

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ms Jane Challis

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING of MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 27th AUGUST 2026, AT 6:30PM IN MELLIS MEMORIAL HALL

Present: Cllr A Cross, Cllr L Farley, Cllr Paterson
Clerk – J Challis, CC Cllr Bains, DC Cllr Warboys

Apologies: Cllr Read.

1 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Due to Cllr Read's absence, it was agreed unanimously for Cllr Cross to chair the meeting. Cllr Cross welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies received from Cllr Read were approved unanimously.

2 To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items

Cllr Cross declared a non-pecuniary interest against agenda item 9, being a member of the Memorial Hall Committee.

3 To consider requests for Dispensations on agenda items

Agreed unanimously for Cllr Cross to participate in the discussion against agenda item 9, but to refrain from voting, (one abstention – Cllr Cross).

4 To resolve the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 23rd July 2026 are a true and correct record

The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 23rd of July 2026 were approved unanimously with one abstention (councillor who was not present at the meeting).

5 Reports from County Councillor and District Councillor

Cllr Bains sent his report in advance of the meeting, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

Cllr Warboys sent his report in advance of the meeting, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. Cllr Warboys updated further to say that the new bin collections have been working well, apart from collections requiring access beside the Mill, which have been blocked by residents' parking.

6 Public Participation Session (10 minutes set aside)

None.

7 Chair's Report

No report due to Cllr Read's absence.

8 Clerk/RFO's Report

- The LGA pay award 2026/27 has been agreed with an increase of 3.3% backdated to 1st April 2026.
- Positive feedback has been received from residents regarding the impact of the current road closures in Mellis.
- An email has been received from Steve Adams inviting councillors to visit a woodland he manages near Mellis. Councillors suggested Steve Adams be invited to attend a meeting.
- An email has been received from the new Emergency Planning Officer for MSDC, asking if the PC and MMHC would be open to discussing registering the Memorial Hall as a rest centre. This will be a future agenda item, and discussed with the MMHC.
- The Clerk suggested the council might wish to consider reviewing the Conservation Appraisal for Mellis, adopted by MSDC in 2008, which has not been updated since. Councillors indicated they would like to look at this further, it will be a future agenda item.

9 Financial Requests received from the Memorial Hall Committee

The MMHC has asked the council to consider the following requests, due to an increase in running costs, and necessary maintenance works that have had to be carried out:

1. a contribution for the current financial year towards the costs of running Mellis Memorial Hall and
2. for an addition to be made in future years to the Parish Council Precept to provide such a contribution going forwards.

There was a lengthy discussion focused around the running costs provided with the MMHC's request, the value of the hall to the community, and profitability of current events. Councillors were favourable towards the request, but Cllr Paterson felt more financial information was required. Therefore, this item will be carried over to the next meeting.

ACTION – Clerk to request additional financial information from the MMHC.

10 Environmental issues, including:

- **NSIP and large-scale energy project updates** – the Parish Council's response to EcoPower Suffolk's statutory consultation was submitted by the deadline, and can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. The Clerk will speak to the Chair of Yaxley PC regarding a joint approach to the proposed reservoir.
- **Biodiversity Action Plan** – update within Mellis Common below.
- **Mellis Common** – report from Will Cranstoun SWT: parts of the common have been cut for hay, slightly late than planned due to the contractors work program. Despite the drought affecting the quality of the hay, SWT are very keen to reinstate this annual management. At least one pond is due to be restored this winter (timing tbc) and tree works will be carried out soon to facilitate this. The pond to receive the first round of management will be the large pond nearest the primary school.
- **Mellis Garden**– Cllr Cross reported that he has not yet cut the grass.

11 Traffic and highway concerns including VAS installation update

The Clerk will pursue Suffolk Highways for a date to install the posts for the VAS device at the four approved sites.

ACTION – Clerk as above.

