

he Rt Hon. Miatta Fahnbulleh MP Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), c/ o Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team, DESNZ

Dear Secretary of State,

Sea Link, Lionlink and Value for Money

Following your letter of 28 August asking for further information from several parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO, I am writing in the light of the reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office (NAO). These raise troubling questions about the cost, delivery and value for money of Sea Link and indeed the effectiveness of the current regulations in protecting consumers, that is, the whole UK nation.

Your government has said the right words about reducing household energy bills, which must be followed through in proportionate and necessary energy infrastructure projects that provide true value for money.

The NAO's report, 'Value for Money - Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network', of 11 September highlights serious weaknesses: there needs to be stronger supervision, transparent monitoring and the regulatory capability to scrutinise costs. The NAO specifically recommends improvements from Ofgem in order to protect consumers (that is, all of us) while upgrading energy networks.

This particularly affects Sea Link, the 2GW transmission project through East Suffolk, now estimated by Ofgem to cost about £3.2 BILLION, three times the costs quoted during the DCO examination. Clearly, the information has not been reliable nor has National Grid been transparent about these massive costs. Their figures are therefore wholly unrealistic and decision-makers have not been given the true cost on which to base their decision, let alone the affected communities. Your government has promised more local decision-making on vast projects that affect them deeply and widely but there is no sign of that in this project.

Furthermore, the assumptions behind these costs and the project have changed: now the apparent export deficit at Friston is about 352MW, down from 1852MW before. There are also unresolved 'harmonic' issues probably needing additional work elsewhere on the transmission network before Sea Link could operate at the proposed 2GW capacity. These works are still without their scope and location determined. Extra costs will also be necessary to reinforce transmission networks in Kent, but they have not been included in this staggering £3.2 billion submission.

That is why Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) proposed an alternative, much much cheaper at less than £300 million, based on upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon routes.

LionLink also falls under the NAO's concerns about consumer protection. LionLink is not part of the Great Grid Upgrade but is planned by Ofgem to export energy to the Netherlands. This is frankly astonishing: it would result in increased British wholesale electricity prices compared to not having LionLink.

LionLink would badly affect, indeed is already badly affecting, the Suffolk coast, an AOB with many supposedly protected landscapes and wildlife, which brings in vital tourist income to the local communities. The damage would be huge and in many cases irreversible: this is precisely what 'green' energy and policies of this government are meant to protect, for the good of all. We know now that we are all integrated, that destruction of habitats affects humans as well as wildlife, degrades us all and hinders growth, lowers health which in turn costs more to the NHS and therefore us all. It is madness to press ahead with the current proposals.

Please require an independent and transparent reassessment of the economic need and consumer case for LionLink against current 2026 evidence, not the 2024 regulatory decision.

Achieving Net Zero should not and need not mean enormous over-expenditure on successive infrastructure projects: there are cheaper, better co-ordinated and less environmentally damaging alternatives. Public support for the transition to green energy will be much stronger if people see the government challenging unnecessary expenditure and protecting consumers. Please ensure that:

the cheaper alternative to Sea Link is assessed

LionLink's case is reassessed with current evidence

offshore solutions and better use of existing infrastructure are implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Katharine Ridler

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]