

ALDEBURGH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION DOCUMENT RELATED TO HEARING TO EXAMINING AUTHORITIES 28 JANUARY 2021

The Aldeburgh Business Association's submission reference number is REF4-070 for this and the video sent in 13 January 2021, please note that some information has been updated since the video was created and since the hearing on 28.01.21. References and appendices can be found at the end of the document.

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Introduction

Thank you for having me, I am a representative of the Aldeburgh Business Association, our members are 80 SMEs in Aldeburgh, Snape, Thorpeness and Leiston.

None of our members are big corporate giants, this area has no Smiths, Boots or Starbucks, instead we have Baggotts, Barry Shooter's Pharmacy and Munchies. This delicate and successful network would be seriously threatened by the long term disruptive nature of the planned energy projects.

A vote was taken by ABA members in March 2019 and September 2020 regarding members' views and it was agreed that renewable energy was of importance in the effort to drive down climate change emissions but that multiple cabling projects through the AONB risked the industrialisation of precious landscapes and threatened local businesses.

Loss of trust in SPR

Although the ABA was always concerned about SPR's intentions it has only recently become aware of the full extent of the proposed works. On 07 July 2018 at an information event at Thorpeness Country Club SPR representatives assured me that the works would be completed within a year and that only 100 construction staff would be necessary. We now see this was misleading, we are now aware that SPR is just the first of a series of projects destined for this area with an unclear timescale. The ABA is asking the question 'What will SPR's behaviour be like once consent is granted?'

And there was no reassurance to be found in SPR's Chapter 30, Tourism, Recreation and SocioEconomics Environmental Statement Volume 15¹. I have been through this with some care and am alarmed at the sweeping assumptions and inaccuracies that it contains. It certainly does not take account of the multiple projects that are anticipated and has no consideration for local needs.

The key points that I now want to address relate to the tourism that so many local businesses rely on in this very special area, I will outline why visitors come here, what about SPR's plans will deter them and what that will cost the local area in income, jobs and mental health.

Why people come here

The East Suffolk Tourism strategy of 2017² stated that visitors are attracted by the character, culture, food, clean beaches and spectacular coastline, the outstanding countryside and wildlife. The Energy Coast³ report of September 2019 found that 72% of visitors came to the area to experience its nature and in 84% of respondents it would be the main reason for visiting in the future. Much

support for these reports can be found on independent online guides, and the following is an example from The Telegraph:

“Suffolk is the smallest and gentlest of the East Anglian counties. Its biggest draw is perhaps its coast, which is home to two of Britain’s most alluring seaside resorts – Aldeburgh and Southwold – with the Minsmere RSPB Reserve and ancient settlement of Dunwich at the centre of some glorious stretches of marsh, heath and woodland.”
(Telegraph online⁴)

This coastline has featured in the work of very many artists, including Benjamin Britten who would stick to a strict routine which always included a ‘composing walk’ after lunch, crucial time and space away from the desk to think about his music. These walks would cover North Warren, the coastline, Thorpeness and beyond.

The beach between Aldeburgh and Southwold has been critical to countless artists such as Maggie Hambling and writers such as MR James, Emma Freud, WG Sebald and Elizabeth Jane Howard.

What will deter visitors

SPR claim in their report^{1a} that: ***“the majority of tourism and recreation receptors are located beyond this buffer zone.”***

The tone suggests that ‘tourism receptors’ a small distance from construction will be unaffected but the cabling work across the AONB and in Friston will have an impact on a much wider area in two significant ways.

The first is traffic. There has been talk in Suffolk of improving the road network running up the East Coast for decades. In 2018 The East Anglian Daily Times⁵ reported that the A12 has been named the most dangerous A-road in our region.

Suffolk County Council’s public consultation document⁶ regarding the improvement of the A12 between Wickham Market and Saxmundham in 2017 stated that :

“This section of the A12 suffers from problems with congestion, reliability, resilience, accidents, air quality problems and community severance.”

There are plans to improve this stretch of road, but are the examiners confident that the relief road will be in place before SPR starts its construction projects?

