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Drigg and Carleton Parish Council

Drigg and Carleton Parish Council Response to ‘North West Coast Connection – Consultation on the projects Initial Needs Case and suitability for tendering’

Drigg and Carleton Parish Council wish to respond to the consultation being undertaken by Ofgem regarding the North West Coast Connection (NWCC) – Consultation on the projects Initial Needs Case and suitability for tendering. We wish to specifically comment on the southern connection of the 400keV system.

Drigg and Carleton Parish Council have recently completed a detailed response to the consultation undertaken by the National Grid for the North West Coast Connection (NWCC) project regarding that section affecting the Parish (EIA Section D1).

The Cumbria Parish Councils represent the interests of whole communities and understands the needs of different groups within (such as young and elderly people, local business and tourism). Comments within this response are from elected Councillors and their mandated representative(s), and benefits from understanding of the local community, built from long term experience delivering services to meet local needs, aiming to correctly appreciate, then improving quality of life and community wellbeing. It is in our interests to speak on behalf of our community to identify real improvements, so that we can best allow those communities to maintain their sense of purpose and belonging, protect very sensitive local business (small farming or tourism reliant companies for example), and maintain the community strength and character that makes this area special to the UK. We, therefore, believe we can be considered an authoritative Interested Party in the Ofgem consultation.

We note that the Ofgem consultation is divided into three themes, namely:

1. Whether Ofgem think there is a technical need for the project.
2. How National Grid (NGET) has narrowed down the option it has taken forward to its planning consultation.
3. Whether the project, or sections of it, are suitable for competitive tender.

We note with interest Ofgem's statement:

'Overall, we consider that a sensible and logical process has been followed to narrow down NGET's proposed design. However, we consider that the decision between NGET's favoured use of a tunnel under Morecambe Bay and an alternative approach of using subsea cables around the bay is relatively finely balanced. We have concerns that significant changes in the cost of the tunnel, or additional work identified through the planning process could indicate in the future that the subsea cable option could be better value for consumers. For this reason, if costs of the preferred option escalate significantly due to factors that NGET should have reasonably foreseen at this stage, we reserve the right as part of our Final Needs Case assessment to revisit the justification for its selected option.'

This aligns with the views of the Drigg and Carleton Parish Council and we endorse Ofgem's stance.

We note that whilst there are no perceived systems benefits to the undersea cable option (Appendix 1 Option 3), there are clear socio-economic and environmental benefits to the south Lakeland communities, together with potential reductions in the engineering risks and uncertainties associated with the construction of any Morecombe Bay tunnel. These factors coupled with the minimal cost differential from NGET's preferred option (Appendix 1 Option 2) justify a re-examination of the NGET's conclusions for the preferred southern route from the potential Moorside nuclear power station.

We wish to remain engaged with Ofgem as this project develops, and would like to obtain feedback on Ofgem's consultation.

Yours faithfully

R Williamson

on behalf of Drigg and Carleton Parish Council

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