

SAVE NAILSEA WEST
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North Somerset
BS48 2AU

Hinkley C Connection Project
Consultation Response
National Grid
PO Box 5689
London W1A 4FG

Dear Sir/Madam

Response from SAVE NAILSEA WEST to the Route Corridor Options proposed for the Hinkley Point C Connection project

1. About SAVE NAILSEA WEST

- 1.1. Save Nailsea West is a group that has been set up to represent the views of residents of west Nailsea who are directly affected by Corridor 1.
- 1.2. We represent the thousands of residents currently living very close to or under the two existing 132kV lines (currently owned by Western Power).
- 1.3. We share the same aims as the Save Our Valley (SOV) campaign and have worked closely together since our inception. We support their campaign and their formal response to National Grid.
- 1.4. You will have noticed the joint Winter Walk last Saturday (2nd January 2010) in which over 700 people took part to demonstrate the strength of feelings against these plans. These people came from all parts of Nailsea - North, East, South, West and even central areas. Nailsea walkers were joined by others from the neighbouring towns of Backwell, Wraxall and Tickenham. Each walk followed one of the two corridors around Nailsea. The wide participation in the walk is an emphatic expression of the views of residents.

2. Flawed consultation process

- 2.1. Along with many others, we too would like to point out some of the flaws in this consultation process:
 - 2.1.1. The mailshot of bland envelopes addressed "To the Occupier" - most of which would have been ignored as unwanted marketing and thrown out unopened.
 - 2.1.2. The fact that these did not get sent to all residents of our town. All residents have to enter or leave the town by one of the two corridors and will therefore pass the planned pylons often. They will also encounter them whenever enjoying the countryside around Nailsea.

- 2.1.3. The fact that initially there was no public consultation meeting planned for Nailsea, despite both corridors impacting on Nailsea residents.
- 2.1.4. The extra “public consultation event” put on in Nailsea after residents complained, which was actually an exhibition with a number of National Grid project team members answering questions from individuals. Many people reporting getting different answers to the same questions. Others didn’t get a chance to ask their questions. This is ineffective as a public consultation – there should have been a presentation explaining the project in more depth than the original mailshot did. This should have been followed by a public Q&A session and then the opportunity to view the exhibits and take information home for further review. There should then have been a further opportunity to re-question National Grid once information has been absorbed, understood and researched.
- 2.1.5. The notice period from mailshot to exhibition was too short and there should have been many more sessions for a town of this size. Many residents could not attend any events due to diary conflicts.
- 2.1.6. It is only thanks to Save Our Valley that an additional meeting chaired by Dr Liam Fox MP was held, where National Grid representatives did give a presentation. This was much needed, although there were still many questions left unanswered at the end, as time ran out. Hundreds of residents were unable to enter due to lack of space. Yet another demonstration of the depth of concern here.
- 2.2. Another major flaw in the consultation process is that it only allowed residents to consider voting for one of two overhead options. No information was provided initially about other alternatives that might have been considered, except to state the financial cost was prohibitive.
- 2.3. It wasn’t until near the end of the public consultation period (well into December 2009) that National Grid made its Strategic Optioneering Report available. This did explain some of the work done to review alternative solutions to overhead lines, but in a fairly simplistic and obviously “watered down for the general public” way.
- 2.4. The analysis only considered upfront project build financial costs and ignored full life cycle costs and all costs to the public.

3. Proximity

- 3.1. It is a fact that concerns about powerline proximity have changed for the worse since Nailsea homes were built near the pylons erected in the 1930s and 1950s.
- 3.2. In opening up this issue now, National Grid have exposed themselves to dealing with legacy issues, such as these two 132kV lines running alongside and through Nailsea homes.
- 3.3. Estate agents have confirmed that houses close to power lines have significantly lower values (1/3 lower or even more in some cases) than the same homes further away, primarily due to the perceived health risks.

4. Health concerns

- 4.1. Whilst we understand there is not conclusive proof about health risks, the evidence in the past 10 years is gathering momentum. The process could have a parallel to that of smoking, where 50 or more years ago there wasn't evidence that smoking caused cancer. Even now, it's not true to say smoking causes cancer, but the evidence is overwhelming that they are linked. Similarly, it may be that science is not advanced enough at this time to capture the evidence that health risks are connected to exposure to powerlines.
- 4.2. It is a fact that there are associations between living close to powerlines and increased risks of childhood leukaemia, brain tumors, Alzheimer's and other senile dementia.
- 4.3. In the rushed short timescales given by National Grid, we have yet to tap into all the research; however we are encouraged by the growing levels of support we are getting from the scientific community and will continue to develop our understanding, independent of any planning outcome.
- 4.4. It would be better to plan now to achieve a safe distance for all current and future power lines, rather than deny these growing trends and then be forced to re-plan at the last minute.
- 4.5. We note increasing legislation in other countries to site powerlines at significant distances from homes, often along designated formal Rights of Way. We also note National Grid's own Corporate Public Position Statement "To mitigate the amenity impact of new overhead transmission lines, we always endeavour to route them away from existing buildings."

