

Minutes of an AUST PARISH ASSEMBLY to view plans by EDF to create a saltmarsh in Littleton as mitigation for impacts of Hinkley Point C new nuclear power station.

Held on Tuesday 17th October 2024 at 7:00pm at Littleton-upon-Severn Village Hall

Present:

Cllr. Ian Jenkins, vice-chairman of Aust Parish Council – in the chair

Ward Cllrs. Matthew Riddle & Tony Williams – Severn Vale ward members, South Glos. Council

Residents of Aust parish and surrounding areas

Representatives of Arlingham, Westbury-on-Severn and Kingston Seymour parish councils

Emma Pattullo – Clerk

Representatives of EDF team at Hinkley Point C:

Andrew Cockcroft	Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Social Impact
William Gilbert	Land & Property Surveyor
Alex Latchford	Environmental Technical Specialist
Mounia Miguil	Stakeholder Relations Manager
John Pingstone	Senior Planning Officer
Joanna Manley	Principal Planner

1 Welcome and introductions

Cllr Jenkins welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained the structure of the evening. Cllr Jenkins as vice-chairman was chairing the meeting as Steve Meredith (chairman) has a significant interest, being a landowner in the area potentially affected.

The HPC team introduced themselves and their role in the project.

2 Presentation by EDF team (slides appended to these minutes.)

Andrew Cockcroft (AC) gave a presentation on the Hinkley Point C (HPC) development and why they wish to change their existing Development Consent Order – which is the equivalent of planning permission for large infrastructure sites. EDF wish to remove the existing requirement for them to install an acoustic fish deterrent device on their cooling water intakes and instead carry out off-site works to mitigate for the impact on fish populations of the additional fish which would be taken up by the intake pipes.

One of the proposed mitigation measures is the creation of new saltmarsh habitat elsewhere within the Severn Estuary. Saltmarsh areas can provide feeding & breeding grounds for some fish populations, and can store significant amounts of carbon to help in the fight against climate change. It was also stated that saltmarsh can reduce flood risk as it can soak up large volumes of water.

Littleton is one of four proposed sites for the creation of this new saltmarsh. AC stressed that the exact site(s) have not yet been determined, and that EDF are carrying out survey work at all four to determine which is most suitable.

Littleton is deemed to be a suitable site because it is relatively sparsely populated and has a large area of land at the right elevation (at the upper end of typical tidal heights) to allow saltmarsh species to develop.

AC stated that the scheme would be designed so that there was no increase in flood risk to the surrounding properties and land.

There is a very tight timescale for this aspect of the project, as EDF are planning to start commissioning the new reactors in early 2027 and the mitigation measures must be in place before

that can happen. The saltmarsh habitat was initially planned to be created at Pawlett Hams in Somerset, but this site has recently been deemed unsuitable so EDF are now under time pressure to find an alternative site.

EDF expect to complete their plans and announce the selected site(s) around 4 months from now, i.e. February 2025. A more formal public consultation will take place at that time. The proposal will then be subject to public inspection by the Planning Inspectorate, who will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether the changes to the Development Consent Order should be allowed. A final decision is expected in early 2026.

AC apologised to local landowners, for whom the first most had heard of the proposals was when they received legal letters announcing the survey work to be carried out on their land. He acknowledged that this has caused a lot of stress and trauma to landowners and other affected residents.

3 Pre-selected questions

The parish council had requested questions from residents prior to the meeting, then collated and summarised these to ensure all topics were covered without repetition.

Questions (Q) and answers (A) are given below. Initials at the start of each answer denote which member of the EDF team answered that point.

