



## Hearing Transcript

<b>Project:</b>	Sea Link
<b>Hearing:</b>	Recording of Open floor hearing 3 (OFH3) - Session 1 Part 1
<b>Date:</b>	24 March 2026

**Please note:** This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:15 - 00:00:10:08

Good morning, everyone, and welcome. Can I just confirm that everyone can hear me clearly.

00:00:11:23 - 00:00:41:00

And can I confirm with the case team that live recording of this event has commenced? Thank you. Okay, the time is now 10 a.m.. And this open floor hearing in relation to the ceiling project is now open. Thank you all for attending the hearing. My name is Sarah Holmes. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered civil engineer, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State for the lead member of the panel to examine this application. I'm now going to ask my fellow panel members, who have also been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine this project, to introduce themselves.

00:00:42:03 - 00:00:47:10

Good morning. My name is Luke Regan. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered transport planner.

00:00:48:14 - 00:00:53:23

Good morning. My name is Doctor Richard Hunt. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered environmentalist.

00:00:55:18 - 00:01:01:02

Good morning. My name is Nancy Thomas. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered town planner.

00:01:03:17 - 00:01:08:16

Hello and good morning. My name is Stephen Ranney. I am a planning inspector and a chartered town planner.

00:01:10:03 - 00:01:45:12

I can confirm that all members of the examining authority have made a formal declaration of interests, and there are no known conflicts of interest. With regard to this, examining this application, together we constitute the Examining Authority, or Acsa, for this application. There were other colleagues from the Planning Inspectorate with us today. For those who are present in the room, you may have already heard from or spoken to Louise Hathaway, who is our case manager for this project. But those of you who have joined virtually, you will also spoken to Caroline Allen and Emma Smith from our case officers in the adjoining conference. Together, they are the case team for this project and if you have any questions or queries, they should be your first contact.

00:01:45:22 - 00:02:18:07

Their contact details can be found at the top of any letter you've received from us, or on the project page of the National Infrastructure website. In addition, there are technicians from CVS international who are attending solely for the purpose of managing the recording and live streaming of the hearing. So before we just consider the items on the agenda today, we need to deal with a few housekeeping

matters and I will try and get through this as fast as possible. For those in this room, please make sure your phone is switched off or turn to silence. There's no fire test planned for today, so should no alarm sound. It is an emergency and we need to vacate the building.

00:02:18:10 - 00:02:49:10

And most of the exits are located along the size of this room. And the fire assembly point is at the far end of the building at the western entrance. If anyone needs any assistance, please can you let the case team know? Toilet facilities, including disabled facilities, can be found down the hall just past room 20, on the left of the brown tiles for those attending the satellite venues to minimize background noise, please can I ask that you also make sure your phones are switched off or turn to silence? If you wish to speak, raise your hands and a roving mic will be brought to you. Or you can speak from the table at the front of the venue.

00:02:49:22 - 00:03:24:27

Similarly, for those attending virtually, can I repeat the request made in the arrangements conference that to minimize background noise. You make sure your phone is switched off or turn to silent, and that you're so muted with your camera off unless you're speaking. I also would ask that if you want to speak, you switch your camera on and either use the raise hand function in Ms. teams or ask to speak at the appropriate time. Can I remind people that the chat function on teams will not be monitored? So please do not use this to ask any questions or post any comments. For those people watching on the live stream, should we at any point adjourn proceedings today? We'll have to stop the live stream to give us clear recording files.

00:03:25:03 - 00:03:35:22

As a result, at the point that we start the meeting again and the live stream you'll need to refresh your browser will remind you of this when we adjourn. Are there any members of the press in attendance?

00:03:39:18 - 00:04:15:25

Don't see any hands online or in the room. So as far as I know, we've had no requests for any special measures or arrangements to be made to enable participation in this meeting, such as need to take a break for medical reasons. I having to leave the event at a certain time. If anyone does need a break. Or extra support later on, then please do let the case team know the event is being live streamed and recorded. And as of our letter, 19th of September, which we refer to the rule six letter, we explained that we retain and publish the digital recordings, and they form part of the public record to which the General Data Protection Regulations, or GDPR, apply.

00:04:16:14 - 00:04:35:09

The Planning Inspectorate publishes and retains recordings for a period of five years from the Secretary of State's decision on the Development Consent Order. So if you participate in this meeting, it's important for you to understand that you'll be recorded and that you consent to the retention and publication of the digital recording. Does anyone intend to film or record the meeting?

00:04:39:02 - 00:05:20:11

Not seeing any hands online from Suffolk or Kent? Okay, so we'll only ever ask for information to be placed on the public record. That's important and relevant to the planned decision to avoid the need to edit the digital recordings. What we ask is that you try your best not to add information to the public

record that you would normally wish to be kept private or confidential, so such as your address, financial circumstances or details of any medical conditions. If you do feel the need to refer to something that is private or confidential, please can you discuss this with the case in first so we can explore how this could be submitted in writing and redacted? Does anyone have any questions with regards to this matter in the room or online?

00:05:25:21 - 00:05:50:09

Okay, I just want to say a little bit about conduct during the hearing. We understand people have strong feelings about the proposed development, but it's important to recognize that we have a process to follow, and therefore we ask for good manners and respect to be shown to each other throughout the hearing. We also understand that people feel nervous when having to speak in public. Please be assured that we do understand. And if you stumble over your words or need to repeat something, this isn't a problem.

00:05:52:03 - 00:05:56:14

Are there any comments or questions regarding any of the points I've just made in the room online?

00:06:01:00 - 00:06:16:02

Okay. This hearing will generally follow the agenda that was published on the project page of the National Infrastructure website on the 17th of March. A copy of this can be found in the examination library at AV 701. And can the applicant now display this on the screen, please?

00:06:21:08 - 00:06:22:03

Thank you.

00:06:23:20 - 00:06:56:08

So we've called this open floor hearing because we've had requests to be heard from interested parties. We're familiar with your representations. So when you're speaking you don't need to repeat these at length. What we're seeking is for you to provide further detail, to help us understand the issues, to make best use of the time. And while not wishing to limit contributions, it will assist us greatly if points weren't repeated. You can rest assured that we will have understood the points the first time made. We are aware that the applicant is attending today. We will ask the applicant to respond to everything they have heard through the open floor hearing sessions in writing.

00:06:56:17 - 00:07:26:26

It's not the purpose of these hearings to enable the applicant to make their case. So I'm just going to move on to item three on the agenda. So due to the number of people wishing to speak at this open floor hearing, you'll see from the agenda we've allowed the whole day. It's our intention to hear from interested parties who have pre-registered speak and who are listed in the agenda for this hearing. And after that, if time permits, we may choose to hear from any interested party who's not pre-registered but wishes to speak. And finally, for any other persons or non interested parties who wish to speak.

00:07:27:05 - 00:08:02:28

Time is tight though, when this will be at the discretion of the examiner authority. If time is not available during these open floor hearing sessions, then we ask that you submit what you said in writing at deadline six, which is Monday the 13th of April. We'd like to remind you that this is an

examination and it's predominantly a written process. Oral submissions do not carry any more weight than that which we receive in writing. Due to the number of parties wishing to speak today, we set a time limit per person six minutes for those representing groups, which include membership organizations, clubs, societies, and three minutes of individuals.

00:08:03:10 - 00:08:39:21

When you're speaking, you must take account of the time remaining. This will be shown on the monitor. You will see a purple bar at the top, which will turn to red when your time is up. Please try and finish in your allotted time, as we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard today. To ensure that we can hear from as many people as possible. We won't be asking any questions once you've spoken, but be assured that if we do have questions for you, we will send them to you in writing following this event. So can the applicant. Now please display the speaking list and please can everyone have a look at this and see if your name is on the list? If you could slowly scroll through the list, that would really help.

00:08:42:15 - 00:08:44:25

So this is the order that you will speak.

00:08:46:17 - 00:08:48:29

And we'll be bringing people up in groups of five.

