

Councillor Welham

East Anglia GREEN Consultation Response submitted to Cabinet 6 June 2022

National Grid – Route from Norwich to Tilbury

Before speaking about the proposed route as it may affect Mid Suffolk, and in particular the ward served by Cllr Eburne and myself, I'd like to ask Members if they would consider the most logical and least damaging method of transmitting energy from the North Sea to Tilbury in the Thames Estuary. Why would you first connect offshore windfarms to Norwich? And then erect miles of 50 metre high pylons through South Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

Before any transmission lines are implemented overland, or underground, a National Energy Strategy is essential. Suffolk MPs should join with MPs in other parts of the country which might be threatened by similar schemes to ensure a UK wide strategy is approved before this proposal is considered.

Residents have told me that they are confused by the approach of showing a band of interest rather than a specified route. Most of those who have homes or own land from which the pylons would be visible are against an overhead scheme. Others who fear the disruption of an underground scheme object to such a scheme and some believe they should support the overhead scheme as the least worst option.

Clearly, the consultation is flawed as there is no comparison of costs between overland, underground and undersea options. Nor is there any comparison of disbenefits of the three options. For instance, effect on Listed Buildings, wildlife habitat, visual amenity, agricultural production, disruption during construction. The administrative costs of dealing with, potentially thousands of individuals, the economic cost due to loss of tourism and other knock on effects all weigh against the current proposal.

Through our ward, if the proposal goes ahead 50 metre columns will stride across the high claylands plateau and will be seen for miles around. Listed Buildings are within the coloured band. The effect on SSSIs, wooded areas, in particular Gipping Great Wood, and a whole range of conservation and biodiversity projects is given no consideration.

Some of the comments of National Grid staff have been unhelpful and in many cases questionable. 'We don't take other matters into account at this stage'; 'the technology for an undersea option doesn't really exist'. When questioned further, I was told that such expertise does exist in the private sector. Surely now is the time to come together to devise a strategy for the UK.

In discussion with one of the staff at the Needham Market consultation, he and I agreed that the undersea option, over the life of the scheme, would only add a few pence per year to the average household electricity bill. That's before taking into account the savings from using renewable sources of energy rather than fossil fuels.

Members of Cabinet, you have an opportunity today to tell government that this proposal and other similar schemes are unacceptable and using your contacts within

government to urge an end to this piecemeal approach and produce a National Energy Strategy fit for the future.

KPW 3 June 2022