John Pettigrew – CEO
National Grid
1 – 3 Strand
London
WC2N 5EH

8th January 2025

Dear John,

RE: COMMUNITY UPDATE NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2025

I am writing to you in my capacity as constituency MP for South Suffolk regarding the latest edition of National Grid's community newsletter. I understand that the enclosed update has been sent to all residents along the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon route, many of whom are my constituents.

Upon reading the Q&A section, I was dismayed to see that on page 5, in response to the question *'are underground HVDC cables cheaper?'* the answer was *'no'*, stating that underground HVDC cables would cost '**five to ten times more**' than pylons.

Can I ask you to reveal the detailed study on which you base that statement? As far as I am aware, the only one that exists was undertaken by ESO, then a part of National Grid, and published in March 2024. This concluded that underground HVDC (option 8) had a lower overall cost than pylons, assuming a 2034 delivery date for both that option and the extant pylon proposal. I believe that it is necessary to use the 2034 date for both approaches to ensure that any comparison acknowledges pylons have had a substantial 'head start' in preparedness – since National Grid have never seriously considered any other option – that inevitably makes an alternative more 'costly' in the immediate term if started from scratch. However, even with a 2030 date for the pylon option, you will see that the cost difference over the lifetime is a long way short of being '5 to 10' times more for underground cables.

Given the discrepancy between National Grid's figures and the findings of the ESO East Anglia Network Study, I should be grateful if could please confirm how you reached the conclusion that underground HVDC would cost 5 – 10 times more than overhead lines.

Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

James Cartlidge MP
Member of Parliament for South Suffolk