

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing following your letter of 28 August requesting further information from several parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO. Although I am not a listed recipient, I feel compelled to write in light of recent evidence concerning the cost, deliverability and value for money of the proposed Sea Link project.

I fully support the transition to Net Zero and recognise the urgent need to strengthen Britain's electricity transmission network. However, I believe that such investment must represent genuine value for money and, wherever possible, make use of existing infrastructure rather than cause unnecessary environmental damage.

This is particularly important given Ofgem's current Project Assessment of Sea Link. National Grid's DCO documentation gives an estimated implementation cost of approximately £1.1 billion in 2018/19 prices, whereas Ofgem is now considering substantially higher costs of approximately £3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented during the DCO examination.

I am particularly concerned about the Kent end of Sea Link at Minster. I have been involved with the campaign to protect Minster Marshes and have looked closely at the environmental consequences of constructing the converter station, substation and associated infrastructure there. Minster Marshes and the neighbouring internationally important habitats around Pegwell Bay are precisely the sort of places where we should be preventing entirely new infrastructure, when less damaging alternatives do exist.

The circumstances underpinning Sea Link have also evolved. Nautilus, which was previously proposed to connect at Friston, is no longer doing so; National Grid's own DCO documentation records that Nautilus terminated its Suffolk connection agreement in March 2025. Ofgem has nevertheless stated that its current assessment of Sea Link's need is based on other generation connections and does not include Nautilus. This makes a transparent examination of the current need and the alternatives especially important.

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) has proposed an alternative based on upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon corridors in Suffolk and Kent. SEAS estimates this

could cost under £300 million, compared with the much higher current projected cost of Sea Link. That is a claim which should surely be subjected to independent technical and economic assessment before consumers are committed to billions of pounds of expenditure.

For me, this is not an argument against Net Zero or investment in the grid. Quite the opposite. If we can achieve the necessary network reinforcement more cheaply, more quickly and with substantially less destruction of countryside and wildlife habitat, that is exactly what a rational Net Zero programme should seek to do.

I therefore urge you, before determining the Sea Link DCO, to ensure that the SEAS alternative is independently and transparently assessed against Sea Link in terms of network capacity, total cost to consumers, delivery time and environmental impact.

If upgrading existing infrastructure can meet the required network need at a fraction of the cost and with far less environmental damage, it deserves proper examination before an irreversible decision is made.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Blem

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