

Hinkley – Seabank – Minded-to Consultation on delivery model response.

Please find below my response to the above consultation exercise.

Competition by proxy is nothing but a slap on the wrists for National Grid for their failure to deliver their obligations, there has been no effort at all to respond to consultation or to complete an open options appraisal during the original development consent scheme. Competition Proxy is not the answer to the problem, although it might constrain National Grid's financial abuse of the process it doesn't address the fact that National Grid have failed on all other aspects of a proper options appraisal or to carry out their consultation responsibilities.

Ofgem have skated over evidence with a complete lack of consideration of previous consultation feedback. There has been a failure to make stakeholders aware of Ofgem's involvement in the process. Comments in your letter of the 23rd Jan 2018 concerning the decision on the needs case contain the views of a limited number of consultees and are not remotely representative of previous feedback. Members of the community and indeed even local MPS were not asked for their view or made aware of the Ofgem process. If you don't ask everyone you can't use the views of just a few.

Key events and issues

There have been a number of organisations involved in the Hinkley C connection project so far and none of them have the remit to oversee the whole process. National Grid failed in their responsibilities very early on, a new and untested Planning Inspection process did not identify this failure and decisions have been built on bad foundations since the start.

The process of deciding on the transition and route options for the Hinkley C connection has been going on for nearly 10 years now and those of us directly involved since the start have a detailed understanding of the issues, context and process.

A number of events and organisations have contributed to the current situation. I have set these out in a table to try and simplify a very complex situation over a 10 year period.

Using the 2008 National Infrastructure Planning Legislation National Grid were given the duty to complete a Development Consent scheme for the Hinkley C connection. The responsibility to properly consult on the best options for delivery were delegated to National Grid (the non-tendered provider)	National Grid completed numerous 'consultation' exercises but failed to respond correctly to the feedback. The impression given was that National Grid had already chosen a transmission option and route, the one which was most advantageous to themselves. Any alternative options and feedback were negatively received by them. The 'consultees' were placated by National Grid by their promises that the place to raise concerns and to question the process and option appraisal was when the Planning Inspectorate carried out their inspection. (We later found out this was not true)
Under the 2012 – National Infrastructure Planning Legislation the new Planning Inspectorate completed an inspection of the Hinkley C connection.	The Inspectorate spent 6 months seeking the views of stakeholders. Again consultees questioned both the process and the outcome of the Development Consent schemes. I was at many of the events and stakeholders again presented views on National Grid's failure to listen to consultation, the lack of evidence for their choice of option, alternative solutions and National Grid's general dismissive attitude towards

	<p>Stakeholders and the people of Somerset.</p> <p>At no point during the inspection process were we told that our comments were not relevant. At the very end of the year long inspection the Planning Inspectorate disclosed that at the point when the Inspectorate had accepted the project from National Grid there was no longer an opportunity to change the proposed option. Therefore, other than any views on the T.Pylons themselves, all of our feedback had been a waste of time. This left us feeling deliberately misled by National Grid and wondering why we hadn't been told about the limitations of the Inspection when we were actively encouraged to take part.</p>
Ofgem	<p>Ofgem's consultation last summer failed to include all relevant stakeholders, including those directly on the pylon route subject to compulsory purchase. Following the consultation Ofgem accepted that National Grid's options appraisal and evidence are poor. However Ofgem have failed to consider if undergrounding or under sea options are more appropriate. Ofgem's only concern is cost for an over-land option. Ofgem's argument that cost is the primary consideration makes no sense when National Grid are taking down pylons in other parts of the country and replacing them with underground transmission.</p> <p>Ironically Ofgem want to use the competitive tendering regime used for the connection of offshore wind farms rather than the one supplier (National Grid) option used for on shore transmission.</p> <p>Ofgem's recommendation of a competition proxy delivery model fails to challenge or resolve any of the real issues.</p>

The process that resulted in the current situation would seem to have gone wrong almost from the start and there has been a continued reluctance to recognise this and deal properly with the fundamental problem. The failure of National Grid to respond to consultation feedback appears to have fed into a misleading inspection process and then a limited Ofgem investigation.

Times have changed in 10 years and factors such as spending efficiency, the use of new and alternative technology, the impact on the environment and the local economy are even more prominent in people's thinking. The full range of impacts were never properly considered by National Grid and it would seem that their priority was to get approval to deliver their own preferred option.

Competition proxy doesn't challenge the process and the current position nor does it provide reassurance that the most suitable transmission solution is going to be used for one of the biggest and longest impacting infrastructure projects in the country.

All other transmission routes should be properly considered, costed and appraised. If Ofgem don't see this as an area of their responsibility I suggest they refer it to someone who can tackle it rather than add another bureaucratic layer to an obviously incorrect and badly made decision.