

Philip Watson Interested party reference number 20034509

Comments on information provided in response to Secretary of State letter dated 16th January 2024.

My comments are regarding question 5. Voluntary agreements with Affected Persons (“APs”) the applicant.

National Grid are applying to compulsory purchase my land for Tadcaster CSEC West and extinguish my right of way near to Tadcaster CSEC East. I do not agree with National Grid’s statement that “National Grid has engaged with interested parties throughout the application and examination process and has continued to do so following close of the examination.”

From the very start of this process National Grid have ignored any comments I have made. Since the examination in public National Grid has made no further offers. I have requested that all communication is made in writing mainly due to poor recollection of verbal agreements made by National Grid in the past. I was contacted by National Grid in November 2023 who claimed they could not change the terms of the voluntary option agreement because they did not understand my concerns. My concerns are well documented as they well know and I engaged throughout the examination in public. I pointed this out in my reply and I was hoping to have a revised plan for the access road off the A659 at the very least but there was no response. I chased the matter again in January but I have had no reply. I have not been consulted properly about the access off the A659, and I was only presented with any details of what they were planning at deadline 6. I would have expected to have seen the details well before the application to the Planning Inspectorate was even made. I cannot see that the highways agency have given their approval for these plans either. The current plans will make accessing the field from the left (Tadcaster side) very dangerous which is the direction I will be coming from. I will have to stop on the A659 to remove the bollards which is a very fast and busy road. The matter is compounded by National Grid wanting to extinguish the right of way to access the field from another side. I have asked that the requirement in the voluntary agreement to extinguish the right of way for no money is removed. National Grid have refused. I would not have spent so much time and money going through the courts to get a deviation around the pylon if I thought that the right of way was worthless.

I have been sent a threatening letter from National Grid's agents saying that once they are granted their DCO application then they will not engage in any further negotiations. How can any voluntary agreement be made if they refuse to respond to requests for more information? I was hoping we could find some areas that we maybe could agree on even if we couldn't agree on everything. I still maintain that both CSECs at Tadcaster could be placed elsewhere and minimise disruption to landowners and the land which is of course green belt.

I note that as of 30th January 2024 they have only 1 signed agreement out of 110. This would suggest that they are using similar tactics on other landowners.