

Progress report

The main issue at the moment across the division is the rash of problematic energy infrastructure planning proposals, including the pylons, vast solar parks (East Pye and Tasway proposals) and gross and ill-placed BESS storage units. Alongside parishes and district councillors and the MPs, I am working hard to ensure that we get proper assessment of the environmental impacts, proper consultation, proper attention to local residents, and correct reports concerning the quality of the land, to ensure that the planning system can do its job properly. But the situation is becoming truly overwhelming and in some cases we seem to be left powerless. I'm working with both the local MPs to address the weaknesses in the UK's national rules for planning, and to get strategic commissioning instead of the current free market for speculators. However the government's chief desire seems to be to slash protections for nature and heritage.

Watch my facebook for daily updates on what actions I've been taking on these things. I made a detailed submission to the consultation on the land use framework. I had a useful discussion and some correspondence with Ben Goldsborough MP, but as one of a myriad back benchers on the government side he has even less opportunity to raise questions about this than Adrian Ramsay. I attended, with Adrian Ramsay MP, a useful meeting with the Norfolk Fire Service team, to hear their assessment of the risks associated with large BESS storage schemes, and about how much say they have in the planning consultations. I've attended scheduled meetings with Field about the BESS proposed in Great Moulton (which will be decided at South Norfolk DC), and with East Pye Solar (about their mega solar farm plans) which will be decided in Westminster. I've got meetings set up with fellow councillors in neighbouring divisions and with the NSIPs officer at County Hall, and I'm feeding into the County Council responses, raising issues about roads, drainage and ecology etc.

At the May County Council meeting, I submitted a motion to address the concerns about these schemes. There was a Conservative amendment, but nevertheless the motion was still mostly intact, and it passed with a substantial majority. You can read the motion on my facebook page, and there is also a link to the recording where you can watch the debate.

Meanwhile I note that the government is going to make it mandatory for energy developers to provide substantial community funding. See link here(it's not just coastal but rural areas as well): [Cash boost for coastal towns hosting clean energy infrastructure - GOV.UK](#). It is important to insist on this in any parish response to a proposal within the vicinity.

In other local work, I've been working with landowners and the footpath officer to solve issues with one of the footpaths in Winfarthing, and with residents and the riparian rights and water management teams to solve problems in Bressingham. We have some progress with the impassable section of Broadgate Lane in Great Moulton, but some questions about rights of way on Hundred Lane remain which I am still trying to get an answer on. We are looking forward to the completion of resurfacing on two of the important B roads in the division, at Tivetshall and the horrible pitted surface at Winfarthing/Shelfanger. I note that several roads have also been given surface dressing. There will be closures on the A140 during the weekend of 5th July for work to join up the new bypass at Long Stratton, and in August there will be an opportunity to walk, cycle or run on the new road when it opens for a community fun day.

New community fund

Strangely, given our tight budget, Cabinet have opted to give councillors a new fund to spend on community initiatives. I can offer grants between £200 and £2,500 to support projects that

promote things like social inclusion, volunteering, and community engagement. This can include church groups if they serve the community.

Further details and how to apply are available on the county council website [here](#). Those looking for support should contact me on Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk.

Info from County Council

New ways of solving the NWL problem?

On Monday 7th July Cabinet will decide to return to the drawing board, following the demise of the ill-fated Norwich Western Link road. Doggedly pursuing that scheme, despite overwhelming evidence of the environmental wreckage it would have caused, has wasted time and money. Now a lot more time and money will be spent searching for another option. The Council will be looking for new options, not just reviving old options. I'll be trying to ensure that the cabinet listens properly this time to local experts and ecologists and doesn't repeat the same mistakes. If you have ideas for how to reduce traffic, replace road travel with other modes of transportation, and protect villages to the West of Norwich from intrusive road schemes, let me know.

Norwich Castle Museum — Castle Keep opening date announced

Norwich Castle Keep will re-open on 7 August 2025. Priority booking with a Norfolk Museums Pass opens: Thursday 17 July. General booking opens: Thursday 24 July. Further information about the Norwich Castle, Museum and Art Gallery is available [here](#).

National info

Future water shortage warning from the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has [warned](#) that England will be short of five billion litres for public water supplies by 2055 unless the Govt takes urgent action. A further one billion litres per day will also be needed to generate energy, grow food, and power “emerging technologies”.

Why the shortage? The EA cites climate change, population growth, and environmental pressures. Increased energy and food usage also require more water. The Guardian [suggests](#) that the AI boom could also be responsible, with significant uncertainties as to the scale of shortfall, since data centres do not currently have to report how much they are using to cool their servers.

Government strategies for industrializing everything

The Government has launched an [Industrial Strategy](#), which sets out plans to drive investment, support innovation, and retain the UK's competitiveness across eight core sectors which are Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services. I note that there is nothing about farming or tourism.

Five of the eight [sector plans](#) have appeared. It's probably worth looking at the clean energy one. I suppose life sciences means genetic modification and lab-grown meat or algae for food, to replace farming on real farmland. They haven't produced that sector plan yet.

Contact me

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk. See also my Facebook page [here](#).

Catherine Rowett

4th July 2025