



1 June 2020

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For the attention of:
Mr Rynd Smith and Mrs K Mignano

Dear Mr Smith and Ms Mignano

**SCOTTISH POWER & NATIONAL GRID
EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH AND EAST ANGLIA TWO**

I write further to your letter of 21 May 2020 and supporting questionnaire concerning remote working and virtual events surrounding the above Examination process.

I shall complete the questionnaire, but my reason for writing separately is to express deep concerns that transformative projects are being proposed for this small stretch of Suffolk Coast. Our communities feel excluded from the consultations which have taken place. We therefore place our trust in your hands and seek reassurance concerning

- The integrity and robustness of the Examination and then to question
- Who is ultimately responsible and accountable for co-ordinating, deciding, implementing and monitoring these and other related projects?

Responsibility and accountability

The 'in-tray' of the Planning Inspectorate has the following:

- EDF Sizewell C – two new nuclear reactors – DCO submitted 27 May 2020.
- SP – EA1N, EA2 and National Grid Interconnector – DCOs under Examination.
- East Suffolk Council Local Plan and specifically that part of the Plan of the former Suffolk Coastal District Council.

In the pipeline are other NSIPs which I refer to later in my letter. But I wish first to focus on the above three:

- Sizewell C has long been in gestation and in the public domain. This is the greatest blow for the area with huge impacts on the local economy and environment. It is going to be further politically difficult in respect of viability, financing and potential Chinese investment.
- On top of that there is now the SPR/National Grid proposals for Friston (**please note, NOT North of Friston**). In effect we have three NSIPs rolled into one and where the aim is clearly to establish a bridgehead to accommodate future connection points.
- Local Plan – This has its own vision reflecting the characteristics of the area and its needs. However, the impacts of the projects materially undermine, if not destroy, that vision and impose considerable burdens on

the environment, its population, businesses and infrastructure. Yet it only commands 5 pages out of a document of 594 pages which is disproportionate to the impacts.

Accordingly, how does the Planning Inspectorate investigate, co-ordinate and reconcile its responses to these applications?

I suspect that I shall receive a rather convoluted and legalistic response which will say your role is only advisory in which case **just who is actually responsible and accountable?**

Following on, there are some important projects in the pipeline which are gradually creeping out into the public domain and which I have termed

The National Grid Axis of Evil.

In the murky background are National Grid and its subsidiary National Grid Ventures pulling strings and offering connection points in the area when they own no land whereas they have an existing site with capacity at Bramford, West of Ipswich. These are NSIPs in their own right:

- NGV – Nautilus European Interconnector
- Galloper Extension
- NGV Eurolink Interconnector
- Greater Gabbard Extension
- ESO-SCD1 Sizewell-Canterbury Interconnector
- ESO-SCD2 Sizewell-Selindge Kent Interconnector.

Here are six further projects which will require digging up cable routes (up to 150 metres wide each) over areas of outstanding beauty. Their plans seem to envision a coalescence of industrial infrastructure along a corridor from Friston to Leiston to Sizewell.

National Grid has failed to consult and information sought has been withheld or heavily redacted

In sum, this area of the Heritage Coast is to be destroyed and subsumed by ten energy projects, nine of which have only emerged to the local communities in the last two years. Friston only became aware of the SPR/National Grid project in March/April 2018.

Any reasonable person asked to stand back and make an objective assessment would ask – **‘How on earth has this happened?’** This then leads to the importance of preserving

The Integrity of the Examination Process.

That same person would think about the impacts both singularly and cumulatively and then understand that there is considerable ill-feeling and opposition – the mix of emotions against the projects; incredulity at the destruction and injustice and bereft of support. These are naturally at their most extreme in Friston where some two thirds of the population are in the ‘autumn of their lives’ facing years of disruption and imprisonment by the scale of the works extending over 15 years and concerned to preserve the legacy of their landscape and environment.

The Examination is not just the ‘last throw of the dice’ but, the only throw of the dice.

It is of paramount importance, therefore, that there are locally held physical meetings at the outset:

- Preliminary Open Meeting and Issue Specific Hearings
- Clearly defined and participative Accompanied Site Visits.

