

Report County Councillor Dr Marie Strong

Dear Councillors

I will be attending on Wighton PC followed by Field Dalling and Saxlingham. Regrettably I may not reach you before you close the meeting so I am sending a few pieces of information. Some of the material is an update but if it seems familiar just pass on by.

Market Lane Development:

I realise the outcome was a disappointment to many, particularly regarding the number of access points on Market Lane. The NCC Officer had to explain that he was governed by regulations which had he bypassed would have been successfully challenged. It will hopefully be of some comfort that I have been assured that my request, which was read out, was accepted. Namely the construction of traffic calming/20 mph zone will be carried out. Also that there will be highway improvements in Church Street/Burnt Street and these will be constructed before occupation of the new dwellings.

Broadband:

As I have reported, once the contract with BT was completed the company commenced detailed survey work including inspecting existing infrastructure. Following which draft designs for rolling out fibre network need refining, followed by detailed phase deployment plans. Installation for each new phase is expected to begin approximately every three months. We should know by the summer when and where phase 1 will be deployed. Of course I am as keen as you to know when and where all the phases will be deployed ..... watch this space

Rural Transport:

You will have read how, along with others, I met the Minister for Transport, Norman Baker and urged him to ensure Norfolk receives full compensation for the concessionary bus passes from the Government – in order that our rural transport does not suffer. He listened, was impressed by the Coasthopper service – the customers who got on at each stop to impress on him its importance were well received! The Minister promised the matter would be under discussion but we are not there yet. The good news is that we have an additional £500,000 for rural transport ‘solutions’ to enable the development of more responsive public transport services to meet needs.

There has been good news for Brinton and Sharrington, along with Hindringham. For the first time in a goodly number of years these parishes will have a regular bus service on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. My thanks go to NCC Officers and Mr Sanders who have listened to my request for this service for four years. The Sanders 46 Circular Holt and Blakeney bus will leave Sharrington at 10.12 and Hindringham at 10.19 - timetables available on board. Travellers can then pick up the Coasthopper at Blakeney – and along to Wells if they wish or from Wells if you wish. Please let friends and family know..

And a brief update on the Blakeney Marsh saga which I know is of interest to many of you:

Blakeney Marsh

Together with support from parishes all around our division we mounted a very successful campaign. It was so successful in drawing attention to the lack of consultation and scientific research that all the reference zones were pulled from consultation. I was not content with that result since it meant the Blakeney Marsh (rRA4) could be brought back for consultation. I was successful in putting forward a motion at County that we should send a clear message to DEFRA that this marsh should never again be considered for zoning. A letter, outlining the County’s general support of conservation zones, continued with the

statement that Norfolk County Council remains deeply concerned that the most contentious recommended Reference Area at Blakeney Marsh (rRA4) may yet re-emerge and that the case for withdrawing this site has already been well made to the Minister and Defra Officials, with very clear evidence of many reasons why the site is manifestly unsuitable for designation. The letter goes on to ask for categorical assurance that the recommended Reference Area at Blakeney Marsh (rRA4) will not form part of any future designations; and that such assurance would remove a significant area of doubt and concern and demonstrate that the Government has listened to the well-reasoned case already presented by the communities.

A response will undoubtedly take considerable consideration time and may well be guarded and circumspect. But whatever the response it means that the supporters from this division do not stand alone - we have the backing of the Norfolk County Council.

Mobile 'Phones:

The large amount of money we were successful in gaining from the Government for Broadband is not available for our mobile 'phone dilemma. However the government's Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) has allocated £150m to improve mobile network services across the whole of the UK in areas defined as 'complete not spots' - where mobile signals currently do not exist. Survey work continues but as yet no exact locations have yet been released as to where any funded upgrades might happen. Norfolk is expected to benefit, but the project will be targeted at complete 'Not Spots', it will not address areas with weak signal strength. New infrastructure will be needed and planning permissions for new masts will be required - but if communities that could potentially benefit don't want it they don't have to have it. The Dept. of Culture Media and Sport is currently at the procurement stage of the project, and is seeking a national contractor to build and run the new infrastructure. Our work party meets this month to ensure we can take full advantage of whatever is on offer to benefit Norfolk. And whilst funding for other than 'not spots' is not on offer we will continue to strive seek a solution for the weak signal areas.

Norfolk County Council:

Members of the Wells Discussion Group were surprised to learn the full range of NCC's responsibilities so here they are: Transport; Environment, Fire, Rescue and Public Protection; Children's Services; Adult Social Services; Planning; Cultural and Recreational Services.

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