

## Parish Report – November 2023

### Councillor Annette Dunning

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### Shaping the future of Library Services Suffolk County Council's library consultation process

County Council has launched a public consultation encouraging Suffolk Residents to tell the council what they want from their library services in the future.

This is part of the Suffolk County Council's process to shape the future of the library service, which is their statutory responsibility, and is not a consultation on how Suffolk Libraries has run the service over the past 12 years.

**I would strongly encourage everyone to take part and give your honest views. The role of Friends' groups and volunteers is integral to the running of Suffolk Libraries and everyone should have a views on the future, it is important. You can have your say by visiting [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation)**

As many of you will be aware, Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk Libraries comes to an end on 31st May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The 13-week consultation will be followed by a competitive tender process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

A key focus of the consultation will also be the council's library outreach services, which include our mobile libraries, pop-up libraries and Home Library Service.

The mobile library vehicles are coming to the end of their life and the council therefore needs to consider the best way to deliver these services to people in rural areas of the county going forward.

The consultation is made up of two parts. Part, one gives residents an opportunity to tell the council what they value in their library service and what they would like to see more of in the future. Part two seeks views on how library outreach services could be run in the future.

The consultation is open until Friday 26 January 2024.

### Dentaid

Dentaid is a Dental Charity that has seven mobile dental units and a static dental trailer. Their vehicles travel the country visiting communities with dental professionals providing dental treatment and oral health advice. The Charity received funding for 7 clinics in this Suffolk area to provide emergency dental treatment for hard-to-reach communities and people experiencing difficulties.

Halesworth held a surgery outside the Apollo youth centre on 1<sup>st</sup> November and they were able to see 20 patients. Attendees came from Halesworth and the surrounding villages and all were so very grateful to be seen. Having spoken to the dentist who gave their time, they say they will have further discussions with me to see if they can hold regular emergency drop in facilities for those in the greatest need in our communities and I will report back at a later stage.

### LionLink (formerly known as EuroLink) and SeaLink

SCC has released a statement voicing concerns for LionLink's impact on the Suffolk coastline, with the proposed norther landing points at Southwold and Walberswick which they feel is wholly unacceptable and states that the project should be considered and examined jointly with the Sea Link project, providing more coordination with other projects.

The energy project could see considerable impacts on Suffolk's coastal communities and natural environment. Plans would see the project coming onshore near Southwold and Walberswick, with a cable route affecting Southwold and Reydon. This would affect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest. The LionLink project aims to connect multiple offshore wind farms in the North Sea, instead of individual wind farms connecting one-by-one to the shore. The project is a joint venture between the UK and the Netherlands, supplying energy to both countries. However, during the presentation to SCC it was only mentioned that LionLink would be a multi-purpose connector, designed to transport offshore wind from The Netherlands via sub-sea interconnectors to the UK. It did not mention production of electricity from onshore Netherlands which currently would include fossil fuel produced electricity as well as the abundant Solar energy.

The Netherlands has a continued reliance of fossil-fuel produced electricity and at the request of the Dutch Government, the OECD and the IEA had helped to facilitate a national review of fossil-fuel subsidies. It showed that the Government support for fossil fuel extends beyond measures provided through lower taxation on energy use and it was said that production from the Groningen natural gas field would be phased out by mid-2022, but there was an increase in the investment allowance from 25% to 40% which was granted to promote production from other fields. To my knowledge the Groningen field is still producing and some exemptions to energy taxation and lower rates may result in higher consumption of fossil fuels, the Dutch still remain heavily reliant on fossil fuels presently as it has a concentration of energy and emission intensive industries.

We need to understand that the impact of LionLink on our local communities, businesses and the natural environment would be substantial and aiming to bring the project onshore at Southwold or Walberswick is unacceptable. It is far too close to homes and the road infrastructure, which is already difficult within this tourist destination, could not accept the disruption of the crisscrossing of the A12.

Sea Link is a proposal for a new 2 gigawatt subsea high voltage direct current electricity connection developed by National Grid Electricity Transmission. It is approximately 140km in length and predominately offshore.

A statutory consultation opened to the public on 24 October, and closes on 18 December 2023.

Plans for Sea Link include:

- a connection from the existing transmission network via the consented, but as yet unbuilt, Friston Substation
- landfall on the Suffolk coast between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness
- a 2 GW high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station up to 26 metres high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection & railings for walkways) near Saxmundham
- a high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cable of approximately 1.7 km in length between the proposed Friston Substation and the proposed converter station.
- 10 km of HVDC underground cable between Saxmundham, and a transition joint bay (TJB) approximately 900 m inshore from a landfall point between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness

The impact of the Sea Link proposals on local communities should not be underestimated, it would see miles of underground cabling, landfall on our coastline and a large converter station built near Saxmundham, which would be taller than the iconic House in the Clouds in nearby Thorpeness.