Then there is the A12 junction with the A1094 at Friday Street which merits an entry in Wikipedia: ***“The junction is considered an accident risk”***⁷. Looking at SPR’s most recent traffic management plan⁸ it is hard to know exactly how they will deal with this as they state: ***“A final detailed construction management plan will be produced post consent”*** but they do anticipate the number of daily HGV movements at two to four hundred a day. More recently (ISH session 5 20/1/21) SPR has said that ‘temporary traffic lights’ would be installed. Anyone who has sat at that junction for 20 minutes on a Friday in summer will be very concerned about the build up of queues on the north bound side of the A12 and the displacement of traffic through Snape and surrounding villages on the

B1069. This would also have a significant impact on the cyclists, local and visitors, who use the B1069 as an alternative to the A12.

It was most useful to hear the statistical analysis at Issue Specific Hearing 5 on 21 January by John Trapp. Based on a traffic count on the A1094 between September and November 2020 he told the examiners that there were 1,200 vehicles per hour (both ways) with an average of 50 metres between each vehicle. He suggested the examiners consider not just the added HGV journeys but also the construction workers' journeys and the smaller vans used by suppliers. There is no mention of these in the SPR traffic management plan. He also thought the examiners should consider the slower rate of travel for cars behind HGVs and the fact that many tourists come to the area for just the weekend or the day, making visitors unwilling to spend their precious and limited free time sitting in queues. He stated that SPR's traffic would undoubtedly slow down travel times and be a deterrent for tourists.

This traffic count took place in the Autumn during a pandemic. What about a Thursday or Friday of a festival weekend? Snape Proms takes place in August and sells 22,000 tickets, the internationally recognised Aldeburgh Music Festival is in June and sells 20,000 tickets, the Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival in September sells 10,000 day tickets and Aldeburgh Carnival in August attracts 15,000 over 3 days, during the same weekend as the Folk East festival with 9,000 music lovers at Glemham Hall. The road congestion as a result of festivals is not for only a few weeks a year, the Aldeburgh Literary Festival is in March and The Aldeburgh Documentary Festival is in November. There is no evidence that SPR has taken this into account, nor almost 35,000 ticket holders (to say nothing of support equipment and staff) that travel up and down the A12 to the Latitude Festival in July.^{9,10}

The second deterrent to visitors will be loss of tranquillity and walking opportunities. Given the importance of walking and enjoying the environment to visitors it is alarming to business owners that SPR's report anticipates 38 public rights of way *"that may be affected ... as they are within or adjacent to the onshore development area. Additionally, the Suffolk Coastal Path runs adjacent to the development area, however the use of Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) at the landfall will result in it not being impacted."*^{1b} The ABA is interested in how one conducts HDD for such a big project adjacent to a Coastal Path, repeatedly, without it being impacted? More recently (ISH2) SPR cast doubt on the use of HDD, leading the ABA to ask 'what exactly is the plan and how will SPR manage the impact on this sensitive development area?'

With reference to the onshore cable route SPR's report states^{1b} *"Significant, localised and temporary effects on the character of the AONB."*^{1c} and *"The visual effects are also assessed as being significant on views experienced by walkers over short sections of the Suffolk Coastal Path, the Sandlings Walk and the Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route."*^{1c} It is disingenuous to call these effects 'temporary' if multiple projects are planned. These are key routes for cyclists and walkers going from Aldeburgh and Thorpeness to the NT Coastguard Cottages, RSPB Minsmere, Dunwich, Walberswick and Southwold. Indeed, such is the importance of the Coastal Path and the Sandlings Walk that they feature heavily in the Suffolk Walking Festival which attracts about 1,000 walkers a year. Many walkers take on the challenge of the uninterrupted 50 mile Suffolk Coastal Path from Felixstowe to Lowestoft independently, enjoying views of river and sea walls, marsh, heath, foreshore and cliffs.

ABA members' anxieties about the route of this cabling are mirrored by the Expert Topic Group *"There was also concern raisedabout an overall impression of industrialisation that would*

detract from the image of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. Stakeholders are concerned that this would lead to a reduction in the number of tourists.”^{1d}

SPR's report states ***“Recreational assets such as PROWs, beaches and common land have a low sensitivity to change because this can be managed through appropriate construction management.”^{1e}*** This makes little sense, construction is noisy and dirty, involving heavy machinery, dust, construction staff and their transport, 'construction management' will not prevent damage to the experience of the visitor who is in the area to enjoy nature.

The ABA asks the examiners to accept the concerns of the ABA, the town council and the expert topic group and recognise the impact that SPR's plans will have on visitor numbers.