5. Alternative options to new overhead lines

- 5.1. It cannot be a sustainable strategy to continue to put up new overhead lines throughout our countryside. We demand that the UK government, Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), Ofgem and the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) require National Grid to give higher priority and more weighted consideration to less intrusive options such as undersea, underground or along motorways.
- 5.2. We are pleased to note the CPRE (Campaign for Protection of Rural England) have recently changed their policy to campaign for more underground lines in view of the volume of new overhead lines being proposed.
- 5.3. It has not been explained at all why the new 400kV line could not run alongside the M5. Motorways are already a blight on our countryside. It seems far more efficient for everyone that two ugly, but necessary, structures are given shared routes.
- 5.4. We are told by National Grid that the technology for the undersea option in the Severn Estuary is unproven for this length of line, the amount of power required and type of line and also costs too much. We note the proposal for a pan-European supergrid to share renewable energy sources which will utilise sub-sea cables. Technological advances are being made all the time.

6. Choice of overhead corridors – NO to Corridor 2

Looking at the overhead options, we are disappointed that the choice of corridors runs either side of Nailsea. This would seem to be a tactic to divide Nailsea.

- 6.1. We are pleased to say the Save Nailsea West wholeheartedly agree with the Save Our Valley campaign.
- 6.2. The people of west Nailsea are not NIMBYs. At our initial meeting it soon became clear that the choice of Corridor 2 (to completely surround Nailsea in a metal cage) is not an acceptable option to anyone living in and around Nailsea, including us in west Nailsea.
- 6.3. It could have been very easy for western residents to take the NIMBY view and vote *against* Corridor 1 and *for* Corridor 2, but we have chosen the more altruistic view that Corridor 2 is an unsupportable option for Nailsea.

7. NO to Corridor 1b

- 7.1. We also cannot support the proposal known as Corridor 1b, which is to build the proposed 400kV line as a third separate line parallel to the existing lines. This is a wasteful proposal and would indicate only National Grid's and Western Power's inability to work together for the good of the communities they serve.
- 7.2. We note from National Grid Electricity Transmission's own Annual Report 2008-09 that "Under the Electricity Act 1989 we have a duty to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission".

8. Corridor 1a

- 8.1. So we come to the crux of the matter. We in west Nailsea are left with only one overhead possibility to seriously consider, which is Corridor 1a – the option to replace the more westerly existing 132kV line with the new 400kV one.
- 8.2. We feel cornered into supporting this option with its monster pylons nearly twice the size of the existing ones. We certainly don't want overhead lines of that power and height near our homes, causing health problems and the associated decrease in house values. Nor do we want the lines and pylons blighting the landscape and the special nature that is the SSSI of Nailsea Moor.
- 8.3. However we are prepared to support this option, if and only if National Grid and Western Power agree to move all the existing powerlines and pylons far away from our homes.
- 8.4. We appeal for these lines to be placed underground for the short stretch running alongside Nailsea in order to achieve an improvement in quality of life for residents by less impact on their health and a return to the unblighted landscape.
- 8.5. We note in Germany that 2009 legislation says 400kV lines should be placed underground if located within 200m of homes.
- 8.6. We note the cost of underground cables is higher than that of overhead, stated by National Grid to be at least 12 times higher for farmland. Further investigation on this point is required as National Grid claim the cost of underground cables is at least £24m per mile (12 x £2m per mile cost of overhead). Europacable, a consortium of EU cable manufacturers, confirms that

total life cycle analysis in 2009 shows the cost of underground cables to be as little as 2-5 times more than overhead.

- 8.7. We are told that underground and undersea options will increase end consumer bills by less than 1%. Therefore short distances of underground cabling will add even tinier amounts.
- 8.8. We therefore urge National Grid to investigate further into the fast developing technologies for underground lines.

9. Interest of other stakeholders

- 9.1. We will be copying this letter to the IPC. They and the other regulatory authorities should be aware of the strength of feeling from local residents.
- 9.2. If the UK electricity system were not split up into separate entities for generation, transmission, distribution and supply, then the cost of partial underground lengths of this new power line would be dwarfed by the cost of the new generating capacity at Hinkley Point (in excess of £8billion).
- 9.3. We will continue to involve MPs and local councillors in this process. Their views on pylons and their willingness to become engaged in future debate on this issue will no doubt be a key campaign issue for voters in 2010.
- 9.4. During an election year, rushed decisions to benefit from current planning structures which may not have a long term future would be unfortunate, and might later be undone or open to legal challenge.

In conclusion, there are a number of issues discussed by us here, and other interested parties elsewhere along the line, which still require further research. In addition, National Grid need to advise us what happens if EDF does not go ahead with the Hinkley point C, due to cost, lack of funding or whatever.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that the legacy issue of the two existing 132kV lines running through west Nailsea homes needs to be addressed irrespective of the corridor decision. We look forward to working with National Grid and Western Power towards a better solution for residents here.

Yours sincerely

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CC. Dr Liam Fox, MP
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