

For the Attention of Chrissie Brown  
Stakeholder Lead  
Offshore Co-ordination project  
Energy & Regulation  
National Grid ESO

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Chrissie,

## **National Grid Offshore Coordination Project**

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership welcomes the opportunity to comment on these proposals and the ongoing engagement from National Grid on a comprehensive and integrated approach towards a future offshore and onshore electricity transmission network designed to manage the growth of the offshore wind energy sector

More offshore wind is located off the coast of Norfolk and Suffolk than any other area – and this will continue to be the case under current plans.

We welcome the exploration of an integrated network option compared to the status quo. The Government's commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; and its aspiration of increasing the current offshore wind energy resource from 10 GW installed capacity (2020) to 40 GW off offshore wind by 2030; and 75 GW of offshore wind by 2050 is an enormous opportunity for the economies of Norfolk and Suffolk and New Anglia LEP welcomes National Grid examining a more coordinated and integrated approach to offshore network development.

There are significant technological and regulatory challenges to overcome if the benefits of this approach are to be secured.

Early and decisive action will lead to a reduced amount of infrastructure in both the short and long term.

We fully support the view set out in the consultation that one of the challenges to delivering the ambition in the timescales required will be ensuring that the offshore transmission network enables this growth in a way that is efficient for consumers and takes account of the impacts on coastal communities and the environment.

We are keen that the opportunities provided by the growth of the offshore wind sector are fully realised for the people of Norfolk and Suffolk and support the vision set out in the consultation that achieves this vision in an integrated and strategic manner.

The consultation sets out what can be achieved if full integration takes place before 2030 and what is likely to be achieved, clearly identifying that rapid and early deployment of the integrated approach would maximise benefits in the longer term. For integration to be achieved early pathfinder projects will be needed to overcome technological barriers and this approach would be consistent with the purpose and objectives of the Offshore Renewables Catapult.

As well as welcoming the economic opportunities for Norfolk and Suffolk, an integrated network approach that reduces environmental impacts also supports our visitor economy

worth £5.2bn and recovering from the effect of the pandemic. Like energy, New Anglia LEP has considered tourism a priority since its formation and the Economic Strategy re-confirms the importance of the sector to Norfolk and Suffolk.

The current regime for developing and connecting offshore wind generation incentivises developers to connect individually. Of the two options considered in the report: (a) an integrated network approach to grid connection up to 2050; and (b) a status quo option of maintaining current project activity into the future, the integrated network approach clearly offers significant social and environmental benefits:

- Potential to save consumers approximately £6 billion or 18% in capital and operating expenditure between now and 2050.
- Significantly reducing the environmental impact both offshore and onshore around the UK, minimising infrastructure requirements; resulting in less landing points being required.
- Reducing the impact on local communities through fewer landing points and less onshore infrastructure required overall.
- Use of HVDC technology allows for greater flexibility on landfall locations and the opportunity to avoid environmentally sensitive areas.

As stated above the New Anglia LEP supports the Offshore Coordination Project integrated option but there is a need for further detailed work to be carried out by National Grid assessing:

- The economic opportunities for coastal communities resulting from an alternative approach.
- The wider environmental implications of any new transmission network.
- The development of an innovation strategy that progresses HVDC circuit breakers to commercial use and establishes Great Britain as a world leader in offshore grids.
- The changes that are required to the assessment process for the location of offshore connections and packaging connection offers with other elements such as seabed leases.
- Where liabilities sit for offshore connections.

In addition to the above we ask that the below points are given consideration as follows:

- Non-technical sensitivities associated with each of the technical solutions – whilst any disruption to land in areas of outstanding beauty or areas of national heritage [or even areas that are back gardens] is unwanted by all, it must be balanced against the shared Net Zero goal that the UK has committed to.
- Do not allow any currently contracted projects to “slip” whilst waiting for a technical solution to be agreed – for our region above all others this would have major economic and social impact on the supply chain resulting in lost jobs and lost opportunity in the very immediate future at a time when the UK economy in general and coastal communities in particular are combating the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic.
- How innovation in offshore wind is moving to the fore and how can we enhance revenues, reduce risks and reduce costs as CfD prices reduce – For East Anglia, the visibility of a project pipeline helps with this – so any delay is not just about slipping the targets, it’s about the potential to stifle innovation.

- The impacts on regional infrastructure development when evaluating technical solutions – in East Anglia we are already seeing public and private investment into port infrastructure as a result of the future pipeline of offshore projects, this will be severely affected if currently contracted projects slip or the future pipeline of projects deteriorates or moves to the right.
- How a region such as East Anglia could become an exemplar for the implementation of any given technical solution alongside the technical solution itself – the economic benefits to East Anglia would be significant and allow a repeatable model to be developed.
- The regional supply chain and the ease of access to it alongside the technical solutions – in East Anglia we have over 800 companies with the potential to contribute to the technical solution.
- The future growth of electricity production in the regions through new sources to be modelled into the technical solutions – for East Anglia the future potential for green hydrogen generation is huge and needs to be considered alongside the technical solutions.
- The potential reuse of existing brownfield infrastructure in any technical solutions – East Anglia has a strategically important Gas production and distribution terminal at Bacton that could easily play a role in many of the technical solutions being considered that would not necessitate any further greenfield land disruption.
- Existing Way Leaves associated with the current natural gas infrastructure in any technical solutions – in East Anglia we have a significant gas distribution network running from the Bacton Gas Terminal [and the existing Way Leaves associated with it] that could be used to support future technical solutions.
- Energy systems of the future – East Anglia is uniquely placed because of its existing geography and existing energy mix to contribute to the smart energy system of the future. Moving too quickly to a sub-optimal grid solution risks the economic well-being of the East Anglian region.
- Hybrid grid models – linking market to market interconnectors with offshore wind. There has been significant thinking on this in Europe and the terms of the BEIS consultation mention this.

We support the positive findings and benefits of progressing an integrated approach towards the offshore wind network set out in the consultation document and will be keen to see the final Holistic Approach to Offshore Planning Report, Draft Cost-benefit Analysis Report and Offshore Connections Review Report. We also encourage that the further analysis required of the legislative and regulatory model is undertaken to take this proposal from a concept to a plan to reality.

The energy sector is one of nine key sectors highlighted in our Economic Strategy and clean energy is one of three strategic opportunities being taken forward as part of our Local Industrial Strategy.

The New Anglia LEPs All Energy Industry Council (AEIC) is the perfect platform to work across all the energy sub-sectors located in the area/region - we would encourage National

Grid to engage with the AEIC in the future development of the Offshore Coordination Project.

The AEIC brings together private sector developers and supply chain businesses with education and local and central government partners.

In summary, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership welcomes the findings in the consultation report and the potential an integrated network approach would have for jobs and growth across Norfolk and Suffolk. We would like to be kept updated on future National Grid reports and the outcomes of the Offshore Transmission Network Review.

We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours sincerely



C-J Green  
Chair



Chris Starkie  
Chief Executive