

November–December 2025

Parish Report - Ind Councillor Julia Ewart

**Kelsale & Yoxford Ward
East Suffolk Council**

East Suffolk Council Local Impact Report

On 18 November, East Suffolk Council submitted its Local Impact Report to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the Sea Link examination. The full report can be accessed here: [*EN020026-001182-East Suffolk Council - Local Impact Report - 18.11.25.pdf*](#)

This report builds on the council's earlier Relevant Representation (June submission) and reflects input from external legal counsel, as well as concerns raised by Parish and Town Councils invited to contribute.

East Suffolk Council Position & Response – Sealink

East Suffolk Council continues to object to the Sea Link project. Objections focused on:

- Poor engagement by the developer.
- Questionable need case for the development.
- Premature consent given current circumstances.

The original justification for Sea Link was based on transporting surplus electricity from Suffolk, generated by Sizewell C or imported via undersea interconnectors Lion Link (Netherlands) and Nautilus (Belgium).

However:

- Nautilus will no longer land in Suffolk.
- Lion Link is not yet consented.
- Sizewell C is at least 10–12 years from operation.

This timeline allows for alternative solutions to be explored. We have reiterated our call for government to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of all coordination options, including enhanced offshore coordination.

I made a personal response also, bringing up the fact that little was going to be gained from the 'build' if allowed and that more benefits must be achieved.

Concerns About Coordination

ESC believe the developer has adopted a light-touch approach to consultation, missing opportunities for genuine coordination—even with projects under its own umbrella company, National Grid.

Example:

- NGET selected the Saxmundham converter station site for co-location with NGV Lion Link.
- However, Sea Link has not aligned construction timelines with Lion Link and will not share cable ducts, increasing land use and construction impacts.
- This is co-location, not coordination.

The lack of coordination between NGET and NGV—despite shared ownership—ignores the cumulative damage these projects will cause locally. True coordination would:

- Reduce burdens on communities and consultees.
- Enable robust consideration of design and cumulative impacts.

Environmental and Community Impacts

Key concerns include:

- **Landfall site** between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness:
 - Impact on tourism and recreation
 - Cable route crosses ecologically sensitive areas (Leiston–Aldeburgh SSSI, North Warren RSPB reserve) and up to Saxmundham impacting villages locally whilst impacting peripheral villages
 - Technical risks that may impact agriculture and land use
- **Friston and Sax substation sites:**
 - Potential for previously agreed mitigation (Scottish Power) to be compromised by Sea Link cable routes.
- **Mental health impacts:**
 - NGET’s proposal for seven-day construction weeks.
 - Stress from multiple consultations and cumulative impacts of successive major projects.

An independent survey commissioned by Cllr Whitelock found:

- 57% of residents in affected postcodes feel energy projects negatively impact mental wellbeing.
 - Common themes:
 - Poor communication from NSIP developers.
 - Loss of habitats and green spaces.
 - Financial insecurity and housing concerns.
 - Increased anxiety and stress.
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Ongoing Advocacy

ESC continue to lobby government for a strategic approach to energy generation along the Suffolk coast.

Recent ministerial engagement includes:

- Andrew Bowie
- Lord Hunt
- Lord Vallance (see previous notes below)

The County Challenge –The Power Projects – A more detailed explanation

In November, East Suffolk Council submitted its Local Impact Report to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the ongoing examination of the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) Sea Link project. This submission, made on 18 November, builds upon the council's earlier Relevant Representation provided in June and incorporates legal advice from external counsel alongside feedback gathered from Parish and Town Councils across the district. The full report is available online for public access.

The Local Impact Report sets out the council's position clearly: they remain firmly opposed to the Sea Link project. Their objections are rooted in concerns about the developer's inadequate engagement with affected communities and stakeholders, as well as serious questions regarding the necessity of the development at this stage. They argue that granting consent for Sea Link would be premature. The original justification for the project was based on the need to transport surplus electricity generated by Sizewell C or imported via undersea interconnectors such as Lion Link (Netherlands) and Nautilus (Belgium). However, circumstances have changed significantly. Nautilus will no longer make landfall in Suffolk, Lion Link has yet to receive consent, and Sizewell C is at least a decade away from becoming operational. These facts provide ample time to explore alternative solutions. For this reason, the council has reiterated its call for the government to undertake a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of all available options, including greater offshore coordination. It is hoped that a new Minister for Nuclear energy will appreciate these challenges faced.

