

Application by NNB Generation Company (SZC) Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for The Sizewell C Project EN010012

This is the (edited) text of my oral presentation from:

OFH2: Tuesday 18 May 2021 (afternoon) Session 1/7

My name is Neil Poole. I have spent most of my 66 years in Suffolk and retired last year from the practice of chartered architects that my business partner and I established here in 1985. I am speaking in a personal capacity, on behalf of my family and of those I love.

On 1 February 1953, the young woman who, two years later would become my mother, was in a rowing boat assisting the rescue operation in Felixstowe after the previous night's storm. She took the oars while her colleague pulled a body from the water.

41 people died in Felixstowe. The sea defences held but nobody had expected the flood to come from water pushed up the estuary of the Rivers Orwell and Stour, and over land occupied today by the Port of Felixstowe.

307 people on Britain's east coast lost their lives. In the Netherlands, more than 1,800 people died. Winds gusting at 140mph had driven a 15 billion cubic feet sea surge southwards from the Atlantic into the North Sea. A ten feet high wall of water crashed into the high spring tide approaching from the other direction.

The Great Flood of 1953 was an extreme weather event, but this side of Britain is also subject to relentless erosion caused by the impact of steady weather patterns and tides on its soft cliffs and low-lying coastal marshes.

We are all familiar with the story of the demise of the Medieval town of Dunwich, three miles north of the application site. But Dunwich is not unique: the ruins of Walton Castle, built by the Romans near Felixstowe, now lie more than a mile offshore;¹ five miles north of Dunwich, the ruins of the huge church of Easton Bavents, are now more than a mile and a half offshore;² the shell of the medieval church of St Andrew at Covehithe, 10 miles to the north, where in every normal year 5m of coastal land disappears, will be gone in fifty years.³

While the general pattern is of losses, in some places, land accumulates. During my lifetime huge new shingle banks have built up around the mouth of the Deben and at Shingle Street. The old centre of Lowestoft is further away from the sea than it was 500 years ago.⁴ Sudden dramatic and unexpected changes to the coastline have often resulted from human interventions.

So it goes on. Orfordness lighthouse finally succumbed last year. The sea defences at Thorpeness, are failing ahead of their intended design life. At Slaughden, only regular interventions have prevented major breaches. A policy of 'Managed Realignment' is likely to see a permanent breach there very soon.

To all of this, we now have to add the impact of climate change, which is already increasing the regularity and severity of extreme weather events. Sea levels will continue to rise throughout this century.

Dr Tony Dolphin, senior coastal scientist at Cefas, quoted in the local press, said:

*'... it is generally only possible to predict detailed changes to the coastline over the next 10 years. We can try and predict as much as we like, but almost every prediction in the very long-term has no certainty around it.'*⁵ From which, we have to conclude that for Cefas, the 'very long-term' is a period beginning in 2031.

One thing we can be certain of, is that if Sizewell C is built, it will be protected at all costs. It will become the end of a peninsula causing dramatic changes to the coastline to the north and south.

When lockdown rules were eased last month, my wife and I took our first trip beyond our local patch, to one of our favourite spots. The hides were still closed but we made a circular walk around the perimeter of the Minsmere reserve. As we passed the beautiful new stained glass installation at the ruins of the former Leiston Abbey, a cuckoo called - a common sound until recently, but now heart-liftingly rare. Further inland, hidden deep in a bramble patch, a nightingale, newly arrived from West Africa, treated us to its astonishing repertoire. Later, below Whin Hill, where 5 years earlier, at the former Springwatch cabin, we'd spent a delightful midsummer evening listening to pieces from Messiaen's Catalogue d'oiseaux, as part of that year's Aldeburgh Festival, marsh harriers drifted in front of what the great WG Sebald called the '*Whispering madness on the heathland of Suffolk*'⁶. Further on, we stood beneath the closed bittern hide. A Cetti's warbler sang close by and, as if by arrangement, a bittern lifted off over the reeds.

Whether or not one agrees that nuclear energy should provide part of our future energy mix, the precautionary principle, not to mention simple logic, scream at us that the east coast is NOT the place to be testing that debate to destruction. To put it

here, of all places, alongside what the Council of Europe's website describes as '*the most important bird reserve in the United Kingdom*',⁷ would be utter madness.

Our children and grandchildren face an uncertain future. We owe it to them not to allow folly on the scale of the proposed Sizewell C mega plant.

Thank you for the opportunity to address members of the panel.

Neil Poole RIBA

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1 The Suffolk Churches Site [Suffolk Churches](https://suffolkchurches.co.uk)

2 Ibid [Easton Bavents \(suffolkchurches.co.uk\)](https://suffolkchurches.co.uk)

3 Ibid Suffolk Churches Site [Suffolk Churches](https://suffolkchurches.co.uk)

4 Ibid [Suffolk Churches](https://suffolkchurches.co.uk)

5 East Anglian Daily Times, August 6 2020, Updated October 11 2020

6 After Nature. WG Sebald, translated by Michael Hamburger

7 [Minsmere's status as "most important bird reserve in the UK" at risk from Sizewell C \(rspb.org.uk\)](https://rspb.org.uk)