Cost to the Economy

The importance of tourism to the local economy is reflected in the data from The Suffolk Observatory¹¹, an official data resource which works in partnership with the councils and Suffolk Constabulary. This shows that the proportion of small businesses, leisure sector employment, accommodation and food service enterprises and longevity of companies is disproportionately higher in East Suffolk than that of the rest of England. East Suffolk's GDP is clearly dependant on small businesses servicing the strong tourism industry, and we anticipate that should demand for these services fall, the economic impact will be dramatically worse than that of the average English district. Three snapshots from this data illustrate my point:

In England 5.6% of the workforce work in accommodation and food services

In East Suffolk 7.0% work in accommodation and food services

And the percentage of people working in skilled trades, which includes the large number of carpenters, decorators, electricians, plumbers etc servicing the holiday rental sector is 9.6% in England and 12.3% in Suffolk.

The same data resource shows that in East Suffolk 88.9% of people are employed in micro businesses (defined as a business with up to 9 employees).

These are the people, our members, who do not have a big voice on their own and who are threatened by the might of SPRs intentions. When visitor numbers drop off and their business fails they will have few other employment options because SPR will not be taking them on. SPR's job promises are in Lowestoft, due to the automated nature of the substations there will not be one single job created here. SPR's map The East Angle¹² relating to the supply chain clearly shows there are no suppliers in this immediate area, so where will the shop and café owners get work if they have to close? What impact will the loss of local employment have here?

It's not just employment in the obvious areas that will be impacted. I have identified 26 annual festivals in East Suffolk¹⁰, they account for 168,350 attendees, many of them are music and arts festivals but they also include a Festival of Fabric, a Sausage Festival and the internationally recognised Aldeburgh Documentary Festival. According to the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) a 5,000 capacity festival is worth £1.1 million to the local area, if we extrapolate that number to

the number of people attending festivals in East Suffolk that shows an income to the area of over £37 million.¹³

There are over 175 hotel rooms in the immediate area¹⁴, if you estimate £100 per night and 30 week occupancy rate that translates to almost £4 million. There are 4 holiday cottage businesses that specialise in local, mostly high spec accommodation¹⁵, they manage the majority of cottages, between them they have 1,657 cottages to rent, most of which are let for 30 weeks (out of season Aldeburgh festivals and winter birdwatching boost occupancy) at an average of £1,000 a week to take account of high and low seasons. That equates to almost £50m, much of which is being spent on independent tradespeople and services, and that figure does not include money spent on meals out, shopping, coffees or artwork.

Cost to mental health

Mental Health has received the attention it deserves during the pandemic and there are two aspects to this.

The first consideration is the impact on the mental health of people who lose their jobs because of a downturn in tourism. If someone loses their job working at a restaurant locally there is nowhere else to go, no factories, no larger offices, no industry to speak of. Once people are out of work their mental health suffers, the BMJ reported that in the UK between 2008 to 2010 that every 10% increase in unemployment among men was associated with a 1.4% increase in male suicide¹⁶ and we cannot neglect the impact the uncertainty is already having on people who own or work in local businesses.

The other aspect of the mental health argument is the relief it gives visitors from their problems. People come here to relax and unwind, enjoy the views and wildlife. These are two examples of comments made by visitors to Five Acre Barn B&B which lies only a short walk from the cabling corridor “**a few precious days here feels a world away from the hubbub of urban life**” and “**we recharge and enjoy the surrounding area**”. If people cannot connect with the tranquillity they crave how will they get relief from their daily anxieties?

Conclusion

In the light of the evidence presented we ask that the examining authorities reject SPRs plans to bring the energy onshore at such a sensitive point or build substations when there are other much more suitable options that are not so economically dependent on tourism. We ask that the Examining Authorities do not allow SPR and National Grid to throw such a special stretch of coast and its people under the proverbial bus.

References:

- 1 Chapter 30, Tourism, Recreation and SocioEconomics Environmental Statement Volume 1
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010077/EN010077-001535-6.1.30%20EA1N%20Environmental%20Statement%20Chapter%2030%20Tourism,%20Recreation%20and%20Socio-Economics.pdf>
 - a 30.3.2 point 15
 - b Table 30.37
 - c Table 30.68
 - d Page 107
 - e Table 30.71
- 2 The East Suffolk Tourism strategy of 2017:
<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Visitors/East-Suffolk-Tourism-Strategy.pdf>
- 3 The Energy Coast report of September 2019: The Energy Coast, National Coastal Tourism Academy, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/shares/The-Energy-Coast-BVA-BDRC-Final-Report-2019.pdf>
- 4 Telegraph on line <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/united-kingdom/england/east-anglia/suffolk/articles/an-expert-travel-guide-to-suffolk/>
- 5 EADT August 19, 2018 <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/a12-a14-a120-most-dangerous-road-figures-2484648>
- 6 Suffolk's Energy Gateway Improving the road network and supporting economic development in Suffolk, public consultation document, Suffolk County Council
<https://woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk/assets/News-2017/SUFFOLKS-ENERGY-GATEWAY-IMPROVING-THE-ROAD-NETWORK.pdf>
- 7 Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A1094_road
- 8 SPR Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan Dec 2020
- 9 Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latitude_Festival
- 10 See Appendix A Summary of Festival Information
- 11 Suffolk Observatory <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/economy-employment/report/view/db248b8d713542efb3c026fccac983c4/E07000244/>
- 12 See map, appendix B
- 13 Written evidence submitted by UK Music December 2020 to House of Commons DCMS Select Committee Evidence 3.5
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/18840/pdf/>
- 14 See Appendix C Hotel Rooms
- 15 See Appendix D Holiday Cottages
- 16 Suicides associated with the 2008-10 economic recession in England: time trend analysis
 BMJ 2012 <https://www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e5142>

APPENDIX A SUMMARY OF FESTIVAL INFORMATION IN EAST SUFFOLK Updated 31/01/21

Numbers in black verified by email or phone, numbers in red have their offices closed due to COVID so figures are conservative estimates based on similar local events. For festivals that sell tickets for individual events, I have estimated the number of attendees as half the number of tickets sold, assuming an average of each attendee attending two events within the festival.

NAME OF FESTIVAL	TYPE	PLACE	NUMBER OF TICKETS	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Siren Festival	Environmental	Aldeburgh	3,500	3,500
Aldeburgh Carnival	Family events	Aldeburgh	15,000	15,000
Folk East	Music	Glemham Hall	9,000	9,000
Ink	Theatre	Halesworth	1,500	750
Alde Valley Spring	Arts/environment	Glemham	4,000	4,000
Suffolk Walking Festival	Walking	51 events in East Suffolk	996	500
Snape Proms	Music	Snape	22,000	11,000
Aldeburgh Music	Music	Snape & Aldeburgh	20,000	10,000
Maverick Festival	Music	Easton Farm Park	4,000	4,000
Latitude	Music/Arts	Southwold	35,000	35,000
High Tide	Arts	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Literary Festival	Books	Aldeburgh	4,230	2,100
Aldeburgh Food & Drink	Food & drink	Snape	10,000	10,000
MAUI WAUI	Alternative Music	Theberton	5,000	5,000
Ways with Words	Books	Southwold	5,000	2,500
Sausage	Food	Framlingham	5,000	5,000
Aldeburgh Documentary	Documentaries	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Aldeburgh Poetry Festival	Poetry	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Southwold Arts	Arts	Southwold	4,000	2,000
Ways with Words	Books	Southwold	5,000	2,500
Slaughter in Southwold	Crime writing	Southwold	1,000	500
First Light	Arts	Lowestoft	35,000	35,000
Flipside	Arts	Snape	3,000	1,500
Felixstowe Book	Books	Felixstowe	2087	1,000
Festival of Fabric	Fabric	Felixstowe	1,000	500
Art on the Prom	Art	Felixstowe	5,000	5,000
TOTAL: 26			Tickets: 212,510	Attendees: 168,350

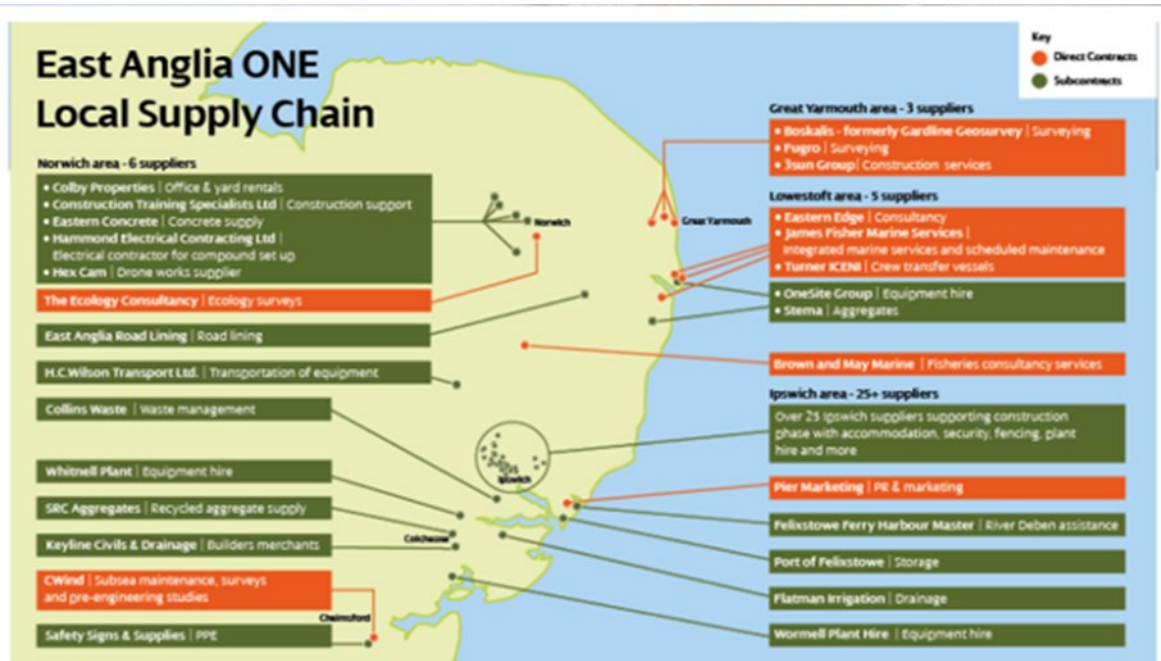
Economic value of festivals:

Written evidence submitted by UK Music December 2020 to House of Commons DCMS Select Committee Evidence 3.5 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/18840/pdf/>

“Music both contributes to onshore economic growth and supports local economies. Festivals and music venues are intrinsically linked to supply chain businesses in their local areas including technical freelancers, catering providers and service suppliers (for example security). According to the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) a 5,000 capacity festival is worth £1.1 million to the local area, while a 110,000 capacity festival can be worth over £27 million. Glastonbury generates over £100 million into the economy of South West England each time it takes place and music festivals as a whole employ over 85,000 people directly. Analysis has showed that for every £10 spent on a ticket for a live music event, £17 goes back into the local economy, driving business for local transport, hospitality outlets and retailers”

Using the figures quoted and the number of people attending these events in East Suffolk the festival industry is worth over £37 million to the East Suffolk economy. (168,350 attendees with every 5,000 attendees bringing £1.1 million to the local area)

APPENDIX B THE EAST ANGLE



APPENDIX C SUMMARY OF HOTEL NUMBERS IN SNAPE, ALDEBURGH, THORPENESS

Updated 31/01/21

The Brudenell Hotel Aldeburgh 44 Rooms
 The White Lion Hotel Aldeburgh 38 Rooms
 The Dolphin Inn Thorpeness 3 Rooms
 The Golf Club & Hotel Thorpeness 36 Rooms
 The Country Club Thorpeness 16 Rooms
 The Wentworth Hotel Aldeburgh 35 Rooms
 The Golden Key Rooms Snape 3 Rooms

Total number of rooms: 175. Estimating a conservative £100 per night and 30 week occupancy rate that translates to almost £4 million.

APPENDIX D SUMMARY OF HOLIDAY COTTAGES (EXCLUDING MOBILE HOMES/ROOMS IN HOUSES) IN EAST SUFFOLK

Numbers established via an internet search and count with Aldeburgh as the search term

Updated 31/01/21

There are 3 holiday cottage businesses in Suffolk Coastal that mostly specialise in local high spec accommodation:

Suffolk Secrets	780
Best of Suffolk	407
Aldeburgh Coastal Cottages	170

Also AirB&B entire place	300
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TOTAL COTTAGES:	1,657
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There are also 8 other holiday cottage companies that are listed as having cottages in the area but they have smaller numbers.

Most cottages in the area are let for 30 weeks (out of season festivals and winter birdwatching boost occupancy) at an average of £1,000 a week (some larger, high spec houses in the area cost over £5,000 for a week) to take account of high and low seasons. That equates to almost £50 million. Much of this is being spent on independent tradespeople (decorators, kitchen & bathroom fitters, cleaners, laundries, window cleaners, garden maintenance, electricians, plumbers, heating engineers, carpenters etc) and that figure does not include money spent by visitors on meals out, shopping, coffees or artwork.