



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP
Minister of State for Energy Security & Net
Zero

**Department for Energy Security & Net
Zero**
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Sir Bernard Jenkin
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

7 March 2023

Dear Sir Bernard,

Thank you for attending our meeting on 30 January alongside your OffSET colleagues. I understand you are disappointed by the decision not to undertake an independent review of Transmission network in East Anglia. You have been clear about the level of frustration this has caused among colleagues and local communities, which I heard first-hand when I visited your constituency last month.

During our meeting with local councillors and community group leads, several people asked me whether Government could re-open connection contracts. At this late stage, we cannot re-open these connection agreements without significant legal challenge from developers, who hold the contract with the Electricity System Operator (ESO).

Instead, the Government remains committed to a developer led voluntary approach for greater coordination of projects. This initiative is being supported by the Government's £100 million Offshore Coordination Support Scheme, launched last December, and changes to National Policy Statements (NPS) where a greater emphasis has been placed on coordinated approaches in the planning system.

As explained during our January meeting, the Electricity System Operator (ESO) has confirmed it will conduct a study into the implications of network co-ordination from the Early Opportunities workstream in East Anglia. This study will be independently conducted by the ESO and will consider alternative options for connecting grid infrastructure, including an offshore option. This study will follow on from and be contingent of the Early Opportunities workstream where developers are exploring voluntary coordination in the region. I have attached the study's updated Terms of Reference to this electronic letter, alongside a map of the current state of planned infrastructure in the area and a delivery timeline of the key milestones from the East Anglia Early Opportunities workstream.

National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) will also hold statutory consultations following the outcome of this study. These consultations will provide important opportunities for communities to share their views on the project in 2023 and I would encourage everyone to engage in this process.

It is important to note that at this stage the presumption in the NPS is that new energy transmission infrastructure projects will remain onshore but that no decisions have been made by the Secretary of State. All planning applications will be considered on their merits, applying the appropriate law and policy.

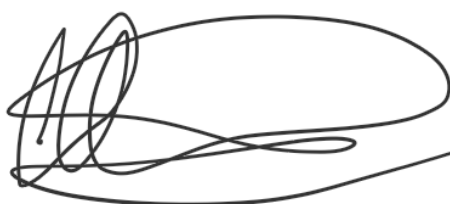
I would like to stress that the Department's role in approving this nationally significant infrastructure will come at the end of the planning process. Developers are responsible for

bringing forward suitable plans that demonstrate how they meet the nationally set criteria, have considered local communities and alternative options for grid connection.

This process may result in communities hosting new infrastructure. We therefore plan to consult on proposals to streamline the approach to community benefits and my officials will email your office once this consultation opens.

As we discussed the other day, Andrew Bowie has been appointed as the new Minister for Nuclear and Networks at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and will replace me as your main ministerial contact for this work. As a ministerial group we are determined to find solutions which do everything possible to minimise negative impacts on communities while keeping us on track to meet net zero by 2050.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

THE RT HON GRAHAM STUART MP
Minister of State for Energy Security and Net Zero