

## Walberswick Parish Council (WPC) – report to Annual Parish Meeting – 2025

Let's begin with some of the many positives from the past year:

- The Council has set its budget for the 25/26 tax year and we are very proud to have been able to hold the element of the Council Tax that goes to the Parish Council (called the precept) completely flat for a 5th consecutive year, despite the inflation of recent times. This, when combined with the impact of additional Council Tax revenue coming from second home owners for the first time this year had meant that the precept being paid by individual Walberswick Council Tax payers has actually gone DOWN by approx. 32% this year – quite the contrast to other bills!
- We have also had another smooth year accounts-wise with completely clean audits again from both our internal and external auditors. In this regard, I would like to thank our extremely professional and capable Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer who have both now worked for WPC for 6 years. All the details of the Council budget, meetings and decisions can be found on our website at: <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/walberswick-parish-council/>
- During the last year the extensive work to upgrade both the Toddler Play Area and the Playing Fields was completed and we are really pleased with both the end result and the lovely feedback we've had on the quality of facilities we now have as a village
- We are very fortunate to have a number of advisory groups working with the Parish Council, including the Scroll Advisory Group and the Speed Watch team, all of whom I would like to thank for their input and advice. Our most active advisory group continues to be the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) and we remain indebted as a Council and a village to them for the excellent work they do in assessing the many planning applications we receive. Our hope is that the NDP, once approved, will make it much less likely that the planners will be able to ignore the arguments put forward by PAG and WPC that seek to limit overdevelopment in our village. The NDP itself is now at the stage of being drafted, so hopefully much more on this in the coming year.

Now for some of the tougher stuff:

The WPC remains heavily engaged on the NSIPs that are impacting our area. Having been involved in SZC consultations and Inspection Panel Hearings, the WPC ensured that Walberswick is a legally recognised member of the Northern Transport Forum, the B1125 Transport Working Group and the SZC Community Forum. The WPC regularly includes news items in the Village News and on the website to update the Parish on what is happening particularly with regard to any mitigation. Currently, our representative on the B1125 working group is involved with SZC, Suffolk Highways and Blythburgh Parish Council in sorting out the best way to close the B1125 to the north of the Walberswick Road to limit rat running and the use of the B1125 by SZC workers coming from the north. As part of the scheme, the B1387 between the water tower and the A12 will be improved to end flooding and ensure it is a safer, two-way route. There will also be widening and safety improvements where the B1137 meets the A12. WPC added its voice to all the other Councils in the Northern Transport Forum to win a commitment by SZC to include an area of the massive worker park and ride being built next to the Darsham Train station for use by the public taking the train.

A disturbing fact confirmed through a question posed by the Walberswick representative at the recent community forum is that SZC is now solely financed by the UK Government with some £5.5 billion already provided, meaning all the current works that have so shocked everyone in their scale and destruction of the natural environment and the "community projects" promoted as local

benefits coming from SZC are not being financed by the developer, but rather by us, the tax-payer. If the Government goes forward with a Final Investment Decision in its Spring spending review, we will then pay again when the nuclear tax is added to every electric bill in the country to pay for the plant's construction, now estimated to cost at least £40 billion. All of this, before a single watt of power is ever produced — for which we will be required to pay again as consumers.

As for Lionlink, the Council is also working with our MP, SCC, ESC, WALL and neighbouring Councils who are unanimously opposed to NGV's plans for Lionlink here as there are clearly better options including offshore and using existing brownfield sites. An excellent opportunity for combining Lionlink with the Belgian interconnector, Nautilus, coming through the Isle of Grain is one obvious solution that NGV should be made to follow. Given the strong links between NGV's Sealink landing in Aldeburgh connecting to a substation in Saxmundham, the WPC will register itself as an interested party to take part in those hearings coming up shortly.

Finally I am very happy to report that the Parish Council remains at full strength with regard to Councillors. All Councillors serve our community on a purely voluntary basis and we are all indebted to all of them for doing so and therefore please join me in thanking my fellow councillors: Josie Bassinette, Esme Richardson, Lee Sutton, Rebecca Whiting, Emilie Dadswell and Peter Watson for all they do for the village

Andrew Lewis

Chair, Walberswick Parish Council