



JOINT LOCAL AUTHORITIES GROUP

SIZEWELL C

The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin
Secretary of State for Transport
Department of Transport
Greater Minster House
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Date: 11 February 2015
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Dear Secretary of State

The A12 between Ipswich and Lowestoft

We write seeking your support, alongside that of your colleagues at DECC and CLG, in respect of a unique opportunity in regard to the A12 in Suffolk.

We are at a critical time for the future of this road, a locally strategic route providing the only regional link through East Suffolk for business, residents and tourists. It links the key centres of Lowestoft and Ipswich and is the principal regional link to the A14 in the south, and thence to London, the Midlands and the North, and to the A47 in the north. It supports vibrant communities large and small up and down the Suffolk coastline. Projected traffic forecasts indicate that the A12 will come under increasing pressure if we are to realise the full potential for our already strong local economy, along with the necessary increased housing .

Our Councils have sought to provide improvements to this road for more than 20 years, most specifically at a particular severe pinch point through the "four villages"¹, a five mile stretch of single carriageway linking two dualled sections. This includes a sharp bend in the middle of Farnham village where HGVs are physically unable to pass each other. Indeed in 1995 a full dual carriageway bypass scheme was taken successfully through Public Inquiry by the Highways Agency, but subsequently removed from the spending programme in early 1996 due to national funding constraints. Most unfortunately, the road was subsequently de-trunked in 2001.

However, we have a unique one-off opportunity to resurrect this now essential scheme, given the potentially significant funding available from EDF, as the promoter of Sizewell C nuclear power station. The A12 will serve as the primary access route to the Sizewell site for the 10 years of the construction period bringing unprecedented changes to the intensity and nature of traffic movements on this road.

The local authorities have explored alternative means towards an incremental approach to improving this section of the A12 by construction in phases, over possibly two decades. However that would involve a substantially longer final route, be significantly more expensive to the public purse and more disruptive than the delivery of a single comprehensive project. That would be of limited wider economic benefit in the medium and long term, and be likely to generate future demands for funding for the remainder, an intrinsically inefficient and costly process.

You will be aware that our Councils are in extensive negotiations with EDF Energy in respect of Sizewell C nuclear power station, a project we strongly support in principle, subject to achieving a range of essential mitigations of the inevitably huge impact both its construction and operational phases will have on this rural coastal area, sited as it is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Critical amongst those mitigations is a solution to the impossibility of the large quantity of HGV construction traffic negotiating the four villages, and specifically the Farnham bend.

This last issue has already been accepted in principle by EDF in their Phase 1 Consultation in the NSIPs process. However, their minimal mitigation proposal at that time was not remotely adequate. Nevertheless it may be that a narrow interpretation of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project's concept of mitigation may not support the entire project, resulting in proposals for a partial scheme only.

Accordingly we see the combination of the proven local economic need² for improvements to the A12, the likelihood of potential, but perhaps not total, funding from EDF, and the NSIPs process as the opportunity to fast track the approvals process for the bypass, as a unique chance to satisfy multiple objectives, both local and national. Namely:

- To enable the enhanced economic growth in East Suffolk which is both needed and achievable
- Thereby to make a significant contribution to the Government's Growth Agenda
- To deliver Sizewell C as soon as possible, in line with the increasingly urgent need for nuclear power identified by DECC
- To avoid a wholly unacceptable impact on these villages from the Sizewell construction traffic, and thus minimise opposition to the project.
- To minimise future demands on the Road Programme from DfT by use of EDF funding.

However, we fear that this may not be possible without a significant degree of joint working between the three Government Departments involved (Transport with regard to policy and funding; Energy and Climate Change because of the link with Sizewell C; and Communities and Local Government responsible for the NSIP process), our two Councils, and indeed EDF themselves, to make the best, and perhaps an innovative, use of the NSIPs process coupled with EDF finance to expedite these interlocking issues.

Accordingly we seek your support in principle to work with officials from the three Departments to put together a scheme on the above basis, we suggest led by the Department for Transport. However of course we do not expect immediate commitment to funds as such at this time.

Our two Councils have prepared a suite of evidence to support this approach, regarding both the economic value of this sub-regional strategic route, and outline proposals for the Highways aspects of feasibility, route, costs and environmental impacts. Background information relating to these is attached as an Appendix.

We look forward to hearing from you in anticipation of your support in outline for this exciting initiative.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Andy Smith

Andy Smith
Chairman, Suffolk Joint Local Authority Group³
Deputy Leader, Suffolk Coastal District Council,
Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Cllr Graham Newman

Graham Newman
Vice-Chairman, Suffolk Joint Local
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Stephen Baker

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Notes to above:

1. Farnham; Stratford St Andrew; Little Glemham; and Marlesford
2. Report Commissioned by SCDC (2014) from Mott McDonald: "A12 –Wider economic benefits assessment".
3. JLAG is the Joint Local Authorities Group of Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council working on behalf of both authorities to deliver the Sizewell C project in the most efficient and least locally damaging way possible. It comprises relevant Cabinet Members, local backbench Members and Officers from both Authorities.