

From: [Jane Kenny](#)
To: [Norfolk Boreas](#)
Subject: Norfolk Boreas
Date: 13 November 2019 15:56:07
Attachments: [Offshore Wind Energy off the Norfolk and Suffolk coast - rethinking a mo....pdf](#)

Dear Sirs

Please find attached a copy of a letter from George Freeman to Andrea Leadsom for the Planning Inspectorate's attention which has been forwarded to me as lead agent for LIG.

I trust that you find this self-explanatory but should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Jane

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Before printing, think about the environment



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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria St
Westminster
London
SW1H 0ET

Monday 28th October 2019

Dear Andrea,

Offshore Wind Energy off the Norfolk and Suffolk coast: rethinking a more sustainable strategy for onshore connection.

I am writing on behalf of myself, Therese Coffey MP, Suffolk Coastal, and Norman Lamb MP, North Norfolk, to thank you and your Ministers for taking the time to discuss the serious strategic policy challenges raised by the lack of an overall strategy for the connection of offshore wind infrastructure in the Southern North Sea to the National Grid in the East of England.

As discussed, over the last year it has become clear to many of us in Norfolk and Suffolk – MPs, Councils, the LEP, tourism agencies, farmers, wildlife and countryside lovers and various related agencies, and many thousands of residents – that we face a wave of potentially serious environmentally and economically disruptive onshore grid connectivity infrastructure from the otherwise welcome offshore wind farms coming to the Southern North Sea, which could be avoided through the use of an offshore ring main (ORM).

I am delighted that you have decided, in light of our representations, and the environmental commitments in the Government's flagship Environment Bill just announced in the recent Queen's Speech, to set up a proper Review of the potential for an Offshore Ring Main instead of the current proposal for multiple onshore cable corridors and substations across the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts.

This is wonderful news which will be greeted with genuine joy by all the many thousands of people who have looked on in increasing horror at the proposal for hundreds of kilometres of high voltage cabling in trenches across the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts to multiple onshore substations the size of Wembley Stadium.

Background.

As explained, in the last few years I have supported both the offshore wind generation revolution and, in my own constituency, subject to appropriate siting, screening and local

community benefit, two major sub-stations. I am 100% committed to, and supportive of, offshore wind generation as both a strategic renewable energy priority and an opportunity for the Eastern Region.

As you know, the East coast (and particularly the coast of Norfolk and Suffolk) is rapidly becoming the UK's offshore energy powerhouse, with a further three of the world's largest offshore wind farms in the pipeline off the Norfolk coast, and another three more expected off the coast of Suffolk.

In fact, the Southern North Sea is set to become the world's most concentrated cluster of offshore wind power in the world, with TEN major wind farms anticipated.

Whilst this is excellent news for the UK's energy economy, decarbonisation, reduced reliance on foreign oil and gas, and for those parts of East Anglia which benefit from involvement in the construction work, it also has serious environmental impacts on the marine, coastal and onshore habitats through which the connected infrastructure will be built, which needs to be seriously considered in choosing the right connection strategy.

Connection to the Grid.

The issue is how best to connect this strategic offshore energy to the national grid?

If just the current two proposed wind farms off the coast of Norfolk alone are given the greenlight, at least 115 kilometres of countryside will be dug up to make way for the necessary cable corridors, and two new electrical substations will be built – each the size of Wembley Stadium. Over the 11-year time period that it is estimated will be required to construct the necessary infrastructure for these three wind farms, a 3,300% increase in the number of HGV journeys will also occur, with much of this traffic being on some of the worst-affected roads in the county.

With wind farms off the Suffolk coasts now also in the pipeline, we are about to repeat this damage to some of the most environmentally precious wetland and coastal landscapes in Norfolk and Suffolk (where coastal tourism is a major part of our economies), as well as massively impact many communities along the routes of the proposed cabling.

