



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

Department for Energy Security &
Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HP

www.gov.uk

Sharon Smith
Clerk to Saxmundham Town Council

Our ref: TOB2024/11702

Email: townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

15 September 2024

Dear Ms Smith,

Thank you for your letter of 19 July to the Secretary of State (SoS) and the Minister for Industry, about energy infrastructure in East Anglia. Your correspondence has been passed to me and I apologise for the delay in response.

Work is already underway across the Government to improve the strategic planning of network infrastructure and reduce the impact on communities. As I am sure you will appreciate, we need to re-wire Great Britain to transport power from new renewable generation to homes and businesses across the country. This means we need to build four times as much new electricity transmission network in the next six years as was built since 1990. The Government is determined that this infrastructure must be delivered strategically and sensitively by the Transmission Owners (TOs) and developers, using a mix of onshore reinforcements, upgrades to existing technology, offshore transmission cables and, where appropriate, undergrounding.

Through the strategic approach to network planning we are taking with the Holistic Network Design, the upcoming Centralised Strategic Network Plan, and the Beyond 2030 report, networks are designed holistically with community, consumer cost, environmental, and operability factors taken into account. Through this coordinated approach, we are making extensive use of offshore routes to reinforce the onshore grid, where appropriate. This is reducing the amount of onshore upgrades required. In addition, wind farm landing points are also being coordinated with the onshore grid, where windfarms often connect further along the coast, to reduce the amount of onshore reinforcements required.

It is not the role of the Government to undertake planning or design of the grid, which is left at a high level to the Electricity System Operator and, at a project level, to the TOs, which in the case of Sea Link is the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), and Lion Link is the National Grid Ventures (NGV). For this reason, the NGET and the NGV will be best placed to consider the points you have raised.

The planning process remains independent and robust and each project in its application must demonstrate it has fairly considered alternatives. The assessment of these considerations sits, in the first instance, with the Planning Inspectorate, and it would be inappropriate to circumvent this well-established process ahead of its assessment. The planning process contains opportunities through the examination process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) where such views on the fair consideration of alternatives can be raised.

The Government supports Ofgem in regulating networks through a price control process that enables the investment needed to deliver a secure, resilient, net zero network in an efficient way, protecting consumers from excessive costs. The price control determines the revenues network operators recover, the investment they make and performance standards they must deliver. Ofgem has been ambitious in setting stringent efficiency targets for network companies while reducing baseline expenditure from the network's business plans to protect consumers.

The heart of the Government's agenda is to make Britain a clean energy superpower, boost energy independence and save families money on their bills through clean power by 2030. Our electricity network is key to this success. It is the Government's priority to build support for developments by ensuring communities directly benefit, as per the commitments set out in the election manifesto. As such, we are reviewing how to most effectively deliver community benefits for communities living near new electricity transmission network infrastructure.

Given the role of the SoS in determining NSIP applications for development consent, neither he nor the Department can comment on specific concerns regarding a proposed infrastructure project, to avoid prejudicing any ultimate planning decision. I can assure you that in taking the decision, the SoS will consider a range of factors relevant to any development consent application.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely,

A. Collins
DESNZ CORRESPONDENCE UNIT