

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

c/o: Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team, DESNZ

Via Email: SouthEastAngliaLink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Subject : Sea Link (EN020026) – Request for Information

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK – DID YOU KNOW THERE’S A CHEAPER and FASTER ALTERNATIVE?

After your letter of 28 August I'm requesting further information regarding the Sea Link DCO.

I'm not a listed recipient, but am compelled to write after two significant reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office. Both raise serious questions about cost, deliverability and value for money of Sea Link.

I welcome the Government's commitment to reducing household energy costs. With billions of pounds now being invested in the Great Grid Upgrade, it is essential that major projects are necessary, proportionate and provide genuine value for money for consumers.

After The National Audit Office's report, Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network I am writing to ask the Government to look again at the proposed Sea Link project in East Suffolk, as it illustrates many of the concerns mentioned by the NAO.

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

This raises serious concerns about the information presented during the Examination. National Grid gave an estimated project cost of approx. £1.1 billion. SEAS challenged that, and presented evidence for it being nearer £3.2 billion. Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately £3.2 billion, broadly confirming the figure put forward by SEAS.

The £1.1 billion figure presented during the Examination therefore proved wholly unrealistic. It is deeply concerning that a project of this scale was examined without decision-makers and affected communities being given a realistic assessment of its likely cost.

More importantly, the circumstances underpinning the original need for Sea Link have changed.

The project was developed around a 1,852MW export deficit at Friston, associated with the proposed Nautilus interconnector. But Nautilus has been relocated away from

Friston before the Sea Link application was submitted, reducing the apparent deficit to about 352MW .

There are more concerns: Ofgem has identified unresolved harmonic issues which will require additional work before Sea Link can comply and operate at its intended 2GW capacity. The precise scope and location of these works are yet to be determined. Plus, identified reinforcement between Richborough and Canterbury in Kent is not factored into NGET's current £3.2 billion Project Assessment submission.

So - what is the true need and total cost of delivering Sea Link?

Most importantly, there is a cheaper, faster alternative .

During the DCO examination, Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) generated an alternative based on upgrading and reconductoring the existing pylon corridor of Suffolk and Kent. This would cost under £300 million , compared with £3.2 billion for Sea Link – a potential saving to consumers of almost £3 billion .

This alternative could be delivered more quickly too, using infrastructure that already exists rather than the new proposed onshore infrastructure. This would avoid environmental damage and disruption to communities associated with Sea Link.

I support the transition to Net Zero and recognise that Britain's electricity network needs substantial investment. But achieving Net Zero should not mean spending billions of pounds on new infrastructure without first properly examining whether the same network need can be met more quickly and at a fraction of the cost by upgrading existing infrastructure .

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

I'm sure that if these were government-owned rather than so-called National Grid share-holder-centric projects, the SEAS solution would be adopted without question. The land we live on and love is not an asset to be gambled with by remote individuals for profit. Especially by share-holders who live nowhere near it, and have in all likelihood never visited. This fragile ecosystem in Suffolk is all we have, if we allow it to be ruined there is no way back.

There is a solution costing under £300 million which can deliver the required network reinforcement faster than a £3.2 billion project. Surely it deserves to be properly examined before billions of pounds of consumers' money are committed . And wasted. Do you want that to happen on your watch?

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Shelley



