



Minsmere Levels Stakeholders Group

Update on progress since start of SZC Stage 3 Consultation

Following the release of the consultation documents by EDF on Friday 4th January, our primary activity has been to support TEAGS and B1122 groups at parallel exhibitions to EDF's roadshow.

However, we have not been idle in starting to examine the 4 volume consultation documents containing preliminary environmental information that have been published by EDF to support the public consultation.

Coastal Issues

We note that the jetty has been removed from the plan due to environmental impacts and the fact that the build would simply take too long for the benefits to roll down into the project as a whole. Modelling by EDF had shown that there would have been accretion of sediments along the jetty length but also that upon its removal the shingle and sand would have dissipated quite quickly. We are concerned that this inevitably means an increase in road transport effects and are further concerned that EDF seem to be expressing doubt that they will be able to get 5 trains per day reliably into the site and thus have to rely even more heavily on road transport.

Similarly, plans for the coastal defences and the beach landing facility (BLF) and their long term potential effect on the Sizewell frontage, southern Minsmere Levels and ultimately Minsmere Sluice are still incomplete and EDF are still insisting that any effects north of the SZC site will solely be down to natural processes and that the site will have no impact short or long term on the Levels or any significant potential for exacerbating the effects of coastal breach during the increased risks of storm surge and sea level rise due to global warming.

At the Joint Local Authorities Group meeting on SZC and Coastal Processes on Tuesday 22nd February, serious concern was raised by officers from Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk County Council about the fact that the toe of the main hard shore defence stops short of mean low tide and that to extend it down to this level could completely undermine the sacrificial dune that currently fronts the area where SZC is to be built.

The design of the defence, its susceptibility to erosion over the lifetime of the station along with potential interaction with the BLF, that sits forward of the main defence, has the capability during rising tide levels and storm surges to breach the coastal strip into the Leiston Drain and southern Minsmere Levels. EDF's own flood maps and breach scenario clearly show that the flood zones connect eastward from within the Minsmere Levels and Leiston Drain to the area behind the sacrificial dune for several hundred metres north of the "northern mound" with the lowest point connection being made close to the existing tank traps where overtopping occurred earlier in January when we had the latest small storm surge.

Inland Hydrology

The impact of the new development and associated works on the ground and surface water quality and flows are potentially massive. For the first time we are provided with some limited information. However, the measures to avert or mitigate any impact are outlined in such general terms as only to increase our apprehensions about the damage to which the Minsmere Levels and Sizewell Marshes may be exposed. We are particularly alarmed that EDF themselves admit that, at this early stage of their assessments there are potentially widespread risks of ground and surface water contamination both during construction and once operation has commenced.

MLSG consider that it is quite unacceptable that, at this final stage in the public consultation that EDF's investigations have so little advanced that this is the quality of material upon which we will have to base our response.

A step too far?

The proposed Sizewell C operational site is heavily constrained compared to that at Hinkley being some 25-30% smaller and even to achieve this area the site has had to expand into Sizewell Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by some 5.5 hectares. It has also had to bring the eastward shoreline frontage across the existing Heritage Coast resulting in the significant loss of recreational land across this coastal frontage.

The squeezing of the coastal strip seems also to have resulted in the current Hard Coastal Defence (HCD) proposals not penetrating down to the mean low tide level and exposing further medium/long term risk of HCD undermining.

Coincidentally we are also informed that cables to connect the station to the National Grid can no longer be channelled underground without further expansion of the station footprint and, as a consequence, these will now be strung across four tall pylons on site. These pylons are currently shown as a similar size to those that cross the Orwell near the Orwell bridge, much taller than the Nation Grid pylons that carry power away from Sizewell.

Perhaps, cumulatively, all of this indicates that the current proposal for Sizewell C having two nuclear power stations is in fact not achievable in a safe and environmentally sympathetic manner, given the constraints that this site and its surrounding landscape imposes.

Perhaps EDF and planning authorities should reassess this proposal and reduce it to a single reactor within a footprint that minimally impinges on the Heritage Coast and SSSI. If that makes the whole enterprise uneconomic, then perhaps that has to be admitted and the proposal allowed to fail.

Next steps

Two video's have now been released by TEAGS and can be viewed at the links below with the environmental fly-through video being updated with voiceover and links to a +SumOfUs action page on the TEAGS website through <https://teags.org/action>.

Once again there will be a joint TEAGS and Theberton & Eastbridge Parish Council public meeting at Theberton Church on Saturday 23rd February where you will be able to hear the results and opinions of the Parish Council and TEAGS/MLSG/B1122 groups of the various aspects of proposals from EDF in the Stage 3 documents. At that time we would intend to provide much more analysis of the information in the consultation documents regarding the effect on Minsmere Levels, Sizewell Marsh, Leiston Drain and Minsmere Sluice that you will be able to use to inform your own response to the consultation which closes on 29th March 2019.

Watch on Facebook: www.facebook.com/teags.org/

Watch on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7Up-u10ZF_okK9_WWTtNSQ

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