

**Response of Walberswick Parish Council to the Sealink DCO
at Deadline 4 (10 February 2026)**

IP Number: [REDACTED]

I am responding on behalf of Walberswick Parish Council as the Councillor delegated to deal with NSIP projects in our area including Sealink. I attended three days of ISH hearings on 28,29,30 January 2026 but did not make any oral representation given the preference of the Panel to receive written input when possible.

I am writing in response to several issues of concern covered during the 3 days of ISH.

Converter Site: Access and Design

The hearings and WRs have demonstrated that the selection of the converter station site in Saxmundham is highly flawed. It is of huge frustration to witness the Applicant proposing increasingly extreme 'mitigation' to make this site workable when good project planning and management should have led to the conclusion that a different site is necessary. We are particularly troubled by the Applicant's desire to retain the converter station site despite its obvious inaccessibility. All its possible "solutions" to the inability of the Benhall Bridge to support such infrastructure simply create new problems that fall on the community, the roads, the rail network and the environment. As ExA understands, our area has no alternative road or rail routes. Those that exist are already sub-standard prior to SeaLink. It is a travesty for the Applicant to propose ever higher costs on to the transport network (including closing the rail which impacts communities all the way to Lowestoft), the community's right to peaceful enjoyment of their homes, and to threaten the survival of local businesses, heritage assets and the natural environment in its desire to construct converter stations in a location that it cannot even reach.

Another case in point about the inappropriateness of the converter station site was the discussion on the proposed excessive working hours the Applicant said they needed in order to make the chosen converter station site viable. This amply demonstrates that Sea Link's proposed location is untenable if it can only be built if contractors are given a free hand to work all day, every day of the year without regard to its impact. Presumably such an approach was banished from the British economy more than a century ago. In this regard, we are appreciative of ExA's questioning of the Applicant on the proposed working hours. As all the speakers pointed out, it would be unacceptable under any conditions to provide no respite to the local community from the congestion, noise, pollution, and other externalities of the project. But for the Applicant to even consider that they should be permitted such work hours when working within the same location as SZC, SPR and other projects which quite rightly are NOT permitted to do so, is indicative of how desperate the Applicant is to continue with their ill-conceived plans with no regard to its impact on others.

One must also wonder that even if the extreme work arounds proposed by the Applicant to build the converter station were possible, how can a converter station be operated without permanent and sustainable access? Would the applicant propose to redig haul roads, construct new temporary bridges, close the rail line as it needed and disrupt the surrounding community whenever a transformer needs replacement or any AIL needs to be removed or delivered?

A third area of concern relates to the discussion of design aspects. We were troubled by the Applicant's unwillingness to commit to any design elements beyond their "grey box" when, in

fact, they had offered throughout consultations and within their documentation more sympathetic and less offensive design options. This is particularly troubling given the site's impact on heritage assets, ProW and the sense of space discussed at the hearings and raised in many oral and written representations. It was particularly worrying that the Applicant, in arguing that its design choices were constrained by the need to be "electricity-led", implied that the more sympathetic design options offered throughout consultations and in their materials did not meet such a standard. We also learnt that Lionlink would be using the same architect as Sealink so that the buildings would be aligned – presumably in whatever way SeaLink's Applicant determined.

At the time of the ISH, I took the opportunity of attending the Statutory Consultation just launched by Lionlink. I confirmed with Lionlink engineers that the architect they were using was indeed the one selected by National Grid for Sealink. But the Lionlink engineers also confirmed that the 4 "designer" converter stations on offer to the community for both projects were all "electricity-led". That is, the engineers for LionLink confirmed that 100% of the necessary electric kit would work in any of the proposed designs. Therefore, the Applicant for SeaLink either doesn't understand the converter station design or was untruthful. We believe that this point needs to be challenged further by ExA.

