



## **SOUTH DOWNS NETWORK**

*Working for the best possible National Park*

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Chair: Dr A Whitbread

Chris Tomlinson  
Rampion Project Manager  
E.ON UK Ltd

4 May, 2012

Dear Chris,

### **South Downs Network – 1<sup>st</sup> consultation response to Rampion windfarm proposals**

The South Downs Network is a group of community environmental, conservation and recreational organisations that have come together to work for the best possible South Downs National Park. It comprises nearly 50 organisations, although some of these bodies are networks themselves, so the effective membership is much wider.

The South Downs Network would like to welcome the amount of work that E.ON has undertaken in the past 12 weeks to raise awareness of the Rampion windfarm proposals. Unfortunately, while it has made great efforts to do this, for many organisations, the lack of more detailed information has hampered them making any informed comment on the proposals.

The South Downs Network also welcomes the proposal to put the cable underground, to connect the windfarm to the National Grid.

More particularly, the South Downs Network would like to make seven further points on the proposals:

1. The formal stage of the consultation, when the Environmental Impact Assessment is released, should be 12 weeks long. Given the amount of data that is likely to be published, 6 weeks is far too short for organisations to properly absorb this information and to make a considered response, particularly if they have to go through any democratic procedures. This is a particular problem for Network members, many of whom are voluntary organisations with no paid staff.
2. Access to the information might also be a problem and electronic copies are not always easy to use, particularly for larger maps and photomontages. Therefore the South Downs Network would like to ask that at least one hard copy is provided at the Sussex

Wildlife Trust headquarters at Woods Mill which is close to the route of the proposed underground cable. This would allow members of the South Downs Network better access to the documentation and give them a more realistic opportunity to assess the environmental impacts.

3. The windfarm will have both short-term and long-term landscape visual impacts – for example it will be visible from the Heritage Coast where tranquillity is high and there is an absence of incongruous features. Therefore, every effort should be made to avoid that impact and if that is not possible to mitigate it as far as possible. If, after all that, the scheme is considered acceptable overall, compensation should be paid for any outstanding landscape impact on the National Park. Given the recent confirmation of the South Downs as a National Park, great weight should be given to these issues.
4. The South Downs Network is concerned that no photomontages were produced showing the view from the top of any hill along the Heritage Coast during this first consultation. The only photomontage from this area was lower down at Birling Gap. This has not helped the public assess the likely impact of the proposals. To rectify this absence of data, the South Downs Network would like to see photomontages of the view on a clear day from several high vantage points along the Heritage Coast, including Seaford Head (the closest point to the windfarm), one of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head.
5. The Network is extremely concerned about the choice of the underground cable route and that there has been inadequate consultation over this route with local stakeholders. No alternative route options have been presented; including an option to avoid the National Park altogether, and little information has been released about the route selection. Ideally, the route should avoid the National Park, but if this proves impossible, it should be as short as possible to minimise its impact. At the point where the National Park is at its narrowest, some 4 – 5km wide, it does not seem credible that the shortest possible cable route through the National Park is some 14km long. The impression given by E.ON is that the route has already been negotiated with landowners and cannot be substantially changed which is undermining confidence in the process.
6. Any cable route through the South Downs National Park should be preceded by a full archaeological survey.
7. There should be no closure of any major rights of way (national trail, bridleway or major footpath) in, or linking to, the National Park, during construction of the cable route. Where it is necessary to divert a path for a short distance it is important that there are clear signs to warn all users.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Tony Whitbread

Chair

South Downs Network