# Report from Councillor Alexander Nicoll to Wickham Market Parish Council, May 2024

In addition to a varied postbag of cases and my work as Deputy Cabinet member for Transport Strategy including chairing Suffolk's county-wide Bus Enhanced Partnership, I want to focus on three particular matters relevant to Wickham Market (and nearby communities).

**1) Sizewell C (SZC).** Despite the continuing and widespread concerns of many the construction phase of SZC looks, sadly, inevitable.  I have spoken against the project and in public since I was first elected to Suffolk County Council (SCC) back in 2017.

Evidence of the project ramping up include the setting up of various forums.  SZC will, despite what the promoters say, have a huge impact on our ability to move around the roads of our county, particularly if you live or work in the east Suffolk area. I sit, as the SCC elected representative, on the Northern and Southern Transport Forums which have each held two meetings since the start of 2024. The most recent meetings took place in the first two weeks of this month. The format involves exchanges between a number of parish councils and a senior team from SZC. At the most recent meeting of the Southern Transport Forum an interesting discussion ensued about the impacts of the four planned night trains, carrying aggregate etc, which will potentially create disturbance for residents in a number of parishes who live near the East Suffolk Line.  I had asked that Network Rail join the meeting, and this proved helpful as they gave greater detail about both noise mitigation works and required improvements to various level-crossings.

In terms of the movement of Wickham Market people and neighbouring communities the next likely greatest, albeit hopefully not long in terms of time, impact will be possible temporary closure of the Melton level-crossing for improvement works. I have asked for fuller details about the likely timing and duration of any works.


**2) Bentwaters.** A number of local parishes alongside me and East Suffolk councillors attended a site visit at Bentwaters recently.  This was the latest of a number of meetings held to assess the impact of current HGV movements to/from the site and better understand what the likely growth might be. There remains a concern a) that monitoring of numbers of vehicles is inadequate and b) fears that SZC supply chain operators may be tempted to make use of Bentwaters as part of their activities in support of the main construction site near Leiston and there will be additional traffic most likely large vans moving through our rural roads to/from the Southern Park & Ride site just north of Wickham Market.  HGVs are supposed to be tracked along designated routes, but a number have already been caught trying to reach Leiston via other routes.  Unfortunately, any vehicle with a gross weight of under 3.5 tonnes will not have to stick to a prescribed route although, we are told, recommended routes will be advertised to this (large) group of SZC suppliers. I doubt this will remove all the likely fly parking and other problems we will face.

**3) Gas works in Ufford.** As David Chenery will confirm, I have been working with Ufford, Melton, Pettistree and Wickham Market PCs alongside local businesses and residents over the past few weeks since Cadent Gas announced with no warning (most heard via an article in the East Anglia Daily Times) that they planned to block off, with complete rolling closures, the main road through Ufford for a period of possibly three months. Working with Network Assurance and a quickly assembled group, including David, I have managed to have permission to enter the highway by Cadent withdrawn pending a proper public consultation event. This will take place at the Ufford Community Hall on Thursday 23 May between 4pm and 8pm. Some works are required (failing gas main etc) but better evidence must be provided by Cadent that they will carry out their works with the least impact on residents and businesses. So far they have not demonstrated this.


Cllr Alexander Nicoll

Member for Wickham Division