

Katharine Sampson [REDACTED]

South East Anglia Link

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Dear Secretary of State,

I am getting in touch following your letter of 28 August regarding the Sea Link DCO application. While I wasn't among the original recipients, two recent reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office (NAO) highlighted issues with this project that I feel cannot be ignored. Both reports raise serious red flags about Sea Link's spiralling costs, overall deliverability, and ultimate value for money.

I fully back the Government's goal to lower household energy bills. As billions of pounds are poured into the Great Grid Upgrade, every major project must be strictly necessary, proportionate, and cost-effective for billpayers. The NAO's *Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network* report underscores this exact point. Looking closely at the East Suffolk Sea Link project, it seems to embody nearly every concern the report warns against.

Ofgem now puts the price tag for Sea Link at roughly £3.2 billion. That is about three times the £1.1 billion figure National Grid presented during the DCO examination. Back then, groups like Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) challenged that initial estimate with evidence showing the real cost would sit closer to £3.2 billion—a prediction Ofgem has now effectively confirmed. It is alarming that a project of this scale moved through examination based on unrealistic figures, depriving decision-makers and local communities of the true financial picture.

Just as concerning is the fact that the rationale for Sea Link has largely fallen away. The original proposal was designed around a projected 1,852MW export deficit at Friston linked to the planned Nautilus interconnector. However, Nautilus was relocated away from Friston before the Sea Link application was even submitted, dropping that deficit down to about 352MW.

On top of that, Ofgem has flagged unresolved harmonic issues that could demand extra, unspecified network works before Sea Link can safely run at its 2GW capacity. Crucially, required reinforcements between Richborough and Canterbury are not even included in National Grid's latest £3.2 billion assessment. This leaves us with a basic question: what is the actual scope, need, and final cost of this project to the public?

There is a significantly cheaper and faster alternative available right now.

During the examination, SEAS put forward a proposal to upgrade and reconductor the existing pylon corridors across Suffolk and Kent. This approach carries an estimated price tag under £300 million—saving consumers nearly £3 billion compared to Sea Link. Beyond the vast savings, this option uses infrastructure we already have, could be delivered far quicker, and avoids the heavy environmental toll and disruption that new onshore builds would impose on East Suffolk.

As an East Suffolk resident, I see firsthand how the endless wave of energy projects threatens, and is already beginning to irrevocably harm, our local landscapes, tourism, and quiet communities. It is all the more frustrating to watch energy bills rise while potentially multibillion-pound blunders are made on our doorstep.

We urgently need to reach Net Zero, and I support upgrading our national grid to get us there. But reaching Net Zero shouldn't mean blindly greenlighting multibillion-pound builds without checking if an existing route can achieve the same goal faster for a fraction of the price and without the widespread destruction to the unique habitat and existing infrastructure on which we depend for our livelihoods and peace of mind.

Before committing consumers to a £3.2 billion spend, I urge the Government to order an independent, transparent review comparing the SEAS alternative against Sea Link—weighing cost, timeline, capacity, and local impact side by side. If an option costing under £300 million can meet our network needs sooner, it deserves a thorough, fair evaluation before a single pound of public money is locked in.

Yours sincerely,

Katharine Sampson

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