

Nick Timothy, Member of Parliament for West Suffolk



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

Jon Butterworth, CEO, National Gas

23 October 2025

Dear Mr Butterworth

As you know, the Government issued a Development Consent Order last July for the construction of the 2,500 acre Sunnica solar and battery project on farmland in my constituency of West Suffolk, as well as on land across the county border in Cambridgeshire.

In addition to over a million solar panels, this project will also include ca. 500MW/2400MWh of lithium-ion battery energy storage (LiBESS) that will rank it amongst the world's largest battery energy storage facilities. Hundreds of Sunnica Ltd's LiBESS containers will be spread across three sites (ca. 77 acres):

- **East A**, next to West Row/Isleham/Mildenhall
- **East B**, next to Red Lodge/Freckenham and;
- **West A**, next to Chippenham/Snailwell/Newmarket.

The high-pressure gas line to the Li-BESS site at Sunnica East site B is part of the National Transmission System and is owned and operated by National Gas. This pipeline passes near the properties of my constituents in the village of Freckenham, for example, and Cadent leaflets have been issued asking those living in the area not to dig, have bonfires or plant anything near the pipeline.

There are known safety risks related to LiBESS technology, including the hazard of explosion and extreme heat during potential thermal runaway (as high as 1,000 degrees Celsius). Our local fire and rescue service in Suffolk (SFRS) consider LiBESS 'an emerging risk.' Yet fire services have no legal power to enforce safety measures on battery sites. As such, these services have called for more regulatory powers. Nor do SFRS or the Cambridgeshire FRS (CFRS) have the resources to deal with such incidents. This is especially concerning as the three Sunnica LiBESS sites are close to homes, businesses, schools and prime cropland.

I understand that the Say No to Sunnica (SNTS) campaign has been in touch with you as the owner of this pipeline to seek reassurance regarding the potential safety risk given the location of this pipeline near the future Sunnica LiBESS installations. SNTS are not at all satisfied with the responses received and requested that I get in touch to follow up.

I would like to ask the following questions:

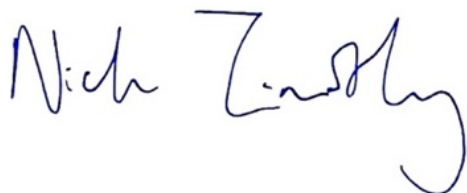
- SNTS say that National Gas have refused to confirm whether any BESS-specific hazard analysis, quantitative risk assessment, or thermal radiation modelling has been carried out in relation to the gas pipeline. **Please can you tell me very clearly whether or not this has occurred?**
- SNTS say National Gas relies on general construction standards and easements but have not been able to demonstrate due diligence regarding the unique fire and explosion risks posed by lithium-ion BESS. **Please can you confirm to me that appropriate due diligence relating to the potential risk of LiBESS has been carried out?**
- Are you able to provide any other examples in the UK where gas pipelines have been or are planned to be co-located with LiBESS?
- Are you able to confirm that you have consulted the local Fire and Rescue Services about the potential safety questions related to the building of the Sunnica scheme so close to this gas pipeline?

SNTS is concerned about the apparent lack of due diligence regarding the safety of allowing LiBESS technology to be placed so close to a high-pressure gas main. It is of the view that residents have not been given straight answers on how public safety risks are being gauged or mitigated.

I am sure you will agree that it is in the interests of all that when residents are concerned about the safety of their families and their homes, they should be given clear answers about what measures have or have not been taken to assess or minimise the potential risks.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Timothy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nick Timothy
Member of Parliament for West Suffolk