

ALDEBURGH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION EVIDENCE TO EXAMINING AUTHORITIES DEADLINE 7

Interested Party number: SIZE-005

Thank you for having me, I am Sarah Whitelock, a representative of Aldeburgh Business Association, our members are 80 SMEs in Aldeburgh, Snape, Thorpeness and Leiston.

None of our members are big corporate giants, this area has no Smiths, Boots or Starbucks, instead we have Baggotts, Barry Shooter's Pharmacy and Munchies. This delicate and successful network would be seriously threatened by the long term disruptive nature of the planned energy project.

Please bear in mind that this planning enquiry falls at a difficult time for small businesses who have suffered multiple threats during the pandemic and that committee members, including myself, are all volunteers.

However, we now have a clear mandate to speak of the negative impact the construction of Sizewell C will have on local businesses, the majority of which rely on tourism. All references will be included with this text when I submit the document as evidence.

Why people come here:

A report of 2019 found a tourism spend of £210 million ¹ for the local economy and it is notable that this survey was done before Covid 19 and the surge in Staycations, current visitor numbers are even higher.

EDF's report on tourism to the Suffolk Coast in 2019 found that future visitors would be likely to be here for walking, the landscape and views, wildlife, cycling and birdwatching.²

A further 2018 report, Valued Landscapes, recognises the special landscape of the district as a nationally important area for its natural beauty and heritage. The AONB has a unique character defined by semi-natural and cultural landscapes (notably sea, coast, estuaries, reedbeds, Sandlings heath, forest, farmland and villages) and built heritage features (such as Martello towers, pill boxes, river walls), creating a juxtaposition of elements in a relatively small area.³

What will deter visitors:

Members' first concern is traffic.

It's important to understand how inaccessible East Suffolk is, with very poor bus and rail provision, so the majority of visitors come by car.

Many come from within 2 hours drive and stay for the day, a trend that has increased during the pandemic. A key feature of a holiday in East Suffolk is to enjoy towns and sights along the coast including Walberswick, Southwold, Dunwich and Woodbridge.

The area is also popular for its festivals, Snape Proms, the internationally recognised Aldeburgh Music Festival, Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival and Aldeburgh Carnival and Folk East festival attract many thousands while 40,000 ticket holders (to say nothing of support equipment and staff) travel up and down the A12 to the Latitude Festival in July. Road congestion as a result of festivals is already an issue, now EDF wants to add freight and personnel movements into the mix. They say:

“One of the most distinct characteristics of the construction phase of the Sizewell C Project is the need to transport substantial volumes of construction material during the 9–12 year construction programme.”⁴ and: “Even with full rail and sea capacity, there is a significant volume of material which will require transport by HGV.”⁵

The strain this will put on local roads is unimaginable.

The build-up of traffic throughout the area will also cause displacement of traffic through surrounding villages with a significant impact on the cyclists, locals and visitors. In 2019 the Guardian reported on the roads leading to Hinkley Point C:

“Air and noise pollution, traffic chaos ...are blighting the Somerset town that has found itself the gateway for the marathon construction of the new Hinkley Point C..”⁶

We understand that the relief roads, roundabouts, the railway line and beach landing facilities aim to help cut down on HGV journeys but each of those will require HGVs and road works, as will the new plan to build a water desalination plant and to truck in the shortfall in water supplies.

The second deterrent to visitors will be loss of tranquillity and walking opportunities.

It is alarming that the construction site will cut the AONB in half preventing the use of numerous rights of way, most notably the Suffolk Coastal Path, the popular walk along Sizewell beach towards Minsmere, well used footpaths through Kenton Hills and around Eastbridge will also be affected. Many walkers take on the uninterrupted 50 mile Suffolk Coastal Path from Felixstowe to Lowestoft, but any determined walker attempting this will be greeted, not with the sight of rare birds and quiet footpaths but spoil heaps and fly parking.

EDF accept significant interruptions to favourite walks⁷ and views but offer “Inland diversions for pedestrians...to minimise disruption”. Expecting visitors to enjoy a coastal path that is not on the coast and newly created landscapes without the benefits of biodiversity, marred by noise, dust and vibration of construction is unrealistic.

EDF Survey and Tourism Fund.

Within EXQ1 EDF responded to the issue of visitors to the area. Their response said:

“SZC Co. recognises the importance of the tourist economy within and around the Suffolk Coast, and has undertaken an assessment of the effects of the Sizewell C Project on tourism,... This concludes that there is limited empirical evidence that the Sizewell C Project would lead to a quantifiable reduction in visitor numbers, a change in visitor behaviour, or a change in expenditure or business viability in the sector over and above normal variation.”⁸

However, its 2019 visitor survey does not support this statement, it demonstrates that visitor behaviour would change⁹. I am no statistician and this survey appears to have conflicting results. It suggests on page 23 that 63% of visitors would not come here during the construction of Sizewell C and on page 25 it states “..three in ten visitors (29%) expect the construction, as described, to make them a lot or a little less likely to visit, while one in ten (13%) expect it to make them a lot or a little more likely to visit.”

