

Mr David Mercer
National Grid
1100 Century Way
Thorpe Park
Leeds LS15 8TU

3 December, 2009

Dear Mr Mercer

Firstly, I would like to thank you and your colleagues for taking the time to attend our public meeting in Nailsea last Friday. I am sure you will agree it was a very measured meeting, although the strength of feeling was extremely clear. There were a number of issues raised which I promised to take up with you.

As I said at the meeting, the costs of the pylon replacement scheme need to be measured in more than simply monetary terms – the quality of life of our local environment has a value too. We therefore need more information about genuine alternatives, rather than simply a choice between two different corridors (one of which is so horrendous and would represent such environmental vandalism that it could never be a really viable option).

As you saw, there was considerable interest in the issues of undergrounding cables or having them under water. There was a huge appetite for more detailed costings about these and more information on the technical issues, albeit in language designed for a lay audience.

Could you tell me in detail what is different about the Neptune Project and other underwater projects which make them so radically different from a project in the Severn Estuary? Could you give us costings on similar projects to take cables underground where there are large population centres? One of the most surprising answers that we received at the meeting was that the difference to electricity consumers from a pylon project cost of £90 million and an underwater or underground programme of over £500 million would be only around one per cent on electricity bills. More information on this relationship would be very useful.

I would also be grateful if you provide us with evidence on the superconductor idea and how technology in this area could take us into supply for the 21st century. I would also find it very useful if you could give estimates not only of the initial cost but of the through life cost for the various options.

Finally, as we are well into the consultation period and with Christmas approaching, we need time to look at all these options and all this information. I think it would be a very good seasonal gesture to extend the consultation period so that a good decision can be reached, rather than simply a quick one.

On a personal note, as I said at the meeting, I find it outrageous that the current government's legislation has resulted in a situation where the IPC is not answerable to a Secretary of State. The lack of democratic accountability in this whole process is wholly unacceptable and it is an area that a Conservative government would wish to change.

Thank you once again for taking the trouble to come to Nailsea and I look forward to your reply in due course. I will put the hard copy in the post.

Yours sincerely

LIAM FOX MP
MP for WOODSPRING

