

Marilyn Hands – Written Representation

My objections to the proposed development are manifold and mainly relate to the construction rather than operation of SZC, but for the purposes of this written representation, I shall confine myself to general principles and the local economy.

General Issues

In its response to Middleton Parish council (p326 doc 9.1 under REP1-013) EDF says “The EPR™ design is now successfully operating at Taishan 1 and 2 in China. *The French (Flamanville) and Finnish (Olkiluoto) Projects experienced delays as a result of an incomplete design. (My italics.)* Sizewell C will benefit from direct experience gained from Hinkley Point C construction. The Project has a stable design and will have an experienced workforce and supply chain and a well-tested schedule. We have a very good understanding of Project risks and how to mitigate them. SZC Co. has been able to learn from the experiences of EPR™ construction and this has informed the proposals assessed within the ES.”

It beggars belief that anyone would start any major construction project with incomplete plans – let alone a nuclear power station. The French and Finnish projects are more than ten years behind schedule and three times over budget. On this basis I would not trust the company to build a garden shed. Why government is entrusting EDF, with such an appalling track record, to build the power station, let alone risk any public investment in it, is beyond me.

Moreover, whilst there may be some truth in what EDF says about the design on the power station per se, it has clearly not bottomed its plans for infrastructure, delivery of materials and mitigation works, as evidenced by late changes to its application. Issues like rail and seaborne freight movements are still up in the air. Various funds for mitigation such as tourism and housing are still unquantified. And on EDF's performance to date, such funds will not be generously endowed – mere chickenfeed in the context of the overall cost and the damage the construction work will inflict on the local area.

Whilst nuclear power stations could and should be the subject of precision planning at the outset, there are some issues that cannot be predicted with certainty. EDF's experts tell us don't worry about coastal erosion, hydrology, ecology and socio-economic matters – all will be fine. But EDF's experts got it very wrong with the development of Flamanville and Olkiluoto. If they cannot deal with the precision of the laws of physics, why should the company's experts be right on matters which are subject to the vagaries of nature, the weather and human behaviour? For example, coastal erosion on the Suffolk coast has been far more aggressive than experts predicted a few years ago. And SZC and its waste are going to be around long after the power station ceases operation.

Moreover, EDF's experts are paid advocates – so of course they would say “Everything will be all right on the night.” Other people's experts, including those who have no axe to grind, take contrary views to EDF's team. There is little mention of disbenefits anywhere anyway in the company's documentation. EDF is fond of using the word “perceived” in front of disbenefits to undermine opposing views. By way of example of the general bias in the reports, look at APP-450, where EDF compares the relative merits of alternatives to the idiot link road it proposes. It does not mention lasting benefit or cost. No prizes for guessing which road has minimal legacy value and minimal cost. As far as EDF is concerned, there is only one overriding criterion for route selection – and that is price and its relentless drive to reduce costs.

No one seems to have looked at potential cumulative impacts – we have silo reports. What happens if they get lots of things a little wrong? The veritable, modern-day Mordor, that will be the Sizewell construction site, should be looked at in the round.

One of my principal concerns is what will happen if things do not turn out as planned. We know that at Hinkley, EDF had to apply for increased HGV movements. Well, that was just tough on those affected. But what happens if the company gets the impact of the scheme on the local hydrology or wildlife wrong and Minsmere and the adjoining areas are being irreparably damaged. Sorry won't do it. If things look like they are going wrong, development should stop until a proper solution is found.

Economic impact.

EDF's economic reports run to 250 pages. We have been “snowstormed” with a blizzard of irrelevant information. As a former property director and regeneration specialist, assertions by the company's consultants give me no confidence at all. What they should have looked at is what happened with SZA and SZB - which left Leiston as one of the poorest small towns in Suffolk.

In fact, the district council seem to have forgotten about these earlier developments altogether. They tell us “The Sizewell C project represents a once in a lifetime opportunity to drive economic growth through business growth and diversification and the creation of jobs in Suffolk.” (Rep 1-049 – p3.) Well, SZC is the third opportunity in my lifetime – and I'm not that old. All the council can see is pound signs. As I said in my evidence at the preliminary hearing, “Some have likened them to whores in a gold rush – an unkind but a very apt analogy.”

Leiston will be hit by a short economic boom, just like a gold rush. When construction finishes, the local economy will collapse. It has happened before - and it will happen again. And like a gold rush, we shall see a substantial increase in crime and social problems as we saw with SZB. Rents and house prices will rise as properties are let to the construction workforce - forcing out locals.

Why should the socio-economic impact of the construction of SZC be any different from A and B? Einstein tells us that “The definition of ‘insanity’ is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” EDF, ESC?

EDF may say that with Hinkley Point there has been little adverse impact on the nearest town, Bridgewater. It may be right. However, the Sizewell campus and just one of the caravan parks, holding a total of 3,000 people (mainly men) will be within easy walking distance of Leiston. Bridgewater is over 10 miles from Hinkley - not a sensible proposition for a night on the town. Admittedly, Bridgewater does have dedicated worker accommodation, but this has fewer people than proposed at Leiston. Moreover, Bridgewater has a population of 41,000 as opposed to Leiston's 5,500, so any adverse impact will be diluted.

Our small local labour market is already pretty tight. SZC will simply overwhelm it. The local tourism industry will be irreparably damaged. Tradesmen are already in short supply. Higher wages for those in cleaning and catering will lure service industry workers from the local hospitality businesses which are already finding recruitment difficult now we have left the EU.

One way or another – by way of electric bills or subsidy - the British Public will pay for this development. If we look at the scheme in terms of job creation, the cost of £20bn equates to about: £800k per temporary post created; £300k per man year of construction employment; or £20m per permanent job created. These figures represent appalling value by any standard – especially in an area which does not need the jobs.

Conclusion

Sizewell is totally unsuited to the proposed development. Why not put the scheme somewhere where the jobs are needed, the coast or waterside is stable, there is adequate transport infrastructure and the environment and its ecology are less fragile? There can be few less suitable sites in the country for the proposed development than Sizewell. The only thing going for it is that the local population are inured to the principle of nuclear power – but not the enormous destruction the construction of this development will inflict on the local area.

Marilyn Hands - Middleton

