

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	12 February 2024
Item Number	5d
Report Title	Energy Projects Report
Report Author	Sharon Smith, Town Clerk

Sizewell C

Energy Minister, Andrew Bowie, visited Sizewell on 15th January 2024 to mark the triggering of the Sizewell C Development Consent Order. Stop Sizewell C and Together Against Sizewell C held a peaceful gathering at the gates of Sizewell C and the Minister held a short meeting with them. He did not fulfil his promise to meet extensively and inclusively with elected representatives of affected communities.

Triggering the DCO has allowed the Sizewell C project to release a £250 million package, available in phases over the construction period, for mitigatory schemes and to deliver a lasting legacy for the region. Sizewell C Co's next steps are to establish perimeter fencing around the construction site for safe and secure boundaries, complete designs, and apply for construction permits. Ecological and archaeological works will continue on site and across the associated development sites. Work will begin on access roads for construction traffic and fitting out early site welfare and offices. There will not be a sudden increase in activity but more of an incremental process. The current workforce is around 500 strong. Taxpayer funds will support this ongoing preparatory work so that the necessary infrastructure is in place before full construction begins.

The Final Investment Decision (FID) is some months away, as soon as spring, or later in the year. The Financial Times reported that Minister Bowie said the project was on track to raise £20 billion in financing and debt before the end of 2024. Minister Bowie said the FID would be made 'by the end of this parliament'. A government official told Stop Sizewell C that triggering a DCO before a FID was 'common practice' but it remains at the project's risk.

On 23rd January 2024, it was reported that Sizewell C has been given an extra £1.3bn from government's 'existing budgets' so work can 'steam ahead' as it seek private investors to support its construction bringing the government's total investment to £2.5 billion.

Sizewell C Transport Forums

The first Northern Transport Forum was held on 6th February 2024 and was attended by the Town Clerk. The discussion points covered the purpose of the forum, its terms of reference, an outline of the Transport Review Group, the implementation of the DCO, an update from the Main Development Site Forum, details of the B1122 and the B1125 mitigation works, the Sizewell Link Road, the Yoxford roundabout, the rail strategy and Green Rail Route, and the Northern Park and Ride site.

The first Southern Transport Forum was unfortunately scheduled for 12th February 2024 at the same time as the Town Council meeting and the Town Clerk's annual leave.

Civil Nuclear Roadmap

In January, the government announced the biggest expansion of nuclear power for 70 years with a [Civil Nuclear Roadmap](#) with the aim of quadrupling nuclear power generation to up to 24GW by 2050. The key headlines are:

- The 'ambition' is up to 24GW but no minimum target has been set.
- The government will 'explore' another large-scale project beyond Hinkley and Sizewell C, but it will look beyond EDF and the EPR reactor.

- The aim is to consent projects that will deliver 3-7GW every five years from 2030.
- No funding commitments were made aside from up to £300m for fuel strategies to remove Russia from the supply chain by 2030. The Civil Nuclear Roadmap contains no costings or commitments to certain funding routes (eg RAB, private capital, state funding etc).
- A [consultation on siting of new nuclear infrastructure](#) was also published. Of greatest note are proposals for developers to identify 'suitable' sites outside of the eight designated in the (now out of date) Nuclear National Policy Statement. The Times reports that this could mean smaller reactors could be located almost anywhere.

Sealink

Therese Coffey MP has called on National Grid to publish the reasons why Bradwell in Essex was deemed unsuitable to receive power lines from offshore wind farms. National Grid has decided not to proceed with plans after conducting studies of the site. Speaking in the House of Commons, Dr Coffey pressed the Prime Minister for the reasons why. Rishi Sunak replied that it was 'important to listen to communities and the relevant ministers were listening to her concerns.' A spokesperson for National Grid said, 'we have published an environmental study of Bradwell on our website, as part of the Norwich to Tilbury project, which found that the numerous highly protected and ecologically sensitive sites around Bradwell would require significantly more onshore infrastructure to bring the energy to where it is needed, than otherwise would be necessary. Alongside this, connecting Sea Link in to Bradwell would not reinforce the electricity network in the place where it is required. As a result, these options were not progressed.

North Falls and Five Estuaries

These offshore windfarms are extensions to the existing Greater Gabbard and Galloper offshore windfarms. In December 2023, the Electricity Systems Operator (ESO) began conducting a study to assess different ways to transfer electricity, once it has landed off the coast of East Anglia, to where it's needed. Certain offshore windfarms are voluntarily considering alternative locations to connect to the transmission network as part of this review. The outcome of the first exploratory stage has had a proposal put forward to connect North Falls and Five Estuaries into the middle of Sealink. The windfarm developers and NGET will need to continue exploring the feasibility of the proposed coordination over 2024 which will include detailed technical and commercial assessments, and consideration of any impacts elsewhere to connections or the system. A final report will be produced and made available publicly.

[East Anglia study | ESO \(nationalgrideso.com\)](#)

East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two

The Judicial Review appeal brought by Substation Action Save East Suffolk (SASES) regarding the sub-station to connect these offshore windfarms in Friston has been rejected. The Court of Appeal ruled on flood risk, and the sequential test, under the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF does not require that wherever there is a risk of flooding from surface water, an application must demonstrate that there is no other reasonably suitable available site with a lower risk of flooding. SASES is considering its next steps including seeking leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) is still pursuing its case in the Court of Appeal which is scheduled for 14th February 2024. SEAS have released a short film called 'Coast' written by and starring Ralph Fiennes to gain maximum attention for their national petition, to demand an offshore transmission network, to Claire Coutinho MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. The petition requires 100,000 signature to enable a parliamentary debate.

[Coast \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Petition · STOP Needless Destruction of our Coast & Countryside by National Grid · Change.org](#)