the Churchwardens suggestion that we remain flexible when circumstances change. Eg, Wacton moved their service from the third Sunday to the fourth Sunday during the winter months of January to March</p> <p>In March 2026 the Churchwardens agreed to move the United Service</p>	<p>The rota is working well</p> <p>The idea of utilising the festive services of Christmas and Easter has worked well because we had a good turnout for our Christmas and Easter services regardless of an additional service on the 21st December and 5th of April</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A United service will be held on every 5th Sunday of the month. This was to rotate amongst the different churches. 	<p>from Great Moulton to Bunwell for the Baptism and Confirmation led by Bishop Graham Usher</p>	
4	Midweek Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Bunwell there are morning prayers every Thursday morning at 9:30am. • In Carleton Rode we have mid-day prayers every Friday at 12:00 noon. • Recently it has not been as regular as it used to be. 	<p>These services are very important in keeping the churches open and in having an act of worship held on a day of the week other than Sunday each week.</p>	<p>These services need to be encouraged, and a welcome given for more people who can make it to attend</p>
5	Alternative/ special services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church and Carleton Rode Baptist chapel. Last year this was used as the Stations of the Cross service and witness walk • Service of the stations of the cross • Easter services • Harvest services • Remembrance services • Service of lessons and carol • Christingle service • Christmas services 	<p>These services have always attracted more people, and they continue to be a very important part of the mission of the church. They open good opportunities to encourage attendance.</p>	<p>We need to continue to make the most use of these services and encourage a continued pattern and make them consistent and reliable</p>
6	School Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I continue to do collective worship at Carleton Rode school on a weekly basis. • On Shrove Tuesday we had a very successful pancake race organised by the church and Friends of Carlton Rode School. There was an encouraging turn out and it was suggested that it becomes an annual event • There has also been an Easter egg hunt between Carleton Rode and Bunwell churches, the Baptist Church together with the schools and the Friends of Carleton Rode School. • We have been very encouraged to see Bunwell school, Aslacton school and Carleton Rode Schools, the 3 schools in our benefice, maintaining the tradition of coming into church for holding special services such as Christmas Carols, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance services or celebration assemblies such as leavers' assembly and nativity plays. 	<p>These are good opportunities for children to explore Bible stories, and there has been very strong and encouraging support from the church, staff and governing body at Carleton Rode school.</p> <p>This continues to be a good development and it is always wonderful to see families and friends fill the churches on such occasions to support our schools.</p>	<p>There is a very encouraging atmosphere, and this has improved good relationships between the school and the church in Carleton Rode.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to the small size of the church in Aslacton, families and friends have not been able to attend.</p>
7	Weddings	4		
8	Funerals	22, including burial of ashes only		
9	Baptisms	7		

10	Confirmations	4		
11	Other events	The various parish churches have organised several events: Summer concerts, harvest luck, Coffee mornings, Christmas Fairs and church fetes etc	In these events many of those who come are non-church attendees, so again these are lovely opportunities to meet people from the wider communities	These are also very encouraging moments for witness and fund raising
12	The Church Fabric and churchyard	Our PCC's have been kept very busy in planning events and making decisions and have been involved in activities which have helped to maintain our church buildings. Considering the age of our churches ranging from 11 th Century, the oldest church, to the more recent church built in the 15 th century, our churches have been very well looked after. This work is ongoing, and thanks to all members of our communities who have turned up to support. I particularly would like to give special thanks to our local councils who have continued to support the upkeep of our churchyards. Without this support, our churchyards would be impossible to maintain.	There have been various groups and individuals who have supported our PCC's with ideas, and initiatives in running community events, which have raised funds for the fabric and for the churchyard too. This was also a year of Quinquennial inspections and in all the inspections the reports have proven that our buildings have been very well looked after.	Many humble thanks for all who have made this possible.
13	Parish Newsletter	The parish newsletter continues to go out monthly and this year with our new editor, Emma Fenton Hawes who has replaced Mr Alan Harries and a new Treasurer Mrs Lorraine Bensley	The newsletter has continued to be maintained, and we are grateful to the magazine committee. The comments I have received from people is that the newsletter has shown great improvement	The magazine continues to help link our communities and church.

