

Written Representation of Oral Representation at OFH3 by Gordon Young (Affected Party [REDACTED])
Executive Summary

1. This submission summarises my oral representation to the Open Floor Hearing. It focuses on three principal concerns: (i) access, (ii) site selection, and (iii) the need for the project.

In summary:

- o The proposed access via the Benhall Railway Bridge and B1121 is uncertain, high risk, and likely to cause unacceptable disruption, as identified by Suffolk County Council (SCC).
- o The Saxmundham site is fundamentally flawed, requiring disproportionate engineering interventions, including a new crossing of the River Fromus, resulting in harm to the landscape and heritage setting.
- o The Applicant's reliance on co-location with LionLink does not constitute genuine coordination, but instead concentrates cumulative impacts on local communities.
- o The need for Sea Link in its current form remains unproven, particularly where lower-impact alternatives may exist.
- o The cumulative impact of multiple NSIPs is already placing significant strain on community wellbeing, which must be afforded proper weight.

2. Taken together, the proposal represents ill-considered access, a flawed site, and an insufficiently justified need case, resulting in unacceptable cumulative impacts.

Introduction

- 4. I am an affected party, living approximately 500 metres from the proposed converter station at Saxmundham.
- 5. I support the transition to renewable energy. However, such infrastructure must be delivered in a manner that is strategic, coordinated, and proportionate, and which fairly balances national need with local impacts.
- 6. In my view, the current proposal fails to achieve that balance.

Access

- 7. The proposed reliance on the Benhall Railway Bridge and the B1121 raises serious concerns. The route is constrained, with uncertain structural capacity and unproven engineering solutions, and presents a high risk of disruption.
- 8. SCC has clearly identified that the deliverability of this access route remains in serious doubt.
- 9. Recent experience of the A12 closure at Friday Street demonstrates the extent of disruption that can arise from a single constraint in the local network. The proposed works would introduce multiple concurrent constraints, including impacts to the B1121 and the East Suffolk rail line.
- 10. This has implications for emergency service access, daily commuting, and the functioning of local communities, and is therefore unacceptable.
- 11. A credible alternative exists. SCC's proposed northern access route, utilising the consented Sizewell C Link Road, the former RAF Leiston airfield, and the B1119, would:
 - Avoid reliance on the Benhall Railway Bridge;
 - Remove the need for a new crossing of the River Fromus; and
 - Represent a more coordinated and deliverable solution.
- 12. This approach better reflects what should be understood as genuine coordination between NSIP projects.

Site Selection

- 13. The access constraints arise directly from the fundamental unsuitability of the chosen site.
- 14. The site only functions through significant engineering interventions, including works to the Benhall Railway Bridge and the construction of a new bridge across the River Fromus. These would result in permanent harm to the setting of Hurts Hall and the wider landscape.
- 15. As has been identified, this represents a disproportionate solution to a self-imposed problem.
- 16. Given the sensitivity of this location, any such intervention would need to be of exceptionally high design quality, fully responsive to its historic and landscape context. At present, there is no confidence that this standard can be achieved, and insufficient detail has been provided.
- 17. The Examining Authority has observed a clear contrast at the Hornsea 3 converter station, located adjacent to major infrastructure near the A47. That site demonstrates appropriate siting, accessibility, and separation from residential communities.
- 18. By comparison, the current proposal appears to be retrofitting solutions to overcome an inherently unsuitable location.

19. The Applicant's justification of the site based on co-location with LionLink does not amount to meaningful coordination. Co-location alone does not reduce impacts; it compounds them at a single location.

Need for the Project

- 20. There is a fundamental question as to whether Sea Link is required in its current form.
- 21. Evidence presented within the Examination indicates that alternative solutions, including upgrading existing transmission infrastructure, could potentially deliver the same outcomes at lower cost and with reduced environmental and community impact.
- 22. This calls into question the strength of the Applicant's case for need.
- 23. Where a less harmful and more efficient alternative may exist, it is essential that the proposal is rigorously justified.

Cumulative Impacts and Mental Health

- 24. The proposal must be considered within the wider context of multiple overlapping NSIPs, including Sizewell C, EA1N and EA2, LionLink, and the Essex Suffolk Water project.
- 25. This represents over a decade of continuous disruption, with limited opportunity for respite.
- 26. For local communities, this creates a sustained environment of uncertainty, affecting sleep, work, and daily life, and resulting in observable stress and fatigue.
- 27. The cumulative impact on community mental health and wellbeing is real and ongoing, and must be given appropriate weight within the Examination.
- 28. In this context, it is essential that construction working hours are controlled to allow meaningful respite. Seven-day working would be incompatible with safeguarding community wellbeing and should not be permitted.

Conclusion

29. Clean energy infrastructure is necessary, but it must be delivered in a way that is strategic, coordinated, and proportionate.

30. In this case:

- The access strategy is ill-considered and uncertain;
- The site selection is fundamentally flawed; and
- The case for need remains insufficiently demonstrated.

31. Furthermore, the cumulative burden placed on local communities—particularly in terms of mental health and quality of life—is significant and must not be underestimated.

32. It is also a matter of concern that local knowledge and lived experience do not appear to have been given sufficient weight in the development of the proposal.

33. For these reasons, I respectfully submit that the proposal, in its current form, fails to achieve an appropriate balance between national benefit and local impact.

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