

While we as a country urgently need to upgrade our grid capacity, I believe the best way to go about this would have been for National Grid to pursue an offshore option. However, at this late stage in the application process I realise that all I can push for now, as a District Councillor in Bunwell, South Norfolk, is the best possible mitigation for my residents and for nature.

What I would like to stress from the outset is how little National Grid appears to have listened to any of the feedback from my residents or myself as a councillor, at any stage in the consultation process. A prime example of this is the experience of a Bunwell Hill resident who owns a very precious piece of rural land that has now been approved as a County Wildlife Site. Norfolk Wildlife Trust has said that National Grid should avoid this site altogether and has suggested an alternative route which is far less ecologically damaging. In addition, they believe the woodland may be a remnant of Ancient Wood Pasture and should therefore be put on the Ancient Woodland register. Again, a simple solution would be to slightly change the pylon route which runs over this land, aligning north to south (RG48 and 49) rather than crossing the land diagonally. But this has not even been considered by National Grid. Instead they changed the route in 2025 to mainly accommodate a honey bee tree nest. How can the needs of a colony of honey bees outweigh those of the myriad of organisms, wildlife and ecology residing in ancient woodland?

Another resident spent many weeks putting together an incredibly detailed, meticulously researched and evidenced report regarding the loss of biodiversity, destruction of habitats and negative effect on the River Tas (a rare chalk stream) that this scheme would engender. This appears to have been completely ignored. She herself lives in a property which will be surrounded by pylons on three sides, very close to her house. Of course there are many others affected in this way, with properties and businesses blighted.

Finally, it is the experience and knowledge of local people and local councils that should be the first port of call when huge infrastructure projects such as Norwich to Tilbury are proposed. They will tell you immediately that the road access along the construction line of pylons in South Norfolk will be impossible, with very few wide enough roads to cope with Abnormal Indivisible Loads or HGVs/construction traffic. They will tell you where the ancient trees and hedgerows are located, which no amount of new planting can replace. They will show you the most beautiful byways and rights of way. I would urge the Planning Inspectorate to visit our little area of South Norfolk in Bunwell and see for themselves what National Grid have refused to acknowledge.