



Minsmere Levels Stakeholders Group

MLSG Newsletter February 2022

It's been 12 months since our last newsletter, and it has been a busy 12 months despite the lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our last newsletter was all about the first set of Development Consent Order Changes that EDF had submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, raising the Hard Coastal Defence height, changing the permanent beach landing facility, adding the temporary jetty for delivery of aggregate etc, the initial publication of the Coastal Process Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, addition of a water resource reservoir and changes to the SSSI crossing.

We published our response to the Stage 5 consultation on the website and in the end, PINS delayed the start of the DCO Examination by about 6 weeks whilst the impact of these initial changes could be assessed by Interested Parties and PINS before the examination started.

As well as these initial changes, the total number of changes submitted to the original DCO application ended up at a count of 22 and 2 further consultations were made during the examination period.

Despite no plan for the Hard Coastal Defence being submitted with the original Development Consent Order, a plan was submitted by EDF prior to the start of the examination after the Examining Authority insisted that it be laid before the examination.

Over the course of the examination four different versions were submitted after questions about the height, eastward extent, toe depth, permanent beach landing facility access and other parameters were questioned by MLSG, and other Interested Parties and some adjustments were made by EDF.

It is sadly also the case that by the time the examination was closed, there still remained a number of unanswered questions about the Hard Coastal Defence, ground strengthening, eastward extent of the southern end of the defences, maintenance of the Soft Coastal Defence and impacts on the Sizewell coast and Sizewell C defences when Sizewell B is finally taken out of service.

It beggars' belief that the original intent was simply to rely on the Coastal Processes Monitoring and Mitigation Plan when there was no Hard Coastal Defence design or definitive location to judge the potential efficacy of such a plan.

During the examination we were represented by Paul Collins who also spoke on behalf of both Stop Sizewell C and Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council on some subjects not of direct interest to MLSG. We also had significant help from several specialists and knowledgeable Interested Parties notably Bill Parker, Nick Scarr and Robin Sanders. We also coordinated our efforts with Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council, Stop Sizewell C, Suffolk Coastal Friends of the Earth, Suffolk Coast Acting for Resilience and Alde and Ore Association and shared information as best we could.

We have now updated the website and you can see all of our responses and Issue Specific Hearing Summaries and enhanced submissions.

Six weeks before the end of the examination, Northumbrian Water (Essex and Suffolk Water owners) stunned the examination by declaring that they could not provide sufficient potable water for the development or operation of Sizewell C. Whilst we have long been aware that the local Blyth catchment would not be able to provide these supplies, it had always been EDF's position that provision of potable water was not an issue.

This resulted in the final change to the DCO Application, for a desalination plant to be installed to cover the development requirements for potable water and on the assumption that, by the time Sizewell C was ready for initial commissioning tests, a new pipeline would be available bringing sufficient water for the operational phase of the development.

However, further problems with this plan surfaced as the Environment Agency reduced the Northumbrian Water abstraction license around the Waveney due to increasing water stress in the area. It now appears that as well as a new pipeline to the Sizewell C site, that additional water works supplying water from waste or possibly a permanent desalination facility may be required to secure the appropriate level of supply for Sizewell C operation.

So, the issue of potable water supply remains a work in progress as neither the additional pipeline or water supply facilities are currently part of Northumbrian Water's capital development programme, and any proposals will have to be agreed with the regulator before any works can proceed.

Recently, EDF have submitted two applications to East Suffolk Council, the first a Scoping Opinion request and the second a full development application to conduct Ground Anchor and Soil Mixing tests within the platform area surrounded by the proposed cut-off wall. The Scoping Opinion has been decided and no Environmental Impact Assessment has been required and the development application is open for objections and comment until 1st March. We have submitted a joint objection to the development with Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council and Stop Sizewell C.

On a more general note, the Internal Drainage Board and Environment Agency have cleared a number of drains in the Minsmere Valley as well as the Leiston Drain up to the two crossing bridges close to the Northern Mound of the Sizewell B defences. This has resolved flooding issues that had closed the two bridges for much of the 2020/21 winter period and made the sluice path passable after several winters of significant flooding along its length and during one particularly bad spell in 2020/21 prevented walkers from getting to the sluice at all.

The Environment Agency have also done a significant amount of weed removal and aeration along the New Cut from Middleton through to Twopenny Arch. A significant amount of vegetation is still present from Twopenny Arch to the Minsmere Sluice, but the clearance is very welcome.

In order to continue with our efforts in scrutinising EDF's proposals and the any changes to the DCO, we ask that you consider donating to MLSG through the link below or purchase the Minsmere Levels history book by donating at least £7.50 below, including postage, and sending an e-mail to MinsmereLevelsSG@gmail.com requesting a copy and giving your address details.

