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South East Anglia Link

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18 September 2026

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, LIONLINK AND VALUE FOR MONEY FOR CONSUMERS

I understand that you wrote on 28 August requesting further information from several parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO. As a resident of Aldeburgh, a historic town which would be seriously affected by SeaLink if the DCO is granted, I wish to express my serious concern about the major questions which are being raised about both National Grid projects SeaLink and LionLink in recent reports by Ofgem and the National Audit Office. As I understand it, these reports raise serious issues about the cost, deliverability and value for money of SeaLink and, more widely, about the effectiveness of the current regulatory approach in protecting communities and consumers.

I support the Government's commitment to reducing household energy costs and we recognise the need to overcome the serious backlog in electricity supply investment. With billions of pounds being invested in energy infrastructure, it is essential that projects are necessary, proportionate and provide genuine value for money, and that

they respect and safeguard the wellbeing of the communities which they impact. National Grid's approach in this respect has been dismissive and arrogant.

The recent National Audit Office (NAO) report Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network issued on 11 September 2026 highlights weaknesses in the existing system which need to be addressed if the 'Great Grid Upgrade' is to provide value for money. It highlights the need for stronger oversight, transparent monitoring and sufficient regulatory capability to scrutinise costs. We very much welcome its recommendation that Ofgem reassess the effectiveness of its independent regulatory approach in protecting consumers while supporting rapid delivery of network upgrades.

These concerns are particularly relevant to SeaLink, the proposed 2GW undersea transmission project between East Suffolk and Kent. Ofgem has now assessed the cost of SeaLink at approximately £3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented by National Grid during the DCO examination. This raises serious concerns about the reliability and transparency of the information presented during that Examination. National Grid reported an estimated project cost of approximately £1.1 billion, despite observers challenging that figure and presenting evidence that the true cost was likely to be around £3.2 billion, a figure now confirmed by Ofgem. The scale of this underestimate is astonishing, and even so some additional connection works in Kent were not included. During the DCO examination, Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (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. 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 while providing no new addition to electricity supply. Given the NAO's recommendations, I think the Government should 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. While LionLink has yet to reach submission of its DCO application, you should be aware that its proposal for landfall at Walberswick and a long overland transfer to a converter station at Saxmundham arouses strong opposition by local people and environmental interests.

Both SeaLink and LionLink present serious threats to the wellbeing of the East Suffolk coast. Construction would involve high levels of noise, vibration and light pollution in a fragile, environmentally rich area, much of which has National Landscape

designation. Severe traffic disruption and emergency evacuation risks would be bound to result from the use of inadequate rural roads during the construction phase. This would have a negative impact on visitor numbers, upon which the economy of Aldeburgh and the other small towns depends. There would be negative impacts upon residents, as well as severe disruption to flora and fauna in what are supposed to be protected habitats. These concerns were strongly put forward by councils, associations and residents during the SeaLInk Examination by the Planning Inspectorate, but they appeared to be summarily brushed off by National Grid. Similar dismissive reactions are being experienced during the LionLink consultations, which bode ill for the Government's commitment to energy transition.

I support offshore wind and the transition to Net Zero. However, achieving Net Zero should not mean accepting unnecessary expenditure or successive, uncoordinated 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 communities and consumers, and ensuring that the infrastructure being built is genuinely needed.

I therefore urge the Government to reject the SeaLink DCO application while reviewing whether such a project is needed against the option of a much less costly onshore solution.

I also urge the Government to require that the economic and consumer case for LionLink is reassessed against current evidence.

And finally I call for the Government to push forward as quickly as possible with the development of coordinated offshore solutions and better use of existing infrastructure.

East Suffolk is taking a seismic hit to its environment from the construction build-up for Sizewell C. Residents cannot tolerate the cumulative impact of numerous other poorly coordinated energy projects which seem to regard local communities and their residents as little more than collateral damage.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine

Katherine Mackie