Fish issues and Acoustic Fish Deterrent (AFD)

Context: There is a strong opposition to the abandonment of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent (AFD) system in favour of a saltmarsh. Residents argue that the saltmarsh is ‘greenwashing’ as it does not address the direct issue of fish being killed by the cooling system at Hinkley Point. Concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of the saltmarsh in compensating for the loss of marine life

Q1. Please confirm the estimated number of tonnes of fish that will be lost in a year without mitigation – is it 44 tonnes? What is the estimated tonnage of fish that pass through the Severn estuary in a year? How many tonnes of fish were lost annually from Berkeley, Oldbury, Hinkley Point A & B per year when they were operating? How many tonnes are lost annually from dredging and other marine activities within the Severn estuary? Bearing the above in mind, what is the significance to 44 tonnes being lost?

A1. EDF estimate that 44 additional tonnes of fish will be taken up per year if the AFD is not put in place. For context, this is less than the annual take of one fishing boat. Figures on the amount lost at the previous power stations, or from other activities in the estuary are not known right now but may be available elsewhere. Saltmarsh creation is only one of a range of proposed mitigation methods – other measures such as improvements to weirs, creation of seagrass beds and kelp forest will also help to conserve fish populations.

Q2. Please give a clear statement reason why EDF are not pursuing AFD since this has been insisted upon via a Welsh Government report, a public enquiry, and Secretary of State ruling? If many expert marine biologists, scientists, ecologists, fishery experts and UK Councils have agreed the AFD should go ahead, and EDF have a legal obligation to do so, why they are ignoring this?

A2. EDF are not ignoring their legal obligations, but have come to believe since the original Development Consent Order was issued that the AFD will not be effective and would present a high risk. Maintenance of the system will require divers to make 70-80 dives per year in waters with very low visibility and strong tidal currents; the risk of some fatality over the course of the 60 years for which HPC will be operational is too high.

Q3. Has any benefit of the warm water outfall on fish stocks been estimated?

A3. No specific numbers have been estimated for the HPC outfall, but there have been a number of studies carried out at other sites and anecdotal evidence suggest that it is a benefit to fish stocks.

Q4. Can EDF confirm that their statement that the AFD would be noisier than a jumbo jet taking off, but only to a listener next to the device, three miles from the shoreline and at the bottom of the estuary?

A4. Yes, this statement is correct. The concern is that noise levels underwater would be high and that this will have impacts below the surface, particularly on marine mammals. There is evidence of impacts on seal populations due to the use of such devices around fish farms in Scotland.

EDF issues

Context: EDF's approach to Littleton landowners, with Section 172 and 174 Compulsory Survey Notices coming out of the blue understandably caused much distress. Locals wish to understand more about a company that behaves in this high-handed manner.

Q5. What is the EDF budget for salt marshes?

A5. Firstly, apologies again to landowners and anyone else distressed by the letters sent out. Anyone affected can contact William Gilbert (EDF land and property surveyor) as detailed on the letter. The phone number given goes directly to a member of AC's team, not to a general call centre, and they will also be able to answer queries. Re: budget, there is no set budget for this project yet as it will depend a lot on the site(s) selected and the exact design of the scheme.

Q6. Did EDF instigate a major cost reduction programme in 2016?

A6. No. Like all businesses EDF are trying to run their operations as cost-effectively as possible but there is no specific cost reduction programme.

Q7. EDF have already opened another nuclear power station of identical design to Hinckley C at Flamanville, in Normandy. Flamanville 3 reactor has had to be shut down already several times due to its cooling systems being overwhelmed with fish (particularly large shoals of sprat which are also prevalent in the Severn estuary). So besides a huge ecological impact there are also safety critical impacts of not installing AFD - how is this acceptable on a modern reactor design?

A7. This statement is not true and EDF are not sure where the rumour came from. The Flamanville reactor is going through commissioning and has been started and shut down several times during this process but these were expected as part of the commissioning process.

Economic and social impact

Context: The potential economic and social impacts on the local community are significant concerns. Residents are worried about the devaluation of property, increased insurance costs, and the overall disruption to their lives. There are also questions about the long-term maintenance responsibilities and the potential financial burden on the community.

Q8. What will happen to the landowners within the proposed salt marsh area if they decide to take our land and livelihoods away from us? Compensation for the stress and trauma? Who will be paying us? France or the UK?

