

15 August 2024

cap.floor@ofgem.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

NAUTILUS – PROPOSAL TO CONNECT AT FRISTON
OFGEM CONSULTATION RE NATIONAL GRID VENTURES' NAUTILUS PROJECT
UPDATE

I am writing on behalf of the Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS) to object to the proposals to connect the Nautilus Interconnector at Friston. SPS campaigns on important issues affecting the county's landscape and heritage, working constructively with local communities, campaign groups, the local planning authorities and other stakeholders to help achieve better outcomes for our historic natural and built environment. The Society also represents CPRE, The Countryside Charity, in Suffolk.

Background

Growing concerns about a lack of well thought through policies and joined up thinking around National Grid's Great Grid Upgrade (GGU) led the Suffolk Preservation Society (along with Essex and Norfolk branches of the CPRE) to commission the 2024 *Greening the Great Grid Upgrade* report¹.

The report, by Dr Andy Tickle, an independent planning and campaign consultant who has worked on energy, planning and environmental issues for over 40 years, provides a detailed critique of the GGU's strengths and weaknesses and how it might be improved to reduce the impacts on the countryside and ensure that impacted communities are properly heard. SPS endorses the findings and recommendations of the report which concludes that National Grid is hurrying ahead too fast with its plans, risking a legacy of individual projects that may be surplus to energy requirements, do not integrate with each other, fail to maximise their full environmental benefits and marginalise affected communities. It is against this background that the SPS objects to the Ofgem consultation on Nautilus connecting at Friston.

SPS response to Nautilus connecting at Friston

SPS strongly objects to the NAUTILUS project connecting at Friston on the following grounds:

At this time, Friston has only been consented for SPR EA1(N) and EA2 to connect to the grid. The proposed expansion to create an energy super hub for SeaLink, Nautilus and Lionlink to connect, with the associated converter stations at Saxmundham, effectively bypasses the planning process which is wholly unacceptable.

¹ <https://www.suffolksociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Greening-the-Great-Grid-Upgrade.pdf>

The landscape and visual impacts resulting from a connection at Friston, with associated converter station at Saxmundham, will severely impact the East Suffolk countryside and its communities, as well as all those who work in and visit the area.

The cumulative impacts from National Grid Ventures proposed interconnectors: Sea Link, Lionlink and Nautilus together with SPR's EA1(N) and EA2 yet to be assessed will create devastating environmental impacts upon the historic and natural built environment of East Suffolk.

SPS supports the views of all those that call for this onslaught of disjointed schemes to be halted, and to properly investigate an offshore solution as proposed by expert bodies and campaign groups, especially in light of evidence that both the costs associated with such schemes and the urgency of the proposed connection have been overestimated. A strategic and coordinated offshore solution must be the objective of the government's newly heralded Great British Energy.

Ofgem must reconsider allowing Nautilus to proceed to West Grain to prevent the devastation of East Suffolk's landscape, environment and socio-economic viability.

Summary

SPS **strongly** objects to the connection of Nautilus at Friston, and instead calls for an offshore solution to accommodate the extra power flows from the North Sea. East Suffolk's countryside, together with the amenity of the many affected communities will be severely impacted in perpetuity. The failure to consider the very damaging and very real cumulative impacts of this scheme with other commercial energy schemes is a massive indictment of the current broken system. Moreover, the cumulative impact of ALL National Grid Ventures projects could be entirely negated by an offshore grid/mesh in the North Sea, pooling energy to brownfield sites closer to demand. It is increasingly clear to many that the constraint costs for Nautilus could be shared with Sea Link and Lionlink in upgrading the network at West Grain if all 3 projects were to be co-located.

The importance of social license to enable the efficient and timely delivery of such schemes should not be underestimated, as without it, delays and legal challenge are inevitable. SPS calls for a change in approach to give reasonable and fair consideration to the disproportionate harm that this scheme, and in combination with others, will have upon the tiny village of Friston. The true cost of the nation's need to decarbonize must not be allowed to fall solely on the shoulders of a few. The need for a fair and reasonable offshore solution is urgent and must not be at the expense of the tiny village of Friston and its neighbours.

Yours sincerely

Robert Townshend
Chairman

Cc: Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for NSIPs - Suffolk County Council

Cllr Tom Daly, East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for Energy and Climate Change

Phil Watson, Strategic Energy Projects Lead, Suffolk County Council

Fiona Gilmore SEAS