Bear in mind that the DCO applications comprise some 17,000 pages of complex technical (and some seriously deficient analysis) which is too much for local communities to fully comprehend. These open meetings are important

for communities to have the opportunity, not to ‘sound off’ but, to understand better the processes and empathise with the Examination to ensure their voices are heard. Some will engage their own advisers with whom they will wish to communicate during the hearings.

Overcoming Remoteness

These meetings must be held locally as originally intended at Snape Maltings which is accessible and has the necessary capacity and free parking.

I am aware that there has been some whingeing about the location of the inquiry but it is important that all participants understand and experience the nature and characteristics of the area. Too much has been written by people in far off places.

Unequal Resources

The local communities are the most disadvantaged.

The DCO process presumes in favour of the developers and they and their vested interests can command the depth and breadth of advisers, consultants, project advisers et al, all of whom will have prior experience and know ‘how to game the system’.

But despite all that, what stands out from the DCO is a complete lack of appreciation of the local environment, the socio-economic dynamics and absence of human values. This results in inadequate planning and an inability to come up with any meaningful mitigation – in the case of Friston, the planting of a few trees which in fifteen years may or may not provide some sort of screening!

Local communities will muster their arguments as best they can, but they do not have the resources to match those of the developers.

Virtual / Digital Meetings.

Acknowledging the importance of Written Representations, the process still requires interrogation and understanding which are not fitting within digital processes:

- Not everyone has access to the necessary systems and technology. They have what they need for their individual personal circumstances.
- The receptivity and available broadband in this rural area is not robust. The limited experience of Zoom meetings is that they are subject to interruptions and distortion as a result of technical shortcomings.
- It would be necessary for individuals to upgrade systems, support and possibly engage consultants to advise and install at some cost.
- But most of all is the degree of comfort that a participant would have in the process – easy when chatting with friends and family, but a completely different set of challenges and difficulties which escalate for business meetings and then the increasing numbers of participants. The greater the size, the more problematic effective participation becomes. I read daily of the shortcoming and fatigue that Zoom meetings are now encountering.
- But the examination process is not suited to this type of virtual/digital operation since there are so many representatives wishing to express views, consult with advisers and kindred groups.

Coronavirus

We are all concerned at its implications. No one knows the depth and breadth of the potentially transformative impacts. At the moment it is self-preservation and concern for the future and how to protect ourselves. That includes worrying about the health and survival of our local economy which is a service economy reliant on hospitality and tourism. Businesses are primarily small / medium sized, closed down and many not able to avail themselves of government support schemes. We need to prioritise their survival and regeneration and in turn our own quality of life.

Capital Projects

These will have a crucial role in regenerating the economy. But financial constraints will be such that capital must be allocated efficiently, productively and to areas of deprivation – the levelling up of Government policy; more focus on research and development and exploiting new technologies. Renewable energy will be targeted but what is proposed for this area is capital intensive, not about renewable energy but dumping huge amounts of industrial infrastructure at cheapest cost regardless of the heritage and environment at the expense of a dynamic local service economy.

Conclusion

It is difficult to be measured in tone when your life has been irreparably damaged by the unfolding events of the last two years and all the uncertainties of the future.

One seeks some ‘breathing’ space to adjust to the current uncertainties brought on by the coronavirus; to absorb all the implications of the energy projects on the table, not least Sizewell C and the cumulative impacts and to have trust in the processes of which the Examination is just one.

Put bluntly, we are faced with an ‘omnishambles’ arising from the

- lack of a coherent government energy policy;
- deficient planning, co-ordination and management of individual projects at all levels;
- the plethora of regulatory bodies, quangos and advisers enabling developers to play the system and everyone avoids ultimate responsibility and accountability’
- compounded here by the incompetence of SPR in managing the EA1 project;
- inadequate consultation. If anyone mentions ‘engaging with stakeholders’ yet again, I shall scream because you know that you will be ignored!

There is to be a BEIS enquiry into energy policy and surely the opportunity should be taken to pause and appraise sensibly and effectively.

Yours sincerely

Simon Ive

Copied to:

- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Ofgem
- The Environmental Audit Committee
- Dr Therese Coffey MP
- Suffolk County Council
- East Suffolk Council

