

Interested Party comments Hoverport Compulsory Acquisition Hearing

My Reference [REDACTED] and the reference for Cliffsend Green Community Group [REDACTED] (which I represent)

My history with the Hoverport site

I have lived in Cliffsend for 21 years, I have read the Pegwell Bay Construction Method Technical Note and all associated documents, and noted the many that are missing. This is a dystopian nightmare detailing the destruction of several deeply significant habitats for nature,

I have spent an inordinate amount of time on the Hoverport site, both recreationally and professionally; I can't think there is one part I am not familiar with, to the point where I know which blackberry bush bares the sweetest fruit, the Peregrine Falcon's favourite perch, where the Red Listed Corncrakes nest, the favoured feeding sites of Curlews, Sandpipers, blackcaps, Rock Pippets, Pied Wagtails...the list goes on. It is also where Bats are and the occasional seal. This place is literally where the chalk cliffs end, where an ancient river used to run to the sea in the bay until it silted up and became sandstone cliffs running the length of the site. It is a unique habitat, compounded by it's historical use as a Hoverport. The site is positioned slongside a vitally important and protected site for migrating birds. Many a night , on the spring and Autumn I listen in awe as skeins of geese in their 1000's migrate to Pegwell Bay to rest and feed, you can hear their wings and of course their navigational honking.

The Hoverport site is a place of wonder and reflection and as Cliffsend's unofficial nature reserve, it adds countless value to the inhabitants of Cliffsend and surrounds. At this very time when we are encouraging connection with nature, to learn to value it and realise it's absolute necessity to our survival we have this situation with NG, who do not account for the intrinsic value of this accessible site right on our doorstep.

I know and have met many people who sit at the edge of this site by the water to meditate, reflect, watch wildlife, create art, explore, walk dogs or just have a picnic (it was particularly busy during lockdown). It has been a life saver for me on a few occasions. The very decrepitude of the site is it's beauty and suggests that the Hoverport site should not be used by NG for their nefarious investors gain.

I also write from a position of scientific and environmental legislation knowledge. I am an Environmental Social Scientist (for 22 years) however I also worked with Edge Environmental reporting on brown field sites for development, part of my remit was taking monthly water samples from the Hoverport site (both from the stream at the back and the tidal edge). Briefly, the site was built using slurry from local coal mines as a foundation with all the associated geotechnical, environmental and safety risks.

I understand that NG have suggested they only use the parts of the site that are stable; quite bizarre to be honest, that they imagine they can leapfrog with heavy machinery and pant from one tiny pad of stability to another! Slurry is highly prone to liquefaction under stress (ie; construction material storage and movement, heavy plant movement. Leaching of toxic metals such as arsenic, mercury, lead, chromium and cadmium is far more likely if heavy plant and machinery is used on the site.

I believe it would be impossible to use any of this site as NG propose as it is unstable already, and without full reparation would not be suitable for NG's purpose. It is also of vital importance to the wellbeing of the local community and quite often the homeless community who use it. It is a highly prized and important habitat for wildlife across all species of flora and fauna present.; and especially as it is adjacent to a Saltmarsh and a SSSI of international importance.

I can only imagine the construction noise, lights and vibration from vehicles carrying tonnes of building materials to stabilise Minster Marshes enough to build a huge converter station on it would be highly detrimental to life in Cliffsend and life for all ecology in Pegwell Bay. The removal of the public's right to roam would also be removed; even from local footpaths would be a terrible loss and profoundly affect many people. This really is the last wilderness in Thanet,

I strongly feel that NG have done their usual and stuck a pin in a map and concluded the Hoverport Site would be ideal for facilitating the destruction of Minster Marshes and it's surrounding habitat, including Pegwell Bay. This is bourne out by the fact there have been no ecological studies of the site carried out by NG.

What NG need to do first is the following before even considering the Hoverport for the use they would like

1. A Contamination Risk Assessment (Pollution Analysis, Soil and Groundwater sampling,)
2. Leaching Risk Analysis
3. Gas monitoring
4. Bioavailability Study
5. Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH) Mapping
6. Protected Species Surveys
7. Botanical Surveys

Not to mention various ecological photostabilisation studies,. Also a human health risk assessment and ecological service evaluation are imperative due to the site's position by an inhabited village.

You can understand why the Thanet District Council chose not to develop or remediate the site; the cost and disturbance was prohibitive.

The actions of NG do not surprise me; after all, the first time I met the team at an information evening in Cliffsend, an earnest NG representative suggested remediation for the entire development would consist of a children's play park and a planting of some trees. I am incensed by NG's ignorance and self destructive desire to destroy our unique and vital habitats for financial gain; it is so short sighted it's not only frightening, it's unethical and tantamount to ecocide