

Nailsea Town Council

Response to National Grid's Consultation on the Hinkley Point C Connection Project

General

Nailsea Town Council recognises the national need for more electricity generation capacity and the means to transmit it. We accept that a connection from the Hinkley C station to Seabank will meet the need to export the much higher power output proposed at Hinkley C and to maintain the resilience of the network.

However, the Council is very concerned that the National Grid consultation documents do not identify and analyse all the available options fully and fairly. Further, we do not accept that the transmission corridors on which National Grid are consulting are the best for the consumer or for the residents of Nailsea. The Town Council is being placed in an invidious position by National Grid in being asked to choose between two options when other options have not been properly presented for public consideration.

National Grid's Route Corridor study report provides helpful information about the reasons that justify selection of the proposed routes and useful background on environmental factors and undergrounding policy. In contrast to this, the report is silent on options to take the connection via the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary, which to the Council, is the most obviously preferable route. National Grid has dismissed this option but has not adequately demonstrated why it is not technically or financially feasible. The report contains no policy for the use of offshore connections and the use of high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission, no equivalent to the Holford Rules and no other information to justify rejection of such options.

The Town Council is realistic about the cost motivation of National Grid. However, the decisions on the route must take account of, and respect, other impacts, notably environment, health and visual amenity. The consequences of the decisions being made will be felt by generations to come, and the financial investment must take into account the social and environmental costs. The Town Council is very concerned that National Grid is utilising conventional 20th century technology and avoiding the opportunity for a forward-thinking solution to an infrastructure project which will have a major impact on our community irrespective of which solution is adopted.

The Town Council supports the analysis and conclusions of North Somerset Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee of 25 November 2009.

Preferred Solutions

Nailsea Town Council is strongly of the opinion that National Grid has not justified its rejection of alternative technologies and options on the grounds of feasibility and cost.

Health issues are a priority concern for the Town Council. If National Grid decides to proceed with corridors 1 or 2 it is the Council's responsibility to press for precautionary measures to protect its residents from health risks that mounting research from respected bodies is identifying. A precautionary approach requires separation between housing and the power lines and the Council will be asking for 600m separation, where possible, during the route identification consultation and at the Infrastructure Planning Commission.

National Grid, or any future organisation responsible for the new infrastructure that is the subject of this consultation should be held accountable for health issues which arise in future if it chooses to ignore existing concerns regarding separation distances.

The Town Council totally rejects Corridor 2 as an option on the following grounds:

- **The proximity of new pylons to the settlement boundaries of Nailsea and Backwell.** This route would not allow for any meaningful precautionary approach and is therefore considered very high risk from a health perspective.
- **Visual amenity.** The visual impact of pylons would be exaggerated by the nature of the landscape and would be unacceptably overbearing, an issue of consideration within the Holford Rules. The additional consequence of Corridor 2 would be that Nailsea would be surrounded by pylons.
- **Environmental damage:** including the effective destruction of Backwell Lake as a vital public amenity.

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1. The overwhelming preference of the Town Council is that the new 400kV connection is routed underwater in the Bristol Channel. The public have not been given the information or opportunity to consider this option, which should not be rejected by National Grid until a comprehensive and public feasibility study of the technical and financial issues has been properly and publicly considered. On the basis of this point and the one that follows the Town Council considers the consultation process fundamentally flawed.
2. The second preference, which also has not been included in the consultation, is for the lines to be installed underground, either in totality or in combination with overground cables, with the objective being the least intrusive or damaging environmental impact. The Council would consider this based on Corridor 1 but with the detail to be decided in relation to the actual conditions on the ground.
3. There are two 132kV lines on the north west boundary of Nailsea within the Corridor 1 route. If an overground route is demonstrated to be the only viable option the Town Council is prepared to support Corridor 1 only, and not exclusively, on the following conditions, with the precautionary principle of maximum distance from settlement boundaries being of paramount importance:
 - The existing 132kV line closest to the settlement boundary is removed.
 - The remaining 132kV line should be replaced by the new 400kV line at a distance from the settlement boundary that meets the requirements of the precautionary principle.
 - If it is demonstrably unfeasible for the 400kV line to replace the 132kV line then the 400kV route should be located to the north of the remaining 132kV line i.e. further away from the settlement boundary.

This response has been approved by the Town Council at its meeting of 9 December 2009, minute no [].