12 Location of salt bins

There are currently two salt bins; one by the Mill and another by the post box near the Old Rectory. After discussing, and taking into account flooding and subsequent icy conditions previously experienced on Earlsford Road, it was agreed to seek approval to locate an additional salt bin in this location. Proposed by Cllr Paterson, seconded by Cllr Cross and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to check whether permission is required from SWT, and submit a street furniture licence application to Suffolk Highways.

13 Memorial Hall Car Park

The contractor is due to start work w/c 7th of September 2026.

14 Planning

To consider:

- **DC/25/03257** – Planning Application – Construction of ground mounted solar panel arrays and associated infrastructure which will have the ability to export 49.9MW (AC) electricity. Construction of new vehicular access. (EIA Development) Land at Sone Cottages, Bury Road, Botesdale, IP22 1QH.
After discussing councillors agreed unanimously to object to this proposal, based on their previous objection, the proximity of EcoPower Suffolk's proposal and subsequent cumulative impact, and the impact on the deer corridor.
ACTION – Clerk to add objection comment to MSDC planning portal as above.

To receive an Update on:

- **DC/26/01709** - Application under S73 for Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of Planning Permission DC/23/01494 dated 26/06/2023 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Construction and operation of Synchronous Condensers with ancillary infrastructure, and associated works including access and landscaping. - For non-compliance with and removal of Condition 12 (Use and Re-instatement of Temporary Access Track) To allow for the retention of the access as per submitted plans/documents. Land Between A140 And Leys Lane, Yaxley, Eye - **AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/26/01708** - Full Planning Application - Permanent retention of the access road between the A140 and Leys Lane, Yaxley, Eye. Land Between A140 And Leys Lane, Yaxley, Eye - **AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/25/02824** Regener8 Power Red House Farm - Planning Application - Construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System, together with related infrastructure, access, drainage, landscaping and other associated works. Land West Of A140, Red House Farm, Yaxley, IP23 8BH – **AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/25/03257** Regener8 Power Stone Cottages - Planning Application - Construction of ground mounted solar panel arrays and associated infrastructure which will have the ability to export 49.9MW (AC) electricity. Construction of new vehicular access. (EIA Development). Land At Stone Cottages, Bury Road, Botesdale, IP22 1QH – **AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/22/00416** - Application for Outline Planning Permission (All matters reserved) - Erection of petrol and electric charging facility with associated shop; roadside restaurant with drive through facility; E(g) (formerly B1) and B8 starter units; HGV lorry parking facility for rest area and drivers' facilities as a phased development. Land Adjacent North Roundabout A140, Ipswich Road, Brome Part in The Parish of Thrandeston, IP23 8AW – **AWAITING DECISION.**

15 Parish Council insurance renewal

In addition to the renewal quotation received from the current provider Zurich, the Clerk sought additional quotations from Clear Councils and Community Action Suffolk. Both declined to provide a quotation due to the competitiveness of the renewal received from Zurich. Approval to proceed with the renewal quotation received from Zurich, at a cost of £264, proposed by Cllr Farley.

Seconded by Cllr Paterson, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to instruct Zurich as above.

16 Finance

i) A list of payments and receipts, expenditure against the budget, and bank reconciliation to 24th April was sent to councillors. Barclays bank account balance as of 22nd May 2026 - **£28,699.11.**

ii) Review and authorisation of payments presented:

4	Memorial Hall	Rural Coffee Caravan August hire	£20.00
1	Memorial Hall	August PC meeting	£30.00
3	J. Challis	Admin August & back dated LGA pay award	£662.04
4	J. Challis	Mileage July PC meeting	£15.18
3	J. Challis	Expenses – Norton antivirus	£34.99
4	The Messenger	Donation	£150.00

Cllr Farley proposed approval of all payments above, seconded by Cllr Paterson, and approved unanimously.

ACTION - Cllr Read and Cllr Cross to pay agreed payments above via online banking (dual authorisation).

17 The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Thursday the 29th of October, at 6:30pm in Mellis Memorial Hall.