A8. EDF recognise the emotional connections to the land and want to include landowners and other stakeholders in the co-creation of plans for the site. Conversations with landowners will be vital to understand the ways in which the land is currently used and the potential impacts on landowners. EDF hope to reach negotiated settlements for any land purchases and will only use compulsory purchase powers if no negotiated deal can be reached. Any payments will be made directly from EDF.

Q9. Some farmers who lost their land to HS2 in February 2023 have waited months for compensation. Will it be the same with EDF?

A9. There is no intention to delay compensation, agreed payments will be made in a timely fashion.

Q10. Will there be compensation for those residents living within the area and those living just outside the area? This scheme would make flood insurance difficult, exorbitant or impossible to obtain. Also, mortgages more difficult and a consequential decrease in house values?

A10. The scheme will be designed so there will be no increase in flood risk, so it is not expected to have any effect on insurance premiums. There will be no compensation available for any secondary impacts such as changes in house values.

Q11. Will houses already in existence on the flood plain be bought and demolished under the compulsory purchase, or will they be protected, and if so, how? Would offers be made for individual land parcels or will they go straight to compulsory purchase?

A11. This has not yet been determined, discussions will need to be had with property owners. Only a few properties are potentially affected and these may either be purchased for demolition, or flood defences put in place to ensure the houses are safe. Again, negotiated settlements are preferred rather than compulsory purchase.

Q12. What are the criteria for a candidate survey site proceeding to become a compulsory purchase site for salt marsh? Please advise the legal criteria for the compulsory purchase process. Would these include ecological value, public access and published landscape character?

A12. The strategy for final site selection and land/property purchase has not yet been finalised. Negotiations with land and property owners will take place once the scheme details have been determined. Compulsory purchase is a legal process which may be used for nationally important infrastructure projects but would be a final solution not a first step.

Q13. Will EDF retain the responsibility to maintain the new development in perpetuity, once in place, and will it be responsible to putting right any ongoing future impact caused by the development? If not, who will maintain it?

A13. EDF will be the site owners and so will be responsible for any future maintenance.

Environmental and ecological issues

Context: The area proposed for saltmarsh creation already contains a network of biodiverse habitat, with some parts having nature conservation designations. There are also a number of public rights of way which cross the area. Locals and visitors appreciate the chance to walk here and enjoy the peaceful natural environment.

Q14. Littleton is part of a SSSI site, also Ramsar site and Special Protection Area. How is this to be preserved? Will this require further mitigation elsewhere – mitigation for the mitigation for the mitigation....?

A14. There is a small part of the site which is a designated SSSI; any impacts on this would need to be mitigated. The current survey work will give more detail of what mitigation might be required. Other designated areas are outside the boundaries of the survey area.

Q15. How would existing trees, hedges and wildlife and public rights of way be protected?

A15. It is likely that some trees and hedges within the saltmarsh area would need to be removed. If it is not possible to maintain rights of way in their current location, some may need to be diverted but this has not yet been looked at in detail.

Q16. What will be the effect on The Severn Bore and consequently on the ecosystem?

A16. There are not expected to be any effects on the Severn Bore.

Q17. Are EDF aware that toxic run off water from a nearby landfill is discharged through the Littleton lock at low tide? Where would that go?

A17. The EDF team were not aware of this, this is the sort of detail for which consultation with local people is vital. It will be looked into now they are aware.

Q18. Have you evaluated the carbon footprint of the major construction works required, versus the potential benefit longer term?

A18. No such detailed calculations have been carried out.

Q19. What will the impact on nearby freshwater ponds?

A19. Any freshwater areas within the saltmarsh boundaries will become part of the saltmarsh. Ponds outside the boundaries should not be affected.

Q20. Will salt marsh replace arable crops in total?

A20. Yes, it will not be possible to grow arable crops within the saltmarsh site. There may be some opportunities for grazing of cattle on the saltmarsh.

