

Submission for Deadline 6 of the Sea Link DCO – Coral Duncan

Change of Order Limits relating to the Benhall Railway Bridge

I am taking the opportunity to raise several points I was unable to do so with my original response to Sea Links original DCO application.

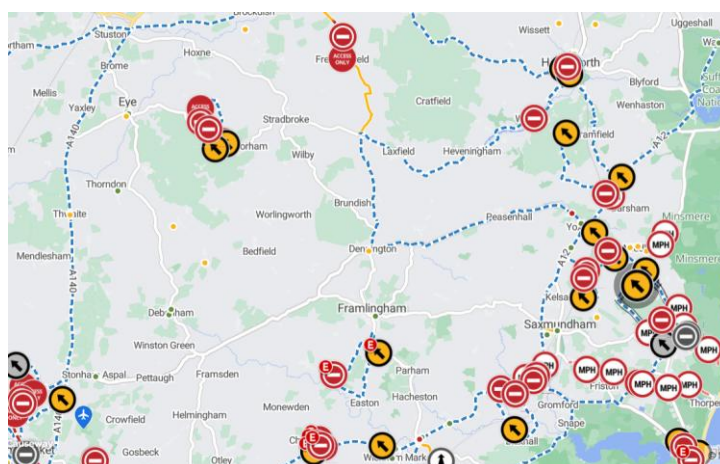
When National Grid presented the proposed converter station at Sternfield, there was no mention of the Benhall Bridge being modified, with the potential to cause me and my community to be isolated.

I believe I was misled by National Grids' original Sea Link DCO. Access to the Sternfield site via Benhall Bridge was flagged as inadequate much earlier in the consultation process. National Grid had chosen to dismiss this as the impactful barrier it is (which should demand a DCO in itself) and has thought to slip these changes in as minor improvements for ease and speed. These CR1 changes have been a deliberate attempt to sneak hugely impactful changes into the DCO without proper due diligence and scrutiny.

We deserve true and proper assessments of the potentially catastrophic impacts our communities and environments will suffer. These must be done before any such project proceeds, but in a true and honest way, not those presented with bias by the developer who deem the impacts as minimal or negligible.

The impact of any of the three options of the Benhall Bridge changes will be devastating, to not only the older folk caged up in their homes denied access to their community, but to those, like my family, who rely on access to the A12 to commute to work – whose journey time has increased by 40% over the past six months with the current live NSIP projects.

This is the current state of the roads we have to negotiate and manage (fig.1), another NSIP thrust upon us without due assessment and evaluation is reckless and damaging to our wellbeing and mental health.



Our family crosses the Bridge up to 8 times a day during the working week. To obstruct our everyday lives would be an unsurmountable demand on local people.

I do a yoga class in a local village hall, which has been well attended for a year. However, class numbers are dwindling in size since the current crazy number of road works in our local area.

People who attend from surrounding villages, such as Tunstall, Gt Glemham, Yoxford etc. are too worried to travel now; concerned with negotiating unexpected road closures, travelling their local lanes encountering inappropriate sized lorries and an overwhelming increased volume of traffic.

This is a root cause to social isolation. It is challenging enough once retired or disabled to keep connected. Social networks are important, and we country folk depend on getting out and meeting up for our mental wellbeing. We attend networks of Churches and village halls in this area, we volunteer, work, socialize and worship via these arteries. I am witnessing people choosing to stay at home because of the fear of travelling from village to village.

Please be made aware that social isolation is a major factor contributing to depression and mental health issues. The East Coast of Suffolk suffers a disproportionate number of people suffering compared to national statistics.

'There's a growing body of evidence that social isolation and loneliness has a significant negative impact on people's health and wellbeing, on happiness, on productivity and on society as a whole. Different groups think about it and experience it differently, and it has a lot of different causes...'

Cited: East Suffolk Council Community Partnership, October 2025

'Mental health in Suffolk is the lowest it's been since we started measuring in March 2020. That's even worse than at any point during the pandemic.'

Cited: <https://www.suffolkmind.org.uk/about-us/our-research/>

The impact of any of the three proposed bridge plans will cause chaos to my community's everyday livelihoods and significantly impact our mental health and wellbeing.

Local people should have had the opportunity to consider SCC's northern access route proposal when the access routes were being considered at the statutory consultation stage back in 2023.

It now appears NG are averse to the Northern access route as it would add over 40 thousand hours to the HGV times.

With 12,000 vehicles a day using that part of the A12, restrictions and traffic lights will add at least 1 hour per day to this journey.

As a rough estimate, on a 5-day working week, that is 60 thousand hours other travellers, Sizewell C HGV's, business and commuters will be having to absorb in both time and fuel. Do we all invoice NG for time and fuel for every delay as our worth is obviously seen as a lot less valuable than NG drivers.

Sizewell C have around 1000 HGV movements a day at present, so 2000 return trips. The enforced delays from Benhall Bridge works will impact Sizewell C HGV's to a far greater extent than the declared hours lost to NG HGV's.

Why do NG feel their time and costs are more valuable than the thousands of users of the A12 who these impacts daily when the bridge is closed and diversions / traffic controls in place.

Another reason NG refute the Northern route as it is Sizewell C emergency access. As Sizewell C is planned to be operational many years after SeaLink, and the HGV and construction traffic will have concluded by that time. I would like to say this is not a strong objection to using the Northern route. The Benhall Bridge is our emergency access route, again SeaLink are showing no consideration for the villages around Saxmundham, or Saxmundham itself.

Another flaw in the access scheme is the issues at Little Glemham, the culvert that runs under the road there is already noted for Sizewell drivers to go dead slow as it is weak, there has been no mention anywhere of what NG plan to do to resolve this as the 400 tonne plus transports that will need to use that route will collapse that part of the A12.