



*a threat hanging over  
coastal suffolk*

## SEAS COMMENTARY ON THE BEIS REVIEW INTO OFFSHORE TRANSMISSION NETWORK

### A shift in position

Having studied the Terms of Reference and the press statements from the principal stakeholders, SEAS wish to draw your attention to key words and clear shifts in position particularly from National Grid ESO (Electricity System Operator), Ofgem and Crown Estate. These words suggest that there was a lack of a coordinated approach in the past, lack of leadership and lack of political will. A tactical developer led approach was preferred to a more strategic ESO led approach. This strategic approach is what we have been proposing for the last year, and the snail pace shifting of position is still worrying. We now need to keep the pressure up.

Fintan Slye, Executive Director, National Grid ESO

“ we are very supportive of BEIS taking forward this important project  
...assessing the most beneficial approach to offshore connections will be vital  
to offshore wind reaching its potential to facilitate net zero, in a way **that  
minimises the impact on consumers and coastal communities**”....



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Jonathan Brearley, CEO, OFGEM

“ we welcome the ***strong collaboration and BEIS leadership these terms of reference formalise***”....

Hubden Rooijen, Director of Energy, Minerals & Infrastructure at the Crown Estate

“ ***as managers of the seabed around England, Wales and N Ireland, we recognise the need for a more coordinated approach to the transmission system, both offshore and onshore*** and are committed to working with Government and other strategic partners to help ensure the sustainable and **responsible** development of our nationally important wind resources...”

## **Let's keep them to these words.**

If you then examine the words of the **Terms of Reference** further, you will see that there are short to mid term objectives as well as mid and long term objectives.

Friston fits well within the timeline for the short to medium term objectives. There is no reason not to find a better alternative site in place of Friston for eight substations and inter-connector projects while in parallel the offshore



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grid system is being planned and constructed. SPR was expecting to deliver by 2027. The **Terms of Reference** state that substations due for completion after 2025 fit within this category.

We would like written reassurance from BEIS that Friston is therefore being reassessed as part of this Review. The **Terms of Reference** are a little ambiguous.

We have always believed that there are **better** alternative sites. Now we have research and evidence that there are better sites. We will be bringing our collective evidence to the attention of the working party team to assist them in their Review.

We now know that independent studies carried out by NAVIGANT on behalf of other European North Sea countries show that developer led approaches are less appropriate for multiple offshore wind transmission projects and that National Government ESO led approaches are better for the environment, and for social and economic factors. National Government ESO led approaches deliver synergies and cost savings. They are ultimately cheaper and better for the consumer in every way. That is why Germany, Holland, Belgium and others are adopting National Government ESO led approaches.

It is an indictment of National Grid that they have not pushed harder for this approach at least ten years ago. Has their lack of motivation been caused



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by the fact that they were privatised in 1995 and since then, their main driver has been profit?

Whatever your party politics, surely it makes sense for the energy transmission infrastructure of your country to be publicly owned? How else do you balance the needs of the environment, the well being of fragile communities and the consumer?

OFGEM has been too narrow in its assessment of its role. It has recently broadened its mission statement to encompass new objectives relating to the environment and societal well-being. BEIS Energy has lacked leadership and vision. Be that as it may, we should not and must not allow these failures to subject coastal Suffolk to the destruction of our precious and fragile countryside.

We must continue to fight because even though this Review has been called, we do not know how short term interests will influence decisions for coastal Suffolk. We have no guaranteed outcome.



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## **Finally, let us hold BEIS to account.**

**It** states in its Terms of Reference the following:

This Review will seek to find the appropriate balance between environmental, social and economic costs....

The short to medium work stream will seek to identify and implement changes to the existing regime to facilitate coordination and will focus on projects expected to connect after 2025...

The U.K. is fortunate to have some of the world's outstanding medical researchers and scientists. They are working flat out, right now to find a vaccine for Covid19 and the country has put huge resources behind this priority challenge.

The U.K. is fortunate to have some of the world's outstanding energy engineers and scientists. They should now be recruited urgently to focus on developing the best offshore modular grid with mega multiple substation hubs situated exclusively on brownfield sites, close to where that energy is mainly required.

## **IT IS NOT TOO LATE**