Overall Environmental impact assessment

Whilst the environmental case for renewable energy per se is of course overwhelming, I was delighted to hear you make a point of emphasising that it does not mean that any and all renewable schemes should be “waved through” without proper regard to their overall environment impact.

I'm afraid this is how the proposed onshore connectivity of offshore wind power appears to be being handled in East Anglia. Because the developers know that it is deemed “strategic” national infrastructure in which the normal planning rules don't apply, I and others fear that a



lot of plans and proposals are being made which are NOT properly assessing the overall environmental impact.

While the Government is making fantastic and rightly welcomed strides in its moves to protect our environment (most recently in the Environment Bill 2019-20 and the legally binding commitment to the net zero target for the country's contribution to global warming by 2050), we believe that, in the eagerness to support the development of the offshore wind sector there is a real risk of inadvertently causing more damage to the vital habitats, ecosystems and fragile environments of these internationally recognised wetland coastlines.

The more that people investigate the actual process by which we have ended up in this current situation, the clearer it is that there has been no proper strategic consideration of the strategic options for bringing this scale of offshore wind infrastructure onshore. (Indeed, at no point in the past seven years has National Grid ever held a proper strategic discussion in Norfolk or Suffolk setting out the options and choices, at which the elected representatives, either at council or parliamentary level, or the general public could contribute).

It is for these reasons that I and the signatories to this letter support the exploration of an alternative way in which this offshore energy can be brought onshore.

We are delighted by the news that if/when the Government returns to office you will launch a Review into the environmental impact of the proposed connectivity plan, including specifically the replacement of the current cable & substation plan with an offshore ring main.

The Offshore Ring Main

The viability of an Offshore Ring Main (ORM) is one such alternative that a number of us believe would take away the need for multiple substations and cable corridors – protecting our countryside and avoiding the huge disruption that accompanies such construction.

This could require just two large onshore substations (with ideal locations, like Bacton in Norfolk, already being put forward) and seriously reduce the length of cabling not only onshore, but offshore also. This really does seem to be a “win-win” option.

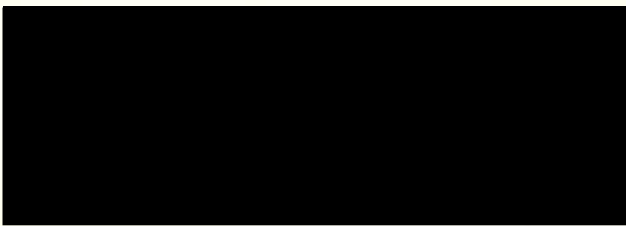
We are aware that, in a 2015 report, National Grid and offshore energy companies considered the viability of an integrated offshore design – stating that “the project team does not believe it would be economic and efficient.” It would be interesting to see the reasoning, evidence, and numbers behind this position given the rapidly growing importance of the sector in our country. And whether that analysis stands up now to the Government's laudable commitments framed in the Environment Bill.

The Review

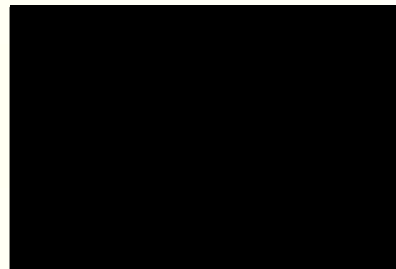
These are obviously all issues to be considered in the Review that you have committed to if and when the Government reassembles after the Election, and we look toward to working with you on it.

Thank you again sincerely for having taken so much time and trouble to listen to the arguments that we have set out, and to commit to a proper Review of the Options for bringing the offshore electricity onshore.

Your decision to look again at this on strategic environmental grounds is hugely welcome and will give huge hope to many who have felt that nobody in power was able to really listen and act. You have. Thank you.



George Freeman MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Norfolk



Rt. Hon Dr Therese Coffey MP
Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal

CC.

Rt. Hon Sir Norman Lamb MP

Chairman of LEP

ORM Campaign

Rt Hon Theresa Villiers

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP

Nadhim Zahawi MP