

Kelsale & Yoxford Ward Councillor Report (May 2024 – April 2025)

Cllr Julia Ewart

Hello. Thank you for reading my report. For those of you who have not met, I am Julia Ewart, a resident of Kelsale village, who has been a district councillor for two years now and goodness what a busy time it has been.

Across the ward it's been a busy year across, and I'd like to briefly highlight the key issues and achievements from May 2024 to April 2025.

Infrastructure:

The construction of Sizewell C really has kicked off in earnest and continues to impact our communities. While it promises long-term energy benefits, I remain focused on ensuring through our council proper controls and have asked for advanced air quality monitoring—especially in Peasenhall and Yoxford.

Preparations for new roundabouts at Kelsale and Yoxford are now underway, and we're keeping a close watch on traffic impacts. Sizewell C's Northern Park and Ride near Darsham and the closure of Willow Marsh Lane until 2027 have raised concerns about congestion and rat-running. I am aware that we still need a solution to cross the A12 for bicycles.

I've also submitted responses on behalf of the ward regarding the Sea Link and Lion Link transmission projects. I continue to advocate for a fully offshore grid solution to minimise impact on our farmland and precious communities. As your councillor I am now the vice chair of the committee that attends to the large infrastructure projects. I know the devastation of the works is upsetting and I truly feel, as many of you do, how difficult it is that this is taking place.

I have recently secured, at the annual community forum that Sizewell C invites all impacted parishes to send 2 delegates to Hinkley point before the end of the year so that they can understand the impact and likely changes that will occur.

Planning & Development:

We've seen active public engagement with planning this year—particularly around the recent site for the proposed Kelsale solar farm and new housing near Yoxford. I hope to host a video call with the solar farm management team to discuss the site, should you wish to join. There more cases due Kelsale. And I encourage everyone to continue using the East Suffolk Planning Portal to have your say and to always comment if you have concerns. Be assured the issues of Carlton caravan park are high on my list.

Farming & Services:

Farming remains under pressure from changing policy, the demands on land use, and climate challenges. Being 'on farm' needs more support and I am working with the council to embrace this change.

I continue to raise food security concerns, and through East Suffolk's Community Partnership, in which all parishes have an interest, we've supported a new look at rural transport, whilst promoting 'welcome rooms' and other isolation initiatives, with services like CATS Dial-a-Ride making a real difference to residents getting about.

It is this very team, and our community officer Sam Kenward, who are looking to support the development of the village Hall here in Kelsale. I do hope that the plans proposed are supported and delivered, as it's a much deserving cause and a well loved and used village asset.

Flooding & Safety:

Villages have experienced less flooding this year. To support local water courses I have ensured that we have a better relationship with the Environment Agency. Some villages are undergoing formal **Section 19 flood investigations** to help prevent future incidents. I've worked with the council's emergency planning team and Suffolk Highways to report drainage issues and have pressed for better ditch maintenance. For those living with flood challenges I have a special safety leaflet for you to take home.

Cost of Living Support:

The district council's *Ease the Squeeze* programme has delivered fuel vouchers, food aid, and benefit advice throughout the ward, helping residents through a tough winter. The new East Suffolk Community Hub will be looking to further strengthen this one to one support. Details for this will be easy to find.

Local Funding:

Using East Suffolk's **Enabling Communities Budget**, I've supported village hall and ground improvements, supplying community group equipment, and supporting local wellbeing projects.

A special opportunity was working with Kelsale Primary School where along with Sam Kenward the local Community Officer we took a coach to the Suffolk Show and gave young families the chance to attend together as a family. It was a smashing initiative and made for a very happy day.

These small grants go a long way in strengthening our community life. The new budget starts in April 2025.

Devolution & Governance:

As Suffolk's councils explore a new devolution deal, I do have to raise concerns about rural representation and democratic accountability if the county becomes one large authority. As a local councillor I believe in servicing all of the villages in the ward I am elected to attend, to the best of my ability, but if the territory is too large this will be very difficult indeed.

Last, But By No means Least – 'Planning':

Well we really have had quite a time of it with regards to planning in the later part of the year, particularly in the closing month of this report. Minors, majors, retrospectives, transport and noise reports, we have been totally absorbed in Yoxford, then Huntingfield planning packs with challenges from the planning applications coming through the system, which to date I have been able to 'call in' for the cases to go to the committee. And how glad I am that we did.

Sadly both cases were granted permission. The car park at Cockfield Hall is concerning and Blyth Barn in Huntingfield, being so close to the village is a huge worry with respect to noise and traffic in the first instance. Please be vigilant about both.

In Closing:

Thank you for your time, thank you for attending any of the village Annual Meetings, Thank you most of all to our wonderful **parish councillors, village clerks and the divisional councillors** I get to work with —for your dedication and hard work are the backbone of our communities. As we face the future where change in local politics may be significant, making Parish Councils attractive places to give time is important.

As ever, please don't hesitate to get in touch if I can support you with matters large or small, do get in touch.

Cllr Julia Ewart

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