

Saxmundham Town Council

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Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
House of Commons
London
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Ms Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Level 3, 55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HP

Ms Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP
jenny.riddellcarpenter.mp@parliament.uk

19th July 2024

Dear Sir/Mesdames

Saxmundham Town Council congratulates you all on your new appointments and would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our rural, market town in the county of Suffolk.

We also wish to raise concerns about the National Grid 'Great Grid Upgrade', particularly with reference to National Grid Electricity Transmission's Sealink project and National Grid Ventures' Lion Link project, both of whom propose onshore infrastructure in and around the historic parish of Saxmundham.

Saxmundham is roughly equidistant from Ipswich and Lowestoft, the two principal economic centres of the East Suffolk district. With both the A12 trunk road and the East Suffolk railway line, the town acts as a 'gateway' to the Suffolk Heritage Coast. Saxmundham was granted a market charter in 1272, signifying its importance as a market town serving the surrounding agricultural and rural area, a function it still fulfils. Our small market town is characterised by a conservation area covering its historic heart set in a rural landscape.

The heritage landscape and views to the south of the town, across the parkland of Hurt's Hall and St John's Church, both listed Grade II, will be severely blighted if National Grid impose multiple monolithic 26-metre-high converter stations, that cover some 6.5 hectares each, on the higher land approaching Saxmundham. Our town will suffer the impacts of random, unplanned industrialisation and decimation of our rural countryside and way of life but without any economic advantages or compensation. The new industrialisation of the town, if it proceeds, will be a largely jobless one, and undoubtedly residents will suffer.

Major construction works are already planned to the east of Saxmundham in the form of numerous Nationally Significant Energy Projects including EDF Energy's Sizewell C nuclear

power station, Scottish Power Renewables' East Anglia 1 North and East Anglia 2 offshore wind farms, and now National Grid's proposed Sealink, Lion Link and Nautilus. Furthermore, a large-scale, new neighbourhood development of 800 homes and designated work/industrial units to the south and west will result in Saxmundham being a town under siege. Cumulative impacts of simultaneous traffic congestion and construction works will detrimentally affect our residents and environment, and visitors may avoid this area affecting the economic viability of our shops and amenities as footfall decreases.

Whilst we understand the need to reinforce the electricity transmission network to boost energy security and affordability and to make the nation become more self-sufficient, we consider that National Grid, a private conglomerate, seeks to maximise profit to the detriment of our local economy and the environment.

Saxmundham Town Council therefore calls for a moratorium and an urgent independent enquiry, established by the government, to assess the validity or otherwise of the current proposals, to explore alternatives to the industrialisation of East Suffolk, and to determine a strategic and holistic way forward which contributes to the UK's net zero targets but is considerate to those affected by the necessary onshore infrastructure.

If the projects proceed, landfall works, cable corridors, sub-stations, new roads, bridges and converter stations will have devastating impacts on the precious landscape and cause widespread environmental damage. We refer to Dr Andy Tickle, *Greening the Great Grid Upgrade: a new vision for landscapes and communities in East Anglia*. Tickle argues that various planning policies do not go sufficiently far to protect the countryside and suggests amongst preventing energy cluster points (as planned for this area) that developers deliver local environmental benefits. These could include landscape, amenity, sustainability and access to the countryside, all driven by the needs and aspirations of local communities through collaborative forums. In other words, more community engagement would benefit the Great Grid Upgrade, whilst the current thinking of reducing planning consenting time will be detrimental to social acceptance of projects.

Therefore, in accordance with community engagement, Saxmundham Town Council also strongly calls for National Grid to agree to provide socially just, sustainable community benefits to both mitigate and compensate for environmental and financial damage that will be caused by the industrialisation of our rural market town.

Your considered help and support with these calls to action would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Sharon Smith
Clerk to Saxmundham Town Council

