

Joint Councillor Report – May 2026

Cllr. Julia Ewart

District Councillor for Kelsale and Yoxford Ward, East Suffolk Council

&

County Councillor for Saxmundham and District Division, Suffolk County Council

Contact details: Tel: 07770666604

Email: julia.ewart@suffolk.gov.uk (County) julia.ewart@eastssuffolk.gov.uk (District)

Introduction

Following the election period, which ran from the end of March through to 7 May 2026, I am very pleased to write to the Chair, Vice Chair, councillors, and residents of Kelsale to express my sincere thanks for the support and encouragement I received.

It is both an honour and a responsibility to have been elected to represent you at District and County level. We are operating at a time of real change—both locally and nationally—and with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon, decisions made now will shape our services and communities for years to come.

With the potential for further elections next year, I have taken the view that we cannot afford to wait. My intention is to act immediately on your behalf—to listen, to challenge, and to ensure that your concerns are front and centre in decision-making.

Below I set out my intentions, but of course wish to blend the needs of the individual parishes along the way.

District Matters

Following the election, the rollout of the new recycling system across Suffolk has continued. While East Suffolk Council has delivered its local responsibilities, the programme forms part of the wider “Better Recycling” system in preparation for national “Simpler Recycling” requirements.

Although a significant effort has been made, it is clear that there have been a number of initial challenges. Whilst many households have received their bins, there remain inconsistencies in delivery and early operational issues that residents are rightly raising.

Residents should feel confident in reporting issues via the central council helpline:

0333 016 2000

Further detailed information is available at:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-waste/better-recycling>

for broader matters: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/contact-us>

The East Suffolk App continues to support this rollout, providing updates, alerts, and reminders directly to residents and helping improve communication during this transition period.

County Council Commitments

My election reflects a clear appetite locally for independent representation—something I intend to deliver in full.

Having returned to local politics for around ten years, it is striking that many of the same issues continue to dominate discussion. These are not new problems—but they are becoming more urgent.

The priority areas remain:

- Connectivity
- Highways and safe access
- Community impact from major infrastructure

Connectivity

Significant parts of our division, including sections of Kelsale, continue to experience poor digital connectivity.

Residents are dealing with:

- Weak or unreliable broadband
- Limited mobile coverage
- Inconsistent service affecting daily life and business

This is no longer acceptable. Access to digital infrastructure is fundamental, and I will be pressing for clear, time-bound improvements so that rural communities are not left behind.

Highways and Safe Access

Highways concerns extend far beyond potholes. What is being raised consistently is the overall standard of maintenance, safety, and responsiveness.

Residents expect:

- Roads to be maintained to a reasonable standard
- Repairs to be carried out without excessive delay
- Clear and visible signage
- Safe crossing points—including zebra crossings or similar measures, particularly near schools, bus routes, and central areas within villages

However, this must go further.

We must also consider **ease of access into and out of Kelsale and surrounding villages**. As traffic increases—particularly due to nearby infrastructure projects—our road network must remain:

- Safe
- Functional
- Appropriate for modern demand

Without this, we risk increased congestion, safety concerns, and reduced quality of life.

Community and Infrastructure Impact

Kelsale and the surrounding area are now clearly feeling the impact of large infrastructure projects, particularly Sizewell C and the proposed Sea Link development.

Feedback from residents is consistent and increasingly direct:

- Traffic is increasing and becoming more difficult to manage
- Road safety is deteriorating in places
- There is concern about long-term health and wellbeing
- There is frustration that previous commitments do not appear to be fully delivered

This creates a sense of disconnect—and that must be addressed.

With Sea Link, the key issue now is not simply whether it is approved, but:

If Sea Link is permitted, what happens next?

- Where is the full plan for managing compounded infrastructure pressure?
- How will road networks cope with cumulative impact?
- What guarantees are there for meaningful mitigation?
- At what point does this become unsustainable for rural communities?

These questions require clear and honest answers now—not after decisions are made.

Representation and Empowerment

Following boundary changes, this division now includes 15 villages alongside Saxmundham.

It is my intention to ensure that Kelsale Parish—and all surrounding communities—have a far stronger voice within County Council.

