

secretary.state@beis.gov.uk

31 October 2022

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Dear Sir

Suffolk Preservation Society urges offshore grid network to safeguard Suffolk's landscapes and communities

The Suffolk Preservation Society, which represents CPRE, the Countryside Charity, in Suffolk, is dedicated to protecting and promoting the county's heritage and landscapes. Energy generation presents major challenges for Suffolk which will host a number of future nationally important energy infrastructure projects. We recognise the importance of such projects, not least in addressing climate change, meeting the nation's energy requirements and job creation during both construction and operational phases.

The cumulative impacts across Suffolk of a new nuclear power station, multiple large off-shore wind farms, interconnectors, a new transmission line known as East Anglia Green, on-shore substations, underground cabling and the impact on our landscapes and communities will, however, be prolonged and substantial. We were therefore encouraged by the recent joint statement that National Grid Electricity Transmission (Sea Link), National Grid Ventures (Nautilus and EuroLink), North Falls (offshore wind farm) and Five Estuaries (offshore wind farm) are working together and exploring the potential for offshore coordination as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) "Early Opportunities" workstream.

The latest rounds of public consultations for EuroLink and SeaLink interconnectors have now commenced and the proposals include possible co-location of infrastructure aiming to reduce the impact on local communities. We will continue to resist the selection of the Friston area as an energy hub for onshore infrastructure. Such significant energy projects should not come on shore in this remote countryside location, but should also be co-located on a brownfield site nearer to the point of energy use. We were therefore pleased that National Grid Ventures very recently announced that it is now looking at a potential location for the grid connection for the Nautilus interconnector on a brownfield site on the Isle of Grain in Kent instead of Friston.

Notwithstanding these movements towards increased co-ordination and appropriate site selection, we consider that these proposals do not go far enough. Our concern, shared by many local communities and environmental groups, is that Suffolk is expected to shoulder such projects with insufficient consideration given to their cumulative environmental and community costs. The impact upon our countryside and communities by these schemes is grave. The projects are coming forward piecemeal and opportunities for other forms of offshore coordination that would future proof the network for the significant increases in generation and transmission have been missed.

Therefore, we support local campaigners who are calling for an independent comparative assessment to be commissioned, using HND criteria and evaluating an integrated offshore grid, combined with various brownfield landfall options. With judicial reviews for East Anglia 1(N) and 2 in progress and their outcomes not known until December 2022 at the earliest, please use this valuable window of opportunity to find a better solution for our countryside and communities in Suffolk.

We urgently need a review of alternative approaches to energy transmission through East Anglia, and Suffolk in particular, and ways to mitigate the inevitable cumulative environmental impacts. We fully support local communities who are calling for the use of increased offshore transmission strategies to avoid destruction of Suffolk countryside and provide long-term, sustainable delivery of electricity from various providers in the North Sea zone to the National Grid. The economic costs of adopting coordinated energy delivery must be examined in the light of the very real environmental, landscape, heritage, community and tourism costs of the current adhoc approach.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Cairns IHBC MRTPI
Director

CC:

Minister.Stuart@beis.gov.uk,
Minister.Doyle-Price@beis.gov.uk,
email@ranil.uk,
therese.coffey.mp@parliament.uk,
Offshore.Coordination@beis.gov.uk,
Offshore.Coordination@ofgem.gov.uk,
box.OffshoreCoord@nationalgridESO.com,
InfrastructurePlanning@communities.gov.uk,
zoe.keeton@rwe.com,
Middleton-Fox.Jobshare@beis.gov.uk,
richard.rout@suffolk.gov.uk,
craig.rivett@eastssuffolk.gov.uk,
Russ.Rainger@eastssuffolk.gov.uk,
Tom.Daly@eastssuffolk.gov.uk,
Andrew.Reid@suffolk.gov.uk

BCC:

info@suffolkenergyactionsolutions.co.uk