



**Friends of
the Earth**
Suffolk Coastal

Interested Party ID: 20025904

EN010012: The Sizewell C Project

**Comments on the responses to the letter from BEIS of 18th March
concerning the proposed desalination plant**

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We are very surprised that BEIS should ask the following question, as the Applicant made it very clear throughout the Examination that the desalination plant would be temporary only, to assist with the construction works until mains water would become available. There were no plans put forward for a permanent desalination plant.

3.3. The Applicant should confirm if it would be possible for the proposed temporary desalination plant to permanently meet the full water supply demand for the lifetime of the proposed Development should no alternative water supply solution be identified. The response should include any further information that will assist the Secretary of State in understanding the water supply strategy for the lifetime of the proposed Development.

Natural England affirms that there were no plans for long-term use of a desalination plant, with the understanding that the proposed plant would be in use for a maximum of just three years only. (Email of 7 April, para. 1.3.) As the Examination has now finished, a permanent desalination plant producing potable water for the entire life of the power station is therefore not a part of the Sizewell C application.

There is no excuse whatsoever for the Applicant to have left the crucial question of potable water so late in the Examination. Why had NNB Gen. Co. (SZC) Ltd not sorted this out during the 10 years of consultation led by EDF Energy? Yet it was left until ‘Change 19’ towards the end of the Examination, when there was no time left for this important issue to be properly examined. Those of us who have lived in East Anglia for many years know all too well how very dry this region is, with intense competition for water from farmers, the tourist industry and a growing population, as well as nuclear power. This is now exacerbated by climate change. We refer you to our report on this issue and the fact that we warned EDFE about this problem at the very outset of their consultations. ([REP8-268](#).)

Natural England points out that a permanent desalination plant would require further environmental and ecological assessments, to understand what the effects might be on the many designated sites and protected species immediately within and adjacent to the Project area. Yet there will be no opportunity now for such detailed assessments to be made. Nor will the public be able to have any say in such an important matter.

Furthermore, what might the impacts be on our highly valued Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty? A desalination plant would be an industrial building, out of keeping with the quiet landscape and low-build architecture of East Suffolk. We understand

that the Applicant has made some suggestions about putting it underground or on Sizewell A land – but this would constitute a significant development in its own right and should have been an important part of the DCO.

The Environment Agency in its response affirms that no application concerning the water has been received. Until it is forthcoming, no permits can be granted. (Email of 8 April 2022, under Q. 3.4.)

The Applicant has maintained throughout the Examination that the water companies have an obligation, following government guidelines, to supply the necessary water so that businesses are not disadvantaged and growth thereby slowed. However, Northumbrian Water, in a letter of 23rd February 2022 from their solicitors Walker Morris, affirm the current position that the company cannot supply all household and non-household water, as well as the SZC Project, from present sources. This means that new ones have to be found. This will not be possible until the late 2020s at the very earliest and could take 10 years to resolve. It remains unclear whether such new resources can indeed be found, where precisely the water would come from and what the cost might be.

This is most unsatisfactory. Our members fail to see how the DCO can be determined without the proper assessment of a reliable and permanent source of potable water. It is obvious that no power station can be run without this essential resource. We request, therefore, that this incomplete DCO is refused.

REFERENCES

Environment Agency (2022). Response to the SoS for BEIS's request for information in his letter of 18th March. Q. 3.4. *Email* 08/04.

Natural England (2022). Response to the SoS for BEIS's request for information in his letter of 18th March. *Email* 07/04, 1.3.

Suffolk Coastal Friends of the Earth (2021). 'Post-hearing submission, including written submission of oral case: Water Management Strategy.' *REP8-268*, 24/09/21, section 1.

Walker Morris (2022). Update from Northumbrian Water Ltd on water supply issues. *Post-examination Submissions*, No. 35. 23/02, para. 6.

