



Rebecca Pow MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
the Environment  
Email: [rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk)

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Minister of State for Housing, Communities  
and Local Government  
Email: [robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk)

Rt Hon Kwarsi Kwarteng MP  
Minister of State for Business, Energy and  
Clean Growth  
Email: [kwarsi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kwarsi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Ministers

**Lowestoft Tidal Flood Barrier  
Delivery impacted by the success of the growth of offshore wind energy**

In an innovative and voluntary initiative, East Suffolk Council was formed in April 2019 from the former Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils. The new East Suffolk Council is at the forefront of helping the Government achieve its low carbon targets hosting nuclear development at Sizewell and the onshore connections and maintenance facilities for numerous Round 2 and 3 offshore wind farms. You will also be aware that we will be hosting the Sizewell C new nuclear build, once it has approval, and the future growth of offshore wind farms with further Round 3 developments, Round 2 extensions and possibly Round 4 offshore wind farms. Additionally, National Grid are proposing connectors from the UK to Belgium and the Netherlands hosted via the pylon line at Sizewell.

It is calculated that with all the offshore wind and nuclear development that is in place, and proposed, it will result in approximately 30% of the UK's electricity being routed via East Suffolk, with the offshore wind element being approximately two thirds of this total (i.e. 20% of the UK's supply). East Suffolk should be appropriately recognised for this contribution.

The Council has positively embraced the offshore wind developments to date, as we move towards a zero-carbon energy market, as they are bringing significant economic benefits for the town of Lowestoft, and to its port in particular.

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LEGAL ADDRESS East Suffolk House, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1RT  
DX: 41400 Woodbridge

POSTAL ADDRESS Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ  
DX: 41220 Lowestoft

It is in respect of the impacts on Lowestoft that I am writing to you. The town has a number of significant challenges which we are tackling directly as a Council, as both landowner and Local Planning Authority. We also have the support from MHCLG through initiatives such as the Towns Fund. Our ambition is to use all these initiatives in a coordinated way to be a catalyst for economic and social change to address many of the challenges the residents and the town face. One key project which we must deliver, and which we are keen to discuss further with Ministers, is the proposed new tidal flood barrier for the town. The lack of a flood barrier, and therefore adequate defences, is holding the town back. Lowestoft is a town on the coast with a population of 70,000 with no defence from tidal flooding, nor river and pluvial flooding too. Plans are being developed to address this risk to both life and property but ironically these efforts have been complicated and severely compromised by the success of the port in supporting the offshore energy businesses.

In December 2013 a storm surge event recorded a peak water level of 3.26m AOD (between a 1 in 100 (1%) and 1 in 150 (0.67%) AEP event. It was reported that during this event approximately 158 residential and 233 commercial properties were flooded in the Lowestoft and Oulton Broad area including 90 residential and 143 commercial properties in the low-lying central area of Lowestoft. In addition, this tidal flooding resulted in the closure of key transportation links including Lowestoft Railway Station and the A47 through Lowestoft.

In simple terms we were lucky on that occasion but next time, and we can be sure there will be a next time, the impacts may be greater, and life may well be in danger. We know that the likelihood of such events occurring is increasing.

To address this significant, and increasing risk, the Council, as lead, with Suffolk County Council and partners, has developed a comprehensive flood protection scheme to address tidal, fluvial and pluvial flooding across the town. The overall project includes a tidal barrier at the head of Lake Lothing by the current Bascule Bridge (A47 - just to the south of the town centre), and tidal walls to the north and south of the barrier. The scheme includes a separate, but an equally important, proposal to protect a number of properties that have experienced significant flooding issues, especially at periods of high rainfall. The project would therefore appropriately protect the vulnerable parts of the town and has strong political and community support.

The benefits for the town would be understandably significant but in providing this protection the opportunity to remove the risk of flooding would also provide a major economic uplift to the town, and to the town centre in particular, by enabling new residential and commercial property to be provided, which would otherwise not be allowed because of the flooding risk. This regeneration opportunity is reflected in the recently adopted Local Plan. This tidal barrier is therefore seen as a catalyst to delivering transformation in this coastal town.