00:08:55:01 - 00:09:27:27

So although some of the speakers in each group, maybe at any virtually or from the satellite venues, we still ask that each of you speak in turn based on the time allotted to you, as shown in the agenda. Once you've spoken, feel free to depart the satellite venues if you wish, but please do so quietly for the purposes of the recording and respect to those people still speaking. And also, it would really assist us if written summaries of anything that you say are submitted by deadline six, which is Monday the 13th of April. These can include any additional points or further detail that you may wish to make, but we are unable to do so due to time constraints today.

00:09:28:04 - 00:09:38:25

And as we've mentioned earlier, please be assured that when we're coming to our conclusions, we give equal weight to what we've heard orally and written. There's no disadvantage of not presenting something orally here today.

00:09:40:18 - 00:09:46:09

So once we've gone through the list, I just want to check if this is everybody who's registered to speak.

00:10:08:16 - 00:10:11:05

Okay, so I see a hands up online.

00:10:13:09 - 00:10:13:26

Um, hello.

00:10:13:28 - 00:10:36:29

This is Tyrese coffee. Um, I did register, and there's a lady coffee. I used to be the MP. Um, I'm on the list as being the MP. I'm not. Uh, but I do live in Saxmundham, and, uh, had have got quite a lot of experience, but I flagged just to make sure people are clear. I haven't tried to register as the MP and as a consequence I said to Emma Smith beforehand, I'd be happy to drop to three minutes.

00:10:37:10 - 00:10:46:17

Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for that. Yes, I did just get the message from Emma. Thank you for letting us know and sorry we haven't got your correct title on there. Thank you.

00:10:47:03 - 00:10:48:02

Sorry about that.

00:10:49:02 - 00:10:56:04

Is there anybody else, um, that hasn't seen their line that their name on the list that thinks they're supposed to be speaking today? That's pre-registered.

00:10:58:29 - 00:11:04:08

Okay. I don't see any hands. Does anyone have any other questions on the speaking process?

00:11:07:22 - 00:11:08:20

Uh, yes.

00:11:09:04 - 00:11:20:00

Excuse me. Um, I was just clarifying. Obviously, you have a lot of people to speak. Um, do you have a sense of, uh, when you might break? Um, for timing for lunch? Uh, this moment?

00:11:20:03 - 00:11:39:10

Yes. So what we'll do is we'll we'll go until about 11:15 today, and we'll have a 15 minute break then. And then we will continue until 1:00 and stop for lunch between 1 and 2. And then the afternoon will start at 2:00 and we'll go to about 3:15. Um, and have a break then, and then continue after that until we've got everyone on the list.

00:11:41:22 - 00:11:44:05

Are there any other questions before we move on?

00:11:48:04 - 00:11:52:02

Okay, I'll hand over to Doctor Hunt to move on to item four on the agenda.

00:11:52:29 - 00:12:24:20

I'm now going to invite those listed in the agenda to speak when I read out your names. If you're in the room or either of the satellite venues. Please come to the table at the front. Unless you've informed us that you don't want to be filmed. And if online, please turn your camera on when it's your turn to speak. Please turn on the microphone, which is the button on the front of the microphone stand for those in the room at the satellite venues, and start by introducing yourself and if relevant to who you're representing. As Miss Holmes explained, you'll see a purple bar at the top of the screen, which will turn red when your time is up.

00:12:24:29 - 00:13:05:02

Please try to finish in your allotted time, as you want to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to be heard today. And can I just remind you again not to supply any personal details when speaking here today? For example, do not state your home address, your age, or your any medical conditions you may have. If you feel that you need to supply this information to us, please talk to the case team about how this can be done without it going on the public record. So the first five people are Carol Duncan, good connections, Walbrzych Limited, represented by Philip Smith and Ian Brown, Joan Ellis and Louise Chadwick.

00:13:27:27 - 00:13:32:16

So if we could hear from Carol Duncan first and you have three minutes.

00:13:33:01 - 00:13:43:25

Thank you. When National Grid presented the proposed converter station at Stanfield. There was no mention of modifying Bernal Bridge, potentially causing me and my community to be isolated. Bernal bridge is.

00:13:43:27 - 00:13:44:12

Against.

00:13:44:18 - 00:13:45:03

You.

00:13:45:08 - 00:13:51:00

I do apologize. Um, the timer hasn't been switched on. Please, can we switch on the timer?

00:13:53:18 - 00:13:58:27

We. Sorry. Apologies. We can't see the timer from where we are.

00:14:04:16 - 00:14:05:09

I can't see it either.

00:14:06:02 - 00:14:07:07

We can't see it either.

00:14:10:04 - 00:14:15:08

Sorry. Apologies. Do bear with us. We'll just talk to our technical team and see if they can resolve the issue.

00:14:49:26 - 00:14:52:25

Sorry. Bear with us. We are coming to a resolution. Hopefully.

00:15:54:14 - 00:16:01:08

I'm very sorry for those of you waiting in Suffolk. We are waiting for a resolution to the issue. Hopefully will be with you shortly.

00:17:04:01 - 00:17:32:08

So, Miss Duncan, I'm very sorry about this. For some reason, we've got a technical issue. Our timer system on the on the screen has failed. Um, so we're going to have to do a, uh, a countdown manually. I'm afraid if you do have a mobile phone, you might want to use that to sort of set your own time for yourself. I'm afraid that's the best we can do. So we'll we'll restart your three minutes. um. And, uh.

00:17:35:19 - 00:17:36:21

Just one second.

00:17:43:20 - 00:17:46:14

Mr. Duncan, you can start now. You have three minutes.

00:17:46:19 - 00:18:25:18

Thank you. Start again. When National Grid presented the proposed converter station at Stanfield. There was no mention of modifying burn or bridge, potentially causing me and my community to be isolated. The bridge is the gateway to my community. The bridge was flagged as inadequate very early on in the consultation process. These calls, classed as minor improvements, are wrong. We need proper due diligence and scrutiny. The impact of the proposals will be devastating, not only to the older folk caged up in their homes, denied access to their community, but to those, like my family who rely on the A12 to commute to work, whose journey time has increased by 40% over the past six months.

00:18:25:20 - 00:19:08:15

With the current live and CIP projects, We cannot cope with the onslaught of mooring ships in this fragile area. My yoga class, which has been well attended for a year. Class numbers are dwindling since the current number of nips and their relentless roadworks. Ladies from surrounding villages are too worried to travel now, concerned with negotiating unexpected road closures, travelling their local lanes, encountering inappropriate sized lorries and an overwhelming increase volume of traffic. This weekend's closure of the A12 had a frightening effect on our village, with displaced traffic, our parish through the litter pick along the B11 21, the Bridge Road and our lives were in danger, with HGVs, speeding cars aggressively negotiating the roads and pinch points.

00:19:08:18 - 00:19:43:07

This proves the proposed converter station is in the worst possible location. These are inappropriate country lanes with no pedestrian safety. Social networks are vital and we country folk depend on getting out and eating out for our mental well-being. We attend networks for churches, village halls. We volunteer, we work, socialize, and we worship via these capillaries of Suffolk lanes. I'm witnessing people choosing to stay at home because of the fear of traveling from village to village. Please understand socialization, social isolation as a major factor contributing to depression and mental health issues.

00:19:43:12 - 00:20:15:07

The east coast of Suffolk suffers a disproportionate number of people suffering poor mental health and well-being compared to national. National grid proposals to bend or bridge will exasperate this. We are being overwhelmed by insight. It's just too much the effects of breaking people at the last open hearing. Ng objected to Northern Access as it would add over 40,000 hours to their HGV times. 12,000 vehicles a day use that part of the A12 restrictions, and traffic lights will add at least one hour a day to this journey.

00:20:15:18 - 00:20:33:19

On a five day working week that's 60,000 hours total. Local business and commuters commuters will have to absorb in both their time and fuel. Another reason you refute the northern route, as its eyes will see, is emergency access. Have they not considered then? Or bridge is our emergency access route.

00:20:35:17 - 00:20:36:07

Thank you.

00:20:37:17 - 00:20:52:27

Thank you, Mr. Duncan. And thank you for bearing with us with the timing issue there. Um, if I can now ask, um, Philip Smith to speak, and you have six minutes on behalf of good connections Walbrzych, and then three minutes on behalf of yourself. Thank you.

