



SAVE OUR SANDLINGS

Offshore Wind Farms
EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH PINS Ref: EN010077
&
EAST ANGLIA TWO PINS Ref: EN010078

Deadline 13 Response
from

Save Our Sandlings

Final Closing Statements

These are the final statements to the Planning Inspectorate Examining Authority and relate to both ScottishPower Renewables East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two offshore windfarm projects DCO applications.

Save Our Sandlings stand by previous comments made in relation to these projects and continue to believe they do not present in any way the best interests of the local economy and community. The applicants have failed to prove the massive disruption to local residents and the countryside can be effectively mitigated and do not provide any local benefits whatsoever, rather the converse is true.

During this examination it has become clear that the applicant on behalf of National Grid plan to build an energy hub comprising two switching compounds and a massive National Grid substation building adjacent to the medieval village of Friston suitable not only these two projects but also as a connection point for 2 European Interconnectors projects provided by National Grid Ventures. The latter will also require switching compounds either within the newly established substation complex or within 5Km. These will require yet further land take and loss of habitat. There is also an evident possibility this hub will continue to be the preferred connection point for any other future offshore energy projects. Clearly, the Friston site and the Sandlings coastal area is completely unsuitable for this purpose and brownfield sites should have been chosen in preference to valuable arable land and historic landscape.

It has also emerged that National Grid ESO plan to establish a further connection from the “Leiston” substation complex to a substation complex in the London area. This will require additional cabling work, either overhead or underground/subsea. Further land loss and disruption.

East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two will, if consented, take a number of years to complete. The applicant will not state whether these projects will run in parallel, in tandem with a delayed start between projects, or sequentially (with or without a break in-between). This leads to a great deal of uncertainty and unnecessary stress to the local community who will have to endure years and years of disruption, heavy traffic on very minor roads, and subsequent loss of freedoms and enjoyment of the peace, tranquillity and solitude the Sandlings area currently provides. There will also be a corresponding impact to the wildlife and ecology in and around the project areas.

The DCO application for EdF’s Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station is currently underway which, if consented, will start ground works in 2024/5. This timescale will run alongside these two ScottishPower Renewables applications and will lead to years of congestion, pollution from heavy traffic and loss of revenue from tourists and visitors to the area.

Much discussion and evidence provided by the Suffolk Destination Management Organisation, (*REP1-194; REP2-082; REP6-137; REP11-195*) and other business owners during Open Floor Hearings and Issue Specific Hearings raising the issue of harm to the essential tourist and entertainment industry of the area. This subject has been well explored and we remain unconvinced by the applicant’s responses of minimal to no impact despite all their glossy words and references to previous project successes.

We are extremely grateful to the examining panel for recognising these impacts and their attempts to extract pertinent information from the applicants.

We fully support the proposal first suggested at Open Floor Hearing 5 Friday 6th November 2020 by Paul Chandler¹ and later repeated by Suffolk Energy Action Solutions and others at a number of later Issue Specific Hearings, and further by the Rt. Honourable Therése Coffey MP for Suffolk Coastal ((*REP8-249*; *REP11-165*) that each DCO application for EA1N and EA2, be considered in 2 separate parts, namely the offshore and the onshore elements, and judged on their respective merits with due regard to environmental effects and cumulative impact. We strongly feel that consent should initially be given to the offshore project elements only. The onshore infrastructure should only be consented at the conclusion of the BEIS Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) and a proper fit-for-purpose co-ordinated energy policy has been established that protects valuable ecology and coastal communities from the continued onslaught of offshore energy projects infrastructure.

We are additionally very disappointed the applicant continues to decline the invitation to become voluntarily involved in the BEIS pathfinder project. This is an opportunity missed and shows the contempt and complete disregard for the local community and special nature of the countryside they are willing destroy. Currently ground exploration work is underway in several areas. Exploration activities were originally slated to commence **after** this examination had concluded; this would not have allowed any comments on these activities to be made prior to the conclusion of these examinations. Fortunately, as a result of the Rule 8 (3) decision, we are given this opportunity.

It has become clear during these ongoing ground investigations, the issues relating to Tier 2 and 3 contractors conducting these works on the applicant's behalf. Many in the local community were very alarmed that those contracted to carry out works were not properly briefed when set to work and were unaware of many of the sensitive issues surrounding these applications, treating the area like any other civils work site. Disturbance to wildlife and ground nesting birds was witnessed and some areas suddenly showing signs of spraying to clear vegetation. Contact with the duly appointed community relations team followed and a subsequent video conference was finally arranged to discuss these concerns with works managers and interested parties. Residents were informed that no spraying or clearing of vegetation was undertaken by those carrying out investigative works, nor were any land owners requested to spray their land. To date there has been no satisfactory answer as to how this happened or who undertook this work. Weekly updates of intended works along the route are now received identifying specific plant movements and anticipated disruptions to road traffic and the community. We have to ask if the previous East Anglia One project was such a community relations success, why did it require several email exchanges and phone conversations before the applicant opened discussions with the local community?

Investigations of the Sandlings SPA will not be conducted until later in the year after the bird nesting season has finished which we welcome. This area remains a sensitive topic and we note the applicant in their latest submission (*REP12-028*) still maintains 2 options for crossing this area; open trench and trenchless. Whilst we are pleased to see the trenchless technique is still an option, we would much prefer this to be the only option for this area. Our concern regarding open trenching remains as previously stated. Should open trenching be used a number of established hedges will be removed from either side of a regularly used footpath. Making ultra-wide openings in these hedge borders will expose parts of the Sandlings SPA to users of the footpath and their dogs where no easy access is currently offered. Until any newly planted hedge species are fully and properly established, open

¹ EN010078-002874-East Anglia OFH 5 Lunchtime Session 2 TRANSCRIPTION.pdf

access to the Sandlings SPA previously protected areas will cause an issue for the many species of bird and wildlife currently finding sanctuary from human disturbance.

We understand trenchless techniques will involve a longer timescale of operation and an increase in noise values over 24 hour periods but it is a worthwhile price to pay for the protection of the Sandlings SPA from unnecessary disruption.

In summary, reading the extensive documentation supplied by the applicant, and responses from all interested parties, there is very little to commend these projects in their current form. There has been very little movement from the applicant to mitigate many of the concerns expressed, with some small concessions arising as the examination proceeded. It is therefore still our contention these projects should only be recommended to the Secretary of State BEIS for the offshore elements **only** to be consented, with a decision withheld for onshore infrastructure until the OTNR has concluded and a proper fit-for-purpose policy for offshore energy projects has been approved and enacted.

Save Our Sandlings have written to the Secretary of State BEIS requesting a split decision for the reasons aforementioned.

Save Our Sandlings

4th July 2021