



The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
Westminster
London
SW1H 0ET

CC:

John Pettigrew, CEO of National Grid
Fintan Slye, Director of National Grid ESO
Jonathan Brearley, CEO of OFGEM

23rd March 2021

Dear Anne-Marie,

RE: REQUEST TO SUSPEND BRAMFORD-TWINSTEAD CONSULTATION

We write as MPs representing communities directly affected by the current proposals to build new electricity pylons on the Bramford-Twinstead route (known as ‘BTNO’ in National Grid parlance), and by the recently revealed plans for new pylons from Norwich to Tilbury (known as AENC, north of Bramford; ATNC south of Bramford). It is now clear that ATNC could well be delivered as a further ‘reinforcement’ of the Bramford-Twinstead route itself, implying the current consultation on BTNO is not giving ourselves or our constituents anything like the ‘full picture’ upon which to consult.

We therefore request that you instruct National Grid and National Grid ESO to suspend the current consultation on BTNO until the route for AENC/ATNC has been established and publicised, so that the consultation on BTNO can take place with all communities and stakeholders able to engage in a position whereby they are fully informed of the total cumulative impact of proposals to build new electricity pylons in the locale.

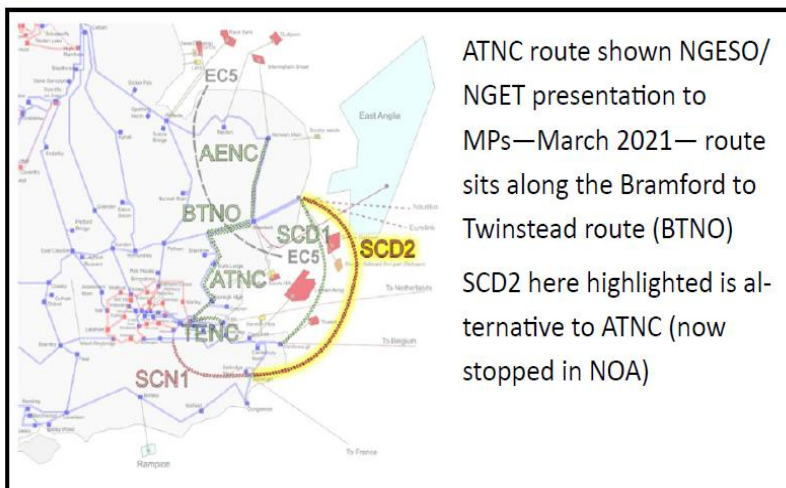
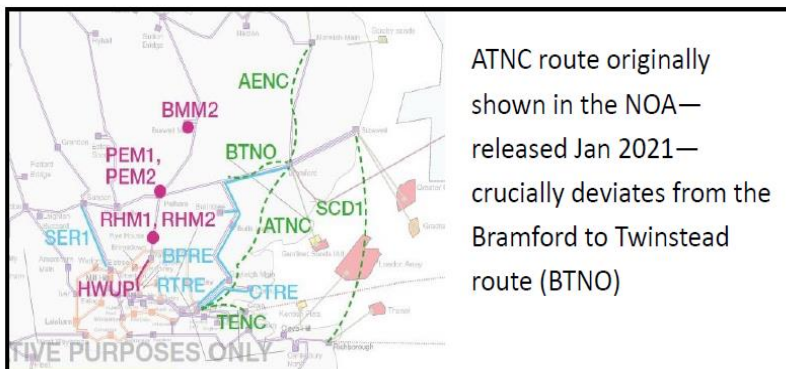
Explanatory Note

The image on the following page provides a background explanation as to why the newly announced AENC/ATNC proposal is so directly relevant to the existing BTNO consultation. The key point is that stakeholders have been aware of the current proposals for BTNO for some time. Whereas, AENC/ATNC appeared ‘out of the blue’ in the NOA in January. In a meeting on Friday 12th March between NGET/NGESO and MPs (including Sir Bernard Jenkin; John Whittingdale; Stephen Metcalfe; James Cartlidge and the offices of Richard Bacon, Priti Patel and Dr Dan Poulter) the explanation for the lack of notice to stakeholders on AENC/ATNC was that this had been specifically prompted by the Government’s decision

to raise its target output for offshore wind by 2030, confirmed in October 2020 but also contained in the Conservative Party manifesto, December 2019. As such, it was argued that there was inevitably short notice for those new proposals for the network that relate specifically to the additional 10GW by 2030 (that is, proceeding with AENC/ATNC; proceeding with SCD1 but not proceeding with SCD2).