00:21:02:25 - 00:21:03:29

Uh, Mr. Smith.

00:21:09:19 - 00:21:12:03

At your. On you, Mr. Smith. I'll start again. Got it.

00:21:12:10 - 00:21:47:16

Morning. My name is Philip Smith, and I'm speaking today as a representative of Walbrzych against line link, which is good connections limited. I want to begin by making one point absolutely clear. We remain fundamentally opposed to the Sealink project as a whole. The project has not demonstrated a robust or convincing needs case, and there are credible, lower cost alternatives that would result in significantly less harm. However, given that we are here today to consider the proposed changes, I will focus on what they tell us about the project itself and what they reveal is deeply concerning. Across all five changes, there is a consistent theme, a pattern of incomplete evidence.

00:21:47:18 - 00:22:18:00

This project was submitted too early, without sufficient evidence and is now being corrected on the fly. That is not how nationally significant infrastructure should be planned. Change one other port Kent. This is perhaps the clearest example of incomplete work by the applicant. There are no site specific ecological surveys. We do not know what species are present. We do not know what habitats are at risk. And even more concerning, important saltmarsh habitat has been omitted from the plans entirely. That is not a minor oversight.

00:22:18:02 - 00:22:51:14

It is a critical failure without proper data. impacts cannot be assessed. Legal protections for species cannot be ensured and the mitigation hierarchy avoid, reduce, compensate cannot be applied. A proposal like this cannot be approved. Change to Friston substation. Here the concern is about future expansion by the back door. The shift toward a gas insulated substation, which can be up to 16m in height, represents a very different visual and landscape impact compared to the lower air insulated alternative.

00:22:51:16 - 00:23:22:15

But more importantly, it raises a clear planning concern. Is this change not just the ceiling, but for future connections and expansion? If so, the community is being asked to accept impacts today without clarity about the scale of impacts tomorrow. That is not transparent. Planning. Change three heritage feature. This change shows something important. What was first identified as a possible Neolithic henge was later reclassified after further surveys. That tells us something very simple.

00:23:22:20 - 00:23:59:29

The original surveys were not sufficient. And if that is true for archaeology. Where else is the evidence incomplete? The Suffolk coast is extremely rich in heritage. We should not be discovering what is there after the application has been submitted. Change for Ben railway bridge. This is about access and common sense. Suffolk County Council has put forward a credible northern route alternative. It avoids the constraints of the railway bridge, removes the need for new structures across the valley, reduces impacts on sensitive landscapes and heritage areas and importantly, it uses existing infrastructure corridors.

00:24:00:04 - 00:24:34:25

Yet this option has not been properly considered. This again raises a fundamental issue why are reasonable alternatives not being fully assessed as required by national policies? N1 and N5 change five hedgerow drainage. This is the only change that is partially welcome. Improving drainage and enabling hedge maintenance is sensible, but even here the proposal falls short. There is a missed opportunity to provide meaningful landscape screening, such as a proper tree belt, to reduce the visual impact of the converter station, and there are still concerns about impacts on local farming.

00:24:35:25 - 00:25:08:04

The bigger picture these changes cannot be looked at in isolation. Communities are here are already experiencing the effects of major infrastructure projects traffic congestion, road safety risks, pressure on housing and rising rents, environmental damage and fragmentation of wildlife corridors, and very real impacts on people's health and wellbeing. Sealink does not exist in a vacuum. It adds to an already overwhelming cumulative burden. So taken together, these five changes point to a single conclusion this project was not ready for submission.

00:25:08:08 - 00:25:39:15

Key surveys were not complete, alternatives not properly assessed, and mitigation remains vague or deferred. This is not consistent with the requirements of national policy, not with the standards expected of nationally significant infrastructure. So my request to you is this. Give these changes the closest possible scrutiny, require proper evidence, not assumptions, and ensure that if this project were ever to proceed, it is subject to the strongest possible protections for communities and the environment.

00:25:39:17 - 00:25:51:27

But above all, recognize that these late changes are not minor adjustments. They are symptoms of a much deeper problem with the project as a whole, and a project which is simply not needed. Thank you.

00:25:54:10 - 00:26:07:28

Thank you. You now have your three minutes. And just to note that we finally have the timer up and running. So you will see a timer at the top of your screen when you start to speak again for your three minutes. Thank you. Thank you.

00:26:09:16 - 00:26:44:08

Good morning. My name is Philip Smith, resident of Walbrzych. I want to focus on one issue in particular today, that being cumulative impact. Because this is where the Sealink project fails most clearly, and where the consequences for communities are the most serious. Sealink is not a project in isolation. It sits alongside other major infrastructure projects. Yet the reality experienced by local communities is this the combined impact is far greater than the sum of the individual projects, and that combined impact has not been properly assessed.

00:26:45:05 - 00:27:20:02

Across this area, people are already living with severe congestion on rural roads never designed for heavy construction traffic, increased road accidents and wildlife deaths. Pressure on housing, rising rents and limited availability. Noise disruption and the loss of tranquillity and the growing toll on people's health and wellbeing. These are not theoretical impacts. They are happening now day by day. Sealink will add directly to this burden. The applicant's approach to cumulative impact is inadequate in three key ways.

00:27:20:11 - 00:27:48:00

First, it underestimates the scale of overlap between projects, particularly in terms of timing and geography. Second, it fails to properly assess combined effects on key receptors, local communities, the road network and the natural environment, including fragmented wildlife corridors. Third, it does not provide meaningful mitigation for these combined impacts. Mitigation is considered project by project, but not in a way that reflects the lived reality on the ground.

00:27:50:05 - 00:28:24:23

The changes we are discussing today only reinforced this concern. They clearly highlight incomplete information, an evolving design and a lack of strategic coordination. This increases the risk that cumulative impacts are being continually underestimated and deferred. So what is needed? At a minimum, there must be a transparent and comprehensive cumulative impact assessment across all major projects. There must be proper coordination between developers, and there must be enforceable mitigation that reflects the combined, not individual, impacts.

00:28:24:25 - 00:28:30:02

Without this, communities will continue to bear an unfair and unsustainable burden.

00:28:31:25 - 00:28:48:23

So in conclusion, cumulative impact is not a secondary issue. It is the defining issue for this project and this region, and at present it has not been properly understood, assessed or mitigated. For that reason alone, this project should not proceed as proposed. Thank you.

00:28:49:29 - 00:28:56:12

Thank you. Next we have Ian Brown and you have three minutes.

00:28:59:09 - 00:29:25:01

Good morning. My name is Ian Brown. I'm an old borough resident who's increasingly unconvinced by the veracity of the African proposals overall, and especially of the proposed changes that have been suggested, to suggest that to the ever expanding footprint of the Forest and Kiln Lane substation. This instance alone typifies the obfuscation and sleight of hand approach that we have endured during the process leading to this stage.

00:29:26:19 - 00:30:03:01

As has been widely reported in its rush to speed up the planning process. The government is in danger of destroying the most valuable aspects of this heritage coast, as was highlighted yesterday by Suffolk County Council and I quote, government is planning to overhaul the nuclear system to speed up buildings, strengthen national and energy security, cut costs and not get bogged down in processes as described by the Prime Minister. Processes that are currently the responsibility of local authorities are best place to consider the impacts on local communities and local environment.

00:30:03:25 - 00:30:39:10

This means that projects directly affecting Suffolk Lake Norwich to Tilbury Island Sealink and line link risk, causing more harm to local communities and environment, and when decisions and powers to discharge will fall to designers rather than experienced local authorities. End quote. In other words, it's removing the affected communities from any consultation process and effectively silencing opposition of protest to these ill conceived energy projects in this region. As the applicant has previously presented inaccurate information to the examining authority.

00:30:39:15 - 00:31:13:27

It's a massive concern if this process is to be further constrained without due reference to the communities affected. For example, the ludicrous changes proposed for the Banwell railway bridge, which will certainly bring more chaos to an area already suffering the ravages of Sizewell C development and the subsequent increase in heavy traffic flow. And with that has come an increase in traffic volume. Erosion of road surfaces by heavy vehicles, increased danger to local road users and severely impacting wildlife that is displaced and frequently killed in the roads.

