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## **Suffolk County Council Report for Clare Division September 2024**

### **Suffolk residents will be able to access electric vehicles on a short-term basis, from next summer**

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A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this autumn.

Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge.

Members of the public interested in this project are urged to sign up to the mailing list to receive updates as the project progresses - [Plug in Suffolk Car Clubs - Mailing List](#).

Car Clubs have already offered people in other parts of the UK access to local, low-emission vehicles without the expense of owning one. Local communities in these areas have already experienced many benefits including improved air quality, reduced congestion and increased mobility for those without access to their own car.

Current providers remain reluctant to fully fund electric community vehicles in rural and semi-rural areas like Suffolk as they do not yet have the real-world data to support the usage.

The project is funded by Suffolk's public sector organisations, helping deliver on two of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan's goals; a reduced number of cars on the road and an increased proportion of vehicles on the road that are low or zero emission. Additional charge point funding is being provided by the Department for Transport's On Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS).

### **Rogue Suffolk builder who conned thousands of pounds from customers is sentenced**

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A rogue Suffolk builder who conned customers by taking deposits worth over £17,000 for work that was never carried out has been sentenced following a prosecution by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Jack Doran repeatedly fobbed off complaints with excuses as to why work was not being done.

Doran, 40, traded as JD Roofing and General Building Ltd of Manor Road, Felixstowe, but his home address is in Harlow, Essex.

At Ipswich Crown Court on Monday August 12 he was given six months suspended sentence, suspended for 18 months by Judge David Wilson.

This was reduced from nine months due to an early plea.

Doran was also ordered to complete 240 hours of unpaid work over the next 18 month, ordered to attend a rehabilitation course to avoid future offending, and told to pay £2,500 compensation, to be split £500 per consumer and paid at £100 month starting from October 1.

He was disqualified as a director for five years.

Doran had previously admitted defrauding customers by taking 50% deposits and additional payments for roofing services and materials not provided, and dishonestly incurring debts in the course of trade, both contrary to the Companies Act 2006.

Suffolk Trading Standards was first contacted about him in April 2022 where a customer from Felixstowe complained they had paid £5,900 for work to replace a roof but which had not been carried out.

In August 2022 a second complaint was received where a customer in Felixstowe paid just over £4,000 for work that never happened.

Neighbours of the first complainant were then identified as further victims.

They paid £1,200 deposit in advance but no work at all was carried out on their property and no scaffolding installed.

All victims received invoices or estimates at the beginning of contracts that stipulated 50% deposits up front, all payable to a bank account in the name of JD Roofing & General Building Ltd.

During the contracts, and despite work not proceeding, at least two of the victims were talked into making further payments under pressure that the business was struggling financially and without further payments the work could not continue.

One paid £1,247 and then another £150 was requested. A second victim paid a further payment of £750 after initially paying £1,440.

Anyone who believes they are a victim of a rogue trader or are concerned that a neighbour or family member may be, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

To find a trader that you can trust, consult the Suffolk Trusted Trader directory and choose with confidence: [trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/](https://trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/)

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## Solar Together launches in Suffolk

Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers.

Suffolk residents can join the group-buying scheme, which offers solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points, as well as retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate. The scheme allows homeowners to increase their independence from the national grid.

It's free to register here, and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation. Suffolk's councils are working in partnership with iChoosr, experts in sustainable energy transition, to make the transition to clean energy as cost-effective and hassle-free as possible.

How does it work?

- Householders can register online to become part of the group for free and without obligation at [solartogether.co.uk/suffolk](https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk)
- Approved UK solar PV suppliers participate in a reverse auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
- After the auction, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

iChoosr has been collaborating with UK councils since 2015 on its Solar Together scheme, aiming to accelerate the energy transition nationwide. The initiative aims to encourage residents to partake in the collective purchase of solar PV and battery storage systems. To date, Solar Together has installed 13,750 solar panels in Suffolk, reducing carbon emissions by 27,100 tonnes over 25 years – equivalent to 15,000 cars off the road in that time!

iChoosr's schemes have been delivered in partnership with local authorities in five countries. More than 180 schemes have led to 178,000 residents installing solar PV systems.

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### Small improvements needed as children's services' Ofsted report published

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Ofsted has published its report into Suffolk County Council's children's services. The report rated the service as 'requires improvement to be good'.

The ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) report conveys a mixed picture across Suffolk. Importantly, inspectors concluded that children's safeguarding is strong and that the experiences and progress of children in care were good. They also reported that 'children in care thrive'.

