

Progress report

After the August lull I have been back to work in the parishes with a vengeance, trying to make progress before heading off to the USA for a week for an academic research meeting that I am speaking at, at Berkeley in California. I'll be unavailable for a week and a bit from 15th September to 23rd September, so please report issues via the Council portal online.

Recent developments in the division include the BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) in Shimpling, a section of which is part of the Boudicca Way. It's legally supposed to be open to motor vehicles, but had been blocked with bollards for some years, and there have been many attempts to restrict it to non-motorised usage. We are now hoping to monitor usage in readiness for (potentially) another attempt to get a change of designation to keep it as a quiet route for walking and cycling or horses. I had a site visit with the Highways team to look at ways to help with traffic management in a number of places and plan interventions: in Upgate Street in Carleton Rode in particular, where we would eventually like a speed limit but will initially start with some signage, and in Ashwellthorpe where we would like to have physical interventions in the highway to force the antisocial drivers to stick to the speed limit even in the wee small hours. We also visited Tacolneston where the need to pass cars parked on the B1113 poses a hazard for drivers in both directions. There is no obvious solution to this, but we shall continue to explore options.

There's been a disastrous mix up about the resurfacing of the road from Shelfanger to Winfarthing, so the contractors have done top dressing without any preparatory work, instead of leaving it because full resurfacing had been approved. This is distressing after all the effort put in by the Highways officer to secure extra funding to enable us to have the resurfacing. I'm fuming but also trying to work with Highways to get some kind of plan for solving the problem.

I've been pursuing the legal puzzle over the rights of way on Hundred Lane in Great Moulton, and am close to feeling sure that I know all there is to know. I'm also working with Bunwell to see about rights of way over some ancient byways that would potentially provide a good route from the centre of the settlement to the school, church and village hall. I've also asked the Highways team to look at the dangerous chasm beside the road where the lorry fell over on Market Lane.

The big issue, which is energy parks and infrastructure, continues to bubble just under the surface. I succeeded in submitting all my responses to the various planning consultations in late July and early August as well as helping officers to include key details based on local knowledge in their submissions. I've been keeping in touch with both MPs to try to put pressure on government to be more circumspect in its approach to nature and to energy, while still urging the importance of ensuring that the UK becomes self-sufficient in energy and stops relying on hand to mouth imports of gas and oil from dodgy countries and at unaffordable prices.

Our next meeting of Full Council is delayed due to the government not issuing the required information about the funding offer that forms part of the devolution deal. We were supposed to get it before the August recess. The meeting will now be on 25th September, to discuss devolution and local government reorganisation. As a result of this change of date I will be back (God willing) from the USA. We have also been called to another extraordinary Full Council meeting in October, at a time when I am supposed to be travelling home from Scotland.

New community fund

My new allowance from the Community Fund gives me £5,000 to award in small grants for costs (including running costs) for community activities and creative initiatives that make your place a

happy place where people meet and are supported. Please advise the community group to contact me directly. I can offer grants between £200 and £2,500 to support projects that promote things like social inclusion, volunteering, and community engagement. Church groups qualify if they serve the community. If you want £500 or more you need to find matched funding, but there is support for this via a crowdfunding scheme. Please ask me for a leaflet, or you can find details and how to apply on the county council website [here](#). Anyone with an eligible project should contact me on Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk.

Updates from County Council

Recycling Centre survey

There is a survey for users to give their views on the County's Recycling Centres, closing date 17th September. The link is here: [Shaping Norfolk's Recycling Centres: Customer satisfaction survey 2025](#)

Report on SEND improvements

A report is coming to the Select Committee at Council which suggests that there have been improvements in provision for children with special educational needs, including better opportunities for staying in mainstream schools and close to the child's home. Obviously this continues to be a huge and increasing burden on the Council, as the proportion of children needing special needs places is rising exponentially year on year.

Councils launch package to support staff at Lotus Cars

The taskforce set up by Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council has launched a comprehensive support package designed to help employees and their families impacted by the recent announcement of redundancies at Lotus Cars.

The package is for Lotus employees and also those affected in its supply chain, focused around three pillars of support: hardship/financial stability, employment & skills, business start-ups.

Between now and the end of the financial year, when the redundancies are expected, the taskforce will work with Lotus and its staff to help them navigate next steps. More information can be found [here](#).

National Information

Ofsted changes

Ofsted has confirmed the details of their new approach to School inspections, which is intended to be more collaborative and supportive of professionals working in education, as well as providing information for parents, and promoting improvements where needed. We shall wait to see whether this actually does any good. The key highlights are: a new 5-point grading scale, with a new 'exceptional' grade; parents and carers to receive detailed information about nurseries, schools and colleges they've asked for; schools and colleges with identified areas for improvement will receive extra monitoring inspections; nurseries and childminders will be inspected more frequently; a focus on 'inclusion' for disadvantaged and vulnerable children; an increased focus on professionals' well-being and workload, and a more collaborative approach.

More info [here](#).

Contact me

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Catherine Rowett

12th September 2025