

Written Representation relating to Change Request 1

I wish to comment on Change 4 relating to the proposed works at Benhall Railway Bridge. My comments relate to the necessity of these works and the personal impacts they would have on me as a local resident living in Saxmundham. The applicant states that the bridge works are required to support access to the proposed Saxmundham converter station site. However, these works are only necessary because of the applicant's intention to create a new permanent access road and a new Fromus bridge crossing. The Benhall Railway Bridge works are therefore not standalone or essential in their own right; they are part of a wider access strategy that has not been adequately justified.

The applicant has presented two possible engineering options for the Benhall Railway Bridge:

- lifting a "mini bridge" structure on top of the existing bridge, or
- strengthening the existing bridge to carry the weight of abnormal loads.

Despite setting out these two options, it still remains unclear which approach the applicant intends to pursue. Each option carries different construction impacts, risks, timescales, and potential railway closures, yet residents have been given no certainty about what will actually happen. This lack of clarity makes it impossible for people like me to understand the true extent of the disruption we may face.

This uncertainty is not an isolated issue. Throughout the DCO examination, NGET has repeatedly refused to commit to key elements of the project, including providing a final converter station design and confirming the design of the Fromus bridge crossing. Both are being deferred until after the DCO has been granted. This approach is neither transparent nor fair to affected communities, who are being asked to accept significant impacts without being given the essential information needed to understand them.

As someone who lives in Saxmundham and relies daily on the Benhall Bridge area and the surrounding road network, the disruption associated with these works would directly affect me. Construction activity, traffic management, noise, and delays would impact my ability to travel safely and reliably. Any railway closures or service interruptions required to carry out the works would also have a significant personal effect, as I depend on the East Suffolk Rail Line for essential travel.

The bridge alterations are being pursued solely to support access to the Saxmundham site, yet the applicant has not explained why such access infrastructure is required when a strategic, purpose built construction route will be available. The Sizewell Link Road will be completed in time for the Sea Link project, and only a short extension from that road would be required to access the proposed site. Such an extension would be far more achievable, less environmentally damaging, and significantly cheaper than constructing a new permanent access road, a new Fromus bridge crossing, and undertaking disruptive works at Benhall Railway Bridge.

These works appear to be driven solely by the applicant's preferred access strategy rather than by necessity. I respectfully ask the Examining Authority to scrutinise whether this approach is justified, particularly when a short extension from the Sizewell Link Road would provide a far less damaging and less impactful alternative. Suffolk County Council has already requested that the applicant use the Sizewell Link Road for construction access, and I fully support this position. This route would avoid unnecessary disturbance to sensitive landscapes and heritage assets, reduce impacts on local residents, and remove the need for costly and intrusive infrastructure such as a new permanent access road, a new Fromus bridge crossing, and major interventions at Benhall Railway Bridge.