



James Cartlidge MP
Member of Parliament for South Suffolk

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

2nd September 2022

Dear John,

RE: EAST ANGLIA GREEN (EAG) – SURVEY OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

I write in response to your letter to me of 5th August, for which I am grateful. I said that I would respond after the survey that I initiated of EAG consultation participants had been completed, a survey covering all affected constituencies in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, backed by their MPs.

In your letter you state that you ‘considered further offshore options however concluded these would not comply with the obligations set out under our licence and by Ofgem to be economic and efficient and therefore, would not be supported under the current regulatory framework when consentable lower cost onshore alternatives were available’.

With respect, the crucial word here is ‘considered’. You may or may not have privately ‘considered’ offshore options – and it is a fact that you did so only to a basic level, given the admission of your team at our 18th July meeting that no detailed work on offshore options had been done, and would take place over the summer AFTER the consultation had ended.

However, what your officers also said in that meeting of 18th July was that offshore options had been ‘consulted’ upon as part of the EAG consultation – this is the key: as a company, you are not only asserting that you considered offshore options, but that you consulted on them with members of the public in affected communities.

From my experience and those of MP colleagues, I very much disagree with this assertion – but said in the Parliamentary debate on ‘New Pylons in East Anglia’ on the 19th of July that I would not respond formally until I had surveyed affected communities to see what they felt. As I said in the debate:

“My view is not predetermined. National Grid says that it consulted on offshore. This, therefore, is what I am going to do. I will write to all of my affected constituents and ask them, “Did you participate in the consultation, and if so, do you feel that it covered offshore?”

Survey results

In response to the following question: ‘Do you agree with the statement from National Grid that their consultation included meaningful discussion on an offshore alternative to the proposed swathe of new overland pylons?’

- 99.4% of those respondents said ‘no’.

I then asked: ‘If you answered No to Question 2, would you support National Grid reopening the consultation to include detailed consideration of an offshore alternative?’

- 98.8% of respondents said ‘yes’.

This survey was based on a significant sample of the consultation respondents:

- 1,040 people who responded to the survey had also participated in your EAG consultation.
- Responses were spread between all affected constituencies in East Anglia, with the top five being Harwich & North Essex, South Suffolk, South Norfolk, Bury St Edmunds and Colchester.

These results make it abundantly clear that your statement, that people were consulted on the offshore alternative to the proposed pylons, has been found to be wholly without foundation. I believe that the only appropriate course of action is to now reopen the consultation, this time including a detailed and transparent discussion of all options, with full engagement at a community level.

If you disagree, I would be grateful if you could provide your own evidence that the public participating in your survey believe that the consultation DID cover offshore options.

Independent report on offshore options

It is clear from your letter that you are not planning to seek an independent, open-minded expert to carry out your ‘detailed’ assessment of offshore options. You instead say that this would be a matter for BEIS or NG ESO. Based on that, I will be writing to both to ask if they could provide the independent report which is clearly needed if faith is to be restored in this process; with the results of that report then featuring in the reopened consultation, necessitated by your lack of consultation on offshore options – as comprehensively proven by this survey.

I am grateful for the statement in your letter of your commitment to be “*as transparent as possible throughout the project development process*” – this is welcome but can only be true in deed as well as word if you reopen the consultation, given the deep flaw that the public did not participate in the decision that you have made to reject offshore options.

Finally, I look forward to further meetings but must stress the constitutional point that if I meet with you, it is not as a private individual but purely based on my being the elected representative of my constituents; that is why ultimately this matter can only be resolved if they themselves get the chance to engage in the thinking and evidence (currently being gathered, post-consultation) as to why massive investment in undersea cabling is possible in the north of our country, not East Anglia.

Yours sincerely,



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