

Sea Link DCO – EN020026

Response to the Secretary of State's letter dated 22 September 2026

Gordon Young (Affected Party Ref: [REDACTED])

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

Via: SouthEastAngliaLink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

22.10.2026

I am writing in response to your letter of 22 September 2026, inviting comments on the further information submitted following your request of 28 August 2026.

I have participated actively throughout the Sea Link Examination, making written representations and attending hearings. I have also previously written to you personally about the unresolved concerns surrounding this application (Ref: C1-073).

As an Affected Party living approximately 500 metres from the proposed Saxmundham converter station and around 250 metres from its proposed permanent access road, the consequences of this decision are deeply personal to me.

I fully recognise the importance of upgrading our national electricity network and supporting the transition to clean energy. However, I believe these objectives must be achieved responsibly, with proper regard for the environment, public expenditure and the communities expected to bear the consequences.

Having considered the Applicant's latest responses, alongside the recent findings of Ofgem and the National Audit Office, I remain deeply concerned that fundamental questions about Sea Link have still not been satisfactorily resolved.

1. Unresolved technical and environmental concerns

One of the most troubling developments is the harmonics issue identified in Ofgem's *Sea Link Project Assessment*, published on 1 September 2026.

Ofgem reported that even the largest harmonic filter solutions proposed by bidders were unlikely to achieve compliance under all system conditions, and that further works elsewhere on the transmission network could be required.

Yet, when the Secretary of State asked the Applicant, in **Question 58**, to identify any other outstanding or relevant matters, its response was simply that it had nothing further to report.

The Applicant subsequently stated, in its letter of 16 October, that it was confident the issue could be resolved within the Suffolk converter station compound. However, as highlighted in the latest SEAS submission, this assurance was not supported by the relevant harmonic studies and does not explain the apparent contradiction with Ofgem's published findings.

I find this particularly concerning, given the significance of the issue and the advanced stage of the consent process.

As an architect, I understand that major infrastructure designs evolve during detailed development. However, there is a fundamental difference between refining an established design and leaving unresolved technical requirements that may affect the equipment, physical layout and environmental consequences of a development.

The Applicant has acknowledged in its response to **Question 13** that the converter station designs have not been finalised and that the full Critical Design Constraints cannot yet be understood.

How, therefore, can the Secretary of State be confident that the development has been adequately assessed if the final technical solution, and potentially its environmental consequences, remain uncertain?

I respectfully ask that the underlying harmonic studies and the proposed mitigation measures be independently examined before any consent is granted.

2. Benhall Railway Bridge and the failure to resolve construction access

I remain particularly concerned about the proposed construction access through Saxmundham and across Benhall Railway Bridge.

The bridge's structural limitations and its ability to accommodate heavy construction vehicles and abnormal indivisible loads have been repeatedly questioned throughout the Examination.

Yet the Applicant's response to **Question 39** confirms that the structural survey has still not been undertaken. Without this survey, the feasibility and extent of any necessary bridge works remain uncertain.

A further significant concern arises from Sizewell C's rail freight programme. Network Rail has confirmed that the East Suffolk railway is being upgraded to accommodate heavy freight trains transporting construction materials for Sizewell C, with up to four return freight trains operating each night during the second stage of the programme.

The railway improvements include track renewals, signalling and level crossing safety upgrades. This raises important questions about how the Applicant's proposed construction access, including any structural interventions at Benhall Bridge and movements of exceptionally heavy loads, can be safely accommodated alongside these strategically important railway operations.

I find it extraordinary that, at this late stage, the Applicant has still not demonstrated the structural feasibility of its proposed access across Benhall Bridge, nor adequately addressed the potential operational conflicts with Sizewell C's rail freight programme.

I also remain disappointed that the Applicant has not given sufficient consideration to the credible *Northern Access Route* proposed by Suffolk County Council, which could potentially reduce the impact on Saxmundham and avoid some of the most sensitive areas around the Fromus valley.

The prospect of a new permanent access road and bridge across this valued rural landscape is particularly distressing for those of us who live nearby.

I respectfully ask the Secretary of State to require the Applicant to complete and publish the Benhall Railway Bridge structural survey and provide evidence of consultation with Network Rail and Sizewell C demonstrating that its construction access arrangements are structurally feasible, operationally compatible and safe.

Until these matters have been properly established, I do not believe the proposed construction access can reasonably be regarded as resolved.

3. Escalating costs and the continuing justification for Sea Link

The recent findings from Ofgem and the National Audit Office raise serious questions about the cost and value for money of Sea Link.

Ofgem's September assessment records that the Applicant requested £3.197 billion in January 2026, while the capital cost used in its original need case was £1.154 billion. Even after accounting for differences in price bases, this represents more than a doubling of the original estimated cost.

