

SUMMARY: Speech to a meeting hosted by TEAGS (Stop Sizewell C) and Theberton & Eastbridge Parish Council on 14 September 2019

Richard Cuttall, Chairperson of West Hinkley Action Group and resident of the tiny hamlet of Shurton which is on the boundary of EDF's Hinkley Point C development in Somerset (roughly equivalent to Theberton and Eastbridge).

Richard described three rounds of consultations, and a sense that EDF were not going to listen to local concerns. "The consultations were repetitive with a lack of new information. There was no mention of the major factors that would diminish our quality of life for years to come."

He gave the example of lengthy negotiations of a piece of land between Shurton and the site that would be left as a buffer but this was omitted in the Development Consent Order application "and we now have no access to this area."

As groundwork started he described how rock and earth was excavated and stockpiled in 35 metre high mounds, initially classified as bunds to reduce noise levels but gradually becoming a visual barrier. The height of these stockpiles has increased and the area is now known locally as The Alps.

Richard described the complexity of the Hinkley DCO application and difficulties in coming to grips with it. He described conversations during the examination about mitigation money being "re-examined".

Once DCO consent was given, local concerns turned to monitoring of the impacts such as noise, dust and light pollution from the site and local roads. 2 out of 4 monitoring stations just outside the perimeter fence were inoperative for many months and data was transferred to WSC in a format difficult to read. "The anticipated noise levels for both day and night were published but we did not appreciate what impact this would have on daily life. We were not aware that baseline noise levels before construction were lower than average in our hamlets so being 10 dB above average was a considerable increase. We should have requested a simulation of the noise levels anticipated at night. All construction traffic should be fitted with white noise reversing sounders. On many occasions they were not fitted so the noise could be heard all around the area. I could see and hear them from my house and would have to phone to complain and tell EDF where the offending vehicle was working. The excuse was that there was a high turnover of personnel and machinery. A one off loud noise will not trigger a violation."

"Light pollution is most noticeable when there is a low cloud base. The whole sky glows and can be seen for miles. The local stables no longer have to use floodlights. Lights shine into people's houses. Complaints are made and sometimes the light is redirected. EDF will say in their application that lights are directional, angled in towards the site and only used when appropriate at minimal intensity to create a safe working environment thus minimising and mitigating the impact."

"Dust covers a wide area with regularity. Windows are always dirty. Footpaths in the area are dust laden and at this time of year the blackberries are spoilt."

"We have ANPR cameras monitoring the HGV route. Three consolidation and holding points. 6 park and ride sites. A team of EDF parking marshals. Numerous road improvements. A village by pass. Speed limit reductions. Traffic calming. Cycle routes. Wide load escort vehicles and a £16 million transport fund given to Somerset County Council by EDF. The reality is that the cameras only monitor HGVs. All other traffic including Cars, coaches, double decker buses, motorbikes, mini buses and vans all travel on the access road and the surrounding lanes."

"Stones fly off lorries damaging vehicles. Tailgating is common, which intimidates other road users. Many of the locals now have dash cams."

"Subsidence even on new roads is commonplace. The unsuitability of the only narrow route to site was highlighted but this was not ignored. Lorries and buses should not park in lay-bys, except in an emergency. They are seen on a daily basis in the badly damaged lay-bys which are prone to flooding. This leaves less space for cars or agricultural machinery to get off what is now a busy road. EDF will investigate if the registration number of an offender is passed to them along with place and time. This isn't very easy when driving or when taking evasive action to avoid a 40 ton truck on the wrong side of the road while the driver is texting."

"Vehicles leave site with their amber beacons flashing which is confusing for oncoming traffic. Many complaints have had no impact and despite this being an illegal practice the Police have issued no fines or cautions."

"Many road improvements have been carried out across the County. If we need to access the road to Bridgwater we only have two junctions where this is possible. A request was made during consultations and at the Inquiry for junction improvements. One request was ignored, we turn onto a road with a 60 mph speed limit with a blind bend to our left and the brow of a hill to the right. It can take up to 10 minutes to exit this junction."

"Fly parking is an area wide problem. Workers drive to the EDF bus stops and park in the village streets. These areas are already congested with workers who are renting rooms.. Alternatively they drive to site and park in lay byes and on the verges. The drivers then walk to get on a bus to the site. The parking wardens are not able to access the Police computer and just put advisory notes on the windscreens. Some houses have been converted to multiple occupancy without planning consent. This exacerbates the parking problems in the hamlets."

"Recently coaches that transport workers locally were stopping wherever they liked. It was agreed with EDF to identify specific stops. However they did insist on two stops within 100 yards of each other because it was too dangerous for the workers to walk on the country lane. We have to walk contending with the extra traffic."

"The phone system has been revised many times and now calls are diverted directly to the site out of normal office hours. In its infancy the calls would divert to Sunderland EDF customer call centre. The call handlers had not even heard of Hinkley let alone any complaint line. Later the calls diverted to EDF in Bridgwater. The security guards invariably had no idea of the complaints procedure. This was blamed on staff turnover. A common verbal reply to complaint is a reminder that "we are building a power station"

"Many people have moved away. Some have been lucky to sell privately but some have sold to EdF at what is reported to be significantly below market value. Properties close to the site have been damaged with cracks appearing in the walls. Currently EdF own 15 properties. EDF workers have rented some of these properties but as their contracts come up for renewal they are being asked to leave. EDF are then putting the property up for sale. Rental property is at a premium and illegal caravan sites are appearing in many locations. This upheaval has had an impact on the cohesion of the villages."

"We have always been encouraged to get a legacy from the construction of HPC. Section 106 money amounted to over £100 million and organisations applied for funds for numerous projects. Stogursey Parish primary benefit is a new village hall which should be built by 2021. However a new village hall does not take away the impact of daily disruption which many people suffer. Contrary to popular belief there is no direct compensation for anybody unless you move, and are very close to the site, then £5000 is offered to assist with costs. There is no compensation like the Heathrow Expansion scheme. Perhaps there is an argument that both HPC and Sizewell should have similar compensation."

