

Date: 30/3/22

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COVID-19

Latest SCC information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Latest Government advice is available here: www.gov.uk/coronavirushave

International Women's Month, and Day 2022 – #BreaktheBias

In March, we celebrated International Women's Month 2022. This is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing achievements of women and push further for equality around the world. This year's theme revolved around breaking the bias, focussing on a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination.

Our group was immensely supportive of this celebration. Suffolk GLI's Spokesperson for Women, Cllr Caroline Page, called for the flag for Women's History Month to be flown high next year at Endeavour House. Suffolk County Council agreed this was an important step forward.

Celebrate women's achievement. Raise awareness against bias. Take action for equality.

Cabinet 1st March

The Cabinet met to vote on the disapproval of the current plans by Sunnica to build the country's largest solar farm in Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire. Suffolk County Council have asked the Government to reject the plans in its current form, arguing the application fails to properly mitigate the impacts of such a large project.

In addition, the Cabinet voted on approving the National Grid's project to scale up its energy infrastructure from Bramford to Twinstead, as part of the Government's Net-Zero plan to increase low-carbon energy in the UK. Our Group, while we approve of the increased capacity for low-carbon energy, argue that this rush into large projects is a result of decades of inaction from Government. This means it is now a lot harder to develop a coordinated plan with regards to energy supply, disruption, and sufficient mitigation.

Both were voted for by the Cabinet unanimously.

Full Council 24th March

Full Council presented a rare opportunity of solidarity between Councillors, as our Group and the Conservatives shared a single motion in support of Ukraine. Our Group recommended a motion condemning the actions of the Russian government, as well as commitment to supporting and welcoming refugees as they become a part of our Suffolk communities. The Conservatives supported our idea and together we showed how politics can be put aside through difficult times.

Cabinet 29th March

The Cabinet met to vote on a plan to establish 'Freeport East'. This is part of a national strategy to create freeports across the country, in an attempt to generate economic activity through tax incentives. Felixstowe Port, Harwich Port, and Stowmarket's 'Gateway 14' Business Park are set to become part of Freeport East. Our Group is very concerned about this project, as foreign direct investment is being prioritised over local businesses, many of which will now not be able to compete with the foreign businesses receiving tax relief. This will effectively be an 'Onshore Tax Haven' that will benefit big business rather than local people.

The project poses many other issues, such as increase in corruption and money laundering, a lack of clear strategy towards net-zero, and a risk of high-skilled jobs being imported, excluding the Suffolk workforce.

The Cabinet also voted on the Enhanced Partnership between SCC and bus operators, in line with the new 'Bus Back Better' strategy, aimed at improving services across Suffolk. The improvement plan was voted for in October 2021, and this partnership outlines how the various stakeholders will interact with one another during the implementation of the improvement plan. Our Group have concerns on the Government's promise of funding, as no funding has yet been confirmed by the Department for Transport and it looks as if the promises to fund electric buses have already been removed.

Roadworks on A12 and diversions on A137

I attended a presentation by National Highways (who are responsible for the major routes).

They are planning roadworks to replace barriers and resurface A12 between Colchester and Dedham and one of the diversions planned is the A137 from Colchester to Wherstead which will have a major impact on my Division. They assure me these will be night-time roadworks only and will avoid weekends and bank holidays.

Southbound roadworks are planned 4-8 April; 8-15 July; 21 July to 25 Aug

Northbound roadworks are planned 11-14 April; 26 June to 8 July; 15-21 July; 25 Aug – 2 September

Both north and southbound: 19/4/22-26/4/22

I have emphasised the existing problems of congestion on A137 and unsuitability as a route for heavy traffic and also conveyed the complaints I have had about the recent very poor signage about roadworks at Junction 56 of A14 (Wherstead) and they have promised to improve communications and signage. They also promise that the diversions will not take place at the same time as the junction slipway closures at J56 of A14 as that will clearly lead to even more problems for drivers.

Please let me know if there are any more concerns about these works, or you can contact National Highways Customer Contact Centre:

National Highways Contact Details:

Email: info@nationalhighways.co.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 5000

Website: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-work/east/>

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

Simon Harley

Suffolk County Councillor for Peninsula Division