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Dear James,

Thank you for your letter received on 1 August regarding the proposed Norwich to Tilbury project. I am grateful for your kind words of congratulations.

Given my quasi-judicial role in making decisions on applications for development consent for energy infrastructure proposals, it would not be appropriate to comment on specific matters related to the proposals, as this could be seen as prejudicing the decision-making process.

In England and Wales, the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5) sets a default preference for overhead lines, except in nationally designated landscapes, where undergrounding is the preferred approach. This is due to the cost and technical considerations and environmental impacts. The energy NPS has undergone two consultations, the first consultation taking place over 12 weeks in 2021 and the second from 30 March to 23 June in 2023.

In relation to the Electricity System Operators East Anglia Study, the High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) underground alternative was found to have lower lifetime costs only in a scenario where the aboveground alternative was delayed by four years (from 2030 completion to 2034 completion), and the HVDC underground option had no delays. The on-time delivery for both options detailed that HVDC underground option to have £1bn higher lifetime costs, and a later delivery date.

In making a decision on any development consent application, I will follow the relevant requirements of the Planning Act 2008 and consider a wide range of matters relevant to my decision, including the consideration of alternatives and the views of all interested parties.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Yours ever,

RT HON ED MILIBAND MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero