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IP 20000023185 & IP 20000023184

Three years on from the day that our lives were turned upside down by SPR's plans we submit our last plea to the planning inspectors.

An additional three months of agony, stress and expense for local residents trying to stop these plans as the hearings were extended – a decision that we continue to challenge as Interested Parties were not consulted and it played into the hands of SPR who were then able to plug the holes in their submissions.

SPR have behaved disgracefully from day one. From the very start they tried to hide their plans, taking out advertisements in newspapers more than 25 miles away from the site (Lowestoft) and failing to alert local residents to what was going on. We complained about this lack of consultation at the time, despite living in the IP17 postcode and very close to the proposed site we received nothing from SPR and it was only a chance conversation with a neighbour that drew our attention to it over the Easter weekend 2018.

This cavalier attitude to local concerns has continued throughout the process. SPR have failed to answer many detailed and important questions raised by worried local people. They have flooded their website with documents that never answer key questions but none the less slip in important changes that local protest groups must try to "catch". Their community engagement has been woeful. From telling a group in Friston that they were "surprised by the intelligence" of local people to triumphantly informing us that they had "never lost a project" implying that there was no point in us even trying to mount a serious objection.

SPR have once again showed their true colours with their behaviour during the "ground investigation" works. Clearly they decided to do these works in order to bully you, the inspectors, and the Secretary of State by saying "the project is too far advanced to be included in the BEIS review". SPR need to understand that this work was taken on at their own risk, to do expensive investigative work as the development consent hearings are taking place is extremely provocative.

Whilst undertaking the work SPR have cause utter chaos in the area from Thorpeness, through Aldringham, Knodishall and Friston. Working with local landowners they poisoned acres of fallow land that was home to red listed ground nesting birds. SPR tell us that the spraying of the fields was nothing to do with them. It is hard to believe that a series of different landowners all decided to spray their fields one week before SPR ground investigation work began without any involvement from SPR. The inspectors should note that the land was not being used for crop growing at the time because SPR had requested that the land be left fallow; there was no reason for the landowners to carry out expensive spraying of the fields.

We would ask the inspectors to note that SPR have excavated the entire site going way beyond the footprint of the proposed EA1N and EA2 development and cable corridor, no doubt at vast expense. When we asked for an explanation SPR said they were "required" to undertake these excavations. We then asked SPR who had imposed this requirement, and after tedious exchanges of emails they eventually retracted the original statement and confirmed that, in actual fact, no one had imposed this requirement. We believe the only logical explanation for the extent of the excavations is that SPR themselves propose further development, or, perhaps more likely, SPR are undertaking these works on behalf of other energy companies or with a view to selling the results of these surveys to

such companies. This goes to confirm all our concerns about future energy project development at Friston and the cumulative impact of this, something that SPR have sought to downplay.

SPR contractors have blocked access roads, parked vehicles dangerously on narrow roads, made roads slippery and dangerous by allowing mud spoil to drain onto the roads and generally made our lives hell. We can no longer walk on the footpath that connects our house to the village of Friston and it has been carved up by vehicles to such an extent that in wet conditions it is impossible to walk on. They have drilled and excavated right up to the edges of private property and failed to provide a proper schedule of work when residents have asked for it. Residents have to send off complaints daily about lives disrupted and dangerous practice. All of this has filled us with dread as to what life would be like for the next 10 years if consent to these plans were to be granted.

SPR have history here and throughout the region they are regarded with mistrust. The inquiry into EA1 was regarded as many to be a sham. At the last minute the power in the cables from Bawdsey to Bramford was changed from AC to DC. Originally the plans for EA1 included capacity for all of SPR's East Anglian windfarms. Although the cabling from Bawdsey to Bramford was extremely damaging and destructive there was at least the belief that it would mean that future projects could be fed through there meaning that no more precious Suffolk countryside would be destroyed for the benefit of SPR. Last minute chicanery meant that the cables are now apparently unable to cope with the volume of energy from EA1N and EA2. Why should East Suffolk, the AONB, the businesses and the people suffer this mass industrialisation because of poor planning by SPR?

As the inquiry process has gone on it became clearer why SPR could be so confident that they would "win" what seems to be a big game to them. They fix the rules, they bought the silence of key landowners who could otherwise have engaged in a positive way with the inquiry, providing key evidence about the scale of opposition and the disastrous implications for the area. Information that should have been provided early on in the inquiry process is being dumped in at the last minute giving interested parties no time to challenge and object. They seem to believe that the rules designed to ensure that the inquiry is fair and transparent do not apply to them. We are concerned that very often SPR have missed deadlines imposed by the planning inspectors but nonetheless seem to be able to deliver vital information at the last minute. They run a slick but flawed process to try to bulldoze their plans through the system.