Meeting closed at 9:08pm.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT - August 2026

Approved upper funding limits totalling £350,000 for Stowmarket Town centre Gateway Fund – From the Community Infrastructure Levy	• £100,000 Mid Suffolk Voluntary Organisations Forum (MSVOF) was awarded funding to redevelop the former fire station on Lockington Road • £100,000 for Stowmarket Arts CIC conversion of 6 Old Fox Yard • £70,000 for a new coffee roastery and community activities • £80,000 for a new milkshake, ice cream and dessert business
Greens Delivering Infrastructure – From the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Additional funding directed to supporting local communities. John Peel centre platform lift and associated work projects, old fire station community space project, st Nicholas church accessible composting toilet and pathway, creating road “big park” play area upgrade project.
Council named as national finalist for nature recovery work	Mid Suffolk District Council has been shortlisted in Nature 2030's Political Purpose Awards, in the Planning for Nature Recovery category. A £1.8m Nature Recovery Budget and investing in 30 hectares of land in Thorndon, Palgrave and Stowmarket, specifically for nature recovery, with extensive public engagement helping to shape local management agreements.
Free community days out	Families across Babergh and Mid Suffolk enjoyed two free community fun days this summer, with a packed programme of activities on offer for all ages. Delivered by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, the events will take place at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury and at Stowupland Village Hall.
Mid Suffolk Police initiatives	Teamed up with local officer for ASB awareness, on Ipswich Street and Brett Drive, completing

	various tasks and patrols to counter anti-social behaviour
Home Plans approved	Mid Suffolk District Council approved the reserved matters for the former Bacton Middle School site, in Wyverstone Road Bacton. A joint venture between Suffolk County Council and Lovell Partnerships. It follows outline permission in 2020 for 50 homes, 10 of which affordable and a 3G football pitch alongside reserving land for primary and pre-school buildings.
Bin Collection	The service is now operating as intended, with all scheduled rounds completed. The food waste service collected 153 tonnes this week. Contact volumes on the dedicated Better Recycling telephone line have reduced
Equans investing in Babergh and Mid Suffolk	Babergh and Mid Suffolk have secured £3 million in funding, working with energy and regeneration contractor Equans, to improve efficiency in 168 more council homes, with completion expected by March 2027.
Local Government Reorganisation	Arthur Charvonia CEO Babergh and Mid Suffolk has now received a draft of the Suffolk (Structural Changes) Order 2026 from MHCLG. This is the Statutory Instrument that the government will use to bring in the reorganisation (pending the county council's judicial review). It is expected to be laid in parliament sometime in the autumn. As part of the LGR process, there will be a joint committee set up for each of the three unitaries. The role of these is set out in government guidance: <i>"Joint Committees have preparatory functions, with one Joint Committee formed for each new unitary council. Their focus is to prepare the ground for matters that need to be in place on day one of the Shadow Councils."</i> The joint committees will be made up of equal numbers of county councillors and district councillors, and where the new unitary is being made up of more than one district, each one will be represented. Western Suffolk – 8: 4SCC/2WSC/1MSDC/1BDC Ipswich and Southern Suffolk – 10: 5SCC/2IBC/1ESC/1BDC/1MSDC Central and Eastern Suffolk -8: 4SCC/2ESC/2MSDC Much of the preparatory work is being done by officers – and is having to go ahead because there is so much to do between now and 2028. There is an Implementation Board already meeting which is the chief execs from all 6 councils, the directors of the two biggest service areas (children and young people; adult social care) and a newly employed programme manager, Lysanne Eddy

	Link to Future Suffolk, LGR Website: https://www.suffolk.lgrhub.gov.uk/
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Rowland Warboys MSDC Cllr. Gislingham Ward

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County Councillor Report



Parish Councils, Aug 2026

Councillor Paul Bains, Hartismere Division. Tel.07889066305 Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk

1. Suffolk Council meeting 16th July 2026

Suffolk County Council met on 16 July 2026 and debated several matters of countywide significance. Councillors voted to rescind the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency declaration and agreed to conduct a review of climate, net-zero and environmental programmes, while continuing to recognise the risks posed by climate change and extreme weather. Members also debated a proposal for a minimum universal bus service across Suffolk, aimed at ensuring all eligible parishes had access to regular public transport, but the proposal was not approved. Councillors additionally agreed new measures requiring independent financial commentary to accompany public announcements of council savings, with the aim of improving transparency and public understanding of financial decisions. The meeting also received Cabinet updates on county services and approved a revised programme of council meetings through to 2028.