14	Looking Ahead	<p>Progress</p> <p>Eco-church: There has been progress in trying to make our churches more Eco friendly. The management of the churchyards has reflected on that, with each parish trying to manage the churchyard in an environmentally friendly way. Some parishes have introduced bird nests, and set apart managed areas for conservation.</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>In the last year we have seen a slight improvement from the year before. I have even seen new people joining our services. We hope and pray that this will continue this year.</p> <p>Finances</p> <p>We have still got a great challenge in keeping our churches safe and reasonable comfortable and open for worship. However finances are tight. We still struggle to fundraise for church upkeep and maintenance. Even further we struggle to pay the full Diocesan Share.</p>	<p>More efforts and ideas are welcome. Some PCC have started to think and discuss about joining the Diocesan Eco-Church Award Scheme</p> <p>Let us continue to pray that God will help us to meet this challenge in one way or another as we seek ways to improve our financial sources</p>	
15	Conclusion	<p>This report ends with a deep sense of gratitude to all for the encouragement and support I have received this year.</p>	<p>This report represents the unity and collaboration which enabled these events to happen successfully</p>	<p>Thank you. Philippians 4:4-7</p>

The Revd John Madinda [May 2026]

Bunwell Allotments Charity Annual Report 2026

The trust was set up in the early 19th century, originally to distribute fuel to the poor of the parish, from the proceeds of rented land. A bag of coal was given to those in need at Christmas time.

Over the years this has changed, the land having been sold and the money invested, and money available at the end of each year has been divided amongst those people who have been residents of Bunwell for 3 years, who are 70 years of age, and also those that have become widowed. Being governed by the Charity Commission, our constitution rules also allow us to make other payments to anyone suffering extreme hardship as a one off or regular payment.

If you think that you may be eligible or know someone else who might be, please let one of the committee know. The number of people applying for the gift has fallen over the years. Last year we only gave 13 gifts of £120 each. The committee consists of Myself, Andrew Love, Nigel

Annual Parish Meeting

6th May 2026

Crouch, Jean Stimpson, Rev. J. Madinda. Jackie Smith moved away last year and so is no longer on the committee. We think we have found a replacement and will ask the Parish Council to approve their posting when confirmed.

We will put a note in the Parish Magazine later in the year asking for new applicants. Existing recipients do not need to reapply.

Finally, we would like to thank Tony Anson for a very generous donation to our funds. He is a former recipient of the gift and is unfortunately not very mobile now so decided he no longer needed to receive it. Thank you very much.

BUNWELL ALLOTMENTS BALANCE SHEET For 2024

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Bank balance 01/01/24	£918.98	Charity Gifts 15 @ £100.00	£1,500.00
COIF Dividends	£2,121.21	Bank balance 31/12/24	£1,640.19
Overdrawn Gift	£100.00		
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	£ 3,140.19		£3,140.19

Thank you,

William Easton (Chairman)

Report from Edward Miles, Owner & Director of Finedale Foods Limited

Finedale Foods is a frozen foods manufacturer, producing savoury pasty products, canapes for hospitality, children's frozen snacks, alongside snack products for airlines and convenience stores.

The Company continues to grow steadily and greater investment in equipment enables us mitigate the difficulties in finding staff.

We look to employ local people and vacancies are advertised on our website <https://www.finedalefoods.co.uk/>

The business continues to operate a small team of around 30 people, working on a single shift 5 days a week, with an evening hygiene team.

We are about to submit a planning application to extend the building which will facilitate badly needed storage space.