Inclusion of Lionlink in the Sealink DCO

At the Open Floor Hearings and in the initial written submission of Walberswick Parish Council to the Sealink DCO, we raised our concern that the Applicant was attempting to sneak in through the back door "pre-approval" of Lionlink by including converter station land and some cable routes for Lionlink within the Sealink DCO. Whilst this was not a specific issue at the ISH, information gleamed from the ISH makes the inclusion of Lionlink land even more pernicious. That is, as we noted above and as discussed at considerable length at the ISH, there are many problems with SeaLink's converter site accessibility, design issues, short and long-term negative impact on the community, transport, heritage assets and Prows. However, these negative aspects would potentially be doubled if Sealink were to receive approval and thereby lock in these same mistakes with a kind of "pre-approval" for Lionlink.

It is striking that Lionlink chose to initiate its Statutory Consultations in January 2026 whilst the ISH for Sealink were ongoing. Given NSIP timelines, the fact that National Grid (in both its public and private guises) is the developer of both projects, and the supposed claims of "coordination" by the Applicant, these two projects should have been presented together. There is no urgency in either project that would have prohibited adjusting the timelines to allow the Inspection Panel and Interested Parties to fully assess the cumulative impact of these projects and how/if the local area could be expected to absorb them. However, the Applicant for Sealink and National Grid Ventures for Lionlink clearly took the decision that it would benefit themselves (and disadvantage the Local Authorities and Interested Parties) if the projects were not examined together. In this regard, it is of note that in response to the request made at the ISH by Friston Parish Council to require laying of the cables of Sea Link and Lionlink from the Converter Stations to the Kiln Lane Sub-station simultaneously, SeaLink demurred on the basis it was a different project.

We would ask ExA to stop the Applicant from playing the system by arguing both that it is coordinating and not coordinating, that it can get approval for the land for Lionlink, but cannot commit to do the work together in a way to lower impact. We submit that responses made by the Applicant at ISH should lead the ExA to recommend the exclusion of all aspects of Lionlink

within the Sealink DCO given that this would prejudge the suitability of the future project without any scrutiny and lock in poor project choices associated with SeaLink.

Cumulative Impact

There was much discussion of cumulative impact at the hearings not only during that specific agenda item, but when examining so many other aspects of this ill-conceived project. To us, questions raised by ExA and statements made by Interested Parties and local authorities demonstrated that the arguments of the Applicant in relation to cumulative impact are insufficient and divorced from reality. We would like to associate ourselves with the arguments put forward by SCC, ESC, SEAS and other Interested Parties in this regard.

But there is one essential element of cumulative impact that I found was not specifically mentioned. That is, for good or evil, Szc is underway and is recognised as the biggest infrastructure project in the UK if not in Europe. Moreover, it is being financed almost entirely by the taxpayer and by all of us who pay our electricity bills. Szc is struggling to deliver within the insufficient and overburdened road and rail system in Suffolk Coastal, in an area with no housing for workers and within a heavily protected environment. One does not have to have any love for Szc to recognise that it is in the overriding interest of the local community and the nation that Szc get built as quickly as possible, without the huge ballooning of costs and years of delay that have befallen every other nuclear plant of its kind in the UK and across the globe. It is this interest, both National and Local, that should, more than anything, preclude a project like Sealink from getting approval. As SEAS and others have set out extremely well (most recently in REP 3-125), there is no compelling reason to connect Suffolk and Kent and certainly no compelling reason to do so now. The building of Sealink directly interferes with supporting infrastructure being built by Szc (such as the Szc link road), adds considerable risk and congestion to inappropriate road networks, disrupts commuter rail, requires even more workers to be bussed in, takes even more housing that is already beyond strain by Szc. Any discussion of “coordination” is misplaced. There is no room for any additional infrastructure in Suffolk Coastal that will not impact Szc. Completing Szc – lowering the impact on the community and the Nation – must have priority over bringing in new NSIPs particularly those like SeaLink that have no local benefit nor particular connection to this area and possibly no strong need whatsoever.

*8 February 2026
Councillor Josie Bassinette, Walberswick Parish Council*