

## **November 2024 Blyford and Sotherton Parish Council Report East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update**

### ***Nature First Funding Scheme***

East Suffolk Council has today re-launched the small grants scheme, Nature First, on behalf of the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum.

The aim of the scheme is to support the Council's environmental vision in delivering positive impacts for nature by funding projects that contribute to the enhancement of local biodiversity and/or its understanding and appreciation by the local community, as well as contributing towards the vision of the Greenprint Forum which includes the goal of an east Suffolk where "Nature's value is recognised by the majority, visitors are attracted because of it and everyone actively cares for it".

Eligible projects could include work to restore existing habitats or create new ones, provision of nesting/roosting places for birds, pollinators and other animals, or activities to help local people of any age learn more about and enjoy their local biodiversity. The scheme previously ran during 2021-2023 and a list of projects that previously received grant funding can be found here: [Nature First Small Grants Scheme » East Suffolk Council](#)

The scheme can offer small grants, typically of up to £1,000. Full details, including eligibility and how to apply, can be found here: [Nature First Small Grants Scheme » East Suffolk Council](#)

### ***Autumn Budget Reveals Better than Expected Funding for ESC***

The indication from the Autumn Budget is that funding for district councils for 2025/26 will be better than expected.

Councillor and Cabinet member for finance, Vince Langdon-Morris said "This is welcome news after the effect of many years of single year financial settlements on ESC budgets, inflationary pressures, high costs and emergency response to events like Covid and flooding. The announcement of multi-years settlement from 2026-27 and reform of the local government funding system is the stability and certainty district councils need, following a number of years of one-year settlements.

It was also pleasing to hear positive announcements around housing, including additional funding for homelessness and changes to the retention of Right to Buy receipts. This will help the council to invest in new social housing and also its existing housing stock.

It was, however, disappointing that the housing benefit subsidy cap for temporary accommodation will not be increased, or the Local Housing Allowance rate uprated in April 2025. This will mean a continuation of financial pressure for temporary accommodation costs.

Whilst the autumn Budget felt generally positive for district councils, we will need to wait for the detail in the provisional settlement to fully understand how the announcements made on Wednesday will affect us.

I'm delighted to be able to say that Cabinet, working closely with the finance team and senior management, have started formulating the 2025-26 budgets, in September 2024. This Parliamentary Budget statement dovetails well into our ongoing work to set a balanced budget in February 2025.

## ***Victory in East Suffolk as National Grid Ventures' Nautilus interconnector project set to leave***

East Suffolk Council has welcomed the news from Ofgem that National Grid Ventures' proposed Nautilus project will no longer be connecting within East Suffolk, favouring a connection at the Isle of Grain, Kent.

The news comes after the recent Ofgem Initial Project Assessment (IPA) consultation which sought community and stakeholder feedback on the proposal to relocate the UK's onshore connection for Nautilus within East Suffolk at Friston, as opposed to the recently assessed (and dismissed) Isle of Grain location.

The Nautilus project proposes a 1.4 gigawatt electricity interconnector cable due to connect Belgium with the UK, running under the North Sea. The project is cited as increasing grid connectivity and resilience between the two countries, whilst helping to meet legally binding climate change targets including net zero, also reducing electricity cost to consumers.

Cllr Tom Daly (Cabinet Member for Energy and Climate Change), is delighted with this development.

*He said: "We have been calling on Ofgem to reverse such a decision and allow Nautilus to proceed to the Isle of Grain, rather than putting short term cost advantages before all else - including exploring possible future economies in coordinating multiple projects at a brownfield site rather than peppering our heritage coast with unplanned-for industrial development. The change of heart is welcome news for East Suffolk Council and the local communities it represents.*

*"The political leadership and technical expertise within East Suffolk Council has enabled Ofgem to see sense and listen to the concerns of local people within the communities set to be impacted by such a project. It has been a long road, however it is moments like today which make it all worthwhile."*

## ***SCC 2024 Rural Transport Survey***

In case you are not aware, Suffolk County Council is currently undertaking their 2024 rural transport survey. The survey is open until 30 November. Feedback will help them shape the requirements for future rural transport services.

You can complete the survey online: [2024 rural transport survey](#)

## ***Ease the Squeeze on Cost of Living***

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living? We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/)

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk)