

Sea Link oral testimony at planning enquiry 6 Nov 2025

As you all know, Sea Link was conceived on the basis that East Suffolk would be awash with electrical power from Sizewell C, subsea power cables from Europe and connections to offshore wind farms – all of which would have to be transferred from Suffolk to the grid closer to where it is needed, nearer London. But In February this year Ofgem announced that one of those subsea cables, Nautilus, would now come ashore at Grain in Kent and not, as originally announced, on the Suffolk coast. The old argument, that this would be too costly, had been overturned by what Ofgem called ‘a reassessment of the strategic value and wider benefits.’

That decision undermines the entire rationale for Sea Link, since this reassessment of the cost/benefits of Nautilus can clearly be applied to all the other energy projects currently scheduled to make landfall in Suffolk – they can simply continue offshore to Grain. To do otherwise would be far more costly, not just in terms of the huge environmental damage to the East Suffolk landscape, tragic though this would be, but in terms of damage to the local economy.

That economy is very largely based on tourism, a complex and far-reaching ecosystem which involves almost every type of business in the area, large and small. Tourists come here because the area is beautiful, with wonderful coastal walks, ancient woodland, an extraordinary diversity of wildlife, medieval

churches, and a rich cultural heritage (of which this concert hall is a prime example). And they are able to come because, despite its glorious sense of isolation, east Suffolk is easily accessible.

All of which is now threatened and would be completely destroyed if Sea Link and the other offshore energy projects make landfall in Suffolk. Roads closed, hedgerow oaks cut down, ancient woodlands flattened, habitats laid waste, and a landscape supposedly protected by every sort of national and international safeguard destroyed without hope of recovery. A treasured place replaced with a depressing vista of huge substations and converter stations, and motorway-wide trenching scars reaching across the land.

The cost of such destruction is immeasurable, destroying hope and confidence in the future, but we can put a reasonable estimate of the cost in terms of the tourist economy - which is said to have contracted by 17% thus far and is forecast to be almost wiped out, at a cost of between £10 and £15 billion over the construction timescale envisaged for these projects.

Letting Sea Link to go ahead as planned would be the lazy option, allowing the mantra of 'nationally significant project' to trump common sense. There are alternative and better ways of doing things.