

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	8 April 2024
Item Number	8a
Report Title	Energy Projects Report
Report Author	Sharon Smith, Town Clerk

Sizewell C

On 3 March 2024, it was reported that Sizewell C Co signed a deal with EDF Energy for the freehold of the land which will be used to build Sizewell C. Most of the land will be used for the construction of the power station buildings, including the two reactor units. The surrounding area will provide space for new wildlife habitats, a temporary construction site, and an accommodation campus for 2,400 workers. Once construction of Sizewell C is completed, the majority of the newly purchased land will be restored to grassland, heathland, scrub and deciduous woodland. In the long-run, Sizewell C is expected to boost local biodiversity by 19%. EDF report that acquiring the freehold is another important step which fulfils a key requirement of the Office for Nuclear Regulation and demonstrates that Sizewell C is an independent organisation. An equity raise process to help finance the project is continuing to make good progress and a Final Investment Decision is expected later this year. Sizewell C has been jointly developed by EDF and the UK Government. The Government is now the majority shareholder and is currently investing a total of £2.5bn in financial support for the project.

Sizewell C Co is continuing work along Lover's Lane and the Ancillary Construction Area on King George's Avenue in Leiston. Current activity on the Main Development Site and across a number of Associated Development sites is concentrated on ecological and archaeological works, as well as conducting ground trials for civil engineering works and commencing drainage and earthworks. Sizewell C Co will be working on access roads on site for direct and efficient access for construction traffic, establishing perimeter fencing for safe and secure site boundaries, and constructing and fitting-out the early site welfare and site offices. Resurfacing work to improve the condition of the B1122 has commenced to reduce noise and vibrations generated from traffic.

The first Community Forum will be held on 9th April 2024 at Trinity Park and will be attended by the Town Clerk. The purpose is to provide the community with an update on the construction of the main site and associated development. The forum will enable local representatives and other appropriate third parties to ask questions, raise issues of concern, and help inform Sizewell C Co on key issues affecting the local community and to find ways to minimise the impacts and maximise the benefits of the project to those living and working nearby.

Anglian Energy Planning Alliance

The Chair and the Town Clerk attended an online meeting with 24 other local Town and Parish Councils on 7th March 2024. It was agreed that AEPA should take up the Department for Energy and Net Zero's offer to East Suffolk Town and Parish Councils for a programme of direct engagement with officials and ministers so that the government can fully understand the cumulative impacts that would be felt from all the proposed energy projects.

Meetings with DESNZ, some online and some in person in London, are to be attended by a small group of AEPA representatives from a wide spread of Councils. There will be one meeting per year to which representatives from all Town and Parish Councils will be invited. The first meeting is to establish a relationship of trust with DESNZ. Subsequent meetings will be structured around themes of specific interest – eg transport, flooding, services, etc, rather than geographically although some will inevitably be dictated by events as they occur. It was felt that this would make it easier for DESNZ officials to prepare and to put forward the right person to answer questions at meetings. The agendas are to be circulated to all Councils ahead of time so they have an opportunity to contribute to any points to be raised.

AEPA reported that at a previous meeting with Minister Andrew Bowie of DESNZ, they questioned whether the department had any sense of what the parishes of East Suffolk were up against and did the government understand

the cumulative impact of all the energy projects happening in such a small geographical area. The answer was that they did not and there was a slight embarrassment about this. DESNZ agree that it is not great, but they are in the hands of National Grid to deliver net zero.

AEPA further reported that the government intends to publish the voluntary guidance on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure in June 2024. AEPA intends to create a new public register on community benefits for transmission network infrastructure, to ensure developers are held accountable for delivering ambitious community benefit packages and to act as a source of inspiration for communities.

LionLink

Following the supplementary non-statutory consultation held in Autumn 2023, National Grid Ventures have published a report which captures the feedback received from over 1,300 responses, provides their response to the key themes that emerged from the feedback, and shares their cable route, landfall and converter site emerging preferences and how these have been identified from the feedback received. A copy of the report is available on their website here: nationalgrid.com/lionlink. NGV plan to hold public webinars to discuss the non-statutory consultation report and the environmental impact assessment scoping report following the Easter break.

The Rt Hon Dr Therese Coffey MP responded as follows:

Today, National Grid Venture (NGV) published their supplementary non-statutory consultation response to the Lionlink proposal. I completely oppose NGV's proposal to bring Lionlink into Southwold or Walberswick with a huge converter station at Saxmundham and continue to make the case to National Grid ESO and government ministers that brownfield sites closer to London should be used instead, especially as a majority of the power will then be transported to London and the southeast. Now that Ofgem is not supporting the Nautilus project, I call on National Grid to investigate the Isle of Grain as their landing point for Lionlink, which they were previously investigating for Nautilus. Ultimately, though, there is still a long way to go before final permissions are granted, including NGV having to undertake a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment. That will not be easy for them to justify considering the impact this would have on the specially protected sites in the Blyth Estuary. I am already engaging with statutory bodies such as Natural England on their response to these proposals. It is welcome that NGV is no longer considering the other sites along the coast, though I recognise that Sealink is still a threat.

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS)

On 18th March 2024, the Chair, Town Clerk and Cllr Geradine Barker attended a briefing update in Aldeburgh with local Town and Parish Councils, the District Council, engaged members of the community, representatives from the Destination Management Organisation, representatives from Saxmundham Against Needless Destruction, and the landowners from the converter station site and substation site. The purpose of the meeting was to learn more about National Grid's plans for the local area, SEAS current work programme and to exchange ideas about a collective action plan. Topics discussed included the LionLink EIA Scoping Report, the East Anglia Network Study, preparing for the LionLink and Sealink DCO examinations, the need for traffic flow assessments, likely impacts on tourism and hospitality businesses, the need for biodiversity and ecology assessments, the need for Town and Parish Councils to engage experts and legal counsel to represent them during the DCO examination, and the need to fill Town and Parish Council vacancies to spread the workload.

Substation Action Save East Suffolk (SASES)

The judicial review appeal was unsuccessful. The appeal was brought on two grounds – surface water flood risk at Friston and the cumulative effects of all the interconnector projects had not been taken into account. SASES is considering its next steps including seeking leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.