

## Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	13 May 2024
Item Number	11d
Report Title	Energy Projects Report
Report Authors	Sharon Smith, Town Clerk and Cllr Geraldine Barker

### Sizewell C

The Town Clerk attended the Annual Community Forum at Trinity Park on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and the Northern Transport Forum held at Darsham Village Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Annual Forum included a presentation from the Suffolk Community Foundation who are administering the Sizewell C Community Fund. A pot of £23m will be directed into the East Suffolk area in the next decade. The SCF CEO said that bids from Leiston, Lowestoft and Saxmundham, in particular, would be considered favourably. Around £2m will be made available each year with grants awarded to projects that minimise the impact of construction work and improve environmental, social and economic well-being. The grants criteria and application process are currently being put in place and they hope to start awarding funds in the late summer and autumn 2024.

EDF presented a project update which included an offsite infrastructure timeline. Track upgrades designed to minimise noise, and level crossing improvements, including at Saxmundham's town centre and Kiln Lane, will commence during the last quarter of 2024. There will be two trains per night travelling to the ancillary construction area at King George Avenue, Leiston from the first quarter of 2025 and four trains per night to the temporary construction area at the main site from the second quarter of 2025. The trains will travel at night due to the restrictions caused by the daytime passenger service. A question was asked about the length of trains which may necessitate the level crossings to be closed for some time. EDF said they would report back at the next meeting with an answer. Network Rail is scheduled to report to the Southern Transport Forum on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 which the Town Clerk will attend.

EDF reported that the B1122 from Yoxford to Lover's Lane in Leiston will have a 30mph speed limit restriction from 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 until the Sizewell Link Road is completed to improve safety and to reduce noise and vibration.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Sizewell C was granted a nuclear licence from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, one of only two such licences to be granted in 35 years, the first was for EDF's sister project at Hinkley Point C. EDF consider it to be a major milestone which demonstrates the project is firmly on track.

### LionLink

The Chair and Cllr Geraldine Barker attended a webinar for Town and Parish Councils hosted by National Grid Ventures on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

The project was explained:

A scheme to connect Dutch wind power with Britain comprising HVAC electricity being converted to HVDC electricity in an offshore converter, then transmitted via offshore cables to a landing point either near Walberswick or Reydon/Southwold. The cables would then continue underground to a converter station at Saxmundham where the electricity would be converted to HVAC before transferal via underground cables to the Friston substation. This is a two-way process. Surplus British electricity can be converted from HVAC to HVDC and transmitted back via the offshore converter (or interconnector) to the Netherlands.

The process to date and future steps were outlined:

Recording that the project was conceived in 2017, (when it was known as EuroLink), NGV held their first non-statutory consultation in tandem with National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) SeaLink project during October – December 2022. This was followed by a second supplementary non-statutory consultation from September – November 2023 to

allow review of the alternative siting and cable routing options. The scoping opinion was submitted in March 2024) and, by 2025, NGV will issue the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and undertake statutory consultations with local residents and communities. They plan to submit the application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Planning Inspectorate in 2025 and envisage commencement of construction in 2026 and commissioning in 2027. Interestingly, whilst explaining that LionLink would connect into Friston substation, the presenter noted that the substation was still subject to a Judicial Review. As far as Cllr Geraldine Barker is aware the Friston group failed to win either of their JRs. In many respects this error reflected the poor preparation by all but one of the webinar presenters.

Thereafter NGV invited questions:

Saxmundham Town Council representatives tendered question both before and during the webinar:

Q: Why are NGV not coordinating with NGET SeaLink in respect of the planning process for the Converter Stations?

A: Two separate companies, but the question was not fully answered. (That will give Suffolk County Council something to consider as they said they would strongly object if the two projects did not co-ordinate).

Q: What plans do NGV have to avoid the centre of Saxmundham during the construction phase?

A: NGV will use SeaLink's arrangements.

Q: Will NGV ensure that aesthetically their converter station will match SeaLink, in other words co-design?

A: Yes.

Q: As NGV are using SeaLink's traffic management plan for Saxmundham and intend to co-design, why not issue one DCO for both converter stations?

A: Whilst acknowledging that NGV and NGET held a joint non statutory consultation in October-December 2022, the projects had advanced at different rates and as SeaLink is an electricity reinforcement scheme and LionLink deals with transferring power, the projects and companies are different and will not work together.

Q: As Suffolk is a low skilled and high employment area, will NGV's construction workers employ travelling workers?

A: Yes, NGV acknowledged that they would have to employ travelling workers. (Thus, their assertion to use local labour in the scoping opinion is incorrect).

Q: NGV appears to have undertaken a reasonable study of environmental issues in sensitive area, but has not addressed the Saxmundham converter site, why?

A: Only baseline studies undertaken. If deemed necessary more studies will be undertaken.

The rationale for bringing the cables ashore either at Walberswick or Reydon/Southwold created a barrage of questions from the majority of attendees. Questions regarding the extent of the scoping boundary and the route around Westleton were overshadowed by why not have the cables land alongside SeaLink between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness? The first response from NGV was that the area was too environmentally sensitive. This obviously created a plethora of response from the attendees. Namely, if it's too sensitive for LionLink, why is it not too sensitive for SeaLink? Eventually, one NGV presenter managed to gain control by explaining it was the marine environment. If the cables made land fall at Aldeburgh/Thorpeness they would have to cross eleven existing undersea cables and cause undue disturbance to the marine environment.

### **Saxmundham Against Needless Destruction**

Cllr Geraldine Barker attended a meeting of SAND with wider stakeholders. She will be invited to give a verbal report at the Town Council meeting.