Phil Gledhill – Village Resident and Housing Development Group Update – May 2026

I apologise for not being with you but my hearing disability, despite sophisticated hearing aids from Spire, leaves me at a significant disadvantage at meetings and other gatherings with large rooms and not so good acoustics.

Up from London and now a resident of Bunwell for 37 years it's interesting to note the changes. Not surprisingly there are many new faces, particularly in the last 5 years and they are so welcome. But sadly, with the pressures of today, it is the reducing, elderly age groups who keep the best of our traditions

going, although speaking for myself I've always believed it's a question of finding the time when I can help our truly lovely village.

The children's vintage roundabout continues to be the most popular attraction in the playground for young and old and I ensure it's well greased up to spin freely when loaded with kids and parents.

A key feature missing for too many years has been the church bells. It was wonderful to hear them on a warm summers evening on practice night, before church services and especially in full flow at weddings. The cost for restoration is far in excess of £100,000 and thanks to Rachel Reeves, the VAT is no longer reclaimable. However, a few of us in the village have been looking at alternatives and we've come up with a local expert, familiar with electronic digital system technology. After discussion and final agreement with the church committee, we are setting up a demonstration at the church with the necessary speakers in the tower. Plans to one day restore the original bells remains an objective, should the funds become available somehow from somewhere. There are two weddings booked this year when the couples are hoping for bells. We'll do our best. It's at events such as this that the local church can provide lifelong happy memories and hopefully loyalty.

Re the Village Clusters Housing Plan, the representative for the Secretary of State held hearings in early 2026 with South Norfolk Council and adoption is expected in late 2026. This is for the two sites along Bunwell Street for 15 and 20 houses approximately. Meanwhile individual dwelling construction continues if approved. Further details are available on the Broadland and South Norfolk Council's website.

Two issues of great concern are the proposed pylon route and the Tasway Energy Park and other sites. This involves thousands of acres of solar panels and is being decided by Ed Miliband and his department, not local councillors. While the pylon route is attracting a great deal of attention from locals, MPs and Councillors, I believe the proposed solar farm development is still somewhat under the local radar and will inflict huge damage to our county countryside and our village if not controlled. Locals, when asked, do appreciate the financial incentives to landowners but alternative energy sources must be adopted otherwise much of our rich rural countryside will be lost, with huge consequential losses to food production and increasing dependence upon imports.

On another important matter, the village really needs more voluntary support from residents whether helping with distribution of The Newsletter, cleaning up the kids' playground, or using the church for more special events and services. Use it or lose it.

Report for Bunwell Parish Council Annual Meeting, 6th May 2026 Norwich to Tilbury Pylons

Four years after the Norwich to Tilbury project proposal was first aired to the public, it is currently in the formal examination stage.

Following the DCO (Development Consent Order) submission in August 2025, the Planning Inspectorate is reviewing the proposal, with hearings underway. The examination stage is set to continue for six months. There will then be a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Should the project be agreed, construction is set to begin in 2027, with a completion date of 2031.

Local Activity

Members of the public were able to make a short personal representation to the Planning Inspectorate in the 'Have Your Say' session at the Open Hearing in Norwich on 12 February 2026. Bunwell was relatively well represented, with two speakers putting themselves forward for Low Common and one for Bunwell Hill. The participation of our MP Adrian Ramsay in this hearing was appreciated by those residents attending.

All three Bunwell representatives subsequently requested a site visit from the Planning Inspectorate, based on the harms to the landscape, heritage and the natural environment. The request for Low Common has not been heeded. There is to be a brief observational visit to Bunwell Hill, likely during the week commencing 25 May 2026. It is possible there may be a minor adjustment to the position of pylon RG49 but otherwise the routing and all associated factors, as things stand, remain the same.

Approximately two weeks ago road markings appeared on the Low Common Road for some distance either side of the point where the transmission lines and associated haul road are to cross the road. The exact purpose of these markings has not been made clear to residents and their presence is alarming.