2. Dunwich Heath Wildfire Update

The Major Incident declared in response to the Dunwich Heath wildfire was stood down on 10 August following a reduction in immediate risk. However, firefighting operations remain ongoing, with crews continuing to monitor and tackle hotspots across the affected area. Public access restrictions remain in place, and residents and visitors are being urged to stay away from the heath and respect all closures and traffic management measures. The fire, which started on 29 July, spread across approximately 150 hectares of heathland and woodland around Dunwich Heath and RSPB Minsmere. Recovery arrangements are now commencing, led by East Suffolk Council through a multi-agency Recovery Coordinating Group, while Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service continues its operational response. Dunwich village and surrounding communities remain open for business. The County Council and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service have thanked emergency service personnel, partner organisations, volunteers, residents and local businesses for their support throughout the incident.

3. East of England Stroke Association

The Stroke Association is hosting **Stroke Information Live** on **Tuesday 22 September 2026** at the **Norfolk County Showground**. This free event is aimed at stroke survivors, carers, family

members and anyone supporting people affected by stroke. Attendees can access expert speakers, practical advice, wellbeing support, local services and opportunities to connect with others affected by stroke. Residents can register for a free place by visiting Stroke Information Live. For further information, please contact Louise Hornagold, Engagement Lead for the East of England at the Stroke Association, on **07983 342638** or by email at **Louise.Hornagold@stroke.org.uk**.

4. Suffolk County Council School fires investigation update

Following the precautionary shutdown of solar panel systems at affected Suffolk schools, a dedicated team is carrying out infrared drone surveys to identify any faults or defects. Where no issues are found, systems are being safely returned to service. The current expectation is that inspections and any necessary remedial work will be completed before schools return in September. The financial impact of the temporary shutdown is assessed to be minimal. I am also still awaiting clarification regarding how installations completed after 2016 are being assessed and whether they are affected by the current measures. I will provide further updates as more information becomes available.

6. Energy efficiency loans available for Suffolk residents

Suffolk County Council has launched the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme, offering homeowners loans of £2,000 to £15,000 at a fixed 2.2% APR to fund energy-efficiency improvements such as insulation, heat pumps, solar panels and double glazing. The scheme, delivered in partnership with Lendology, aims to help residents reduce energy bills and improve home comfort. Applications are now open via the [Lendology Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme](#).

7. Trading Standards Warning

Residents are being urged to beware of **fake charity collection bags** being distributed in Suffolk. The bags falsely claim to support a children's cancer charity and may be used by fraudsters to collect donations. Please verify any door-to-door collection before donating and use official charity shops or collection points where possible. Anyone with information about suspicious collections can contact Suffolk Trading Standards on 0808 223 1133.

8. Division Contact and Support

If you have specific issues regarding local county services, school transport allocations, or unresolved highways defects, please contact me with your relevant case reference numbers.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07889066305

RESPONSE OF MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL August 2026

Mellis Parish Council (MPC) has significant concerns regarding the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) proposed by EcoPower Suffolk. Mellis Parish Council continues to **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this proposal in its current form, and will continue to object should the application for development consent be granted.

MPC is concerned about the significant and detrimental impact of this proposal on the local environment and community. The scale and significance of this local impact is completely disproportionate to the national requirement to achieve net zero, and local communities such as Mellis will suffer serious harm should this proposal proceed.

