

Sea Link DCO (EN020026)

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) – Request to participate in Preliminary Meeting and comments for Procedural Deadline A

Submitted 8 October 2025 in response to the Examining Authority's Rule 6 Letter ([PD-010](#))

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1. Introduction

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) is an Interested Party in the Examination of the Sea Link DCO, representing local communities affected by the Sea Link proposal and the other major energy infrastructure proposed/consented for the area. We draw on local knowledge, expert input, and professional advice. Our objective is to assist the Examining Authority (ExA) in ensuring that this Examination is fair, transparent, and robust.

We wish to participate in the Preliminary Meeting (PM) scheduled for 5 November 2025, and by this submission we respond to the request in the ExA's Rule 6 letter ([PD-010](#)) for:

confirmation of the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points that you wish to make.

SEAS wishes to speak on PM agenda items **3, 4, 5 and 6**, and we provide a list of the points that we wish to make under each agenda item below.

We make clear at the outset that we are very concerned by the following, from a procedural fairness perspective:

- 1. Applicant's refusal to carry out necessary surveys/provide necessary baseline information** (Additional submissions provided by the Applicant in response to the ExA's s89(3) requests by letters of 8 July, 5 August, 5 September; responses submitted on 1 and 16 September 2025). As a result, the Examination will continue to be without the information it requires for a robust assessment of the Proposals' impacts, including cumulative impacts.
- 2. Applicant-driven changes to the application** (Notification of Applicant's Intention to Submit Request for Proposed Changes to the Development Consent Order Application, dated 16 September 2025 (accepted as [AS-138](#)), the subject of the ExA's response in the 25 September 2025 Rule 9 letter ([PD-011](#))). These raise fundamental issues about the scope of the Proposed DCO, compulsory acquisition powers, and procedural fairness, not least because the suggestion is that Interested Parties will have only a matter of weeks, including the Christmas holiday period, to consider and respond to the actual change.

3. **Applicant's provision of further information** (Additional submissions provided by the Applicant in response to the ExA's s89(3) requests by letters 8 July ([PD-005](#)), 5 August ([PD-006](#)), 5 September ([PD-008](#)); responses submitted on 1 and 16 September 2025 ([AS-084](#) to AS-104 & [AS-106](#) to AS-142)). These include material on highly technical topics, such as noise, or flood risk.
4. **National Grid Group's suggestion that it will publish the LionLink PEIR in late 2025/early 2026.** That PEIR will almost certainly contain information relevant to cumulative impacts, but it seems participants in the Sea Link DCO Application will have to attempt to absorb it on the hoof, if at all, and juggle their participation here with an attempt to respond to any LionLink consultation.

Together, these matters result in an unhappy combination of (i) the Applicant refusing to provide the ExA or Examination participants such as SEAS with the information needed to robustly assess the Proposals, and (ii) creating a "moving target" for Interested Parties and others.

We are very concerned what this might mean for the Examination in terms of participants' ability to participate fully and fairly and for the ExA having the right information. Being blunt, we are surprised that the Applicant is trying to press ahead to the PM, despite knowing that from the PM the "starting gun" is fired on the timetable and the ExA is required to do all that it can to complete the Examination within six months, rather than taking the time needed to do things properly and asking the ExA to move the PM back.

In any event, the above require adjustments to the Examination timetable and the scheduling of further Issue Specific Hearings (ISHs).

PM agenda item 3 - Initial assessment of principal issues – annex C to Rule 6 Letter

SEAS welcomes the ExA's initial assessment of principal issues (IAP), including, as we understand it, the list of '*matters that will be taken into account as overarching or integral components of the IAP*', set out at annex C to the Rule 6 letter. We assume that those '*overarching or integral components of the IAP*', which include many issues we regard as of utmost importance, will be the subject of ISHs (and see agenda item 4 below).

