

Good morning to all.

There's a lot to announce this morning, so apologies for those who I know don't really like long emails, but these are important issues and deserve some time and attention.

### 1. The Grant Shapps letter.

You may be aware that during the recent Cabinet re-shuffle, Grant Shapps MP was given the job of Secretary Of State within the newly created Department for Energy Security & Net Zero. That means that any final decision on infrastructure projects, such as the EA GREEN proposals, will be taken by him (assuming that his party are still in power of course).

On Thursday, various organisations and individuals in our region received a letter from Mr. Shapps, announcing what is described as a "Consultation on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure". The consultation seeks suggestions for how communities can receive financial benefit if energy infrastructure affects them, saying that consumers everywhere should subsidise these payments, essentially offering - for want of a better phrase - "payment for pylons".

We find this letter and the basis of the consultation to be extremely insulting. The very notion that somehow some financial incentives - as yet unspecified in type and value - but for example let's assume something like contribution to community buildings such as village halls - could be adequate compensation for the blight that a pylon run would bring to the community would be laughable if it wasn't so serious. We are responding, as a campaign group, and will be offering suggestions as to how you can respond yourselves, to make sure Mr Shapps - in the job for five minutes - is left in no doubt as to our view on this nonsense proposal.

The letter from Mr Shapps is attached as PDF file, and the full text is copied at the end of this email. A link to the Government site for participation is contained within the letter, and also reproduced here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-benefits-for-electricity-transmission-network-infrastructure>

### 2. The "other" consultation.

Also announced on Thursday, and conveniently overshadowed by the Shapps letter, is a second consultation, which proposes a far-reaching and potentially highly damaging change to national energy policy which would allow National Grid and wind farm operators to build what they want, where they want, anywhere in the country, without consideration for anything else. This clearly comes as part of the headlong rush to "Net Zero", with no thought or concern as to how such changes could adversely affect the communities and environment unlucky enough to be caught in the headlights of any such proposals.

The full text of the proposal, which runs to 37 pages - a little light reading for those who are interested to see the kind of detail the campaign is working against - may be found at the following link -



[Planning for New Energy Infrastructure: Revised draft National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

This encompasses the long-awaited revision of Energy Policy Statements – the guidelines by which significant energy infrastructure projects must abide.

Whilst not legally qualified, the campaign committee is of the view that some of the proposals with the document may well be illegal - such big changes in such a short time, with such potentially huge adverse impacts would normally require sustainability assessments, which are omitted from the consultation documents. We have sought the advice of our K.C., Charles Banner, and will pass on his opinion when received.

We have also written to members of the OffSET group of MPs, to seek their response to both consultations.

### 3. Our Press Release

We have released the following statement to the press yesterday –

PRESS RELEASE 31/3/23

#### **Government ‘payment for pylons scheme’ is a smokescreen, says action group.**

Pylon-blight campaigners have strongly rejected government proposals for payments for pylons.

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero, has written to pylon-blight campaigners and East Anglian community groups about a new consultation on ‘community benefits’ for electricity transmission infrastructure. The consultation seeks suggestions for how communities can receive financial benefit if energy infrastructure affects them, saying that consumers everywhere should subsidise these payments.

Pylon-blight campaigner, Rosie Pearson, of Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons, immediately kicked back, saying,

*“The letter from Mr Shapps is very insulting. While recognizing our desire for community engagement on the one hand it not only misses the point that we can’t be bribed to accept the wrong infrastructure, but also neglects to mention a much more important consultation that was also launched yesterday. This second consultation proposes a far-reaching and potentially highly damaging change to national energy policy which would allow National Grid and wind farm operators to build what they want, where they want, anywhere in the country, without consideration for anything else. We have referred it immediately to our leading planning barrister, Charles Banner KC, for comment as we question its lawfulness.*

*We had hoped that the energy policy consultation would reflect the concerns of campaigners all over the region (and Lincolnshire and Wales), about the damage caused by the lack of coordination in wind farm planning.*

*When Minister Graham Stuart visited Essex in February, he heard from campaigners that community benefit is not the answer. No so-called community benefit will compensate for the effects. The answer is for Minister to wake up and smell the coffee: a coordinated offshore grid is good for consumers, communities and the environment. Bribing us to accept the worst of all solutions makes us extremely angry.”*



Additionally, we expect to feature in a national press article , possibly on Monday – more details as it becomes available.

4. A request to contact your MP.

So, the fight continues, and we continue to need your help to maintain the fight. We will advise on suggested responses to the various consultations in due course, but in the meantime a letter or an email to your MP (Richard Bacon for most here) will help to keep our presence strong.

We suggest the following content –

"In light of the recent announcements from the Department for Energy and Net Zero –

- What's happening with the NG ESO review? it has gone quiet, and we need to know communities are being listened to about the need to broaden the scope of the review.

- What is the government up to with its new energy policy consultation proposal to allow so-called 'critical' transmission infrastructure pretty much anywhere? We need strategy and coordination from our leaders, not a free for all at the expense of heritage, countryside, countryside, and habitats.

These developments are not acceptable, what will you do to help stop this."

So, lots to digest this weekend. Thank you all for the support so far – let's continue to take this fight to NG and the Government and stop these ruinous proposals.

Best wishes, and apologies again for the lengthy missive.

Martin.

Here is the text of the Shapps letter –

Dear East Anglian community groups,

## CONSULTATION ON COMMUNITY BENEFITS FOR ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

I'm writing to notify you of our consultation on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure, which opens for views today. We are publishing this consultation alongside our Powering Up Britain Plan, which set out how we are taking bold action to achieve our energy security and net zero objectives.

We know how passionately you and your members feel about the inclusion of community voices in transmission infrastructure policy, and therefore are keen to have your and their inputs into this consultation.

The consultation will gather views on how communities can benefit from hosting electricity transmission infrastructure across Great Britain, recognising the role they play in delivering cheaper, more secure and low carbon energy. It suggests introducing voluntary guidance for industry and local communities setting out the offer they should



make to affected communities. We recommend this includes direct payments and wider community benefits, so benefit packages can be tailored to local preferences. The proposed scope includes all onshore transmission network infrastructure, including onshore infrastructure associated with offshore wind and interconnectors (e.g. substations and converter stations). The consultation can be found [here](#).

#### **Engaging with the consultation**

We would encourage you to respond to the consultation. We will also be hosting public webinars. The dates and joining details for the webinars can be found on the consultation webpage.

Alongside the consultation, through consultants CEPA and Locality, we will be delivering engagement events over the next few months for industry and community stakeholders to help develop the guidance.

We are also planning to seek the views of communities surrounding a number of proposed future network infrastructure projects, using surveys, workshops and interviews to understand views on community benefits. Potential participants will be contacted by a third-party research company that is delivering this on behalf of the department.

My officials are also happy to meet directly. If you would like to speak to the team, would like to be involved in the engagement events, or if you have any questions please email [cbnetworks@beis.gov.uk](mailto:cbnetworks@beis.gov.uk). The consultation will close on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

Yours sincerely,

**RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP**

Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero