***Mulbarton Parish Council report 4th December 23***

* ***Grants***

Applications for Pride in Place grants have now opened and must be in by end January 2024. Grants can be made for capital projects (up to £25,000), revenue support for new activities or feasibility studies. Further details can be found on the SNC website or from one of the councillors named below. A reminder that Members Ward Grants for community organisations needing a small amount of financial help are also available. **Application forms and info can be found on South Norfolk website.**

* **Sale of Long Stratton Building.**

The sale of South Norfolk House was discussed at a meeting of the Council on 6th November. Agreement was narrowly reached to sell the premises to the preferred bidder. The sale is expected to complete before end January 2024. The proposal is to build circa 50 new bungalows on the site.

***Article published by the EDP following the meeting: “A Norfolk council has agreed to sell its former headquarters to its own housing company after a last-ditch attempt to hand it to the community was defeated by just one vote. A meeting of South Norfolk Council (SNC) - which was held***[***entirely behind closed doors***](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23895691.sncs-long-stratton-office-bought-big-sky/)***- ended with a decision to hand over its***[***Long Stratton offices***](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23852117.south-norfolk-council-office-sale-pulled-meeting/)***to Big Sky, a housing developer wholly owned by the authority, for an undisclosed fee. But it is understood that the meeting saw a significant number of members push for an alternative bid to be picked instead. An amendment would have seen the building – called South Norfolk House (SNH) - sold to a community bidder backed by Long Stratton Parish Council. The amendment, put forward by Labour’s Stratton councillor Georgina Race, was initially tied in a 21-21 split vote. The impasse was broken by council chairman, James Easter, who voted against the plan, which would have seen the building turned into a community and creative arts centre. The Conservative-controlled council then approved selling SNH to Big Sky. Speaking after the meeting, Ms Race said the community bid would have done a lot for Long Stratton and the surrounding area and would have stopped the building from being demolished, as will happen under Big Sky’s bid.”***

* ***Nutrient Neutrality***

This was further explained at a recent presentation for Councillors at the Horizon Building. It was stressed that the process is extremely complex and members of the Scrutiny Committee will be monitoring how NEC Ltd (Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd, the company formed by local councils) deal with this as the situation progresses. Currently there is a 16,000 home backlog of homes.

* ***Flooding on B1113***

District Councillors are still active in attempting to resolve this. We understand that a new drain is being planned to better manage run off from the site into the river. A new temporary attenuation pond is being dug to improve on site water storage while the new drainage system is being installed. As this appears to be primarily the responsibility of Highways and the County Council your County Councillor has been emailed and we are still waiting for a response to emails originally sent on the 8th November.

* ***National Grid – Proposed Norwich Main substation extension***

The public consultation for the proposed development of the main Norwich Substation has now launched. Consultation events have recently taken place at Swardeston and Stoke Holy Cross.

***Statement from NG, ‘Existing substation at Norwich Main has been in service for around 50 years. And the time has come when we need to extend the site to enable new sources of electricity generation to connect into the grid, including the Hornsea Project Three offshore wind farm, the Equinor Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon wind farm extensions.’***

* ***Pylons ‘Norwich to Tilbury’ Update***

Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex county councils have written to National Grid expressing concerns about the scheme. The council leaders said the scheme **would have a significant impact on landscapes and local communities, as well as claiming an offshore solution "has not been sufficiently investigated".** They also called for a “more participatory approach to public consultation”.

**Autumn Statement by Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, Wednesday 22nd November:** Communities near new pylons are likely to be offered discounts on their bills and the new **'Critical National Priority' (CNP)** infrastructure policy has been announced.  **CNP** is a kind of fast-track planning category for wind farms and associated infrastructure but it’s not clear whether this will include Norwich to Tilbury project.

<https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk> **Have responded creating an email to get some clarity on this:**

***‘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.*

***Mulbarton & Stoke Holy Cross District Councillor Contact Details:***

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