

## **Sizewell C Project: East Suffolk Liberal Democrats response to the consultation on proposed changes to the project (18<sup>th</sup> November -18<sup>th</sup> December 2020)**

**EDF's new proposed changes to its DCO application to build a new nuclear power station at Sizewell do not change the East Suffolk Liberal Democrat's (ESLD) position on the project: we remain firmly opposed to the construction and operation of a new nuclear power station at Sizewell.**

The changes EDF have proposed in this 5<sup>th</sup> consultation do nothing to alleviate the overall environmental, economic and social damage to the East Suffolk area and consequently to the wellbeing and livelihoods of its residents. The new proposals simply shift the negative impacts.

Worse still, it is clear from the presentation of the proposals that EDF is unsure of the viability of these proposed changes while at the same time, given the scale and scope of detail of the document, we question why EDF could not have made these proposals in its PINs submission a few months ago. Both of these facts further undermine EDF's credibility and so are further cause for concern.

Regarding the new proposals:

- **Traffic:** the proposals *might* reduce the HGV traffic, but they will not reduce the anticipated bus, LGV and car traffic. The traffic volumes will still be the cause of significant CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, air pollution and congestion and will still present a very real threat to road safety. These traffic impacts will be most extreme on the A12, on the routes leading into the site and at and around Felixstowe. If the project goes ahead, we reiterate that a 4-village by-pass is essential, that the D2 relief road must be built (rather than the proposed link road) and that they and all associated transport infrastructure must be completed and ready for use at the start of the construction of the power station. These measures might go a little way toward mitigating the negative impacts of the projected traffic volumes.
- **Coastal damage:** the proposals to increase the use of sea freight will require significantly more infrastructure for sea defences and freight unloading on the vulnerable and changing coastline which will increase further the probability of detrimental effects on the eco-structure of the fragile Suffolk coastline.
- **Rail transport:** the new proposals will result in increased night-time rail transport which will further impact upon residents of the towns along the route. EDF has recognised as much saying that the rail transport will present 'a major adverse effect' both in terms of noise and potentially damaging vibrations for residents along the rail line. If the project is to go ahead, the only effective solution to avoid night-time resident disturbance is to enhance the capacity of the route by doubling the line and so eliminating the need for overnight freight movements. This is not an ideal solution, but coupled with EDF's suggested approach of providing double glazing and sound insulation to affected residents, it would mitigate the worst impacts.

The new proposals do nothing to alleviate a wide range of other significant longer-standing concerns:

- Destruction of the environment: the construction will cause extensive noisy, dusty and unsightly development in a beautiful coastal environment which includes the Minsmere RSPB nature reserve, Sites of Scientific Interest and which is a designated Area of Natural Beauty.
- Social impacts: the construction of the site will bring thousands of workers to an area which already experiences pressures on housing, blue-light services, health services and recreational facilities.
- Overdevelopment: housing 3000 workers will require a campus completely out of keeping in size and form with the local area and the construction of a large site caravan park. Further south, the proposed use by EDF of Innocence Farm in Kirton is most unwelcome, especially as the Planning Inspector (in the review of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan) recently rejected the use of the same site for the expansion of the Port of Felixstowe. While EDF may utilise the site for only 10-12 years it would become a brownfield site and therefore be re-opened to future industrial or housing development.
- All of the above will significantly reduce the appeal of the area to tourists and so damage one of the largest providers of employment and business of the area. At the same time, the construction will not generate the stated local economic benefits as most of the workers are expected to be employed from outside of the area.

In conclusion, the new proposals do not change ESLD opposition to the construction of a new nuclear power station at Sizewell as they do not reduce the overall negative environmental, economic and social impacts that the construction would wreak upon the area. Moreover, the new proposals do nothing to enhance EDFs credibility – the fact that EDF is unsure of the viability of these new proposals which have been put forward seemingly as an “afterthought” to the PINs submission this summer raise further questions as to EDF’s appropriateness to undertake such a project. And lastly, there is the question of the value and purpose of the power station itself. ESLD reiterate our view that the power station will prove to be a very costly white elephant:

- the agreed price/KWhr is significantly more expensive than the current cost of renewable power generation and by the time the power station is completed the price difference will be greater still; furthermore, the recent news that China General Nuclear Power is considering withdrawing from the project means that the Government is now having to consider taking a financial stake – if this happens, consumers will again pay the price
- the national debate on energy has also moved on significantly since the project was first announced; given renewable electricity generation trends and other available energy generating solutions, it is questionable whether there will be a need in 2034 for the power that Sizewell C is planned eventually to generate.