

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	9 October 2023
Item Number	6d
Report Title	Energy Projects Report
Report Author	Sharon Smith

Getting to Grips with NSIPs

SALC and the County Council have worked collaboratively to produce a guidance document which will support Town and Parish Councils to engage more effectively with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The guidance includes definitions of key documents, stages, and procedures within the NSIP process and supports Councils with advice on what to expect, when, and what to look out for.

Anglian Energy Planning Alliance Meeting

The Acting Town Clerk attended a briefing and Q&A session on the status of the various energy projects proposed for East Suffolk. Presentations were delivered from SEAS (Suffolk Energy Action Solutions) pressing for a modular offshore grid as an alternative to the proposed onshore infrastructure for windfarms and interconnectors, from SASES (Sub-Station Action – Save East Suffolk) about the Sealink consultation this autumn and Lionlink consultation next spring and the need for a single planning process for them, and from Stop Sizewell C on the latest information about Sizewell.

Sealink

The Acting Town Clerk and Cllr Jeremy Smith attended a virtual briefing from NGET (National Grid Electricity Transmission) about the upcoming Sea Link statutory consultation to be held from 24th October to 18th December 2023. Unfortunately, the team delivered a cold, factual monologue about the statutory consultation process and did not share any further details about the project. The session appeared to be no more than a box ticking effort at community engagement. An exhibition about the project proposals will be held at the Market Hall on 24th and 25th November 2023. A further briefing with the Town Council will be held between 16th November and 8th December 2023.

Lionlink

The Acting Town Clerk attended the exhibition event at Leiston. It is proposed that the Council does not respond to the non-statutory supplementary consultation which runs from 8 September to 3 November 2023 as it only concerns an alternative landfall site at Walberswick and an alternative onshore cable corridor to the north of Southwold.

Sizewell C

Town Council Meeting

The Community Relations Team will attend the Council meeting to explain how the Main Site Development Forum, Sizewell C Forum, Northern Transport Forum and Southern Transport Forum's will work and who is invited to attend as outlined in the Deeds of Obligation. They will then take questions from the Town Council and the public.

East Suffolk Council Motion

The District Council has strengthened its commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes and minimal impact for communities from the construction of Sizewell C. The renewed pledge comes with an expectation of developers, in conjunction with stakeholders, to identify long-term solutions to a number of key issues. It comes in response to a motion brought to Full Council on 27th September 2023 by Cllr Tom Daly, cabinet member for Energy and Climate Changes, and seconded by Cllr Sarah Whitelock, ward member for Aldeburgh and Leiston, who called for a resolution to strongly represent East Suffolk communities to maximise the benefits and minimize the impacts of developments.

The motion formalized the District Council's position in advocating for true green renewable energy in preference to Sizewell C but recognised the reality of the Development Consent Order decision.

Benhall/Sternfield Habitat

To compensate for a small area of Sizewell Marshes needed during construction of Sizewell C, EDF are planning to deliver substantially larger areas of habitat at off-site locations. One of these new areas is east of Friday Street where fen meadow is being established to create a new habitat for a variety of species. EDF are rewilding areas that were once low-grade arable land to create a mosaic of heathland, scrub, woodland, wetland and fen meadows. Early works on the project including ecological surveys are now complete and excavation work at the site is underway. This includes the delivery of aggregate to create a haul route for the creation of the meadow. Average speed cameras and a temporary speed limit of 40 mph on the A12 at Friday Street have been introduced for eight weeks to increase safety during the HGV movements. The Acting Town Clerk intends to ask EDF to confirm or deny a rumour that 30,000 cubic meters of peat is being excavated from the fen and transported to the main construction site.

Investment

The government and EDF have launched the formal process to raise private investment for Sizewell C. The government is supporting the project with a £700m stake. It has made £511m available to continue project development and prepare the coastal site for construction. A formal invitation has been sent out to investors to come forward to help fund the project.

Judicial Review Appeal

TASC (Together Against Sizewell C) have won a court victory as the Court of Appeal overturned a High Court judge's dismissal of its calls for a judicial review arguing that the government had failed to assess the environmental impact of the project when granting planning permission. The Court of Appeal overturned the ruling based on arguments around the lack of a permanent water supply for the site.

Grant Funding

The Sizewell C Neighbourhood Fund has opened a new funding round of £10,000 which is available for projects which deliver a direct benefit to people living within 10 miles of the proposed development sites for Sizewell C. Requests relevant to the education, environment and lifestyle/health will be viewed particularly positively. The maximum award granted per event/project is £750.