

To: The Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero,

c/o: Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team, DESNZ

Interested Party Reference No: [REDACTED]

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK – A CHEAPER & FASTER ALTERNATIVE

I sent you an email on 27 July asking if you were aware of the large number of NSIPs proposed for Suffolk Coastal, among them Sea Link, and the cumulative impact of those projects. I advised you then of an alternative solution which would be cheaper and faster than the proposed Sea Link project.

I'm now writing in response to your letter of 28 August requesting more information from various parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO. Although not a listed recipient I must write considering recent and significant reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office making serious points relating to cost, deliverability and value for money for the proposed project.

I support government efforts to cut energy costs for households. However, as huge sums fund the Great Grid Upgrade, major projects must be proven to be necessary, well-balanced, and provide genuine value for money for consumers.

The National Audit Office's recent report, Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network, makes this very relevant. I write to urge the Government to review the proposed Sea Link project in East Suffolk, as it highlights many of the issues raised by the National Audit Office.

Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately £3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented during the DCO examination.

The vast discrepancy in cost estimates raises serious questions about the transparency of the Examination process. While National Grid claimed the project would cost £1.1 billion, Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at £3.2 billion—broadly confirming the evidence previously submitted by SEAS. Proceeding with the Examination based on an estimate that was understated by £2 billion meant decision-makers and affected communities were denied a realistic understanding of the project's true scale and impact.

Crucially, the original justification for Sea Link no longer applies. The project was designed to address an expected 1,852MW energy deficit at Friston linked to the

proposed Nautilus interconnector. However, Nautilus was relocated before the Sea Link application was submitted, dropping the apparent deficit to just 352MW.

Further network concerns have also emerged. Ofgem has identified unresolved harmonic issues that may require extra work across the transmission network before Sea Link can safely operate at full 2GW capacity. The scope and location of these fixes are not yet known. Additionally, NGET has excluded the required grid reinforcements between Richborough and Canterbury from its current £3.2 billion funding submission.

These issues raise a critical question: what is the real need and the total cost to consumers of delivering Sea Link?

There is a cheaper and faster alternative.

During the examination, Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) proposed an alternative to upgrade and reconductor existing pylon corridors in Suffolk and Kent. This option is estimated to cost under £300 million, compared to the £3.2 billion price tag for Sea Link—offering a potential saving to consumers of nearly £3 billion.

This alternative could also be delivered faster. By utilising existing infrastructure, it avoids extensive new onshore infrastructure, environmental damage, and community disruption related to Sea Link.

The cumulative impact of all of the NSIPs proposed for this small and precious part of East Suffolk is becoming intolerable. I've been 'fighting' to protect this beautiful part of the world for 18 years. The natural beauty and tranquility, big and dark skies, bird life, other fauna and flora which have been my home for 26 years is threatened by irreparable devastation. The necessity to respond to every consultation, statutory or not, then write in response as necessary or participate in Examinations of DCOs by the Planning Inspectorate for the multiple projects, sometimes concurrently (eg, LionLink too this year) before anything begins to be built. All of this and the actuality of projects commencing is causing real mental stress to me and many others in communities here, as well as actually causing problems with congestion, road closures and diversions. Constant noise and vibrations will very soon create 24 hours a day disturbance and disruption for weeks to those who live in the vicinity of the Scottish Power Renewables EA2 landfall area.

I support the Net Zero transition and recognise the need for major grid investment. However, billions should not be spent on new infrastructure without first properly examining whether existing networks can be upgraded faster and at a fraction of the cost.

Before consumers are committed to the £3.2 billion Sea Link project, I urge the Government to ensure the SEAS alternative is independently and transparently assessed against it on cost, delivery time, network capacity, and environmental impact.

Yours sincerely

Louise Chadwick

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