SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh MP**
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Sent by email.

2 November, 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

**Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire Grid Upgrade (WMEL):**
**Preventing South Kesteven from becoming an Energy Infrastructure Corridor**

Following a formal resolution of South Kesteven District Council Council, I wish to express the Council's concerns regarding the proposed Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire (WMEL) Grid Upgrade and the wider development it is intended to facilitate.

The Council recognises and supports the national need for energy security, a resilient electricity network and the transition to low-carbon energy generation. The Council also acknowledges National Grid's position that the WMEL project will enable up to 14GW of renewable energy generation and facilitate up to 44 renewable energy connections.

The proposed scheme includes: over 60 kilometres of new or upgraded 400kV overhead transmission lines; new substations including one near Corby Glen in South Kesteven; and upgrades to existing infrastructure. These proposals represent a significant and potentially harmful change to the landscape of South Kesteven.

While the principle of strengthening the electricity network is understood, the Council is concerned about the proposal in its current form and, in particular, the lack of clarity regarding the full extent of development that the project is intended to enable.

Furthermore, the Council is extremely concerned that residents and local authorities are currently being asked to consider the project without a sufficient explanation of the potential wider development implications associated with the 44 grid connection points. At present, communities do not have a clear picture of where these connections could lead to further grid infrastructure such as renewable energy generation, battery energy storage systems, substations, cable corridors and associated development. Without such information, it is difficult for residents, local authorities and decision-makers to assess properly the likely long-term consequences of the scheme.

The Council is particularly concerned about the potential cumulative impacts on:

- Agricultural land and national food security;
- Landscape character and visual amenity;
- Biodiversity and ecological networks;
- Heritage assets and the historic environment;

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- Tourism and the rural economy;
- Local businesses and investment;
- Rural settlements and community wellbeing;
- Traffic movements and local infrastructure;
- Fire risk and the need for a full Fire Management Strategy;
- Protection of trees and wildlife;
- Future development that may be facilitated by the upgraded power lines including substations, pylons, battery storage facilities, underground cabling and associated energy infrastructure.

South Kesteven is a predominantly rural district with a strong agricultural base, valued landscapes, important heritage assets and thriving rural communities.

The Council does not accept that the district should become an energy infrastructure corridor without a clear understanding of the full scale of development being enabled, the cumulative impacts that may result, and the potential consequences for our communities, landscape and economy.

The Council is further concerned that major energy infrastructure is increasingly being considered through individual project applications despite communities experiencing the combined impacts of multiple schemes.

The Council believes the WMEL should be assessed alongside existing, consented and proposed energy infrastructure across Lincolnshire and neighbouring areas, rather than being considered in isolation. A strategic assessment of cumulative impacts is essential if decision-makers and affected communities are to understand the true scale of change that could occur across the region.

In addition, the Council requests a transparent assessment of reasonable alternatives, including alternative routes and available technologies, together with a clear demonstration that WMEL forms part of a comprehensive and strategically planned national energy network.

Communities must be assured that decisions are being taken in line with a genuinely co-ordinated national strategy, rather than risking irreversible, piecemeal development before wider strategic considerations have been fully assessed.

The Council also wishes to raise concerns regarding democratic accountability within the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process. Local authorities, statutory bodies and communities are expected to invest significant time and resources in consultations and examinations. It is therefore essential that those contributions are demonstrably capable of influencing outcomes. Public confidence in the planning process depends upon meaningful engagement and transparent decision-making.

The Council is concerned that, regardless of the considerable evidence and resources committed through the examination process, the final decision on this and other NSIPs ultimately rests with an individual Secretary of State. Some recent projects including 'Sunnica' and 'One Earth' have caused concern about decisions being taken contrary to the recommendations of the Examining Authority. The Council believes mechanisms should exist to ensure robust local and independent scrutiny carries meaningful weight in the final determination of such applications.

In light of these concerns, South Kesteven District Council respectfully requests that National Grid and/or the Government:-

1. Produces or requires a comprehensive strategic assessment of the WMEL project and the development it is intended to facilitate, including the 44 potential renewable energy connections and their associated impacts.
2. Ensures the cumulative impacts of WMEL and other existing, consented and proposed energy infrastructure projects are properly assessed.
3. Publishes a transparent assessment of alternatives, including route options and technologies, together with evidence to demonstrate the project aligns with a coherent national energy strategy.
4. Engages directly with affected local authorities and communities to ensure local concerns are properly understood and addressed.

I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you and relevant departmental officials to discuss these matters in more detail and to ensure the concerns of South Kesteven residents and communities are fully understood before decisions are taken on this nationally significant proposal.

Finally, to reiterate, South Kesteven District Council supports the principle of a secure and resilient energy network. However, it does not accept that South Kesteven should become an energy infrastructure corridor without a clear understanding of the full development being enabled, its cumulative impact, and the anticipated consequences for our agricultural land, communities, landscape and economy.

I look forward to your response and to an opportunity for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Ashley Baxter**
**Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for HR and Economic Development**
**South Kesteven District Council**

**cc:**

- Sir John Hayes MP
- Alicia Kearns MP
- Gareth Davies MP
- Dame Andrea Jenkyns, Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire
- Leader - Lincolnshire County Council
- Leader - South Holland District Council
- Leader - Melton Borough Council
- Chairs of Affected Parish Councils