



Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone

Telephone Lines

I was delighted to speak at an event in Aldborough recently, setting out the changes that are coming to our traditional landlines.

This could affect many residents in North Norfolk, potentially leaving many people isolated in rural areas. The traditional exchange is being decommissioned and replaced with a digital only system, and your phone provider will be in touch with you when it's time to make the change. Don't fall for sales pitches from companies in the meantime!

However, a big change is that you will need a battery backup in order to make phone calls if there's a power cut. To ensure you get one of these for free, it's worth contacting your provider now and registering as vulnerable.

I'm taking the phone show 'on tour' and so please get in touch if you'd like me to come and speak about this at an event in your community.

Flood alerts

Many people have been impacted by flooding from the repeated storms we've had this past month, and have worries about how it will be dealt with. I know this is a concern, particularly for residents of Ryburgh. This is especially pertinent considering new flood alerts have been released due to the risk along the low-lying roads and footpaths surrounding the Rivers Waveney, Dove, Ant, Bure and Thurne, due to Storm Debi.

I'm pleased to report back on the multi-agency meeting I had shortly after the recent flooding in Sheringham. I was grateful that representatives from Norfolk Fire and Rescue, Norfolk County Council Flooding and Water Management, Highways, and North Norfolk District Council, were all in attendance, as flooding requires a multi-agency response and high levels of coordination.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) is the lead flood agency, and conducts formal flood investigations, gathering information from responders and residents. The investigation process, including site visits, leads to published reports with non-binding recommendations.

Funding for these recommendations is then the critical issue. Local Flood Officers advocate for direct funding awards to property owners and explore various schemes, including surface water and flood management. But for the bigger stuff, we are held back in North Norfolk by a lack of government funding.

This was particularly exposed by the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (SFA), initially chaired by Lord Dannatt, which was set up with the aim of securing finances and commitment for identified sites and proposed schemes. The need for £80m or so worth of funding for schemes was

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identified, and this is well beyond the budget of local authorities. Calls to Government have fallen on deaf ears - a fact I was keen to point out in the [EDP coverage](#) of the incidents.

Unless someone or something comes forward that will fund the schemes needed, we'll be stuck in a cycle of recommendations that can't be implemented, and small scale property protection projects funded by what little NCC has, exceptions to the rule by insurance companies, or property owners themselves.

I will shortly be writing to the association of insurance providers to compel them to reconsider the instatement of flood prevention measures when carrying out repairs caused by flood damage, and continue to support the calls made by the SFO, which I did most recently at Full Council in January, when Lord Dannatt handed over the chair to Henry Cator.