

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK, LIONLINK AND VALUE FOR MONEY FOR CONSUMERS

I am writing following your letter of 28 August concerning the Sea Link DCO. Although I was not a listed recipient, two recent reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office raise important questions about the cost, need and value for money of Sea Link, and about the protection of consumers as major electricity infrastructure is developed.

I support the transition to Net Zero and welcome the Government's commitment to reducing household energy costs. However, the scale of investment now required makes it essential that projects are demonstrably necessary, proportionate and represent value for money.

The National Audit Office report *Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network*, dated 11 September 2026, identifies weaknesses in the existing regulatory framework, including the need for stronger oversight, transparent monitoring and sufficient regulatory capability to scrutinise costs. It also recommends that Ofgem assess how effectively its regulatory approach protects consumers while enabling rapid network expansion.

These issues are directly relevant to Sea Link.

Ofgem has now assessed the proposed 2GW Sea Link project at approximately £3.2 billion, compared with the approximately £1.1 billion estimate presented by National Grid during the DCO examination. This is particularly significant because Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) challenged the £1.1 billion figure during the Examination and argued that the likely cost was closer to £3.2 billion.

A difference of this magnitude raises serious questions about whether decision-makers, affected communities and consumers had sufficiently realistic cost information during the Examination.

The circumstances underpinning the original need for Sea Link have also changed. Sea Link was developed around an assumed 1,852MW export deficit at Friston associated with the proposed Nautilus interconnector. Nautilus was subsequently relocated away from Friston before the Sea Link application was submitted, reducing the apparent deficit to approximately 352MW.

There are further uncertainties. Ofgem has identified unresolved harmonic issues which may require additional works elsewhere on the transmission network before Sea Link can operate compliantly at its intended 2GW capacity. The scope, location and cost of those works have yet to be determined. Reinforcement identified between Richborough and Canterbury in Kent is also excluded from NGET's current £3.2 billion Project Assessment submission.

The fundamental questions are therefore: what is the current need for Sea Link, and what will its total cost to consumers ultimately be?

During the DCO examination, SEAS proposed an alternative involving upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon corridors, estimated at under £300 million. Given the potential difference in cost, this alternative should be independently and transparently assessed before consumers are committed to expenditure on the present Sea Link proposal.

The NAO's concerns about consumer protection should also prompt renewed scrutiny of LionLink, National Grid Ventures' proposed multipurpose interconnector affecting the Suffolk coast.

LionLink is not part of the Great Grid Upgrade. Ofgem expects it to operate predominantly as an export route from Great Britain to the Netherlands and has indicated that this would increase GB wholesale electricity prices compared with a position without LionLink.

Given the scale and potential consumer implications of the project, I ask the Government to require an independent reassessment of LionLink's economic need and consumer case using current 2026 evidence, rather than relying solely upon the regulatory case established in 2024.

There are also substantial concerns about the latest proposed LionLink landfall at Walberswick (G3). As with the previous G1 and G2 proposals, homes are immediately adjacent to the site and nearly half of the village's homes are within 500 metres, with many considerably closer.

Construction lasting two years or more, including periods of 24-hour HDD drilling, could create substantial noise, vibration and light impacts. There are particular concerns for elderly and vulnerable residents, children and nearby protected wildlife habitats.

The proposed use of the B1387 also raises concerns about severe traffic disruption and emergency access, given its importance as the sole access route for residents and tens of thousands of visitors. The consequences for tourism, local businesses and employment must also be properly considered.

I support offshore wind and the transition to Net Zero. But Net Zero should not require consumers and communities to accept unnecessary expenditure or successive major infrastructure projects without first establishing whether cheaper, better coordinated and less environmentally damaging solutions are available.

Public confidence in the energy transition depends upon Government demonstrating that expenditure is being challenged, consumers are being protected and infrastructure is being built because it is genuinely necessary.

I therefore ask the Government, before consumers and communities are committed to these projects, to ensure that:

- the lower-cost alternative to Sea Link is independently and transparently assessed;
- LionLink's economic need and consumer case are reassessed against current evidence; and
- coordinated offshore solutions and greater use of existing infrastructure are fully considered.

I would be grateful if you could address these matters before any final decisions are taken which commit consumers and affected communities to the consequences of these projects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Nichola