The project was advancing well from 2016 to 2018 with the emerging scheme scoped to cost c£30m. Funding had been committed from several sources including £10m from the New Anglia LEP as well as commitments from the Councils and was on course to be delivered. Wide engagement was also taking place with landowners and other stakeholders in developing the project, but this is where the programme has run in to significant problems.

The Port of Lowestoft is owned by ABP, and this includes the entrance to the port at the Bascule Bridge where the barrier is to be located. ABP are commercial port operators and their port in Lowestoft has been in decline for a number of years. The potential for port growth, as the nearest port to many of the windfarms, to accommodate the offshore energy companies as an operation and maintenance base is, understandably, significant. The Port of Lowestoft has become the main base for the Greater Gabbard Offshore Wind farm (SSE) and East Anglian Array 1 (SPR). There is significant potential for future growth in this sector which this Council wants to support and help deliver.

The programme for the construction of the original programme for the tidal barrier would necessitate the port closing for a period of up to 6 months. Given the challenges of weather and other factors, contingency would need to be built into this time period. ABP understandably objected to this unless they were to be appropriately compensated, but there was also the likelihood that the port would be unattractive for current and future wind energy businesses. As the growth of the port is a key factor for the renaissance of the town, the Council sought ways of trying to deliver the project to protect the town from the risk of flooding whilst maintaining port activity.

The resultant programme amended the scheme for the tidal barrier elements to be constructed over three short windows each winter without the necessity of closing the port for any significant period. The plans as now developed are generally supported by ABP but unfortunately the costs of amending the design and elongating the programme has resulted in significant cost escalation. The costs of the programme have risen from the c£30m to approximately £70m.

The project does not currently have access to this level of funding to protect the town, its residents, and businesses from the increasing threat of a flooding event. The project has been reappraised and, to ensure the appropriate use of the committed funds, the project will be divided into three phases with the first two phases, the fluvial and pluvial works, and tidal walls, being delivered in 2020.

The project partners are developing a strong advocacy approach to addressing the funding gap, including support from Peter Aldous MP. However, there is a real risk that the funding shortfall for this essential infrastructure will not be resolved, and as time passes the project costs increase but more acutely so does the risk of a major flooding incident.

Our opportunities to raise funds from the offshore energy developments are constrained. As part of the DCO process for the offshore windfarms the Council, as a statutory consultee, cannot negotiate a commitment from the energy businesses for them to use the port as their base, as this would put them in commercial difficulties. Nor can we align the project to necessary mitigation under the DCO regime as there is no link to impacts arising from the wind farm projects themselves. Nor does the Council have access to other income that is generated, from the windfarms, for instance it is understood that through granting licenses for offshore wind farms, the Crown Estate has currently delivered a return of c£2.8b to the Treasury. This income stream will obviously increase in future years.

In conclusion, the town will potentially receive significant benefits from the energy businesses but, for the reasons explained above, this will be limited by the lack of a tidal barrier project. Furthermore, failure to deliver the project will leave the town at a significant risk of flooding which would put lives and property at risk. This understandably does not sit comfortably with the Council and its partners.

We would therefore welcome a detailed dialogue with Ministers to highlight the necessity of the project and seek potentially new and innovative ways of delivering the funds to deliver the tidal barrier. As the Government rightly seeks to embed and deliver zero carbon energy, the pressures on the town of Lowestoft will undoubtedly increase. Investment in the tidal barrier project now will secure the potential for huge investment in the town and provide social and economic uplift. Lowestoft recognises that it has many challenges, but it wants to tackle these head on, and the benefits of offshore energy will support that ambition. This will further place the town, and the Council, at the forefront of hosting a significant part of the nation's electricity needs and will provide clear evidence emphasising and providing a clear link to all that is good about a robust clean energy policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Gallant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**CLlr Steve Gallant | Leader**  
East Suffolk Council

Cc Peter Aldous MP