

## **Planning and Highways Delegations Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 September 2023 at 10am  
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Voting Members Present:**

Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Development
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

### **Non-Voting Members Present:**

Cllr Brian Long	Planning (Regulatory) Committee Chair
Cllr Mike Sands	Planning (Regulatory) Committee Labour Group Spokesperson

### **Officers Present:**

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
Stephen Faulkner	Principal Planner - National Infrastructure Planning Lead Officer
Joe Wyatt	Strategic Planner Apprentice

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Graham Carpenter, Cllr Andrew Jamieson and Cllr Paul Neale. Also absent was Cllr Steve Riley.

## **2. Election of Chair**

Cllr Plant was duly elected as Chairman for the municipal year.

## **3. Election of Vice-Chair**

Cllr Vardy was duly elected as Vice-Chairman for the municipal year.

## **2. Minutes**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 5.1 There were no interests declared.

## **4. Urgent Business**

- 6.1 There was no urgent business discussed.

## **5. Norwich to Tilbury Overhead Power Line Proposal – Non-Statutory Consultation by National Grid**

The Committee received the report setting out National Grid's draft proposal and route alignment for their Norwich to Tilbury project and the County Council's

response to the non-statutory consultation.

The Principal Planner introduced the report to the Committee:

- Norfolk County Council also responded to the first stage of the non-statutory consultation in June 2022. The proposals for this project were due to be taken forward as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and the final decision would be made by the Secretary of State.
- There would be further rounds of consultation where Norfolk County Council would be a statutory consultee, at the preliminary environmental Information Report (PEIR) stage for example, which would likely take place in spring 2024. Additionally, there would be further opportunity to comment at the formal submission stage in spring 2025 followed by a public examination in late 2025. If the project continued as planned, work could commence in 2027 and the project completed by 2031.
- The proposal included an 183km cable route including an overhead line of standard construction towers (45-50m tall) at intervals of 350m – 400m. In Norfolk new substations were proposed at Norwich Main and outside of Norfolk substations are proposed at Bradford and Tilbury. The substation planning permission at Norwich Main would be taken under the Town and Country Planning Act and would therefore be a decision for South Norfolk District Council.
- Of the proposed route for the project, 30 KM was proposed to be in Norfolk with 89 pylon towers.
- The project was proposed by National Grid to add capacity to the network to accommodate increases in offshore wind and the approval of Sizewell C.
- The proposed response and comments of the County Council were shown in section 3 of the report, outlining the key issues identified. These included:  
(a) requesting further consideration by National Grid of the offshore option;  
(b) in the event of the offshore option not being viable, undergrounding being taken forward across the route; (c) upgrading of existing overhead lines and evidence of where this can be done; (d) whether the proposed Grimsby to Walpole project would impact this project; (e) implications of the Vattenfall project; and (f) the need for mitigation around Diss and the Waveney valley.

The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Chair raised the Members' concerns set out in the report, especially those discussing the Diss area which would be impacted by installation of towers and cables.
- The Chair noted that no overhead cabling was proposed from offshore installations, and as such felt that underground cabling could be incorporated into this project. He recognised that underground cabling may increase the cost of the project however he felt that it would be better than overhead cabling as it would have less of an impact on the countryside and towns and villages along the route. The Chair also suggested that upgrading towers already in place would reduce impact on the countryside and residents.
- It was felt that some of the power from this project should be retained in Norfolk rather than simply being transported through the County.
- A Committee Member pointed out that the project would be judged against planning policy PPS1, and asked if it would be accompanied by a whole life carbon assessment, noting that producing and installing new pylon towers and replacing them at the end of their lifespan would produce a lot of carbon. A long-term environmental impact assessment would help identify which type of cabling would have the lowest impact on the carbon footprint. He

suggested that the voting members consider putting this forward as a proposal so that carbon impact could be considered at the next stage of consultation.

- Another Committee Member reported that substations/pylons in his constituency area had been noisy for residents, emitting a hum. Since underground cabling had been used this had not been an issue. He asked if Voting Members would suggest raising this as a proposal for addition in the Council's response. The Principal Planner noted that noise did not come under the County Council's statutory responsibility and would be picked up via Environmental Health through the District Council's planning process. He could, however, add this in through the public health section of the Council's response if agreed.
- The Chair noted that Cllr David Bills, the Norfolk County Council Labour Group and the local Parish Council had set out their objections to the proposals.
- The Vice-Chair pointed out that Cllr Catherine Rowett (West Depwade Member) had also commented about the proposals, and drew attention to her comments set out in the report.
- The Chair raised concerns that this being a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project would over-ride concern held by local residents and members about protecting the local countryside, villages and towns in favour of the need to deliver the project and asked The Principal Planner, , to emphasise that Norfolk County Council should retain some of the power and for Norfolk to be protected.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

Agree the comments set out in the report and in the accompanying Appendix 2 be sent to National Grid and to the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero as the County Council's formal response to the Non-statutory Consultation on the Norwich to Tilbury route alignment.

The Committee also agreed to:

- Add an additional comment to the Council's response requesting National Grid to complete a detailed assessment of the whole life carbon cost of the project if overland; or underground;
- Add an additional comment to the Council's response under the Public Health section asking National Grid to consider the noise impacts caused by above ground transmission lines and mitigation measured needed; and
- Update the Council's response based on the points raised by Members during the meeting.

The meeting ended at 10:31

## CHAIRMAN



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