Q21. Will the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), the Slimbridge people, be involved in any proposed saltmarsh similar to Steart Marshes? Would it be developed and managed in a similar way?

A21. WWT are being consulted on the design and creation of the saltmarsh, as they are acknowledged experts in that field. At the moment there are no plans for WWT to be involved in the long-term management of the site, though this might be a matter for future discussion if WWT were interested.

Flood risk and water management

Context: Multiple questions have been raised about the changes to flood risk for the immediate proposed site location and the wider catchment area. Residents are particularly concerned about the adequacy of existing flood defences and the potential for exacerbated flooding due to the proposed saltmarsh.

Q22. There is a lack of detail in the map, which appears to be a hand-drawn sketch. Where will the new flood defences be placed? Please describe them - size, height, etc.

A22. EDF are aware that the proposed site is currently protected by flood defences managed by the Environment Agency; any saltmarsh scheme would need to be designed to provide an equivalent level of protection against flooding. The detail of any new defences has not yet been established as it will depend on the topography and ground conditions – these are being assessed as part of the current survey work.

Q23. Would the chosen land be allowed to flood, and will the river wall be relocated?

A23. Yes, the land within the saltmarsh boundaries will be allowed to flood and drain as the tide rises and falls; it is this cycle of flooding and draining which allows the saltmarsh habitat to develop. It would not be a lake across the whole site at high tide, but instead a network of flooded creeks, tunnels and smaller saltwater ponds. The details of any new flood defence walls have not yet been established, but the defences will be moved further inland, between the saltmarsh and other land.

Q24. Would this change the risk of flood to Littleton and will any future defences account for rising sea levels?

A24. Sea level rise will be accounted for in designing the new flood defences. The Environment Agency will analyse the final design to ensure it meets the requirement for no increase in flood risk.

Project plan and process

Context: There are numerous questions about the justification for the project and the transparency of EDF's decision-making process.

Q25. How does this proposal fit with current government planning for flood resilience, for climate emergency and for housing?

A25. The project will meet the current Environment Agency requirements for flood resilience and there will be no increase in flood risk. Creation of saltmarsh will contribute positively to climate policy as it is a significant carbon sink. There should be no impact on current housing or the possibility of building elsewhere in the floodplain in the future.

Q26. Has the Environment Agency steered EDF to the salt marsh proposal as an alternative to rebuilding flood defences currently classified as near end-of-life? Have your discussions with the Environment Agency been minuted and if so, are they in the public domain?

A26. The Environment Agency and other statutory nature conservation bodies are supportive of saltmarsh creation as a biodiversity improvement measure, but this is not linked to the state of the flood defences. EDF do not hold minutes of any discussions, the Environment Agency may do so but these would need to be requested from them.

Q27. Will there be a period of public consultation should this area be chosen for the salt marsh?

A27. Yes. If the decision is taken to go forward with Littleton as one of the chosen site(s), there will be a period of formal public consultation which will last for six weeks. The final proposals will then be subject to public examination by the Planning Inspectorate, who will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether the changes to the Development Consent Order should be allowed.

Q28. Why was the Pawlett Hams proposal dropped?

A28. The Pawlett Hams site was found to be unsuitable for a number of reasons. One reason being that much of the site has SSSI designation and the amount of mitigation which would have been required for impacts on the SSSI was not practical.

Q29. On what criteria did you decide how large a proposed saltmarsh should be?

A29. The statutory nature conservation bodies (including the Environment Agency and Natural England) have determined the required area of 340 hectares. Not all of the proposed sites will be needed to make up this total area.

Q30. What other sites were considered before Pawlett Hams was chosen?

A30. No other sites were considered.

4 Questions from the floor

Questions were not asked in the order below but have been grouped into the same headings as section 3 above for clarity. Questions and responses have been summarised rather than quoted exactly.