A vivid example of this is SPR's refusal to address the points made by MP Dr Therese Coffey at deadline 10. SRP responded at deadline 12 giving Dr Coffey very little time to respond before the close of the hearing. SPR had nothing new to say in reply to Dr Coffey's proposals, they referred back to earlier submissions. All of this could have been said earlier, instead SPR chose to put their response in late in the day. This is typical of the game playing techniques used by SPR to subvert the planning process. SPR have no interest in trying to come up with a less destructive solution to the onshoring of energy issue.

As concerned locals we have done our very best to show the inspectors why SPR's onshore plans for EA1N and EA2 must be halted. Not only would vast tracts for beautiful, supposedly protected land be irreparably damaged but a vibrant and thriving local economy will be ruined. This is not a rural backwater but a wonderful community that has built up and nurtured sustainable businesses over the years. The affects of Covid19 have been devastating for our local economy as everywhere, but as the sun comes out and restrictions are eased the music at Snape Maltings will resume and holiday makers will be welcomed back to our B&Bs, hotels, restaurants and pubs. The valuable food grown on our fine fields will be distributed locally and nationally. All of this will be ruined by SPR and the associated projects that will follow and night follows day if the substations are allowed to be placed at Friston.

SPR continue to dismiss the impact their plans will have on the local economy. They have bamboozled East Suffolk Council into a “moving towards neutral” position on these plans. We continue to have concerns about how this decision was made within ESC and indeed the two East Suffolk councillors who represent this area have resigned in protest at the position taken by the council. SPR used a letter to the Secretary of State discussing the extension of the hearings to improperly lobby Mr Kwarteng by telling him that “meaningful progress has been made” with local authorities. This letter was only brought to light by a Freedom of Information request made by SEAS. It is disgraceful behaviour and puts the Secretary of State at risk of being accused of bias in respect of this hearing.

Let us be quite clear, there is NO LOCAL SUPPORT for this project. How can there be? It will cause nothing but distress and destruction. Through nefarious means SPR have silenced local landowners and come to some dubious arrangement with East Suffolk Council but no one here trusts SPR or wants them working in our area. From their faulty RAG assessment that was cynically designed to give them the answer that they had already come up with, right through to their failure to undertake proper examination of the fragile cliffs at Thorpeness we have all concluded that they cannot be trusted. It is not just a question of putting profit before everything else, that might be expected, but SPR have tried to cover up for their own faulty planning (Bawdsey to Bramford cable) and tried to skew the planning inquiry so that key questions remain unanswered and information that should be challenged is delivered at the last moment. As well as showing contempt to local people we believe that SPR have shown contempt to the inspectors. Their smooth words and smart documents cannot hide the fact that they have been evasive and disingenuous throughout the DCO.

In recent election hustings held for the candidates for the vacant District Council seats NONE of the 7 candidates said that they supported SPR’s plans for the onshore element of EA1N and EA2. This means that no matter who wins the election a “do not support” view will prevail for the Aldeburgh and Leiston Ward. Even the two Green Party candidates who obviously support renewable energy do not support the onshoring plans for EA1N and EA2. The two Conservative candidates also said that they do not support the project, putting them at odds with their own party in power. The “move towards neutral” espoused by ESC will be challenged by the newly elected District Councillors. In addition, all 7 candidates stated that they supported a “split decision” and all 7 candidates acknowledged that there would be no economic benefit to the area affected by the cabling and substation construction – quite the opposite, the economy of the area will be negatively impacted.

The only thing that stands between these hideous plans and the protection of this wonderful and precious corner of England is you, the inspectors. We believe that we have given numerous reasons for these plans to be turned down, at least the onshore piece. We will fight and fight to protect this land. We will fight because this area is valued by those who live here and those who visit, and we are fighting not just for ourselves but for future generations who ought to be able to come here and enjoy the peace and tranquillity as well as the cultural offerings that the area is so well known for. We are begging the inspectors to force them to think again. We all know that it is utter madness to drive cables 9km inland and create an industrial zone in the heart of Friston. Please do whatever you can to stop them.

In summary, these plans should be rejected because:

The initial site selection was flawed.

The flood risk assessment is flawed.

Numerous national planning policy guidelines would be breached and challenged if consent was recommended.

The cumulative impact of these plans has not been properly assessed.

There are better solutions available and supported by central government – offshore ring main, brownfield site closers to the coast.

The hearings have been fatally compromised by the use “gagging orders” by SPR which prevented landowners from participating in the hearings.

The hearings were unfairly distorted by the granting of an extension in March 2021.

Despite the expense and exhaustion of having to deal with all of this for another three months SPR, National Grid Ventures, you the Inspectors and the Secretary of State should be in no doubt about the determination of local people to stop the destruction of our precious land. We will fight for every blade of grass and every sod of earth; we won't go away. There is an easy way to resolve this, recommend to the Secretary of State that a split decision is the only sensible approach and let's find a 21st century solution that we can all be proud of. The solutions are out there, SPR just need to be told to find them.

We fully support the submissions made by SEAS, SASES, Save our Sandlings and other groups and individuals objecting to these plans.

Thank you.

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