

Public

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Dear James,

### **Centralised Strategic Network Plan**

Thank you for the recent letter from you and your parliamentary colleagues about the future Centralised Strategic Network Plan. Fintan has asked me to reply on his behalf.

I was pleased that we were recently able to meet and discuss this further with colleagues from NESO alongside Sir Bernard Jenkin MP and David Burns. I would also like to thank you for your kind words about our approach in undertaking the East Anglia study.

As you will be aware, NESO has been created, *inter alia*, to ensure more holistic strategic planning of our future energy system. NESO is a public body independent of Government and provides expert, evidence led advice. It is for Government to determine policy and make decisions based on our advice.

We have set out three key pieces of strategic planning work we are going to undertake. We received the commission for the first of these, the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP), on 22 October. The SSEP will set out optimal locations, quantities and types of energy infrastructure required to meet our future energy demand, with a particular focus on electricity and hydrogen infrastructure. Community views will be fed into the process which will influence the outcomes from the beginning.

The SSEP will be interlinked with the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) and the Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs). The CSNP is due to be published in 2026. In advance of this, as ESO, we published our Beyond 2030 report in March which acts as a transitional CSNP.

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Ofgem have set out what they expect to be included as part of the CSNP, with the expectation it will take a holistic approach in assessing future requirements of the electricity transmission network, as well as gas transmission and the proposed hydrogen network at the national level. This evaluation will consider factors such as impact on local communities, environmental impact, impact on the operability of the network and cost to consumers.

In developing the CSNP, NESO will put forward options, but it will also consider options put forward by third parties. NESO will be required to evaluate all options objectively to identify optimal solutions to deliver an economic and efficient transmission system. As part of this we will not make presumptions in favour of any specific type of infrastructure but consider all evidence available to provide a robust evaluation of the options.

In undertaking the evaluation Ofgem have stated that the CSNP methodology: *“should be based on the general principles of transparency, open stakeholder engagement, being adaptive to change, and that it should be robust, consistent, and reproducible.”* We will be developing the CSNP methodology based on this to ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and communities.

I am happy to confirm that our approach to third parties will be inclusive, we intend to evaluate submissions from as wide a variety of stakeholders as possible. As demonstrated through the submission of options from community groups into our East Anglia study this process is helpful and informative for all participants.

I hope this response addresses your concerns. Should you have any further concerns or queries please do not hesitate to get in touch with Jack Brereton in the Public Affairs team.

Yours sincerely

Jonny Gallagher

Head of External Affairs