

ENERGY PROJECTS REPORT - 9 DECEMBER 2024

Seemingly a month is a very short time when dealing with energy projects. November has witnessed consternation about roadworks on the A12, a new battery storage project in our region and further amendments from National Grid in connection with the Sea Link project.

NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION, (NGET) SEA LINK

The council was alerted by NGET to the issue of a further document; the 'Summary of design amendment following Targeted Consultation'. A draft response has been prepared for submission to full council. Briefly, the following issues affect our area:

1. Whilst NGET's July 2024 Additional Consultation withdrew Nautilus (now thankfully consigned to the Isle of Grain) and LionLink from the Draft Order Area, this document reintroduced land to accommodate National Grid Ventures's converter station. Thus, the council reiterated that co-location is not synchronisation and two separate Development Consent Orders (DCOs) unduly burdens all levels of councils, residents and other stakeholders with hours of additional work.
2. The new access bridge over the River Fromus will be moved some 40 metres to the north to avoid the Champion chestnut tree. Whilst this is environmentally great news, it sadly affects important views identified in Saxmundham's Neighbourhood Plan. Moreover it will render Hurts Hall subject to intra-project cumulative impacts of noise, vibration, light pollution and dust.

SIZEWELL C, SOUTHERN TRANSPORT FORUM, HELD 13 NOVEMBER 2024, STRATFORD ST ANDREW

Worker accommodation:

There is great concern in both East Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils about the lack of accommodation. Whilst ESC's Grant Scheme is designed to encourage home owners to house contractors, in my opinion, the lack of housing will create many issues for local residents.

ROAD AND RAIL UPDATES:

Orwell Logistics Park:

Sizewell C has acquired all four buildings for the offsite Freight Management Facility (FMF). One building is specifically for climate/temperature controlled equipment. The 1.2m sq. of warehouse space will start to be used by Mid-2025. However, Sizewell C advised that this is not sufficient space, they need more.

Rail:

Rail works continue during 2025 with major upgrades planned at Melton and Darsham crossings. This will result in both rail and road disruption from mid-2025 to autumn 2025. Track work will be undertaken at Wickham Market in March 2025 and the Saxmundham crossing will be upgraded to fully automatic working.

During rail improvements and the work on the Saxmundham to Leiston sidings, there will be increased rail freight traffic for material delivery. A full rail closure on the Ipswich to Lowestoft line for nine days is envisaged for April 2025. By quarter 4 2025, the green rail route will have reached Abbey Road, Leiston. By April 2026 there will be four trains per night (eight journeys) to and from Sizewell.

Road:

Please see the attached plan of the A12 between Stratford St Andrew and the B1119 turn to Saxmundham. The first concern is that Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) will commence work on Friston Substation in 2025. The DCO called for SPR to install traffic lights on the southbound carriageway at the A1094 Friday Street junction to allow for vehicles travelling north to safely turn right. However, Sizewell C's DCO supersedes this by calling for the Two Village Bypass and a roundabout on the A12/A1094 junction. Thus, SPR traffic, until the roundabout is constructed will be dealt with by temporary roadworks and lane narrowing. Hopefully you have all read the proposed letter to Suffolk County Council noting the council's concerns.

Undoubtedly this will create issues for everyone. Congestion and delays will impact residents. Businesses could suffer as visitors may decide not to venture into Saxmundham. From attendance at the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), Energy Projects Zoom meeting, it is apparent that emergency services are already being delayed by road diversions, especially ambulances. It is not surprising that **Sizewell C is requesting communities to consider the best way to inform residents of road closures and roadworks.**

Inter-project cumulative impacts will be important considerations when responding to the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) Development Consent Order (DCO). I asked if Sea Link could share Sizewell C's park and ride and FMF facilities. Whilst the answer was not 'no', it was more that they were considering the implications.

FINALLY – Battery Storage:

Greenswitch Capital Limited is proposing a 500 Mw energy storage scheme at Manor Farm, Sizewell that will connect into Sizewell substation from 2034. Sadly, this will not be the only project that will take advantage of two substations spaced a few miles apart.