00:31:14:25 - 00:31:51:05

Even the applicant's negotiations with the Crown Estate appear to have met resistance, with Crown Estate indicating deep unease about the environmental consequences and cumulative impact. Naturally, the cumulative impact of this onslaught of energy projects is a majorly adverse effect in the local communities, their economic prospects, continued viability in general, health and well-being. There are many questions as yet left unanswered, and it begs the major question as to whether the applicant has fully addressed the fundamental need for this project to even be in this area at all.

00:31:52:05 - 00:31:58:27

This whole proposal must be reconsidered and not be consented at this stage. Thank you very much for your consideration.

00:32:00:19 - 00:32:06:23

Thank you. Next we have Joan Ellis. And you have three minutes.

00:32:08:17 - 00:32:43:24

Green for over ten years, 300m from Mental Bridge. And I'm disappointed at the less than forthcoming documents from the applicant regarding proposed upgrade works in its December 25th amendment. The applicant categorised the upgrade as a minor change when this was contested by the community. The applicant responded by discounting concerns as a misconception, failing to acknowledge that the bridge and I quote, once fixed, would be utilised by Line Link and Scottish Power and would enable National Grid to consider improving the bridge on a permanent basis for seven transformers if repairs were needed at the converter station.

00:32:43:26 - 00:33:21:03

No closure of mental railway bridge would be required if the bridge had been repaired. Sealink also stated that the proposed changes would make no change to the route or number of vehicles accessing the site via this route, compared to the original application. The applicant. The applicant has neither recognised nor explained how there can be no change to the number of vehicles when they offer this upgraded bridge as a route for both Line Link and Scottish Power. A decade of excess traffic will follow in August 24th. Suffolk Highways assessed this 1956 bridge and deemed it in fair condition for its current weight limit of 46 tons in January of 25.

00:33:21:05 - 00:33:52:15

Suffolk County expressed concern about the bridge, stating as currently designed, this bridge would form critical infrastructure to deliver the Sealink scheme. Sealink wants to upgrade this to 3 to 500 tonnes to accommodate Line Link and Scottish Power, but they have yet to assess the bridge and have no idea how to make it work. Lack of detail prevents Suffolk County properly evaluating the dock and forestalling community response. By 2028, there could be 500 daily HGV return trips plus the cumulative 57 abnormal and CIP loads.

00:33:52:17 - 00:34:25:03

Nothing like the predicted seven Sealink loads. The applicant contends they were unaware of Suffolk Highways August 24th bridge assessment until January 26th, which seems unlikely. Offering options to upgrade the bridge to not. Does not address the underlying issue. That ceiling's preferred route is wrong. Perhaps the undisclosed reason to overlook structural weakness was to forestall opposition to this route. If the bridge's vulnerability had been evident in the original dock, then a better case might have been made for an alternate route, eliminating the superfluous from its crossing.

00:34:25:05 - 00:34:56:21

Oddly named as it is actually a bridge with 80 meter long ramps and two meter tall parapets. In Bennett, we drive through the promise as a forward. There. Justification for this route is shorter journeys during construction. No mention of permanent disfigurement from this infrastructure, including Line Link and Scottish Power as potential users to reduce construction impact, is a

camouflage under the guise of joined up thinking. I support Suffolk County's proposal of joining the SAC's B11 19 to the Sizewell C link road across the disused Lasdun airfield.

00:34:56:26 - 00:35:19:02

Please do not disgrace yourself by accepting that Sealink and Line Link operate as separate entities. They are corporate siblings owned by National Grid Interconnector Holdings, owned by National Grid Holdings, owned by National Grid, whose purpose is to provide 10% returns to Blackrock, Dubai and other institutional investors through a transfer of UK taxes via financial support schemes. Thank you.

00:35:19:13 - 00:35:25:25

Thank you. Next we have Louise Chadwick and you also have three minutes.

00:35:27:19 - 00:36:02:25

Good morning, I'm Louise Chadwick. I live in Snape and would really rather not be speaking today that this is nerve wracking. And like many others, I'm extremely stressed by the multiple menaces facing our rural idyll. We moved here in 2000 to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of our countryside, but for many years I've had to battle destructive Sizewell C, and for the last nine, the growing number of energy related projects planned to devastate our special surroundings. My husband is stressed too. We find it difficult to cope with all that's happening here, but I'm compelled to speak today on behalf of many.

00:36:02:27 - 00:36:36:04

About the further atrocities the applicant proposes to introduce changes at this late stage of the DCO application is an insult to all of us, and you must please dismiss them as you must the whole threat of Sealink to our precious place. Proposed change two proposes to unnecessarily increase the area required for the substation at Friston. National grid refused to engage in the pin's examination of the A1 North and A2, resulting in its substation being permitted by subterfuge to provide grid connections.

00:36:36:24 - 00:36:56:02

The area permitted for a GIS substation for A1 and A2 can accommodate Sealink, but National Grid now attempts further deception by increasing the size of the substation as ostensibly required for Sealink. To the extent that it could accommodate additional grid connections without the need for specific Permissions

00:36:57:27 - 00:37:32:02

change for relates to Benwell railway bridge. One that National Grid knew would have to be crossed since the plan for Sealink began. It was never properly assessed despite warnings from Suffolk County and local councils. National grid always knew they'd have to bring 300 ton aerials to Sachs Mountain, belatedly coming up with inadequate and unacceptable plans. The plans ought to have been included as part of the original DCA application, and it's deplorable. They're only introduced now as the only minor change if their plans are physically feasible.

00:37:32:04 - 00:38:04:14

The disruption to the lives of many who live here will be huge, specifically for those on whose doorstep the bridge lies, as well as many others when roads have to be closed. Chaos reigned in the region when the A12 is closed to accommodate Sizewell C, so multiple three day closures for Sealink Elite to be brought in would cause havoc. If this access road is introduced, it would likely be used for landing to extending the mayhem for years. It would be far more sensible to properly assess the northern route proposed by Suffolk County Council.

00:38:05:07 - 00:38:12:01

Please do not allow these Machiavellian changes to flawed ceiling proposals for an unnecessary project. Thank you.

00:38:13:24 - 00:38:26:29

Thank you. Now we'll move on to the next set of speakers. Uh, can we have a Ramsgate town team? Stephanie Jane Harrison, Steven James Palmer and Victoria Caroline Hambly.

00:38:32:29 - 00:38:42:09

And if we start with Ramsgate town team that's represented by Councillor Tricia Austin. You have six minutes.

00:38:43:07 - 00:38:56:26

Thank you. Good morning everyone. Um, I am here representing Ramsgate Town team. We are a small voluntary organisation working very closely with the town council and our main focus areas of focus are.

00:38:57:01 - 00:38:59:05

Environment, prosperity.

00:38:59:07 - 00:39:36:27

And the well-being of residents. I'm not going to talk about environment today because I know there are other people much better qualified than I to speak about that, but I am going to look at the others and for myself. I am a Green Party councillor. I am fully committed to the idea of renewables, and I think the war that we are seeing in the Middle East is highlighting the importance of renewables to all of us, but this project is not going to work in its present form. Um, I'd like to thank Mr. Smith from Walbrzych because he highlighted many of the issues that we are facing in this area, um, particularly around cumulative impact.

00:39:37:05 - 00:40:10:18

And he highlighted changes brought in at the last minute. And I'd like to add to his list, uh, the need to bring in lorry loads of aggregate, vast numbers of lorry loads of aggregate along our small country roads in Thanet are in order to provide a solid base for the infrastructure because, funnily enough, they're building on a marshland and they realised that actually they need a more solid foundation than there already is. I think many of us who are not experts could have suggested that earlier.

00:40:10:20 - 00:40:43:17

Anyway. We are in fact we are a coastal area, we are a peninsula and we are the most deprived area in Kent. Indeed, our on the index of deprivation. We've actually gone down. We were the 28th most

deprived district in 2015, but we're now the 26th deprived, most deprived district. Despite all our efforts to improve things here, we rely very, very heavily on tourism.

