

**NORFOLK ALC**  
**Annual Meeting Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023**  
**Patron's Address by Lady Dannatt MBE,**  
**HM Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk**

Good afternoon, Directors, Officers and Members of the Norfolk Association of Local Councils. This year will be the first time as your patron that I have been able to address you in person. Last year my Address was read to you by my Deputy Lieutenant, Rev Matthew Hutton, whom I have appointed to be the liaison between the Lieutenancy and Norfolk ALC, but this year I am delighted to be here with you.

What a tumultuous period it has been since your last AGM. As we came out of Covid lockdown last year, I think that we all hoped that the future would be one of calm rebuilding and the return of a more commonplace run of events. That the celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second would be so closely followed by her sad death was not something we had anticipated, although plans had long been in place to deal with such an event. The massive outpouring of emotion and the solemn dignity of her funeral, together with all the other official and unofficial events to mark her passing, demonstrate the huge respect and affection in which she was held by the people of Norfolk and the UK and more widely. This period of sadness was of course followed by the accession of His Majesty King Charles III and the subsequent Coronation celebrations earlier this year.

The last winter saw individuals, families and communities facing economic challenges and hardships the like of which we have not seen for a long time. Sky rocketing energy prices, and food and other basic commodities' price inflation

brought many more people into hardship and exacerbated problems for those already struggling to make ends meet. Many parish and town councils working with county wide organisations such as the Norfolk Community Foundation and the Nourishing Norfolk Network and the district and county councils responded magnificently to these trials and tribulations by setting up food larders and food banks, community warm spaces and drop-in centres and by doing what they could to connect people in need to services that could help. Without these sterling efforts I am sure that life would have been far more challenging for many around the county. As with the response to Covid, I have been heartened as His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk by the way in which people have pulled together, in looking out for and supporting each other, especially those who may be at a disadvantage in any way, through health or age or other circumstances.

Global warming continues to loom large for us all. While this summer has been nowhere near as challenging as last year, events in Europe and further afield have shown the impact that rising temperatures are likely to have on the weather. Here in Norfolk, we can see at first hand some of the responses that are being put in place to deal with climate change. This year has seen the start of the infrastructure works associated with generating electricity at offshore wind farms. Getting the power onshore and away on the National Grid will require works on a scale we have not seen before in Norfolk. Two schemes are already under way, the one running from Weybourne on the North Norfolk Coast to Norwich and a second running from Happisburgh west to Necton. These will be joined by another scheme running from Weybourne (again!) to Norwich, likely to start in 2024. These schemes and other associated projects such as road closures and plant depots; extra battery storage and the proposed extra pylons to transmit the power, will undoubtedly have a major impact on communities across the county. Norfolk ALC are in close contact with the

companies carrying out these works and are doing everything they can to ensure that negative impacts on local communities are minimised and the benefits are maximised, not least through bringing together the companies and representatives of communities at every opportunity.

Matthew Hutton keeps me informed on what is going on within Norfolk ALC and he himself is kept up-to-date with meetings every couple of months (almost inevitably now on Zoom!) with the County Officer Sarah Bristow and the Wellbeing Officer Pete Strange. As well as thanking them and indeed every one of the staff and the Board, I want to record my gratitude also to Adrienne Quinn the former chair who stood down earlier this year and your President and our Chair today, Professor Tim O’Riordan. Tim is a prominent advocate for the importance of localism in tackling climate change in particular and in promoting the betterment of all the citizens of our wonderful County in general. The important thing is that we act together. And we are indeed fortunate in Norfolk in having so many wonderful and very well qualified people to help on the journey.

Finally, I am delighted to hear about the programme of webinars which are regularly arranged and well supported on a variety of issues of concern to all of us. Among these have been: Flooding, Adult Numeracy, Walking and Cycling, Help available to people experiencing Financial Crisis, Policing, Planting for the Future, and Electric Vehicle Charging. These and other issues are of concern to our local communities and I am encouraged to hear of the way that individual parish and town councils have responded to challenges and embraced opportunities to make a difference.

In conclusion, my profound and heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for everything that you do in helping everyone young and old in this wonderful County of ours to thrive, for the good of us all. I am appreciative beyond words.