

## County Councillor Report

### Parish Councils, June 2025



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**Devolution and New Survey** – SCC continues to work with Norfolk County Council concerning plans for both Local Government Reorganisation and formation of a combined Mayoral Authority.

A new survey gives residents an opportunity to shape the work of the council in developing its plans for local reorganisation. This survey will help us to address residents' main concerns. It can be done online at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution), by emailing [devolution@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:devolution@suffolk.gov.uk) or by calling 0345 603 1842 where Suffolk County Council's customer services team can help. People can also visit any of Suffolk's 45 libraries to complete the survey online.

**Suffolk Community Libraries** - Suffolk's library service moved back into the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> June. A new website has launched at [www.suffolkcommunitylibraries.co.uk](http://www.suffolkcommunitylibraries.co.uk).

Importantly, nothing is changing for library users. All 45 libraries remain open, with the same staff, services, opening hours, activities, and the Spydus reservation system. We've been working closely with Suffolk Libraries to ensure the transition is seamless. Users will have full access to the library catalogue and to related library events.

**County Council AGM of 22<sup>nd</sup> May** – Councillors debated three motions, one of which addressed Government proposals to reduce consultation on major projects aimed at those imposing new energy infrastructure on the countryside. This carried almost unanimously:

*The council urges the government to: 1. Retain sections 42 and 49 of the Planning Act 2008, 2. Enforce case-by-case statutory engagement criteria, rigorously assessing applicants' consultation quality. Without these safeguards, the proposals will fuel distrust and enable harmful energy projects to proceed. Suffolk demands a planning process that balances broader goals with our residents' wellbeing, landscapes, and economy, ensuring infrastructure respects the communities it impacts.'*

**Proposed Changes to Planning and Nationally Significant Infrastructure** Projects - [Suffolk County Council recently expressed its concerns](#) in response to government proposals concerning reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill/guide-to-the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill>

Regards consultation, Sections 42 and 49 mentioned above would remove the duty of project promoters to consult with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate, and remove the duty to have regard to comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter. An April amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill would remove all statutory consultees from the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) pre-application process. Wildlife Trusts have expressed serious concerns over this and other aspects of the Bill. See [Planning reforms to slash a year off infrastructure delivery - GOV.UK](#).

In addition, Government proposes to reform the grid connections process. Ofgem and the National Energy System Operator (NESO) are working with government, to change from a 'first come, first served' to a 'first ready, first connected' approach. These reforms are an essential enabler for the government's Clean Energy Superpower and Growth missions.

The Planning Bill would enable mandatory bill discounts to communities close to new or upgraded electricity transmission infrastructure. It would also streamline the Compulsory Purchase Order process and land

compensation rules to enable land assembly through public sector-led schemes and extend existing powers to remove value attributed to the prospect of planning permissions ('hope value') to town/parish and community councils to facilitate social housing.

**Changes to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Proposed** - The UK [Government has announced a consultation](#) proposing reduced Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for small and medium building developments in England. As the latter make up over 70% of all housing developments, the impacts on the natural world would be severe. Craig Bennett, chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts, has expressed concern that the Government is proposing to reduce both BNG and statutory consultation requirements. This announcement comes six months after the Government reinforced its "commitment to BNG". <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/government-amendment-planning-bill-threatens-nature-and-infrastructure-delivery>

**Mapping Major Infrastructure Projects** - An interactive map of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in Suffolk is now available [here](#). This is embedded on the [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects \(NSIPs\) in Suffolk](#) webpage (which also contains more details on NSIPs).

At release, we have included all NSIP Order Limits in polygons where we have received written permission and otherwise as dots (bordered in black), located at the centre of the NSIP. Also included are Town & Country Planning (District Council) Solar Farms as yellow dots.

**Large Scale Solar Proposals** – Several large (NSIP) solar proposals with Battery Electric Storage Sites (BESS) in Mid Suffolk and have held local public meetings. These are shown in the interactive map of NSIPs, above, and include EcoPower around Yaxley/ Mellis/Eye around 1500 acres) and Regenerat8 which is a 208-acre solar site at Stone Cottages east of Botesdale, west of Wortham. It is noted that the White Elm solar farm promoted by Elmya near Mendlesham has been withdrawn indefinitely, reportedly linked to grid connection difficulties. Consultation events have been cancelled.

**National Grid Pylon Scheme** – For current information refer to [Norwich to Tilbury Frequently asked questions | National Grid ET](#)

The County Council's position is as follows: *"We are bitterly disappointed that pylons are still the go-to solution for this project, and particularly those cutting across the Waveney Valley's valued landscape, rather than going underground, or ideally offshore. We still firmly contend that less damaging alternatives to the project have not been properly considered.*

Information is available on – [nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury](https://nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury)

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