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SCOTTISH POWER AND NATIONAL GRID TO DEVASTATE SUFFOLK COUNTRYSIDE

OFF-SHORE ENERGY SHOULD NOT MEAN ON-SHORE MISERY

Following a deeply flawed consultation exercise, an unholy alliance of Scottish Power, National Grid and the Crown Estate are set to lay waste to 50 acres of the prime East Suffolk countryside and carve a swathe 6 miles long and 50 metres wide across the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB.

In the latest twist to the sorry saga of so called “off-shore” wind power development, Scottish Power with the support of National Grid, has finally selected the site next to the peaceful village of Friston on which to develop a vast 50 acre industrial energy complex with buildings up to 18 metres high. This is an area largely untouched by development for centuries, surrounded as it is by listed buildings including a 17th century barn and the Parish Church which dating back to the 11th Century. Added to that are the disruption and noise that will inevitably occur over several years causing further blight also to the East Suffolk villages of Thorpeness, Aldringham and Knodishall in this beautiful area of Suffolk during construction of the cable route. This includes the building of vehicle roadways and massive storage compounds as well as HGV movements which will cause mayhem to the rural road network from Yoxford to Aldeburgh.

This follows a latest phase of so-called consultation during which Scottish Power purported to consider an alternative site between the Sizewell Nuclear Power Stations and the nearby Industrial Estate of Leiston. But since this area is technically part of an AONB, it was merely a cynical exercise intended to placate Suffolk County and Suffolk Coastal District Councils, both strongly opposed to the 6 mile route slicing through four villages from the beach at Thorpeness to inland at Friston. Scottish Power has never been serious in trying to find a site which did not involve destruction to the environment.

One might reasonably anticipate that such a decision would have been made after an open and detailed investigation, considering the numerous brownfield sites available between the North Sea and the large consumers of electricity in London and the South-East. But No! Following direction from National Grid, Scottish Power has been carrying out a deeply flawed consultation exercise considering only sites in undeveloped countryside or in the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB. This decision has been based upon inaccurate assessments and information which Scottish Power and National Grid have refused to disclose. Unbelievably Scottish Power’s timetable does not include detailed assessment of the suitability of the village of Friston for industrial development until next year, long after its current decision to single it out for devastation. Scottish Power have been widely criticised by community groups and the local authorities, but have just ploughed on regardless, showing contempt for the people of East Suffolk and their elected representatives.

What the community finds particularly offensive is that Scottish Power is oblivious to the fact its plans will continue to blight people’s lives for many years and for some of those during the last years of their lives. For although consultation started this year, construction will only start at the earliest in 2024 and will then continue for a number of years, given National Grid’s timetable for its own Interconnector projects intended to connect the UK National Grid to the continent of Europe and set to impact the same area of East Suffolk. This is potentially a period of 10 years! That bizarre timetable seems to be driven by terms dictated the Crown Estate which require Scottish Power to obtain planning consent by 2020. It would make far more sense for the Crown Estate to extend this timetable so these projects can be properly assessed and a more suitable brownfield site found. However Scottish Power has indicated the Crown Estate will not change the timetable. This is not surprising as common sense and wind power projects do not seem to go hand in hand.

The fundamental truth which lies behind these plans is that this is a profit driven exercise driven by the desire to cash in on taxpayer funded subsidies. It has absolutely nothing to do with protecting the natural environment or local communities. What is particularly cynical and offensive is Scottish Power wrapping itself in green credentials to justify this environmental destruction.

A SASES spokesman said “East Suffolk needs to wake up. It is not an overstatement to say that our landscape, in fact our whole way of life is facing an existential threat. This is not just about one windfarm development. This is about Sizewell C, the multiple windfarm developments of Scottish Power, the Interconnector projects of National Grid and yet further windfarm developments being proposed by the Crown Estate. This is an area which for one thousand years has defended itself and the Country from many threats of invasion, from the Spanish Armada to the forces of the Dutch Navy to Napoleonic France and Hitler’s Germany. Yet here we are apparently powerless in the face of the invading forces of the Spanish Iberdrola and their Scottish army. Our political classes need to get a grip and stop this madness. Requiring the Crown Estate, a publicly owned agency, to extend its lease to SPR would be an obvious first step to achieving a better outcome for all concerned”.

Notes for Editors

SASES (SASES.org.uk) Substation Action | Save East Suffolk

Is a campaign group set up with the support of Friston, Knodishall, Aldringham, Benhall & Sternfield Parish Councils to stop the unnecessary devastation of East Suffolk by Scottish Power, National Grid, Other Energy Companies and the Crown Estate who are undermining the AONB and the wider Suffolk landscape.