Formal opportunities for opposition to the project have largely come to an end. Residents in the immediate vicinity of the pylon line remain desperately concerned about the devastating impact on their environment, the disruption of the construction phase and on their ability to sell their homes, should they need or wish to do so. Residents' voices have not been heard.

The Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk Pylons Action Group, of which many local people are members, continue to mount a well organised campaign of opposition to the proposals, advocating instead for more sustainable, less destructive alternatives for transmitting offshore wind energy.

Gillian Palmer
Quaker Barn,
Low Common, Bunwell

Annual Report, April 2026, from Councillor Catherine Rowett

14/04/2026

250 word summary

Locally I've been hard at work fighting bad infrastructure and promoting good energy for real people; working to get better bus services that go to the places we need them at the times we need them; helping parishes get schemes to reduce speed or make roads safer; providing funds for community events and activities, supporting local nature recovery and tree-planting schemes; pursuing enforcement where planning rules have been ignored, or ditches are filled in without permission; dealing with issues relating to rights of way and footpaths. I'm also delighted that some nature-based flood solutions and leaky dams are in progress to help the river Tas become healthier again.

With my Local Member fund I've funded road schemes in Carleton Rode and Tibenham, nature conservation work in Dickleburgh, bus shelter improvements in Carleton Rode, and speed monitoring equipment for Winfarthing. My Community fund has funded activities in Great Moulton, Aslacton, Burston, Forncett, Tivetshall, Shelfanger, Winfarthing and Gissing. And we won parish partnership funds for Ashwellthorpe, Winfarthing, Bressingham, Great

Moulton and Aslacton.

I've been honoured to serve these lovely villages for these three years. My ambitions have been to make things better, so that nature can flourish, farmers can thrive, and families have the best support and opportunities close to home. In the Council meetings I've focused on challenging and removing the systems that systematically obstruct change and calling out the injustices of a system that is set up to make us all feel angry and powerless.

What I've been doing this year:

Fighting bad infrastructure and promoting good energy for real people

I've been especially busy this year supporting residents and working with officers to prevent unsuitable industrial energy schemes in green spaces in South Norfolk. We have been especially blighted with very poor quality and inappropriately located schemes in the area round Great Moulton, with unsuitable roads and infrastructure located much too close to homes and water courses. By contrast I have been encouraging parishes to consider opportunities to develop small local community energy schemes using rooftops, or working with local farmers to get mutually beneficial low cost energy for residents, to help us all get off the costly energy imported from the Middle East.

Bus services

I'm especially pleased with the new hourly bus service up the A140 to Norwich that runs into the evening and enables people to travel to work and for an evening out. We have received another tranche of new funding for buses, and I've been working with the transport officer to get a bus service to pass through Burston and Shimpling and link those villages with Dickleburgh and Pulham as well as Diss. The bus from Dickleburgh to the doctor's surgery in Pulham is also a lifeline for the residents in Dickleburgh and Rushall. We are also looking to get a bus from Ashwellthorpe and Tacolnaston areas towards Wymondham. I've secured funds towards improvements to the bus shelter in Carleton Rode and made up the missing funds from my local member fund.

Road schemes

I'm especially delighted to see approval and funds for the plan for chicanes to calm traffic in the main street at Ashwellthorpe. Further support will be needed from my successor to ensure that a second chicane can be installed in the near future. The stables between Tibenham and Bunwell will benefit from new warning signs on the narrow road where they ride or lead their ponies.

