

Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP
Secretary of State
Department of Energy & Net Zero

Date: 15 December 2023
Enquiries to: Phil Watson - Strategic
Energy Projects Manager
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BY EMAIL

Dear Secretary of State,

The coordination of projects in Suffolk, promoted by the subsidiaries of the National Grid Group

On the 12th December 2023, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet¹ considered the Council's response to the s42 Statutory Consultation on the Sea Link transmission project, and approved recommendations in relation to that matter.

One of those recommendations related to the need for the effective coordination of projects proposed by the National Grid Group, including the coordination of consenting. The recommendation states that:

the Cabinet Member for Environment & Finance writes to National Grid Group and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), asking them to ensure full alignment of the project development of LionLink and Sea Link, and for them to request that the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) considers both projects simultaneously, using a single panel of examiners, to achieve coordinated consenting.

It is recognised that as Secretary of State you have a quasi-judicial role, which prevents you engaging with matters on which you are likely in future to have to decide. However, Suffolk County Council's cabinet has recommended that I write to you, in order to bring to your attention, the importance of the coordination of energy infrastructure, and the need to ensure that corporate and regulatory processes do not hinder this.

As set out in the cabinet report, the failure to integrate these two projects more effectively, both in terms of the consenting process and timelines, as well as the design and spatial arrangements, is unacceptable. Suffolk County Council acknowledges that National Grid Electricity Transmission and National Grid Ventures are legally separate businesses, one of which is under the supervision of the

¹ [https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=\(12-12-2023\),%20The%20Cabinet](https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=(12-12-2023),%20The%20Cabinet)

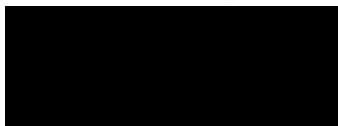
regulator, Ofgem. However, the Council does not consider that it is reasonable for National Grid Group not to coordinate the activities of its subsidiaries in such a way as to minimise harm to the environment and communities of Suffolk.

The Council recognises the emergence of a potentially significant new offer in respect of community benefits in the Autumn Statement; However, this offer of community benefits, to individuals or communities, must not be a substitute for the well planned, well designed, and well executed delivery of new transmission infrastructure.

The Council considers that it is reasonable to expect National Grid Group to follow the mitigation hierarchy at a strategic level. That is, in the first instance, to minimise the impact of projects by effectively coordinating the design and delivery of its proposals, where they are likely to have cumulative impact in the same region of the UK.

Furthermore, the Council also considers that it would be unreasonable for regulatory processes to act in such a way as to prevent National Grid Group from coordinating the projects of its subsidiaries'. Finally, It is recognised that the connection date of the Sea Link project is set by the regulator, under the terms of NGET's Transmission Licence, based on the outcomes of the Accelerated Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework. Therefore, it is likely that the Lion Link project will need to accelerate its consenting processes to coordinate its timing with that of Sea Link.

Yours faithfully

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Richard Rout

Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council
and Cabinet Member for Finance &
Environment