

## **Councillor Mellen**

### **East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022**

I would first like to make a couple of over-arching points about the council's draft response before looking at the details.

Firstly, the proposed route for the overhead cables shown as a graduated swathe on National Grid maps, by my reckoning directly crosses 8 or maybe 9 council wards, from Palgrave and Gissingham in the north, down through Bacton and Mendlesham, Stowupland, touching the Stonhams ward, then Needham Market, Battisford and Ringshall, Blakenham and finally Bramford. Of these wards, I just make the point that most are represented by Councillors in the opposition Green and Liberal Democrat group, I make it something like 8 opposition Councillors' wards affected, compared to 3 administration Councillors. That being said, I welcome the opportunity that all affected Councillors have been given to state their concerns to this cabinet meeting and hopefully have some influence on the Council's response.

Secondly, as myself and Councillor Morley have already discussed, this is an issue where I think there is likely to be a strong cross-party consensus - which means that the Council can speak powerfully with one voice . there may be some slight differences in approach but we are all on the same page.

Since I only have three minutes I will leave my colleagues to make some of the detailed points, however our main concerns about this non-statutory consultation are as follows:

1. This timing of this consultation seems to be inappropriate (ie too soon) since the government is expecting this month the report of the Offshore Transmission Review group, set up by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which may well impact this and other energy infrastructure projects.
2. Whilst we welcome the increase in renewable energy production, there is a lack of strategic, long-term planning to connect multiple offshore wind farms into the national grid in a co-ordinated way, and we hope that the Offshore Transmission Review will bring this forward.
3. The proposed overhead lines and pylons will have a massive impact on the areas through which they pass – visually dominating the landscape and also impacting heavily on many heritage assets along the route. This overground route is only the best value option for National Grid if no intrinsic value is ascribed to these landscapes.
4. There is a huge issue of blight affecting properties on, or close to the proposed route, and given that this is only the first stage in a very long process, this could go on for many years.

Turning to the Council's draft response, I largely agree with what has been written, but I would like to encourage a few amendments:

- The response on page 2 highlights undergrounding the whole route as something that requires further consideration – from my understanding this

would be vastly more expensive and more environmentally destructive than an undersea cable route and therefore seems an unrealistic option.

- Some individual bullet points, (such as the one halfway down page 4) – if taken out of context appear to show support for the scheme and should be removed, or edited so that they show the full context of the Councils' objection to the scheme.
- Lastly, benefits to the communities through which the line may pass. On page 8 some potential benefits are discussed in terms of training, skills and local supply into the project. We think that here we should be demanding more of National Grid: if the line is built, what are the benefits that this project brings to these communities, how and when will they be delivered?