

THE ALDEBURGH SOCIETY

SIZEWELL C – MEETING WITH BUSINESS AND ENERGY DEPARTMENT (BEIS) OFFICIALS

Friday 4 February 2022, Snape Maltings

The Chair and I attended this meeting organised by the Anglia Energy Planning Alliance, the umbrella group for town and parish councils affected by Sizewell C plans. There were some 80 participants, drawn mainly from town and parish councils and some amenity organisations. Also present from Aldeburgh were Cllrs Marianne Fellowes and Peter Palmer (Cllr Sue Osben could not attend due to Covid), Alison Andrews of the Alde and Ore Association, and Cllr Russ Rainger of East Suffolk Council.

The lead BEIS official was Declan Burke, director of nuclear projects and development, who had been taken on a tour of the area by STOP SZC to brief him on the main local issues. Mr Burke explained at the outset that he was there to listen to local concerns but was not directly involved in handling the planning decision to be made following the Planning Inspectorate Examination. His role in the Government was to help develop the business case for new nuclear projects both large and small, given that existing generating capacity is nowhere near sufficient to meet the anticipated doubling of electricity demand by 2040 and renewables alone could not fill the gap.

The meeting (chaired by Cllr Tim Beach of Snape PC) addressed:

- Community consultation and deliverability (introduced by Cllr Fellowes as Chair of the Sizewell A and B Site Stakeholder Group);
- Community impact, in particular transport;
- Environmental impact, esp on the coast;
- Cumulative impacts.

Participants had been invited to submit prepared questions, and our Chair was selected to put the following point: *'How can a Government claiming world-leading environmental credentials even contemplate so much damage to (nationally protected) AONBs by windfarm and nuclear development projects on an eroding coast?'* Other questioners also focussed on these and related issues, often showing considerable expertise in geology, engineering, coastal management, traffic management etc. One particularly telling point was the fact that climate change and resultant sea level rise were not recognised when the Sizewell site was first selected, whereas it is now expected to be surrounded by water during the lifetime of the radioactive waste to be stored there. The conflict between the Secretary of State's recent allocation of £100 million to EDF to support the development of the project and his quasi-judicial role in dealing with the DCO application was also highlighted.

Several speakers emphasised how long they had been addressing these issues through the various stages of consultation since 2010, and how frustrated they had been by the poor level of communication by EDF and its repeated failures to provide timely information to the

Planning Inspectorate. There was also vocal criticism of the ambivalent attitude of East Suffolk Council, which they felt did not wish to engage with the strength of feeling locally.

Declan Burke was not in a position to answer in detail, but he emphasised that the Department would be focussing sharply on deliverability, drawing fully from experience with the Hinkley Point project now under construction. In addition, the Nuclear Regulation Authority was closely watching EDF's experience with the European Pressure Reactors, which were undergoing major technical problems in China, Finland and France. He recognised the strong concern being expressed about the multiplicity of energy projects targeting the East Suffolk coast and seemed to agree that individual projects by the various companies must be addressed in the round by central government.

The meeting was valuable in airing towns' and parishes' concerns and reinforcing their solidarity. It was conducted in a very orderly and calm way which perhaps understated the fears which many have about the construction, operation, and waste management of this enormous project.

PAUL BONGERS DE RATH

7 February 2022