

Helen Napier – 3-minute speech from open hearings with Planning Inspectorate.

I am deeply concerned by the complete lack of transparency of National Grid with respect to a comprehensive cost/ benefit analysis for the proposed Sea Link project.

There has been much publicity regarding the benefits of the project but much less about the costs to our communities, businesses and our heritage coastline and areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Sea Link proposal calls for a converter station to be built at the edge of Saxmundham on valuable agricultural land needed for our future food security. A huge industrial complex dumped on this ancient rural market town. A project that will bring no economic benefit to our local businesses or long-term employment for our communities. A huge industrial complex that will scar our landscape, destroy our tourist industry and bring only long-term hardship to our communities forced to live in proximity to massive electric power lines known to be a health risk.

I'm sure the cost to National Grid makes sense. It is the cheapest option no doubt that will be for the everlasting benefit of its US and Middle Eastern shareholders.

We have lobbied National Grid to build their converter station offshore as our European neighbours are doing. And indeed, ScottishPower Renewables' first-ever High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) offshore converter station has been successfully installed, last month, at East Anglia THREE 40 miles off the Suffolk Coast at a cost of £4 billion.

If it makes economic sense for Scottish Power Renewables to be installing their converter station offshore why oh why are National Grid building theirs onshore?

And recently come to light is the problem of the Benhall Railway Bridge deemed unsuitable to carry the super heavy loads such as transformers. A bridge that can withstand loads of 46 tonnes not the loads of 300 tonnes needed to reach the Wood Farm site. All three options being considered to overcome this problem will require a construction compound to be established in the field adjacent to Shotts Meadow and they all threaten to result in considerable disruption to local residents, cut communities off from Saxmundham, cause traffic delays to back up onto the A12 and impede access to walkers, cyclists and horse riding road users.

National Grid needs to submit a revised planning application that takes account of this new significant and alarming oversight of their original proposals.

We need to insist on the production of a comprehensive cost benefit analysis from National Grid that includes the cost to our community and threat to our businesses through road traffic delays caused by this massive construction project. A cost benefit analysis that goes beyond the narrow confines of what makes sense for National Grid.

This Development Consent Order must not be granted at this time.

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