

Aldeburgh Society Response to National Grid Ventures (NGV)

We thank NGV for putting on the various events during this consultation.

As the civic society for the historic coastal town and cultural centre of Aldeburgh, the Aldeburgh Society strongly supports the development of renewable energies, including the generation of offshore wind energy in suitable locations. The objects of the Society are to encourage public interest in and care for the character of the town and its surroundings, and the preservation, development and improvement of general public amenity in the area.

We believe that NGV's proposals conflict with the fulfilment of the Society's objects and we write now to express our strong objection to NGV's onshore infrastructure proposals for Nautilus. The Society has also registered its grave concern over the DCO application for the construction of two further nuclear reactors at Sizewell and called for a split decision in respect of Scottish Power Renewables' applications for two offshore wind farms.

We are fully in favour of integration of both offshore and onshore and coordinated solutions. We welcome the additional flexibility that MPIs could potentially give. The Society believes however that, as things stand, the plans for Nautilus as an MPI have no practical application.

Even with integration, there has to be consideration as to where the cables come ashore and where the onshore infrastructure is sited. To protect the economies and environments of rural coastal communities these cables must be brought ashore ideally in brownfield industrialised areas and not on fragile and precious coastal Suffolk wetlands and heathlands.

The Society is therefore not in favour of any of the onshore routing and converter siting options that were presented at these events.

We object to the suggested landfall on a fragile coastline of coralline crag (which is sand-based and already crumbling) near Thorpeness or across bird sanctuaries close to Aldeburgh beach. We are gravely concerned about the potential environmental and community impact. The proposal to have cable routes run for approximately 9 km through the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), the Sandlings SPA (Special Protected Area) and rural villages to connect to a converter station with a height of up to 24 metres over a site of 12 acres would lead to intolerable noise pollution, light pollution and air pollution to local communities, wildlife and livestock. The landscape would change forever and damage the local nature-based tourism economy which is a year-round economy.

Research commissioned by the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation, suggests that new energy projects on the Suffolk coastline could damage one of the UK's most successful year-round nature-based tourism centres by up to £40 million per annum. This would crucially lead to loss of jobs in hospitality and other tourist related businesses. Visitors would no longer come to Aldeburgh, Thorpeness and Snape for their short breaks and holidays if the main arterial roads, already congested at peak times, become gridlocked with HGVs carrying materials for construction for what would be the largest energy infrastructure hub in the UK.

Combined with Sizewell C and EA1N/2, the cumulative impacts would lead to considerable industrialisation of East Suffolk. It is obvious to anyone visiting this area that the adverse impacts would outweigh any benefits to this region. These proposals would be quite simply a catastrophe for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths and the people living within it.

The consultation facilitated discussions about alternative sites for grid connections outside the Leiston area. The Society would wholeheartedly support a grid connection, such as GRAIN, which is a brownfield industrialised site. We understand that GRAIN is a busy area but the idea that it is already 'too congested' to consider future connections is unconvincing. Bradwell, Bramford, and other existing substation sites should not be discounted.

If NGV is truly committed to protecting rural coastal communities then they must take responsibility for bringing forward a grid connection that would form the basis of a new strategic framework for onshore infrastructure.

While we warmly welcome the concept of the offshore converter platform, which should reduce multiple onshore cable corridors, and we support the UK-Belgium interconnector in principle we are deeply concerned that NGV's assessments have already concluded that 'East Suffolk was the best connection point', also that Nautilus work 'has been based on the reasonable assumption of a potential connection location at the proposed Friston substation'.

A single point of landfall should be identified and thoroughly researched, capable of future expanded application, ideally using an existing industrial site or brownfield land where the necessary land-based infrastructure and access can be developed without serious damage to its locality.

We therefore reject all the onshore (24 metre high!) converter station search areas as unsuitable for a quiet rural area, and we also particularly object to landfall option E, which would be damaging not only ecologically but also liable to despoil a highly prized and important recreational area in Aldeburgh.

Yours

Katherine Mackie

Chair

The Aldeburgh Society

cc The Hon Therese Coffey,MP

East Suffolk District Council

Suffolk Coastal County Council

Aldeburgh Town Council