



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

020 7219 4198

20 June, 2011

Dear Chris,

HINKLEY POINT – NEW ENERGY TRANSMISSION LINES

With the issue of electricity pylons in my constituency continuing to be a controversial one, there are a number of clarifications I would like to have from your Department. I understand that National Grid may well be coming forward with a proposal in the near future. I would restate that National Grid has had a number of public relations exercises, but not a proper public consultation as information has been limited and thereby the potential outcomes restricted.

I wonder if you could tell me when the DECC request was made for the KEMA study to conclude? Both the IET and KEMA reports should have been ready to ensure a properly informed debate. Without a full range of costings and options the debate will almost by definition be suboptimal. I assume that no major decisions will be taken until this information is in the public domain and I would be grateful to know whether or not your officials feel that any decision would be more open to challenge in the courts were these reports not to be available.

My constituents have complained that it is very difficult to get information on technology and cost alternatives from National Grid. Further to my previous letter I also believe that it is possible that the capabilities for gas in acting could be developed by Siemens in the UK but providing British manufacturing jobs as well as a potential solution in the long term to this transmission problem. I enclose a copy of a letter from Siemens to that effect.

I wonder if it is also possible to look at whether the legislative definition of "overhead lines" is too prescriptive and whether "transmission lines" would allow more sensible solutions to be considered on a more equitable basis. As you know, engineers are clear that the shortest route is subsea, yet the legal default position seems to pre-empt much of the debate. Has there been any review of the legislation in recent years or is there any proposal to hold such a review to see whether the terminology in the legislation is running behind current technology.

The Rt Hon Chris Huhne MP



If National Grid put forward a specific proposal what will be the administrative sequence that follows? How will it be announced and in what timescale? Who will make the final decision, in particular whether it will be a minister, and will there be in the right of appeal to those affected?

I wonder if you could also set out who is now in charge of the major infrastructure planning unit as I would like to make the concerns of my constituents directly known to them.

I enclose a copy of a letter I received from Ofgem in April. In relation to funding for undergrounding Charles Gallagher makes clear that this would be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In his final paragraph he states "in such cases we would expect the network companies, such as National Grid who operate the electricity transmission network, to engage with stakeholders and Ofgem itself will take into account consumer and stakeholder views". I would be interested to find out how this consultation from Ofgem will take place, its mechanism and its timescale.

Most importantly I have included, for information, through-life costs for the overhead pylon option, the underground cable and the underground gas insulated line option. As you can see if the costs of the extra plant required for overhead pylons (the need for connections at regular intervals to ensure efficiency of transmission and minimise loss) is included then the costs rise substantially. This is exacerbated if the global warming costings are taken into account. If we are to have credible green credentials then the decision needs to be taken on more than short-term economics ignoring the environmental impact in the longer term.

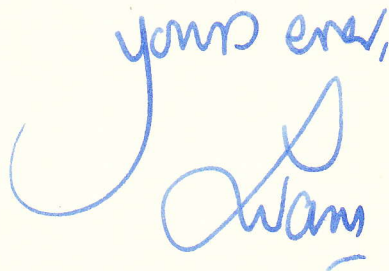
Hinkley example	Overhead Pylon	Underground Cable	Underground GIL
Length Required	37 miles	37 miles	32 miles
Underground & beauty areas	10 miles	n/a	n/a
Cost overground	£2m/mile	n/a	n/a
Cost underground	£25m/mile	£25m/mile	£9m/mile
Extra plant	£90m	£50m	£0m
Build cost	£394m	£975m	£288m
Life maintenance cost	£2m	£4m	£0.5m
Life Global Warming	£701m	£315m	£231m
Property blight	£27m	n/a	n/a
LIFE COST	£1,124m	£1,294m	£519m



I enclose a link to the gas insulated transmission lines (GIL) which Siemens are currently putting down which can run along existing motorway routes thus avoiding the environmental impact of overhead pylons and the costs of undersea or underground cables.

It can be found at <http://www.energy.siemens.com/us/en/power-transmission/gas-insulated-transmission-lines.htm#content=Description>

I look forward to hearing from you when you have had a chance to consider all this information.

Yours ever,
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adam'.

The Rt Hon Chris Huhne MP
Secretary of State
Department of Energy
3 Whitehall Place
London SW1A 2HH