

What's worrying me is that the unprecedented number of major infrastructure projects being developed or due to be developed in East Suffolk at the moment is driving us into uncharted territory in terms of the cumulative adverse impacts that will be experienced by a single community and I'm particularly worried about how such a heavy infrastructure burden will impact on the local population's health and wellbeing. It is of course well recognised that people's mental health is intrinsically and fundamentally linked to stress, but since the whole DCO process is being viewed through a planning lens, stress, which is a highly subjective, perceived experience that cannot be objectively quantified is not actually being "seen". Just because rising stress levels in response to major infrastructure imposition can't be seen does not mean that they are not rising and it is imperative that the mental and physical health harms that may be experienced by the local community if all these projects proceed are properly addressed.

The local community's stress levels have already been rising ever since Sizewell C – the biggest infrastructure project in Europe – appeared on our horizon. Our landscape has been altered in front of our eyes and our local road network has become completely dysfunctional with journey times all over the shop, roads full of pot-holes and roadworks that are impacting on us on a daily basis. And yet we're still only at the start of what threatens to be 10 to 15 years of construction of Sizewell C, EA1North, EA2, the National Grid connection hub, Sea Link, Lion Link, at least 4,000 acres of solar parks, almost 1,000 houses and the Suffolk water project due to deliver millions of litres of water every day to Sizewell C – a project that wasn't even recommended consent for development on the grounds of an inadequate water supply – that had a desktop study putting the pipeline from Saxmundham to Sizewell straight through the Saxmundham converter stations site. This is infrastructure chaos and it will only get worse if the impacts of such extreme, disproportionate, unreasonable cumulative impacts are allowed to progress unchecked.

If we look at how the more tangible direct impacts of Sea Link on health and wellbeing are being assessed, we can see that even with these more measurable impacts such as traffic disruption and cumulative impacts, National Grid is taking a very restricted view. The impacts of Sea Link on traffic are predicted to be negligible, but traffic disruption is already a big issue locally as a result of ongoing Sizewell C works and the limited traffic modelling carried out so far for Sea Link hasn't taken this into account. In addition, National Grid has failed to comply with the request to produce extra junction modelling before Deadline 5, information that won't now be available until Deadline 6 – three weeks before the end of the DCO examinations.

Cumulative impacts are only predicted to be moderate with National Grid claiming that the mathematical equations that have been employed to reach this conclusion are reliable. It is galling to have our health and wellbeing assessment reduced to a few predictive equations that cannot ever be adequate to predict what's happening to us, the local population living

experientially in the middle of everything. National Grid also insists that a precautionary approach to the effects of cumulative impacts is unnecessary, but if there is any uncertainty about the extent of adverse cumulative impacts, a precautionary approach must be adopted.

Let's look at National Grid's response to Suffolk County Council's proposals for an alternative access route to the Saxmundham converter stations site that shares the Sizewell Link Road and avoids the adverse impacts and harms threatened by use of the current proposed route through Benhall. The problems – withheld at the statutory consultation – of transporting super-heavy loads over the weight restricted Benhall railway bridge and of building a new bridge over the River Fromus are considerable. These difficulties, along with the severe adverse impacts that would be experienced by local residents and the wider community as a result of the major traffic disruption that would ensue with use of the Benhall route could be largely avoided by using Suffolk County Council's new route. In addition, Suffolk County Council's proposals would be an excellent example of coordination between Developers because the Sizewell Link Road, specifically designed for transportation of construction vehicles, would be shared between Sizewell C, Sea Link, Lion Link and possibly even Scottish Power. However, in spite of all this, National Grid has dismissed Suffolk County Council's proposals predominantly on the grounds of increased journey times and distances. This shows a woeful lack of understanding of what the local community will have to endure if the route through Benhall is employed as well as a lack of willingness to work with the local population in order to try to find the least impactful and most balanced solution.

East Suffolk is facing a state of extreme planning imbalance and infrastructure should not be imposed at our expense. The urgency of achieving an arbitrary, unachievable date by which to decarbonise the grid threatens to undermine the wellbeing of the local population and it feels reckless to be carrying on imposing infrastructure project after infrastructure project on the same long-suffering local community. More consideration needs to be given to us, the human beings stuck in the middle of this cumulative impact crisis – I use the word advisedly.