

THE ALDEBURGH SOCIETY

Registered Charity Number 262239

OFFSHORE WINDFARMS EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH AND EAST ANGLIA TWO

31 January 2022 Deadline Statement

PINS refs EA1N: EN010077 and EA2: EN010078

Our IP Refs 20023929 and 20023930

As the civic society for our unique historic coastal town adjacent to Sizewell and Thorpeness, the Aldeburgh Society was not in a position to respond to the more technical questions raised in the correspondence from BEIS concerning these DCO applications. We do, however, wish to address again the issue of the cumulative impacts which these projects, together with Sizewell C and the other projects being proposed but not yet subjected to PINS examination, would have on our town and the wider East Suffolk coastal area.

We do not believe that these cumulative impacts have been fully considered in the Examination, in part because other developers have not provided the necessary evidence and in part because of the restricted terms of reference of the Examination. Yet it is clear for all to see that the construction of numerous substations and grid connections with wide cable corridors would result in an impact on the Leiston and Friston area and on the coast itself which would extend far beyond the impact of EA1N and EA2. Some information has now been published by National Grid Ventures about their proposed Nautilus Interconnector with Belgium, a EuroLink Interconnector with the Netherlands, and a SeaLink Interconnector with Kent. It is also widely believed that a SCD2 Interconnector, a North Falls Windfarm connector, and a Five Estuaries Windfarm connector may also envisage landfall in this same area. If only two or three of these projects were to come to fruition, with or without the development of Sizewell C, they would turn this mainly rural area into the largest complex of industrial scale energy infrastructure in the UK.

Such massive onshore development in a quiet rural, nationally protected, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would be unthinkable and must not be allowed to happen piecemeal. While the Planning Inspectorate's remit has been to address the details of the EA1N and EA2 applications, the Examination has addressed a wide range of environmental issues to do with the construction and operation of these two schemes which would also apply to all or any of the other schemes now being mooted. The problems of the eroding coast and its coralline crag; the threats to rare and protected flora and fauna, especially in the Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Sandlings Special Protected Area; the unsuitability of the rural roads system to handle traffic generated by major construction processes; the prospect of light and air pollution; the very real threats to the local population's health and wellbeing; the potential damage to the wider area's nature- and culture-based visitor economy

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– all these and other threats have been made clear by many witnesses in the course of the Examination.

If the overriding national interest requires East Suffolk to be industrialised on a massive scale in order to meet the nation's imperative energy requirements, this should be stated publicly by the government and comprehensive measures should be negotiated with the Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council ensuring the fullest public consultation to cope with the implications. We remain fundamentally opposed to such an outcome. In the present situation, it is wholly unacceptable for developments to be prepared in isolation by individual commercial companies without any overall planning framework. At the very least, all offshore windfarms in the southern North Sea including EA1N and EA2 should be required to connect to an undersea grid as envisaged in the Offshore Transmission Network Review, which would bring the power they generate onshore to a terminal on a brownfield site closer to where the greatest power needs are felt. Interconnectors could then be provided from this terminal to the other areas concerned. This is a perfectly viable alternative option and it is essential that it be given serious consideration.

We have supported the proposal by our Suffolk Coastal MP Dr Thérèse Coffey for a split decision to be made on the EA1N and EA2 applications whereby the offshore infrastructure would be consented subject to agreement with the relevant interests while the onshore elements would be rejected pending further examination of alternative solutions. We do not know whether such an approach is legally possible, but as supporters of offshore wind power generation we hope that such a solution can be found.

These windfarm applications cannot be dissociated in our minds from the Sizewell C application, which has been subject to a separate PINS Examination. We were advised by the BEIS Department in November 2019 that it could not comment on our concerns about these projects since, 'given the quasi-judicial role of the Secretary of State in determining the [windfarms] applications, ...this could be seen as prejudicing the outcome of any proposals subsequently submitted for decisions through the planning process'. Given this position, we are astonished and alarmed that the Secretary of State has announced an allocation of £100 million to EDF in support of the Sizewell C project while the DCO application for Sizewell C is before him for determination.

The Planning Inspectorate cannot of itself address the overriding need for these and other related energy projects and their implications to be considered in the round, but we urge it to highlight this issue in its advice to the Secretary of State. The seismic trauma threatening East Suffolk and Aldeburgh from these projects must be recognised and addressed at the highest level.

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