

Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone

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Footpath story

After two years of consulting, campaigning, and lobbying, I'm delighted that the administration at Norfolk County Council is taking forward my Footpath Toolkit idea!

My interest in establishing and improving circular walks came about when a group of young people in Melton Constable sent me a letter during Covid lockdown, expressing their frustration at the lack of local circular walks. I shared their feelings - especially as these walks are needed in order to enjoy the countryside safely, away from the risks of rural roads.

The project will begin by consulting with stakeholders to update the existing Parish Paths pack and make it into a more practical and useful guide for communities to improve local walking routes.

I hope that this toolkit will soon be made available, as it's often the case that all that's needed are a few simple things fixing - like blocked access, unmaintained paths, or simply publicising the routes.

Norwich Western Link

After years of work and nearly £50m already spent, it now looks like the Norwich Western Link has hit a major roadblock due to the Environment Agency refusing to grant it a license.

There is clearly a serious congestion issue in the West of Norwich that needs addressing. But as far back in 2017 I was unconvinced by the speed at which alternative schemes were dismissed in favour of a project which has now ballooned in cost to over £250m, and is set to cause untold damage to a major conservation area and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

I have in fact resigned my only political job (leader of the Liberal Democrat group) over this issue in 2021 because I couldn't support the road and I remain unconvinced that adding this road offers good value for money as a way of enabling economic growth.

My hope is that changes can be made, and a "plan B" developed that meets the need to reduce congestion, before any more money is lost on the project.

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