

I am a hospitality and visitor perception consultant and have lived in Suffolk for most of my life. I spoke at the SPR Public Inquiry about the effect the power companies infrastructure works would have on local tourism and businesses in this part of Suffolk.

I have to apologise, I got my evidence very wrong, but not as very wrong as SPR's team who claimed there would be minimal disruption and little effect. The reality of the situation is worse much worse.

Already businesses in the area report a drop in takings of up to 30%. Tourism numbers are down by around 15%. Holiday booking have dropped by 24%, partially because many holiday cottages have been rented to the power workers. These levels of collapse turn many businesses from viable to unviable.

Visitors came to Suffolk for peace, fresh air, big skies, relaxation, to enjoy the rural and seaside tranquillity and for an appreciation of culture and the better things. Suffolk has always been London's much needed lungs

Holiday makers are happy to spend money in the shops, pubs, restaurants, and other local attractions but many

power workers tend to bring microwaves and then buy ready meals and cans of beer in the cheaper supermarkets and save their money Local hotels talk of minimal secondary spend. Power workers tend to start early and retire early so no night-time economy. There are no 'boom towns' this is no gold rush for the local businesses.

Coming to Suffolk used to be a rural adventure, the drive from Woodbridge or Lowestoft was a pastoral delight, open countryside , cattle grazing, ancient trees, sleepy villages, Giving you a real sense of arrival. But today you are faced with mile upon mile of red and white fencing, thousands of safety cones, unnecessary speed restrictions, tottering temporary undecipherable yellow AA verge side signs, slow moving lorries, traffic jams, ripped out hedges, scarred countryside, disappeared woodland, road works, road closures, temporary traffic lights and unacceptably long journey times. More a sense of a dystopian Armageddon than a sense of arrival.

Once visitors know this, why would they come to East Suffolk? There are plenty of other options without these problems The damage is already being done. Ai, tripadvisor, mumsnet and similar websites are even now warning of the changes, the chaos and the mess. This will

destroy current levels of tourism and thereby the businesses that rely on it. In the past year five shops have closed in Aldeburgh, four in Leiston and five in Saxmundham, all have empty shops.

This is not some short term problem. The reputation of the area will be tarnished for many years after the last day-glow clad, heavy booted worker leaves. The power companies have shown little interest in mitigating the effects of their schemes, or coordinating with each other to reduce their impact.

Returning visitors will be disappointed by the major changes in atmosphere, the loss of much of the tourist infrastructure, the loss of many of their favourite walks, the quiet lanes and favourite views. and what was once beautiful countryside full of trees and animals will have been industrialised with hundreds of acres of concrete, vast stretches of security fencing surrounding giant silos soaring above the remaining tree line and lest anyone forget highlighted at night with red safety lights and flood lighting.

As more and more infrastructure projects are focused on East Suffolk, and the build time is extended well into the

2040's tourism one of its main income streams and source of employment will not just be blighted it will be destroyed.

Piers Sturridge.