

Statement Made on Behalf of the Walberswick Parish Council Given to the Planning Inspectorate Considering the Development Consent Order for Sizewell C

Open Floor Hearings on 19 May 2021

I would like to thank the Planning Inspectorate for the chance to present the views of the local community. In this, I am speaking as a Councillor and representative of the Walberswick Parish Council. Walberswick is a village of some 300 households about 10 miles up the coast from Sizewell. But I suspect that what I am saying could be representative of most of Suffolk's towns and villages that care about safeguarding the environment and sustaining local economies.

From the start of consultations, local communities, including Walberswick, have pointed out the severe logistical, economic and environmental flaws in EDF's plans for Sizewell C. Each time, EDF has proceeded with its preferred options rather than seriously addressing consultation input. All these years later, as the Planning Inspectorate is hearing from speaker after speaker, we are faced with a DCO that ultimately cannot answer for its inability to mitigate for the truly severe impact the construction of this enormous power station will have on the lives of everyone in the local communities for a generation, on the environment and all the plants and animals that depend upon it, on our economy built on natural beauty and tourism, and on our coastal processes. This probably isn't entirely EDF's fault – the reality is that it is impossible to justify the building of two new nuclear reactors here.

I have several points of particular concern that I would like to highlight:

- **First is the Transport Strategy Overall:** The Planning Inspectorate will have heard so many speakers pointing out the myriad problems with EDF's constantly changing and incomplete proposals for transporting materials and workers to the site. I won't enumerate all of these. For Walberswick, our most immediate concerns are about the utter inability of the A12 and the local roads – all of which we are ultimately dependent upon to get to work, shopping, school and living – to absorb the thousands of additional lorries, vans and passenger cars every day for years on end. None of the proposals put forward by EDF realistically will make this increase in traffic feasible. But I would like to say that even if the combination of rail, road and sea made sense, they are incredibly unlikely to be delivered. For example, as those of us who use Greater Anglia trains on a normal basis between Suffolk and London can attest, passenger trains are already often delayed or cancelled because of a late running freight train. Even if Network Rail could allocate the necessary track (which is by no means agreed), the impact of this number and length of slow moving freight trains would ultimately turn into a decade or more of disruption and misery for train passengers. The other possibility would be that the rail part of EDF's strategy would fail and they would end up moving even greater amounts by road because their rail strategy would be undeliverable. I believe this to be one of the greatest risks we face from Sizewell C.

- Second, is the consistent refusal of EDF to propose any mitigation for the disruption of what they call the ‘early years’ of construction despite this being an issue of concern raised by Walberswick and many local communities at every step of the consultation.** That is, EDF doesn’t propose to have any mitigation in place for at least the first few years. They are asking for approval to start construction without the completion of any new roads, Park & Rides, rail or sea options. This would see 600 lorries per day, plus workers and those for other Energy Projects in the area using the current A12 and connecting B roads. This is completely untenable and unacceptable. We would strongly argue that no start at Sizewell C should begin before transport mitigation is fully constructed. It is up to EDF to prove that they will deliver mitigation and it would be too late if they are allowed to proceed without everything first put in place.
- Third are concerns about Sea Transport and Sea Defences:** I will not go into detail as these will hopefully be dealt with at the issue specific hearings. But overall, I feel it necessary to point out the obvious – that the DCO is woefully incomplete on the impact that the construction and the siting of these plants will have on the sea and the coast. It is important for the Planning Inspectorate to understand just how delicate and interconnected this long coastline is and how much all the coastal communities are already under threat from coastal erosion and climate change. This winter, we had some fairly strong, but not atypical winter storms. We had to organise a beach clean on the Walberswick beach – some 10 miles north of Sizewell – to get vehicles onto the sand to collect these absolutely enormous sand bags that had washed up from the failed sea defenses at Thorpness and Leiston. It is inconceivable for EDF to argue that what they construct for Sizewell C will have limited impact north and south of the site. What confidence can anyone in our nation feel that spent fuel and high-level waste from Sizewell C would stay safely on this eroding coastal site until at least 2135? It is a fallacy that Sizewell C will not have severe consequences for the entire coastline. As a coastal community, already suffering from coastal erosion and the effects of rising sea levels, Walberswick cannot support any proposals that will accelerate coastal erosion and movement and certainly cannot countenance any plans that are not fully developed and provide full environmental impact analysis.
- Fourth is the destruction in the areas of the AONB, SSSI and impact on Minsmere:** The AONB is a contiguous area of coast, fen, and woods. It encompasses the unsurpassable Minsmere and countless other sites that are so special for the animals and plants that live on it and the people who love it and depend upon it. EDF’s proposals will destroy great swathes of it and it cannot be replaced by proposing new compensatory fen meadow habitat at far off Pakenham, Benhall and Halesworth. These areas are miles away and do not come close to adequately compensating for rare fen habitat loss in the Sizewell Marshes SSSI. It does not explain how magnificent species like the Marsh Harrier, which was saved from extinction in the UK because of the AONB and Minsmere, will be protected by putting compensatory habitat dozens of miles away. We see the Marsh Harriers in Walberswick – if Suffolk’s unique coastal environment becomes home to a 24-7 lighted, booming, polluting construction site for a dozen years or more, what

happens to these magnificent birds and others when their habitat is so severely disrupted, if not entirely destroyed? Legally, compensatory habitats that are at least equivalent to those lost must be put in place before construction. We support the view of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and others that EDF's plans are nowhere close to equivalent, nor able to mitigate the impact on the environment.

- **Fifth and finally, is the impact on the Local Community and Economy:**

Walberswick's economy, like those of the surrounding towns and villages, is based around being a rural, clean, relatively accessible coastal community. Access to neighbouring villages, walking paths, road cycling, historic sites and beautiful natural sanctuaries such as Minsmere and Dunwich Heath are major draws for visitors and residents. The urbanisation, congestion, noise, air and light pollution caused by this massive infrastructure project will severely damage the basis of our village economy and life. In particular, I would like to highlight that even EDF's own surveys show that a significant percentage of visitors will be deterred from visiting the area during construction, thereby damaging the Suffolk coast visitor economy. Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation found that tourism could lose up to £40 million a year, with the potential loss of up to 400 jobs. I would argue that this is a very conservative estimate. This doesn't begin to account for the unacceptable pressure the construction will have on already extremely tight local housing accommodation. Finally, like many villages in Suffolk, Walberswick has a large number of older residents. For nearly all of them, they will never live to see Sizewell C finished. All they will see is this amazing environment and coast lost in a haze of construction.

In closing, I want to stress that this is not NIMBYism. Suffolk already hosts 2 nuclear plants and is slated to host more than ½ a dozen other power projects. This is about just how wrong it is to build these nuclear reactors in this particular site. It can't be justified on the basis of 'carbon neutral' given that the development will create so much pollution that even EDF's own estimates admit that Sizewell C will not contribute to carbon neutral until 2040 (assuming they stay to schedule which has never happened at any nuclear power plant). We can't argue for benefits of 'carbon neutral' if it entails the destruction of one of the UK's key Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and SSSI. The siting of Sizewell C -- in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the delicate North Sea coast, in an area with woefully inadequate infrastructure to absorb the construction -- is simply and entirely wrong and should be rejected.

Thank you.