

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: Material change in context since closure of Sea Link Examination

Dear Secretary of State,

Ref: Material change in context since closure of Sea Link Examination

I have recently moved to East Suffolk and as a new resident, I have been following National Grid's application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the proposed Sea Link project and its similar intention for the LionLink project.

I note the Planning Inspectorate's latest update concerning your letter of 28 August 2026, requesting further information from several parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO.

I am not an intended recipient of your letter but in light of your request for further information, I feel obliged to bring your attention to two recent and significant reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office, which establish that there has been a material change in context since the Sea Link examination closed.

The National Audit Office (NAO) report, dated 11th September 2026 and the Ofgem ASTI project assessment consultation (opened 1st September 2026, closing 29th September 2026) represent critical new financial and strategic information that did not exist during the Planning Inspectorate Examination period. **Both reports raise serious questions about the cost, deliverability and value for money of Sea Link and, more widely, the effectiveness of the current regulatory approach in protecting consumers.**

I urge you to take the new figures and risks identified in these reports into account in your next deliberations, so as to make a legal and fully informed decision on the public interest and economic balance of the Sea Link project.

The Government's commitment to reducing household energy costs is much needed but if billions of pounds are being invested in energy infrastructure, it is essential that projects are necessary, proportionate and provide genuine value for money for consumers.

In the recent NAO report, entitled **Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network** (11/09/26) the NAO highlights weaknesses in the existing system which need to be addressed if the Great Grid Upgrade is to provide value for money, including the need for stronger oversight, transparent monitoring and sufficient regulatory capability to scrutinise costs. Importantly, the NAO recommends that Ofgem assess the effectiveness of its regulatory approach in protecting consumers while supporting rapid delivery of network upgrades.

These concerns are particularly relevant to **Sea Link**, the proposed 2GW transmission project through East Suffolk. Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately **£3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented during the DCO examination.**

This raises serious concerns about the reliability and transparency of the information presented during that Examination. **National Grid presented an estimated project cost of approximately £1.1 billion, despite Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) challenging that figure and presenting evidence that the true cost was likely to be around £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.

The circumstances underpinning Sea Link's original need 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**.

Ofgem has also 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 precise scope and location of these works have yet to be determined. In addition, identified reinforcement between Richborough and Canterbury in Kent is excluded from NGET's current £3.2 billion Project Assessment submission.

This raises a fundamental question: **what is the true need and total cost to consumers of delivering Sea Link?**

During the DCO examination, SEAS identified an alternative based on upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon corridors, estimated to cost **under £300 million**, potentially saving consumers approaching **£3 billion**.

The NAO's concerns about consumer protection must also prompt renewed scrutiny of LionLink, National Grid Ventures' proposed commercial multipurpose interconnector affecting the Suffolk coast, currently in the pre-application phase for a DCO.

LionLink is not part of the Great Grid Upgrade. Ofgem expects LionLink to operate predominantly as an **export route from Great Britain to the Netherlands**, increasing GB wholesale electricity prices compared with the position without LionLink.

Given the NAO's recommendations, I urge the Government to require an **independent and transparent reassessment of the economic need and consumer case for LionLink against current 2026 evidence**, rather than continuing to regard that case as established by the 2024 regulatory decision.

Furthermore, I would also like to emphasise that in addition to the overall case against LionLink, the latest proposed landfall site in Walberswick (G3) is wholly unsuitable, as it was with the previous proposed sites at G1 & G2.

Walberswick is a coastal village dependent on tourism, almost entirely surrounded by protected habitats, with one fragile access road and one of the oldest populations in England (43% aged 65+ and 11% aged 85+). Homes sit directly adjacent on two sides of the proposed G3 landfall site, with nearly half of all village homes within 500 metres with dozens much closer. This means:

- Unacceptable high levels of noise, vibration and light pollution from construction work lasting for two years or more with severe impacts from 24/7 HDD drilling for weeks on end.
- Disproportionate, significant harmful impact on elderly residents, children and vulnerable people, along with serious threat to wildlife and ecosystems of the protected habitats which lie in close proximity.
- Severe traffic disruption and emergency evacuation risks arising from the proposed construction HGV traffic use of the minor road B1387, which is the sole access road for residents and tens of thousands of visitors.
- Significant impacts on recreational tourism, and consequent threats to the viability of local businesses and jobs.

I support offshore wind and the transition to 'Net Zero'. However, achieving 'Net Zero' should not mean accepting unnecessary expenditure or successive major infrastructure projects without establishing whether there are **cheaper, better coordinated and less environmentally damaging alternatives**.

The energy transition needs public support. That support will be much stronger if people can see that Government is challenging unnecessary expenditure, protecting consumers and ensuring that the infrastructure being built is genuinely needed.

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

- **Sea Link's cheaper alternative is properly and independently assessed;**
- **LionLink's economic and consumer case is reassessed using current evidence; and**
- **coordinated offshore solutions and better use of existing infrastructure are fully considered.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Ives

