

I have lived in Saxmundham for more than 13 years. During this time, I have seen it develop and become a town with huge potential for the future. The town council, in conjunction with the community, has produced a neighbourhood plan which points the way ahead. This will all be lost if National Grid is allowed to take the land to the East of the town. It will then effectively be stifled by the A12 on one side and the converter station(s) on the other. Given that the government is wanting to build more houses and Saxmundham townspeople, during the neighbourhood plan consultation, favoured building additional houses to the East of the town, all of this will be lost if National Grid is allowed to go ahead. We are already facing years of disruption due to Sizewell C. This will be increased several times by a combination of the National Grid work AND the approved development of the Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. How much destruction is one town expected to take? The combination of road traffic with construction light, noise and dirt will have a devastating effect on the mental health of townspeople who are already having to bear the results of the cost of living crisis and ever increasing energy costs.

I support the alternative option of an offshore energy grid combined with connections into brownfield sites close to the users of the energy which will be produced. This country bore a heavy cost as a consequence of industrialisation during the 18th and 19th centuries. Have we not learnt anything from this disaster and can we not make the right decisions this time that will benefit people and the environment while at the same time giving this country a long-term prosperous future? I urge this inquiry to look carefully at National Grid's case for their current proposal and conclude, as I do, that it does not meet the needs of this country.

Personal impact:

My wife and I moved to Saxmundham over 13 years ago and during that time we have both become involved in the community. I served as a town councillor for four years during Covid and the Sizewell C inquiry. I also volunteer with the town's Green Team which helps maintain our green spaces.

We both saw Saxmundham as our final move until the energy projects started to disrupt our lives. During the last year, we have discussed moving on two occasions, for a third time two days ago when the Essex and Suffolk Water project proposals dropped through our letterbox. Each new application makes us anxious and uncertain about the future. It is sheer cruelty to expect people to live their lives as normal with such a plethora of challenges. Worse still, many of these projects, although connected, are treated in isolation and discussed separately even though we know they are linked.

Sealink Project failures:

It is obvious from the proposals that have been submitted that NGET has not absorbed the lessons that Belgium and the Netherlands have shown us. That an offshore grid can be both simpler and cheaper. But this privatised company prefers to carry on stringing wires across our countryside like lights on a Christmas tree. It is rewarding the shareholders and executives at the expense of its customers and this country.

It fails the primary test of delivering electricity to the point where it is required in the most cost-effective and least damaging way.

In adopting this approach, it also hopes to achieve the government's stated target of decarbonising the grid by 2030. We all know that this laudable aim will not be achieved as much of the electricity that flows through the continental interconnectors will not be generated from either renewables or nuclear.

Additionally, it blights any chance of Saxmundham's future development as a community where people can live and work as it ends any prospect of development to the East. Perhaps we should introduce the Ministers for Housing and Energy Security and Net Zero to each other.

Overall view:

East Suffolk is buckling under the weight of the developments that it is being asked to host. This has been brought about by the failure of successive governments to plan to secure our energy supplies. We are now at the point where a government is taking panic action to achieve this. Regardless of the damage that it inflicts on the natural environment and in direct opposition to its avowed intention to enhance nature.

It accuses those who question its approach as 'nimbys'. Well, I am NOT a nimby and I welcome the development of renewable energy sources. I would also welcome the opportunity for local communities to develop their own energy networks along with increased investment in upgrading the energy efficiency of our housing stock which together will help millions who are struggling to pay their energy bills.

If we are reduced to name calling then I accuse the government and its privatised allies of being Luddites who are sticking to outdated technologies rather than investing in the new technology which can secure our futures. And I hope that this inquiry will agree with me that this project is unfit for purpose and send NGET back to the drawing board.