In summary MPC have the following concerns about this proposal –

1. The scale of the proposal in terms of overall size and scope, and the specific impact on the Parish of Mellis.
2. The potential significant impact on Mellis Common Nature Reserve.
3. The increased wildfire risk to the community the infrastructure will cause, which is already high due to the open areas of common and farmland.
4. The significant and potential catastrophic impact on local wildlife, bio diversity and local culture and heritage.
5. The impact on accessibility for the local community both during construction and subsequently. This includes the visual destruction of the surrounding area, and impact on the rights of access around the footpaths, bridleways and areas between Mellis, Thrandeston, Wortham, Burgate and Gislingham.
6. Lack of co-ordination with the numerous major energy projects in various stages of planning affecting Mellis and the surrounding area.
7. The significant impact of the simultaneous implementation of numerous energy proposals and the cumulative effect on the parish of Mellis, the wider environment and the local community.
8. The potential significant impact of a substantial, protracted increase in construction traffic to the detriment and safety of the Mellis community and environment.
9. The significant increased stress, and impact on mental health and wellbeing of the local community.
10. The potential increased flood risk in Mellis, and subsequent impact on surrounding communities in the Waveney Valley and neighbouring areas.
11. The proposed location of the BESS in Thrandeston with significant increased risks in terms of the environment and public safety.
12. The speed of this proposal and poor communication to date by EcoPower Suffolk to the local community. This has meant many are uninformed and unaware of the scale and impact of this proposal.

Mellis Parish Council reserve the right to continue to submit feedback to this proposal up to, and including, any planning application stage. MPC will continue to research, risk assess and consider these proposals in the coming months and submit further feedback as necessary.

The following expands on these concerns and, where relevant, suggests mitigation in the event this proposal should be successful in any planning application.

1. Scale of Eco Power Suffolk Proposal

The scale of this proposal is unsustainable and disproportionate in terms of impact on local communities such as Mellis in this part of Mid Suffolk. The imposition of such a vast area of solar panels, and an additional BESS, across vast swathes of farmland and open rural areas will significantly change the local environment and lives of many small villages, communities and households for generations.

There has been no evidence provided of any attempt to identify, or consider, the impact on food production, landscapes, land use or the natural environment, even at this early stage.

No evidence has been produced to show that Eco Power Suffolk have sought alternative land provision in accordance with Department for Energy Security and Net Zero guidance that developers should, 'utilise brownfield, contaminated or previously developed land. Where the development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, lower quality land should be preferred to higher quality land'.

It appears that EcoPower Suffolk have merely sought the cheapest, easiest option to maximise profits, to the detriment of the local environment and communities.

Mitigation

- Significant reduction in scale and extent of the proposed sites to balance energy needs and the needs of the local environment and communities
- Consideration of alternative brownfield, contaminated or previously developed land as a priority for solar farm and BESS development over the use higher quality agricultural land
- Solar field sites on farm land should encompass large natural barriers (strips of land) alongside roads and foot-paths with significant mature screening to reduce the visual impact
- Wildlife and community access should be preserved and clear mitigation in place to preserve, and enhance, local bio-diversity

2. Mellis Common Nature Reserve

Mellis Common is unique, beautiful, accessible and a haven for bio-diversity and wildlife.

It has the largest area of unfenced common land in England; Mellis Common is a 59hectare nature reserve managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

'While many great commons were enclosed and lost forever, Mellis somehow escaped this fate and now provides a glimpse of what large parts of the county used to look like. If the land itself is the same – the Hodgkinson's 1783 map of Suffolk depicts an outline of the Common that is entirely recognisable – the same is also true of the management techniques used to look after it.

In all there are some 239 acres of registered common land in Mellis, owned jointly by two so-called Lords of the Manor ... and the site's importance to the rural landscape is recognised by its designations as a Conservation Area, a Special Landscape Area and a County Wildlife Site' (Suffolk Wildlife Trust).

The Common is ringed around by a series of drainage ditches, locally enlarged in many places to form substantial ponds. The preservation of these is of the utmost importance for flood protection.

Mellis is a conservation area, originally designated by East Suffolk County Council in 1973, and inherited by Mid Suffolk District Council at its inception in 1974.

Mellis Common is a protected landscape under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It also enjoys "Commons Rights Holders" privileges. These privileges are conveyed to land owners who have the right to graze livestock on the common.

