

Energy Projects Update – Website

Scottish Power/National Grid

SASES - As previously reported SASES has applied for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. SASES has sought permission on two grounds relating to how surface water flood risk should be addressed when selecting a development site and how information relating to other projects should be taken into account (i.e. cumulative impact) when granting development consent. A decision on permission is awaited but it is hoped this will be before August.

SEAS - The SEAS has lost its appeal in the Court of Appeal. Its case is based on the manner in which Scottish Power engaged with landowners. SEAS is seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. Meanwhile SEAS is continuing to campaign and argue for the better alternative of an offshore grid/solution engaging with communities in Walberswick, Southwold/Reydon and Saxmundham given those communities' interest in the subject now.

SPR Activity - SPR finally met with the Parish Council in late March, principally because it wishes to carry out what are known as "infiltration tests" at the substation site and along the cable route. These tests are primarily designed to see how much surface water can be absorbed into the ground rather than having to be discharged through the village. These tests were conducted defectively during the planning process but the Scottish Power position on flood mitigation was accepted by SCC and the Examining Authority. The infiltration tests will be carried out during mid-April and therefore contractors in high vis jackets and some plant and machinery will be seen at the substation site. Given the serious concerns about flood risk in the village the Parish Council requested to see the results of the infiltration testing however SPR refused. The Parish Council regards this refusal as unacceptable. This matter has been taken up with the County Council which is responsible for flood risk matters.

Members of the Parish Council met with Annette Robinson (SCC Public Rights of Way Manager) and Steve Merry (SCC Highways) on 22 March to discuss the diversion of footpaths around the substation site. Unfortunately FP6 (the Pilgrims' Way) is proposed to be diverted along the inside hedge line of Grove Road. We were very firm that the hedge line would need to be secure to prevent dogs and children from straying on to the road. Cllr Shipman also met briefly in Friston with Matt Williams (SCC Flood Engineer) and Ben Locksmith on 21 March. Matt is leaving SCC to join SZC and Ben is taking over his position. Matt and Ben had walked over the substation site and parts of the village during the morning so that Ben was familiar with the issues.

National Grid Sealink

The position of this project is as previously reported. National Grid expects to make its formal development consent application in the Autumn of 2024.

National Grid Lionlink

National Grid has reported back on its non-statutory consultation and announced that landfall for this project will be either at Walberswick or just north of Southwold. The cable route will then make its way to the proposed converter station site at Saxmundham and from Saxmundham the cable route will go to the National Grid connection hub at Friston.

The statutory consultation is planned for the first quarter of 2025 with the application being made in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The Planning Inspectorate has recently sought comments on the LionLink Scoping Report prepared by National Grid which sets out the environmental impacts that it thinks should be considered. This will feed into the content of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report which will form part of the statutory consultation process next year. The Parish Council provided a response and this is available on the Parish Council website. The Parish Council raised a number of issues which it felt were not adequately considered in the scoping report including inevitably flood risk and cumulative impact. Depressingly no consideration has been given to the impact of all these projects on the mental well-being of the community.

As previously reported the Parish Council has complained repeatedly about the multiplicity of consultations and planning processes but no effort has been made to coordinate these, adding to the burdens of an already oppressed community. East Suffolk Council has taken this point up in its response to the scoping opinion. Both East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council responded to the scoping opinion and are at last taking a more robust approach.

National Grid Nautilus

The position on this project is as previously reported. National Grid has been considering whether it can connect this project at an existing substation location at the Isle of Grain in Kent or as originally planned at Friston. The position has still not been confirmed although a decision on this can be expected this year. Further OFGEM which is required to approve the Nautilus project, has recently indicated it is not prepared to recommend regulatory support for another interconnector as National Grid has yet to demonstrate its consumer value. However this is not a final decision rather a demand that further justification must be provided.

National Grid Study

National Grid has conducted a study into its transmission infrastructure in East Anglia and this has now been published. In short the results of the study are a disaster for this community.

It is proposing yet that more projects are developed and connect here including the possibility of an additional pylon line. Further Friston, as a potential major East Anglia connection hub, is acting as a honeypot for other projects such as solar farms and battery storage. There is no doubt that this small community is facing an unprecedented number of projects yet the impact of this on the mental and financial well-being of the community is being ignored.

It has to be remembered that National Grid has never sought consent for a connection hub at Friston, it has sought consent by stealth, in which process it has previously been assisted by our local authorities through their passivity.

A joint Parish Council/SASES meeting was held at the Village Hall on 23rd March to brief residents further on this. Therese Coffey MP attended this meeting as she is clearly concerned. Further just before this meeting DESNZ published the results of a survey it had conducted on attitudes to transmission infrastructure. In short the survey was a travesty showing highly misleading images of the nature of the infrastructure and asking questions designed to minimise people's assessment of impacts. The survey is nothing short of dishonest. Therese Coffey indicated she would take this issue up with DESNZ.

Sizewell C

There is little new to report. EDF held its annual Forum in Ipswich on 9 April which

was a highly stage-managed affair. There has been little feedback from this forum.