We're still awaiting completion of the long-ago approved speed limits for Bressingham and Fersfield. It is disappointing that the first scheme I started work on, in the summer when I was elected, is still not up and running when I leave office. We do have some new "slow" paint and bend signs to slow traffic on Ugate Street, and the flashing signs at Burston School are up and running. Surfacing on Bunwell Street has finally been redone, to address the shoddy work done last year, but I am awaiting the verdict of residents

Nature recovery and enhancement schemes

Schemes I've supported include new oak trees on the parish land at Winfarthing, installation of an insect hotel at Burston, conservation work at Dove's Meadow in Dickleburgh, a pond and biodiversity project in Tivetshall and so on. At County I have argued for a reduction in verge cutting (to return it to the two regular cuts per year not three) and a reduction in the use of weedkiller on council pavements, since both were increased at a cost of half a million in money and much damage to our natural environment last year. We've also been benefiting from some plans for leaky dams and other nature-based improvements to the river Tas catchment area, which will restore the precious chalk stream and improve the flow and the natural environment as well as preventing floods and reducing the effects of drought. I've been trying to get these nature-based flooding solutions a bit higher on the Council's priorities and will look forward to seeing whether the new administration takes up this idea and ensures that we do more of this.

Perhaps we should have beavers?

Enforcement issues

Some parts of the division are blighted by rogue businesses operating without planning permission or ignoring conditions that were required to obtain planning permission. I've been working with officers to get some of this put right, but it is a terrible strain and cost to local residents to fight these things. Although the county is not the planning authority, some of the issues relate to vehicles and narrow roads, and to illegal waste disposal sites, ditches filled in without permission etc. I've been happy to support residents and parishes and pursue enforcement, but there is also a cost to law-abiding businesses who are put at a disadvantage if others are failing to pay business rates or are destroying the roads. I have raised concerns about this with the cabinet, but to no avail so far.

Byways and footpaths

The worst bit here has been the requirement to reopen the byway at Shimpling to motor traffic (for legal reasons). It is now in a terrible state and not the lovely walking and riding place that it used to be. Naturally this has made everyone angry. I'm doing my best to support the parish council with dealing with being in the middle of this very unhappy situation, and trying to ensure that officers are accumulating appropriate evidence and are paying attention to the destructive effects of off-road motor vehicles that use it as a play space.

Funding for schemes in the villages

Road and green spaces improvements from my Local Members Fund

I've now allocated funds to the following works from my local member's fund, or contributed to the projects:

Dickleburgh Dove Meadow - nature conservation work: £3,000;

Carleton Rode - initial safety measures for Uppgate Street, including signs, white paint etc. £6,000;

Winfarthing - towards the parish's share of the PP bid for SAM3 equipment, £1,000;

Carleton Rode - towards the parish's share of the bus shelter improvements, £420; Tibenham/Bunwell - two horse riding signs near the stables on Cargate Common, £1,500;

From next year's fund we are planning to undertake a feasibility study towards a reduced speed limit on part of Uppgate Street in Carleton Rode.

Parish Partnership results

99 schemes across Norfolk have won support for their proposals under the parish partnership scheme. Of my parishes, we've won these:

Traffic calming chicanes, £25,000, Ashwellthorpe

Village Gateways: Aslacton £8421; Bressingham, £4548

SAM cameras/equipment: Great Moulton (£3928), Winfarthing (£4685).

Norfolk Community fund

I've awarded funding to these schemes this year (and am aiming to get some others to the point of being funded):
Burston and Shimpling Insect hotel and information board at the rec

Gissing Gardening tools for the church yard gardening group

Tivetshall Pond and biodiversity at the playing field

Great Moulton Pots and pans for community lunches

Aslacton/Great Moulton Equipment for Badgers group

Gissing Equipment for Friday café

Winfarthing Oak trees for the parish land

Aslacton Coffee morning at the church

Shelfanger Rotary mower for churchyard gardening group

Forncett Forncett Festival in August

I'm pleased to say all these schemes will be running again in future and we look forward to supporting lots of nature enhancement and community activities in the villages, as well as making roads safer where we can.

News and updates from Norfolk County Council for residents

Heating oil

The price rise for heating oil is seriously affecting a lot of our rural households, some of them very urgently. Adrian Ramsay has done some work at Parliament to ensure that short-term help is quickly put in place for those affected. The good news now is that the government is finally considering decoupling electricity prices from gas prices, in line with Green Party policy, which would be transformative, especially because people would see the savings that come from having cheap homegrown renewables by contrast with the expensive high risk fossil fuels.

