

I am speaking on behalf of Offshore4Sure — a network of independent groups in England, Wales and Scotland.

We fully support: the UK's transition to net zero and offshore wind and transmission reinforcement.

I am here to question the national system implications of Sea Link and to explain why, given the Nautilus changes, this proposal must be re-examined because the UK is not being offered the best solution by the Applicant.

This Sea Link Application reflects legacy grid system design & thinking, whilst proven alternatives exist that are cheaper & faster to deliver and cause significantly less harm.

I am questioning the national, system-wide implications of Sea Link, and show that now, the Examining Authority has clear grounds — indeed a responsibility — to question whether the Applicant's Sea Link proposal is still appropriate.

Across the North Sea, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Germany are all building now hybrid, meshed offshore grids that pool energy offshore and then bring it onshore at brownfield industrial hubs near demand.

This approach is:

- Faster to consent, as there is less onshore infrastructure
- Cheaper, since infrastructure is shared and curtailment is reduced
- Better for communities & biodiversity as the onshore footprint is smaller

This solution is real. Siemens, Hitachi and GE are all making & delivering offshore converter platforms today.

Last week, SPR's EA3 windfarm completed an offshore HVDC converter platform in the North Sea, 69km from the Suffolk Coast with undersea cables taking energy from that platform to landfall and connecting to the Grid at Bramford.

So, the question is NOT whether the UK could do this, but rather why are we still planning major onshore infrastructure, as if this better solution did not exist.

Sea Link was planned using assumptions that multiple interconnectors and wind connections would cluster in the Sizewell area.

That's no longer true.

Nautilus has moved to the Isle of Grain and the 1.5GW driver for reinforcement in Suffolk removed at a stroke.

LionLink is not consented, and its connection point is not fixed.

It can be connected as part of an offshore grid.

With Nautilus gone and if Lion Link is treated as speculative rather than assumed as certain, the claimed "Sizewell need" collapses from 2GW to a deficit.

So, Sea Link is no longer solving the need, it claims to be solving!

This crucial change demands immediate reassessment.

In 2020, National Grid ESO modelling showed greater offshore integration in East Anglia alone could save around £2 billion and about £6 billion nationally, based on official systems planning analysis commissioned for the Government.

Offshore pooling reduces the need for & cost of redundant onshore converter stations.

Plus

- It halves the onshore construction footprint
- It minimises constraint cost spirals, which land on consumer bills
- Construction periods are shorter and easier to sequence,
- There is less than half the community disruption, compared with the current project-by-project landfall approach.

This is the very definition of a more efficient network under the Electricity Act (1989), and a material consideration under NPS EN-1 and EN-5.

So: why is Sea Link still being planned for here?

This is an NSIP hearing. The Applicant should be presenting a Nationally Significant solution.

It's not. It's a sub-optimal solution, because the Applicant did not revisit the alternatives, once the location of Nautilus changed. It's worse, as their proposal actually increases the risks of harmful environmental impacts that will reduce the UK's ability to withstand climate change.

To be clear:

NPS EN-1 and EN-5 require the Applicant to show that harmful sites are justified when less harmful alternatives exist. They have not demonstrated that.

We are not asking the Examining Authority to design the UK grid.

What we are asking for is something procedurally fair and legally required.

A dedicated Issue-Specific Hearing on network alternatives and offshore hybrid solutions, since the Need Case has so clearly changed.

The Examining Authority has shown interest in alternative sites and system designs.

There is now clear, current and decision-relevant evidence that merits further examination.

A pause for such a hearing is not a delay.

It enables due diligence, to ensure the right solution is consented for the next 50 years.

Sea Link is not required for Suffolk and is not the right solution.

If unchallenged, this Application may set a precedent for how Britain connects offshore wind farms for decades to come.

We have one chance to get this right.

Get it wrong — we lock in extra cost, inefficiency and public resistance.

Get it right — we achieve net zero faster, at lower cost and with public support.

Better alternatives exist and are technically ready NOW plus the Needs and Site Case for Sea Link have fundamentally changed.

We request:

- An Issue-Specific Hearing on network alternatives
- The Examining Authority do not recommend consent in its current form

Thank you.