

**Robert Platais**

**Reference number** [REDACTED]

Dear Inspector,

Here is the text of my written representation, I have included supporting references for your information and further enquiry. Finally, I have made comment on NG's Benhall bridge plans included in AS-138. If progressed these will have a direct adverse impact on myself, family and many others who regularly access Saxmundham via the B1121.

**Text of my written representation**

**Open Floor Hearing: Representation 6 November 2025, Snape Maltings**

In October, the Home Secretary spoke about '**cumulative impacts**' in the context of police powers. It is vital that the concept of '**cumulative impacts**' is used in the evaluation of energy projects National Grid is seeking to build in Suffolk (reference 1).

The work at Sizewell and Friston is causing damage and serious disruption to the life of the community. Sizewell alone will eventually be employing c8,000 thousand workers. There is already loss of housing for locals, and visitors: three in our village (reference 2). Traffic has increased and quiet lanes are being used as rat runs, often by bad tempered drivers to avoid construction traffic. Cyclists derive physical and mental health benefit but are vulnerable. Safety considerations could mean that I give up cycling. If this is a consequence of decarbonisation, how ironic.

Due to retirement, the owners of a pub with visitor accommodation in a neighbouring village are selling. They are concerned that a sale at auction will transfer ownership to a developer to use for worker accommodation. The value of the property assessed for this is twice that of its existing use. Locals did not want to risk losing a unique, much loved community asset so a group was formed and have agreed a middle price, albeit 33% over an independent Red Book pub use valuation. Thanks to supportive sellers the group have twelve months to raise funds to save the pub.

These are examples of unintended but predictable consequences radiating into rural communities from large-scale projects located where there is neither the industrial heritage, nor infrastructure.

I would like to draw the Inspectorate's attention to the minutes of the Commons Energy Security and Net Zero Committee published in October (reference 3). Witnesses to the Committee included six leaders from the UK's electricity supply industry. Their views were profound. They believe that Ofgem is close to agreeing a spend of £80 billion on electricity transmission over the next five years. They say demand for electricity has been '**falling for the last decade**' (reference 4) so existing '**networks are massively underutilised;**' that the regulator has just taken plans from the system operator, agreed a price with them, and said, customers must pay. There was a call to stop a large part of the expenditure: there is no clear understanding of the future demand for electricity, nor the most efficient way it should be supplied. There should be a '**really good review**' before locking customers into paying for something which might be unnecessary or could be delivered more efficiently.

I am in favour of energy decarbonisation but, to conclude:

- 1) This area and the individuals living and working here are already suffering direct damage, and this will be compounded by the cumulative impacts of National Grid's plans.
- 2) Leaders in the electricity supply industry express concern that infrastructure development is not being thoughtfully planned either in terms of demand or timing so that electricity bills will rise. It looks like National Grid is needlessly planning to cause irreversible damage to life in Suffolk.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Robert Platais

### **References to my written Representation:**

#### ***Reference 1***

*Police powers: Protests (see section 2.2, 'serious damage to property,' 'serious disruption to the life of the community')*

*Research Briefing by William Downes*

*23 October 2025*

*House of Commons Library*

Although the proposed legislation is about police powers in the context of protests there are significant elements which appear to me (a non-lawyer) to support community attempts to prevent cumulative energy projects from permanently damaging rural Suffolk.

Here are some quotes from the briefing paper:

*allow the police to place conditions on protests that, due to their regularity, have a "cumulative impact" of disruption (page 6).*

*Section 2.2 page 16*

*if they "reasonably believe"*

*"serious damage" to property or "serious disruption to the life of the community."*

*"serious disruption" to an organisation's activities in the area. This is defined as "any persons connected with the organisation not being reasonably able, for a prolonged period of time, to carry on" any of the organisation's activities.*

*a "significant relevant impact". This is defined as causing possible intimidation, harassment, harm or distress to people in the area.*

*If any [my underline] of these apply, the relevant officer can issue a direction to impose any condition on those organising or taking part in the protest that they consider necessary to prevent the relevant outcome from occurring.*

The Home Secretary is looking to prevent certain types of protest because of adverse cumulative impacts on communities and organisations: the Energy Secretary should be following similar principles when considering energy projects in Suffolk. Further, protests are usually peaceful and of short duration, Suffolk is facing years of adverse impacts and permanent destruction of landscapes, wildlife, businesses and properties.

