

Cliffsend Parish Council – Submission to Sea Link Project (10/2/26)

(Ref: Issue Specific Hearing 2)

In relation to our points raised at the Issue Specific Hearing 2 on 30/1/26 and our written submission dated 30 January 2026 (attached as Appendix, for ease of reference), Cliffsend Parish Council wish to add the following points:

1. Local Community Benefit

1.1 We note that, while there has been some communication between National Grid (NG) and Thanet District Council regarding an employment and skills plan, there has been no discussion whatsoever of a local community benefit fund. This is a significant omission for a project of this scale and impact.

1.2 Cliffsend Parish Council therefore requests direct engagement with National Grid to establish such a fund, with a view to securing appropriate commitments as conditions of consent. Items requiring consideration include:

- Conversion of public toilets in Cliffsend to full disabled accessibility, specifically:
the existing toilets at the Village Hall, Foads Lane, and
the existing toilets at the rear of the Viking Ship Café, Hugins Green
- Funding for essential maintenance and restoration of the Viking Ship on Hugins Green, which is a site of major historical and cultural importance. The ship is a full-scale replica of the vessel used by the Vikings when they landed at this location in 449 AD, and its preservation is a matter of heritage significance for the parish and wider district.

1.3 These are modest, targeted, and locally impactful improvements that align with the principle of proportional community benefit for nationally significant infrastructure.

2. Cumulative Impact on the Ramsgate Tunnel

2.1 National Grid propose transporting substantial volumes of heavy construction materials via Ramsgate Port and the A299 Royal Harbour Approach Tunnel. This tunnel is owned and managed by Kent County Council Highways (KCC).

2.2 KCC has confirmed that the tunnel, in its current condition, is not suitable for large numbers of HGVs. Safety inspections and post-fire repair assessments (following the 2025 incident) have identified structural and systems fragility. Based on KCC's investigations, the tunnel would require at least £6 million of works to safely accommodate the freight volumes proposed.

2.3 Cliffsend Parish Council maintains that the absence of a safety assessment by NG is a serious and unacceptable omission. Furthermore, any assessment and any proposed mitigation measures must be to the satisfaction of Kent County Council, as the statutory highway authority. Without this, the proposal fails to demonstrate safe and deliverable logistics.

3. No Safe Road(s) for Transport of Materials and Equipment

3.1 Taking into account: -

The limitations and fragility of the Ramsgate Tunnel (as above), and

The constraints and safety concerns relating to the A299 Thanet Way and Sandwich Road, Cliffsend (as detailed in the Appendix to this submission)

it is clear that there are currently no safe or suitable road routes for transporting the large and heavy quantities of materials and equipment required for the proposed converter station.

3.2 NG has not demonstrated any safe transport route. This is a fundamental prerequisite for approval of the project. Until NG provides a fully evidenced, highway-authority-approved logistics plan, the proposal cannot be considered compliant with safety, deliverability, or statutory duty of care.

Appendix

Submission by Cliffsend Parish Council (30/1/26), As presented at Sea Link issue specific hearing 2, 30/1/26.

1. Cumulative Impact of Sea Link Construction Traffic on the A299 (Thanet Way)

1.1 I wish to register concerns regarding the impact of construction-related traffic from the proposed Sea Link project on the A299 (Thanet Way), which is the primary strategic highway serving Thanet.

1.2 The A299 is already subject to significant structural and operational constraints, including long-standing surface deformation caused by underlying London Clay, repeated failures requiring ongoing repairs, and an extended 50 mph speed restriction for safety reasons. These conditions demonstrate that the road currently operates with limited resilience and is vulnerable to additional stress.

1.3 The Sea Link project is expected to generate substantial movements of heavy goods vehicles, abnormal loads, construction plant, and daily commuting by a large workforce. Introducing this level of traffic onto an already compromised route is likely to

accelerate structural deterioration, increase the frequency of emergency repairs, and heighten the risk of unplanned lane closures. This would have direct consequences for network reliability, journey times, and the safe operation of the highway.

1.4 National policy (NPS EN-1 and EN-5) requires cumulative impacts to be assessed. The A299 already carries a high baseline load, and the addition of Sea Link construction traffic would create a significant cumulative burden on a route that is demonstrably fragile. On this basis, the applicant must provide a robust, evidence-based transport assessment and identify credible mitigation measures or infrastructure reinforcement.

2. Cumulative Impact of Sea Link Construction Traffic on Sandwich Road, Cliffsend

2.1 Sandwich Road runs directly through the village of Cliffsend and serves as a key residential route. National Grid proposes locating its operational and maintenance (O&M) compound at the northern end of Sandwich Road. In addition, all access to and from the Pegwell Bay waterfront - formerly the hovercraft base - also relies on this same road. National Grid's current proposals indicate that all heavy construction traffic, including HGVs associated with the Sea Link project, will be routed along the length of Sandwich Road for the duration of the project.

2.2 Residents living on or near Sandwich Road would therefore be exposed to excessive and persistent nuisance, noise, disturbance, congestion, and vibration over a period of several years. These impacts would occur throughout National Grid's proposed core working hours (7am–7pm on weekdays and 7am–5pm on weekends and bank holidays). However, National Grid also reserves the right to work outside these hours "if necessary", and vehicle movements for site set-up and close-down would take place before and after the stated times. In practice, this means residents face the prospect of disturbance from early morning until late evening, seven days a week.

2.3 No mitigation or compensation has been offered to residents for this prolonged and unavoidable disruption. This omission is significant and must be addressed as part of any responsible assessment of community impact.

2.4 A further and critical concern is the structural capacity of Sandwich Road itself. The road is not engineered to accommodate prolonged volumes of heavy goods traffic. Only recently, a sinkhole appeared on the section of Sandwich Road opposite the Viking Ship at Hugins Green, resulting in a full road closure. This incident exposed the underlying fragility of the sub-surface infrastructure and demonstrated that the road's foundations are already vulnerable and under strain. Subjecting this route to years of intensive HGV movements associated with Sea Link construction poses a clear risk of further subsidence, accelerated deterioration, and potential safety hazards for all road users.

2.5 There is no evidence that National Grid has assessed the cumulative impact of routing all construction traffic along a road with known structural weaknesses. This represents a serious gap in the project's impact assessment and undermines the credibility of the proposed traffic management strategy.

2.6 Given the recent sinkhole, the residential nature of the route, and the scale and duration of the proposed construction traffic, Sandwich Road is not a suitable or safe corridor for Sea Link HGV movements. A full reassessment, including alternative routing, mitigation measures, and compensation provisions, is essential.

Presented by Cllr Paul Chapman

(Chair, Cliffsend Parish Council)