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**Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley Partnership response to Norwich to Tilbury Targeted Consultation (Essex and Thurrock) 25 February to 27 March 2025**

**Nomenclature**

In this response the term National Landscape is used to represent the brand of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation.

The term National Landscape Partnership refers to the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley Partnership.

**The Partnership**

The National Landscape Partnership acts as a champion for the nationally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley.

The National Landscape Partnership is made up of around 20 organisations who are committed to the purposes of the AONB designation, to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Information relating to the Partnership can be seen at:

<https://dedhamvale-nl.org.uk/managing/about/partnership-members/>

The National Landscape Partnership works together and with others seek to deliver statutory AONB purpose and deliver the statutory Management Plan for the Dedham Vale AONB.

For the avoidance of any doubt, some individual members of the Partnership are public bodies or statutory authorities who have legal responsibilities to the AONB. These obligations are set out in the revised (by section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)) in section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and puts a burden on relevant authorities to:

*Seek to further the purpose of the AONB designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) when undertaking activity that impacts the nationally designated landscape.*

See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85>

The National Landscape Partnership considers other statutory authorities also have obligations under this strengthened duty, including utility providers.

**Context of Response:**

This response made by the National Landscape Partnership has been developed using knowledge and information about the proposals learnt from expertise within the National Landscape Partnership, National Grid publications and web based information, attendance at Expert Topic Groups and public consultation events and information exchange with interested parties.

The response should be considered to add to previous National Landscape Partnership consultation responses, including:

- Non-Statutory Consultation to June 2022
- Consultation to August 2023
- Consultation to July 2024

This response will restrict itself to consideration of topics relating to National Landscapes.

**Targeted Consultation response:**

The National Landscape Partnership note that the proposals being consulted on as part of the Targeted Consultation include a longer stretch of transmission route through the nationally designated Dedham Vale National Landscape.

While the National Landscape Partnership note that the extended revised route has been proposed for sound reasons, relating to habitats and land use, these revised proposals do not appear to comply with the revised duty of section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). In addition, the revised proposals and the original proposals do not adhere to the Holford Rule 1 that states:

*Avoid altogether, if possible, the major areas of highest amenity value, by so planning the general route of the first line in the first place, even if the total mileage is somewhat increased in consequence.*

The National Landscape Partnership recognise the drivers for the current proposed route corridor but consider that if the National Landscape is to be crossed in the manner outlined in the Targeted Consultation, then greater weight is required be given to the revised section 85 Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).

It is the National Landscape Partnership's position that this could be demonstrated by securing the two mitigation proposals outlined below.

### Context:

The National Landscape Partnership recognise the important role that more sustainable electricity generation can have in reducing the drivers of climate change and dependence on other nations to provide the raw materials for electricity generation. The National Landscape Partnership recognise that this generation is likely to require new infrastructure for electricity transmission.

It is the view of the National Landscape Partnership that proposals should adhere to relevant policy and legislation, including but not limited to:

- The Holford Rules
- National Landscape (AONB) Management Plans
- National Policy Statements, including EN-1 and EN-5
- Section 85 Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)

### Considerations:

The National Landscape Partnership consider that the scheme proposer can demonstrate its compliance to policy and legislation relating to National Landscapes through the design of the proposals:

*A more strategic approach to network planning will ensure that network development keeps pace with renewable generation and anticipates future system needs. Strategic network planning, such as through the Holistic Network Design and its follow up exercises or through forthcoming Centralised Strategic Network plans, helps reduce the overall impact of infrastructure by identifying opportunities for coordination, where appropriate, and taking a holistic view of both the onshore and offshore network. Network plans will take account of environmental and community impacts, alongside deliverability and economic cost, from the outset.*

### *Chapter 2.8.1 National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5)*

Proposed mitigation proposals:

- 1) The National Landscape Partnership is aware of an existing overhead 132kV line that runs through part of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and the Dedham Vale National Landscape that is not part of the Norwich to Tilbury project.

The National Landscape Partnership considers that the current purpose of the existing 132kV line may become redundant if the Norwich to Tilbury project is built. If this is the case then a method to secure the benefits for the removal of the 132kV line should be considered, ideally as part of the Development Consent Order but if this is not possible by some other legal agreement. This could demonstrate meeting the obligations of section 85 of the Countryside and Rights Way Act (2000).

The revision of section 85 places a duty on relevant authorities to 'seek to conserve and enhance natural beauty' in their decision making. It is the view of the National Landscape Partnership that if the 132kV line was removed this would go a significant way in demonstrating compliance with that new duty placed on relevant authorities, including statutory undertakers such as National Grid.

This potential benefit would be felt across both the National Landscapes but be of particular importance to the highly sensitive receptors in the vicinity of Willy Lott's Cottage which was captured in one of England's greatest landscape artists, John Constable RA most well-known paintings, 'The Haywain'.

- 2) The National Landscape Partnership believes that the undergrounding of the proposed 400kV cables (the Norwich to Tilbury project) through the National Landscape is driven by policy considerations.

However, to meet the revised section 85 Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) duty the National Landscape Partnership considers that the undergrounding should be achieved through Horizontal Directional Drilling (or similar).

At the very least, cable installation through Horizontal Directional Drilling (or similar) under all environments where cable installation through trenching would deliver an unnatural straight-line amenity impact on above-ground flora and thus be detrimental to the preservation of natural beauty.

It considers that the trenching method would have significant impacts on the National Landscape during construction and operation. If using a less intrusive method of achieving undergrounding, the National Landscape Partnership considers that this would demonstrate seeking to meet the active duty outlined in section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023).

- 3) The National Landscape Partnership note that the revised proposals include a longer length of transmission line through the nationally designated landscape. It considers that whatever method of undergrounding that is used that this will cause a greater negative impact on the National Landscape due to increased construction area.

The National Landscape Partnership therefore consider that any compensation or mitigation proposals should include a proportional increase for additional impacts on the National Landscape.

The National Landscape Partnership is aware of mitigation proposals being included in a section 111 agreement relating to impacts on the AONB in relation to ScottishPower Renewables proposals relating to its East Anglian One North and East Anglian Two offshore wind farms.

Yours sincerely



Simon Amstutz  
National Landscape Manager

cc Cllr James Finch, Chairman, Dedham Vale National Landscape Joint Advisory  
Committee and Partnership