The council is deeply concerned that the developer has adopted a superficial approach to consultation, missing genuine opportunities for coordination with other projects—even those under the same corporate umbrella. For example, NGET selected the Saxmundham converter station site on the basis that it could co-locate with NGV's Lion Link converter station. However, Sea Link has failed to align its construction timeline with Lion Link, which is currently 12 to 18 months behind schedule, and will not share cable ducts. This decision will result in additional land being required and greater construction impacts. In the council's view, this is not meaningful coordination but mere co-location. The fact that NGET has sought to distance itself from NGV, despite both being owned by the same parent company, is deeply disappointing. True coordination would reduce the burden on local communities and statutory consultees, while enabling a robust assessment of design and cumulative impacts.

Environmental and community impacts remain a major concern. At the proposed landfall site between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness, the council has highlighted the potential disruption to tourism and recreational activities caused by the closure of Thorpe Road during construction. The chosen cable route crosses areas of high ecological sensitivity, including the Leiston–Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the North Warren RSPB reserve. Even with trenchless techniques such as Horizontal Directional Drilling, risks such as frack-out and habitat disturbance persist. At the Friston substation site, the council has raised alarms about the possibility that mitigation measures previously agreed for Scottish Power's substation could be undermined by Sea Link's cable routes.

Beyond environmental concerns, the council has drawn attention to the cumulative impact of successive major infrastructure projects on local communities. NGET's proposal for a seven-day construction schedule is unacceptable, and the strain caused by multiple overlapping consultations has been significant. Residents face prolonged disruption, uncertainty, and stress. An independent survey commissioned by ward councillors into the emotional wellbeing of residents in affected postcodes revealed that 57% of respondents believe local energy projects are a barrier to their mental health. Common themes included poor communication from developers, loss of habitats and green spaces, financial insecurity, and heightened anxiety about housing and environmental impacts.

East Suffolk Council continues to lobby government for a more strategic approach to energy generation along the Suffolk coastline. They have engaged with ministers including Andrew Bowie, Lord Hunt, and most recently Lord Vallance, urging them to visit the ward and reconsider the current fragmented approach to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Their goal is to secure better coordination, stronger mitigation measures, and fairer representation for residents.

The press release from ESC with respect to the meeting mentioned with the minister is as follows:

Council urges Government to improve coordination of major infrastructure projects during ministerial visit

Posted on 5 January 2026

During a recent ministerial visit to the district, East Suffolk Council has urged the Government to improve coordination and strategic oversight of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

On Thursday 18 December, Lord Vallance, Minister for Nuclear at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, visited Sizewell C. The Council's Deputy Leader Cllr Paul Ashton and cabinet member for Energy and Climate Change Cllr Tom Daly met with the Minister, alongside the MP for Suffolk Coastal Jenny Riddell-Carpenter. During discussions, the Council pressed its concerns about the lack of coordination across multiple NSIPs affecting East Suffolk and emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum on the social and environmental mitigations secured as part of the Sizewell C project.

East Suffolk continues to play a significant role in the nation's progress towards Net Zero, with several NSIPs already planned or under construction across the district and heritage coast. These include the Sizewell C new nuclear project, alongside other large-scale energy and infrastructure schemes, including the Sea Link grid reinforcement project currently in examination with the Planning Inspectorate. However, the concentration of these projects, many with overlapping construction periods in the same geographical areas, poses the risk of substantial cumulative impacts on local communities, the environment, the district's tourism economy, and essential services.

The Council has for years consistently raised these concerns with central government, stressing the need for a more joined up approach to infrastructure consenting. It has repeatedly called for a comprehensive cost benefit analysis of all available options or, at minimum, a Government led requirement for developers to work collaboratively to minimise harm to host communities.

During the meeting, the Council reiterated its commitment to constructive engagement with Government and developers but warned that the current system risks undermining community confidence and the deliverability of national infrastructure ambitions. The Council also reinforced its expectation that all NSIP developers must deliver the environmental mitigation and community benefits they have committed to, ensuring these measures provide meaningful and lasting value for local communities and environments.

Cllr Daly said:

“East Suffolk plays a vital role in supporting the nation’s energy and infrastructure ambitions. However, the sheer volume of major projects proposed for our district means we are facing unprecedented pressures. Whilst project benefits are on a national scale, the impacts are localised within our district. We need Government to take a more coordinated, strategic approach so that these projects can be delivered in a way that is fair to our communities and environment, and sustainable for the future. It is essential that the developers of these nationally significant projects not only make commitments but follow through on them, particularly when it comes to environmental mitigation and community benefits.”

In October, the Leader of East Suffolk Council, Cllr Caroline Topping, wrote to the Minister reiterating these concerns and invited him to visit the district to see firsthand the close proximity of the proposed NSIPs and the challenges faced by local communities.

