

Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council – 30 November 2023

District Councillor Report

Grants

Applications for Pride in Place grants are now open. Applications must be in by end January. Significant funds are available for the support of new or developing community projects, and for capital projects of up to £25,000. Further details can be found on the South Norfolk Council (SNC) website.

Members Ward Grants of up to £1,000 are available for community organisations needing a small amount of financial help. Any organisation interested should approach one of the councillors listed below.

National Grid – Proposed Norwich Mian Substation Extension

Your councillors attended the initial consultation meetings at Swardeston and Stoke Holy Cross. Little information was available at this stage. A planning application will be made in 2024 and construction would take around 2 years starting in 2025. The development will enable power from the 3 offshore wind farms into the National Grid infrastructure. The online consultation is open until 8th December 2023.

Greater Norwich Plan – Village Clusters

SNC will be re-consulting on the housing allocations for the village clusters – probably starting before Xmas for an extended 8 week period. There are no new sites in Stoke Holy Cross, according to draft papers.

Planning Application – Additional Extraction System at Mill Road, Fish and Chip Shop (2023/2967)

This controversial application is likely to be considered at the Development Management Committee on 13 December 2023.

A140 North of Long Stratton Workshop

Jim Webber attended an online workshop organised by the County Council. Most contributors were from Parish Council's bordering the A140. Congestion, economic growth and business needs, housing delivery and connectivity including sustainable transport were discussed. A report will be available in the new year.

Nutrient Neutrality

Norfolk Environmental Credits (a JV company formed by local councils) expects to shortly start selling "credits" to developers to offset the impact of new housing on nutrient levels. The EDP has featured several stories which explain the rationale for the local pig farm scheme.

Vehicle-Related Public Spaces Protection Order

SNC Cabinet has endorsed the proposed PSPO including an extension to 7 days a week. Following approval by Council, it is expected to come into force in early 2024.

Sale of Long Stratton Building

The decision to sell South Norfolk House to the preferred bidder was agreed at a Council meeting on 7 November. The EDP reported that the decision to sell to Big Sky, a subsidiary of the Council, was reached only after the chairman used his casting vote. The bidder plans to demolish South Norfolk House and build c50 new bungalows.

'Norwich to Tilbury' Update

A report commissioned by the County Councils of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk has found that the 2030 target date for new transmission as cited by National Grid is not required. The current grid can cope until 2035 or later. There is therefore more time to consider alternative options to the proposed pylons.

In the recent Autumn Statement, the Government announced the new 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) infrastructure policy and stated that communities near new pylons are likely to be offered discounts on their bills. CNP is a kind of fast-track planning category for wind farms and associated infrastructure but it's not completely clear whether this will include the Norwich to Tilbury project.

A recent email from the Pylons East Anglia pressure group is copied below.

30 November 2023

Councillor Contact Details:

	Email	Telephone
Cllr. Jim Webber	jim.webber@southnorfolkandbraodland.gov.uk	07394 323215
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Email From Pylons East Anglia pressure group (<https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk>)

Urgent reconsideration of Autumn Statement's Critical National Priority infrastructure and community benefits . 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) policy and the 'community benefits' scheme, likely to be announced in the Autumn Statement, present legal and environmental risks. We urge you to consider the following crucial points:

Lack of transparency in consultation responses. The non-disclosure of the relevant consultation responses undermines the legitimacy of the CNP policy. It ignores widespread regional opposition, including comprehensive feedback from our campaign, from residents, community representatives, academics, and council officers, and raises serious legal concerns relating to the Gunning Principles. This opacity suggests a disregard for community voices and a potential breach of legal protocol.

Flawed CNP approach. The CNP simply magnifies and exacerbates the current fragmented, costly approach to grid development, potentially leading to an unnecessary £6 billion expense. Conversely, an integrated offshore grid solution enjoys widespread public support, as evidenced by a 27,000-signature petition, and statements from regional MPs, councils, and other statutory bodies.

Moreover, the CNP's approach significantly harms environmental habitats, including the proposed UNESCO East Atlantic Flyway Natural World Heritage Site and many priority habitats. This contradicts the Environmental Principles National Policy Statement which requires policy makers to avoid harm.

The CNP ignores a number of studies, not least the National Grid ESO's own report which set out the harms of the piecemeal approach and, significantly, the many benefits of an integrated approach.

Community Benefits – a misguided approach. The community benefits under the current proposal are wholly inadequate and trivialise the substantial losses faced by homeowners and businesses. These benefits cannot and will not substitute for true comprehensive compensation and are perceived as a nothing more than a "Band-Aid" to cover-up deeper infrastructural and environmental issues.

The alternative. An Integrated offshore grid – faster, better, and cheaper. We propose an integrated offshore grid as a superior alternative. This approach aligns with the government's environmental commitments, saves £6 billion nationally, and enjoys broad public and political support. It represents a sustainable, economically sound, and environmentally responsible path forward. We urge you to pivot towards this internationally recognised (and implemented), solution in the Autumn Statement. Choosing the integrated offshore grid will signal the UK's commitment to responsible energy infrastructure development, attracting wind farm developers and benefiting the environment, local communities, and the taxpayer.

We hope for your thoughtful consideration of these pressing issues.