00:40:43:29 - 00:41:20:19

Uh, we tourism support some 8000 jobs in the area. Uh, it brings in a significant amount of the revenue that we have in the area. We suffered very badly during Covid, but we have built that up again between 2021 and 2023. In Thanet, we saw a 65% increase in the value of tourism. We are a rather unusual tourist area because although we have seaside and a lot of family visitors, actually the demographic group that is most represented amongst our visitors is the over 65.

00:41:21:07 - 00:41:53:06

Nearly a quarter of our visitors are over 65. And when we go into that, they are mostly walkers. They are people interested in country pursuits and outdoor life. They are people who may become in campervans or who stay in small, local B&Bs, and they have a particular interest in heritage, um, heritage, as somebody is highlighted about the Suffolk coast. We have the same here. This is where Julius Caesar landed, Pequot Bay.

00:41:53:24 - 00:42:28:15

It's where Saint Augustine landed. Indeed, the historical spoof book 1066 and all that used to say that, um, any invader would have to, if he had tried to arrive in England in any other place, would be sent away and told to come back and start again at Thanet, because that was the correct place to invade England. From the Saxons, the Jutes, everyone came here. We have vast amounts of fascinating historical, uh, sites and places of interest.

00:42:28:17 - 00:43:02:26

And these are under threat from the Sealink project. The visual character of the converter station, however much it's screened by trees, is going to destroy the landscape that those older visitors wants to come and visit and walk around. They are going to have very limited access. The traffic as has been highlighted by other people. It's going to be dreadful and the impact on our tourism businesses is going to be severe, both during construction and thereafter, because it's not going to be what it was.

00:43:02:29 - 00:43:34:15

Our cafes are bars, our sea watching trips, our birdwatching trips, our fishing trips. All of those will be adversely affected dramatically during construction and, uh, rather less thereafter. Um, we are expecting that jobs will be lost. We are concerned from previous hearings that National Grid do not seem to have any impact, any plans to employ local people. Um, and our employment rate is already low. This is not going to help.

00:43:35:16 - 00:44:07:22

Wellbeing is not great in this area. Our health and both both physical and mental is not great. People locally rely on going out to the areas where ceiling is planned to relax, to enjoy a walk, to enjoy visiting the seals, etc. they will not be able to do that for some years during construction and it will not be the same hereafter. We are really concerned about this and we have a number of questions.

00:44:08:11 - 00:44:39:11

Firstly, we would like to understand realistically whether alternatives have been properly set against this plan and discounted for good reasons, not because this is the plan that will create the most value for shareholders, but because this is the plan that will work best. It doesn't feel to me like building on marshland will work best, and from what I'm hearing from Saxmundham, it doesn't appear that that is going to work best either.

00:44:40:05 - 00:45:15:21

We are concerned that there are plans to take land permanently, which could in fact be, uh, leased or used in the short term, and that that will have dramatic effects on our tourist economy and the well-being of our residents. We are concerned about, um, access to public rights of way and so on, which don't seem to have been considered properly. And we are really worried about the lack of community engagement that's been highlighted by previous speakers. This process, as one of the previous speakers highlighted, is quite nerve wracking for people to get involved in.

00:45:15:24 - 00:45:18:11

It's quite difficult to follow the process.

00:45:18:13 - 00:45:21:16

Councillor Austin, you have exceeded your time. Can I ask you?

00:45:21:18 - 00:45:25:10

I'm sorry I can't see a timer at all, I do apologise.

00:45:26:06 - 00:45:27:22

I should take the top of your screen.

00:45:27:24 - 00:45:31:21

But no, I can't see it. But thank you very much. Thank you for your time. For your.

00:45:31:23 - 00:45:32:08

Time.

00:45:33:26 - 00:45:36:03

If we can have Stephanie Jane Harrison.

00:45:38:20 - 00:45:40:10

And you have three minutes.

00:45:48:04 - 00:45:51:03

Sorry, Mr. Harrison I think you're muted.

00:45:52:26 - 00:45:54:21

Could you put your microphone on.

00:45:57:15 - 00:45:58:12

Is it on now?

00:45:59:19 - 00:46:00:09

Yes.

00:46:00:12 - 00:46:01:25

Um. Can you hear me now?

00:46:03:02 - 00:46:03:28

Yes. Thank you.

00:46:04:00 - 00:46:36:07

Okay. Good morning. Thank you. So I'd like to address specifically the points about the hover port, which is the amendment. And I just want to point out that that's been rewarded after over the last 30 years. And it's a very precious resource and it has to be robustly safeguarded. The proposed works will have detrimental effects on the environment, local community and visitors, as well as US residents and local businesses in the area. As the previous speaker has highlighted.

00:46:37:08 - 00:47:10:10

It's going to be devastating and have a permanently devastating environmental impact, but other speakers are going to address that who are better qualified than I. So I'm going to put that point and leave that for them. So National Grid have tried to suggest the hover port is barely used in one of their papers, and this is completely untrue. My house is directly opposite within 100 yards of the Viking ship, and I can attest that every day and evening there are people visiting the hover port.

00:47:10:12 - 00:47:24:20

It is well used by all ages abilities and that's so, so important. It's a valuable and irreplaceable resource and it supports the well-being. And.

00:47:25:26 - 00:47:32:10

Sorry, sorry. Um, there's someone else speaking. Could you please turn off your microphone? Says the speaker. Clear. Okay.

00:47:33:22 - 00:47:35:22

Anything better than yesterday?

00:47:35:24 - 00:47:46:19

So today. Excuse me please. There is someone speaking whilst there is a speaker in process. Um, could you please mute your microphone and allow them to have their time?

00:47:48:04 - 00:47:49:28

Thank you sir.

00:47:50:06 - 00:47:51:22

Sorry. Can I continue?

00:47:53:02 - 00:47:54:08

Hopefully. Yes, please.

00:47:54:18 - 00:48:39:13

Can you hear me? Okay. Okay. Uh, so I think I said that the National Grid had suggested the hover port is barely used, but that's patently untrue. I can attest that. I've seen that for myself. So my one of my main concerns is of valuable and irreplaceable resource which supports the the health, wellbeing, mentally supports a huge community and its destruction. And this loss of access is absolutely unacceptable. I think the fact that National Grid failed to see the necessity of its use in their initial planning application suggests, well, at best, a lack of due diligence and incompetence, and at worst, deception.

00:48:39:15 - 00:49:12:11

It's a form of creeping development often seen in large projects such as this, and that raises worrying concerns about their ability to assess the structures and their works. I've mentioned in my written submission, the hover port's foundational structure is fundamentally unsuitable for the works proposed, so I will leave that to one side regarding the whole proposed site. It's unsuitable for the project for many reasons, including its tendency to flood being a marshland.

00:49:12:13 - 00:49:46:19

And it's clear from recent news reports over the last few days that flooding is becoming increasingly likely and we need to protect our flood defences, not impact on them and destroy them. And finally, can I just finish as I was interrupted a little bit? Can I just add one more point? Thank you. Thank you. So. National grid is trying to justify its plans as supporting green energy. And yet it's destroying our natural flood defences of the salt marsh and so creating even greater environmental problems.

00:49:46:21 - 00:50:17:25

And we must always remain mindful that despite its name, this is not a national company that benefits the UK nationally. Far from it. In fact, it's profits and cost savings benefit the shareholders, private companies and investors. And yet its residents and Suffolk, who will suffer and pay this incredibly high price for zero benefit because National Grid is just not willing to consider other options due to cost concerns and attaining maximum profitability.

00:50:17:27 - 00:50:22:07

Thank you very much for listening. Thank you for letting me go over time. Thank you.

00:50:22:09 - 00:50:39:26

Yeah. And do you apologize for the interruptions? Thank you. I just remind everyone who's on the call. Please, can you mute your microphones while you are not speaking so that the speaker isn't interrupted is very distracting, and obviously it is a stressful moment to be up there and having to say your piece. So, uh. Um, and.

00:50:39:28 - 00:50:42:15

I'm going to switch mine off now. You just create that.

00:50:43:25 - 00:50:54:29

Thank you. Um, also, just to remind anyone that if you have been interrupted or if you got to the end of your, uh, presentation at your time, uh, you can, of course, submit any comments in writing.

