

**Transcript of SEAS and SASES Online Hustings  
Aldeburgh and Leiston Wards  
THURSDAY, 1 JULY 2021**

Tom Daly, Green Party Introduction ([00:01:30](#)):

ScottishPower Renewables are the head of the queue of international energy companies who want to use the AONB between Thorpeness and Friston for their cabling, trenches and substations over the next 12 to 15 years. Each would involve nine kilometers of trenches as wide as a motorway running across unspoiled countryside closing roads and footpaths, threatening the tranquility and specialness of these areas. There are more acceptable options. Other countries such as Germany and Denmark run a ring main from one wind farm to another, and then bring the energy in at one single point. Usually a brownfield industrial site. Another option local to us is for the cabling to run directly from the site of the to an industrial site on the coast, for example, at Bradwell. The Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy announced a Review of the current ad hoc approach last year with a view to a more coordinated, less damaging plan. I actually think it has strategic planning and trying to take a bit of control. Unfortunately a District Council is on the fence. It's neutral. It doesn't seem to have an opinion. Why is it not got an opinion and concern about its own district? It's sitting there on its hands, doing nothing. What we need desperately is Greens on that District Council that are going to connect back up to the locality, the needs of the local people in the local environment. So it's crucial that we are voted on to do that because the locality and environment locally is not being considered at the moment. Thank you.

Russ Rainger, Conservative Party Introduction ([00:11:13](#)):

So yeah, so I'm a resident of Snape and until recently many of you will know that I was the County Councillor for Aldeburgh and Leiston. So have represented the division that is now the ward that I'm offering to represent. I've been involved in the energy projects, I've engaged in that as a resident and as a Councillor on issues of concern, for me personally and for many of you in the parishes that I represented. I've engaged in the community, as many of you know, as a trustee at the Long Shop Museum where I'm lucky enough to be involved in looking after the heritage, working with volunteers and as a big asset in Leiston. On the housing side of things, I'm a trustee of the Leiston Community Land Trust, which is linked to the, Leiston neighbourhood plan and they have as a scheme to provide affordable housing and retail units around a market square around town center redevelopment. From the environmental aspects, I'm involved in the Leiston Net Zero Project, a carbon reduction scheme for Leiston that will tackle climate issues and also help with things like fuel poverty. And on the dentistry issue that's been brought up, well as a Suffolk Councillor, I engaged with NHS England and the Head of Commissioning about the changes that they're looking at within their services. We then there were arrangements to bring District services back, not just to this area, but to the whole nation. And so I guess if elected I would continue to represent everyone. And I think Louise used the expression robustly. Yes robustly. And I will continue to support you and I'm sure as we go through the evening, you'll hear more about my views on the energy projects. Thank you.

*Question 1 - Suffolk coastal is noted for its diverse ecology and biodiversity all the way from Felixstowe to Lowestoft. Do any of the candidates support SPR's/National Grid's plans for cabling and building*

*substations through the AONB, the Sandlings and other Sites of Special Scientific Interest to accommodate the electricity generated offshore.*

Russ Rainger, Conservative Party ([00:21:41](#)):

Okay. Well, yes, biodiversity is a big issue. No, we don't support it, the destruction of the natural environment, and anyone responsible couldn't take that position. We recognize the importance of our unique countryside and we do need to protect it. That said, if we, as everyone else is saying, support the idea of offshore wind farms, then we need to get our energy onshore somewhere somehow. And that's really why Andrew and myself previously have worked closely to get things like the BEIS Review pushed forward. The whole idea of understanding how things like offshore ring mains could be better utilized, pushing National Grid for a much more coordinated plan. And so we do want to protect the environment. We do want to deliver renewable energy, but in a responsible way.

Louise Fincham, Chair ([00:22:37](#)):

Thank you, Russ, but can I just press you because the actual question was, do you support ScottishPowers plans for bringing the infrastructure onshore through the AONB and the Sandlings and the other Site?

