

Paul & Jeanette Collins Open Floor Hearing Transcript

Good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you this morning.

I'm speaking on behalf of myself and my wife. We are residents of Eastbridge and have lived here since September 2011. I'm a retired chemist who was a manager in the nuclear biomedical sector for 15 years and I am disappointed at our inability for over 40 years to build the Geological Disposal Facility for nuclear wastes. However, this is not my main objective for talking to you today.

You have heard that Eastbridge is situated about 250 metres from the closest borrow pit and various water management areas at the north western end of the construction site and my house is about 500 metres away from those areas.

We moved here to enjoy the beautiful landscapes, many protected areas such as Minsmere, wonderful walks and cycling in and around the Sandlings, the AONB and rare lowland heaths of this area.

EDF has made much of their claim to increase the biodiversity of the area because the arable estate they own will be landscaped to get rid of the millions of tons of excavated materials that cannot be used in the construction and "converted" to lowland heath, a significant feature of the Sandlings area and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The ability of any organisation to create lowland heath, which elsewhere has had centuries to establish itself in quiet and undisturbed areas is simply not credible in a timeframe of less than decades.

We have heard in the past few days that EDF SZB has already felled the 110-year-old Coronation Wood in advance of receiving bat disturbance licenses from Natural England in preparation for SZC. SZC Co plans to destroy other established woodland on the development site which, oddly enough, was originally planted as mitigation and compensation for Sizewell A and B power stations. Coronation Wood was cited in EDF's planning application for the Sizewell B Dry Fuel store as a visual barrier to what is a large industrial warehouse type of construction. We are now faced with additional outage and training centre buildings in front of the Dry Fuel Store with an inadequate boundary of new planting at the lowest elevation of the site which will not perform the purpose for which Coronation Wood was cited about a decade ago.

What cannot be in dispute, is that these established areas are rich in biodiversity, even if some of the forest is old plantation woodland and that their destruction cannot quickly be re-established, mitigated or compensated for.

Whilst some of the hedges and trees are scheduled to be retained within the SZC construction and development envelope, they are likely to be severely denuded of wildlife for the 10-12 years of the construction. The proximity of the green rail route to old oaks at Kenton Hills will also disturb known bat roosts and foraging areas.

Planting a 10-fold replacement of trees for the 110-year-old Coronation Wood cannot mitigate the loss of this mature habitat until the new planting has had many decades to establish and the same applies to the other mature woodland that will be lost.

Following the end of construction, the access road and car park for Sizewell C will see 900 staff, and many more during outages, going to and from work in multiple shifts. The use of this access road will continue to sever the AONB and cause significant disturbance to these new landscapes.

If we add in probable life extensions of the two new reactors, the period of severance of the AONB is likely to be well over a century.

It is clear there will be a significant overall loss of biodiversity within this area for decades to come and that will impact designated areas at Sizewell Marsh, Minsmere and well beyond.

Whether we consider Pillbox Field to replace Coronation Wood, Aldhurst Farm reed bed to replace Sizewell Marsh reed bed or Halesworth, Benhall and Pakenham inland fen meadow to replace Sizewell Marsh coastal fen meadow, the conclusion is that the compensation either does not compensate “like for like”, is not close enough to the loss and has or will not be provided well in advance as required.

In my five minutes, there simply isn't enough time to talk about the problems of beach, dune, and shingle habitat loss, impacts on sea life or all the issues with such a massive development on this eroding coast.

Overall, as a community we cannot continue to destroy what is established and already providing essential environmental services now, with the shaky promise of something to replace it decades away. We have a biodiversity and climate crisis now, not twenty, thirty or forty years down the line.

Essentially, EDF's claims for biodiversity increase are a poor attempt at what is now termed “Greenwash”.

Overall, this project is an ecological disaster with a multi-generational price tag for its environmental and toxic waste problems.

I trust after examining this rather flimsy, albeit large and complex, Development Consent Order application and hearing the multiple informed voices of concern, you will come to the same conclusion as we have.

This application should be refused.

Thank you for listening to me this morning.