



24 JANUARY 2024

SCOTTISH POWER RENEWABLES EA1N & EA2 PROJECTS

Comments of Friston Parish Council in respect of the proposed Pre-Commencement Archaeology Execution Plan/Infiltration Testing - Discharge of Requirements

East Suffolk Council references: DC/24/0064/DRR; DC/24/0065/DRR; DC/24/0062/DRR; DC/24/0069/CCC

Suffolk County Council references: SCC/0007/24/DoR/EA2; SCC/0006/24/DoR/EA1

Preamble

1. FPC considers it would be helpful for both local authorities to see all of its comments on these works given their respective responsibilities.
2. FPC has no professional expertise in relation to these matters and therefore relies upon the expertise and diligence of the local authorities. The key point FPC would make is that it would expect the relevant experts within the local authorities to have carried out physical site inspections. This is necessary given FPC's concern over the accuracy of the plans provided by Scottish Power - see below.
3. As the local authorities are aware these projects are very controversial with the community. Scottish Power and National Grid, and therefore by extension their contractors, are deeply distrusted, and in particular with regard to their competence and transparency. This has been even further exacerbated by extremely poor community engagement by each of these developers. There has been little sign of this improving. Further given the ongoing litigation being conducted by SASES and SEAS these projects may not go ahead rendering this work and the associated disruption unnecessary.
4. FPC therefore expects the local authorities to robustly engage with these developers putting the concerns and interests of the local community first rather than its relationship with the developers.
5. As the local authorities are aware, although the examining authority recommended that these projects should be granted consent, it highlighted that the "harm that the ExA has identified is ***substantial and should not be underestimated in effect***". This harm is not theoretical. It has already caused and will continue to cause serious damage to the well-being of the community.

Introduction

6. Friston Parish Council (FPC) observes that these Pre-commencement Archaeological Plans are less about archaeology, but effectively an admission by SPR that the infiltration testing, which it conducted at a late stage in the EA1N and EA2 DCO examinations was inadequate. This is something that it chose to deny in the examinations despite it being pointed out by Clive Carpenter, the flood and drainage expert instructed by Substation Action Save East Suffolk (SASES). The relevant submissions on this point are included in the Examination Library. It remains a matter of concern to FPC that SCC was prepared to rely on this inadequate testing for the purposes of agreeing the operational drainage management plan despite the existing serious surface water flood risk at Friston.

Planning background to the current applications

7. In August 2023 FPC became aware of a Planning Application DC/23/2436/FUL made to ESC for a temporary compound at Harrow Lane Airstrip to serve the onshore Archaeological Mitigation Works associated with EA1N and EA2 projects. FPC had not been notified of this planning application which had been submitted on 21 June 2023. A copy of FPC's comments of 16 August 2023, which are equally applicable to the current applications, are appended.
8. Within this application is a Transport Statement which shows Grove Road, Friston proposed as an HGV route to access both the substation site and the haul road/cable route. It is to be noted that Grove Road is a winding, mainly single-track road, which is designated as Quiet Lane. FPC engaged with both SCC and ESC on this matter and were advised that a further opportunity to comment on the use of Grove Road and the location of the access points would arise when the Archaeological Execution Plan was submitted. A copy of this Transport Plan is also appended
9. The planning application for the temporary compound was approved on 8th September 2023 and the Officer's Report states "*The issues raised by the Parish Council regarding the location of the access points off Grove Road and the risks to rights of way users by contractors' vehicles accessing or working within the site are noted. The Transport Policy and Development Manager would expect that these matters would be considered during discharge of the DCO requirement 19, 20 (archaeology), 26 (onshore preparation works) and 32 (rights of way) rather than this TCPA application which relates to the compound on Harrow Lane. As far as practical we would encourage SPR to use the northern access (AP2) on Grove Road in preference to Manor Farm (AP4) and to ensure that secure compounds are provided to avoid daily movement of construction vehicles*".
10. These Discharge of Requirements applications were submitted to Suffolk County Council on 5th January 2024.