However, SEAS considers that some important issues are missing or require greater emphasis, including:

- **Effect on transport, notably cumulative effects, and linked impacts on tourism and the local economy.** Whilst we note these appear under "Construction Effects", we consider they are sufficiently important they merit emphasis in their own right.
- **Health & Wellbeing, including community mental health impacts and amenity harm, the same issue, in that these appear under "Construction Effects" but we consider is sufficiently important to merit emphasis in their own right (a major deficiency of assessment in the Application, despite evidence from local surveys that community mental health and**

wellbeing are already being adversely affected by the uncertainty and cumulative stress of energy infrastructure proposals).

- Noise and vibration (and amenity impacts generally). We cannot see these are identified.
- Archaeology, which we are concerned is not singled out (including under the '*Design, Landscape, Heritage and Visual Effects*' Principal Issue). The hengiform discovery at Friston, which SEAS considers entirely predictable given how rich the Suffolk Sandlings is in buried heritage from the period, has already prompted the Applicant to moot a cable route change. There is no doubt a great deal more buried heritage as yet undiscovered that the Proposals will impact, and realistically the Application should be considered as evolving and incomplete.
- Cost of the Proposals: the figures appear to be a moveable feast based on the Applicant's parallel recent request to Ofgem for Early Construction Funding (ECF) (which request, unfortunately, appears to treat the confirmation of the Sea Link DCO as a formality/fait accompli). So far as SEAS can tell, the "budget" the Applicant has present on this DCO Application, of some £1.6billion, has been presented to Ofgem as something over £2billion.

We request that these matters are also treated as Principal Issues for the purposes of the Examination.

SEAS intends to submit written representations on the Principal Issues once the ExA has confirmed the Principal Issues at/shortly after the PM. **However, SEAS is concerned by the limited time available between then and deadline 1 (18 November 2025), which is less than the statutory 21 days.**

We also note that ISH1 on *Scope of the Development* is scheduled for 11 November 2025, which is before deadline 1 for written representations, and before the Applicant has been asked to confirm any actual application to change the proposed DCO. We are also concerned by this (and do not understand how the topic can be sensibly handled at that point in a timetable). For the avoidance of any doubt, we intend to participate.

PM agenda item 4 - Draft examination timetable – annex D to Rule 6 Letter

Further to our response to PM agenda item 3 above, SEAS respectfully requests that the ExA schedules dedicated ISHs (or ensures adequate agenda time within environmental ISHs) for the following matters:

- Needs Case / System Need
- Alternatives & Site Selection
- Cumulative Impacts (with LionLink, EA1N/EA2, Sizewell C)
- Traffic & Transport
- Tourism and local economy
- Noise & Vibration
- Flood Risk & Drainage

- Ecology
- Archaeology & Heritage
- Health & Wellbeing
- Cost

For the avoidance of any doubt, SEAS wishes to participate in the ISHs for all of these.

We further request that the ExA requires the Applicant to provide cumulative visualisations including LionLink and ensures that the Applicant's mooted changes ([AS-138](#)) are fully scrutinised and that compulsory acquisition powers are rigorously tested.

In addition, we reiterate our concerns that:

- **There will be limited time available between the ExA's confirmation of the Principal Issues at/shortly after the PM and deadline 1 (18 November 2025), which is less than the statutory 21 days.**
- **ISH1 on Scope of the Development is scheduled for 11 November 2025, which is before deadline 1 for written representations, and before the Applicant has been asked to confirm any actual application to change the proposed DCO. We do not understand how this topic can sensibly be handled at this stage of the timetable.**

We consider that both of these raise issues of procedural fairness, and would be grateful for the ExA's reconsideration of the proposed procedural approach here.

Further, as it seems to us to fall most logically under this agenda item, we say something here about procedural fairness more generally, beyond those two particular points.

Procedural Fairness

SEAS is concerned that the procedural complexity and shifting nature of this Examination risks prejudicing the ability of Interested Parties to engage meaningfully with the application.

The Applicant's late Notification of Intention to Submit Request for Proposed Changes to the DCO Application ([AS-138](#), 16 September 2025), alongside multiple responses to s89(3) requests ([PD-005](#), [PD-006](#), [PD-007](#) & [PD-008](#)), including provision of further information on technical topics such as noise and flood risk, has altered the scope and content of the application and/or Examination at a late stage.

Equally, the Applicant's refusal, despite the ExA's efforts, to provide necessary baseline information/survey information/other information, including on such issues as traffic baselines, ecological survey gaps, archaeological impacts, and visualisations, means the Examination and participants in the Examination, as well as the ExA, are missing what is needed for a robust assessment of the Proposals. Interested Parties

are left trying to plug gaps that should never have been left open by the Applicant, but without the Applicant's resources to do so.

This undermines fairness and places a disproportionate burden on community groups and non-statutory stakeholders.

SEAS can plug some gaps through basic common sense. For example, the Applicant's justification for not providing the necessary traffic baseline information, comprising a "neutral" month or months and taking into account the summer tourist peak, is an attempt to sidestep on the basis that: *'Had higher Baseline traffic flows been adopted to consider seasonal fluctuations during the Summer for example, then the percentage increases as a result of forecast construction traffic associated with the Proposed Project would have been lower than the levels reported and assessed... resulting in fewer potential impacts being identified'*. This misses the point, obviously so: if a road or a junction is already experiencing x amount of traffic, and y amount in addition will put it over capacity (so leading to traffic breakdown), or increase the risk of collisions, then what matters is whether the additional traffic will amount to y (or more than y), not what the additional traffic is, expressed as a % of x. But many of the gaps the Applicant has left, in the face of the ExA's points, are truly "expert".

The concerns raised in the ExA's s89(3) letters ([PD-005](#), [PD-006](#), [PD-008](#)), were matters that should have been properly addressed at application stage, not deferred into Examination, and the Applicant's general approach of refusal or only partial acquiescence in its responses (of 1 and 16 September ([AS-084](#) to AS-104 & [AS-106](#) to AS-142)), mean that key areas remain procedurally and evidentially inadequate, and it is essential that the Examination provides sufficient opportunity for oral scrutiny.

By deadline 1 (18 November 2025), SEAS will make written representations regarding the Applicant's refusal to provide necessary baseline, survey and other information.

However, SEAS considers that these matters add weight to the need for ISHs into the PIs as suggested above.

As regards the compressed timetable in connection with the Applicant's mooted changes to the Proposed DCO, the Rule 9 letter ([PD-011](#)) proceeds on the basis that the Applicant's actual change application will not be submitted until late November 2025, with Interested Parties expected to respond in early January 2026. This falls during the holiday period and will almost certainly disadvantage Interested Parties and participants generally, particularly community groups and non-statutory organisations with limited resources.

We request the timetable for responses to any change to the Proposed DCO be extended, to at least early February 2026, and the timetable generally adjusted accordingly. We will do our best to respond to any notified changes through written representations but ask that we be given a fair opportunity in that respect, which means more time.

As regards LionLink, and the National Grid Group's indication that it will publish the LionLink PEIR in late 2025/early 2026, we invite the ExA to raise this issue with the Applicant, given LionLink is a project of its sister company, and that

the ExA build in time for participants in the Sea Link Examination to properly absorb whatever is published regarding LionLink, and feed in to this Examination as appropriate, without finding themselves unable to also respond to LionLink.

PM agenda item 5 - Procedural decisions – annex G to Rule 6 Letter

As to this, SEAS does not propose to raise any particular points at the PM but asks the ExA to please note that we have suggested rewording of the DCO by reference to the EAN1/EA2 DCO in our Relevant Rep (and also that we offered to enter into a SoCG process with NGET, but it declined).

PM agenda item 6 - Any other matters

We do tentatively wonder whether the couple of hours scheduled for the PM itself will be sufficient, and whether it would be prudent to schedule a day, rather than have the first OFH follow on immediately thereafter in the afternoon.

5. Summary of requests and conclusion

SEAS emphasises that it is committed to assisting the ExA in ensuring that the Examination of Sea Link is fair, transparent, and robust. We will provide detailed evidence at Deadline 1 and throughout the Examination process. At this stage, our focus is on ensuring that the timetable and hearings structure allow for proper scrutiny of the Proposals, both as they stand and as they might be if changed.

SEAS looks forward to continuing to engage constructively with the Examination.

End

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