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BY EMAIL

cc. James Cartlidge MP & Sir Bernard Jenkin MP

Dear Simon,

Backbench business debate Westminster Hall, 19th July 2022: Pylons in East Anglia

I am writing to you following the backbench business debate at Westminster Hall, opened by Sir Bernard Jenkin, on 19th July 2022, regarding *Pylons in East Anglia*¹. The Council is pleased to note that, as discussed in that debate, by James Cartlidge, National Grid Electricity Transmission are intending to produce a report in the coming months setting out in greater detail, information about and the rationale for, discarding an offshore alternative to the proposed East Anglia GREEN pylon line.

The Council welcomes this development, as it will be a tangible outcome of the request it made for this work to be carried out in its response to the recent consultation, which closed on 16th June. As set out in that response, the Council considers that an independent report into an offshore connexion is not unprecedented, based on the commissioning of Parsons Brinckerhoff to carry out similar work following a consultation on the transmission link to the proposed Wylfa nuclear power station². Indeed, the council considers that given the current state of public disquiet, an independent report is now essential, to restore a public confidence.

Furthermore, the Council considers that the scope of the report should not only consider a direct “bootstrap/s” offshore alternative to the East Anglia GREEN project, with its 6GW of capacity, but that the report should also consider how the boundary transfer issues and

¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-07-19/debates/03625B71-6F20-4DC1-A9AE-2BEBA9C8A6A4/NewPylonsEastAnglia>

² para 3.5 of

https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wpcontent/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020015/EN020015-001041-9.8.3_Historic%20Strategic%20Options%20Report%20-%202016%20Update.pdf

customer connexions might reasonably be resolved using a more comprehensive and integrated offshore approach. Whilst it is recognised that such an approach maybe significantly more expensive, or require anticipatory investment, the Council believes that reviewing this integrated option would have significant benefits.

The Council considers that an independent report is an opportunity to test if it is, in this instance, possible to produce such an integrated solution, and meet the required in-service

date of 2030. Doing so would ensure much greater public confidence that *all* reasonable alternatives to East Anglia GREEN have been properly explored, especially considering the wider policy drive towards an integrated and long-term approach to transmission issues.

The Council believes, based on previous work undertaken by the Electricity System Operator³, that an integrated approach may yield significant savings for the consumer, in the longer term. Whilst it is recognised that there may be significant challenges to developing such an approach, regarding anticipatory investment and timeliness of delivery, clarity on these issues is now essential, given the very high levels of public disquiet.

Suffolk County Council will continue to engage with National Grid on the project as it has been presented to date, notwithstanding the Council's call for an effective and independent examination of alternative approaches. As you are aware, the Council has already commissioned its own review of options for undergrounding in the most sensitive areas, in accordance with emerging policy in the recent draft EN-5⁴. Furthermore, the Council expects National Grid to test and deploy a range of both embedded and secondary mitigations, to reduce the adverse impact of the current proposal on the communities and environment of Suffolk, and to provide effective mechanisms to deal with adverse residual impacts.

In summary, the Council considers that:

- A comprehensive and independent review of the offshore alternative to East Anglia Green should be published. This should include consideration of a fully integrated offshore approach, and the extent to which this would support wider ongoing benefits to system operation and reduced costs to consumers, in the longer term.
- The publication of this independent review, should, as discussed in the Westminster Hall debate, include opportunities for public engagement with, and an opportunity to comment on, this new material.
- The Council expects, notwithstanding these points, a comprehensive range of mitigation measures to be deployed as the design of the project, as proposed, continues to mature. The Council considers that there are likely to be significant opportunities to improve the initial proposal in accordance with current good practice, and emerging policy.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Rout

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

³ <https://www.nationalgrideso.com/document/183031/download>

⁴ 7 Para 2.11.20 in https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/10_15238/en-5-draft-for-consultation.pdf