

Update for Barnham Broom Parish Council

South Norfolk Council – August 2025

1. Diss Hotel – Community and Planning Concerns

South Norfolk Council has been actively engaged in responding to community concerns regarding the reconfiguration of The Park Hotel in Diss announced by the Home Office. The proposal to convert the site into accommodation for single adult males has drawn significant local opposition. Diss Town Council, alongside South Norfolk Council, has publicly stated its disapproval of the sudden nature of the change and the lack of prior consultation with local stakeholders. The matter remained under review throughout August, with further discussions between local authorities and central government agencies. Subsequently the Home Office has withdrawn the proposal, and the hotel is due to be brought back into mainstream hospitality use.

2. Solar and Renewable Energy Initiatives

The Council continues to advance its renewable energy agenda, with several key developments:

- East Pye Solar Project: A non-statutory consultation was launched for the East Pye Solar scheme, which is being treated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The consultation included in-person events and an online webinar, reflecting the scale and potential impact of the project. Member briefings and internal discussions have been ongoing to assess the implications for the district.
- Strategic Planning for Renewables: The Council has acknowledged the growing number of solar and energy infrastructure proposals and has developed a strategic framework to guide a District response to Government for their development. This includes identifying suitable sites and ensuring that renewable energy installations align with local planning and environmental priorities. The main thrust of the District's concern is not anti-renewables as such but recognition that these such schemes must not be placed on prime agricultural land which is necessary to support our food security.
- Leisure Centre Upgrades: Solar PV installations are part of broader energy efficiency upgrades at council-owned leisure centres, including Wymondham, Long Stratton and Diss Leisure Centres. These improvements will both reduce operational costs and carbon emissions.

3. Lotus Hethel Redundancies – Council Support Measures

Following the announcement that 550 jobs would be lost at Lotus's Hethel headquarters, South Norfolk Council has taken swift and coordinated action to support affected employees.

- Formation of a Dedicated Taskforce: A joint taskforce has been established by South Norfolk Council and Norfolk County Council, chaired by Daniel Elmer (Leader of South Norfolk Council). The taskforce aims to ensure that the skills of redundant workers are retained within Norfolk's economy.

- Support Measures Offered: The taskforce is delivering a comprehensive support package, including:

- Job Search and CV Support in partnership with Working Well Norfolk and DWP.
- Benefit Advice from DWP advisors.
- Apprenticeship Support through Apprenticeships Norfolk.
- Job Brokerage via NAAME and the New Anglia Growth Hub.
- Start-Up Support through Hethel Innovation, MENTA, and Norfolk Libraries.
- Hardship Assistance from South Norfolk Council's Help Hub.

- Infrastructure Investment at Hethel: South Norfolk Council is investing in infrastructure improvements at Hethel to support long-term economic resilience. A Cabinet paper recommends that SNC take the lead on procurement and delivery of the infrastructure works, with £1 million allocated from the capital budget. Planning permission and ecological licences have already been secured, and construction is expected to begin in late 2025.