What concerns me is that this substantially higher cost was already being presented to Ofgem while the Examination was still underway, yet it does not appear to have been brought before the Examining Authority.

Furthermore, the cost of additional harmonics mitigation has not been included in these figures and may require separate funding.

The National Audit Office has also raised wider concerns about the lack of full business cases, options appraisals and overall value-for-money assessments for accelerated grid infrastructure projects.

These findings should give the Government reason to examine the justification for Sea Link with particular care.

The Applicant has acknowledged that the original 1,852MW Sizewell capacity requirement reduced to 352MW following the changes associated with the Nautilus interconnector. SEAS has also identified a substantially cheaper alternative involving reinforcement of the existing transmission network, which it estimates could cost under £300 million.

I recognise that the technical merits, deliverability and environmental consequences of any alternative must be independently established. Nevertheless, with Sea Link's potential costs now exceeding £3 billion, surely there is a compelling public interest in properly testing whether a more economical and less damaging solution could meet the identified network needs.

The country needs an electricity network that is reliable and fit for the future. But it also needs investment decisions that are proportionate, transparent and represent genuine value for consumers.

4. The cumulative human cost to East Suffolk

Beyond the technical and financial questions, my greatest concern remains the cumulative impact of these developments on the people and communities of East Suffolk.

Saxmundham and the surrounding coastal communities are already facing an extraordinary concentration of major infrastructure projects, including Sizewell C, ScottishPower Renewables' offshore wind developments and their substations at Friston, the proposed LionLink interconnector and the Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project.

Each project may be considered separately through its own planning process, but the people who live here experience their combined consequences.

For many residents, years of consultations, uncertainty and the prospect of prolonged construction have already taken a considerable emotional toll.

I have repeatedly raised concerns about the inadequacy of the Applicant's Health and Wellbeing assessment, particularly its treatment of mental health and the absence of demonstrable specialist clinical input into the assessment of psychological impacts.

It is therefore especially troubling that, in its latest correspondence with Suffolk County Council, the Applicant acknowledges that where significant cumulative health and wellbeing effects arise, it may have little or no ability to mitigate them, particularly where other major projects contribute to those effects.

To me, this highlights a fundamental weakness in assessing major infrastructure projects individually without adequately addressing their combined consequences.

The people of East Suffolk should not be expected simply to endure whatever cumulative harm arises because no individual developer accepts responsibility for the overall impact.

These are not abstract environmental effects. They concern people's homes, health, quality of life and sense of belonging.

Our countryside, villages and market towns are more than convenient locations for infrastructure. They are places where people have built their lives and where future generations deserve to enjoy a healthy and sustainable environment.

5. A final personal plea

Secretary of State, I appreciate the difficult responsibility you carry in balancing the country's energy needs against the interests of affected communities.

I am not opposed to clean energy or the necessary modernisation of our electricity infrastructure. I believe strongly in the importance of both.

But I also believe that national progress should not come at the cost of avoidable harm, particularly when important questions about the necessity, design, cost and consequences of a project remain unanswered.

For nearly three years, residents, community groups and local authorities have devoted enormous time and effort to examining the Applicant's proposals, identifying shortcomings and putting forward constructive alternatives.

We have done so because we care deeply about the places where we live and because we believe that major decisions affecting our communities should be based on the best available evidence.

It is disheartening that, even at this late stage, we are still seeking answers to such fundamental questions as whether the proposed construction access is feasible, whether the converter station can operate at its intended capacity without additional works, and whether the project's escalating cost can be justified.

These are questions that should be answered before consent is granted, not left to be resolved afterwards.

I therefore respectfully ask you to consider extending the determination timetable under section 107(3) of the Planning Act 2008 to allow the outstanding evidence to be obtained and properly scrutinised.

In particular, I support SEAS' request for disclosure of the harmonic studies, completion of the Benhall Railway Bridge structural survey, updated independent scrutiny of the project's need and benefits, and a comparative assessment of the less costly alternative.

My personal plea is that you do not grant development consent for Sea Link in its present form while these fundamental uncertainties remain unresolved.

Once consent is granted, the consequences for Saxmundham and the surrounding communities could be irreversible. The industrialisation of this rural landscape, the disruption to people's lives and the loss of tranquillity cannot simply be undone.

I ask you to consider not only whether Sea Link can be built, but whether it should be built in this form, in this location, at this cost, and with these unresolved questions.

The transition to clean energy is intended to secure a better future for our country. Surely that future must also include protecting the communities and environments that make it worth preserving.

This is likely to be my final opportunity to make a personal representation before your decision. I sincerely hope that the concerns of those of us who will live closest to this development, and the substantial evidence presented throughout the Examination, will be given the consideration they deserve.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.

Yours sincerely,
Gordon Young

Affected Party ()
Saxmundham, Suffolk