Recent research from Oxford University has shown that drilling for more oil or gas in the North Sea would yield very small tax benefits (only about £16 to £82 per household to the UK treasury which would nowhere near cover the subsidies needed to make oil affordable) and would deliver no reduction in energy costs, while benefits to householders from shifting instead to renewables would be between £105 and £441 per annum per household (and much more if the renewables were public or community owned instead of taking profits offshore). So we'll be massively much better off from increasing investing in renewables instead (besides the fact that climate breakdown is a serious threat to national security generally and farming in particular).

Annual Parish Meeting

6th May 2026

Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund

Thanks to funding received from the government, Norfolk County Council has set up a £3 million crisis fund to support residents affected by the rise in heating-oil prices.

Who can access support?

Help is available to those who are on low incomes, typically households with less than £35k coming in each year. Priority will be given to those who are due to run out of oil and are at imminent risk of losing access to heating and hot water. Once eligibility is confirmed, the council will offer grants of around £350 per household. There is also support available around setting up payment plans with oil suppliers.

Residents can apply to the Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund through the council's website at www.norfolk.gov.uk/HeatingOil

Longer term we need to be building energy security and resilience by helping households to access the support for household renewable energy schemes (see below).

Those who are in financial hardship can also access a range of support through the council's Crisis and Resilience Fund (Further details [here](#)) which offers crisis payments for unexpected financial shocks and support to build financial resilience, including budgeting advice, grant applications, and debt referrals.

Could you benefit from a community energy scheme (and stop the industrialisation of our countryside)?

On 13th March I attended an excellent conference organised by Adrian Ramsay for organisations interested in nature recovery and community energy etc in Waveney Valley area and there were some inspiring examples of the good stuff that's going on.

The government has announced new funding for community energy projects. Some of our parishes and district councils are working with Community Climate Action to devise a scheme to benefit local people and get clean cheap energy: <https://www.communityclimateaction.uk>. If you haven't already, do join up to the *Norfolk Environmental Collaboration* (organised by the NALC).

Updates from County Council and the Health Board

Local Government reorganisation

We have now had the announcement from the government, saying they have opted for the plan for 3 councils for Norfolk (and three for Suffolk). The effect is that these parts of South Norfolk will be in the East Norfolk council, but parts of South Norfolk and Broadland that are suburbs and commuter belt for Norwich will be incorporated into the Norwich area. It is doubtful that this arrangement will be financially sustainable since the East Norfolk council will include deprived areas with high social needs, coastal erosion areas with high costs from climate issues, and coastal areas with a high proportion of retired people and second homes. As yet, also, there is no provision towards the huge costs of reorganising, with this scheme being the most expensive of the recommended options to implement, since it will involve disaggregating services that are currently run as a single service across the whole of Norfolk.

Five for a fiver on Norwich Park & Ride

Norfolk County Council has reduced the price of group tickets on all Norwich Park & Ride services from 29th March. Groups of up to five people can now enjoy all-day travel on Park & Ride services for just £5 making it even better value for families and cheaper than parking for more than 3 hours in most city centre car parks. For one person, the price is £3 (for concessions £2); for two people £4.

Nine new Specialist Resource Bases to open this year

Nine new bases providing 110 specialist places are opening at mainstream primary schools this year as part of Norfolk's Local First Inclusion programme to increase capacity for children who need additional support. This includes one Specialist Hub of Inclusive Practice (SHIP) now open at Roydon Primary School near Diss (16 places) and several others.

Annual Parish Meeting

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Household Hazardous waste disposal events

👉 Booking is now open for Norfolk County Council's free disposal event at Thetford Recycling Centre. There is also a later event in June at Norwich South recycling centre.

