



## DR DAN POULTER MP

Member of Parliament for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich

We are rightly proud of the contribution that Suffolk is making to deliver clean and green energy as we have become a magnet for renewable energy production. Suffolk offers one of the driest climates in England with longer hours of daily sunshine and miles of coastline, so it is seen as the perfect location for solar energy and of course, offshore wind. Most of us will recognise and celebrate the benefits that renewable energy can bring, including much needed jobs for local people, as well as helping us to achieve our net zero carbon emission targets. However, these large scale energy projects cannot continue to be brought about in a piecemeal fashion without proper consideration for the potential consequences to some of our local communities.

With increasing numbers of planning applications for solar parks in our area, the time has come for our councils to plan more strategically for larger local energy projects. Rather than viewing each planning application for solar energy individually, we need a more joined up approach. Our local councils must work together to develop a strategic plan for the future development of solar power in Suffolk. Whilst we should support appropriately sited solar parks (preferably on brownfield sites), there is also an imperative for our council planners to balance green energy production against the need to protect the countryside which makes Suffolk such an attractive place to live and work.

Undoubtedly Suffolk will continue to grow as an energy hub, so it is essential that future energy development is sited in the right locations, so as not to blight our communities or damage our natural environment.

Since becoming the MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, I have worked hard to support local communities fight against inappropriate planning developments. In the energy sector, I helped to see off the mid-Suffolk straw burning power station plans and I worked successfully alongside Tim Yeo (the former MP for South Suffolk) to ensure that new power lines were installed underground (rather than overhead) throughout the beautiful Fynn Valley.

Recently, we have seen proposals coming forward for a number of new solar parks near Bramford and concerning plans to install new overhead power pylons between Bramford and Twinstead, which would be a blight to our beautiful Suffolk landscape.

My view is that new power lines should, wherever possible, always be underground, and ideally, put offshore in the sea bed. So I am currently working with other MPs to make the case to the National Grid and I shall continue to do all that I can to protect the Suffolk countryside from the threat of additional overhead electricity pylons.

However, solar parks are a local planning matter and as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is both an opportunity and a need for our local councils to work together to deliver a strategic local energy plan for Suffolk. If we get it right, there is a tremendous opportunity to grow more green jobs, support our local economy, protect the countryside, and to move swiftly towards a zero-carbon society.