

Sizewell C Councillors Monthly Update

April 2016



Cllr Guy McGregor
Chair of Sizewell C
Joint Local Authorities Group (JLAG)



Cllr Geoff Holdcroft
Vice Chair of Sizewell C
Joint Local Authorities Group (JLAG)

Meeting with Robert Goodwill MP, Minister of State at the Department for Transport, to maintain momentum for Suffolk's Energy Gateway

On the 21st March Cllr Holdcroft and Cllr McGregor met with the Minister of State for Transport, Robert Goodwill MP to put the case for the Suffolk Energy Gateway. The meeting was called to keep the focus for improvements regarding the A12 high on the Department's agenda. The meeting was the culmination of work to prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case which demonstrated to Department for Transport officials that the new road proposal is a high value for money scheme.

The two councillors were supported at the meeting by EDF, the developer promoting Sizewell C, and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Local MPs Therese Coffey, Dan Poulter and Peter Aldous were in attendance as well. The Suffolk delegation told the Minister that the new road has the support of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, BIFA the road haulage company and Scottish Power Renewables who have an important interest in the offshore wind industry.

Cllrs McGregor and Geoff Holdcroft used the opportunity to emphasise the importance of this new road infrastructure to help unlock further business growth and community development in this area of Suffolk. A new wider road, bypassing some of the villages along the existing A12 route will also prepare the area for the potential future development of Sizewell C which will bring significant investment and highly skilled workers into Suffolk and the wider region. The two councillors asked that the Department for Transport provide the £1.5m needed to finalise the proposal so the Minister can then make his funding decision on the new scheme. Officials from both Councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership are now in discussion with Department for Transport officials to see if the £1.5m revenue funding needed to move to the next stage can be identified soon.

A project of the size and scale of Sizewell C means that a suitable road infrastructure must be in place way ahead of any potential construction date for this size of nationally significant project. The meeting with Robert Goodwill MP, came hot on the heels of the positive announcements made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding investment for new crossings in Ipswich and Lowestoft last week.

The A12 route runs through Suffolk, between Ipswich and Lowestoft, and is a key strategic transport corridor for businesses and communities which use it on a daily basis. It is an essential route for sustaining the county's growing economy. Since the de-trunking of the road in 2001, pinch points have developed along particular stretches of the road; particularly between Marlesford and Farnham where congestion and high volumes of HGVs and agricultural vehicles are limited to slow speeds on winding sections of the road.

We believe the new road is the first phase of the Suffolk Energy Gateway which is essential for the local economy of the area. The route as it stands needs improving so that we can improve the reliability of journey times to the towns served by this stretch of road network. The new road will help open up the energy coast as it runs from Ipswich to Lowestoft.

To make this work a reality, we need the Government to help us with financial support as the scale of this project cannot be achieved by local funding alone. We put Suffolk's case forward to the Department for Transport to keep up the pressure and to see what can be done to deliver this significant infrastructure project.

Suffolk Coastal already has the strongest economy in the County, but we need to build on its success and get the correct infrastructure in place to drive the continued economic development of this area. Meetings like the one with the Minister are essential to keep this project on the Government's agenda and complement the other exciting projects, such as the Third Crossing at Lowestoft, to ensure the future prosperity of the east coast.