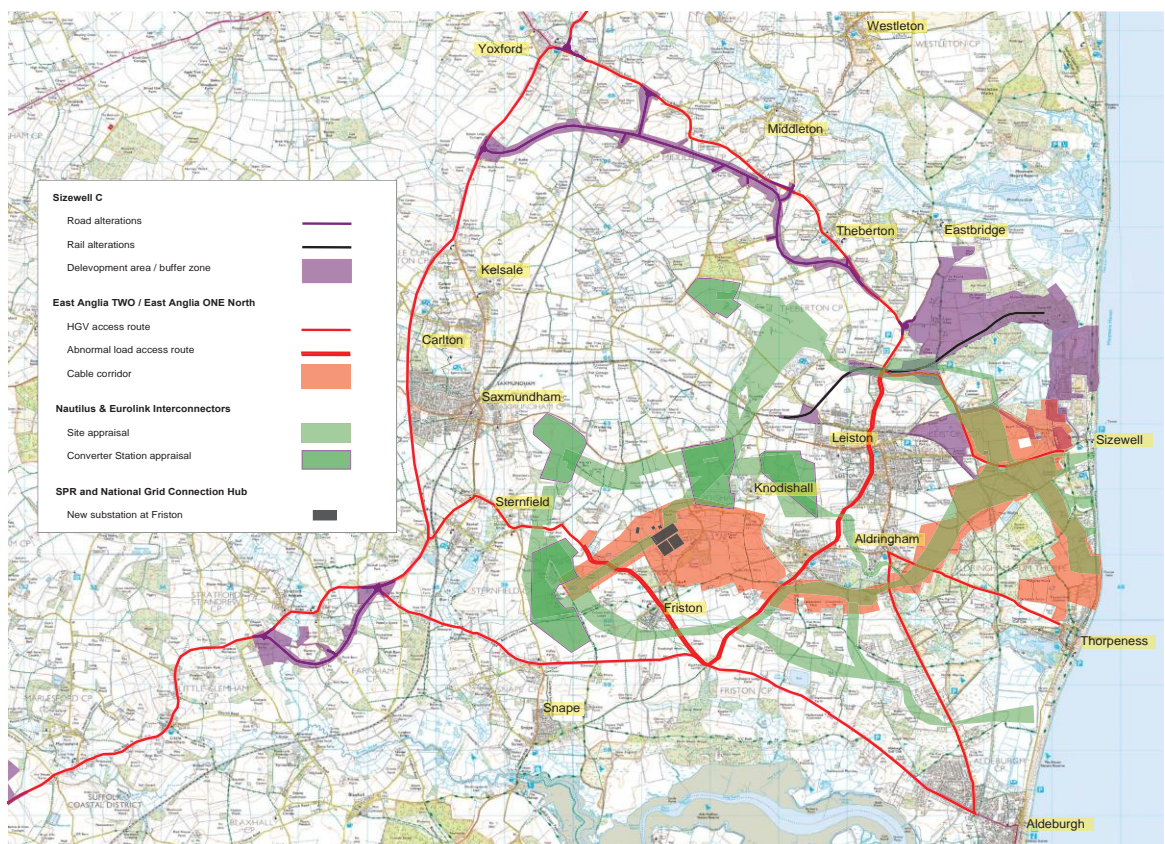


Update on Sizewell C and Other Large Energy Projects Impacting Walberswick and the Surrounding Coast

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting May 2023

Our small bit of Suffolk Coast is being deluged with proposed energy projects. None of the developers – nor decision-makers at the national level nor at the District Council -- seem prepared to prioritise 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 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.



Since writing the paragraph above in 2022, the situation has managed to get worse with “Eurolink” adding itself to this map including the proposal that consideration be given to bringing its cable on shore in the middle of the Walberswick Beach and through the Cliff Field Car Park.

With regard to Sizewell C, over the past year, the Government has promised the developer EDF greater amounts of taxpayer money. Although the current and previous Energy Secretaries, not to mention the former PM Boris Johnson, have visited EDF in Suffolk, they have never met with local community representatives despite numerous requests. The Environment Agency, under the current Environment Secretary Therese Coffey, has issued operating licenses for Sizewell C despite the absence of a plan for potable water and several other unresolved environmental issues. Whilst the cost of Hinkley C has now doubled since it began construction and looks likely to be some 10 years late in its delivery, Government and EDF are not revealing the likely cost of Sizewell C despite the Government taking a large equity stake in the project and committing to add a tax to every electric bill so as to provide a higher return to potential private investors during the 10-15 years (or more) period of Sizewell C’s construction. A judicial review of the Government’s decision to go forward with Sizewell C, brought by Together Against Sizewell C (TASC), is underway. It has been reported that Government and EDF, unable to convince British pension funds and others to invest in Sizewell C, are seeking billions of pounds of investment from sovereign wealth funds in Gulf countries. All of this demonstrates that there is still a lot at stake and plenty of reason to continue the fight against this project.

In terms of National Grid’s plans for on-shore infrastructure for off-shore wind, there has been no additional news since the ‘non-statutory consultation’ that took place in the autumn 2022. Strong arguments are being put forth for putting the necessary cabling and sub-stations off shore and in brown fields sites. However, Government and National Grid have made no commitments.

As for the role of WPC, we continue to engage on these issues to the extent we can. The WPC is represented on the B1125 Working Group set up under the Sizewell C Deed of Obligation to work alongside Westleton, Walberswick, Blythburgh, Suffolk Highways and EDF to try to mitigate the impact of potentially tens of thousands of extra cars and light vans that could use the B1125 to reach Sizewell C, its related facilities (such as worker campuses) and other traffic trying to rat run around the A12 which will itself be experiencing thousands of additional HGVs and worker vehicles every day. The Working Group is developing traffic calming infrastructure at Westleton and looking at the possible closure of the B1125 at the B1387 to help limit through-traffic. We expect to share updates over the course of 2023. The WPC will also continue to submit consultation responses to all relevant bodies and work to make local voices heard.

Cllr. Bassinette, 4 May 2023