Russ Rainger, ([00:22:52](#)):

**Okay. Well. I'll answer that in a roundabout way. I do support ScottishPower, but I think I find, I think they find themselves in a difficult position and I have some sympathy, you'll be surprised to hear, for ScottishPower because they have consulted with me as a resident and with others as residents about their project, the project for Friston, and they've put forward a DCO for Friston and that project has faults and flaws and they've tried to design those out. What has happened is that project has been railroaded and now National Grid are using it as a connection point for a multitude of projects and this is where the real concern comes because it's the thin end of a wedge that hasn't really been consulted on properly. So I do try and support ScottishPower. I think I do respect the biodiversity issue, but I think what we're talking about are slightly different things.**

Tom Daly, ([00:26:14](#)):

Yeah, it's quite interesting. This concept of robust neutrality, quite interesting that. I think what we need to do, if we do care about the flora and fauna that's under such a lot of threat, is the District Council now needs to go, as Andrew just mentioned to saying it supports the split decision. **This is the crucial thing at this time to swing the District Council around in explicit support of a split decision, giving no permission for any of the onshore stuff, 'till the alternatives have been explored. So that's what we're looking for the District Council to do now.** This is the sort of thing the Greens on the District Council would be pushing robustly.

*Question 2 - In January East Suffolk Council announced that it was moving towards a neutral position in respect of ScottishPowers plans having previously objected. If you are elected, what will you do to get East Suffolk Council, to reverse its policy back to object in order to reflect the views of the local community?*

Russ Rainger, ([00:34:43](#)):

Yes. Well. Interesting. I mean, there's a comment just popped up there that the Tories want to pass the buck. No I'm not looking to pass the buck. This is a difficult position. I think you need to understand what neutral actually means. And I think it has been misinterpreted at times. They made it clear, I think, East Suffolk Council, in their own returns, but that means they neither fully support nor are they against it. So they are in a neutral position. They are in a position of open consideration. And what they have said is that as they're not the decision makers, the decision makers are elsewhere and they're just the consultee. **There are too many open options, too many open issues on the table for them to make a clear decision in favor of the project.** And then they've shared those concerns with the Planning Inspectorate to ask them to help get that detail from the developers and pushing the developers for better understanding and better response. And I think that's an important position because it's allowed East Suffolk particularly to continue to talk to developers about the project, about mitigation, about compensation and about the whole arrangements generally. It allows the debate to continue. And whilst there's been some noises about 'it's all about talking, no action', the debate is important because you need to find a resolution with the developers so that we can move these things forward in a proper way. So that's really I think, the important part, is to understand what neutral really means. Neutral means they don't either support it nor are they against it, but they do feel that they can talk about improving it.

Louise Fincham, Chair ([00:36:18](#)):

I think Russ, one of the problems is that ScottishPower are translating neutral into support and they are using East Suffolk Council's move towards neutrality as evidence of support for the project in the local area.

Russ Rainger ([00:36:37](#)):

Just to come back on that. So yeah, so just to be clear then, East Suffolk Council can only respond in their own, right. If ScottishPower are misinterpreting East Suffolk's position then that needs to be clarified, but I'm sure that they would be happy to do that.

Tom Daly ([00:37:03](#)):

So it's quite interesting. It's been suggested about balance that there's some sort of balance and that's why the Council is in neutral. I can't think of the positives. There's a huge lot of negatives that we're all talking about. I can't think of the positives because there isn't any employment positive. There's not going to be any employment generated by this is going to go fully automatic. The construction stuff, employment and services, are all going to be sourced from outside of our district. So I can't see where the plus is on it. We've got to bring this energy ashore. We know that. There was initially intention that they plug into the line that's already being built up at Bawdsey. They plug into that. Then suddenly they changed tack and they wanted to come ashore at Friston for commercial reasons and national power

allowed that decision to happen without any input from District Council or anybody else. So neutral is not viable. You've got to fight your corner. You've got to defend your patch. You've got to work for your district. So neutral is not acceptable. So as Greens on the Council to answer the question, **neutral is utterly unacceptable.**

*Question 3 - If elected, the candidates tackle the District Councils culture of secrecy in respect of its dealings with National Grid and energy companies, which is resulting in communities being totally unaware of important decisions until it's too late. An example of this is the expert topic groups for which no agendas or minutes are ever published.*

Tom Daly ([00:42:22](#)):

As Matt says, as a party we're into openness and everything being clear. I think secrecy and things being done under the table are the beginnings of corruption. We're beginning to see the effects of that at the national level and we don't want it coming down into the local level as well. So yeah, I think we should, as a matter of course, be totally open and have the public involved in everything we're doing. We're here to work for the people who vote us in and not be doing shady deals outside of their awareness.

Russ Rainger ([00:43:35](#)):

You're right. We don't want secrecy. We want openness. I've already mentioned you know, it's important that we have the debate and discussions. We've got to take things forward. The question with respect to expert topic groups, I'm not really sure that I can respond directly to that, but no, there's no place for misleading people or for doing things in secret. It needs to be done in a public way. It's important that we have the debate and it's important that we listen to the views when we have that debate.

