



James Cartlidge MP
Member of Parliament for South Suffolk

John Pettigrew – CEO
National Grid
1-3 Strand
London
WC2N 5EH

25th July 2022

CC:
The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP

Dear John,

RE: EAST ANGLIA GREEN CONSULTATION

I am writing to you regarding the East Anglia GREEN (EAG) consultation, and your company's promise to conduct a 'detailed' assessment of an offshore option. This commitment was made at the virtual meeting on Monday 18th July between OffSET MPs and National Grid. The meeting was also attended by Ofgem and National Grid ESO.

I asked why this information was not available until 'later in the summer' and was told, quite simply, that the work had not been done.

You will appreciate that it seems extraordinary that you have made a choice for an overland narrow swathe for EAG – rejecting offshore options – without any detailed assessment of those offshore options. I am afraid that is a far from satisfactory position.

Furthermore, your team were clear that the detailed work would show that such options were 'too expensive'. You will not need me to point out that such an expression of your position is effectively predetermined. You have made a decision on EAG without assessing, in detail, the rejected options; you are now going to look at them after the closure of the consultation, and from a position where you are clear what the result will be. This is not defensible.

You will be aware of the opposition to EAG across East Anglia, including from many MPs, who have now written letters to this effect and expressed such concerns in the Westminster Hall debate last week on new pylons for East Anglia. With the full backing of my OffSET MP colleagues, I would urgently request you to confirm that the following conditions will apply to the 'detailed work' that you are now going to conduct on the offshore option:

- Given the very open statement from your team that they expect the report will show an offshore option is not viable, and that therefore they are effectively predetermined, please can you ensure that your report is undertaken with an open mind by an independent consultant. As Suffolk County Council state in their attached letter, an independent report into an offshore connection option is not unprecedented. I understand that National Grid have previously commissioned Parsons Brinckerhoff to undertake similar work, following stakeholder feedback to 'further investigate the possibility of an HVDC option', in response to the North Wales Connection project. Without an independent nature, such a report could not be accepted as being anything other than produced with a predetermined outcome in mind.
- The report must then be shared, through engagement at a grass roots level, with constituents in affected communities - i.e., this should form part of the original informal consultation, effectively reopened in recognition that the choice that was presented before was flawed and lacking in detailed work to underpin its rejection of offshore options. This does NOT require you to raise

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expectations that the report will change the outcome – but if it is open-minded and considers a range of offshore options, there will be benefits (e.g., greater interconnector capacity for export/import), to offset the costs that your colleagues have already said are prohibitive (yet without detailed underpinning).

- Finally, the report must not just look at a ‘straw man’ alternative – e.g., an undersea link of 2 or more cables from near Norwich to Tilbury – which would inevitably be hugely expensive. Rather, it must consider meshed Sea Link options – Sea Links 2, 3 and 4 etc with multi-nodal capacity, linking with international interconnectors, potentially converted at sea (in other words, the foundation stone of the proper offshore grid in East Anglia that is now Government policy to deliver significant upside benefit).

One of the main points stressed by your team in the meeting was that the ‘framework’ precludes considering offshore options – as Akshay Kaul, Networks Director, Ofgem – stated on the call, this is NOT the case. On the contrary, the ‘framework’ does permit consideration of offshore options and that each project must be considered on a ‘case-by-case basis’. It is hard to see how you could have carried out that evaluation without the detailed assessments being to hand.

Separately, your team were insistent that the offshore option was ‘covered’ as part of the original consultation. I am 100% clear that is not the case. The extract from the CPRSS document is very light on any detail, not surprisingly as we now know that you have no detailed supporting work, and the scant information provided was buried away in the small print. The fact is, when my constituents visited village halls to meet your community engagement team, there were no pictures up in the halls showing the offshore alternative and why it couldn’t work; any questions on it were batted away with answers such as ‘not possible’.

As you know, subsequently I pointed out that – far from not being possible – you are spending billions delivering undersea cables in the north. However, to show that I am not predetermined, I will be surveying constituents in affected communities to ask if they felt that the consultation covered the ‘rejected’ offshore option. They were certainly not given any detailed costings etc – because we both know that would have been impossible, as you haven’t conducted that work.

Faith in this consultation has collapsed following the revelation that you made the decision without any detailed work on the offshore alternative. To restore that faith, you MUST please ensure that this next phase of work: is independent and open minded; looks at a range of offshore options – including sea links 2, 3 and 4; and involves our constituents directly in discussing the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

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