

It has been most unhelpful that National Grid's responses to Relevant Representations regarding the proposed Sealink project have been grouped together as 'Thematic Response' rather than dealing separately with representations from Suffolk and Kent. Each area has specific concerns that deserve proper consideration. In regard to which, I attach my comments for East Suffolk.

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Project: Sea Link EN20026

Deadline 2 – 9th December 2025

RE: Response to Applicant's Document 9.34.6 Applicant's Thematic Responses to Relevant Representations– REPI-116

Summary

As a longstanding local resident I have concerns about most of the assessed topics but shall concentrate on the following –

- The protection of local communities
- The protection of a natural environment that is supposedly protected in law under multiple national and international designations
- The damage to the region's tourist economy that will result if NG's plans go ahead.

Comments in detail

7.3.1 – Construction Compounds, Haul Roads and General Construction Footprint

There is vague mention of “standard reinstatement” when the project is completed but no legally binding detail as to how that will be implemented. Experience of other large-scale projects of this sort suggests that ‘reinstatement’ is wishful thinking, and that lasting damage is more likely.

Compounds near sensitive habitats and communities should be avoided entirely or significantly relocated. Almost every part of the natural landscape is legally protected, and coastal communities such as Southwold, Walberswick, Thorpeness and Aldeburgh are already facing significant threats from rising sea levels and cannot withstand encroachment by the large-scale industrial compounds and buildings envisaged by this scheme, without huge damage to their economies, and to tourism in general. This is also true of the beautiful inland villages of East Suffolk, such as Blythburgh, Westleton, Middleton, Theberton, etc.

This is a complex and treasured environment dominated by natural beauty, famously dark skies at night, extraordinary wildlife, ancient woodland, historic buildings, and all the other features that make it so special to visitors and residents alike, and which is so easily damaged beyond repair.

7.3.3 – Construction Workforce Management & Training

“Best practice” training is promised, but no enforceable commitments or independent audits are set out to ensure contractors adhere to environmental plans. The DCO should require certified environmental training and independent compliance reporting.

7.4.1 – Impacts on Local Historic Sites and Setting (Suffolk)

The history and pre-history of East Suffolk includes some of the earliest evidence of humans (around Pakefield), neolithic remains (the recently discovered henge monument at Friston), Roman settlements both military and civilian, and a rich medieval history from the Danes and Anglo Saxons onwards. All of which contributes significantly to the attractions of the area for visitors and locals alike, and much of which is still waiting to be discovered, under the soil. Large scale construction projects can irreversibly damage this cultural heritage, requiring the utmost sensitivity and archaeological investigation before work commences.

This applies as much to temporary traffic routes and construction sites as to major infrastructure.

7.6.2 – Suffolk Landfall and Nearby Protected Sites (Sandlings SPA, Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI, RSPB North Warren).

The potential for lasting damage to the coast itself is considerable and every step must be taken to mitigate the risks with enforceable rules for contractors to observe.

Some disruption to local residents is inevitable near landfall sites, but experience suggests that contractors have a cavalier disregard for local inconvenience, so every possible step must be taken to minimise this. Residents have a right to peace, and tourists to access. In both cases, lasting economic damage can too easily result from disruption.

7.7.1 – Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

The Project area is supposedly protected by national and international designations (AONB, SSSI, SPA, Heritage Coast, RAMSCAR) but the Applicant's conclusion of "no significant adverse effects" is hard to reconcile with the large-scale, permanent converter infrastructure and access routes. AONB status requires exceptional caution and avoidance.

The cumulative effect of converter stations, substations and overhead lines is to industrialise rural landscapes. This is not just a localised visual change but a fundamental alteration of character. Landscaping, planting of tree and hedgerows and other 'mitigation' measures can do little to disguise the reality of this permanent destruction of a treasured landscape.

Light pollution is as damaging to such environments as hard construction. Lighting design should be agreed with local authorities and conservation bodies. Temporary and operational lighting must be strictly controlled to limit spread and wildlife disturbance.

7.13.1 – Impact on Tourism

Tourism relies on tranquil landscapes, coastal amenity and peaceful access. The sheer scale of the work involved in the Sea Link project could well prove the tipping point that destroys the tourist economy on which so much of this area depends, and which has already been badly impacted by both Sizewell C and Scottish Power's pre-works.

Temporary construction jobs and a hike in rents benefiting landlords in Leiston and Lowestoft will do nothing to mitigate this catastrophic long-term damage.

7.26.1 – Inadequate Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives

Alternative locations, including offshore, appear to have been rejected in favour of the Applicant's operational preferences rather than for environmental, community or cumulative impact considerations.

Other alignments or locations have been described as "less feasible" by the Applicant, but no structured scoring matrix or transparent cost-benefit method is provided. Without comparative scoring, the Examining Authority cannot be confident that alternatives were assessed consistently or objectively.

Offshore routing and landing alternatives appear to have been dismissed prematurely. Where offshore solutions could minimise community impacts, the Applicant should justify with transparent engineering and environmental evidence why these alternatives were discounted.

A proper alternatives assessment must be independent, transparent, and environmentally led, not simply a justification of pre-selected locations

7.26.2 – Avoidance Hierarchy Not Properly Applied

National Policy makes clear that the first principle should be avoidance of harm — yet in multiple topic areas (landscape, BMV land, tourism areas, bird habitats, flood zones), the Applicant appears to have prioritised "minimisation" rather than "avoidance".

Avoidance should always be the default, especially where highly sensitive receptors (AONB, SPA, SSSIs, Heritage Coast, tourism hotspots) are involved.

Conclusion

In its current form, the Sea Link project would inflict catastrophic and irreversible damage on the environment, inhabitants and economy of East Suffolk.

The Examining Authority should require a robust examination of alternatives, taking into account the whole-life consequences and costs of this scheme. The priorities should be the avoidance of sensitive areas, enforceable mitigation and design protections, independently audited monitoring, and binding community benefits. Consent should be refused unless all alternatives have been fully explored and the necessary protections properly guaranteed.

Simon Loftus

9 Dec 2025