

SEA LINK CHANGE REQUEST 1 – OPEN FLOOR HEARING 3

Tuesday 24 March 2026

Good morning.

My name is [REDACTED] and I am speaking as a representative of Walberswick Against LionLink.

I want to begin by making one point absolutely clear.

I remain fundamentally opposed to the Sea Link project as a whole.

The project has not demonstrated a robust or convincing needs case.

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.

A Pattern of Incomplete Evidence

Across all five changes, there is a consistent theme:

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 1 – Hoverport, 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.

Even more concerning, important saltmarsh habitat has been omitted from the plans entirely.

That is not a minor oversight—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 2 – 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 16 metres high, represents a very different visual and landscape impact compared to the lower Air Insulated alternative.

But more importantly, it raises a clear planning concern:

Is this change not just for Sea Link—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 3 – 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:

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 4 – Benhall 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 Fromus Valley
- Reduces impacts on sensitive landscapes and heritage areas

And importantly, it uses existing infrastructure corridors.

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 EN-1 and EN-5?

Change 5 – Hedgerow and 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.

The Bigger Picture – Cumulative Impact

These changes cannot be looked at in isolation.

Communities 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

Sea Link does not exist in a vacuum—it adds to an already overwhelming cumulative burden.

Conclusion

Taken together, these five changes point to a single conclusion:

This project was not ready for submission.

Key surveys were incomplete.

Alternatives were not properly assessed.

And mitigation remains vague or deferred.

That is not consistent with the requirements of national policy, nor with the standards expected of nationally significant infrastructure.

So my request to the Examining Authority 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

But above all—

Recognise 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.