These findings demonstrate that at least a double figure percentage of visitors will be put off by the construction of Sizewell C. Can I ask EDF how their staff might react to a 16% cut in wages, or even a 63% cut? What would that do to their families?

Tourism fund:

As part of its responses to the Examination Authority deadline 2¹⁰ EDF says that: “there would be benefit in the establishment of a Tourism Fund to market and promote the area so as to attract new potential and returning tourists.”

There are some key rules to marketing. Perhaps the most important is the loss of faith that occurs when marketing says one thing but lived experience proves another. Marketing may encourage visitors once, but when they have experienced clogged roads and spoilt walks they won't come back, and then they will take to the most powerful of marketing tools – word of mouth and social media.

Cost to the local Economy

The importance of tourism to the local economy is reflected in the data from The Suffolk Observatory, an official data resource. This shows that the proportion of small businesses, leisure sector employment, accommodation and food service enterprises is disproportionately higher in East Suffolk than that of the rest of England. For example: In East Suffolk 88.9% of people are employed in micro businesses (defined as a business with up to 9 employees)¹¹. East Suffolk's GDP is dependent on small businesses servicing the strong tourism industry, we anticipate that should demand for these services fall, the economic impact will be dramatically worse than that of the average English district.

These are our members, who do not have a big voice on their own and who are threatened by the might of EDF's intentions. When visitor numbers drop off and their business fails they will have few other employment options because SZC will be looking for very different skills and is planning to use a significant number of workers moving from their existing jobs at Hinckley Point C. 'Local' jobs that are available will actually be open to people within a 90 minute commute.

It's not just employment in hospitality that will be impacted. I have identified 26 annual festivals in East Suffolk, they account for 168,350 attendees, many of them are music and arts festivals.¹² The Association of Independent Festivals¹³ (AIF) states a 5,000 capacity festival is worth £1.1 million to the local area, so the number of people attending festivals in East Suffolk brings an income of over £37 million. Will Sizewell C fill that gap, will the construction process require musicians, marquee suppliers, specialist chefs, actors, dancers, lighting engineers and stage managers? It seems unlikely.

Cost to mental health

I did email EDF on 18th August to ask for any report that might have been done into the mental health of residents, who are also our members, I received a reply after a gave video evidence.¹⁴ These plans will adversely impact those who live anywhere near the multitude of construction sites, they fear for their quality of life for the duration of the project.

The accommodation campus at Sizewell, with thousands of workers lodging nearby would exceed the total population of Leiston, the nearest town, and would be more than double that of Aldeburgh. Reassurance is not to be found in the national press which reports on rising rents, an increase in numbers using the food banks and locals who are: “frightened to go into town at night because they worry there will be fights, and complain there has been an increase in the number of sex workers.”¹⁵

The same newspaper article quotes Matthew Brock, a building maintenance worker: “They told us Hinkley would be for the locals but they have brought in labour from all over and there has been no trickle-down effect”

On top of such dramatic change in their environment ABA members also doubt that construction workers will pick up the slack in tourism spending – how many concerts will workers go to at Snape Maltings or Disney matinees at Leiston or Aldeburgh cinema? They are likely to shop in supermarkets and pick up take-aways but what about lunch in local restaurants, visiting museums, buying clothes and books? The behaviour of people on holiday and those working in the area are very different, currently new tourists arrive every week and spending money on a new coat or a nice meal are part of the experience, common sense tells us this cannot be true of construction workers.

Worries about the future are having an impact on the mental health of our members. If a local restaurant fails where will the owner, the owner’s family and the staff go?

The other aspect of the mental health argument is the relief it gives visitors from their problems. These are two examples of comments made by visitors to Five Acre Barn B&B¹⁶ which lies only a short distance from the construction site “a few precious days here feels a world away from the hubbub of urban life” and “we recharge and enjoy the surrounding area”.

Conclusion

All this might be bearable if there was any sense that it is a sensible decision. There are so many reasons not to build Sizewell C, the same EPR reactors in Olkiluoto in Finland and Flamanville in France are still not operational, the long lasting problem of nuclear waste, the worrying news about a radiation leak from the EPR reactor at Taishan in China, the mind boggling costs which consumers will have to bear for decades, the shortage of potable water, rising sea levels and coastal erosion, loss of fish in the cooling system, displacement of unique biodiversity, the threat to a thriving tourist economy and arts culture, the sheer volume of traffic, noise and dust and consequent unacceptable strain on everyone that lives here.

We believe that there are more sustainable alternatives including renewables, much needed nationwide insulation for our leaky housing stock, battery storage and hydroelectric, all of which could provide thriving green energy expertise and employment and offer a sustainable answer to the climate emergency.

Thank you again examiners for hearing the views of the local business association.

