

After the summer recess a number of national issues have surfaced that impact on our village.

Firstly is the recently media highlighted issue of the banned release of sewerage by water companies. Whilst SWW is not on the list of offenders, they declined to provide the relevant details that other companies did. I will leave you to draw your own conclusions on this. However, what is perhaps even more concerning and related is the report by EDDCs coastal officer, which highlights the fact that on an excessively large number of occasions SWW monitors to detect spills were switched to 'maintenance' mode. This effectively means they are switched off. The officer has asked for clarification as why there were so many occasions when these important monitors were switched over, to date there has been no response. I need to make it clear that both EDDC officers and elected members of the council share a deep concern and frustration over the level of communication and response from these utilities companies, companies that are tasked with keeping our drinking and bathing water safe to use. In my opinion there needs to be a radical change in priorities going forward.

There have been a number of proposed changes to national planning in recent weeks, sadly some driven by political expediency. The watering down of strict controls in AONBs is of great concern given the damage it does to protecting these important environments and landscapes. Whilst I note that these are only proposals at the moment, they do indicate a direction of thinking which should worry us all. There also seems to be a mixed message coming out of government on this. On the one hand there is theoretically more weighting being given to how local communities feel about planning applications, many of the standard safeguards are being swept aside to favour developers.

I was dismayed to hear of the lifting of the moratorium on land based wind farms. Whilst, as an element of reducing our reliance on fossil fuel for power, they play a part in energy self sufficiency, there are real concerns on their impact on our countryside. One only has to look at the rapid advances in micro energy generation, particularly in wind power, to see that perhaps the future does not lie in marching these huge edifices across the landscape.

In local matters it was heartening to see EDDC planning committee showing with almost one voice their deep concerns over the application to build a battery storage facility in the east of our region. Of greatest concern was the potential risk to the local aquifers should there be any form of spillage or fire, as was seen in the Liverpool fire which the local firefighters had to let burn out and use massive volumes of water. Separately, I'm asking for clarification as to why EDDC planning officers felt this application merited being marked for approval whilst flagging up little concern over the potential impact on our precious water supply.

Our Strategic Plan continues to grind through the committee stage, with a firm input from concerned communities that may be afflicted by unwanted and inappropriate housing development. Much of this seems to be driven by greed rather than the needs of a particular community. I remain hopeful that government guidance to be announced soon will go some way to address this. However, this once again seems to fly in the face of recent government proposals, as commented on earlier.