



## **Ardleigh Parish Council response to North Falls Off-shore Windfarm consultation July 2023**

Our Parish Council has previously responded to consultation by North Falls (in December 2021) having met with a team from North Falls in November 2021. This was before the proposals for the National Grid pylons and substation project (East Anglia GREEN AKA Norwich to Tilbury) were known. The National Grid Proposals would (if implemented) have a profound impact on our Parish and the surrounding areas.

We responded to National Grid (June 2022) and to the Five Estuaries consultations (August 2022 and May 2023). Those earlier comments still stand - copies of other responses can be forwarded on request and are published on our website <https://ardleigh.website/pylons-and-substations>. We would ask that these responses are taken in to account for the current consultation.

We note the broad opposition to the highly contentious National Grid proposals from many other quarters, including Essex County Council and Tendring District Council and by many thousands of local people and representative bodies across the three counties with over 23,000 people having signed a petition, calling for an offshore grid. Our own MP, Sir Bernard Jenkin, has played a pivotal role as part of the OFFSET group of MP's in galvanising opposition to the current National Grid plans. This project is many years from planning permission, if it succeeds at all. We have seen and endorse the comments on your current consultation by our neighbours Little Bromley Parish Council.

When we met you in November 2021 and as referred to in our initial response, we were given to understand that *'it would be technically possible for some infrastructure to be shared between providers, but that there were commercial and (perhaps) legal/ competition constraints which mean that multiple sites and cabling would be needed. Further, that some of the cabling and infrastructure could be placed offshore, but that this would be more costly and time consuming (and perhaps less commercially viable).'*

**We were pleased to see an option for an off shore link in your latest consultation. We would strongly support your Option 3 for the project's National Grid connection point, an Offshore electrical connection supplied by a third party electricity distribution network provider.**

**We are also pleased to see some evidence of attempts at collaboration and of direct engagement with our Parish Council and with our residents, including holding consultation events in our Parish (something that National Grid have conspicuously failed to do). We urge you to continue to do so and to work with other providers to seek an integrated off shore solution, lobbying to remove artificial constraints which force pylons on to communities when other options would be technically feasible and even less costly (particularly when the human and societal costs are considered).**

**Should these developments be forced upon our communities, any mitigation would need to address the impact on those communities as directly as possible. We are far from this stage, but would welcome public commitments to such legacy investment as early as possible and continued engagement with local stakeholders at every stage.**

As previously stated, *'In principle, the Parish Council supports the generation of green energy and is not opposed to the development of off-shore wind farms.'*

However, we object in the strongest terms to any unnecessary connection onshore in Tendring. This would result in tunnelling beneath the shoreline, trenching to place underground cables through Tendring, and a sub-station near to or within Ardleigh (with further sub-stations needed for National Grid and for other providers).

This damaging onshore connection is unnecessary because both North Falls (plus at least two other offshore projects which we know of, ie Tarchon and Five Estuaries) could, and should, connect offshore. National Grid ESO has already carried out advanced scenario testing of offshore coordination options.

We now know that the National Grid connection point would be in Ardleigh. We understand that National Grid has offered this connection point to you, and has not offered any alternatives, but we urge you to do the right thing for the environment and communities and to reject National Grid's unacceptable offer and work with others to deliver an off shore connection. You will be aware that the connection offered is deeply damaging and disruptive, being in the centre of a proposed 180km pylon route, and adjacent to the AONB where the pylons create a ring of steel around Ardleigh (both underground and overground). Overall we believe that Ardleigh would be uniquely and profoundly affected and would be at the epicentre of a number of infrastructure projects all of which would harm our Parish.

Our residents care deeply about their environment and the rural characteristics around our Parish. This was emphasised during consultation for our Neighbourhood Plan- which has been endorsed by Tendring District and now reached Regulation 17 stage. *'It is the overwhelming view of the people who live and work in the Parish of Ardleigh that it should above all else retain its rural characteristics, including the visual quality of its buildings, open spaces, trees, hedges, footpaths and bridleways... There is also a strong sense of community in Ardleigh which should be protected and nurtured throughout all parts of the Parish, including its outlying hamlets...'* (para 6.29-6.30 Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan). More details of the emerging Plan are on the Tendring DC site <https://www.tendringdc.uk/sub-content-pages/ardleigh-neighbourhood-plan> or our own site <https://ardleigh.website/our-plan>. We consider the proposals by North Falls (unless an off shore connection is agreed) and the associated proposals from National Grid to threaten the very things which our residents tell us they value about where they live. We are therefore bound to oppose them.

We endorse the concerns raised by our neighbours in Little Bromley around wildlife and environmental impact. *'The countryside in the affect area has a rich and varied wildlife population as identified by wildlife surveys. This includes many species of waterbirds and non-waterbirds. We are very close to the Stour Estuary SSI and Ramsar site, and surveys indicate bird species present which are related to those sites. Badgers, hares, foxes, deer, bats and other mammals can be found in the parish. Grass snakes are regular seen in the summer. These all thrive as we have woodland, extensive hedgerows and arable margins some of which will be affected by your planned development. The migratory bird route across East Anglia, the East Atlantic Flyway, has gained Government backing to bid to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Major developments such as planned by Five Estuaries, North Falls, National Grid and Tarchon, will have serious impact. Potential exists for protected or notable species to be impacted by construction activities either physically via permanent or temporary habitat loss or by inadvertent injury or killing or from disturbance via light, noise and human presence. There is potential for permanent habitat fragmentation and species isolation as a result of four substation construction and also from construction of the cable route. The substation construction together with the additional temporary construction compound areas and the cable route during construction will bring a permanent loss of habitat.'*

There are particular concerns about the impact on the road and lane network in the areas around the new sub-stations and of safety for all users but especially those on foot/ cycling or on horseback along the very narrow lanes, especially but not limited to lanes around the Burnt Heath area of Ardleigh which borders Little Bromley and Great Bromley. Such concerns would be exacerbated if several substations were contiguously or closely located. If the existing lanes are used by construction traffic we struggle to see how mitigation could prevent a very significant and negative impact on local residents particularly those who use the lanes for leisure and could well be prevented from doing so if sharing with HGVs. In other words we fear a loss of village amenity. The North Falls development and associated facilities such as haul roads, temporary construction compounds and haul road

access points will be highly disruptive to day-to-day community life. Quiet country roads and Public Rights of Way will be affected impacting residents, walkers, cyclists and horse riders. There are many farms which need access to their properties and fields at all times of year, and especially during harvest.

In addition we would emphasise local concerns around

- Agricultural Land. loss and damage to significant areas of high grade agricultural land- at a time when food security is of increased concern
- Landscape and Visual impact. The topography around Ardleigh means there are vast open vistas across productive farmland which could be disfigured forever by proposed pylons and substations
- Operational and Construction Noise and Light Pollution.
- Construction Traffic and Impact
- Business Impact - With road diversions and closures and large parts of the countryside under development businesses could be seriously affected.

We urge you to work with Government and others to connect offshore thus avoiding all of the above negative impacts on the Tendring peninsular in general and Ardleigh in particular.

*Ardleigh Parish Council*  
*13/7/23*