

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
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BY EMAIL

Dear The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP,

East Anglia GREEN - The letter from Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex MPs, of 20th May 2022

I am writing to you in support of the concerns raised by MPs from across the region, in their letter to you of 20th May. Specifically, regarding the lack of discussion in National Grid's recent consultation, on East Anglia GREEN, of strategic alternatives to the proposed onshore transmission line from Norwich to Tilbury.

The Council, both alone, and in partnership with others, continues to engage and work with Government on the development of coordinated offshore transmission, to minimise the impacts on our communities. We have been lobbying for strategic electricity networks since 2011¹.

As you know, in recent years, Suffolk County Council has, with the robust support of many of our local MPs, continued to advocate for a coordinated and offshore centred approach, to creating a transmission network fit to deliver Net Zero. The Council has engaged extensively on matters of policy and regulation, relating to the management of onshore and offshore electricity networks. It has also made comments, and contributions to consultations, on the issue of mitigation and community benefits, for Suffolk's communities, hosting both generation and transmission infrastructure².

The Council agrees with the MPs, that alternatives to the Norwich to Tilbury pylon proposal do not appear to have been fully explored, nor have the reasons that these alternatives have been discarded been clearly explained. As a result, the MPs concerns reflect the significant disquiet within our communities, which can only be addressed if clarity around the possible alternatives is provided by National Grid.

¹ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects/Strategic-electricity-networks.pdf>

² <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects/energy-infrastructure-policy/>

Furthermore, the Council agrees with the MPs, that there is a need for greater clarity around the option of integrating the goals of East Anglia GREEN into the wider framework of strategic offshore coordination. Especially given the imminent publication of the Holistic Network Design, and an updated Network Options Assessment.

The County Council's clear preference is for a coordinated, offshore centred approach, delivered at pace, to minimise onshore infrastructure in Suffolk. If this approach can deliver an alternative to East Anglia GREEN in a timely manner, without risking wider Net Zero, renewable generation, and decarbonisation targets, it would be welcomed by us and the communities we represent. However, as well as being an advocate for strategic change on behalf of the communities of Suffolk, the Council has a specific role, as a statutory consultee in relation to these emerging proposals for East Anglia GREEN, therefore we must also respond to them in detail, as they stand. As such, we have identified potential opportunities to improve the project, based on existing and emerging policies, should there be no alternative but to proceed with East Anglia GREEN.

These include:

- A strategic opportunity to rationalise the network of 132kV pylon lines across Suffolk, and potentially more widely, as part of this project³. This would not only reduce the accumulation of adverse landscape impacts, but it would also support the development of a more robust and effective electricity network, consistent with the objectives of the British Energy Security Strategy⁴ (BESS).

However, the Council considers that these strategic opportunities for policy delivery, can only be realised through effective dialogue and cooperation, between National Grid, UK Power Networks, and Ofgem.

- Opportunities for further undergrounding, outside the Dedham Vale AONB, as this is supported by draft National Planning Policy⁵, in sensitive locations such as, but not limited to; the Waveney Valley (between Norfolk and Suffolk) and the southern edge of the Dedham Vale AONB in Essex.

However, it is recognised that the development of the National Policy Statements for energy is ongoing. Therefore, because of the changes foreshadowed in the BESS, further revision and consultation may be required before these can be made.

- That for a scheme such as this, which we understand is of a scale unprecedented in recent years, it is essential that the project has sufficient

³ https://dgmap.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/site/?q=dgmapping_ext_open

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy#networks-storage-and-flexibility>

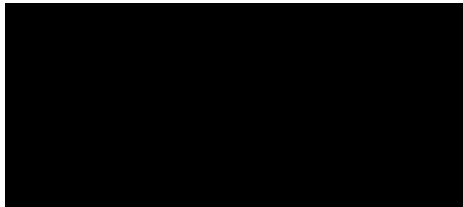
⁵ Para 2.11.20 in https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015238/en-5-draft-for-consultation.pdf

resources to provide effective, comprehensive, and robust mitigation of residual adverse impacts.

- That this project, and NGET more widely, should have the regulatory freedom to offer appropriate community benefits, an issue that will be part of the forthcoming consultation on such benefits, as well as in the development of both the Energy Bill, and the Strategy and Policy Statement.

However, the Council is aware of the potential impact of these additional costs on consumers⁶, coupled with the increasing demands placed on the current financial settlement between Transmission Operators and Ofgem. Therefore, it is suggested that additional funding from other sources, such as Crown Estate receipts from seabed leases, may be required to support the mitigation and compensation of transmission projects.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Rout

Cabinet Member for Environment and
Finance

Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council

⁶ <https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/advice-services/adults/poverty-reduction>