As a result of EcoPower Suffolk's proposals, and other energy project proposals, it is now at significant risk of harm.

The visual impact of EcoPower Suffolk's proposals alone, will, in essence, ruin and despoil a beautiful, idyllic and natural part of Suffolk.

In addition to the visual impact there will be a significant impact on the wildlife and fragile bio-diversity of the Nature Reserve.

For example -

Today Mellis Common, and surrounding fields, are the hunting grounds of numerous Barn Owls, Little Owls, Tawney Owls, Kestrels, Red Kite's and many other species of prey birds who depend on Mellis Common and surrounding farmland for survival.

The fields surrounding Mellis Common are a rare habitat for Lapwings in springtime and for Hares at all times of

year, the grazing and mating of European hares in Mellis is well documented. These fields provide a safe environment for Lapwings to nest on freshly tilled fields and then walking their young to graze on nearby pastureland to feed.

These pasturelands once covered with solar panels will be devoid of their natural food of leatherjackets and earthworms as the soil would not be cultivated, this would normally allow the development of these species and the effective grazing by the Lapwings.

The plans provided appear to show limited information and consideration relating to the heritage and culture of Mellis Common and surrounding area. It is clear the plan in its current form will be devastating for many historical and ancient places both during construction and subsequently. Proposals for 'Area 3' with a cable running along Mellis Common would destroy the historic importance of the common.

For example, Mellis Common, and specifically Cavalry Barn, have historic connection to the English Civil War. It was an encampment, and training grounds for, Cromwell's Army.

Risks posed by construction (e.g. potentially 12 – 24 truck movements per day over one to two years, Source: Eco Power Suffolk) and the enclosure of the areas surrounding the common by vast swathes of solar panels is hugely significant and detrimental. This cannot be mitigated with the plans in their current form.

Mellis Parish Council is also extremely concerned that Dam Lane (also known as Drury Lane) has not been highlighted as an area of constraint by EcoPower Suffolk.

Dam Lane, is a beautiful green lane covering 1.6 miles across country, between Mellis Ash Road and the A143, near Wortham. It is a historical, local asset, much loved by ramblers, dog walkers and horse riders. Along this route there is an early mediaeval, moated site, next to Seething's Wood which was investigated in the 1930's by the archaeologist Basil Brown, who discovered the Anglo-Saxon Ship Burial at Sutton Hoo. The Parish Council believes Dam Lane needs permanent protection and should be treated as a historic relic.

Mitigation

- One kilometre 'exclusion zone' in the area immediately surrounding Mellis Common Nature Reserve for solar panels and any BESS.
- No access or construction routes using roads which cross the common.
- Where limited access is required, movements significantly restricted in terms of numbers, operating times and days.
- Following assessment, clear mitigation to protect areas of heritage and culture on Mellis Common Nature Reserve and surrounding areas.
- Significant mature screening to be placed in areas which overlook Mellis Common Nature Reserve or that can be seen from it.

3. Cumulative Impact of Multiple Proposals

This proposal is one of many currently being developed in a small area of rural Suffolk.

There will be a cumulative, significant impact on the local environment and lives of many small villages, communities and households should this, and other proposals, proceed in current form.

Instead of a single coordinated proposal from different energy companies the uncoordinated, piecemeal and unstructured approach being currently adopted presents serious cumulative risks to the local community, environment and infrastructure.

Two of these proposals are NSIPs (including this one) and others are of real significance in terms of size and impact. The risks of multiple projects taking place simultaneously are high, and this will result in irreversible damage to the local environment, ecology, wildlife and local communities.

This proposal will extend the 'industrialisation' of Eye Airfield to the West of the A140 to a significant degree, which will be exacerbated by other proposals. This 'free for all' is currently being imposed on local communities with minimal local benefit.

