

# **£1.6 billion super highway substation plans back**

**Plans for a substation at the centre of a £1.6 billion project to create an underwater “super highway” to bring offshore energy into the UK network are set to get the go ahead next week.**

The latest application is a key link in plans to create an Eastern Link between Torness and County Durham which aims to turn the North Sea into an energy powerhouse for the future.

SP Energy has resubmitted proposals for the 400 kilovolt (kV) Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation at Branxton and despite receiving more than 60 objections including from local community councils, officers are recommending it for approval.

It is estimate around 12km of underground cables will be required to link the new substation, a converter station and landfall sites in East Lothian with 176km sub-sea cables linking Torness and County Durham sites.

However the substation, which it is estimated could take up to five years to construct with work going on six days a week as it is built, has raised concerns from local residents.who say the area is already taking an ‘unfair amount’ of renewable projects and are concerned about the lengthy construction hours.

East Lammermuir Community Council said that while it supports the aims of the Scottish Government and East Lothian Council

in pursuing the renewable energy agenda, they could not support the proposed development.

They called for a 'pause' on the substation saying it is the "key to all of the other developments" and "major schemes" in the area.

And neighbouring West Barns Community Council said it had concerns about the cumulative impact of the number of energy projects focused around the site, adding the new grid connection being created was a "a breeder of a proliferation of energy projects seeking to gain access to the National Grid".

Despite the objections, council officers are recommending the application is approved when it goes before the planning committee next week.

Announcing plans for the new Eastern Link two years ago SP Energy said it would deliver "an underwater super-highway that would see the North Sea become the hidden power house of Europe".

The company says the work is vital in meeting net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the future as it works with the National Grid to develop some of the longest underwater high-voltage, direct current (HVDC) links in the world.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter