

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

This special place

Last week I chanced upon an elderly lady, along with her daughter and granddaughter, at RSPB Minsmere where I am a volunteer guide. They were looking for 'grandad's tree' and it soon became apparent that they were trying to relocate the spot where, a couple of years previously, they had scattered grandad's ashes.

We spoke for a little while about the man, his wish for his last resting place to be Minsmere and the family's feelings about the importance of choosing somewhere so unique and special for remembrance. I understood those feelings well enough because my late wife's ashes are also scattered at Minsmere in a spot that was special to her and remains so to me and to our children.

But beyond such intense personal connections to the place, how do we attribute a value to Minsmere and the wider AONB?

I have been a regular visitor at Minsmere for around 45 years; it was the most special of places during my 30 year marriage and my children spent large chunks of their young lives there; they still visit whenever possible.

But over that same period I enjoyed a 40 year career, in Suffolk, in economic development with a clear focus on securing investment for business growth, employment creation and skills development. I worked for many years for the county council and the chamber of commerce, amongst others.

Alongside a love for the environment and wild places I therefore have a long-standing professional, and pragmatic, commitment to achieving a strong and sustainable economy that works for local businesses and individuals alike.

During my professional life I met and got to know a lot of local businesses, from all sectors and of all sizes. I came to understand very well the challenges that they face and the energy and investment that it takes for them to thrive. Businesses of course are owned, managed and staffed by individuals with their own values and interests and their own reasons for doing what they do and doing it where they do it. It became obvious to me that there is an overwhelming sense in the Suffolk business community of what a special place Suffolk is, with a wonderful and tranquil landscape underpinning an excellent quality of life. That is especially true in and close to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. This sense of Suffolk as a special place to start up or run a business underpins its entrepreneurial character and gives it deep roots.

This perception has been strongly reinforced since I began volunteering at RSPB Minsmere. As a regular guide over the past ten years I have met countless local business people in 'relaxation mode'. I have come to appreciate the value that they

place on being able to balance their entrepreneurial drive and the demands of running their businesses with the need for a special place for rest, recuperation and good old-fashioned pleasure in wild places. These are *the same people* already driving what is a very diverse and successful local economy with good prospects for growth, low levels of unemployment and they are already having to wrestle with labour and skills shortages. Nonetheless the importance of the Suffolk environment – this special place - both roots businesses in the county and attracts them to it whether to establish a business or take up employment.

An unhelpful belief is that the only businesses likely to be adversely affected by the proposed Sizewell C project are those in the tourism and leisure sectors. Certainly those sectors, which are critical to the Suffolk economy, would be very negatively affected by Sizewell C should it go ahead but the impact on the wider business community would also be harshly felt. The proposed project would erode the characteristics and quality that make Suffolk special and would weaken business confidence in Suffolk as an attractive place to remain or in which to locate.

My own convictions are reinforced by the Suffolk local authority-led and New Anglia LEP-endorsed [Invest in Suffolk initiative](#) which through Suffolk Chamber of Commerce hosts 100 prominent business ambassadors. Invest in Suffolk tells potential investors that “Suffolk is one of the most beautiful *and unspoilt* areas in the UK”...with...”a fantastic quality of life”.

Likewise the New Anglia LEP [Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy](#) acknowledges that: “the *natural landscape* plays a unique role in creating the ‘*sense of place*’ that makes the area a great place to live, work, learn, invest and do business in...”.

The County Council’s [Suffolk Growth Strategy](#) similarly promotes the: “excellent quality of life that people can enjoy in Suffolk...*an attractive place for people to live and work*...our longstanding commitment to become the UK’s “greenest county”.

EDF has failed to take into account, as required by National Policy Statement EN-6, the potential negative impacts on local business retention and future investment by the proposed ruination of this special place. The volume and value of the economic and employment gains created through the proposed project would be more than offset by the very real losses resulting from irreparable disturbance and damage to our environment.

The SZC proposals that would desecrate the area as a special place for joy and remembrance would be equally disastrous for the economy and employment in Suffolk.

Nicholas Burfield, 

Ref: 20025887