*Question 4 - in view of the stand being taken against the onshore element of the SPR proposals by Dr Coffey, do you agree with her view that the Planning Inspectors should call for a split decision, which would allow for only the offshore element of the project to progress?*

Russ Rainger ([00:48:19](#)):

**Yes, absolutely support a split decision consideration, because we do know that Friston's not the right place for this to land** and certainly the development, this size and type is, just not what we want. We don't want cables trailing across the countryside and **we really do know that there are better ways of delivering it.** So I think the support for offshore wind by allowing the Crown Estate element of the work to continue is important and shows progress, but **there is an opportunity for the BEIS Review around the delivery systems to really pick up the Friston project and all the other energy projects that are targeted for this area and really show a better way of delivering the on-shore solution.** So yeah, a split decision would help us hopefully push it back far enough to get us included in that Review.

Tom Daly ([00:54:08](#)):

Yep. Yeah, absolutely. I think the next positive step has to be a split decision. What that does then is gives us a chance to fill this enormous vacuum where strategic planning a proper regard for our, for what the costs that have been externalized effectively between National Grid and ScottishPower Renewables. That is the environmental costs and the social costs, they're effectively externalizing them. By getting the split

decision in that gives us chance to bring those things back into the agreement. Once you do that, then the argument for a brownfield site and for the ring main is irresistible. So yeah, let's go for this split decision. I think the only way they're going to actually get the whole District Council is get more Greens in there. Because greens are now the opposition to the Conservatives in Suffolk, you must vote Green if you want anything other than Tories on those Councils, but as you know, the Tories always vote for the party line. So yeah, let's go for that split decision.

*Question 5 - Why are you both supporting Conservative led East Suffolk Council by standing when the Council no longer opposes the energy company's plans for Friston. And what makes you think that you can represent our views any better than your two hardworking predecessors who were shown the cold shoulder by their fellow group councillors, particularly when the Council refuses to meet with local Town and Parish Councils to discuss these proposals that will affect all of our lives for years to come?*

Russ Rainger ([00:58:20](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. Well, very similar to Andrew. I can't really comment for the others. You've seen the messages that they've sent out and circulated. What I can tell you is that from a personal point of view, I enjoyed representing the area as a County Councillor, it was an honor and a privilege and I would have carried on doing so, but I had my own personal reasons for stepping down. This vacancy, this situation has arisen, and I feel so strongly about the situation that I have changed my personal circumstances to, to try and stand at this time. And so I believe that given my past experiences with the County Council, I can take the message into the people that need to listen. I'm robust in my discussions with people on the Council. I do engage with the community. I go to all of the events where the community have been consulted so that I can represent those views and I will champion those views. I don't know what it would be like to be at the front in east Suffolk, but I know that whatever it's like, I will give it my best and I will certainly try and change minds and make sure that our views are heard.

*Question 6 - What will candidates do, if despite all our efforts, these projects go ahead, to make sure that there are substantial economic benefits locally, which reflect the overall capital investment which is being made in these projects.*

Tom Daly ([01:04:07](#)):

What we can do is a bit like we've talked about already, make things explicit. Talk about the costs in the wider sense, the cost to the community, cost to the environment and then demand that these are in some way mitigated or balanced up. As a Council, we'd have to work together to make sure that any precepts, any community structured payments that are coming from the developers are used in the most beneficial way for the locality and for the people involved. We also need to be pushing again for employment opportunities locally, because all the indications we're getting, and this is from ScottishPower's own flowcharts that they're going to be sourcing everything from outside of this district. We need to lean heavily upon them to not do that so that there are benefits within the district. And again, it goes back to this thing about secrecy and openness. These things have to be explicit, they have to be on the table or we have to embarrass the company if we need to, to make sure that it honours its responsibilities.

