

Babergh District Councillors Report (August)

Steps taken to manage meadow land and reduce fire risk during hot weather

Residents are being reassured over action being taken by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to manage its meadow areas – reducing fire risk during hot, dry weather while also protecting wildlife

The councils operate a number of wildflower meadows within the open spaces it manages to increase biodiversity across the districts.

However, recent heatwaves and drought have led to increased concerns over risk of fires – with biodiversity experts offering reassurance over the steps being taken to ensure responsible land management.

Seasonal mowing would usually start in late August, but the councils have decided to bring this forward following:

- the prolonged hot, dry weather during June and July
- discussions with partners
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service raising awareness of increased risk of field fires due to the recent weather conditions

In many areas, the grass is brown to the ground, and therefore no longer supporting as much wildlife, so the councils will be clearing them early as a precaution.

Priority will be given to meadows close to fences or houses, with more remote meadows left until later to retain habitat for wildlife.

Any ecological impact will be limited, with the hot weather already having hastened the lifecycle of many species.

Babergh District Council's cabinet member for climate change, nature recovery and biodiversity, Cllr Helen Davies, said:

"We know many people care about their local wildflower meadows and want to understand what action is being taken and why.

"We hope this offers some reassurance of the factors that are considered by our biodiversity experts to ensure their maintenance provides a balance between supporting biodiversity and also considering the safety of our local communities."

Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet member for environment, culture and wellbeing, Cllr Tim Weller, said:

“Of course we want to encourage biodiversity, but we are also responsible landowners.

“By taking these steps we can take timely action to reduce the risk of fire, whilst retaining the majority of our meadows where wildlife can continue to flourish for as long as possible.”

Latest community investments are child’s play

Playgrounds, a leisure centre upgrade and a children’s library are amongst the community projects set to receive a share of more than £745k from Babergh District Council this month.

The awards, including an investment of nearly £500k in Belle Vue Park in Sudbury, are thanks to the latest round of funding from the council’s Community Infrastructure Levy. CIL payments are legally required from developers when building residential sites across the district. Monies collected are then redistributed by the council to go towards local community projects to ensure they can keep up with housing growth.

Belle Vue Park receives a total of £490k to cover the increased costs of the new toilet block and accessible facilities, plus upgrading the play area to create a more inclusive space for young visitors and complements the council’s plans for a new café. A further £55k will go towards improving the play equipment at Aubrey Drive play area – also in Sudbury – with £76k for improving the play area at the Calais Street recreation ground in Hadleigh.

In each case, proposals include upgrading facilities to create more inclusive play equipment that is designed to support children with disabilities, incorporating sensory play features and ground-level activities as well as features to ensure safe and accessible fun for all.

Meanwhile, Hadleigh Leisure Centre receives £101k towards a project to increase the capacity of the fitness suite and repurpose a ground-floor room into a community space – and Great Cornard Library receives £19k to add a children’s library within its existing space to attract younger visitors and their families.

Cllr Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Heritage, Planning & Infrastructure at Babergh District Council, said: “When housing grows at the rate that it is currently, it is really important that the local community infrastructure can grow at the same pace and CIL funding is one of the ways in which this can be achieved.

“CIL funds some absolutely fantastic projects. The money can build or improve all sorts of facilities that communities will use for years to come”

Cabinet members also noted one successful bid under delegated approval. Just over £3,000 will go to Glemsford Village Hall to be used in an insulation and eco lighting project that will transform the Old Library Room into a warm, welcoming space for the community. Bids for CIL funding are regularly reviewed by cabinet, so that the money can be ploughed back into local infrastructure, helping communities to keep pace with the impacts of housing growth.

Council rescinds Climate Emergency declaration and launches review

- Climate Emergency declaration rescinded
- Council to review climate, net zero and environmental programmes
- Findings and recommendations to be reported to Cabinet

Suffolk County Council has voted to rescind the Climate Emergency declaration originally adopted in March 2019 and commission a comprehensive review of climate, net zero and environmental programmes across the authority.

The decision was agreed at a meeting of Full Council on Thursday 16 July 2026, following consideration of a motion presented by Councillor Morgan Brobyn, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Food, Waste and Rural Affairs.

As part of the resolution, the council will:

- rescind the Climate Emergency declaration adopted in March 2019
- remove references to a Climate Emergency from council policies, strategies and communications where appropriate
- undertake a comprehensive review of climate, net zero and environmental programmes, projects, partnerships and expenditure across the council
- report the findings of that review to Cabinet, including recommendations for the continuation, modification or cessation of individual schemes

The review will examine current activity across the organisation and assess programmes against criteria including environmental outcomes, operational effectiveness, statutory requirements and value for money.

Councillor Morgan Brobyn, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Food, Waste and Rural Affairs, said:

"Climate change is a subject that people feel strongly about, and residents rightly expect the council to help communities respond to challenges such as flooding and extreme weather.

"But our responsibility is not to maintain declarations for their own sake. Our responsibility is to deliver practical outcomes that protect Suffolk's environment and support our communities.

"Whether that's improving flood resilience, enhancing biodiversity, reducing waste or making sure taxpayers' money is spent effectively, those are the things that will make the biggest difference on the ground.

"I was pleased that some members from across the chamber were able to find common ground on the importance of practical environmental stewardship, and I was happy to support the Conservative group's amendment which further reinforced that principle within the motion.

"The choice at today's council meeting was not between caring about the environment and not caring about the environment. It was about ensuring that environmental stewardship is practical, effective and focused on outcomes. That is the approach we will be taking as we move forward."

Further details of the review, including timescales and reporting arrangements, will be announced in due course.