From Alexander Robson

Ford Mill

Colne Engaine

ESSEX CO6 2JL

By email to EastAngliaGREEN@nationalgrid.com

The Colne Stour Countryside Association (CSCA) is a conservation charity and historical group, which for more than 80 years has been in the forefront of preserving and protecting the stunning landscapes, built heritage and biodiversity of this corner of Suffolk and North Essex. We are passionate about preserving the rural beauty of the valleys, both within and near the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB). We have a longstanding campaign to support the AONB's extension.

Landscapes made famous worldwide by painters John Constable and Thomas Gainsborough and more recently John Nash, Alfred Munnings and Cedric Morris must not be sacrificed for short-term economic reasons.

We understand the need to provide energy from the North Sea wind farms and Sizewell C to areas that need it, but do not believe that this requires further despoilation of our unique landscape. We believe that the correct approach to doing so is a strategic, not piecemeal, long-term plan that uses an offshore ring main as the preferred approach.

The environmental and societal impacts of the East Anglia GREEN proposals would fall disproportionately on the people of this special part of Suffolk and North Essex, but they would see little benefit from this new infrastructure. Running 120 miles of new electricity transmission through Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, much of it rural and unspoiled is not the solution, especially given the irreparable damage this is likely to cause to the landscape, flora and fauna and historic buildings and communities.

A much better option is an offshore ring main and this needs to be pursued with urgency. It is not only known to be feasible, but National Grid's own figures show it to be usefully cheaper than the past "radial" approach. If it is claimed that there is a timing mismatch, between the need for additional transmission infrastructure and the availability of offshore transmission capacity, the options of accelerating the offshore ring main, and delaying certain new generation projects, need to be properly examined.

In the absence of this solution, National Grid ESO must modify its proposals to reduce its adverse impacts through undergrounding, the coordinated rationalisation of power infrastructure, both on the network and at the substation site. There must be well-funded schemes of mitigation and community benefit.

The East Anglia GREEN Project Background Document states the reinforcement will require underground cabling through the CSCA area and Dedham Vale rather than the pylons planned for much of the rest of the route. This sounds good but the construction phase of undergrounding will affect local habitats, archaeology, and the use of arable land. Local farmers are concerned the undergrounding process will disrupt soil layering and impede drainage.

During the construction phase, there will be substantial degradation of the visual appeal of the AONB and significant disturbance of wildlife. This will affect the AONB adversely during the construction phase, no matter what route it takes through the AONB. Furthermore, the cable sealing ends will need to sited well away from the AONB to ensure they are not visible or cause other issues within the AONB.

The planned route to the south of the AONB running from east to west should also be undergrounded and the proposed substation at Ardleigh is also a concern to the DVS, as it impacts on a rural village and seems to be justified on the basis that a much smaller facility already exists in Ardleigh.

The National Planning Policy Framework states "Development within their AONB setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area".

We are particularly concerned about the impact of pylons that will be visible from the AONB and the proposed Western extension. The double run of pylons will have an adverse impact on the local community.

With respect to energy, the National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) states with respect to development proposals in nationally designated landscapes: National parks, the broads and AONBs have been confirmed by the government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

Each of these designated areas has specific statutory purposes which help ensure their continued protection and which the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) should have regard to in its decisions.

The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given substantial weight by the IPC in deciding on applications for development consent in these areas.

The CSCA reminds you that the Holford Rules apply to decisions relating to new overhead lines, which include:

Rule 1: Avoid altogether, if possible, the major areas of highest amenity value, by so planning the general route of the first line in the first place, even if the total mileage is somewhat increased in consequence.

Rule 2: Avoid smaller areas of high amenity value, or scientific interests by deviation; provided this can be done without using too many angle towers, i.e., the more massive structures which are used when lines change direction.

Yours faithfully,
Alexander Robson
Chairman