

Chair's APM Report for Bures St Mary March 2026

The BSM Parish Council meets every two months on a Thursday evening, usually here in the Community Centre in the Garrad Room. Members of the public are always welcome; the agenda is typically very busy and some perennial issues require determined patience and quiet persistence.

The Parish Council has two vacancies. We would welcome applications for anyone who has lived in the village for at least twelve months and who feels they would like to make a real contribution to village life. We are also in the process of advertising for a Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Notices to this effect have been circulated on Facebook, in the village magazine and around the village.

Highways

Highway matters have kept both the Clerk and the Council well-occupied over the past year.

Road closures and persistent potholes continue to try everyone's patience and the Parish Council determinedly pursues some of these matters, working closely with our County Councillor, James Finch.

The Parish Council has been pressing for a dropped kerb to be installed at the Nayland Road/Church Square junction to the pavement, providing access to the Doctor's surgery and beyond. Residents from Eves Orchard, Claypits and further afield who use mobility aids regularly experience difficulty in mounting this section of the pavement. The problem is exacerbated by access to both sides of Church Square routinely being blocked by parked vehicles. Our suggestions so far have been all been rejected by Highways but we are hopeful that a solution will be eventually be found.

We are awaiting an update on any possible repair work to the B1508 road bridge this year after a number of postponements. A resident has recently reported corrosion to one of the supports to the bridge. It is indeed worrying to see the number and sheer size of HGVs using the B1508, and the bridge, as a through route between Colchester and Sudbury. It is an authorised lorry route and Highways are not able to apply restrictions without impacting on local legitimate HGV traffic.

Plug-In Suffolk is making progress on the installation of EV charging units in and around the Tawneys Ride / Claypits area. The Strategic Development Division of Suffolk County Council have been in consultation with the residents of Tawneys Ride and Claypits Avenue. Unfortunately, there is currently no timeline to the completion of this initiative but the Parish Council and the District Councillor are applying gentle pressure to keep this project moving forward.

The B1508 between Cornard and Bures remains on the SCC rotational use of an ANPR to monitor motorists' speeds. The devices are in great demand and, as they are shared around the entire county, they can only be deployed in Bures about twice a year.

Lee Norton, however, continues to manage our own Speed Indicator Device at three entry points to the village. We are very grateful to him for maintaining this since the withdrawal of

the services of the Sudbury Town Council last March. As noted before, the SID does not influence serial speeders but acts as a very helpful prompt for generally compliant drivers who have just not noticed that they need to adjust their speed.

Unfortunately, the Community SpeedWatch Teams have been disbanded on both sides of the village. In Bures St Mary lack of public support meant that we simply could not comply with the volunteer numbers required for approval. The Bures Hamlet team stood down on discovering the decision by the Essex Road Policing Unit to ignore all speeding motorists who were not registered to an Essex address. This meant that less than half of the registration numbers reported by the team were actually processed.

A councillor attends the Suffolk Enhanced Partnership which meets periodically to discuss all matters relating to public bus services across the area. If any resident has an issue regarding the bus services, please share these concerns with the Parish Council so that they may be addressed at the next SEP meeting. There is also some funding available to improve or increase services if you have any suggestions.

The bus shelter on Bridge Street has been missed by many since its removal due to rot attacking its fixing timbers. An application was made to the Suffolk Enhanced Partnership, which supports the improvement of all local bus services operating in the Suffolk County Council (SCC) Local Transport Authority. Funding for the replacement of the bus shelter was approved with capital funding from central Government, made available specifically to improve infrastructure. The bespoke shelter is being constructed by a company in Leicestershire and will be installed hopefully in early April. It will be a wooden structure, very similar to its predecessor, but with half-width side panels to give more protection against the elements.

Community

Parish Councillors regularly attend the Bures Market each month to engage with residents in a more accessible way, to make themselves known and to listen to concerns and suggestions. It was good to be back this March when the Market resumed after the winter break. Councillors are very happy to take any issues raised to the bi-monthly Parish Council meetings.

When available, the police officer assigned to Bures St Mary, PC Brendan McKenna, tries to also attend the monthly markets which provides a great opportunity to address any current issues in the village. Both Parish Councils will continue to work closely with their respective Constabularies, especially over the busy summer period when the village attracts more visitors. As well as our own Jenny Wright for Bures Hamlet, we also link closely with Mark Smith, the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator for Little Cornard, to keep up to date with any ongoing incidents or problems. Mark is always on the lookout for volunteers to join him in expanding this valuable network across our communities to keep us all safe and secure.

We have created two first aid stations in Bures St Mary and for those not aware of their location- a defibrillator and a bleed control kit can be found on the front of the Football Club building here on the Sportsground and the other first aid station is housed inside the

telephone kiosk next to the Post Office. The defibrillator here has been recently replaced as the previous unit had served its useful life of ten years. The Parish Councils are very grateful to the Bures Music Festival for kindly funding the new defibrillator. The two First Aid stations are an important emergency provision in the village.

You are all aware, I am sure, that the Post Office in Church Square will be finally closing tomorrow afternoon. Working with the County and District Councillors, we will endeavour to get some service reinstated as soon as possible. Suffolk County Council recognises the importance of a Post Office in a rural community and has pledged to try and help when a Post Office provision is under threat. We have arranged an informal gathering at the Three Horseshoes PH tomorrow from 5pm to show our appreciation to Robert and Madelyn and to wish them both well in their retirement. Everyone is very welcome.

Environment

The Parish Councils continue to support wildflower schemes and tree planting around the village wherever the opportunity presents itself. In conjunction with the Babergh Diversity Officer, the Parish Council has identified small areas of grass around the village to be left unmown from May to September to provide habitat and a food source for bees and other insects. These are trial initiatives and can be reversed if the areas become troublesome. We hope, though, that residents will tolerate some small patches of grass being left unmown to support wildlife.

The Parish Council is consulted on any work involving trees in the village. There are just a few trees protected by a Tree Protection Order. We are grateful to Ken Jackson, our Tree Warden, for his advice and guidance when looking after all the trees in our public spaces.

We are especially grateful to our team of contractors, Grass Roots, JPB Landscapes and Nigel Norton who all work very hard throughout the year in all weathers to keep both sides of the village looking well-tended and cared for and, of course, to the band of volunteers who bring colour to the flower planters around the village through all the seasons.

Our Cemetery continues to bring pleasure and comfort to local families and visitors from further afield. It is always gratifying to hear how the Cemetery is much appreciated for its tranquillity and wholesome feeling of being well-cared for. We have to thank Jenny Wright for her special attention to detail in her management of all the affairs of the Cemetery and for the support she gives to those who have lost a loved one. This year's ongoing maintenance has included a new chestnut stake fence to the northern boundary, lots of levelling and turfing of graves and extensive tree management to ensure the longevity of some of our handsome but elderly specimens.

The Parish Council would like to thank District Councillor Reece for her contribution to another important community project. Isabelle has kindly donated £500 from her Locality Budget to the installation of grit bins on the Arger Fen Road once Highways have approved the locations.

Planning

The proposal for the development of the former Chambers Bus Yard was submitted in March 2024. Full Planning permission was granted last year, Meanwhile the developers continue to

address a raft of planning conditions. Currently they are addressing their Biodiversity Net Gain obligation and will be erecting some scaffolding in mid/late April by Knowle House. The ecologist who is overseeing the biodiversity aspects of the site will check that there are no bats living in the roof of Knowle House itself. The roof tiles will be removed to ensure no bats will be disturbed when construction work starts properly later in the year.

Conclusion

I would like to thank our respective team of councillors and Jenny Wright, as our Responsible Financial Officer, for their commitment to the community over the past year, and, as always, for their contribution, patience and good humour. We are also very appreciative of the advice, guidance and support given by our County Councillor, James Finch, and Isabelle Reece, the District Councillor. We envisage that the Parish Council will continue to play an important part in village life as Local Government Reorganisation gets underway.

Jennie McCrory (Acting Chair Bures St Mary Parish Council)