

Norwich to Tilbury grid upgrade – for CPRE Norfolk website 16 July 2024

Author - Michael Rayner

The Norwich to Tilbury upgrade is a proposed new electricity transmission route planned by the National Grid, to run from Norwich Main, just south of Norwich, to Tilbury in Essex via Bramford substation in Suffolk. The suggestion is for it to consist of new overhead power lines running between pylons, along a separate corridor to the already existing line of overhead cables and pylons just to the east of the proposed new route. Where it crosses the Dedham Vale AONB underground cabling is being proposed.

CPRE Norfolk understands and supports the increasing need for offshore wind to generate electricity, and for new legislation to ensure solar panels are placed on south-facing commercial and domestic properties. It is estimated there are already 250,000 hectares of south-facing commercial roof-space which could house solar panels. These new supplies of electricity will require upgrades and changes to the existing National Grid, not least through the introduction on offshore multi-purpose connectors or ring-mains.

In addition, it is vital that strategies are introduced urgently to reduce electricity usage where possible, for example through better design and use of insulation in new development, and for retro-fitting of existing housing.

To have an effective long-term strategy for the power network it is essential that 1960s lowest-cost solutions are not the default setting. Instead, as has been the case for all recent East Anglian onshore cabling for offshore wind companies, underground cabling should be used for any new National Grid transmission lines. This would help to ensure less harmful long-term impacts for residents, the environment, settings of heritage assets, tranquillity and the countryside. It is encouraging to see that National Grid acknowledge the value of the landscape, views and environment of the Dedham Vale AONB, but we are disappointed to see that the rest of the countryside along the proposed route is not considered to be valued enough for underground cabling to be used, other than for a newly proposed short section across the Waveney Valley.

The Government urgently needs to take control of forming a long-term strategy for power distribution, of which Norwich to Tilbury is one part, but which would also include all aspects, including offshore multi-purpose interconnectors and/or Ring Mains, as well as local power networks for community-led schemes. We also urge Government to consider the detailed report and its conclusions commissioned by CPRE Norfolk, The Suffolk Preservation Society and CPRE Essex, written by Dr Andy Tickle and titled 'Greening the Great Grid Upgrade: a new vision for landscapes and communities in East Anglia'.

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