♻️ Accepted items: aerosols, anti-freeze, drain cleaners, fertilisers, paint, and weed killer. Booking required

🚗 – reserve your spot early!

Friday 5th and Saturday 6th June, 8am - 4pm at [Norwich South Recycling Centre](#) (Booking will be available online and by phone from 9am on Thursday 28th May)

Norfolk Rural Business Awards

The closing date for applications for the Norfolk Rural Business Awards is Tuesday 21st April. There are nine category areas aimed at showcasing a wide range of our best businesses, community groups and people. The awards ceremony takes place at the Royal Norfolk Show. You can nominate yourself! Submit nominations here: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/65893/Apply-for-Norfolk-Rural-Business-Awards>.

National Information

County Councils Network (CCN) response to the National Planning Framework

The CCN has [published its consultation response](#) to the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), warning that the reforms would weaken local communities' voice and increase the risk of speculative, unsustainable development in rural areas.

Additionally, mandatory housing targets introduced last year mean county areas face, on average, a 56% increase in expected delivery: 64,000 homes a year (around 1,245 a week) which is over seven times the increase for councils in England's major cities. But houses in rural places are not selling, and developers aren't completing the plans that have already been approved. It's no solution to a housing crisis that's about existing housing being unaffordable and stockpiled by the wealthy investors in lucrative and high-demand areas.

Land use framework

The Government's new [land use framework](#) has now been published. This is guidance on how land is used across England, to balance farmland with valuing nature and pressures such as housing and industry. It has three parts:

- A vision for England's future landscapes, informed by land-use change analysis
- Principles to guide land-use decision-making
- Actions to support land-use change, delivered with partners

The full framework is available [here](#). It commits to maintaining overall food production in England, and to support food security and economic growth. It also sets out how the Government will protect the most productive land and give farmers (owners and tenants) greater rights, data and certainty to invest. This is all excellent but directly conflicts with everything in the two items I listed above (about housing targets in rural areas and the threats in the new planning framework). You couldn't make it up.

Children and parents to pilot social media bans, time limits and digital curfews at home.

Social media bans, digital curfews, and time limits on apps will be piloted in the homes of 300 teenagers in a first of its kind trial by the UK government. This runs alongside the [digital wellbeing consultation](#), which is closing on 26 May 2026. The pilot studies will last 6 weeks and test how different restrictions affect young people's day-to-day lives.

Both the children and the parents taking part will be interviewed at the beginning and end of the pilots to understand the impacts on family life, sleep and schoolwork that come from limiting social media.

Annual Parish Meeting

6th May 2026

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Signed

County Council Elections on 7th May

Please encourage residents to check that they are registered to vote. More information here:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Voters who will be away on holiday, on business, in hospital or looking after a relative may need a proxy vote (if you will be away when the postal vote arrives). See more here <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-vote/voting-by-proxy>

If someone you know has no photo ID they should either apply for a postal vote, or apply for a voter authority certificate (which is free): <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>

Students who will be away at University can register at both addresses. Please encourage them to get a postal vote if they want to vote at the home address, or they can vote at their college address providing they have registered there. For local elections **it is legal to vote in both places**.

Contact me

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk. See also my Facebook page [here](#).

Catherine Rowett

14th April 2026

Bunwell District Councillor Annual Report May 2025/May 2026

It has been a real pleasure working for the four parishes of Aslacton, Bunwell, Carleton Rode and Great Moulton for the past two years. As I did last May for the AGMs, I have put together a summary of my work over the past year. Obviously I cannot discuss case work as this is confidential but there are always several issues that I'm working on at any one time, which are generally enforcement related or planning issues.

One successful case I can point to is Hot To Trot, the wonderful stables run by Hannah and Tom Wright in Bunwell. They worked so hard on their planning application to build a home on site, and it was fraught with difficulties. I helped and supported them, and it was a really special moment when they received outline planning permission from the council last month after a two-year battle! I had a very kind message from them at the time – they said: “thank you so much for all your help, we could not have done this without you.” That was a really lovely thing to hear and it's not often you hear it as a councillor!