¹ Energy Coast 2019 <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/shares/The-Energy-Coast-BVA-BDRC-Final-Report-2019.pdf>

² Pg 130 of EDF document 6.3 Revision: 1.0 Applicable Regulation: Regulation 5(2)(a) Volume 2 Main Development Site Chapter 9 Socio-economics Appendices 9A - 9F survey:
https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-001817-SZC_Bk6_ES_V2_Ch9_Socio-economics_Appx9A_9F.pdf pg 17 of visitors survey

³ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/First-Draft-Local-Plan/SCDC-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

See from Page 58 – 63

⁴ 3.1.3. SZC Project Consultation Document On Proposed Changes Nov/Dec 2020

⁵ 3.1.13. SZC Project Consultation Document On Proposed Changes Nov/Dec 2020

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/14/hinkley-point-c-london-traffic-bridgwater-somerset>

⁷ 3.3.7 SZC Project Consultation Document On Proposed Changes Nov/Dec 2020

⁸ G.1.27 EXQ1 April 21 Pg52

[https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-004679-Sizewell%20C%20Project%20-%20Responses%20to%20the%20ExA%E2%80%99s%20Written%20Questions%20\(ExQ1\).pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-004679-Sizewell%20C%20Project%20-%20Responses%20to%20the%20ExA%E2%80%99s%20Written%20Questions%20(ExQ1).pdf)

⁹ EDF Visitor Survey Fig 1.4

https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-001817-SZC_Bk6_ES_V2_Ch9_Socio-economics_Appx9A_9F.pdf

¹⁰ See endnote 8

¹¹ Suffolk Observatory <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/economy-employment/report/view/db248b8d713542efb3c026fccac983c4/E07000244/>

¹² See Appendix A Festivals

¹³ See Appendix B Festivals

¹⁴ [APP-346] - 6.3 Volume 2 Main Development Site Chapter 28 Health and Wellbeing -

https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-001963-SZC_Bk6_ES_V2_Ch28_Health_and_Wellbeing.pdf

[APP-347] - 6.3 Volume 2 Main Development Site Chapter 28 Health and Wellbeing Appendices 28A - 28C -

https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-001964-SZC_Bk6_ES_V2_Ch28_Health_and_Wellbeing_Appx28A_28C.pdf

You may also find the response to the Local Impact Report helpful (search “mental health” in this document –

[REP3-044] - <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-005445-D3%20-%20The%20Sizewell%20C%20Project%20-%20Comments%20on%20LIRs.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/14/hinkley-negative-life-site-shadow-bridgwater>

¹⁶ <https://www.fiveacrebarn.co.uk/>

 APPENDIX A SUMMARY OF FESTIVAL INFORMATION IN EAST SUFFOLK Updated 31/01/21

Numbers in black verified by email or phone, numbers in red have their offices closed due to COVID so figures are conservative estimates based on similar local events. For festivals that sell tickets for individual events, I have estimated the number of attendees as half the number of tickets sold, assuming an average of each attendee attending two events within the festival.

NAME OF FESTIVAL	TYPE	PLACE	NUMBER OF TICKETS	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Siren Festival	Environmental	Aldeburgh	3,500	3,500
Aldeburgh Carnival	Family events	Aldeburgh	15,000	15,000
Folk East	Music	Glemham Hall	9,000	9,000
Ink	Theatre	Halesworth	1,500	750
Alde Valley Spring	Arts/environment	Glemham	4,000	4,000
Suffolk Walking Festival	Walking	51 events in East Suffolk	996	500
Snape Proms	Music	Snape	22,000	11,000
Aldeburgh Music	Music	Snape & Aldeburgh	20,000	10,000
Maverick Festival	Music	Easton Farm Park	4,000	4,000
Latitude	Music/Arts	Southwold	35,000	35,000
High Tide	Arts	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Literary Festival	Books	Aldeburgh	4,230	2,100
Aldeburgh Food & Drink	Food & drink	Snape	10,000	10,000
MAUI WAUI	Alternative Music	Theberton	5,000	5,000
Ways with Words	Books	Southwold	5,000	2,500
Sausage	Food	Framlingham	5,000	5,000
Aldeburgh Documentary	Documentaries	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Aldeburgh Poetry Festival	Poetry	Aldeburgh	2,000	1,000
Southwold Arts	Arts	Southwold	4,000	2,000
Ways with Words	Books	Southwold	5,000	2,500
Slaughter in Southwold	Crime writing	Southwold	1,000	500
First Light	Arts	Lowestoft	35,000	35,000
Flipside	Arts	Snape	3,000	1,500
Felixstowe Book	Books	Felixstowe	2087	1,000
Festival of Fabric	Fabric	Felixstowe	1,000	500
Art on the Prom	Art	Felixstowe	5,000	5,000
TOTAL: 26			Tickets: 212,510	Attendees: 168,350

Appendix B: Economic value of festivals:

Written evidence submitted by UK Music December 2020 to House of Commons DCMS Select Committee Evidence 3.5 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/18840/pdf/>

“Music both contributes to onshore economic growth and supports local economies. Festivals and music venues are intrinsically linked to supply chain businesses in their local areas including technical freelancers, catering providers and service suppliers (for example security). According to the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) a 5,000 capacity festival is worth £1.1 million to the local area, while a 110,000 capacity festival can be worth over £27 million. Glastonbury generates over £100 million into the economy of South West England each time it takes place and music festivals as a