There isn't any integration with all the other similar projects – LionLink, Sea Link and Nautilus are all being addressed in isolation, despite all originating from National Grid. Whilst you may wish to support these ambitions to improve the country's energy security, it is important to understand the lack of coordination across these different projects.

It has been made clear by the constituents in this area that they absolutely cannot understand why onshore connections are not being placed on Brownfield sites closer to London, such as the Isle of Grain in Kent, or Bradwell in Essex... not the Suffolk Coast.

This area on the East Suffolk Coast is an AONB and we rely heavily on tourism, which supports so many with their employment. The encroaching industrialisation is an extreme worry, especially with multiple projects being discussed.

It is noted that there is great disappointment that there was no opportunity for residents 'the other side' of the A12 to be respectfully offered the same chances to see all consultation documentation by National Grid..

### **Supporting Suffolk Farmers**

The SCC council meeting on Thursday 19 October saw councillors vote to approve a motion supporting local farmers and food producers by ensuring that local meat and dairy, as well as plant-based produce, is served at council events. The council's facilities and catering arm, Vertas, has a 68% spend with Suffolk suppliers and 86% with regional suppliers. To tackle the county's environmental priorities and boost the local economy, the council also pledged to encourage Suffolk residents to buy local produce and shop locally wherever possible.

### **Walking and Bridleway Access**

At SCC Cabinet on Tuesday 10 October, members of the Suffolk Local Access Forum joined the meeting to provide their annual report, which included the work they are doing to improve and maintain footways and access around the county, particularly with Network Rail and National Highways to make sure that new developments take foot traffic and walkers into account. They are keen for the council to promote the East Anglian sections of the newly named King Charles III England Coast Path. The forum also expressed concern about the significant large-scale energy infrastructure projects planned for the county and could impact on Suffolk residents' enjoyment of the green access network and impact on the county's natural environment.

### **Suffolk Pharmacies**

On 11 October, councillors from my GLI group attended Health Scrutiny which was looking at the service provided by pharmacies in Suffolk and the challenges they face with funding, staff recruitment, medicine shortages and pharmacies closing. Representatives from the NHS, Suffolk GPs and the Suffolk Pharmaceutical Committee joined the meeting and recommendations were made to write to minister about funding, and work with local schools and the University of Suffolk to promote pharmacy as a career path. It was noted that in order to provide extra services (such as blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests and asthma advice) which take pressure off GP surgeries, more space and consulting rooms would be required than Suffolk pharmacies currently had available.

### **Budget Consultation**

Suffolk County Council is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities as it decides how it will spend money next year and has launched an online consultation to give Suffolk residents a say in budget setting for the financial year 2024-25. There will also be a number of focus groups to explain the council's current financial situation, along with the chance for Suffolk residents and businesses to have a say on Council Tax proposals.

There are three key questions, the first is on which services people have recently used, the second asks for thoughts on seeking a greater contribution to Council Tax to help fund public services, and the third on which service area you would like to see more money spent. The online survey can be found at the link below – please give us your views! [http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget24\\_25/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget24_25/)

### **Storm Babet and Ciarán Flooding**

I would like to extend my thanks to those of you around the division who helped other residents whose homes and travel were affected by the rains and flooding that struck Suffolk. The way the emergency services, volunteers, farmers and local communities worked together to help children get home from school, move people to safety and protect buildings from flooding was truly inspirational.

If you have been affected by either of the storms or the recent flooding, please use link below for SCC support and advice: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

## **1. Reporting Flood Damage to properties or businesses.**

Residents or businesses who have experienced flood related damage are being asked to report this online via the Highways Reporting Tool, available on our website here: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/ReportFlood](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ReportFlood).

### **How to use the Reporting Tool:**

Click on **Report It**, then click **Drainage and Flooding** and select the most appropriate drop-down option. Please include as much information as you have, there is also an option to upload photos.

### **What if I can't report online?**

A family member/friend could report online on your behalf, or if you do not have access to the internet, you should call the SCC customer service number: 0345 606 6171.

## **2. Government Support.**

On 25th October, the Government announced funding to help communities recover from the impact of the storms

- Flooded households in affected areas can apply for up to £500 to give cash quickly to help with immediate costs.
- Households and businesses significantly affected by recent flooding will be eligible for 100% council tax and business rates relief for at least three months.
- Small-to-medium sized businesses in affected areas will be eligible for up to £2,500 from the Business Recovery Grant to help them return quickly to business as usual.
- Eligible flood-hit property owners will be able to apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding via the Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme.

### **Eligibility**

The support will be made available through a scheme known as the Flood Recovery Framework, You can read more on the GOV.uk website.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-support-for-flood-hit-areas](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-support-for-flood-hit-areas)

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**Website** - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](http://suffolkgli.wordpress.com)

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>