

May 2025

Below you will note the concerns that SCC have regarding the removal of the requirement for energy developers to consult with local residents. I would urge you to also write to the government and to your MP to express your concerns without delay.

It came as no surprise that the planning inspectorate accepted the Sea Link application. It is important that we all work together to achieve the best outcome for all concerned. Please register for updates and be ready to send in your relevant representations when appropriate. However, the window for registering etc will be short.

Please also keep yourselves up to date with the Sizewell C works tracker and the Tec Register.

https://www.neso.energy/data-portal/transmission-entry-capacity-tec-register/tec_register_-_25_april_2025

Many thanks

TJ

Obituary for Councillor Robert Everitt

It is with deep sadness that we announce the untimely passing of our esteemed colleague and friend, Councillor Robert Everitt, last the weekend.

Robert's dedication to public service and his unwavering commitment to his community spanned more than four decades, beginning in 1981 as a parish councillor in Wickhambrook. His guiding principle was clear from the outset: "you only get out of life what you put in." Robert certainly embodied this belief, continually giving his all for the people of Suffolk.

Throughout his career, Robert held various significant positions, including Mayor of St Edmundsbury Borough Council and several cabinet member roles at West Suffolk Council, with a focus on Families and Communities. More recently, he became a County Councillor in 2017 and served as Chairman in 2022. He executed every responsibility with warmth, dignity, and purpose.

Robert had a remarkable gift for connecting with people—residents, colleagues, and individuals close to his heart. He ardently advocated for numerous causes, from fostering a love of reading among young people to championing those with hearing impairments and supporting children with dyslexia.

We will deeply miss Robert's calm wisdom, his kindness, tireless spirit, and his unfailing good humour.

On behalf of the Council, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Robert's wife, Diane, their family and loved ones during this very difficult time.

Infrastructure reform could silence Suffolk's communities in 'energy onslaught'

Suffolk County Council has serious concerns about proposed reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, as announced by government (Wednesday 23 April).

It is part of plans to cut by a year, the delivery of clean energy projects, public transport links, and other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

This has potential for a significant impact on Suffolk's communities who are at the forefront of many NSIPs including solar farms, offshore energy and nuclear.

Our communities need more and better consultation - not less. These proposed changes claim to recognise community voices, but I fail to see how removing consultation can help make residents feel more involved.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

Instead, there will be statutory guidance for developers with an expectation that consultation and engagement will still take place, prior to submitting an application.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

"These proposals to remove the duty on energy developers to consult with councils and local communities, are staggeringly tone deaf.

"Our communities need more and better consultation - not less. If the Secretary of State wants more opposition from local people to his decarbonisation targets, this is precisely the way to do it.

"For countless NSIPs past and present in Suffolk, local communities are rarely given the consideration and respect they deserve. These proposed changes claim to recognise community voices, but I fail to see how removing consultation can help make residents feel more involved.

"The minister may claim that these reforms will stop communities 'feeling fatigued and confused' with technical documents. However, I suspect these feelings are likely to be replaced with ones of anger and being ignored.

"Project proposers for large scale solar farms and the like, will be rubbing their hands together knowing that they can bypass community engagement completely and go straight to submitting their application. Engagement and consultation takes time and costs money, and given the amateurish approach we are already seeing from solar developers in the county it is highly unlikely that they will be willing to do this.

"Staggeringly, even if a developer chooses to undertake a voluntary consultation, the government is also proposing removing the duty to listen to what has been said.

"To publish such a radical amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill just 24 hours before oral evidence was to be heard, has given no time for proper public scrutiny. It is an act of cowardice and only serves to further undermine public faith in the planning process.

“Our county is facing an energy project onslaught. I have previously described Suffolk’s NSIP landscape as the Wild West – these proposed reforms sadly just reinforce my view.”

Suffolk County Council will be submitting written evidence to the Bill Committee outlining its concerns and opposition to the proposed changes.

Suffolk needs smart solar, not speedy schemes

Since the new government took power in July of last year, we have seen a stampede of project promoters looking to locate their solar farms in our part of East Anglia.

The driver for this is the desire of the Secretary of State, Ed Miliband, to decarbonise our electricity generation by 2030, rather than the previous target of 2035.

Unfortunately, when it comes to large-scale solar projects in Suffolk, the pre-disposition for private companies to install solar, is across our rural landscape.

At Suffolk County Council, we’re adamant that while solar has a role to play in our energy generation, installations should be rooftop-before-rural. And schemes certainly should not remove any quality agricultural land that is suitable for food production. Yes, our energy security is important to protect, but so is our food security, which should not be put at risk either.

