

Internal Drainage Board Special Interest Group

The IDB SIG successfully obtained an uplift to the one-off grant awarded to meet levy increases, increasing the allocation in the Local Government Finance Settlement for 25/26 from £3m to £5m, in recognition of the cumulative pressure presented by levy increases in recent years. This will be distributed amongst the most-affected councils, and we wait to hear the confirmed allocations from MHCLG.

GDF Update

In 2021, East Lindsey District Council was invited by Radio Active Waste Management (now Nuclear Waste Services) to join a Working Group to explore whether the former Gas Terminal at Theddlethorpe would be a suitable location for a Ground Disposal Facility (GDF). Lincolnshire County Council had already accepted the same invitation.

Constitutionally, this was a decision for the Executive to make. Recognising the potential and wide-ranging impact of such a proposal, the Overview Committee was asked to consider the invitation as part of a pre-decision scrutiny.

The outcome of which was fed back to the Executive Board that being, we should engage in the process. That meeting took place on 19 October 2021.

We entered the process in good faith believing it was better to be involved and influencing a potential major infrastructure development that could have far ranging impacts, both positive and negative, for our residents and communities.

We have actively engaged in the process as a member of the Community Partnership (CP).

We now know that NWS have had to review their potential use of the redundant Theddlethorpe gas terminal and late last year they instigated a search for a new Area of Focus for a site entrance for the offshore GDF.

Their findings were made public on Wednesday 29 January 2025.

The surface Area of Focus is described as land between Gayton le Marsh and Great Carlton. The potential site covers some 4km².

Clearly, this is land that has not had any previous industrial use and is prime agricultural land nestling close to the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB.

This is in stark contrast to the "brownfield" location at Theddlethorpe.

The Executive of ELDC is now of the view that this change in location and Area of Focus severely tests the original rationale for our involvement in the GDF siting process.

We also know of the understandable widespread concern for the proposed National Grid pylon consultation currently underway. ELDC shares the concern of

many residents and communities regarding the industrialisation of the Lincolnshire countryside.

This brings into question how can we support a campaign to object to the environmental harm of the pylons and yet keep an open mind regarding the surface entry site for the GDF that will scar several kilometres of Lincolnshire farmland on the margins of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

The use of a brownfield site on the coast where a former facility had operated for over 40 years without local objection is completely different to a green field site in open countryside. The new site would also need attendant connecting infrastructure in the same sensitive countryside that the pylons would be scarring.

We also need to consider the progress that the Community Partnership has made in being the liaison between NWS and wider community. As the Leader of ELDC I have had to acknowledge at full council, that the engagement process has been clumsy, interrupted and not generally seen as helpful.

The four-year timescale to this point is disappointing and frustrating in equal measure. It is only in recent months that the flow of more relevant information has been appropriate but both NWS and the Community Partnership have had to recognise that the engagement and consultation process had not been effective or informative in the way we had anticipated or hoped for. It has only achieved one thing and that is to unnecessarily antagonise and distress our residents and communities.

With this in mind and after listening to community voices and our own councillor voices at parish, district and county level, I will recommend, at the next appropriate ELDC Executive meeting that we unilaterally withdraw from the Community Partnership and exit the process to site a GDF in East Lindsey.

Even if ELDC withdraws, LCC can still remain in the process. We will urge LCC to initiate a binding Test of Public support by 2027.

Retrofit Academy Awards 2025

The Home Energy Advice and Retrofit Team has been shortlisted as a finalist under the BEST LOCAL AUTHORITY-LED RETROFIT PROGRAMME at the Retrofit Academy Awards 2025. This is for delivery of the current Home Upgrade Grant 2 programme which will see circa £8-million of grant funding delivered during the current financial year to improve the energy efficiency of 450 properties. The winners will be announced at the award ceremony which takes place as part of Futurebuild 2025 at ExCel London on 4 March 2025.