HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Michael Shanks MP
Minister for Energy
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HP, United Kingdom

Our Ref: TV10786 6 November 2026

Dear Michael,

Re: Grid connections and substation siting on Romney Marsh

I hope you are well.

I am writing to you regarding the three large solar and battery schemes proposed in my constituency of Folkestone and Hythe: Romney Marsh Shepway Energy Park (SSE), South Kent Energy Park (Low Carbon) South Brooks (EDF) and the decisions on grid connection that will shape where these solar farms and a new 400kV substation are built.

I strongly believe that transparency and accountability regarding those decisions is vital, and the current delays surrounding the establishment of the grid connections and substation are causing great uncertainty and anxiety for my constituents in Romney Marsh.

Delays in siting decisions

As I understand it, developers cannot finalise their designs until NESO confirms grid connection locations and the dates for completion of the connections. Ofgem has twice extended NESO's deadline for Gate 2 Phase 1 offers, most recently to 31st October, and I would welcome confirmation of whether the offers for grid connections relevant to Romney Marsh have now been issued.

SSE informed my office on the 19th October that the environmental assessment and battery design work for their solar farm project is paused, as they wait for a decision on the grid connection. National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) has stated that a preferred site for the East Kent Connection Node A substation "could be identified during 2026", with completion in the early 2030s, but no site has been named and NGET is reviewing its own siting approach. I do not believe that the timetable nor the process is sufficiently transparent for my constituents.

Impact on home owners

Until a location is known regarding the grid connection, residents cannot know whether a substation, cable route or battery site will be constructed next to their homes. Families cannot plan, sell or invest. The uncertainty and anxiety lasts for as long as the decisions are delayed.

Siting options for the substation

The locations I understand for the substation that are being discussed are Newchurch, which is reportedly favoured by SSE, and Old Romney/Hammonds Corner, which I understand is favoured by Low Carbon. I have significant concerns about the suitability of each of these locations.
Both areas have a high flood risk; they contain best and most versatile farmland; protected species; there is the serious risk of harm to heritage assets; and the roads are totally unsuitable for abnormal loads, especially when the combined impact of two very large solar and battery sites alongside a 400kV substation is taken into account.

A substation of this scale requires a large, concreted footprint on unstable Marsh soils, with consequences for drainage that could affect neighbouring farmers, undermining our food security, a vital component of our national security.

Connecting the proposed South Brooks Solar Farm directly to the grid at Dungeness appears to be constrained by sites that are protected by environmental regulations focused on protecting rare animal and plant species.

It is clear to me that there is no good answer to the question of the siting of the grid connection and substation, which makes a transparent and evidence first process critical.

Transparency

NGET's response of 2nd November to an Environmental Information Regulations request from the campaign group, *Hands Off Our Marsh*, withheld its draft siting study and strategic needs case due to it being unfinished, and withheld customer-specific connection information, as they stated that it was confidential.

NGET also reported holding no recorded correspondence with NESO about the need for, or timing of, the works to construct the substation, and no assessment of whether they would change if one or more schemes did not proceed. If accurate, that is concerning given that three competing projects are chasing the same grid connection. NESO has also declined to disclose the Gate status of the schemes.
As you can imagine, residents are left fearing that the outcome will be decided by who lobbies hardest rather than through a transparent, evidence first process.

I would therefore be extremely grateful if you would consider:

- Meeting with me to discuss these issues?
- Pressing NGET for a firm timetable for identifying a preferred EKNA site, and for a published evidence trail showing how options are assessed?
- Requesting that NESO confirm grid connection locations and completion dates for the Romney Marsh solar schemes as soon as possible?
- Asking NESO and NGET to assess the cumulative environmental and economic impact of the three solar schemes and confirm whether DESNZ will evaluate them in the same way?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Tony Vaughan KC
MP for Folkestone and Hythe