

Minutes of a site meeting held on **Monday, 2 September 2019 at 10.00am**
at Sizewell B Power Station Complex and Adjoining Land, Sizewell Power Station Road, Sizewell,
Leiston, IP16 4UR.

Strategic Planning Committee Members Present:

Councillors Debbie McCallum (Vice-Chairman), Melissa Allen, Stuart Bird, Jocelyn Bond, Tony Cooper, Mike Deacon, Graham Elliott, Tony Fryatt, Colin Hedgley, Craig Rivett

Officers Present:

Lisa Chandler (Energy Projects Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), James Meyer (Ecologist), Nicholas Newton (Arboriculture and Landscape Manager), Philip Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management)

Others in Attendance:

EDF Energy Staff Members

The site visit began at the Sizewell B Power Station Complex's Visitor Centre.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the site meeting and reminded those present that the purpose of the meeting was a 'fact finding' exercise only and to provide Members with an opportunity to view the site and its surroundings. She noted the sensitivity of the application related to the site visit and advised Members to treat this site visit as any other and direct all questions to the Council's officers.

The Sizewell B Station Director introduced himself and outlined the health and safety requirements for visiting the site, including evacuation procedures and safety advice. He also outlined the operation of Sizewell B Power Station Complex, its workforce and the outage process that took place every 18 months.

The Energy Projects Manager outlined to the group the three areas of the site that would be visited and their links with application DC/19/1637/FUL, which was to be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee at its meeting on 9 September 2019. It was noted that one area, Pill Box Field, would need to be accessed by vehicle.

It was explained by the Energy Projects Manager that the group would be split into three smaller groups, who would visit the three areas of the site simultaneously. Each site would have a relevant Council officer stationed there, who would be able to answer any questions on the site. The groups would also be accompanied by EDF Energy staff members.

It was stated that following visiting the three sites, the group would reconvene at the Visitor Centre for a final opportunity to ask any questions.

It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would remain with a single group and that Council officers stationed at each of the sites would record the questions and answers of the other groups to be included within the notes of the site visit.

The groups visited within the Nuclear Security Fence, where it was proposed to construct a new outage store. It was noted by the Energy Projects Manager that the details of development would be subject to a separate application. Members viewed the buildings proposed to be cleared.

It was explained to members of the Committee that this area of the site was being looked at to ensure that Members had the opportunity to see all of the site that was to be discussed in the Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

Several members of the Committee asked what the outage store would be used for. It was explained that this would be for plant equipment used during outage periods, such as lifting equipment, that needed to be securely stored. The building currently on the site was for general storage.

The proximity of the sea defences to the site was noted. The height of the sea defence was confirmed as 10m.

In response to a question regarding the current location of the outage facilities at the northern end of the site, the Energy Projects Manager said that when these were constructed, the site allocation for Sizewell C had not been identified.

A member of the Committee expressed his surprise at the limited number of workers seen on the site. It was explained by EDF Energy that the technical team, operating the reactor and turbine, was approximately 10 people per shift.

The footprint of the building was confirmed as being larger than the one existing on the site. The proposed building would be 18m in height; Members' attentions were drawn to a building of similar height on the site.

The groups also visited a wooded area on the site, known as Coronation Wood, which was identified to be cleared as part of the application, for a training centre, car park, and lay down site.

The Arboriculture and Landscape Manager explained that the wood had been planted in 1911 to commemorate the coronation of George V; it was made up of mostly Scots and Austrian Pine with some Firs, Sycamores, and Oak. There was little evidence it was a managed wood and appeared to be coming to the end of its life expectancy. There were signs of aging trees, die back and Red Band Needle Blight.

It was suggested by EDF Energy that the wood had been planted by the Ogilvie family.

The wood was half the size of its original planting as half had been felled during the construction of Sizewell A Power Station, having come out of private ownership during this time. The wood was not publicly accessible.

When asked about the life expectancy of the wood, the Arboriculture and Landscape Manager suggested it was fairly limited in terms of safe useful life expectancy because it has been poorly managed and was increasingly at risk of windthrow. Thereafter the wood would need to rely on natural regeneration or replanting.

The future of the wood was said to be subject to positive management by EDF Energy as the landowner. Various options were described including felling and replanting or felling and allowing natural regeneration.

The Arboriculture and Landscape Manager confirmed that beyond the wood was old water reservoirs, the SSSI marshes, Alder Carr, and acid grassland. He was not aware of any risk to local hydrology by removing the wood.

A member of the Committee asked for more information on the Oaks. It was considered that they pre-dated the wood planting and were stunted in growth due to the shallow, sandy soil in the area.

The wood was described as not being essential to screening the site from the outside.

Members of the Committee explored the wood in detail, noting the various species of tree contained within. It was noted that the proposed planting at Pillbox Field would now exceed what would be lost and provide varieties of tree native to local soil. The Arboriculture and Landscape Manager advised that the size of the tree stock for that area needed to be small for the best chance of a successful establishment.

The groups all visited Pillbox Field, where the outage car park was proposed. The car park would be 576 spaces and would be accessed round the clock during an outage, due to outage work taking place in shifts. The site was accessed via vehicles.

Members were advised of the proposed access location and its proximity to bridleway 19; the access had been moved so it would be separate to the bridleway. The loss of hedgerow would be mitigated through planting at the car park.

Several members of the Committee asked how workers would access the Power Station Complex from the car park; it was agreed that this question would be answered by the Energy Projects Manager when the group returned to the Visitor Centre.

A member of the Committee asked why lower ground had not been chosen for the car park site; the Ecologist explained that there would be a small reduction in ground levels on the site.

In response to a question on why there was to be a separate vehicular access making three in a short distance, rather than installing a roundabout which would incorporate the road opposite the site; It was explained that a separate access was proposed to maintain separation from bridleway users and that the Highways Authority response detailed why it preferred the proposed option.

Site lighting plans were available on the plans attached to the application.

Members of the Committee sought clarification on the visibility of Coronation Wood from Pillbox Field. It was confirmed that trees visible were part of the wet woodland bounding the SSSI, trees in the far distance were in the approximate location of Coronation Wood. Members were advised that the wet woodland had a greater ecological value than Coronation Wood (when compared to plantation woodland) as it was a rarer habitat type.

The residential property on the site was confirmed as being part of the EDF Energy estate; the western half was occupied and access to the property was via bridleway 19.

It was confirmed that the car park surfacing would be a reinforced grass surface.

Following the visits to all three sites, the group reconvened at the Visitor Centre.

In response to the question of how workers would access the Station Complex from the outage car park site, the Energy Projects Manager advised that the original footpath proposed, that would cross SSSI land, had been removed from the scheme. There was no current plan to link the two sites and the fall-back position was for access to be via the main road, either on foot or by shuttle bus. A condition would be proposed seeking an alternative pedestrian access from Pillbox Field to the main site.

It was confirmed that a proposed footbridge had been part of the withdrawn footpath.

It was clarified that the lay down area was a sealed surface for equipment that was not required to be securely stored. It was confirmed this would include iso containers brought in by contractors during outages.

The site visit concluded at 12.48 pm.