

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

Following my intervention at Issue Specific Hearing 4 (ISH4 Socio-economic and Community Issues) Session 1, on Friday 9 July 2021, I want to re-iterate my concern that the voice of business is not and cannot be properly represented by certain of the bodies that you highlighted as Interested Parties on the PINS ISH4 meeting agenda.

I have had a career spanning 40 years in Suffolk, focused on economic development and employment creation (including senior roles with Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and Suffolk County Council) and believe that I provided an informed and highly relevant contribution to ISH4.

It concerned me that for an ISH focused on socio-economic issues you invited, directly, no actual business voices at all despite the well-known concerns many local companies have about the impact that the Sizewell C project would have on their viability and prospects for growth.

The apparent reliance of PINS on Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and New Anglia LEP to give a business perspective was dangerously flawed.

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has around 1,400 members whereas the number of businesses in the County stands at 35,000. The Chamber could therefore claim to speak for only 4% of businesses and even that claim is undermined by the fact that its membership has never been openly canvassed for its views. In any case the membership includes a significant proportion of non-business members including: Babergh District Council; Ipswich Borough Council; Mid Suffolk District Council; Suffolk County Council; West Suffolk Council; West Suffolk NHS Trust; and any number of schools, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, other local charities and so on; who could not truly be claimed to be part of any coherent business voice. Furthermore the Chamber does of course manage a supply chain contract on behalf of EDF which is naturally a commercial arrangement and surely compromises the Chamber's objectivity on this issue. To be blunt when the Chamber spoke on supply chain matters, whilst holding a supply chain contract with EDF, you were listening not to an impartial business representative but to the applicant. The applicant was in effect given an opportunity to marking its own homework.

New Anglia LEP is a quango that is wholly funded by Government, and operates within tight policy frameworks set by Government, therefore its strategic and operational functions are centrally-driven rather than locally-driven. LEP strategies are after all signed off by the Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. It is not surprising then that the LEP is quite rightly regarded as a public sector partner rather than a business and it is equally unsurprising that the LEP's penetration in the local business community is slight. In addition the Government's confidence in LEPs as business leaders is implicitly in question given that yet another LEP review is currently in progress.

I hope that you will reflect on these points and give further consideration to how you could possibly be seen to have achieved a balanced business contribution to ISH4 without having heard directly from businesses.

Nicholas Burfield (Unique Reference: 20025887)

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