

January 2024 Parish Report
East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Wilson Update

Learning Centre Funding Boost for Environmental Education Charity

A charity dedicated to transforming lives through the power of nature has received a major funding boost from East Suffolk Council towards completion of a unique new learning centre.

East Suffolk Council has committed £110,000 of grant funding towards the Green Light Trust's vision to provide health and wellbeing programmes from the new building at Castan Wood, in Martlesham, for children, young people and adults with complex needs.

The environmental education charity launched an appeal last November to raise the money needed for completion of the carbon negative, cement-free learning centre – built using a hemp-based modular construction system.

The Green Light Trust already hosts a range of outdoor, woodland activities aimed at providing equitable access to nature at the 26-acre site. East Suffolk Council's contribution from earmarked reserves will assist completion of the centre, designed and manufactured externally by Suffolk based Natural Building Systems, and which received initial support from Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Growth Investment Fund.

GLI Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, East Suffolk Council's cabinet member with responsibility for the Environment, approved the grant in consultation with cabinet member for Resources and Value for Money, Cllr Vince Langdon-Morris. Cllr Smith-Lyte said:

"I'm thrilled that we have been able to support the Green Light Trust's appeal to raise money for completion of this new purpose-built eco exemplar indoor learning centre.

"This is a unique site and a unique organisation offering essential support in an important mature woodland that also stands to benefit from sensitive use, care and an extended lease. The hemp construction aligns with part of our net zero ambitions, while encouraging community wealth building by working with local companies, like Suffolk-based Natural Building Systems in this case."

Lauren Shand, Green Light Trust CEO, said:

"We are hugely thankful to East Suffolk Council for their support, which puts us in a position to be able to complete the build and start reaching many more people in need of our services.

"This building is being constructed with deep green principles in mind and we are delighted that this has been recognised and supported by the Council. We will be able to showcase through this build, new and sustainable ways of working which have the potential to positively influence the wider construction industry."

Permit Issued with Robust Conditions to Protect Climate

East Suffolk Council has put air-quality and climate at the core of an operating permit for a residual-waste incinerator.

Planning consent for the incinerator, to be operated by VC Cooke Ltd, was granted by Conservative-controlled Suffolk County Council last year. An environmental permit is also required before operation can commence, which East Suffolk Council have now issued in accordance with statutory obligations.

Having commissioned legal counsel to examine the permitting process in detail, the Council has added conditions to the permit enforcing all applicable regulations regarding air-quality. The Council has also included a condition in the permit requiring VC Cooke to submit a carbon-management plan showing that the incinerator does not contribute to climate-change.

GLI Cllr Caroline Topping, Leader of East Suffolk Council, said: “We’ve heard resident concerns and representations about the incinerator, and we’ve taken all the steps legally allowed to safeguard air-quality. We’ve also ensured that the permit includes a robust condition to protect the climate. We look forward to discussing with VC Cooke their plans for meeting these conditions.

“We don’t believe that waste-incineration is the future. East Suffolk Council has declared a climate emergency, and we support the national commitment to reach net-zero by 2050. We’ve also said clearly in our new strategic plan for East Suffolk, Our Direction 2028, that we’ll deliver positive climate, nature and environmental outcomes in all that we do.

Formal Response to National Grid’s Sea Link Consultation

The Council submitted its written response, agreed by East Suffolk Council’s Cabinet, to National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) as part of statutory consultation into the Sea Link project, which is one of several reinforcement projects proposed as part of the Great Grid Upgrade.

NGET has stated that the Sea Link project is required to add greater capacity to the electricity transmission network, allowing anticipated renewable energy, generated offshore, to connect to the network and be transported around the country.

The project includes installation of a new high voltage undersea electricity cable link between Suffolk and Kent – with construction of a converter station near Saxmundham, a substation near Friston, and underground cabling running from both sites out to sea at Aldeburgh. A number of public exhibitions and webinars were held in East Suffolk as part of the consultation between 24 October and 18 December 2023 – with postal responses accepted until Tuesday 2 January 2024.

GLI Councillor Tom Daly, East Suffolk Council's cabinet member for Energy and Climate Change, said:

“We recognise the need to deliver infrastructure to help achieve net zero targets, but we must ensure coordination and efficiency in the network to minimise detrimental impacts on the environment and local communities. The Council objects to the proposed grid reinforcement proposals because:

- The proposals provide insufficient levels of coordination or certainty of coordination with other nationally significant infrastructure projects proposed in the locality.
- The proposals are likely to result in further unacceptable harm, alone and in combination, to the communities, environment and economy of East Suffolk.
- Further consideration should be given to alternative coordinated offshore solutions.
- Further consideration of the timing of the need case is necessary.

“Although we will not decide whether or not the scheme is approved, we are a statutory consultee in the process and we are adamant that the views of those most affected by this project are fully taken into account.”

NGET has said it will give all representations due regard in preparation of proposals for the scheme prior to formal submission to the Planning Inspectorate in the autumn of 2024. As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), the decision on whether to grant development consent for Sea Link will rest with the Secretary of State.

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/

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

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk