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Subject: The Sizewell C Project, Deadline B, 7 April, and Preliminary Meetings Part 2, 14 April Planning Inspectorate Reference EN010012
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My Ref 20026566

Dear Sir / Madam

**The Sizewell C Project, Deadline B, 7 April, and Preliminary Meetings Part 2, 14 April
Planning Inspectorate Reference EN010012**

I followed the livestreamed Preliminary Meeting on 23/24 March during which Alison Downes of Stop Sizewell C (Theberton and Eastbridge Action Group on Sizewell Ltd) spoke on my behalf. I remain fundamentally opposed to the project and would like to place on record the following comments and observations:

1 Virtual Meetings

I recognise the difficulties facing the ExA in conducting an examination of this importance virtually. It will have been clear to all those participating though, that the technology on which we are forced to rely, places individual objectors, lay people with an interest but without specialist knowledge of the planning system, those without sophisticated electronic systems or expertise in operating them, and those with poor broadband service, at a significant disadvantage.

It cannot have escaped the attention of the Examining Inspectors, that even those conducting the meeting were regularly affected by poor quality screen displays, flickering, freezing, muffled sound etc. Lead member of the panel Ms McKay's display was particularly poor.

The difficulties experienced by many of the participants contrasted with the generally good quality livestream enjoyed by those representing the Applicant. I suspect I'm not alone in noting the particularly 'chummy' exchanges between Mr Brock and Mr Philpott on Day 2 which, for interested parties attempting to articulate their reasons for objection (some of whom had been shut down abruptly) served only to emphasize their sense of disadvantage. Was it really in order for Mr Brock to hand the floor to Mr Philpott to explain the Rochdale Envelope when, if explanation were needed, that should surely have been handled in a scrupulously non-partisan manner by the ExA?

The examiners should consider whether these serious technical issues had the result of limiting access and participation by those with genuine, heart-felt interest. They may also reflect on the perception of local people unused to the planning system in action at this level, that it may not be treating them equally. The system itself will have failed if it results in people simply giving up. This is a question of basic democratic fairness and should be addressed urgently.

Whilst I would prefer the Examination to be delayed in its entirety, I urge the ExA to take note of these problems and move to in-person meetings at the earliest opportunity.

2 Timing of the examination

It is perverse to press ahead with the examination at full speed when the Inspectorate has yet to decide whether to accept the Applicant's proposed changes to its proposals, and if it does accept them, how they are to be considered in relation to the original submission.

This is a clear example of the examination placing individual objectors at a significant disadvantage. Those of us who object have extremely limited resources.

In addition, the timing of County Council elections means that opportunities for the voices of local objectors to be represented, are being further constrained.

Delaying the decision over the proposed changes and ignoring the local elections, whilst sticking to a fixed timetable, provides clear evidence that the democratic framework within which the proposal is to be examined, is being compromised.

In the interests of fairness and basic democratic principles, I urge the ExA to defer the start of the examination until after a decision over the applicant's proposed changes has been made and communicated to all interested parties and until the new Council appointments have been made. The suggestion of a Part 3 Preliminary Meeting seems to be a logical and equitable solution to this important flaw in the current timetable. Given the imminent easing of Covid 19 restrictions, it would also make it easier for larger parts of the examination to be conducted in future, by way of Open Floor Hearings. I urge the ExA to reconsider its position on this aspect of the timetable.

3 Principal Issues

My principal objection to the application relates to the fundamental unsuitability of the site's location with regard to the long history of coastal erosion in this region, rising sea levels caused by climate change and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events.

I do understand that this issue will be, or should be, considered during the main examination phase as one of substance. However, for the purposes of the Preliminary Meeting it has become a procedural / timetable issue because of the Applicant's reliance on the Rochdale Envelope. The Applicant has not provided the level of detail required under the Inspectorate's guidance on that approach and the matter should be addressed now, urgently.

I was not familiar with the Rochdale Envelope until the Preliminary Meeting but EDF seems to be relying on this approach in order to limit consideration of coastal erosion and rising sea level. Having now read Advice Note Nine: Rochdale Envelope, July 2018 (version 3), I urge the ExA to insist that the guidance in this advice is followed scrupulously. Specifically, I refer to:

4.9 "... The assessment should establish those parameters likely to result in the maximum adverse effect (the worst case scenario) and be undertaken accordingly to determine significance."

4.12 "... The characteristics of the Proposed Development that are yet to be finalised should be clearly identified in the description of the development in the ES. The Applicant should consider whether it is possible to robustly assess a range of impacts resulting from a large number of undecided parameters." I would argue that in this case it is not.

4.13 The applicant should "... ensure that the assessment of the worst case scenario(s) addresses impacts which may not be significant on their own but could become significant when they inter-relate with other impacts alone or cumulatively with impacts from other development (including those identified in other aspect assessments)."

4.18 "... During the examination of an application, if it comes to light that the ES should contain further information for example to assess variations associated with flexibility within the DCO application, consideration of the application would be suspended pending receipt of that further information."

6.3 "The challenge for applicants is to ensure that where uncertainty exists and flexibility is sought the following is achieved: ...

- that the likely significant environmental effects from the Proposed Development have been properly assessed and presented in the ES; and
- that there is a consistent approach to the description of the development addressing the uncertainty and necessary flexibility across all relevant application documents.”

I suggest that the application fails already to meet those specific requirements and that, at the level of cumulative effect, it fails completely.

We all know that the coastline in this region will continue to change unavoidably, even without the Sizewell C project. EDF's own advisers, Cefas, have admitted that it is only possible to predict detailed changes to the coastline 10 years ahead. They say that “almost every prediction in the very long-term has no certainty”.

I invite the ExA to consider this: If the Applicant admits that it is only able to make detailed predictions for a 10 year period, then by implication the ExA is being invited to accept that “the very long-term”, a period for which it is impossible to make detailed predictions, commences in 2031. They are saying that they are unable to make predictions for a period which will commence before the proposed construction programme has been completed.

Even if we accept their 10 year prediction, this is an admission by their own advisers that they are unable to satisfy the requirements of Advice Note Nine. And of course a 10 year prediction is of no use when considering a project of this nature: a project which will result in spent fuel remaining onsite until 2140, one which would not be decommissioned until 2190.

So, returning to the Rochdale Envelope and Advice Note Nine:

The Applicant's advisers say “almost every prediction in the very long-term (by implication, from 2031) has no certainty”; Advice Note Nine, 6.3 says “... that the likely significant environmental effects from the Proposed Development ... (should be) ... properly assessed and presented in the ES.” By its own admission therefore, the Applicant is unable to satisfy 6.3.

The Applicant's advisers say “almost every prediction in the very long-term (by implication, from 2031) has no certainty”; Advice Note Nine, 4.9 says “... The assessment should establish those parameters likely to result in the maximum adverse effect (the worst case scenario) and be undertaken accordingly to determine significance.” By its own admission therefore, the Applicant is unable to satisfy 4.9.

The Applicant must not be permitted to exclude this issue from detailed public examination by arguing that it is a separate matter to be resolved via the Office of Nuclear Regulation's site licensing process or by relying on the Rochdale Envelope approach. EDF's coastal defence plans are incomplete. If the level of detail required under Advice Note Nine is not available or possible to provide, the ExA should either:

- delay the examination until sufficient detail has been submitted for public scrutiny;

or, logic suggests, and in the light of the Applicant's experts' public statements,

- simply note that the Applicant has advised that it is unable to address the issue with the degree of certainty required by the Inspectorate's guidance, and proceed with the Examination on that basis.

4 Accompanied Site Visits

It was suggested that the ExA should make a visit to Hinkley Point. I support that suggestion but would urge the Examining Inspectors to ensure that they are accompanied not just by the Applicant's team but by representatives of the interested parties and, for the purpose of information gathering with respect to outcomes compared with the original proposals, by representatives of interested parties from the historical Hinkley Point examination.

I suggest also, that if the inspectors are to visit to Hinkley Point, they should ensure that they are in the area at key times of day (including peak traffic movement periods) and night (in order to reach an appreciation of the levels of light pollution).

Yours faithfully

Neil Poole RIBA

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07 April 2021