Mitigation

- There should be clear and consistent engagement with other proposals and local communities to identify risks and impact and ensure these are mitigated through joint working. This engagement needs to be transparent and inclusive to ensure it is meaningful, productive and accountable
- The cumulative impact of multiple energy proposals should be mitigated by the rationalisation of individual proposals into a coordinated, less impactful single proposal. This should be more balanced and proportionate to reduce local impact

4. Speed of Proposal, Communication and Community Engagement

This proposal has been 'fast tracked' and has provided limited opportunity for the local community to understand the scale, scope and consequences of implementation. Many of the land information requests from Ardent were sent to the incorrect addresses and named individuals. The charges made for physical copies of the consultation documents have also made been prohibitive for many residents. These points have been raised with EcoPower Suffolk, without satisfactory response.

EcoPower Suffolk have failed to understand the context and demographics of small rural communities with the current communication strategy.

The online plan was clearly rushed and lacked detail. It did not identify specifically where the BESS was to be located and it was only from conversations at the above 'consultation', and a subsequent MPC meeting with EcoPower Suffolk, that it was apparent that it would be located 'in Thrandeston'. Of note, there were no images of a BESS site made available in initial information provided, which would have helped the local community understand what is being proposed. The BESS proposal appears to be being implemented by stealth, or at least that is the perception.

The initial leaflet provided images which were misleading (e.g. child with sunflower, no location or image shown for the BESS) and sought to reassure local communities about potential impact i.e. that the installation of solar panels would be a benefit to the local community and environment. The benefit is in fact a national one and not local, despite offers of potential financial community benefits.

The Parish Council was specifically advised that this would be rectified and detailed plans would be provided for the statutory consultation, based on the feedback from the non-statutory consultation, but this has **NOT** happened.

The speed of this application and the limited number of information events to provide key details mean that the promise to 'work with communities' has already been undermined and trust eroded. The process to date has been undemocratic, lacking clarity and detail. This is a clear symptom of a proposal developed in haste without due regard for good communication, community engagement and understanding potential local impact.

Communication from the non-statutory consultation phase to date, has been an exercise of 'style over substance', a failure to understand the demographics of local rural communities has meant many local residents have been excluded and feel uninformed. In essence communication has been a failure.

Mitigation

- **The statutory consultation period should be extended to allow those affected by the proposals free access to detailed and transparent plans of the proposals.**

5. Lack of Co-ordination

It is clear that since the non-statutory consultation 16 months ago, meaningful dialogue or co-ordination is still to place between the various proposals currently being considered for this area.

Early co-ordination around construction phases (e.g. construction traffic management and access) and operational use of facilities would have clearly identified opportunities for shared working and operational requirements. This includes the apparent need for three BESS in three different locations when clearly, with some planning, these could be shared facilities in one location. This is private energy companies operating in

silos to enhance profit at the expense of local communities. This is wrong and unfair.

Mitigation

- There should be a clear, transparent and coordinated approach by the various multiple proposals, including this NSIP proposed by EcoPower Suffolk, to assess local concerns and risks, and mitigate these to reduce the impact on the local environment and communities.
- EcoPower Suffolk should engage with other proposals to look at access routes to the Western end of Mellis Common and Thrandeston from the A143 e.g. Regener8 'Stone Cottages' proposal, and from the A140 (Regener8).

6. Specific Impact

Visual

See above re Mellis Common Nature Reserve.

Bio Diversity

See above re Mellis Common Nature Reserve

Heritage and Culture

See above re Mellis Common Nature Reserve

Traffic Management

The road from Mellis to Burgate (Mellis Road and The Common) is not on Suffolk County Council's recommended routes for HGVs i.e. not suitable for HGVs unless for limited, specific access.

Speeding of traffic through Mellis has already been identified as high risk by MPC and several initiatives have been initiated to mitigate this, including the recent establishment of a Community Speed Watch Team. Further traffic calming measures are also being implemented and planned. There are no footpaths, no streetlighting and no escape routes for pedestrians or cyclists in Mellis.

In addition to comments above (Mellis Common Nature Reserve) Mellis has an expanding and thriving school. Traffic during school hours is significant and children often walk or ride bicycles to school. Children from the school do use Mellis Common Nature Reserve. Risks posed by large volumes of construction traffic over a protracted period will pose a significant risk to those attending the school. This is a high risk.

