



Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP Secretary of
State for Energy Security and Net Zero

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Dear Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP,

East Suffolk Council's concerns regarding the uncoordinated Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects on the Suffolk coast and outcomes of the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme

I write further to the letter sent last October following the local elections and East Suffolk Council's (ESC's) change in administration. In addition to setting out some concerns in relation to Sizewell C, concerns were raised regarding the cumulative impacts of numerous other consented and proposed nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) potentially being delivered alongside Sizewell C.

The request in the letter date 20 October 2023 was three-fold. We sought further discussions with you regarding the following:

1. A full cost benefit analysis of the options for connecting all the currently proposed and consented offshore wind, multi-purpose interconnectors, and reinforcement projects to users in the UK, with prioritisation being given to offshore solutions connecting the power directly to areas where the demand is needed and the utilisation of brownfield sites.
2. Assistance to ensure that the consenting process related to the NSIPs proposed within East Suffolk is coordinated.
3. A commitment to mandatory community benefits for communities directly impacted by hosting energy infrastructure.

We look forward to hearing from you on the above matters but would like to raise a related issue following the recent announcement of the outputs from the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme (OCSS). ESC has been advocating for the need for a more coordinated approach to the connection of offshore energy projects onshore for several years and it remains our view that a comprehensive review of the connections offered in this area should be undertaken, as set out in point 1 above. Notwithstanding this, as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR), we recognise the commitment to a more limited and narrow review following the outputs of the OCSS. Given the large number of connections which have been offered in the Sizewell/Leiston area

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within the district, ESC welcomed the commitment in the objectives section of the scheme's guidance¹ which stated:

“Coordination of offshore transmission assets is expected to give rise to benefits which include lower transmission infrastructure costs, lower environmental impact from transmission infrastructure, and reduced impacts on local communities from transmission infrastructure”.

On 5 December 2023 it was announced that North Falls, Five Estuaries and Sea Link had been successful in receiving grant funding of initially £1.7 million, with the potential for up to £11.7 million in 2024/2025. It is identified the money will be utilised to explore coordination between the two offshore wind farms and the bootstrap reinforcement to the GB grid. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is no compulsion for private parties to enter the scheme or reach an agreement, ESC was disappointed by the lack of participation by ScottishPower Renewables in relation to East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two projects, and the failure by RWE and SSE to reach agreement to coordinate with the multi-purpose interconnectors (Nautilus and LionLink).

Following the announcement of the OCSS outputs National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) had committed to undertaking the East Anglia Study to assess the different ways the electricity being generated can be transported, once it has landed, to where it is needed. As part of the initial stage of this study NGESO has produced a series of confidential maps representing the different onshore and offshore options available to transport the electricity should the proposal to link North Falls and Five Estuaries to Sea Link proceed. Representatives from ESC, town and parish councils and Therese Coffey MP attended a meeting on 9 January 2024 to discuss the options presented, during this meeting there was unanimous upset at the implications to east Suffolk. Alarming and unacceptably, each of these options results in greater onshore infrastructure needing to be delivered within the district.

Although NGESO indicated that an offshore transmission network could be considered, and that there was connection capacity further south, all scenarios presented by NGESO included Friston connections. There are significant impacts associated with providing infrastructure in the Friston location that we strongly advocate for the alternatives to be seriously looked into and form part of this review.

As outlined earlier, one of the fundamental objectives and expectations of the OCSS was to coordinate offshore transmission assets in such a way that they give rise to benefits which include amongst other factors, lower environmental impacts, and reduced impacts on local communities from transmission infrastructure. Based on the options produced by NGESO, the linking of two offshore wind projects with a reinforcement project means that the essential objective of the OCSS scheme cannot be met and it is therefore questionable whether the OCSS represents good value

¹ [Offshore Coordination Support Scheme guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/offshore-coordination-support-scheme-guidance.pdf)

for the public purse.

ESC requests that the outputs of the OCSS are reconsidered. It is entirely inappropriate for the outputs of a scheme which is intended to reduce the environmental and social impacts of transmission infrastructure to result in a worse starting position for east Suffolk than the status quo which includes no coordination. It is understood that the significant amount of additional transmission infrastructure proposed within each of the options is necessary due to the addition of the electricity generation from the offshore wind projects onto a bootstrap required for grid reinforcement reasons.

Notwithstanding the above request, it is acknowledged that some information considered as part of the OCSS is commercially sensitive and confidential, however given the disappointing outcomes of the OCSS, ESC consider that at the very least it would be helpful in the interests of public confidence, for further explanation to be provided to demonstrate how the outcomes were reached.

Therefore, in addition to further discussion on the points raised in the previous letter, ESC requests the following:

1. Reconsideration of the outcomes of the OCSS to ensure only proposals which meet the objectives of the scheme which include *“lower environmental impact from transmission infrastructure, and reduced impacts on local communities from transmission infrastructure”* are awarded funding.
2. Clarification and justification in relation to the decision taken to award Sea Link, North Fall and Five Estuaries OCSS funding be provided to aid understanding as to how the decision was made including consideration of how this proposal met the scheme objectives. This explanation will also help to assist public confidence in the OCSS.
3. Notwithstanding ESC concerns regarding the narrow focus of the East Anglia Study, we request Government engage with NGESE to seek a pause to the study until it can be undertaken on OCSS outputs which meet the original objectives of the scheme.

ESC would welcome further discussion on the above points and points raised in the previous letter sent last October, a copy of which has been provided for ease. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink. It consists of a long horizontal line at the top, followed by the word "Tom" in a cursive script, and the word "Daly" in a larger, more stylized cursive script below it.

Councillor Tom Daly | Cabinet Member for Energy and Climate Change
East Suffolk Council

cc. Graham Stewart MP, Thérèse Coffey MP