

County Councillor Alexander Nicoll: Report for the 2021 annual meeting of Ufford Parish Council

The past year has, for everyone, been unlike any other. It has been one of great sadness and more widely one of struggle as Suffolk communities have sought to understand and live through a pandemic of a scale not seen in our lifetime. Against this backdrop many other subjects have continued to be addressed by the Parish Council and community groups in Ufford and some of these, in terms of likely impacts, have been significant. Perhaps the one with the highest profile, aside from the impact of Covid 19, has been the continuing public fears surrounding the possible siting of two new nuclear reactors – Sizewell C – on the coast a few miles from the village. The physical impact of EDF's proposals, if taken forward, impact much closer to the village with the building of the Southern Park & Ride site just north of Wickham Market and, alongside existing concerns about the increase in logistics activities at Bentwaters, local people are likely to see a further proliferation of HGVs on our rural roads in addition to possible congestion on the A12 over the next few years. My objection to the Sizewell C proposals, particularly in terms of the impact of construction on our roads and environment, was lodged with the Planning Inspectorate.

Suffolk County Council plans to study and review existing recommended HGV routes during 2021 (delayed from last year due to Covid 19) and I will press strongly that such a study will only be meaningful if action is taken to curb HGVs using unsuitable rural roads to 'rat run' to their destinations. Ufford experiences far too much rat running from adjoining roads and not just by lorries and vans.

Aside from Sizewell C and the increasing impact locally of Bentwaters I have vocally campaigned against several ill-considered planning applications likely to negatively affect Ufford and neighbouring villages. In addition to obvious problems arising from developments which may be simply too large and poorly designed I have championed local concerns about how these developments impact upon existing, stretched, community facilities including schools, medical facilities and shopping and recreation amenities.

Ufford, one of six parishes in the Wickham Division, has a well-developed community spirit and there are a healthy number of organisations and individuals who go more than the extra mile to support the vulnerable in our community and work hard to keep a diverse community atmosphere alive in the village. Much of this is visible in the exchanges between members of the Helping Ufford Group (HUG) on Facebook.

Finally, community strength is ensured by a sense of connection and I have been closely involved in a project, led by Suffolk County Council, to introduce a new all electric taxi-bus service, Katch, running between the station at Campsea Ashe to Framlingham via Wickham Market. The pilot for this project, delayed by Covid 19, started on 17 May and, if successful, will herald the creation of similar services more widely across Suffolk.