

RPC response to National Grid's East Anglia GREEN consultation

Roydon Parish Council held an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting on 25 May 2022 to hear the views of the public and to discuss and decide the Council's comments on National Grid's East Anglia GREEN proposals.

Between 60 – 70 members of the public attended, the majority of whom lived and/or worked in the parish; others were from parishes that border Roydon and whose homes and/or businesses are affected by the National Grid's proposals. Roydon's District Councillors and County Councillor were also present and contributed to the meeting.

The main points raised during the Public Forum:

There are residents, landowners, farmers, businesses and visitors to Roydon who would be directly and adversely affected by the proposed erection of pylons and overhead cables. Some residents would have pylons directly on their land and some would have them within close view from their homes. Due to the sharp angles in the route through Roydon, some residents would have pylons in their direct sightline from two different directions.

Residents and visitors would have a landscape they value highly altered to its detriment. For example, the Waveney Valley is visited by many people (local and tourists) for its unsullied beauty and uncluttered spaciousness; and the area along and around Darrow Lane is prized for its countryside landscape and its typical “Norfolk big sky” openness. Both of these examples appear in the developing Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan as “Key Views” which have the support of over 80% of respondents to the DDNP's Issues and Options public consultation held in summer 2020.

The detrimental change to the Waveney Valley, for example, would also greatly impact on the few non-agricultural businesses in the area. The renowned Bressingham Gardens and Steam Museum currently attract high numbers of visitors and tourists in great part because of their rural, unspoiled setting. It would be directly impacted by the National Grid proposals.

The view was expressed by more than one attendee that there needs to be a full public enquiry, in preference to a judicial enquiry, for all sections of the East Anglia GREEN project.

Many local people, and Roydon Parish Council, feel that the questions on the consultation are leading questions and that the choice of tick-box answers to choose from is biased and very narrow in scope, probably so that the responses can be read and represented in a positive light.

It was noted that a project of this scale and complexity should not be rushed through to achieve a government target. Many government targets don't get met: circumstances change, other options come to light. It was noted many times within the meeting that other options are not only available but are under consideration by another arm of National Grid, the Electricity System Operation, jointly with the government to review the co-ordination between on and offshore routes. This “OTN Review” is due to be published in the summer.

It was also noted that there were idealised pictures of the countryside in the National Grid brochure, including the cover images, with no pylons in sight!

Several local people also expressed concerns about the effect of overhead cables on mental and physical health, with examples coming from people, for example, with pacemakers and hyper sensitivity issues.

Conclusions:

The majority local response is for rejection of the whole East Anglia GREEN scheme.

Many residents, and the Council, feel that a wholly different emphasis needs to be taken by the government: for example, much more investment in home insulation, in micro generation (e.g. domestic solar panels), and in community-led energy generation projects.

Failing that, the Council supports the OffSET campaign for a strategic offshore grid. This offshore undersea route, instead of the land-based pylons and cables proposal, is our preferred option. Our second preference is for the pylons and cables to follow the existing route of the already existing pylons and cables through South Norfolk. And our third, but reluctant, preference would be for underground cabling through South Norfolk.