00:51:15:09 - 00:51:21:19

Um, so the next speaker is Steven James Palmer. And, um, you have three minutes.

00:51:22:25 - 00:51:23:23

Thank you.

00:51:24:09 - 00:51:55:19

Um, yes. I'm a resident of Saxmundham and I've lived in Saxmundham for almost 40 years. Um, I'm here today to object to the application and in particular to object to the proposed converter station development on the edge of Saxmundham on environmental grounds. My primary concern is one of the visual impact of the converter station on the environment, and therefore my comments relate to this part of the proposal only.

00:51:56:13 - 00:52:14:03

Um, the site itself at Saxmundham is elevated. It's open in nature. It has distant views and it's in the countryside. And the scale of the converter buildings is undoubtedly significant.

00:52:15:25 - 00:52:52:18

The footprint of the converter station, if we are to assume it's going to be similar to that of the line link converter station has a perimeter of over 1000m. Well, I've tried to do a comparison and Wembley Stadium has a perimeter about 1000m or twoabouts. So we're looking at a site similar in footprint to Wembley Stadium. In fact we're looking at two Wembley Stadium side by side. Now obviously the height is different, but the height I understand the buildings is supposed to be on over 25m.

00:52:52:25 - 00:53:09:12

I think one would be hard pushed to find an agricultural building of that height, and that height will be imposing in the countryside. Therefore, I feel external design in my view, is a vitally important consideration of this application.

00:53:11:10 - 00:53:36:23

In my view, examination of this application should include one. Design options which reduce the visual impact to the building masses, and two options to effectively lower the effective height by sinking the buildings below the ground level, and concomitant funding to help obscure the building mass.

00:53:38:19 - 00:54:14:28

Um, I think finally, just before my time runs out, I wanted to mention about traffic impact. Um, I certainly, along with others, support the alternative access put forward by the Highway Authority, uh, for access to the site from the northeast across the former Leiston airfield. And I think any closure of the 1121, albeit on occasions, will have severe impact on the narrow roads in Saxmundham and the traffic signal junction at the High Street, which is already at capacity.

00:54:15:00 - 00:54:18:15

So I support the alternative route. Thank you very much.

00:54:19:27 - 00:54:27:03

Thank you. And can we now have Victoria Caroline Hambly. And you also have three minutes.

00:54:30:02 - 00:55:07:15

Thank you. Victoria Hambly I live in Snape and I'm representing myself. Like many who've already spoken, I participated in the examination for Scottish Power's E1 and E2 projects. We all willingly donated funds so Saiss and C's could engage the best experts to address issues including flooding, landscape, noise, lighting. We did this because even if unable to stop the project, it was important to secure the best possible DCO with maximum mitigation firmly in place.

00:55:07:27 - 00:55:29:28

These mitigations are essential owing to the unprecedented proximity of the substations to the village. As the examiner has noted at the time. The local harm identified is substantial and should not be underestimated in its effect. Its mitigation has in certain key respects been found to be only just sufficient

00:55:31:16 - 00:56:06:14

as the Sealink examination progresses. It is apparent that National Grid seeks to rollback on mitigation secured under the Scottish Power DCOM, as it was understandable last year that in the event that the Scottish Power projects did not go ahead, National Grid might reapply for consent for the National Grid hub under its Sealink DCO. But EA two is proceeding and its DCO, which includes design details and other mitigation relating to the National Grid Hub, have been approved by the Secretary of State.

00:56:07:04 - 00:56:14:20

These should now apply as an absolute minimum. A failure to do so would be an abuse of due process.

00:56:16:05 - 00:56:47:23

At the end of the Scottish Power Examinations, the ESA observed that the cumulative effects of the proposed development, with other developments at Friston. Are so substantially adverse that utmost care will be required in the consideration of any amendments and additions. Quite the opposite appears to be happening here instead of certainty and firmly established design principles. The Sealink DCO is riddled with vague generalisations and obfuscation.

00:56:48:00 - 00:57:27:08

This is far from reassuring for those of us who have to live with the consequences. I don't live in Friston, but I live close by and I have friends that do. And over the years I've witnessed the increasing toll that these projects are having on their health and well-being. But it is the absolute fear of what is yet to come that is causing widespread anxiety. We foresee elements of what is happening in Friston being repeated in Sternfeld, in Saxmundham, in Walbrzych And villages that thought themselves immune from the dangers of one project, suddenly find themselves at the center of a new one.

00:57:27:28 - 00:57:49:00

This is a huge imposition on the local community. At the very least, we deserve honesty and clarity, and it's why the hard won mitigations contained in Scottish power discos must now prevail. Anything less suggests that a disco is not actually worth the paper that it's written on. Thank you very much.

00:57:49:27 - 00:58:20:14

Thank you and thanks to our second group of speakers. If we can now move on to our third group of speakers, we have Sharon O'Brien, Suffolk County Council, represented by Councillor Richard Rout, White Arch Residential Park, represented by Theresa Thorne at Caroline Pope, Ben Hall and Stanfield Parish Council, represented by Councillor Charlotte Fox. And then Charlotte Fox has time as an individual as well to speak. So if we start with.

00:58:23:22 - 00:58:28:13

Um, I understand that Sharon might not be here. Do we have Sharon O'Brien on the call?

00:58:32:09 - 00:58:40:15

No, it doesn't look like it. So we'll move on to Suffolk County Council. Uh, represented by Councillor Richard Rout. And you have six minutes.

00:58:42:19 - 00:58:43:07

Good morning.

00:58:43:14 - 00:59:22:24

My name is Richard Rout, and I'm the cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and nationally significant infrastructure projects at Suffolk County Council. I'd like to begin by thanking you for providing this opportunity for me to address you in person about the Sealink proposed change requests for the project. The applicant has proposed modifications in relation to the red line at the Bendall Road over the rail bridge, as requested by the examining authority. The county Council has provided further details regarding its alternative approach to the project's access route found in rep 4149 and Rep 5179.

00:59:22:26 - 00:59:58:17

These submissions set out the council's rationale for this proposal and its benefits, relative to the considerable adverse impacts and risks associated with the applicant's proposal for access to the site. The only real change to the application caused by the inclusion of the bridge in the red light boundary is that the process of acquiring the necessary consents to use the bridge becomes simpler for the applicant. Indeed, the proposed modifications put forward do little more than serve to undermine the inherent weaknesses and flaws of the proposed development.

00:59:58:27 - 01:00:30:07

The impact of the scheme on heritage and landscape remain, and as the examination has progressed, the impacts of the access proposals on the local community have become ever more and even more apparent. The Council is particularly concerned regarding the well-being and safety of the residents in White Oak Park in Bethel. The council is pleased that the applicant has now recognized the importance of access for the white residents, as shown by commitments to taxis for residents who don't have access to a vehicle in the latest version of the register.

01:00:30:09 - 01:01:02:00

Environmental actions and commitments. Rep. 5116 however, the council is concerned with the lack of detail regarding how these commitments will work in practice. Detail has not been provided demonstrating that access for white residents can be maintained, whilst a mini bridge is installed over the bridge. The council considers much greater detail regarding the logistics of the taxi service should be provided in a control document, to be agreed post consent with the council.

01:01:03:07 - 01:01:40:25

It is noted that the applicant has provided a response to the preliminary alternative Access proposal set out by the council in rep 5125. Suffolk County Council will respond to this at the next deadline. However, in the interim, I will just say that the County Council recognises that its alternative access proposal is not without issues, but considers that, on balance, the benefits of this alternative scheme outweigh those issues and that the scheme offers in the long term strategic benefits. Therefore, notwithstanding the longer journey time, the alternative scheme of access is substantially more robust than that being proposed by the applicant.

01:01:41:17 - 01:02:16:21

In the Council's consultation, response and relevant representation on the change request. Rep 3A-031. We strongly recommend that further expansion of the order limits is needed at the converter station site to increase the provision of mitigation planting, and allow for a public right of way. However, this is not happened. Rather, the small changes only serve to demonstrate the contrast with the Line Link proposed project, which set out a comprehensive preliminary approach to design of the site in their recent consultation, an approach that has been developed in response to detailed feedback from the community.