Russ Rainger ([01:10:55](#)):

So I've just been looking at some of the comments on the chat box. There's obviously some strong views about the Tories. And it's interesting really because I'm not here as a Tory so much, I know, I'm a Conservative candidate but I'm here as a resident, like so many others, you know, I live on the A1094. It will be a major traffic route should the Friston project go ahead. I'm a resident that will be affected and impacted like the rest of you. I'm worried about the economic impacts. I'm worried about the impact from the villages and the areas that we enjoy. I'm worried about the traffic. I'm worried about all the other things that a project of this nature will bring. And so I agree, the economic benefits for the Aldeburgh Leiston area, are very small. Scottish power are bringing in a huge construction to this area, but they're not bringing employment, they're not bringing income and they're not bringing revenue. Their investment is purely in the use of our fragile and important land. I think it's also important to recognize that we need to challenge this from the thin end of the wedge. You know, we're talking about ScottishPower, but the Friston development could become a Friston hub and other projects could follow. And we're absolutely adamant that we need to make sure that this doesn't happen to us and that we are so keen that Friston and the developments that we're talking about, are taken into the realms because there are better ways of doing it. If it should happen to us, because we recognized it as a Secretary of State decision, it's possible, it will be done to us. Then yes, we will press and press and press for the best we can get in the way of mitigation and compensation. And those discussions do take place at the moment, various areas. And so, it is important that we understand the nature of this project. It really will have a big impact on, on me and all of us as residents. And so there is no economic benefit and we do really need to challenge it. And that's why, as ??? has already mentioned, we are in favor of the split decision.

*Question 7 - We're asking the candidates to specifically express their views on the socioeconomic and environmental impact of the combination of Sizewell C, it's overlap with the Friston substations and other major developments extending from Ipswich and Martlesham up to Lowestoft and their cumulative impact across the whole area of East Suffolk.*

Russ Rainger ([01:21:26](#)):

So it is a big question. I mean, the Sizewell project is a different project. It is local still, but it does bring with it different economic outcomes with respect to employment. But the point really I think, is the in combination impacts. A development of this scale and this size at the same time as the potential for Friston would just be massive for the area absolutely massive. And I think in my time as a County Councillor, I've always made the point that I felt that really the NSIP, the DCO process, the Development Consent Order process is really not the right tool for what we're looking at here. I mean, Matt, you used the point energy coast, well, we don't want an energy coast. We want an energy strategy, that really sort of picks up how it comes ashore adequately. And I think it's really important to recognize that should something like Sizewell go ahead at the same time as Friston then, the impacts on tourism, traffic, the environment, the coastal erosion, everything will just change. It would be so impacted. So from my point of view, I think it's one that we do need to keep pushing back. And I've said it before and I will say it again, we need to get our voices heard higher up the scale with people like BEIS, about how energy projects link and how we can actually then have a more literally joined up offshore solution.

Tom Daly ([01:25:20](#)):

I think it's a great question because it's no good looking at these issues alone. So looking at the socioeconomic impact, looking at the future, pulling in the environmental side of it. If you like looking at the human ecology of the whole thing. I think once you put the elements of Friston and Sizewell C, going on at the same time, removal of the planning process, effectively free porting Felixstowe, opening up the countryside too all this sort of heavy sort of industrial input, I think the message from the government is quite clear. They want to industrialize this part of the country. And that's the effect that's going to happen with all of this cumulative impacts of all these things. This government, in particular, tends to look at only one motivator and that's greed. And what it's doing is inviting these big companies in to make a profit. Our countryside, our people are just another resource for that to be used in that process. And 20 to 30 years time, if things go the way they looking it to be going, we're going to be looking at a very wasted landscape and an impoverished community. Certain elements and certain interests are going to be much enriched. But we're going to do everything the wrong possible way. And again, it's down to this lack of strategy, lack of planning, lack of a vision, a decent civilized vision for our society. This is the sort of vision that Greens can bring to the table. We absolutely need some Greens into that Council that are going to vote against these Tory decivilization plans, because that's what it amounts to. And it's very important to look at these things in the ?? like the question is inviting us to do so. So yeah, I see the whole of it is going to be negative. It's going to bring some bits of employment. It's going to devastate our landscape. It's going to ruin our sustainability into the future. Putting all these things together is a nightmare. It's a disaster for Suffolk coast. We really have to start fighting back.

Tom Daly, ([01:30:11](#)):

Okay. So we are a breath of fresh air. We are the future. We are the party of the future. We are the party of the locality putting local action first. We are the party of the countryside. We are the party of the environment. We are the way that the world has to go if this world is going to survive. So at this level, acting locally at this district level, we will come in to that Council. We will do our utmost to turn it upside down and make it a force for the locality and the local environment.

Russ Rainger ([01:31:47](#)):

Well, I don't want to make it about politics, I want to make it about experience. I've got the experience as a County Councillor representing the people of the area. I've got a commitment to the area in the roles that I currently have with respect to projects that have taken place in this region. And I feel that if you put your trust in me to represent you, I will do everything I can to get your voice heard at East Suffolk and tackle some of the issues that have been tabled today.