

Response to Planning Inspectorate Hearing held at Snape Maltings – 7th November 2025

Sirs,

On 7th November 2025 I attended the SeaLink DCO planning application hearing held in Snape Maltings, and largely concur with the views expressed by local action groups such as SEAS, SAND SASES. Here I write to you as an Interested Party living in Friston, and one deeply concerned at the extensive industrialisation by National Grid (NG) of the rural surrounds to this village, whose existence extends back to the Middle Ages. I urge the Inspectorate to make a site visit to see the extent of the visual change to our immediate surroundings and loss of footpaths

It should be recognised from the outset, that, via the CION process, NG offered Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) a connexion to the 400 kV overhead lines (OHL) at Friston despite there being no National Grid infrastructure at this site other than the pylons supporting the OHL. To implement such a connexion, it was clear that NG would need to build and operate its own substation to house the requisite switch gear and cable sealing ends.

NG did not enter a separate DCO application for its own substation, but “hid” its requirements within the SPR submission. Particularly it wished the substation built as close as possible to that of SPR’s (<500 metres) to the SPR substations for reasons of electrical stability and ideally co-located. This requirement skewed markedly the RAG assessment conducted by SPR in its site selection and resulted in the choice of Friston for the total infrastructure build. Now, outline NG plans for connecting the HVAC output of SeaLink converter station near Saxmundham to Friston, a distance >1000 metres, shows this to have been a false premise.

To my recollection, nowhere in the earlier DCO was NG granted unlimited use of the Friston site for the further connexion of offshore wind farms or interconnectors, either domestic or trans-national.

At the recent hearing, I was much concerned by the *curriculum vitae* delivered by each member of the examining panel as it appeared to not include someone with detailed knowledge and experience in assessing DCOs for a large-scale electricity infrastructure such as the proposed SeaLink development. The lack of such expertise in the examinations for EA1, EA1(N), EA2 and EA3 has, in my opinion, allowed a seemingly minor electrical change to an approved DCO to pass without close scrutiny. Here I refer to the acceptance of a “minor deviation” to the DCO for the EA1 windfarm, (circa 2016), whereby the Applicant (Scottish Power Renewables) secured permission to reduce the onshore power delivery from 1.2 GW to 714 MW and to alter the delivery from HVDC to 3-Phase HVAC. The effect was to reduce the capacity of the 30 km cable duct built between Bawdsey and the NG substation at Bramford, south of Ipswich and demand another connexion point to the 400 kV grid be found for the residual power output of EA1 and EA2, 800 & 900 MW. It is reasonable to suppose that the change request was reviewed by OFGEM, the Planning Inspectorate, Suffolk County Council and the local District Council as the discharge authority, but none spotted that this “minor change” was anything but, and has had major and adverse consequences for Friston and the surrounding area.

I do urge the examining panel to secure the services of experienced and fully independent consultants to help scrutinise submissions from the Applicant in technical areas such as noise and electrical engineering matters.