The local road infrastructure surrounding Mellis Common Nature Reserve is comprised of small single track rural roads. They are barely sufficient for local traffic. The addition of significant numbers of trucks (HGVs) during the construction phase over a protracted period, will cause risk to the local community and damage the already poor road infrastructure, adjoining land, ecology, wildlife and bio-diversity. These roads are not designed for this type of traffic on a regular basis.

The current proposal to place the BESS 'in Thrandeston' will pose significant risks should there be a fire (known BESS risk) with very limited access for Fire and other emergency services (see below).

Flood Risk

There has been a failure to date to acknowledge recent flooding events in the area in recent years. MPC has concerns that this proposal will only exacerbate flood events due to increased coverage of land with solar panels and the BESS which will be built on agricultural land. This land should be left to absorb rainfall and control runoff. Mellis and the surrounding areas are positioned on a natural high point and as such act as a 'sponge' to absorb rainfall and slow down the runoff that causes flooding of the local rivers systems.

MPC have already engaged with the River Waveney Trust to consider any natural mitigation which may be considered, in consultation with the Environment Agency, to seek to manage this significant risk in the years ahead. This proposal would have a significant impact on these natural solutions to flood risks.

Fire Risk

It is clear that climate change is resulting in a significant increase to the temperature and longevity of the summer months. To date, approximately 1017 wildfires have been recorded in the UK in 2026. This is a significant increase to the 848 recorded in 2025. Mellis is surrounded by open farmland, and is home to the largest area of unfenced common in England; a significant risk factor in itself. The infrastructure proposed raises this risk exponentially. The fact that there is a high-pressure gas line very close by should also be a consideration.

Stress and Wellbeing

This and other proposals are causing significant stress to the local community, this will continue for many years. Many people in small communities like Mellis feel helpless, powerless and fearful about the impact of these proposals on their lives and safety. Poor communication has significantly added to this anxiety and stress.

Whilst many recognise the need for sustainable energy, including MPC, local sentiment is that the scale of this, and other proposals, are disproportionate in terms of the local impact and National requirements.

Risks to the wellbeing and welfare of the local community are real, significant and will grow as this proposal develops in its current form.

7. BESS Location

The proposed location for the seven-acre BESS 'in Thrandeston' is clearly wrong, is high risk, and carries with it significant impact. No consideration has been given to working with other proposals to rationalise the BESS requirement (see above)

- Access for construction and maintenance is very poor and poses significant risk.
- Access for Fire and other emergency services is very poor and this poses significant risk to local communities. Other proposed BESS sites will have direct access from the A140 for example.
- The batteries will need to be placed on concrete pads (we understand) which will have an impact on local ecology, bio-diversity and wildlife.
- The visual impact will be catastrophic in an area which is rural, peaceful and beautiful.
- The BESS is in close proximity to housing which has significant impact in terms of construction traffic, visual impact and risks from fire.
- This site extends the 'industrialised' area from the current Yaxley Substation and Eye Airfield by approximately a mile into green belt and 'higher quality' agricultural land.
- The construction of the BESS in this location will significantly extend the construction phase for the proposed Thrandeston site (Source: Eco Power Suffolk), with potential increased impact on Mellis Common Nature Reserve if access is granted via Mellis.

Proportionality and Necessity

Mellis Parish Council recognises the global, national and local need to ensure we have sustainable, clean energy. Leaving aside the concerning debate over the production and disposal of solar panels, we feel that our local community is being over-duly burdened with responsibility to provide solutions, that is to accept proposals which desecrate beautiful, rural locations with industrial-sized fields of solar panels and BESSs. The impact of these proposals if implemented will be catastrophic for the reasons outlined in this document.

The uncoordinated imposition of large, multiple energy projects on a small area is wrong, disproportionate and unfair. It seems clear the motivation is for short-term profit at the expense of local communities.

Whilst the need for 'clean' energy may be necessary through solar farms and associated BESS, the scale and impact of this proposal is not proportionate to the need.

