

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

IP [REDACTED]

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK

I am writing following your letter of 28 August requesting further information from a number of parties in relation to the Sealink DCO planning inquiry.

Although I'm not one of those listed my home is one of the most severely affected by these plans.

We are located on the boundary of the National Grid/SPR substations site so are already badly impacted by their construction. And as I have said in my previous submissions if Sealink and Lionlink get the go-ahead we will be entirely encircled by cable routes with large construction sites on our doorstep and the prospect of another decade or more of disruptive construction. Our Suffolk community is as a whole already paying a high price in terms of the impact on our quality of life and on the environment of the multiple projects already underway.

So whilst I support the government's desire to green our energy system and the stated commitment to reduce household energy bills the huge cost of these projects should represent value for money and indeed they should be proven to be necessary.

Community groups and individuals such as myself have made submissions to the Sealink inquiry questioning whether the needs case made has been made and whether the estimated costs of the project given by National Grid represent the true cost.

Two recent reports published by the NAO and Ofgem raise serious concerns serious questions about both these issues

The recent National audit office(NAO) report “Value for money upgrading the electricity transmission network” highlights weaknesses in the existing system which need to be addressed if the great grid upgrade is to provide value for money. These include the need for stronger oversight, transparent monitoring and sufficient regulatory capacity to scrutinise costs and very importantly the NAO recommends that ofgem assess the effectiveness of its regulatory approaching protecting consumers while supporting rapid delivery of network upgrades.

In their submissions to the inquiry National grid estimated the project cost at approximately £1.1 billion. Ofgem have now assessed the cost at £3.2 billion - three times the amount presented during the DCO. This figure is the same figure community group SEAS estimated the cost to be in their submissions to the inquiry. It is very worrying that this large-scale project was examined by the inspectors without them being given an accurate assessment of its likely cost.

In relation to the needs case Sealink made their representations on the basis of out of date figures. The project was developed around an assumed 1852MW export deficit at Friston associated with the proposed Nautilus connector. In fact Nautilus was moved away from Friston before the Sealink application was even submitted for consideration. The deficit was thus reduced to around 352 MW.

SEAS in their submission to the inquiry identified a cheaper, faster alternative to Sealink which would accommodate this deficit by simply upgrading the existing pylon corridors at a cost of under £300 million potentially saving consumers something approaching £3 billion.

I'm deeply concerned about the lack of transparency on the part of National grid and the seeming lack of reliability of the information provided to the enquiry which I believe calls into question the very basis on which you are being asked to make a decision about this project.

We all recognise that substantial investment is required to upgrade the electricity network. However, particularly given that consumers ultimately pay the price we should all be asking the question as to whether these requirements can be met more quickly with less disruption and at a fraction of the cost.

So therefore, I ask you as Secretary of State to carefully consider the findings of these reports and before committing to Sealink and other future projects such as

Lionlink the needs case and cheaper alternatives are properly independently assessed and coordinated offshore solutions and better use of existing infrastructure are fully considered.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Cramb