

Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone



Local priorities

As I mentioned in my last report, my priorities for the coming four years are tackling the climate emergency, increasing public transport, and growing our local economy, as well as supporting the reestablishment of local footpaths.

I have been on three local walks with members of Parish Councils so far, and identified some common themes:

There is a desire for circular walks - one 2.5k or so, one 8-10k - in many communities, as well as opportunities for pedestrian and cycle access to nearby towns.

Many people lament the removal of funding for Permissive Paths, which resulted from central government cuts to Natural England's budget.

There are a number of routes that nearly meet the above description, but often there are pinch points or barriers that prevent them from being usable by all but the most confident.

One of the issues raised by landowners is the liability they potentially incur in allowing walkers onto land and as a result, I am putting a motion to Full Council in September compelling it to create a county-wide insurance scheme to meet this need.

Holt Hall

The Friends of Holt Hall team have been doing a fantastic job exploring potential partnerships to ensure the site continues to serve an outdoor education function.

Under the Asset of Community Value status they obtained, they have a small amount of remaining exclusivity window to prepare a bid before the property is offered on the open market and I am working to lobby the relevant County Council officers to ensure they treat favourably the final preferred bid or bids that FOHH put forward. I invite you to share your views with Cllrs Proctor, Fisher, Proctor and Jamieson, to this end.

Members' Allowance and Parish Partnerships

A reminder that the members' Highways allowance is now increased to £10,000 per year and expanded to cover Highways and Environment, meaning I can contribute towards assets that achieve a wider range of local benefits. The Parish Partnerships scheme, still for local highway improvements only, will be being repeated next year with the deadline of 10th December for submissions.

Employer Training Incentive Programme (ETIP)

Despite not having won a majority in May, I'm delighted to see yet another of our manifesto policies becoming a reality as the Employer Training Incentive Programme (ETIP) offers grants of up to 75% for training to SMEs in a range of sectors including Agri-tech, digital, retail, and the visitor economy. Employers can pick their own providers, and more information can be found by emailing etip@norfolk.gov.uk or calling Lisa Cook, Project Officer, on 01603 692465.

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