

Sizewell C – Survey of Pakenham Fenland

Happy New Year from Pakenham Parish Council with the hope of better times ahead. The Parish Council continues to hold its meetings by Zoom and all residents are welcome to join, the invite details can be found on the agendas which can be accessed either on the website: www.pakenham.onesuffolk.net or on village notice boards. Alternatively you can email the clerk on pakenhampc@outlook.com for a meeting invite. The meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday in the month starting at 7.30pm.

The Parish Council received the following information in January 2021 from Sizewell C concerning the fenland in Pakenham and Councillors felt it should be shared with all residents for their information, Henry Painter Chairman of Pakenham Parish Council:

Sizewell C Survey of Pakenham Fenland document

Sizewell C Co (the company that has submitted the proposals to build the Sizewell C power station) will be undertaking some surveys and site investigation works at the proposed fen meadow development site at Pakenham shortly.

The proposed Pakenham site is made up of approximately 32ha of land located to the west of Fen Road, south of Thieves Lane/Broadway, east of Thurston Road and to the north of the Street. The site currently comprises a mix of grassland, fen meadow, rush pasture and drier grassland and is adjacent to the designated Pakenham Meadows SSSI.

As part of the plans for the Sizewell C Project, which were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in May 2020, we had already stated our intention to create two fen meadow compensation areas (at Benhall and Halesworth) during the construction phase, if the plans for Sizewell C get the go-ahead.

Then in November/December last year, we went out to consultation on a number of proposed changes to the planning application. One of these was the suggestion that we create a third fen meadow development site in Pakenham.

This change to the planning application was made, following advice from Natural England, in recognition of the rarity of fen meadow in the UK and the known difficulty of restoring species-rich fen/fen meadow habitat. SZC Co. is therefore proposing to include the site at Pakenham to further increase the probability of creating sufficient fen meadow habitat to compensate for the loss of fen meadow from the Sizewell Marshes SSSI.

Work associated with the fen meadow compensation areas would commence at (or just prior to) the outset of construction on the main development site. It could include:

- Installation of water control structures, to maintain/manipulate water levels;
- Removal of any existing field drains, to reverse historic patterns of drainage;
- Local excavation to reduce local ground levels, create low bunds and /or create minor surface watercourses to help distribute surface water and reduce nutrient levels;
- Translocations of some turfs from the fen meadow areas of the Sizewell Marshes SSSI that would otherwise be lost through construction works; and/or,
- Limited planting of other locally sourced native species and use of appropriately sourced 'green hay' from Sizewell Marshes SSSI or potentially adjacent Pakenham Fen SSSI to accelerate colonisation by key fen meadow species.

This work will only be carried out if the plans for the proposed Sizewell C power station are approved. Any changes made to the water levels locally at the fen meadow development would be designed to be within the boundary of the site and not affect any adjacent properties.

The fen meadow development at Pakenham (as well as Benhall and Halesworth) would be retained permanently to compensate for fen meadow that will be lost from Sizewell Marshes SSSI as a result of the Sizewell C development.

Before progressing further with the Pakenham scheme, Sizewell C Co intends to carry out a series of surveys and investigative works on the site, in order to assess its suitability.

Initially, during January, these will simply be non-invasive, scoping visits to the site. Then, from the week commencing Monday 22 February, site investigative works are scheduled to start. Depending upon the weather conditions, this work is likely to take about five weeks.

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The works will require the use of drilling rigs, as well as other related vehicles and equipment, and involve drilling some boreholes and installing monitoring equipment. The installed equipment, which will be contained within the boreholes and at the edges of watercourses/field drains, will enable us to monitor groundwater and surface water as it changes seasonally and will help to tell us how much fen meadow habitat we are likely to create at this site.

There will be daylight working only, between 8am and 6pm, on weekdays. There will be no weekend working and no lighting or machinery running overnight on the site.

Please note: This does not constitute the start of any construction work for Sizewell C. Nor does the work imply that consent for the proposed development is assumed. The planning application for Sizewell C must be considered by the Planning Inspectorate and a decision announced by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

We intend that this work will not cause too much inconvenience or disruption to people in the area. We are informing you now in case anyone sees the contractors working on the site and is curious about what is happening.