

EAN1 AND EA 2 SUBMISSION BY DEADLINE 5

ALDE AND ORE ASSOCIATION.

The following is a text of the evidence delivered.

Open Floor Hearing 6 Friday 22 January 2021

The Alde and Ore Association seeks to preserve and protect the estuary and its banks for the benefit of the public and seeks to do this by assessing major policies or projects likely to impact on the wellbeing of the area.

The SPR project is going to have a massive effect on the area in very many ways as the many oral and written presentations show.

Although, the combined EA wind farms onshore project are proposed to be sited a few miles north of the Alde and Ore estuary, the projects would impact substantially and detrimentally on the estuary area too.

The focus of the Association's evidence is on:

- the context of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- the physical evolution of the Suffolk Heritage Coast
- the impact of climate change on the coast
- the detrimental impact on access to and the economy of the Alde and Ore area
- cumulative impact of a series of energy projects

AONB: The project is proposed to be sited in the middle of the unique Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Beauty which consists of the Suffolk Sandlings country running south to containing the Alde and Ore area and areas further south. It is an area which has many visitors. There are many provisions in law about seeking to protect an AONB and any detrimental changes need considerable justification.

The Coastline: Bordering the entire AONB is the Suffolk Heritage Coast which was designated as such in 1979 and managed by Natural England. The coast is not a series of bite size self-contained segments. It is all of a piece and has a long integrated geomorphological history of natural evolution and change, and is subject to many continuing dynamic forces, principally wind, waves, sea surges and sea level change working on the young geology.

The coast has continuously evolved through history running from Dunwich, which lost its port and then town to the sea, a few miles north of the EA windfarms chosen landfall site, then passing south with areas of losses and gains to the unique and very long Orfordness spit which forms the eastern bank of the Alde and Ore estuary. At the Special Issue Hearing on Tuesday 19 January 2021, the Association spoke in detail about the geology of the very fragile sector of the coast at which landfall, by horizontal direct drilling (HDD) is proposed for this project (see separate submission). There is a concern about the apparently unresearched consequences of manmade interference on a fragile part of the Suffolk Heritage coast resulting in accelerated cliff collapses. This could change the coastal dynamics and impact badly on the coast to the south, not only the immediate and vulnerable settlement of Thorpeness but Aldeburgh and the eastern bank of the Alde and Ore estuary.

Climate change brings two further factors which increase the vulnerability of the coast.

- sea level forecast to rise by 0.6 -1 m by the year 2100, *the impact of the sea on cliff erosion, particularly at its height in the winter storm surges will be all the greater- each year we see further inroads into the cliff. On top of that we are seeing*

- a far greater frequency and strength of storms and rain

All of these will impact on the fragile coastland through which the HDD is proposed.

Consultation about the coastline: Questions put to SPR staff manning the stands at an SPR Consultation Day, on why not minimise damage coming in with the Galloper/Gabbard cables, received replies that they were put in very badly and it would be very expensive. That was all that would be said. *Considering that the current proposals are cutting through a fragile cliff and unspoilt AONB and would involve kilometres of cabling, whereas using the Galloper/Gabbard route to the national power lines would be very limited in distance and impact, this is not an adequate answer, nor against the fact that there are statutory requirements not to damage an AONB unless there are very impelling reasons.*

Summary- there is great concern for the continuity of the area. Natural processes we know will cause the coast to move slowly inland over the next century and such pressures are increasing with climate change, but any drilling or construction operations which might exacerbate the rate of change should be avoided.

Impact on access and the local economy: There is great concern about the economic fallout of consequences of access to the area being affected, possibly a loss of £8-10 million of the current economy.

The Alde and Ore area is a very popular one for visitors. Access to the estuary area is primarily from the A12 via the A1094 into Aldeburgh and the from the B1069, which at the ISH on 20 January was also identified as being a rat run from Woodbridge to escape blockages on the A12, as it runs from via the A1152 which leads into the B1069 through Snape. The EA windfarm projects would involve a substantial extra amount of traffic, including HGVs, on these very limited access roads, particularly on the A1094 for several years.

In 2013 the Association undertook a second 10 year economic study of the value of the Alde and Ore area economy, which involved both desk studies and on-the-ground surveys of what people did, valued and spent in the area. This revealed a local economy worth at a minimum about £100 million a year: and we know it was an understated valuation because of data we subsequently obtained and tourism has continued to grow. Of this £100 m, tourism and related activities brought in £79 million. If access becomes difficult for visitors, even a 10% fall off would cost the area, updating the 7 year old figures, possibly about £8-10 million a year in lost revenue and all the related employment. Nor is the tourism a summer only phenomenon, the area is very popular with visitors in most months of the year.

SPR use average figures from desk studies, but assessing impact using average figures of traffic does not work here - in the peak holiday season the local population is 3-5 times the normal levels (taking into account the large amount of holiday accommodation). Further, HGVs on the local roads are quite frightening at times as they inevitably take up more than half the width of the narrow local roads, both the A road in places and the B roads. The very narrow roads, even the A road, also have hidden dips which are deceptive to non-local drivers, and can easily become blocked. A single incident in summer 2019 when a towed holiday caravan and HGV going in opposite directions became jammed together on the A1094, led to a two hour plus blockage and many cars having to turn round and find alternative routes taking 30 minutes to an hour or more instead of 5 minutes to get to Snape or the A12. These accidents and blockages can only increase with the substantial works traffic necessary for the EA wind farm projects: residents will have to try to cope but it is very likely that some tourists will go elsewhere rather than get stuck in long traffic jams or snarl ups.

Further, under the EA windfarm onshore proposals, the Aldeburgh to Leiston road (B1122) may be closed for some years. Any blockage on the A1094 would leave people at the Aldeburgh end, whether residents, business traffic, tourists, river users and emergency vehicles (Aldeburgh has a small hospital, fire station and many older residents) only able to leave Aldeburgh by the very long route via Thorpeness and Aldringham and thence round via Knodishall or Leiston. The compound effect of small roads, substantial works traffic in size and volume and choked access to the estuary area via the A1094 or via Snape on the B1069, could

severely discouraged the areas main economic activity and access to the Alde and Ore. This leaves aside the concern about accidents.

Summary and cumulative effects: in addition to the consequences for Friston area in which the project will be constructed, there will also be a substantial wider pool of economic and possibly environmental damage or disadvantage caused by the construction of these projects. These can only be exacerbated by the possibility of construction works simultaneously at Sizewell, and in later years by other power projects should they follow in after the EA projects. And all this in a precious Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Alison Andrews

Chairman of the Alde and Ore Association 3 February 2021

Reference

'Alde-Ore Local Economic Study' by RPA printed 28 February 2014, available at www.aldeandore.org/publications