I really do care about doing the very best I can for residents in my ward and I look forward to continuing to do so over the next two years.

1. **Community Grants.** The council squeezed in a last-minute second round of funding earlier this year for the Community Action Fund and we were successful. With a very short amount of time to turn an application around, the trustees at Aslacton and Great Moulton Coronation Hall worked wonders and I helped facilitate funding from South Norfolk Council of over £11,000 towards the purchase of AV equipment for Flix in the Stix, enabling residents to enjoy watching film screenings at a much lower price than the cinema and on their doorstep, as well as attracting more private hirers to the hall. This year the council has increased the CAF funding to a maximum

of £40,000 per project and I have already been in discussion with various organisations about ideas for this.

I have also used my annual ward allowance of £1,000 to spend on projects of my choice in the ward. Back in September I contributed £500 towards a new external toilet at Bunwell Village Hall, meaning that groups like the U7s football team using the playing field have been able to use a toilet without having to use the village hall facilities. I've also contributed Forest School equipment to Carleton Rode Primary School and the final chunk went to Aslacton and Great Moulton Coronation Hall to buy some much-needed catering equipment. The ward allowance has doubled for 2026 to £2,000 and I have already earmarked this for Aslacton Primary School, to kickstart their campaign to fund much-needed new playground facilities.

- 2. Renewable Energy Projects.** I would say this is probably the biggest issue affecting my ward over the past year. I have done a huge amount of work on the FIELD Long Stratton BESS application (a misnomer as actually the site is in Great Moulton), alongside my County Councillor colleague Catherine Rowett. I have met the planning officer on site and showed him around the area, and I am in regular contact with him; I have met the Highways team at Norfolk County Council on site; and I have spoken to and advocated for many residents who will be directly impacted by the scheme. Thankfully this is going through local planning so we as councillors have a direct impact on these cases and I have already called this in to committee.

This means it will be examined in greater depth and I will be able to speak at the committee alongside parish councils and local residents. Of course we need to store the energy we produce from wind and solar in these storage systems but this is one of the largest in the country and to site it here in Great Moulton is completely unjustifiable.

To the south of Great Moulton the East Pye project has now been accepted by the Government's Planning Inspectorate. Along with many residents I will register as an interested party and have already submitted my objections as part of previous statutory, non-statutory and targeted consultations. Of course I believe that roofs should come before rural land, and that we should site solar panels on brownfield sites first, but it is clear that we must use a certain amount of lower grade agricultural land too to host solar. I am not against fields of solar panels but what I am against is grid connections which mean industrial associated infrastructure is situated in inappropriate locations. Sandwiching three substations, one of which will be permanent, plus a BESS, between two rural villages cannot ever be acceptable.

And in brief...

- We had a wet winter and I helped various parishes with flooding issues, picking up one long-standing case on the boundary between Aslacton and Great Moulton, next to the Tas. Now we have a new surface drainage team at the council, this should really help matters.
- As I said last year, as the only Green Party Councillor on South Norfolk Council, I feel it's important to attend every Full Council Meeting and although Widdicombe Rules dictate that I cannot be on any committees, I always make my voice heard. A particular motion that comes to mind from the past year which I felt very strongly about was the demolition of South Norfolk House in Long Stratton, the Council's former headquarters, which I voted against. We need more community facilities, not more land sold to developers for unaffordable housing.
- Bunwell is now a Mindful Village after I completed basic mental health training with the Council and thanks to the excellent work of the Community Arts Club CIC.

- I have been visible in the community, attending every parish council each month unless there is a very good reason not to! I also really enjoy the discussions at these meetings and contributing where appropriate.

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge

Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council

m 07943 180556 suzanne.wateridge@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk