

Name: Jennifer Barnard

RR Ref No: [REDACTED]

Project: Sea Link EN20026

RE: Response to Applicant's Document 9.34.6 Applicant's Thematic Responses to Relevant Representations

Please find below my written response as a concerned Suffolk resident who would be directly affected by National Grid's Sea Link project. As National Grid states on their website, there is real potential to co-locate infrastructure for two further converter stations. Having recently received the LionLink Autumn Newsletter stating that the DCO application is planned for 2026, it would appear that at least two converter stations at the Saxmundham site are very real.

I have real concerns about the proposed Sea Link, including the loss of high-quality farmland, long-term construction noise, ecological disturbance, disruption to public rights of way (and perhaps most importantly to me the permissive rights I have to ride my horse on so I can be off the roads), traffic and road safety impacts, harm to the tourism economy, landscape damage, cumulative effects from multiple NSIPs, and insufficient mitigation. It does not feel that the applicant has tried to understand the various issues and concerns raised, and that, by quoting document numbers, we will give up. There is no doubt that the project, in its current form, will permanently alter the environment, character, and well-being of Saxmundham and the local vicinity, and it feels that National Grid cannot be bothered to justify the level of harm proposed. Is that because National Grid is confident that the UK's Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero will pass the scheme, whatever the planning inspectorate recommends, to help reach the country's net zero transition? An example of this would be their statement in section 7.23 that 'the proposed project has been designed, as far as possible, following the mitigation hierarchy to, in the first instance, avoid or reduce environmental impacts and effects thought the process of design development and by embedding measures into the design of the proposed project such as sensitive routing and siting of infrastructure.'. The proposed site for the converter station(s) is on the top of an open Suffolk hill with views for miles - you can see the dome of Sizewell B in the distance. This is not a sensitive siting of infrastructure.

In particular, I would like to comment on their reply concerning 7.1 – Agriculture and Soil - 7.1 – Loss of Productive Agricultural and Best & Most Versatile (BMV) Land in Suffolk

The Applicant claims impacts are "temporary" and that Sea Link will 'only' need 11.45 hectares of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land. With Lion Link now heading towards its DCO in 2026 and the knowledge that a third converter station is on the plans, along with the area that the investigative digs have taken place in, it is not cumulatively 11.45 hectares - indeed, I am aware that the area that the farmer is expecting to lose is closer to 100 hectares. The draft order limit is for an area bigger than this but National Grid will not require it permanently, however the reality will be that the area of this best and most versatile agricultural land, which will not be needed long term, will no longer be viable - the farmer is losing so much of his prime agricultural land that realistically it doesn't make economic sense to continue farming. It was heartbreaking to watch him speak at the open-floor hearings at Snape Maltings.

Where agricultural land is temporarily taken out of agriculture, e.g., during the construction of converter stations or cabling, it is vital that the land is restored to the highest standard. These farmers deserve independent, long-term monitoring and guaranteed remediation. Are National Grid ensuring this?

I want to query comments made in 7.7 - landscape and visual impacts - and ask why some hedge planting cannot take place now, rather than waiting for the first available season prior to construction commencing, to show goodwill before consent is granted or withheld. Depending on when construction starts, it may well be that planting cannot take place before hand. The converter stations are not going to be a thing of beauty, and stating that, even in 15 years, the screening will be unable to hide the upper extents of the infrastructure is not reassuring - 15 years is a very long time to wait to have these converter stations partly screened. The converter station(s) will industrialise farmland, causing a fundamental change in the landscape character and completely changing the current approach to the market town of Saxmundham from Leiston.

Next, 7.26 - the applicant's response to people's concerns about cumulative impact.

I am concerned by National Grid's determination that there will be no cumulative impact from the energy projects potentially underway in a quite small area for a considerable number of years. Residents are already feeling the effects of Sizewell C - I'm sure the inspectors witnessed some of this impact when they came to Snape Maltings. It's not just environmental or destruction of the landscape; it is affecting people's health and well-being. It is predicted that Sizewell will take at least a decade to build. How can National Grid state that Sea Link (and in the future Lion Link) won't add to the impact, without doubt there will be further destruction of the local area, a concrete bridge across the River Fromus in front of Hurts Hall, as one example.

I am still confused as to why National Grid (having given the same standard response again and again) is saying that offshore isn't possible due to the size of British wind farms. So why have they produced their own video promoting the use of multiple-purpose interconnectors (and/or energy islands) connecting clusters of offshore wind farms to allow clean energy to be shared between countries, including the UK and our European neighbours? They also state that it lessens the amount of infrastructure needed and is quicker and cheaper. It further states that it reduces environmental and coastal community impacts. The video finishes by saying, 'To reach net zero, we know we have to act now. We need new solutions to deliver new offshore wind farms. We need multi-purpose interconnectors.' So if that is what National Grid say we need, why are Sea Link and Lion Link even on the cards? I did mention the above in my initial submission, but have not received a response explaining why they are proposing something so different from what they recommend in their own video.

National Grid also mentions the necessity of being close to Sizewell (7.23). Would it not then make sense to team up with Sizewell C and build the converter station(s) at Sizewell, where all the infrastructure, e.g., access roads, is already under construction? It would remove the necessity to build a bridge over the River Fromus or strengthen the railway bridge at Benhall. I understand that the two companies involved couldn't agree on terms - surely this is a situation where the British Government could exert control over the matter and insist that the Sizewell site is utilised. I do appreciate that there would still be concerns and issues, as cabling to Friston would still be required.

In conclusion, I remain opposed to the Sea Link project in its current form. I do not feel that National Grid have taken on board the issues raised and has minimised the impact such a project would have. There would be long-lasting negative consequences: the area's physical and human geography would be adversely affected. I hope the planning inspectorate

can see that there are still many fundamental issues that National Grid need to overcome before consent can be approved.