Discharge of Requirements

Infiltration Testing

11. FPC was surprised to see that the Pre-Commencement Archaeology Execution Plan (PcAEP) and the Onshore Preparation Works Management Plan (OPWMP) also include for a repeat of the Infiltration Testing which was carried out during 2021 during the DCO Examination. There were many inadequacies in the 2021 infiltration testing which in the opinion of SASES' flood expert, Clive Carpenter, made them not compliant with BRE 365 standards and therefore could and should not be relied upon. Nevertheless they were accepted at the time by SCC as local lead flood authority. In paragraph 7 on page 7 of the PcAEP, SPR states the following:

"Previous phases of infiltration testing undertaken in 2021 have recorded infiltration rates with varying degrees of success... Following review of the infiltration test results and subsequent discussion with Suffolk County Council, it was deemed necessary to carry out a third phase of infiltration testing at the location of the proposed SuDs ponds".

The OPWMP repeats this at paragraph 10 and adds "*This was primarily due to the low permeability of the soils affecting the duration of the test and restrictions on site at the time of undertaking the infiltration tests*"

12. FPC is pleased that further infiltration testing will be undertaken to BRE 365 standards, however FPC queries why the 2021 testing was accepted which led to the DCOs being granted. Surely if the testing was adequate to support the grant of the DCOs why is further testing necessary? FPC would welcome an explanation by SCC.
13. FPC welcomes a meeting with the Applicants (as proposed at paragraph 91 on page 19 of the PcAEP)) in the vicinity of the infiltration testing survey works. FPC however asks that a

representative of the Parish Council can be present at the actual testing events and be supplied with the results as soon as they are available.

14. FPC is concerned that the infiltration testing is only being proposed to take place on the locations of the proposed SuDs ponds. These ponds will not be available during the construction period and FPC asks to see a scheme which fully considers the drainage plans during construction.
15. It is the opinion of FPC that the geological map provided with the documents does not adequately show the essential claylike nature of the soils on the proposed substation site, which do not lend themselves to infiltration.
16. It is noted that the Infiltration Tests are proposed to be carried out in March, which is shown on page 9 of the Hydrogeological Risk Assessment as being the average driest month of the year. Infiltration tests must therefore take this into consideration and allow for the wetter winter months in terms of infiltration. Preferably infiltration testing should be repeated in each season of the year if it is to be a reliable guide to infiltration throughout the year.
17. FPC believes that this testing should be carried out in conjunction with investigations as to how an effective connection for the proposed outfall pipe to the Friston Watercourse is to be achieved. FPC's opinion is that this connection is not viable, a point which SASES made during the examinations.

Traffic and Access points

18. FPC notes that Drwg No. IBR-001347 'Pre-Construction Activities – HGV Routing and Accesses' proposes the use of Grove Road as an HGV route with two access points marked AP2 (the access track to Little Moor Farm and a designated PRow) and AP4 to the south of Grove Wood. This is identical to that proposed within the application for the temporary compound. It is not acceptable for such a narrow, winding unclassified road with no footpaths to be used for this purpose. Grove Road is designated as a Quiet Lane as well as a National Cycle Route and is used by pedestrians, dog-walkers and horse-riders (there are stables at Manor Farm close by). These accesses are also very close to the village.
19. Paragraphs 79 and 80 of the Pre-Construction Archaeology Execution Plan state that all accesses will require traffic management and may include the use of two-way traffic lights, which will be on an ad-hoc basis as and when required. How can people plan their journeys to work, school and services without a proper plan in place? Grove Road is used by local agricultural traffic and is also a convenient route between Friston and Leiston avoiding the dangerous junction at Blackheath Corner. The proposals will lead to a chaotic situation.
20. The use of a road sweeper on a weekly basis to clear mud and debris from the road is insufficient and this should be done on a daily basis.
21. FPC also objects to the use of PRows for vehicular access over the site and also to the parking of vehicles in locations on or close-by such rights of way. This is a safety issue as well as being detrimental to the wellbeing of the community.

Conclusion

22. Given the size and extent of the proposed development it is vital that surface water flooding is given priority in ensuring that Friston will not be subject to greater flood as a result of the development and importantly during its construction. Also the community needs to feel confident that this issue is being properly addressed.

23. Currently this is not the case. In this respect it is essential that the infiltration testing is properly monitored and recorded. FPC wish to be involved in all stages of these investigations and ask that SCC as Lead Flood Authority also take an active part in monitoring the infiltration testing. Further FPC would wish to be involved in the discussions relating to these tests.
24. FPC understands that there have been significant archaeological finds across the development area north and east of Friston and asks that SCC Archaeology closely monitors the works and does not rely on SPR's findings exclusively.
25. FPC is extremely concerned about the use of Grove Road as an access for the proposed works, in particular access AP4 which is very close to the village and residential properties.

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