However, they highlighted weakness in some of the processes and systems in place. These included inconsistencies with the way first contact with children and young people is processed, and the quality and support to children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless. It also found inconsistencies in the level of understanding that care leavers have about the range of support available to them.

The report outlined seven points for improvement, which have either been implemented already through small amends to systems or processes, or are in progress.

**Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“It is disappointing that Ofsted didn’t find all our services to be consistently good.

“However, what really counts is that the report shows that our children are safe and well-taken care of and - in particular - our children in care are thriving.

“We need to improve some of our processes and systems, and address inconsistencies in the way we do things. These things can be improved with small uncomplicated amends and a plan of action agreed by Ofsted.

“I was delighted to read the extent of praise for staff throughout the report, including the strength of relationships with the children and families we work with, and their sensitivity and compassion. This public recognition is huge testament to their hard work and dedication.”

The inspection looked at four areas; the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; the experiences and progress of children in care; and the experiences and progress of care leavers. Although the majority of the report is positive, three of these were graded as ‘requires improvement to be good’. The experience and progress of children in care was ‘good’.

Following publication of the report, an action plan will be sent to Ofsted by the end of September and a partnership board will be set up to oversee improvements. The council will also carry out a quality assurance review of systems and processes.

You can read the report [here](#).

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## Sunnica challenge ends as two councils pull out

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Judicial review proceedings from four local councils against the Sunnica solar farm project will not be pursued after West Suffolk Council and Cambridgeshire County Council chose to withdraw from the process.

Suffolk County Council had written to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP, regarding his decision to approve the Sunnica solar farm.

The pre-action protocol letter was the first step in potential judicial review proceedings against the Sunnica solar farm project, in a bid to secure appropriate funding for work that the council will have to do as a result of the scheme.

The council believes that, in his haste to approve the application in just a matter of days, the Secretary of State ignored the council’s funding arguments.

The new Secretary of State has shown scant regard for the communities affected, and for the local authorities who must pick up considerable amounts of additional work as a result of the project.

This comes at a time when local authorities are having to make difficult financial decisions across all service areas, in order to prioritise supporting the most vulnerable in their communities, through adult social care and SEND.

Suffolk County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council remained committed to seeing through the legal challenge but were left in an impossible position to continue.

With West Suffolk Council and Cambridgeshire County Council abandoning the process, the cost of legal fees for the two remaining councils versus the likely financial return in a successful outcome was no longer a justifiable use of public funds.

Although both councils still had the desire to take things forward, the loss of two councils in the group action is damaging to the process as a whole.

All four councils had earlier received a response from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP, to their pre-action protocol letter in a bid to secure appropriate funding.

That reply outlined the government's position to defend their decision to grant permission for the Sunnica project. The councils maintain their position that the Secretary of State made a legal error, but cannot now test the case in court.

## Major scrapyards fire most likely sparked by discarded battery, fire investigators conclude

The fire at Sackers in Gipping Road, Great Blakenham, on Thursday, August 8, resulted in a major response by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. The fire at Sackers saw 14 appliances and more than 80 firefighters deployed to deal with it.

It was brought under control late on Thursday and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service subsequently launched an investigation into the cause.

This has established that the most likely cause was a battery which had made its way into a pile of scrap metal.

If batteries, or electricals containing batteries, are not properly separated they can end up being crushed in the waste and recycling process.

When punctured they can self-combust, setting fire to any surrounding dry and flammable waste and recycling.

At the height of the Sackers fire there were a total of 14 fire engines - around 80 firefighters at the scene, which included appliances from Essex and Norfolk.

Local residents and businesses were advised to keep doors and windows closed for nearly 24 hours as a massive smoke plume, which could be seen for miles, rose above the site.

Trains were also severely affected as rail services from Ipswich to Norwich, Cambridge and Ely were cancelled owing to the potential danger from the fire to the adjacent railway track.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) said in May that lithium-ion batteries thrown in household rubbish bins had led to more than 1,200 fires in the UK waste system in the last 12 months, compared to 700 in 2022.

In June last year operations were disrupted at Haverhill waste transfer station in Homefield Road after fire broke out amongst 50 tonnes of rubbish and which is thought to have been caused by a battery.

Waste batteries and electrical items should never be thrown into household waste.

Instead, they can be recycled at any of Suffolk's 11 Recycling Centres, as well as other local recycling banks. Many supermarkets also accept them.

Electricals containing batteries that tend to be discarded the most are smaller, frequently used and often cheaper electricals like toothbrushes, shavers, chargers, and toys.

More information can be found at the Suffolk Waste Partnership website <https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/>