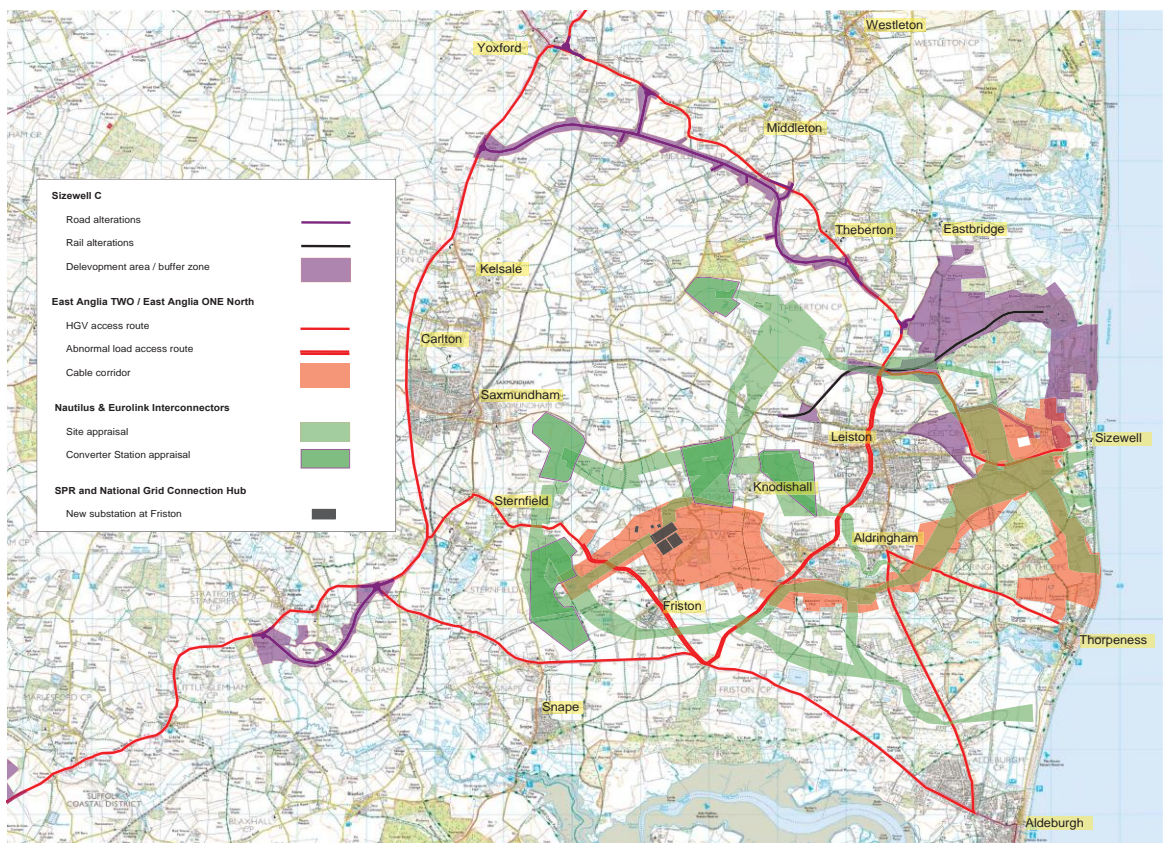


UPDATE ON SIZEWELL C
Report to the WPC Meeting of 17 January 2022

Our small bit of Suffolk Coast is being deluged with proposed energy projects. None of the developers – nor decision-makers at the national level -- seem particularly interested in the impact that one project has on the other nor of the overwhelming cumulative impact that these would have on the local population, transport networks, economy, health and safety services, and the character of rural Suffolk. These proposed projects include not only the world’s largest nuclear power plant and accompanying desalination plant, but windfarms with on-land supporting stations, at least half a dozen sub-stations for the national grid, the landing site of power cables from mainland Europe and interconnector cables with Kent and solar panel farms. The biggest of these proposed projects are shown in the map below. This is clearly an absurd situation for coastal Suffolk not to mention the country as a whole which would need to depend on the narrow A12 and local B roads to carry all the equipment, workers, and materials to support this infrastructure. Environmentally, the construction and operation of these projects pose extraordinarily high risks for the AONB, the SSSIs, Minsmere and all the marine, bird and animal life that depend on our pristine coast including here in Walberswick.



