

Buckerell District Report.

As a result of the first full council meeting since the election, work begins to wind up to full speed. All the committees have now been formed and, despite an ongoing issue between the leader of the council and the chief exec, it is my hope that EDDC will be able to fully commit to the needs of its electorate.

On planning, the spectre of more solar farms is ever present. So I include here some of the questions that I asked to be presented at a recent planning application. “Firstly, what is the lifespan of the panels and secondly, is there a confirmed date when the array will be connected to the grid? These two are obviously linked given the recent exposure by the media on how long these new installations take to start contributing to our energy needs as the grid plays catch-up. In some cases it is often half the life of the system before it can generate. Thirdly, how are the panels going to be disposed of at the end of their life? I know of no other business that could work in this way. I’m sure the officers will say these are not planning issues, well they need to be. I’m not against solar farms, but the picture often painted by the companies of a field full of sheep happily grazing amongst wild flowers and bees is a false one. I understand from the farmers around me that the sheep will not stay in the field of panels for long as the grass quality slowly degrades. Unlike a normal field, the panels drastically reduce sunlight and rain to most of the ground, and fertilisers are impossible to apply”.

Whatever anyone’s opinion is with regard to energy independence these are valid questions (in my view) to ask before we go removing valuable farmland from food production.

I am putting forward the motion below to full council on July 19th. There has recently been media coverage of the number of councils around the UK adopting parking apps in an attempt to save money, and the public’s reaction to them. However, it appears the impact on loss of tourism spending and depriving vulnerable, disadvantaged or those that simply don’t want to use this system, has not been properly quantified. I hope that I will be able to raise cross party support for this motion. I will report back on its success or failure in the next Parish report. The motion follows below.

‘This council recognises that it is essential for people to have the freedom to pay for goods and services however they choose. The cost-of-living crisis and the necessity to budget demonstrates the important factor cash, especially to those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or in poverty.

A growing number of councils are removing pay and display parking machines don’t asking people to pay using an app or by phone. This is discriminatory to those who do not have smartphones, are not familiar with modern technology or rely on cash.

Therefore, this council commits to ensuring that all pay and display machines in council operated car parks continue to accept cash payments until at least 2027.’

The webinar regarding the strategic local plan was very disappointing and primarily filled with facts and figures and no relevant feedback from the flawed public consultation. I understand this will be dealt with at a later meeting.

Report ends.