01:02:17:29 - 01:02:51:09

Finally, turning to the modifications to the scheme at the Friston Substation site. Whilst these are welcome improvements in terms of alignment between projects, the Council has submitted to the examination in rep 5181A table setting out how the DCO wording needs further amendment to ensure that the benefits of the safeguard secured by the existing ScottishPower renewables consent are fully transposed into the C link DCO. The council has worked with Friston Parish Council on this issue, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the parish council in particular and in particular, um, Mr.

01:02:51:11 - 01:02:56:21

Michael Mahoney, for working constructively with Suffolk County Council on this issue. Thank you.

01:02:58:10 - 01:03:06:29

Thank you very much. Um, can we move on to Whitehawk Residential Park? Um, Theresa Thorne and you have six minutes.

01:03:07:13 - 01:03:44:03

Good morning. My name is Theresa Thorne, and I'm speaking on behalf of the residents of Whitehawk Park. At the outset, I would like to make it clear that we recognise change and progress as essential part of modern life. We understand the importance of developing cleaner energy and sustainable infrastructure for future generations, and we do not stand in the opposition to that broader

goal. However, we do believe it is both responsible, reasonable and necessary to consider carefully the concentration of large scale energy projects within what is in reality, a relatively small and closely connected area.

01:03:45:03 - 01:04:25:25

The Suffolk coastline, once widely recognised and valued as a heritage coast, is already undergoing significant transformation. Across the region, we are seeing the effects of ongoing development, road closures, diversions, increased traffic and major construction activity. Importantly, this is only the beginning. Further large scale projects including Sealink and other planned developments have yet to commence and their cumulative impact remains a serious concern. While these projects may bring clear national and strategic benefits, we respectfully ask that the equal weight is given to the local consequences for communities such as Benwell and Saxmundham.

01:04:26:05 - 01:05:04:29

These are not abstract locations on a map. They are established communities where people live, work and have chosen to spend important stages of their lives. White Arch Park is home to residents ranging in the age of 60 to 92. Many moved here with the intention of downsizing and enjoying a quieter, more peaceful and less stressful stage of life. For some, this is not simply a preference, but an important aspect of maintaining their health and well-being. Increasingly, however, the level of disruption, activity and uncertainty surrounding ongoing and proposed developments is beginning to affect that sense of stability.

01:05:05:17 - 01:05:38:04

One specific example concerns the railway line that runs close to our homes. The recent decision to use this line during the night in connection with construction activity has caused understandable concern among nearby residents. While we fully acknowledge that the railway itself is not new, the change in how it is being used represents a significant and material difference for those living close to it. Nighttime operations induce a level of disturbance that was not previously experienced and is particularly challenging for older residents.

01:05:38:20 - 01:06:13:27

We were encouraged when a noise barrier was initially proposed as a potential mitigation measure. However, we were disappointed when this proposal was later withdrawn. Of equal concern was the perception among residents that those most directly affected were not fully involved in that decision making process. Meaningful engagement is essential if communities are to feel heard and respected. Traffic represents another growing and very tangible concern. In recent months, there has already been a notable increase in the volume of vehicles used in main road in Belgium.

01:06:14:03 - 01:06:51:17

For some residents, residents, particularly those who with reduced mobility or slower reaction times. It is becoming increasingly difficult and stressful to exit safely onto the road. This is not simply an inconvenience, it's a matter of safety and confidence in everyday activities. Looking ahead, there is understandable anxiety about how traffic levels may develop as further construction progresses, particularly in and around Saxmundham. Many residents now routinely allow additional time for even routine journeys in appointments, reflecting the unpredictability and congestion that is already emerging.

01:06:52:09 - 01:07:24:00

In context, the proposal from Suffolk County Council to utilise the northern route for access to the converter stations is viewed very positively by residents of Wittlich Park, as this route is already under construction for other related developments. Its inclusion represents a practical and potentially effective way to reduce additional strain on local roads, such as those through Bennell. We would therefore respectfully request that this route is formally incorporated into the Development Consent Order.

01:07:24:21 - 01:07:56:12

Beyond the practical impacts, there is also a more tangible but equally important concern. The pace and scale of change itself. For those who have lived in Suffolk for many years, there is a deep sense of connection to the character and identity of the area. Increasingly, residents expressed sadness at how quickly that character appears to be changing. Conversations within Bennell and Saxmundham often returned to the same theme uncertainty, loss of tranquillity and concern for the future of the well-being of the community.

01:07:57:00 - 01:08:32:03

We fully appreciate that national infrastructure projects are complex and necessary, and that difficult decisions must often be made. However, we respectfully ask that these decisions do not lose sight of the people who will live with their consequences on their daily basis. It is not only the physical environment that is affected by cumulative development, but also the mental well-being and quality of life of residents. For an older community, in particular, prolonged disruption, increased noise, traffic and uncertainty can have its significant and lasting impact.

01:08:33:03 - 01:09:11:26

In conclusion, I would ask the panel to consider carefully the cumulative effect of these developments, not only in terms of infrastructure and logistics, but in terms of human impact. The residents of White Arch Park, along with those in Bennell and the wider Saxmundham area, are asking not for development to stop, but for it to be managed in a way that is balanced, considerate and generally responsive to the communities it affects. Thank you for listening. And I sincerely hope that the voices, experiences, and well-being of the people who live here will carry as much weight in your deliberations as the infrastructure that is planned for its landscape.

01:09:12:00 - 01:09:12:27

Thank you.

01:09:13:15 - 01:09:19:18

Thank you. Um, next we have Caroline Pope, and you have three minutes.

01:09:20:04 - 01:09:21:03

Good morning.

01:09:21:07 - 01:09:51:12

Firstly, I must say how time consuming, confusing and extremely difficult this process has been. The small amount of people protesting at these hearings does not reflect the strength of opinion against

this proposed Sealink project. The old rewilding port site is linked to Pequot Bay National Nature Reserve and is a wildlife haven. I am strongly objecting to National Grid compulsory purchase in this area, as they will ruin it for the wildlife plant and our life and everyone.

01:09:51:14 - 01:10:28:15

This area has been left to nature to reclaim and it is doing a very good job of it. Birds, mammals and unusual plants such as the bee and lizard orchids have taken up residence there. These areas need our utmost protection and care. The old welded hover port site is easily accessible for everyone, and it is one of the few places of refuge left in Thanet where people can go and spend time in nature and get away from the stresses of life. In a recent small survey on Facebook, nearly 300 people said they used the old hover site once a month or more.

01:10:28:18 - 01:11:02:12

In reality, this number is much larger. National grid's compulsory purchase in this area will take it away from the locals and tourists to Thanet. There is also the threat that National Grid will cause extensive damage to the vulnerable surface of the old hover port with their heavy vehicles, machinery and equipment allowing pollutants to escape and pollute the bay. The Nemo Link cable, when that was put through Pebble Bay, caused irreversible damage to the area when they abandoned the horizontal drilling technique for open trenching.

01:11:02:14 - 01:11:33:21

There is no there has been no mitigation for this either, since National Grid cannot 100% guarantee that none of the above incidents may occur and they will not want to abandon their project once it has commenced. Sealink must not be granted permission. There is too much at risk. This area is too precious and valuable to be gambled with the whole process. The whole proposed Sealink project will be a massive national security risk.

01:11:33:23 - 01:12:05:15

We have seen that in these recent times of conflict. It is the energy infrastructure that is targeted and bombed. The proposed converter station is to be the largest in Europe, so this will be a prime target. We should learn from what is going on in the world and not allow such big projects to be built. The question of whether we need this project needs to be fully examined. I do not think this is the case, nor the right of way going about it. I am no expert, but better technologies are being developed all the time.

01:12:05:18 - 01:12:36:14

We cannot afford to make such planetary and environmentally costly mistakes as granting this proposal would cause. Presently, this country is in a mad dash to reach net zero, but this will be an absolute disaster if we have no countryside, nature and wildlife left. One thing we know for certain is that if this project is allowed to go ahead, it will call massive amounts of devastation to our marine environments, our marine onshore and natural environments, and our already struggling wildlife.