As a council, we also have the highest possible expectations that any solar developer fully rules out any possible links to forced labour in China or elsewhere in the world. Delivering energy security to our nation is vital but it simply must not be done on the back of slavery. It was disappointing, therefore, to see Suffolk’s Labour MPs recently vote against a House of Lords amendment to Great British Energy Bill that would have prevented taxpayers’ money being spent on solar panels manufactured by forced Labour in China.

Anyone who has read my previous thoughts on solar projects touted for Suffolk, will know the debacle that surrounded the now-granted Sunnica solar farm spanning the Suffolk/Cambridgeshire border.

We are now faced with the risk of similarly misplaced and misjudged proposal in the north of Suffolk. The EcoPower 250-megawatt solar farm and battery energy storage project proposes over 1,500 acres over coverage at multiple sites in the parishes of Occold, Eye, Brome and Oakley, Stuston, Thrandeston, Mellis, Burgate, Thornham Parva, Gislingham and Yaxley.

It is already showing the hallmarks of causing irreversible damage to local communities, even although it has not been built. I’ve met local residents who have seen the value of their properties fall overnight, even one who was in the process of selling her house, only to be told by her estate agent that a sale is now unlikely following the launch of the EcoPower project.

Irrespective of the eyesores, construction disruption, damage to local ecology – which are all profoundly serious – the impact that these projects have on local communities can be devastating. Local people should be front and centre when companies put forward these schemes, but sadly they rarely are and I’ve seen little in the way of mitigations from EcoPower.

The EcoPower proposal will only have two rounds of consultation. It is clearly being rushed through as quickly as the planning process will allow. There is no time for residents and businesses to understand the effects of the project and make meaningful representations.

This hurried process also adds pressure on the county council, as it has required significant additional resources and staff to manage – our objection was a 142-page document, something which doesn't just happen overnight. And this is on top of the other energy projects and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that we are already dealing with.

Why this breakneck speed from the project promoter? As I mentioned in my opening lines, I believe it is influenced by the government's unrealistic obsession to decarbonise our electricity supply by 2030. They must slow down to allow for proper planning, coordination of energy projects, and fair treatment of communities.

So what is our solution?

Our communities simply must come first. We must prioritise brownfield sites and protect good agricultural land from vast solar schemes, like EcoPower. There is a role for solar on rooftops and along infrastructure corridors but not on prime agricultural land which is vital for food production.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs. (opinion piece)

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched today (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

Suffolk has pockets of diverse nature and unique landscapes, and this strategy will help link together those isolated areas that need improving and restoring.

This has been coordination with Norfolk, through the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#). The two counties are working together to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and connect across the landscape.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

"Last summer, over 1,500 Suffolk residents shared their thoughts on how we can all help Suffolk's nature recover, to help us put together this draft strategy for Suffolk.

"Having now drafted that strategy, we're keen to involve our residents and communities across Suffolk by receiving their own insights, so that we can amend as necessary and approve a final strategy later this year.

"Suffolk has pockets of diverse nature and unique landscapes, and this strategy will help link together those isolated areas that need improving and restoring. It will support landowners, land managers and farmers to work together for the benefit of the county's natural environment.

"It is a project which will not only benefit flora and fauna, but us as Suffolk residents - we can mitigate the risks to homes and businesses against inland flooding, create new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and support farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities."

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community.

There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken.

Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

Best wishes

TJ



My letter to our MP:

Dear Jenny Riddell-Carpenter,

I am writing to you to express my concern for Town and Parish councils and residents within my division to express my strong opposition to the Government's proposed abolition of sections S42 and S49 of the Planning Act. These sections are essential for maintaining the voices of our communities in the process, and their removal would significantly undermine local input and oversight in developmental matters.

It is crucial that the voices of our residents, landowners, businesses, and community members are not stifled. The involvement of the local community in planning decisions ensures that development meets the needs and aspirations of those most affected by it. Removing these sections would not only diminish transparency but also erode public trust in the planning system.

I urge you to reject these proposals and advocate for the continued importance of community involvement in NSIP decisions. Your support in preserving these vital sections of the Planning Act is essential for maintaining the integrity of this planning process and ensuring that the voices of our constituents are heard and respected.

Additionally, as you are aware, the Planning Inspectorate has recently accepted an application by NGET for examination for an order granting development consent for SEA LINK. While it is not surprising, given the Planning Inspectorate's history of accepting applications in this area, it underscores the need for us to work collaboratively to ensure that our community's interests are safeguarded.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your support in rejecting these proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr TJ Haworth-Culf.

Suffolk County Cllr for Aldeburgh and Leiston Division.