As the images show, initial indications of the potential route for ATNC suggested a ‘squiggle’ not dissimilar to the route of the UKPN line that currently runs from Bramford into Essex, via Capel St Mary and Flatford before crossing into Lawford and south through Essex. Whereas, in the aforementioned meeting on 12th March, the presentation suggested that ATNC would take a route following the same path as Bramford-Twinstead.

We entirely appreciate that such images are ‘illustrative’. Nevertheless, whilst noting that in a recent meeting with James Cartlidge MP, UKPN confirmed that they had received no correspondence about their line from Bramford to Essex, in the meeting of 12th March, NGET were clear that ATNC could potentially follow the same route as BTNO.



Indeed, it seems a statement of the obvious, given the limited options that pertain in this part of the world for network reinforcement, that further reinforcement of Bramford-Twinstead is a very realistic option for ATNC.

Consideration of undersea options

We are all particularly concerned about the lack of transparency in the decision not to proceed with SCD2, an undersea ‘bootstrap’ alternative to ATNC (a direct alternative, as confirmed in the NOA). We are extremely confident that SCD2 would have strong local support against the overhead line options and yet this has already been rejected without any public consultation at all. The relevance of this to the issue of consultation ‘on the full picture’ is that taking the combined proposals together would, we feel, lend greater weight to SCD2 in terms of lower *cumulative* impact.

The likely sequence of decisions based on best value in each case is likely to preclude the possibility of considering the more comprehensive, offshore scheme. If the industry and the department were to adopt a longer-term view, and to reflect the environmental impacts (and the real likely costs) of onshoring more powerlines through special areas and open countryside, the offshore solution would be more attractive. However, on the basis of the present sequence of decisions, the offshore solution will never be evaluated against the full potential cost of the several schemes, because they will only ever be evaluated as separate projects. This underscores further why it is demonstrably fair to the potentially affected communities that these projects are considered jointly, and therefore after a routing proposal for AENC/ATNC has been confirmed.

Request to suspend BTNO consultation

BEIS will of course be aware that the recent UK High Court ruling overturning consent for Norfolk Vanguard emphasised the issue of ‘cumulative impacts’, when considering notionally ‘separate’ projects. We believe that our constituents would expect any consultation on such important and potentially impactful development to also consider ‘cumulative impacts’. For consultation to commence on BTNO as currently proposed, when it could be that within months a further line or more of pylons for Bramford-Twinstead would in effect be confirmed as being definitively proposed, is not fair to those we were elected to represent.

It should be emphasised that all of us support the development of offshore wind and the drive to net zero. However, the process of reaching such policy goals must not be to the detriment of communities, and transparency in these matters must be maximised. We therefore request that the current BTNO consultation is suspended until the proposed route for AENC/ATNC has been established and made public to all relevant stakeholders.

We thank you for your consideration in this matter.

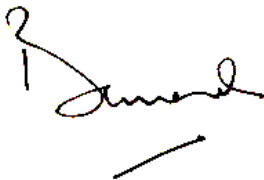
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Cartlidge', written in a cursive style.

James Cartlidge MP
Member of Parliament for South Suffolk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dan Poulter', written in a cursive style.

Dr Dan Poulter MP
Member of Parliament for Central Suffolk & North Ipswich

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bernard Jenkin', written in a cursive style.

Sir Bernard Jenkin MP
Member of Parliament for Harwich and North Essex

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'James Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Member of Parliament for Braintree