

Country Land and Business Association
16 Belgrave Square
London
SW1X 8PQ



28 July 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

National Grid ESO Consultation on Grid Connections Reform

We write in relation to the above consultation. The CLA is the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales. We help safeguard the interests of landowners, and those with an economic, social and environmental interest in rural land. Our 27,000 members own or manage around half the rural land in England and Wales and over 250 different types of businesses.

CLA and its members have an interest in renewable energy generation, network issues and the grid connections process. Our members tell us that costs and delays in getting grid connections are a major constraint at all scales of operation.

The current consultation concerns the process around connecting to the transmission networks. Some of our larger acreage members are engaged in developing renewable energy generation and storage and have been quoted prohibitively long timescales and costs in order to connect their proposed projects to the transmission network, with estimates given well into the mid 2030's. This situation, where well founded projects are largely treated the same as speculative ones in the management of the project 'queue' and allocation of grid capacity, threatens the viability of otherwise proceedable projects and can lead to project abandonment. The current situation is simply unsustainable and incompatible with the achievement of ambitious government targets for renewable energy deployment and meeting net zero goals.

CLA are supportive of the work that NG ESO and Ofgem are doing to address this situation. The changes to the grid connections process proposed by NG ESO in 'preferred option' TMO4 appear to CLA to be proportionate ones which will significantly improve the situation, allow 'serious', proceedable projects to be better distinguished from more speculative ones and result in more realistic, 'merit based' timescales for connection being given to applicants.

However, as we work towards a more decentralised future model of electricity generation, storage, transmission and distribution, in which rurally based projects will play an important part, it is essential that reform to grid connections processes at all scales - by network operators, the regulator and other involved parties - are implemented in a co-ordinated and equitable way.

This needs to ensure that projects of all sizes receive fair and equitable treatment, whether they seek connection to the distribution or transmission networks. Smaller generation and storage and demand projects should not be unfairly disadvantaged or effectively prevented from being able to connect and secure capacity and contribute to our energy security and economic growth. Security and continuity of future electricity supplies will come from a diversity

of project sizes and greater deployment of local generation and supply 'mini-grids' embedded within modernised wider networks.

CLA advocates that this important principle, of reforming grid connection processes in ways which ensure that a diversity of project sizes can connect to the networks in a cost effective and timely way, is central to how reform of the grid connections regime for all our electricity networks should be taken forward.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Graham Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Graham Clark MRICS
Senior Land Use Policy Adviser