



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March, communicating the views of your constituents on National Grid's proposal to construct new electricity pylons along the Bramford to Twinstead route. I very much appreciate your support for this Government's ambitious Net Zero and offshore wind targets, and I recognise your strong feelings on this matter.

That said, I hope you will understand that it is not in the Department's legal power to halt the activity of a private developer at this pre-application stage of the planning process. Moreover, intervening now to steer National Grid's conduct could only threaten the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial independence and the neutral and impartial role that the Department plays in the planning system.

The appropriate action at this stage is rather to allow National Grid to conduct its business as it finds proper, in the knowledge that it is the duty and responsibility of the Secretary of State to decide, at the end of the process, should the proposed development make it that far, whether National Grid's approach to consultation has met the required standards of transparency, propriety, and thoroughness.

In that connection, it is worth remembering that this present consultation is by no means the last opportunity for you and your constituents to have your voices heard. Indeed, I am advised that National Grid plans a further round of statutory consultation later this year, as they are obliged to do under the relevant pre-application guidance. There is therefore a good opportunity for respondents to make clear their reservations about potential cumulative impacts, whether through the current consultation or through subsequent ones.

It is also crucial to note that, in addition to the adequacy of the consultation process, at decision-making time the Secretary of State will weigh the cumulative impact of the development set in context against any other relevant proposed or planned projects. Thus, the impact of the Bramford to Twinstead line will not be assessed in isolation, but with the impact of other relevant lines in mind, and vice versa, should those other lines make it to the same stage.

We are of course seeking to ensure, through the Offshore Transmission Network Review, that the onshore and offshore electricity networks are planned and built in a more holistic and coordinated way. This approach offers a great many benefits, not least the minimisation of any disruption to local communities while still maintaining the pace of offshore wind delivery required to meet our 2030 target of 40GW.

I am very aware of your acute interest in the Review, and I am keen to continue the productive dialogue that you established with my predecessor. In that spirit, I have asked my officials to organise another East Anglian Roundtable discussion at the earliest opportunity, and I do hope that you will be able to attend.

Given the importance of the Department's quasi-judicial role in planning affairs, you will appreciate that I have not been able to comment on the merits of the specific project at issue. Nevertheless, I hope that these considerations go some way to reassuring you and your constituents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne-Marie Trevelyan', with a horizontal line underneath.

THE RT HON ANNE-MARIE TREVELYAN MP
Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth

CC. National Grid Electricity Transmission
CC. National Grid Electricity System Operator
CC. Ofgem