



The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
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Department for Business, Energy, and
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Your ref:
Our ref: EP/PJR/PW
Date: 17/12/2021
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Rt Hon Greg Hands MP; Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change

Energy projects: nuclear, offshore wind, solar, hydrogen and interconnectors, East Suffolk District

Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council (the Councils) are at the forefront of electricity generation in the UK with approximately 30% of the UK's energy supply predicted to come through East Suffolk. Our officers welcomed the opportunity to meet with you on 14th December, at the Round Table for the Off Shore Electricity Grid Taskforce, (OffSET) and to participate in the valuable discussion.

Your department's officials have been invited to spend considerable time in Suffolk recently, at the invitation of both the local amenity groups, and Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, although it is understood that one of the meetings was postponed due to illness. We are confident this will have given your officials a clearer understanding of the effects of the succession of energy projects, on both the environment, and the communities of East Suffolk, and a direct impression of the extent and depth of disquiet this has generated in our communities.

Since 2018 the Councils have been engaging effectively with your department, primarily regarding the unstructured non-collaborative approach to energy development. We recognise the significance and benefits of the Offshore Transmission Network Review, (OTNR) being undertaken by BEIS, we are grateful for your commitment to this, and the work of your officials on this process. We are also very grateful for the opportunity to engage effectively with it.

However, we are concerned that whilst the Enduring Regime seems likely to deliver significant benefits after 2030, prior to that date, the interim workstreams will have little benefit for East Suffolk.

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The Councils have received confirmation from National Grid Electricity System Operator¹, that most of the forthcoming projects are, in their view, within the scope of the Early Opportunities workstream of the (OTNR). However, they are clear that this workstream relies on developers opting in, with no requirements for coordination placed upon them.

These are the current live projects proposed, consented, and constructed in East Suffolk district:

East Anglia One offshore windfarm	Constructed
East Anglia Three offshore windfarm	Consented, pre-construction
East Anglia One North offshore windfarm	Post-DCO Examination, pre-decision
East Anglia Two offshore windfarm	Post-DCO Examination, pre-decision
Sizewell C nuclear power station	Post-DCO Examination, pre-decision
Nautilus Interconnector (to the Netherlands)	Pre-Application
Eurolink Interconnector (to Belgium)	Pre-Application
SEA Link Interconnector (to Kent)	Pre-Application
Five Estuaries offshore windfarm	Pre-Application
North Falls offshore windfarm	Pre-Application

East Suffolk also has five solar farm proposals ranging from 27MW – 49.9MW (some incorporating battery storage), and independent battery storage proposals. at consented and pre-application stage. The Council is also in discussion with EDF Energy, (operator of Sizewell B nuclear power station) on the potential for hydrogen capture and re-use opportunities.

In addition, there are three further energy NSIP projects in the county, transmission lines between Norwich and Tilbury and Bramford to Twinstead, and a 982ha Solar Farm, in West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire, as well as a suite of sub 50MW solar projects.

The Councils want to be supportive of well-developed coordinated projects, that enable the goal of Net Zero and the interim targets. However, this cannot be at the expense of Suffolk's environment and communities. The constant barrage of individual proposals on our communities without clearly visible strategic over-sight, or collaboration to minimise impacts, creates a very challenging situation which is not sustainable. Tangible improvements prior to 2030 are essential, if community confidence is not to be further eroded. Whilst we fully support the work being undertaken as part of the OTNR, not enough is being done, in a timely manner, to make project promoters collaborate and coordinate before 2030, this needs to be urgently addressed.

We fully recognise the sensitivities of your department's quasi-judicial role in respect of specific proposals. Therefore, we want to make clear, that we wish to focus the discussion on wider strategic matters. Our key concerns, notwithstanding our formal positions on individual proposals, and recognising that we are not the decision-maker, are:

1. Achieving, prior to 2030, through direction and dialogue, the maximum tangible co-ordination between energy projects that are connecting to the grid in East Suffolk, if they cannot be sited elsewhere.
2. The provision of strategic Government-led community benefit, using existing preliminary

¹ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Strategic-engagement/11-SCC-ESC-Response-Letter.pdf>

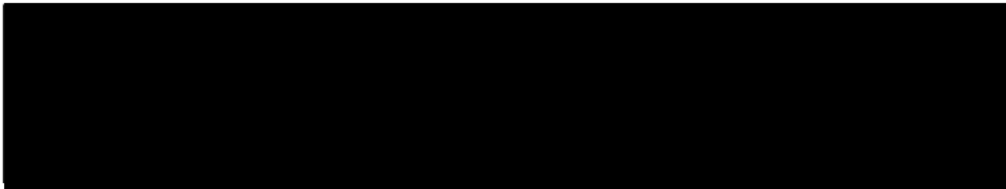
frameworks,² and visible messaging around this, to our communities. We believe this messaging will be required in the first instance, around the launch of the Holistic Network Design (HND) and associated Network Options Assessment, (NOA) during Q1 and Q2 of 2022.

3. The provision of project-level community benefit, supported by clear and robust guidance and appropriate policy change. We believe that there are opportunities to use or modify existing workstreams,³ and policy reviews⁴, to achieve this.

The Councils consider that the approach we have outlined here is a reasonable one, given that our communities are required to host much of the generation and transmission infrastructure, necessary to deliver the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement.

We, and our colleagues, are happy to travel to Westminster, unless a virtual meeting is preferred, to meet at your convenience. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing a constructive dialogue.

Yours sincerely,



CLlr Craig Rivett
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Economic Development

East Suffolk Council

CLlr Richard Rout
Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Finance &
Environment

Suffolk County Council

Cc. Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP
Sir Bernard Jenkin MP (Chair OffSET)
Jerome Mayhew MP (Vice Chair OffSET)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/shale-wealth-fund>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-proposed-amendments-to-the-scheme-2020>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure>