

[REDACTED]

South East Anglia Link

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

c/o: Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team, DESNZ

Interested Party Reference number: [REDACTED]

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK

I'm prompted to write in response to your letter of 28th August, requesting further information in relation to the proposed Sea Link project.

In light of the recent reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office, which raise serious questions about the cost, deliverability and value for money of this project, I feel, more than ever, that if East Suffolk is to be raped by a litany of proposed NSIPs, we owe it to this charming, bucolic and historic corner of the country to do our utmost to get it right.

In my view, here are a few of legitimate questions that still await satisfactory answers:

- Why here? Why not a brownfield site adjacent to where the energy is needed?
- Why so many NSIPs in one place, a location that Capital Industry has until now passed by? (And because of their proximity, extremely vulnerable to just one thermobaric missile should Russia not be vanquished in Ukraine.)

- **Why so little regard to East Suffolk, its agricultural and tourist economy? Why do the cumulative impacts on the region remain unaddressed?**

But I don't want to harp on about issues that have probably already been stitched up.

What is worth emphasising is what the two recent reports have to say.

Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately £3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented during the DCO examination, and broadly confirming the figure put forward by SEAS earlier in the proceedings.

This raises serious concerns about the reliability and transparency of the information presented during the 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 (snap!). The £1.1 billion figure presented during the Examination therefore proved wholly unrealistic.

One might call NG's underestimate a lame attempt at craven manipulation unworthy of any national body, least of all a privately owned one held by offshore parties. Some might say that this is par for the course in the Trumpian world in which we find ourselves. But I say we can do better. Indeed must do better.

NG's financial case has been further undermined by the relocation of the proposed Nautilus Interconnector away from Friston, which will reduce the assumed export deficit by over 80%, thus blowing a hole in the financial assumptions behind this project.

There is another way. During the DCO examination, SEAS identified an alternative based on upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon corridor in Suffolk and Kent. This is estimated to cost under £300 million, compared with £3.2 billion for Sea Link – a potential saving to consumers approaching £3 billion.

The alternative could also potentially be delivered more quickly, while making better use of infrastructure that already exists and avoiding much of the new onshore infrastructure, environmental damage and disruption to communities associated with Sea Link.

In this way we could get this right - and the rape of East Suffolk might not be in vain.

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 therefore 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.

If a solution costing under £300 million can deliver the required network reinforcement faster than a £3.2 billion project, surely it should be properly examined before billions of pounds of consumers' money are committed.

Yours sincerely

Justin Power

