

ENERGY PROJECTS REPORT – February 2025

Government planning changes to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

Towards the end of January the Government issued Press Releases that highlighted proposed changes in the *Planning and Infrastructure Bill*. Generally the proposals include:

1. Removal of three court challenges to planning decisions. In the Prime Minister's Press Release, he cited Sizewell C and EA1N / EA2N (Friston substation) projects. The first stage of appeal, the 'paper permission' stage will be scrapped and replaced by an oral hearing at the High Court. If the appeal is considered 'totally without merit' it will not be possible to refer to the Court of Appeal. A second attempt to request an appeal will be permitted for other cases.
2. A new *Nature Restoration Fund* will be inaugurated. Current law requires for individual infrastructure projects to secure mitigation or compensation for environmental harm to protected sites and species before planning permission is granted. The new proposals change this. The Government is endeavouring to negate the need for individual site-level assessments. The Nature Restoration Fund, financed by developers pooling funds will result in a single payment being made to fund mitigations or compensation prior to the development proceeding. This obviously has implications for the Sea Link and Lion Link proposed projects. Exactly how this will work is yet to be seen. But it is obvious that the Government will appoint one national body, such as Natural England to oversee where the money is spent. Rather than compensating individual project specific schemes, funds could be spent nationally rather than benefitting local schemes.

Report from the Sizewell C Northern Transport Forum, 5 February 2025, Darsham Village Hall

This was a rather lengthy meeting with councillors expressing concerns about the amount of road closures, especially around Leiston and on the B1125. Of interest to Saxmundham residents:

1. With Abbey Lane (off the B1122, Abbey Road, Leiston) closed, HGVs accessing the Green Railway Compound on Buckleswood Road, Leiston are routed through Saxmundham.
2. Average speed cameras will be installed shortly along the B1122 around Middleton Moor.
3. Hydrogen fuelled buses are currently being trialled. **It was noted, that when in regular use, there will be a lull during the middle of the day, and that the buses could be utilised for community use.**
4. Finally, some good news for users of the Greater Anglia, Saxmundham Car Park. Saxmundham Town Council received a complaint via ESC Councillor, Julia Ewart that one of her constituents found parking extremely difficult due to the Balfour works compound, Balfour's contractors' vehicles and also post office vans. This resulted in scant vehicle spaces for rail users. This was an issue as the Resident needed to park and pay for several days; a service that is not available in the Market Place carpark. In a joint effort between Councillor Ewart, our Town Clerk and myself, I can report that:
 - a. Balfour contractors have been requested to park elsewhere.
 - b. The Balfour compound is no longer required to be in this location as they are working on the branch line and it will be removed shortly.
 - c. ESC has agreed to facilitate multiple day parking in the Market Place carpark.