



MEDIA RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3 JANUARY 2019

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ENERGY SCANDAL THREATENS TO DEVASTATE EAST SUFFOLK LANDSCAPE

East Suffolk and the Suffolk Coast are known for their beauty and tranquillity. They are the home of the quintessentially English towns of Southwold and Aldeburgh, made famous by Adnams beers and Benjamin Britten. Yet this beautiful region is in uproar over the latest energy project to hit its shores. Not only are there plans to build yet another nuclear power station Sizewell C, in addition to Sizewell A and B, but now Scottish Power (owned by Spanish energy giant Iberdrola) also plans to build a vast onshore energy complex in open countryside next to the peaceful village of Friston to connect the ever increasing number of offshore wind farms in the Southern North Sea to the National Grid. Adding to their concerns, local communities have learned that the National Grid organisation is planning to connect the UK electricity grid to those of Belgium and the Netherlands in the same location which would require further large scale industrial development in open countryside. Yet further onshore industrialisation will be required to accommodate the major expansion of the existing windfarms known as Galloper and Greater Gabbard. Then on top of all of this the Crown Estate is unthinkingly planning yet another series of wind-farm projects known as 'Round 4' off the Suffolk Coast which will require even more onshore infrastructure.

It might be thought that before launching such an extraordinary number of energy projects in one small and sensitive area of Suffolk, which includes the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there would have been a long term plan to identify and allocate suitable brownfield land to minimise the long term onshore impact. However, the key players such as the Crown Estate, the National Grid, Scottish Power (owned by Spanish company Iberdrola) and the French company EDF have failed to do this.

Scottish Power's damaging proposals result from their failure in a botched project which is currently carving a 50 metre wide swathe through the AONB further down the Suffolk coast. **It turns out that Scottish Power's 22 mile long and 50m wide cable route, from Bawdsey on the coast to Bramford inland, could and should have carried all the power from the Scottish Power wind-farms to an existing onshore energy complex. This project has been mismanaged to such a degree that it can now only take a fraction of the power originally planned. What is Scottish Power's and National Grid's solution to this debacle? They plan to dig up yet another 6 miles of the Suffolk countryside in a different location again through the AONB and build another 30+ acre substation complex 18 metres high in open countryside adjacent to the peaceful Suffolk village of Friston in close proximity to a number of listed buildings including Friston Parish Church.**

How has this been allowed to happen? The planning arrangements for such projects are the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate, a Government Agency. A multitude of other bodies are consulted, most importantly Natural England (another Government Agency), National Grid, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council). Incomprehensibly they agreed to the changes which Scottish Power wanted to make to the 22 mile cable route and none of them seemed to be aware of the disastrous consequences of such a decision. It is difficult to believe, had the Planning Inspectorate and the consultees been made aware of those consequences, that they would have ever agreed to those changes.

Clearly in the dash for so called renewables something is going seriously wrong. Renewable energy should not involve the desecration of landscapes which cannot be renewed when with a strategic, long term approach sensible solutions can be found.

Local community groups are trying to oppose Scottish Power's plans including Save East Suffolk (sases.org.uk) and Save Our Sandlings, but the wind power juggernauts of the Crown Estate, the National Grid and Scottish Power are not thinking or listening and just carry on regardless, taking no heed of impact on the lives of local residents, whilst hiding behind a meaningless consultation exercise.

Meanwhile the political classes tinker at the edges but have failed to take action when it comes to bringing about a strategic, long term approach to energy planning.

Given the collective failure of the energy industry and central and local government, Save East Suffolk have written to both the Parliamentary Select Committees for Energy and the Environment to investigate precisely what has gone on.

A spokesman for Substation Action Save East Suffolk said "People understand the need for renewable energy but what is happening in East Suffolk is a scandal and undermines the case for renewable energy. How can Scottish Power be allowed to dig up miles of an AONB, a supposedly legally protected landscape, twice and possibly yet again in the future? The abject failure to plan for the long term calls into question the competence of those charged with developing much needed renewable energy. National Grid's failure to invest and plan for the long term casts doubt over their stewardship of a vital piece of national infrastructure. Scottish Power's failure to manage its projects effectively calls into question their fitness to develop this vital resource. You do wonder whether the driver of these projects is the pursuit of private profit to meet the short term demands of Iberdrola's and National Grid's shareholders. Rather than a desire to reduce carbon emissions it is the desire to cash in on tax payer funded subsidies. What is particularly disappointing is those whom we elect and pay to represent us and control such behaviour seem to have been asleep at the wheel."

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