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BY EMAIL

Dear Minister of State,

The Airfield Advisory Team within the CAA, and the delivery of energy infrastructure

I am writing to you to bring to your attention the proposed disbanding of the Airfield Advisory Team within the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). As the Councillor responsible for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects at Suffolk County Council, I am only too aware of the critical technical advice that this unit provides.

The advice of the unit has been crucial in shaping improvements to the proposed pylon line between Norwich and Tilbury, which is expected to make its formal application for development consent in summer 2025.

With this in mind, and the wider ambition for a “Great Grid Upgrade”, by National Grid Electricity Transmission, (NGET) consisting of 17 major projects across GB, as well as the associated onshore wind and solar targets, I am very concerned that the closure of this unit will leave the Planning Inspectorate, and the Secretary of State at DESNZ, without robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure. All of which can have a significant impact on the operational effectiveness of airfields and air safety. In addition, adverse impact from obstructions, or glint and glare from solar farms, may limit the commercial, strategic, and recreational operation of airfields, across the country.

Suffolk County Council considers that effective and robust technical advice from authoritative sources is essential, not only to secure effective delivery of energy infrastructure, but also to ensure public confidence and trust in the joined-up processes by which this infrastructure is delivered. Therefore, the service provided by the Airfield Advisory Team is essential to the effective delivery of new nationally

significant energy infrastructure and the safe delivery of the government's 2030 ambition to decarbonise the electricity grid.

I would ask that you would work closely with the CAA, DESNZ and the Treasury, to ensure that this critical advice remains available to decision makers and statutory consultees alike. This will both ensure air safety, and maintain essential scrutiny of the design, and impacts, of project proposals.

Yours Sincerely



Richard Rout

Deputy Cabinet Member Nationally
Significant Infrastructure Projects

cc.

Michael Shanks MP Minister for Energy DESNZ

Chair Aviation APPG