## **Reference 2**

*Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and Eviction in Great Glemham*

*Email from villager to Clerk to the Parish Council*

*1 November 2025*

A copy of the email can be supplied on request

## **Reference 3**

*Energy Security and Net Zero Committee*

*Oral evidence: The cost of energy, HC 736*

*Published 15 October 2025*

I have quoted some witnesses in my representation in connection with electricity demand, and the need to pause and complete a comprehensive review of the requirements. The minutes of the Committee contain much other useful information; about the cost of electricity, and whether there is a need to build infrastructure now. See for example Q&A 275, 277,278,282,287,288,315,316, and 317.

## **Reference 4**

*Digest of UK Energy Statistics*

*Annual data for UK, 2024*

These are the official Energy Statistics produced by the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero and are referenced by expert witnesses in evidence to the Energy and Security Net Zero Committee, see above.

They provide some useful insights, examples:

### **Chapter 1: Energy**

#### **Key Headlines**

*‘Energy consumption in 2024 rose by 2.6 per cent on 2023 but remains down 9.4 per cent on 2019. Consumption levels in 2024 rose for all sectors except for industry due to cooler weather as well as some easing from the higher energy prices in 2023.*

*Domestic and services sector consumption both rose by 3.8 per cent, but industrial sector consumption fell by 1.2 per cent and remained at record low levels.’*

#### **From section 5**

*‘Demand for electricity is usually met by UK generation and supplemented with imports from Europe when price differentials are favourable’. [Which means that if NG rush to build badly designed inordinately expensive infrastructure, electricity will be imported, or customers will pay more than continental customers creating an adverse cost of living/industrial competitiveness problem – RP comment]*

## **Additional comments regarding Consultation document AS-138**

### **Benhall Railway Bridge, Suffolk**

All three options for Benhall Bridge set out in NG’s recent Change Application will result in works construction traffic which inconvenience and distress users of the B1121, and the Ipswich to Lowestoft railway. In the immediate vicinity are residents and local businesses sandwiched between what will be multiple roadworks. Immediately prior to the Benhall railway bridge is the entrance to an over 50s year-round Park Home site. It is not clear what consideration has been given to the residents of these properties.

There is no clarity regarding the safety of cyclists, pedestrians, and those with impaired mobility. Damaged public access to Saxmundham will be a major source of frustration and anger to the many who travel to Saxmundham from dispersed rural villages to conduct the most basic of day-to-day activities including shopping, travel

to work, visits to the only bank and one of the few post offices in the area. There is no allowance for the annual hours of lost economic productivity/leisure time that users of the road and railway will suffer due to travel delays or the health impacts.

Fixing the bridge is said to be a permanent solution '*benefiting future projects.*' There is no explicit articulation of future projects. Alternatively, a schedule of comprehensive mitigations which consider the cumulative impact of intended future work. Benefiting '*local traffic*'? The existing bridge is fine for local needs. Any money for highways would be better spent more widely on roads resurfacing and drain clearance.

NG have previously been made aware that Benhall bridge has a weight limit of 46 tonnes. The bridge however is considered suitable for local businesses, residents, and farmers with heavy machinery. Only NG have a requirement to transport abnormal industrial loads. From the outset NG have had difficulty identifying a suitable main access route because the site is unsuitable for the intended purpose. Without practical safe access NG's project is not feasible at the proposed site in Saxmundham. Given the importance of Benhall bridge for access it is remarkable that NG are considering such a fundamental issue at this stage. Whether this late change is a planned omission to avoid scrutiny, or lack of diligence, neither scenario reflects well on NG's management.