In terms of Sizewell C, the Planning Inspectorate (PI) completed its review in mid-October and had 3 months (until 12 January) to submit its recommendation to the BEIS Secretary of State (SoS), Kwasi Kwarteng, for decision. However, in late December the PI requested 6

additional weeks given the pressure to complete their work from the massive volume of papers and the 22 change applications made by EDF during the course of the 6-month DCO review. The SoS begrudgingly approved the extension in a letter that seemed to blame the Planning Inspectorate for being unable to complete its task in only 3 months. For those of us who engaged in the exceedingly complex inspection process which involved almost 5000 separate documents, we found the BEIS letter bizarre given how well the PI had performed even whilst key national agencies including the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Marine Monitoring Organisation, and Network Rail often failed to appear at the relevant hearings and found themselves unable to cope with the DCO and the major changes that EDF's numerous QCs and consultants continued to present. This reached its pinnacle when EDF admitted at the 11th hour that they had no water source during construction nor operation and would have to build an energy intensive and environmentally damaging desalination plant to support the construction phase. Even MP Therese Coffey, who remains a supporter of Sizewell C, expressed concern that the Environment Agency and Natural England, which are responsible for assessing EDF's plans on behalf of the nation, were unable to review and provide input on many of EDF's proposal (including the desalination plant) because of lack of details and time. To this day, there is no identified source of potable water needed for the 60 years of operation. As a result of the postponement, the PI now has until 22 February to make its recommendation to Government.

There have been other developments over the past few months. First, the Government is proposing to include a tax on every energy bill in the country for years to come to pay EDF to build Sizewell C. This controversial RAB financing model has gone through 2 readings at Parliament. RAB financing of nuclear energy has not gone well in other places (notably the US) where it has been tried (and left consumers paying for \$23.5 billion in cancelled construction costs and overruns) as it basically puts an unlimited construction cost liability on to all energy consumers. This is unrelated to actually paying for energy produced or, in fact, whether or not Sizewell C ever provides energy. Given that Hinkley Point and 2 other attempts to build EPR reactors in Europe are hugely delayed and overbudget, it would seem that this is a desperate attempt to finance something that no other investors will nor that the Government wants to show as part of national debt. There is every indication, however, that parliament will approve the RAB. Reportedly opposition parties are likely to try to introduce amendments to it through the House of Lords.

In terms of safety, new questions have arisen. The only place that has an operating EPR reactor is Taishan, China and this has been shut down since August (after only 3 years of operation) because of fuel failure. Meanwhile in reaction to revelations from a French whistle-blower who claims that the EPR reactors have a serious design flaw that is behind the Chinese reactor shutdown, France's Nuclear Regulator has halted work on EDF's EPR reactors at Flamanville which are already 10 years overdue. The same design (and potential flaws) is being built at Hinkley Point C in Somerset and would be used at Sizewell C.

On environmental issues, EDF has requested a change to its planning approval at Hinkley C to remove acoustic fish deterrents. From what we learnt at the hearings at Sizewell, these deterrents are essential to limit the impact on marine life and fish kill caused by the operation of the reactors as they are meant to keep fish away from the intake pipes. The

fact that EDF are back-peddling already on key environmental protections bode ill for similar promises at Sizewell where the coastal and marine impact could be even more dire.

What's Next

Kwasi Kwarteng was in Ipswich in December and reportedly received an ear-full from Suffolk businesses who are opposed to Sizewell C. He stated to those assembled that no decision on Sizewell C had been made. The top civil servant from BEIS for nuclear energy was meant to meet with about 60 delegates from local councils (including Walberswick) also in December but this was cancelled because of covid. However, this meeting is now planned for 4 February and Walberswick will be represented at the meeting in Snape by Cllr Bassinette.

East Suffolk Council (ESC) is supportive of Sizewell C and stands to benefit from many pots of mitigation funds that EDF is offering as compensation for the environmental, transport, housing and economic hardships that Sizewell C construction would cause in coastal Suffolk. It is of interest that neither EDF nor ESC has explained how this money could be used to mitigate these hardships and at the Planning Inspection hearings there were moments when the Planning Inspectors challenged ESC to explain what practical purpose the money would serve in terms of mitigation. Suffolk County Council has expressed opposition to Sizewell C but has now begun trying to plan for the disruption that it would create particularly on the roads if allowed to go forward. Cllrs Bassinette and Lewis met with Suffolk Highways to ask them to consider the impact at the water tower and A12 junctions with the B1387 and, should Sizewell C go forward, much more will be needed from Suffolk County to help mitigate the substantial traffic and safety problems we can expect.

Financing for Sizewell C remains uncertain even if the RAB goes through. To date, only EDF and Chinese Government-run China Nuclear, are investors. In contrast, Rolls-Royce's Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are promising new nuclear technology that could potentially replace large scale nuclear at a fraction of the cost and environmental impact. They could potentially be online sooner than Sizewell C. Rolls-Royce has also announced that they have the financing they need at present. The danger for us is that Sizewell C is given permission to begin construction with all of its negative impacts and huge financial costs and then is obsolete before it ever begins operation.

For those who would like to know how to express their views on Sizewell C, the Stop Sizewell C website provides very useful information on who to contact and how. It also has links to reputable media articles and research that provide many more details. Stop Sizewell C also offer a 5-mile walk through the beautiful part of the AONB and SSSI on which Sizewell C will be built. Details and booking information are on their website. It is well worth it to take this walk to understand the absolutely mammoth scale of the proposed nuclear plant and what will be forever lost if it goes forward.

Cllr. Bassinette, 11 January 2022