In particular, I am keen to empower Saxmundham Town Council, which serves the villages, so that it is able to:

- Act decisively
- Secure funding
- Catch up on lost years
- Deliver improvements locally
- Be resilient to intense change

Saxmundham is increasingly being placed at the centre of development pressure. It is only right that it receives the support and resources to match that role.

However, it is equally important that this support extends outward. Kelsale and neighbouring villages must also benefit from:

- Investment
- Infrastructure improvements
- Strong representation

We must avoid a situation where pressure is shared, but benefit is not.

Growth and Infrastructure – Impact on Kelsale

The proposed 800-home development cannot be considered in isolation.

Whilst located in Saxmundham, the impact will be felt directly in Kelsale. This includes:

- Increased traffic through local roads
- Greater pressure on shared services
- Impact on local schools and facilities
- Additional strain on already limited healthcare

Alongside this, we are already seeing:

- Stretched GP services
- Limited capacity within schools
- Serious challenges accessing NHS dental provision

Access to dentistry is becoming a critical issue, with many residents unable to register locally at all.

Given these pressures, it is entirely reasonable to take a firm position:

No further large-scale development should proceed without clear, funded, and deliverable infrastructure plans in place.

At present, provision is not sufficient—and that must be acknowledged by all councils.

Supporting Residents

Since being elected, the volume of correspondence has increased considerably, and I welcome that.

Residents who contribute through council tax should feel able to seek support and expect a response.

My role is to ensure that:

- Issues are taken seriously
- Cases are progressed
- Systems are navigated effectively on your behalf

In many ways, it is about ensuring that things are actually done—not just discussed.

Young People and Community Provision

Provision for young people remains very limited, yet expectations of behaviour remain high. We must ask what we are offering in return. Currently it feels like very little.

Work is underway to gather focused data on need and to explore options for provision across:

- Saxmundham, Kelsale, Benhall, Sternfield
- Surrounding villages

The aim is to establish safe, engaging environments where young people can spend time productively, develop skills, and feel part of the community. Part time work opportunities need to be announced, and apprenticeships need to be visible. This will be a whole new approach, and our community will own it !

SEND Provision

Concerns regarding SEND provision, particularly in relation to Saxmundham, continue to grow.

I have written to our MP, Jenny Riddell-Carpenter, to request a meeting and will press for urgent action.

A key concern is that too many local children are currently not in school or do not have appropriate provision in place.

We are seeing:

- Increased exclusions
- Growing demand
- Limited local provision
- Families feeling unsupported

At the same time, there are an increasing number of families home-educating their children. These families require:

- Better support
- Clearer guidance
- Access to services and resources

They should not feel isolated or overlooked.

At present, progress appears limited, and I remain concerned that provision may not be ready by September. This must remain a priority and I have taken this up already.

Final Comments

Whilst I have only been elected for the past two and a half weeks, I have already taken an active role within the County Council. I attended Full Council, made my maiden speech, and brought forward **my own amendment** on the Northern Bypass discussion relating to traffic flow around the Orwell Bridge.

I am encouraged to report that my amendment was supported and carried. This ensures that a full range of options remains under consideration, including both a second bridge and a tunnel.

Amongst others, the tunnel option represents a forward-thinking solution, with reduced disruption and potentially greater cost effectiveness.

I was also clear in bringing this forwards that political disagreement should not be allowed to derail progress. Too often, schemes of importance are delayed unnecessarily.

What I believe this demonstrates is the value of independent representation—working constructively, focusing on outcomes, and ensuring that residents come before politics.

Whilst these discussions may appear regional, improved connectivity to Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford, and beyond has direct implications for Kelsale. Access to employment, services, and opportunity depends on these decisions being taken seriously.

Take a look at the Medway tunnel:

[About the Medway Tunnel | Medway Tunnel | Medway Council](#)

To Close

Thank you once again Kelsale Cum Carlton Parish and residents for your support and trust.

I remain fully committed to working on your behalf—to ensure that Kelsale is properly represented, that your concerns are heard, and that your community is not left behind as change continues.

Yours **Julia Ewart**

See above for contact details.