East Suffolk Council will continue to advocate for improved coordination and collaboration between projects and developers and will keep pressing for communities affected by nationally important infrastructure to receive appropriate benefits for hosting them.

Local Government Reorganisation – Have Your Say

Two proposals are still being considered in Whitehall for Suffolk’s future local government structure:

- Three Councils for Suffolk – proposed by district and borough councils. This would replace the current six councils with three unitary authorities, each responsible for all local services.
- One Suffolk – proposed by Suffolk County Council, creating a single unitary authority for the entire county.

East Suffolk Council continues to make the case for the Three Councils proposal, explaining why they believe this option best serves Suffolk’s communities. They are also encouraging residents to take part in the consultation process.

To ensure the widest possible engagement, East Suffolk Council has produced leaflets and postcards outlining the consultation details and the reasoning behind the Three Councils proposal. Copies of the full proposal will also be available in libraries across the county.

Residents are urged to share their views by visiting:
Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk and Suffolk – GOV.UK
The consultation closes on 11 January 2026, with the Secretary of State expected to announce a decision in March 2026.

If approved, new councils would be in place from April 2028.

The current district council elections should be in 2027 and the County were in fact due last year. Nobody currently knows when elections will be called but what I would personally say is that being operative and efficient as your council services remains the key objective, so perhaps its best to wait for elections and to know the plan before elections are next called. This is no time for novices.

Extended Free Wi-Fi Network

East Suffolk Council's free Wi-Fi network has been extended in four market towns—Aldeburgh, Halesworth, Leiston, and Saxmundham—and has proven popular with residents and visitors. Data shows a significant increase in sign-ups since the extensions:

The Economic Development Dept has expanded coverage and it now includes more shopping areas, encouraging visitors to stay longer and support local businesses.

Those with businesses will be interested to know that the Digital Towns programme also provides data on visitor numbers and patterns, helping tailor support for businesses. Visitors registering for free Wi-Fi can opt to receive a quarterly newsletter with local events and information.

Find out more, including coverage maps: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/east-suffolk-free-wi-fi

Tackling Health Inequalities – East Suffolk launches Marmot Place

A new collaborative approach to addressing health inequalities has been launched with the creation of the East Suffolk Marmot Place. Partners include East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, and NHS Integrated Care Boards.

The launch event on 27 November, 2025 featured a keynote from Sir Michael Marmot, workshops on local health data, and insights from experts tackling inequalities. Not all villages were invited but those that attended enjoyed the experience.

Health inequalities—differences in life expectancy, health conditions, and access to care—are shaped by social factors such as housing, education, and employment. Marmot Places follow eight principles, including giving every child the best start in life, creating fair employment, and tackling discrimination. Senior Council Officer Nicole Rickard is highly versed in the subject area and therefore it is wonderful that the council have been selected to be on the scheme as she applies her knowledge widely in the field of health and well being for ESC.

East Suffolk joins more than 50 areas across England, Wales, and Scotland committed to reducing health inequalities. It is hoped that funding will be sustained.

Field to Fork Fund – Final Applications Open

Community groups in East Suffolk are invited to apply for the final round of Field to Fork funding, supporting local food-growing projects.

- Grants of up to £2,000 are available for creating or improving growing spaces, purchasing tools and equipment, or hosting cooking lessons.
- Since 2023, the project has funded dozens of growing spaces, distributed 3,000 free growing kits, generated £138,000 worth of produce, and diverted 23 tonnes of CO₂.
- 86% of participants reported improved wellbeing through involvement.
- Sam Kenward Communities officer is ensuring our ward schools in Yoxford, Kelsale and Bramfield (supporting Heveningham/Huntingfield) are covered.

Applications close on Friday 16 January 2026.

Find out more and apply: [Field to Fork Community Growing Grant](#)

Residents' Magazine

The latest East Suffolk Council residents' magazine has been delivered district-wide. You will be aware it is published twice a year, it provides updates on council services and activities, helping residents access available resources.

Every household should have a copy through the door, Do say if you require one or take a look on line at [091-East-Suffolk-Magazine-December-2025.pdf](#)

Finally – as a rural ward we in Kelsale & Yoxford ward are challenged by the weather and traffic disruption. The A1120 has become very difficult for locals to navigate. I hope all those that are able to attend and represent the villages at the SZC Forums do so, I certainly am trying to keep ahead of news and likely impacts on your behalf. If you are a resident or a parish councillor please do get in touch if you need my support.

Please contact your county councillors if you have any highways issues - [Find your councillor - Suffolk County Council](#), Cllr Burroughes is for the northern villages and Cllr Smith for Yoxford and Kelsale.

Cllr Julia Ewart

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