

## **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) Update 12 October 2020**

### Background

The Development Consent Order (DCO) is the last stage of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) at which the public or organisations can contribute their views and concerns about the planning application. At the end of this the Examining Authority of PINS (a Panel of Planning Inspectors) 'examines' the application then makes a recommendation to the Sec of State who gives the final decision of approval or rejection. And within the DCO there are several parts or Hearings. Each has a deadline by which individuals and organisations have to apply to participate, either in writing or verbally. This update will explain that briefly and tell you what has happened so far with an NSIP DCO right here in our area, and what you can do.

### Introduction

Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) has submitted an NSIP planning application to construct, operate and then decommission two wind farms called EA1N and EA2 off the East Coast. SPR have been offered a connection to the National Grid somewhere along the line which runs south east from Sizewell. SPR have decided this connection point will be at Friston close to the Grade II listed St Mary's Church where they plan to construct two very large industrial substations each with warehouse style solid buildings up to 21m high and across 12 acres. This also means constructing landing facilities on the fragile coastal cliffs at Thorpeness, and cable trenches (10km long and 32m to 60m wide) from there through the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to Sizewell, Aldringham (through woodland close to the Residential Care home) and the Fitches Lane area of Knodishall (close to the Primary school) across the B1069 and agricultural land (where it will also build a Consolidation Compound) to Friston. To do this they would also need to construct new 'haul' roads and have to 'stop up' 26 public rights of way temporary and close 2 permanently. There would be a significant increase in traffic, air/light/dust and noise pollution, with potential risk of flooding or fire.

As part of this National Grid would also construct an even larger substation (up to 24m high) at the same site in Friston (over a total of 35 acres) to convert/connect the electricity to the pylons and power lines running inland. Alarmingly we have found out that if this application is approved National Grid (NG) would want to connect other new NSIP projects; Nautilus (an interconnector from Belgium – although only last year one was built called Nemo) Eurolink interconnect from Holland, extensions to the existing Great Gabbard & Galloper windfarms (now called Five Estuaries and North Falls) with SDC1 and potential SDC2 (connectors to/from Kent). Each would require its own substation up to 26m high over 12 acres that has to be within 5km of Friston, cable trenches from the coast and landing facility! There is no coordination or strategy, and there are alternatives both elsewhere along NG powerlines and to combine offshore as elsewhere in EU. \*Please note there are various sections of NG - to simplify we've referred to them all as the parent company.

You can imagine the impact this huge industrial project (and potential future projects) will have on the life of those who live in/work in, travel across and visit this rural area. And on our economy which is heavily reliant on Tourism, and on the elements of the environment that residents and visitors of all ages value; tranquillity, dark skies, landscapes, peaceful walks, wildlife, listed buildings, access on relatively safe (although already getting busier) roads to; Music/Arts/Theatre and leisure activities (cycling, golf, sailing) our wonderful Heritage coast and AONB/SSSI (Sites of Specific Scientific Interest).

### So where are we now?

Registering as an Interested Party (to take part in the DCO) individuals and groups also sent in written 'Relevant Representations'. These documents are published on the PINS (Planning Inspectorate) website and the applicant has answered these with their own comments. See: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-one-north-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=relreps>

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-two-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=relreps>

At the Preliminary Meeting hearings (PM) of the DCO (part 1 on the 16<sup>th</sup> September and part 2 on 7<sup>th</sup> October) the Panel heard from individuals, organisations (representatives from SASES and SEAS and local Councils (Suffolk County, East Suffolk District and Aldeburgh Town Council) about the process and timetable of the Examination phase of the DCO. Despite requests to delay the Examination start, until after a review which is currently going on with BEIS (the Government department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) or due to Covid-19 restrictions and the additional pressures and constraints this has put on individuals and organisations/Councils - the Panel decided to start the six-month Examination on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

As well as sending in Relevant Representations people and organisations could request to speak and the first stage of the Examination which is called Open Floor Hearings (OPH). Over three days (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October) 50 individuals, representatives of organisations and local councils - out of 140 who had asked to speak were selected to do so. Everyone made excellent presentations and were of the same view that the harm of these projects outweighs the benefits. There were also several new specific points that were expressed which the Panel said was very helpful. Due to Covid-19 restrictions all these Hearings were held 'virtually' and as well as being able to watch these live streamed at the time - you can watch a recording of these Hearings though a link on the PINS website. They are one of many documents found here in date order:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-one-north-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=docs> or

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-two-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=docs>

At the OFHs the Panel announced that due to the volume of people wishing to speak they will be given time at extra OFHs on the mornings of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November. The Panel also asked the applicant to respond to several points. Everyone who spoke was asked to send in a summary and other points they want to make.

What you can do now by 2<sup>nd</sup> November which is the next deadline:

1. The Examining Authority Panel invited anyone to send in responses to the written Relevant Representations on their website and the Open Floor Hearings. So please write to say you agree with certain points made, or send in your own views and concerns, or that of a group you represent.
2. The Panel also asked that everyone sends in suggestions of where they should visit during their Site Inspections so details of the views, paths, roads and junctions etc to illustrate our concerns, what we value and want to protect. This could also include photographs.
3. You can also request to speak at further OFHs in January 2020. The Inspectors said they would also make additional provision for individuals who were unable to take part due to digital exclusion or difficulties using the virtual format if they are asked to do so. (This cannot be just if you prefer not to speak virtually, but if you do not have the IT or a stable internet connection, or anything that prevents you from contributing virtually). This is crucially important as it will be the last time the Inspectorate can hear verbally from individuals or organisations. So please request this now, even if again you use your time (5mins) to agree with others or add weight to what has previously been said.

There is time between now and then to plan or get assistance with your verbal presentation, or if you are a representative of an organisation to gain their support to do so officially.

4. You can also request to speak at the Issue Specific Hearings during week of 30<sup>th</sup> November. They will discuss and examine the specific issues of harm which have been identified through the written Relevant Representations and virtual verbal Hearings so far. The Inspectors confirmed that National Grid has been invited to attend these which is the first time they have engaged visibly with these matters although it is their offer to SPR to connect to the Grid at Friston which is driving this, and it is NG who want to create a huge industrialised energy hub here.

For more information see SASES (Substation Action Save East Suffolk) [www.sases.org.uk](http://www.sases.org.uk) or SEAS (Suffolk Energy Action Solutions) [www.suffolkenergyactionsolutions.co.uk](http://www.suffolkenergyactionsolutions.co.uk)

**THIS PROCESS WILL BE REPEATED TO CONSIDER THE DCO FOR THE APPLICATION TO BUILD SIZEWELL C.**