

Interested Party Reference number:



Submission to PINS against the Sea Link proposals to come ashore across Minster Marshes

I write to urge the Planning Inspectorate to place the value of a precious and unique environment above that of apparent savings to the privately owned profit-led company that is National Grid.

It is apparent to all that the reasoning behind National Grid's selection of Minster Marshes to bring this infrastructure ashore is cost-led, although I believe that, even by this measure, they are mistaken in their choice of site.

Given National Grid's own advice that such vulnerable infrastructure should not be installed in zones at significant risk of flooding, is the choice of coastal marshes in line with National Grid's own policies?

Given that the salt marshes in question flood frequently, that sea level rise in the near future is scientifically accepted as an assured outcome of climate warming and that to protect the installation from such risks will be extensive and expensive, surely clever money would be investing in other options where both the environment and the infrastructure itself will be at significantly less risk of damage?

The only answer to these questions can be that this is, for National Grid, the first of many such infrastructure incursions into Minster Marshes. They are looking to gain a foothold here which will facilitate future works, perhaps from the European mainland, but they are not being honest about future plans; this is why this proposal, standing alone as it does at present, appears postposterous to us or to anyone sensible.

However, for National Grid, I am sure, it is the thin end of the wedge, and that makes it even more imperative that we fight it, because this will not be the last destructive project imposed on these precious marshes and on the people of Thanet.

For me, this means that the overarching importance of the intrinsic value to the World of such environments as Minster Marshes must be recognised and the test for whether an infrastructure project (or projects) may damage them and disrupt them must be a very high bar indeed.

Unlike prime agricultural land, the marshes are not valued by the square meter or any other metric; they are not protected from harm, as they should be, by their value.

The wildlife, both flora and fauna, reliant on these marshes has no monetary value; however the cost of its loss will be incalculable.

Furthermore, Nature's ability to recover from insults and damage, such as that proposed here, is significantly inhibited by the pressures of climate change, already proving dangerous to so many of the species which spend their summers or winters here as a vital part of their breeding programmes.

Landscapes and environments such as this are irreplaceable. They are, on the face of it, protected by laws and regulations, but the agencies empowered to uphold those protections lack teeth and the real power to do so.

These hearings will expose whether or not the planning authority in question, ultimately the Secretary of State, lacks the will to do so, because they DO have the power.

I ask the Planning Inspectorate to deny permission to National Grid to lay waste to this precious environment and send this decision to the Secretary of State, so that the truth of this Government's expressed intention to protect the environment is exposed for us all to see, together with the true scale of National Grid's plans for this precious shoreline.

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