(S – statement made, no direct response)

Fish issues and Acoustic Fish Deterrent

Q. If the AFD is not effective, why was it included in the original planning application?

A. The original Development Consent Order was granted in 2013. At the time, AFDs were new technology and it was believed that a suitable system could be developed to provide an adequate solution for the HPC intakes. Now AFD systems have been in use for longer and more is known about them, it is believed that the particular conditions at HPC means that such a system will not be effective in that location.

Q. AFDs have been proved to be effective at other sites. Why are EDF claiming they are not?

A. The efficiency of AFDs depends on the location and the nature of the local waters including water depth and tidal strength. The water intakes at HPC are in much deeper water than other AFD sites and have very strong tidal streams. These factors would reduce the efficiency and would make maintenance dives more risky than the potential benefit would justify.

Q. The AFD manufacturer claims that the device can be maintained without diving?

A. The manufacturer claims that a remotely operated vehicle can be used to carry out maintenance, but EDF believe that the strong tidal streams at Hinkley will be too strong for an ROV to operate in. Other sites carry out maintenance by lifting the device components to the surface, but the deeper waters and strong tides at Hinkley again make this impractical.

Q. Why is maintenance by divers dangerous?

A. The AFD system would have 280 speakers, each of which would require regular maintenance. This would require around 70-80 dives each year. The waters around the intake heads are very turbid with hardly any visibility. Tidal flows in the area can be very strong. Whilst the resulting risk of any individual dive may be acceptable, the cumulative risk of the required number of dives per year over the 60-year operational life span of HPC means that there is a significant chance of a serious accident or fatality at some point.

Q. Will diving not also be required to clear bio-fouling of the water intake heads?

A. Possibly, but this will not be required regularly and the total number of dives would be much less.

Q. Is the figure of 44 tonnes of fish lost per year the difference due to removal of the AFD from the planned construction, or the total losses due to operation of the HPC site?

A. This is the expected additional loss if the AFD is not included.

Q. A Welsh Government report suggested that the additional losses due to removal of the AFD will be much higher than EDF are claiming. Why is this being ignored?

A. This paper is several years old and it is not clear how the quoted figures were calculated. The statutory nature conservation bodies agree with EDF's estimate of 44 tonnes lost per year.

Q. Fisheries bodies such as the Devon and Somerset Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Association (IFCA) have also objected to plans to not build the AFD. Why are their views not listened to?

A. Bodies such as IFCA will be included in the coming consultation process and their views will be taken into consideration.

EDF issues

Q. How far along is construction of the HPC site?

A. About halfway. Construction started in 2016 and the project is aiming for commissioning in 2027.

Q. When did EDF start planning the HPC site?

A. In 2009.

Q. Given the context of the new flood defences recently installed between Aust and Avonmouth, which cost £87 million, what is the budget for the saltmarsh creation?

A. There is no set budget yet as it will depend on the final site and scheme design, but it is expected to be many millions of pounds.

Q. Is the removal of the AFD a cost saving measure?

A. No. The cost of the required mitigation will be greater than the expected cost of installing the AFD.

Economic and social impact

S. Representative of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA). The CLA represents many of the landowners potentially affected by this project. CLA would prefer to see negotiated, voluntary settlements for any land purchases, not compulsory purchase. Landowners should note that the cost of agents' fees can be claimed as part of any compensation payment, so they should ensure that they have good representation.

S. Affected farmer. His family have farmed within the project area since 1891, over five generations, and have a deep emotional connection to the land. He and his family have invested huge amounts of time and money into their farm and he believed it would be his career for life. If this project goes ahead, it will severely impact his future career and the livelihoods and wellbeing of himself and his family, as well as those of other families affected.

Q. Given current worries about food security, how can it be justified to remove fertile land from agricultural production?

A. EDF wish to talk to landowners about the social and economic impacts the project could have on their businesses. They are encouraged to get in touch if they have not already been contacted.

Q. What will happen to houses within the survey area and in the wider flood plain? Will they be subject to compensation or compulsory purchase?