01:12:36:16 - 01:12:43:23

Please, examiners, carefully consider whether Sealink will be doing us more harm than good. Then reject it.

01:12:44:29 - 01:12:45:14

Thank you.

01:12:45:16 - 01:12:46:04

Thank you.

01:12:47:06 - 01:12:52:00

Next we have Councillor Charlotte Fox on behalf of Ben Hall and Stanfield Parish Council.

01:12:53:00 - 01:12:53:29

Thank you.

01:12:54:14 - 01:12:56:07

Sorry. Six minutes.

01:12:56:15 - 01:12:58:05

Thank you. Doctor Charlotte.

01:12:58:07 - 01:12:59:00

Fox, on behalf.

01:12:59:02 - 01:13:00:00

Of Benton Stanfield.

01:13:00:02 - 01:13:00:17

Parish.

01:13:00:19 - 01:13:01:04

Council.

01:13:01:24 - 01:13:02:19

What's worrying.

01:13:02:21 - 01:13:05:21

Me is that the unprecedented number of.

01:13:05:23 - 01:13:08:14

Major infrastructure projects being developed.

01:13:08:16 - 01:13:09:01

Or.

01:13:09:03 - 01:13:10:00

Due to be developed.

01:13:10:02 - 01:14:01:29

In East Suffolk at the moment, is driving us into uncharted territory in terms of the cumulative adverse impacts that will be experienced by a single community. And I'm particularly worried about how such a heavy infrastructure burden will impact on the local populations health and well-being. It is, of course, well recognised that people's mental health is intrinsically linked to stress. But since the whole DCO process is being viewed through a planning lens, stress which is highly subjective perceived experience that cannot be objectively quantified is not actually being seen, just because rising stress levels in response to major infrastructure imposition can't be seen, does not mean that they are not rising.

01:14:02:18 - 01:15:10:00

The local communities stress levels have already been rising ever since Sizewell. See, the biggest infrastructure project in Europe appeared on the horizon. Our landscape has been altered in front of our eyes, and our local road network has become completely dysfunctional with journey times all over the shop, roads full of potholes and roadworks that are impacting on us on a daily basis. And yet we're still only at the start of what threatens to be 10 to 15 years of construction of Sizewell C, E1 North E2, the National Grid Connection hub C link lion link, at least 4000 acres of solar parks, a thousand houses and the Suffolk Water Project, due to deliver millions of litres of water every day to size, will see a project that wasn't even recommended consent for development on the grounds of an inadequate water supply that had a desktop study putting the pipeline from Saxmundham to Sizewell straight through the Saxmundham converter station site.

01:15:10:13 - 01:15:53:17

This is infrastructure chaos, and it will only get worse if the impacts of such extreme, disproportionate, unreasonable cumulative impacts are allowed to progress unchecked. Even with the more tangible direct impacts of sealing on health and wellbeing, such as traffic disruption and cumulative impacts, National Grid is taking a very restricted view. The impacts of Sealink on traffic are predicted to be negligible, but traffic disruption is already a big issue locally as a result of ongoing Sizewell C works and the limited traffic modeling carried out so far for Sealink has not taken this into account.

01:15:54:16 - 01:16:29:02

Cumulative impacts are only predicted to be moderate, with national grids claiming that the mathematical equations that have been employed to reach this conclusion are reliable. It is galling to have our health and well-being assessment reduced to a few predictive equations that cannot ever be adequate to predict what is happening to us, the local population living experientially in the middle of everything. National grid also insists that a precautionary approach to the effects of cumulative impacts is unnecessary.

01:16:29:06 - 01:17:09:03

But if there is any certainty about the extent of adverse cumulative impacts, a precautionary approach must be adopted. Let's look at National Grid's response to Suffolk County Council's proposals for an alternative access route to the Saxmundham converter station site that shares the Sizewell link road and avoids the adverse impacts and harms threatened by use of the current proposed route through channel. The problems withheld at the statutory consultation of transporting super heavy loads over the weight restricted railway bridge, and of building a new bridge over the river from a considerable.

01:17:09:17 - 01:17:44:14

These difficulties, along with the severe adverse impacts that would be experienced by local residents and the wider community as a result of the major traffic disruption that would ensue with use of the Bennell route, could be largely avoided by using Suffolk County Council's new route. In addition, Suffolk County Council's proposals would be an excellent example of coordination between developers because the Sizewell link road, specifically designed for transportation of construction vehicles, would be shared between Sizewell C see link line.

01:17:44:16 - 01:18:15:23

Link. And possibly even Scottish Power. However, in spite of all this, National Grid has dismissed Suffolk County Council's proposals, predominantly on the grounds of increased journey times and distances. This shows a woeful lack of understanding of what the local community will have to endure if the route through Bennell is employed, as well as a lack of willingness to work with the local population in order to try to find the least impactful and most balanced solution.

01:18:16:10 - 01:18:53:10

East Suffolk is facing a state of extreme planning imbalance and infrastructure should not be imposed at our expense. The urgency of achieving an arbitrary, unachievable date by which to decarbonise the grid threatens to undermine the well-being of the local population, and it feels reckless to be carrying on. Imposing infrastructure project after infrastructure project on the same long suffering local community. More consideration needs to be given to us, the human beings stuck in the middle of this cumulative impact crisis, and I use the word advisedly.

01:18:55:27 - 01:18:59:19

Thank you. You now have three minutes as an individual.

01:19:00:15 - 01:19:40:25

Charlotte Fox as a resident of Stanfield, I have so many questions. For instance, I wish I understood why a plan to transmit the entire output from all four Scottish Power, North Sea offshore wind farms to an existing connection point at Bramford was allowed to be derailed by a short sighted, cost cutting move. That meant that construction impacts remain the same, but only half of the electricity could be transmitted to Bramford after all, and how that cost cutting move was allowed to pass as a non-material change when it was clearly, clearly a material change? Or why connection for the ScottishPower.

01:19:40:27 - 01:20:11:06

Electricity that could no longer go to Brantford was offered at a connection point in Friston that didn't even exist. Or why this back to front connection approach at Friston, which enabled the National Grid Connection hub to sneak by stealth through a planning back door opened by ScottishPower, was allowed to slip through the net. Or why the words expressed by the examining authority of the Scottish Power DCO. That caution should be observed in order to avoid harms exceeding benefits.

01:20:11:08 - 01:20:52:14

Were more projects to be connected at the de facto connection hub at Friston in the future are being ignored, and why? Even though the needs case for Sealink is highly questionable, the project has been escalated to national priority infrastructure status and all planning balance seems to have gone out of

the window. I could go on as cautioned by the examining authority. Ceiling is lifting the lid on electrical infrastructure projects being connected at Friston. As we can already see with the giant solar parks that seem to be popping up on the planning horizon, and this means that one single community is being subjected to more infrastructure imposition than ever before.

01:20:53:01 - 01:21:24:08

No one seems to have a handle on what is happening to the human beings living here in Nsic land, but let me tell you, we're already struggling and it sometimes feels as though we are stuck in a horrid social experiment in which the aim is to see how far a local community can be pushed and pushed before it completely falls apart. It is all way too much, and between the developers and option, we feel as if the East Suffolk community has been well and truly sold down the river.

01:21:24:18 - 01:21:55:29

We have a right to live our daily lives without being subjected to such unprecedented levels of cumulative adverse impacts. And even if this imposition is justifiable in the name of the greater good. There must be a tipping point at which the local community sacrifice becomes too great, and we end up with mental and physical health issues that result in us paying too high a price. But who is looking out for that point, and how will it even be recognized? Trust me, I'm a doctor.

01:21:56:01 - 01:22:05:23

Prevention is better than cure, and it would be much better to preempt us reaching breaking point rather than picking up the pieces. Thank you.

01:22:06:11 - 01:22:31:06

Thank you, Doctor Fox. And the. And thank you to all the speakers in the first session today. Time is now 1122. We've been going for nearly an hour and a half. I therefore propose that we take a short German to allow a comfort break. For those watching on the live stream, you'll need to refresh your browser page to view this hearing when we recommence, and we'll recommence at 1140. Thank you.