

## Nuclear Power and Pakenham/Ixworth

Government made a decision to build a nuclear power plant at Sizewell next door to the existing two power plants one of which is being decommissioned and the other has a current life to 2035.

The planning process for infrastructure is different to other projects as it is deemed to be “national infrastructure” and therefore should not be held up by local objection so is considered directly via an inquiry. The inquiry found against the government saying that there were a number of reasons for it **not** to go ahead. These included the damage to the SSSI, Minsmere and the lack of freshwater required for operation of the plant. The government ignored the result and the Secretary of State gave the go ahead. It then put a statutory instrument to parliament which is not able to be amended, it is passed or lost. The planning permission thus granted is only subject to change by the government. That is what Sizewell C company (SZC) is now implementing.

During the inquiry it became clear that some land, Fen Meadow, classified as an SSSI was going to be built on. In addition, there were worries that groundwater flows, important to the RSPB Minsmere Nature Reserve, could be modified to its detriment, by the work. The National Planning Policy Framework insists that any development ensures that biodiversity be at least 110% of that preceding construction. So, what to do?

Fen Meadow is very specific and quite rare it consists of peat with high and relatively stable water table thus keeping all the plants in moist ground and being supplied with water from the chalk aquifer below.

[Such] *“Rich-fens, are fed by mineral-enriched calcareous waters (pH 5 or more) and are mainly confined to the lowlands and where there are localised occurrences of base-rich rocks such as limestone in the uplands. Fen habitats support a diversity of plant and animal communities. Some can contain up to 550 species of higher plants, a third of our native plant species; up to and occasionally more than half the UK’s species of dragonflies, several thousand other insect species, as well as being an important habitat for a range of aquatic beetles.”* Source Defra.

If it dries out peat degrades into a soil which is poor draining so plants suffer from drought and/or flood. This encourages rushes to grow in a similar way to the nearby Micklesmere Reserve, which has lower levels of biodiversity.

Environmental bodies argued successfully that the lost habitat be replaced with approx.10 times the area of new similar habitat elsewhere. This larger quantity would ensure that if there were any site failures, the objective could still be met and this was accepted by SZC. They would use land which was less diverse than that being destroyed, which could be converted into more highly biodiverse Fen Meadow.

A search was undertaken by environmental consultants for suitable land elsewhere. Approx. 60 sites were investigated and three selected, Halesworth and nearby Benhall, which are both small and the third at Pakenham which constitutes the bulk of the newly created Fen Meadow.

The eastern boundary of the Pakenham site is the Pakenham Stream which feeds the Water Mill. It consists of a mixture of Fen Meadow and Rush Pasture. Existing Fen Meadow on and off the site will be retained. The Rush Pasture is being made into Fen Meadow by removing soil drains, stripping approx. 500mm of soil and turf and replacing it with about 250mm of

quality peat and turf, provided by the Sizewell C site. This will reduce soil surface level to just above the water table which will be maintained by a weir and overflows. The new surface will be supplemented by mowing's from the existing Pakenham Fen. Although this is rather new, similar work has been conducted with success on the nearby Little Ouse. In addition, there will be an area of wet wood, a quite rare habitat. If it all works as anticipated, the project could significantly increase the total quantity of Fen Meadow and biodiversity in Suffolk.

The area will be maintained by SZC's contractors for at least 10 years from installation to ensure all is well for the funga, flora and fauna.

A further benefit is that *"the creation of new wetland habitats could create a new phosphorus sink in the catchment, thereby contributing towards a reduction in phosphate concentrations and, potentially, an improvement in physico-chemical status."* Treated Thurston sewage.

Page 36: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-002902->

[SZC\\_Bk8\\_8.14\\_Water\\_Framework\\_Directive\\_Compliance\\_Assessment\\_Addendum.pdf](#)

The biggest problem of the development is traffic. Approx 7,000 HGVs will take away the eroded soil and bring in the new. The new surface will be sculpted with ridges to vary the peat depth and the surplus, approx. 15,000 m<sup>3</sup>, will be taken back to Sizewell or to anywhere else nearby, who would like it. Approx 8,000 m<sup>3</sup> will be brought to the site from Sizewell.

All large construction sites have an agreed route plan for HGVs and large loads. To get to Pakenham from Sizewell, vehicles will travel down the A12, along the A14 to Bury. Come off at the Sugar Beat Factory and travel North East along the A143. They will then turn right across the carriage way into Thurston Road, past the windmill and turn left onto an existing farm track, to be widened and strengthened to the site. Green Ixworth have suggested the vehicles go to the Mulley's Roundabout and turn back towards BSE so they can leave the A143 by a safe left turn into Thurston Road. We understand that this is being considered.

The work is due to be undertaken in the summer of 2026. It is anticipated there will be about 7,000 lorry movements, in summer time, spread over 6 weeks, 6 days a week except bank holidays, between 8.00 am and 6.00? pm.

We have contacted both SZC and Suffolk Highways to ensure that the Thurston Road is improved as soon as possible and certainly before the work starts as it is already in such a mess and after completion, to repair it. We also recommended to both that to recompense the people of Ixworth and Pakenham for the disturbance and inconvenience, SZC provide or contribute to, a Green Bridge reconnecting the two parts of Crown Lane, so it is suitable for human and animal traffic, over the A143 thus avoiding unnecessary delay to the long promised, foot bridge and as a permanent memorial to the damage and disruption they are causing to our environment locally and at Sizewell, thus further improving biodiversity.

So long as government believes in propping up the big nuclear companies, by guaranteeing them an extremely high price for nuclear energy compared to sustainable alternatives, we shall see more of this at huge expense to the consumer and risk to the planet.

The section on page 1, in italics, is drawn from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions. BRIG (ed. Ant Maddock) 2008.

The full document is available from: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-570>

Detailed Pakenham maps are on pages 49 to 51 of:

[https://sizewellcdco.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SZC\\_Bk6\\_ES\\_V2\\_Ch14\\_Terrestrial\\_Ecology\\_Ornithology\\_Appx14C4\\_Fen\\_Meadow\\_Compensation\\_Study.pdf](https://sizewellcdco.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SZC_Bk6_ES_V2_Ch14_Terrestrial_Ecology_Ornithology_Appx14C4_Fen_Meadow_Compensation_Study.pdf)

