



NFLA media release, 26th February 2022, For immediate use.

On shaky ground? Latest EDF planning application casts doubt on suitability of Sizewell site

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) were surprised to see a late planning application from nuclear power operator EDF Energy to East Suffolk Council seeking permission to carry out testing on its proposed Sizewell C nuclear power plant site.

Commenting, Cllr David Blackburn, Chair of the NFLA, said: “The application has gone in just as the Planning Inspectorate is about to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether to proceed further with the next stage of the development. EDF wish to be allowed to conduct on-site trials to test whether their construction methods will work on the land at their disposal. It ‘beggar’s belief’ that they should do this now at such a late stage in the process, rather than at the start.”

The EDF design incorporates a cut-off wall approximately 60 metres deep, which surrounds the main nuclear platform, allowing the developer to remove soil and water down to 40 metres; their strategy relies upon employing ground anchors to hold the cut-off wall in place whilst the deep excavations are carried out, and undertaking deep soil mixing to create hard coastal defences.

The application concedes that EDF still need to conduct soil and ground anchor trials to determine if their strategy to stabilise the site during the construction of the plant will work. The NFLA fears that the high-risk strategy might make the site unstable and the cut-off wall could be sent crashing down endangering the lives of construction workers.

Cllr Blackburn added: “To the NFLA, the planning application amounts to a massive admission that EDF still do not know if the site upon which they are proposing to build a new nuclear power station is actually suitable to take such a major infrastructure development. You couldn’t make it up!”

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For more information please contact Richard Outram, Secretary, NFLA
Email Richard.outram@manchester.gov.uk / Mobile 07583 097793

Notes to Editors

The letter of objection sent by email to the Planning Department of East Suffolk Council follows.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR & RENEWABLE ENERGY ISSUES



The Planning Department,
East Suffolk Council

Subject: Strong objection of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) to Application Reference DC/22/0078/FUL – Sizewell C nuclear power station

Dear East Suffolk Colleagues,

I am writing as Chair of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) to register the strong objection of our member authorities to approval being granted to the latest planning application from EDF Energy relating to the proposed Sizewell C development, namely

Planning Application DC/22/0078/FUL

'Planning application seeking full planning permission for the geotechnical trials for the enabling works of the proposed Sizewell C power station. These works comprise (i) up to 16 ground anchor trials, in 5 locations up to 0.95 ha with a further 0.09 ha for welfare compound, 1.04 ha in total (of which 0.54 ha is above ground) and (ii) deep soil mixing trial area comprising a total area of 0.52 ha, together with welfare and compound areas to support the works and access. | Sizewell C Sizewell Power Station Road Sizewell Leiston Suffolk'

Frankly, it 'beggar's belief' that the applicant should submit this proposal at such an advanced stage in the development! Surely the works should have been included within the DCO application for the site, now under consideration by the Planning Inspectorate and soon the Secretary of State?

It amounts to a massive admission that EDF still do not know if the site upon which they are proposing to build a new nuclear power station is actually suitable to take such a major infrastructure development. In effect the application concedes that EDF still need to conduct soil and ground anchor trails to determine if their strategy to stabilise the site during the construction of the plant will work.

The EDF design incorporates a cut-off wall approximately 60 metres deep, which surrounds the main nuclear platform, allowing the developer to remove soil and water down to 40 metres; their strategy relies upon employing ground anchors to hold the cut-off wall in place whilst the deep excavations are carried out, and undertaking deep soil mixing to create hard coastal defences.

If any site instabilities compromised this high-risk approach and sent the cut-off wall crashing down, it would endanger the lives of construction workers, and set the whole project back by many years, or forever.

EDF only now wants to trial this approach. Why did they not do so years ago, right at the outset of the consultation process?

If the trials fail then an awful lot of money and time will have been needlessly expended by the developer, government agencies, such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation, and yourself as planners in the local authority in the pursuit of a red herring. Most importantly an awful lot of distress and anxiety will have been needlessly caused to residents and local businesses for nothing.

The NFLA also cannot understand why East Suffolk Council did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment and why did the Environment Agency not comment on scoping reports when work will be carried out within 10 metres of the boundary of the Sizewell Marsh SSSI and could have an adverse impact on the habitat and wildlife of the Sizewell Marsh, Minsmere, and Walberswick Heaths and Marshes SSSI.

Accordingly, the NFLA wishes to place on record its strong objections to this planning application.

Yours sincerely,
Councillor David Blackburn,
Chair, Nuclear Free Local Authorities

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR & RENEWABLE ENERGY ISSUES