

THE ALDEBURGH SOCIETY

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WINDFARMS EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH AND EAST ANGLIA TWO

The Aldeburgh Society is the civic society for the historic coastal town and cultural centre of Aldeburgh. The objects of the Society are to encourage public interest in and care for the character of the town and its surroundings, and the preservation, development and improvement of general public amenity in the area.

The Society strongly supports the development of renewable energies, including the generation of offshore wind energy in suitable locations. We are, however, deeply concerned by the aspects of Scottish Power Renewables' application for a Development Consent Order which relate to the onshore transmission of this offshore energy to supply the National Grid.

The Society has registered as an interested party for the Examination of the SPR application by the Planning Inspectorate, which is now underway. We objected to the intention of the Planning Inspectorate to conduct virtual Hearings while the Government's restrictions on public meetings during the Coronavirus pandemic continue to apply, and we deplore the fact that our and many others' objections have been overruled. We consider it essential that the fullest possible access should be assured for local organisations and individuals to participate in the examination of this highly complex and potentially damaging project. We are not satisfied that this need can be met by virtual means.

The Society was opposed to the selection of the Friston site for SPR's necessary onshore infrastructure. The 'substation' (itself a misnomer for a very large industrial building), with ancillary buildings serving National Grid would be a totally unsuitable development in a rural landscape adjacent to an attractive historic village. The proposed landfall installation at Thorpeness and the overland cable route to Friston would also cause considerable damage to the coast and a fragile part of the AONB nationally protected area. We are also aware that several other large industrial structures are envisaged within 5Km of the Friston site for National Grid interconnectors to Belgium and the Netherlands and to other parts of the UK and extensions to the Galloper and Greater Gabbard offshore windfarm installations.

The Society deplores the fact that the onshore connections of the various windfarms off the East Anglia coast have so far been handled piecemeal, and it strongly supports the concept of an undersea grid, such as already exist on the other side of the North Sea, that would enable these connections to be combined and brought ashore in a single location, preferably on a brownfield site. The Modular Offshore Grid (MOG) currently being built to serve four windfarms off the Belgian coast will put this concept into practice. We therefore welcome the Offshore Transmission Network Review launched by the Government in July 2020. We urge that these two proposed windfarms be included in the review and that decisions on this DCO application be delayed until that review has reported.

We are greatly concerned that the very large volumes of construction materials required for a project of this size would have to be delivered over a rural roads system, causing environmental damage, noise and disruption to the whole area. The simultaneous application by EDF for Sizewell C, involving similar but even greater pressures on the same local infrastructure, makes a coherent integrated approach indispensable.

The construction project would inevitably have a seriously damaging effect upon the tourism business and the cultural offerings for which Aldeburgh is renowned and upon which its local economy is largely based. We therefore urge the Government to require the Planning Inspectorate to pause the examination of both the SPR Windfarms and the EDF Sizewell C applications for the time being. In the meantime, a coherent national approach must be devised for the management of large energy projects on the Suffolk coast.

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