A. It should be noted that the survey area is not the defined future boundaries of any future saltmarsh site, the surveys are also looking at potential impacts outside the saltmarsh. Housing within the wider flood plain outside the site boundary will not be affected and no compensation will be payable to those homeowners. For any houses potentially affected, there will be discussions with the owner to determine whether the best thing would be EDF purchase or additional protection.

Q. What will happen to the pylons which run across the site?

A. EDF will work with National Grid to determine the best solution. This may be relocation of the pylons, or protecting them as they are.

S. South Glos Council ward member. The introduction of this project to local residents was not handled well; a personal approach to affected landowners would have been much kinder than them finding out when section 172 notices landed at their doors. Public relations need to be greatly improved.

A. EDF acknowledge the distress caused and regret that the time constraints of the project meant it has not been handled in the ideal way.

Environmental and ecological issues

Q. Is it planned that the required 340 hectares of saltmarsh will all be provided at one site, or could it be split across several smaller sites?

A. In general, greater biodiversity benefits are provided by one larger, interconnected site rather than smaller ones. This gives opportunities for wildlife to move around as conditions dictate. However, the exact detail has not yet been determined and smaller sites may still be considered.

Q. Could other mitigation measures be used instead of saltmarsh creation?

A. A range of mitigation measures have been looked at, some other measures are planned such as improvements to weirs to help migratory fish get upstream to spawning grounds, and creation of marine habitats such as oyster beds, kelp forest and seagrass beds. These will work in combination with the saltmarsh to provide habitat enhancement for a range of fish

species. Any planning approvals are required to show “biodiversity net gain,” i.e. the overall project must provide more benefit than harm to biodiversity.

Q. It is known that sediment in the Severn Estuary tends to be removed from the Welsh side and accumulates on the English side of the estuary. How will long term silt movement be accounted for?

A. EDF would welcome further information on this subject.

Q. Photos of construction of saltmarshes, such as at Steart Marshes, show that the construction process is brutal. Can you confirm this?

A. Yes, construction will require large amounts of heavy engineering and will not look very good at first, but the end result at Steart has been creation of a lovely site with many environmental benefits.

S. Local resident. Steart Marshes is a barren site and not pleasant. Littleton is a green and peaceful location already – the proposed changes will make it much worse, not better.

Q. Are there any plans for the saltmarsh to be operated as a tourist attraction, as at Steart Marshes?

A. This would be a question to put to the community to see what they would prefer.

Q. What will be the impacts on the Severn Bore and the associated ecosystem and tourism benefits?

A. No impact is expected.

Q. Which fish populations will benefit from provision of saltmarsh habitat?

A. Several species such as sea bass benefit from saltmarsh habitat, which they use for shelter, feeding and breeding areas.

Flood risk and water management

Q. How will the salt water be able to get into the saltmarsh?

A. The existing flood defence wall will be breached in one or more places so the water can flow through at high tide.

Q. How does saltmarsh reduce flooding?

A. The network of creeks and pools in saltmarshes can soak up significant amounts of water as it floods into the site, rather than it being carried further inland. This can lead to a localised reduction in flood risk, but doesn't affect the wider scale situation.

Q. Flooding in the Littleton and Aust area can be caused by freshwater, especially when it builds up behind the sea wall outflows at high tide. Such freshwater flooding is already becoming more frequent due to climate change impacts. Will bringing flood defences further inland make this problem worse as freshwater can build up behind the new defences, further upstream?

A. This is a known concern and the effects of the new defences will need to be modelled to determine likely impacts. Local knowledge will be important in the design phase.

Q. The surface water drainage systems are linked across a wide area, with connections underneath the motorway linking the ditch system around Littleton to Aust and Olveston. Aust already has a flooding problem due to surface water build up, this has been improved by recent works but has not disappeared. How will the proposed changes to the surface water drainage around Littleton impact downstream?

A. EDF will be talking to the local Internal Drainage Board to assess and model any potential impacts.

Q. Both Bristol Water and Wessex Water have pipes running across the survey area. Have they been consulted?

A. EDF have been in touch with Wessex Water but were not aware of the Bristol Water assets. Bristol Water will now be contacted.

Project plan and process

Q. In the EDF presentation, a slide indicated that the consultation phase was complete. No consultation has been carried out at Littleton – please explain.

A. The slide showed the project timeline some weeks ago, before the decision not to go forward with the Pawlett Hams site. Now the project plan has changed, there will be an additional round of consultation on the new plans.

Q. The Littleton plans seem to have been carried out in a big panic; the first landowners knew of the proposals was when letters arrived. Why is it all so rushed?

A. The decision to look at new sites instead of Pawlett Hams has faced a tight timescale. HPC is expected to begin commissioning in 2027; the environmental mitigation measures must legally be in place before the site can begin the commissioning process. A decision from the Secretary of State on the mitigation measures is needed by early 2026 to allow time for construction to take place. This in turn means the application must be submitted in early 2025. The process is quick but is being closely managed.

Q. How were the proposed new saltmarsh sites selected? Are the four sites in competition with each other to prove why they should not be the final site?

A. Details of how the sites were selected will be including in the coming consultation, as will the results of the surveys and reasons why the final selection(s) have been made. Lots of sites were considered, including some further away such as in the Taw & Torridge estuary in Devon, but these four were the best options to provide mitigation for impacts on the fish populations of the Severn.

Q. Some communities in other areas, for examples places in the east of England who are facing loss of land due to coastal erosion, might welcome such a project. Have any sites in that area been considered?

A. Government guidance requires that mitigation sites are located as near as reasonably possible to the site of the impact. This ensures that, wherever possible, it is the impacted ecosystems which also receive the benefits of mitigation measures. For this reason, only sites in or near to the Severn estuary have been considered.

Q. If you are still required to provide the AFD, will the saltmarsh proposal still go ahead?

A. No. If EDF must install the AFD, the saltmarsh creation would not be required.

Q. EDF have previously applied to remove the requirement to install an AFD and this was refused. It seems unlikely that the new application will be successful either. Why can't EDF apply for the removal of the AFD requirement first, without causing distress to so many people with the saltmarsh plans? If the change is granted, they could then work out the alternative provision.

A. EDF have spoken to both the last government and the current one on this issue. Unfortunately, the law requires mitigation plans to be presented before any change to the current development consent order can be allowed.

Q. Is this proposal part of a game between EDF and the government? Are communities being used as pawns in this negotiation game? EDF have themselves stated that the proposed mitigation measures are disproportionate – why are they still going ahead? Would community lobbying of MPs help?

A. EDF do believe the required mitigation is disproportionate and they would prefer not to have to put it in place. They have sought alternatives, but current environmental legislation puts limitations on the possible options; there is not much which MPs can do about this within the required timescales. However, EDF do believe that the AFD should not be built and that the proposed options are preferable to that.

Q. Is this part of an Environment Agency/ government agenda to get rebuilt flood defences in this area? Will the Environment Agency be required to consult with the public about the plans?

A. EDF had invited the Environment Agency to attend tonight's meeting but they declined. There is no requirement for them to consult with the public, that is down to EDF as the project owners, but the parish council could invite the Environment Agency to attend a future meeting to explain their position.

Q. When will the final announcement of the selected site(s) be made? Will this include a detailed design of the proposed scheme?

A. The announcement of the preferred site(s) will be made in early 2025, before the application for changes to the development consent order is made to the Planning Inspectorate. Details will be made available as part of the consultation process.

Q. How will construction materials and associated heavy plant be delivered to the site?

A. The detailed plans for construction, including delivery of materials, are still to be determined.

5 Meeting closure

Andrew Cockcroft stressed that EDF are willing to discuss the project with affected individuals and that they can be contacted as follows:

Land and property queries - William Gilbert William.gilbert@nnb-edfenergy.com

General project queries - Hinkley-enquiries@edfenergy.com or phone 0333 009 7070.

Cllr. Jenkins thanked all who attended and closed the meeting.