

[REDACTED]

South East Anglia Link

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Dear Minister,

I write in response to your invitation to comment on this application and thank you for the opportunity.

I refer below to the paragraphs as numbered in your email.

3. It is essential that clear mitigations plans are in place before any works takes place. It is far easier to prevent harm than try to remedy it. Also this process needs to be closely monitored and ensure that National Grid [NG] are fully accountable. I fully support NE and KWT's stance. [Please also see point 4 below.]

4. I support strongly the points raised by Natural England and KWT - I am very concerned that National Grid's track record is frankly poor with regard to preventing environmental harm. The previously installed Nemo Link has irreversibly damaged the environment, despite assurances prior to works that all would be well and if necessary mitigated after the event. Some environmental damage simply cannot be undone at a later date. It is essential that judicious, diligent care must be taken **before** works commence. I am far from reassured that NG have the desire and ability to give such assurances. I am also concerned to learn that a 3rd cable is planned for Pegwell Bay!

5. It is extremely concerning that there is likely disturbance and permanent loss of a small amount of chalk habitat which is noted to be an irreplaceable habitat with high sensitivity. I ask please that the Minister apply the wholly-exceptional-reasons and compensation test in her decision-making.

6 & 7. The use of any hovercraft on this sensitive site is extremely concerning. It also was not part of any original scheme [see also point 13 below please]. I support Natural

England's request for a worst case assessment of impact on wildlife (including seal population and migrating birds) and also KWT's request for advance notification of use of the hovercraft. Stringent ongoing monitoring is also essential. This request only further underpins the unsuitability of this site and yet another reason for alternative sites to be chosen. However I do not feel any use of hovercraft should be permitted. If this was to be agreed a further assessment would surely need to be carried out to assess what further inevitable reconstruction works would be required for 'launching pad' type terrain for these hovercraft. Presumably this would also further increase costs.

13. I am at loss as to understand how realistic long terms decisions can be made with regard to any planning application when the applicant wants to leave four planning design options on the table. It seems unreasonable and unrealistic to expect the Minister to make a decision at this stage without knowing what it is going to look like and the impact it will have with regard to visual impact on the landscape and potentially construction issues. Already NG submitted 6 last minute amendments to their proposals [including use of the Pegwell Bay hoverport] which had not been included in any of the plans for the first 4 years of the process but suddenly were deemed essential to their plans. The worry is that with such a 'flexible' approach being granted, the door is left open for a myriad of other last minutes changes in plans, which will then be deemed essential by NG. A clear, full and final set of plans needs to be submitted before permission can be considered.

16. A firm [enforceable] commitment must be given by National Grid committing to no works from March to September at the SSSI to avoid disturbing breeding birds and employment of an ecological clerk of works and/or qualified ornithologist during all months. It is not acceptable nor sufficient to simply use the get-out clause of 'after a nest check' [such checks can in themselves can cause real disturbance and lasting damage to the bird population unless very carefully carried out by an expert]. NG have already demonstrated their inability to follow even their own guidance when they recently put up a site office next to a barn owl box on Minster Marshes, which was known to be in use by barn owls! The environmental damage has already begun before they even have approval. [See also please point 32 below.]

28. I am concerned that it is being proposed to agree access locations and widths of access routes after consent is granted. Surely these should be agreed at this planning stage before consent? The potential for environmental damage from this aspect of the works alone is worryingly large.

32. I agree that “The landfall method statement must ensure that works in Pegwell Bay are programmed to avoid the wintering period (November to February)”. The current wording by NG ‘below mean high water springs’ means some works could possibly be carried out during November to February, which is clearly unacceptable. Protecting the migratory overwintering bird population is vital. It should be noted that this vast and very significant migratory pathway spans numerous countries and continents. Disturbance of this migratory pattern would have far reaching negative consequences. I wonder also if it might not contravene international environmental laws. It is due to the importance of this site for migratory patterns and its extreme sensitivity that these sites have been granted SSSI status. I still cannot understand how it can even be seriously considered as a potential site for this project.

44. The impact on tourism in the area will be hugely affected. Not only during the very long construction process, when due to the heavy construction traffic, access to tourist hot spots will be near impossible to access. Also the noise, dust and building works will make it a very undesirable place to visit, if having successfully navigated the horrendous traffic conditions! The huge amount of works vehicles that require road access will cause huge gridlock road traffic conditions, not just locally but far across this part of Kent - especially Ramsgate, which is a very important tourist area. Then the impact will be permanent after the works are completed, as some areas will no longer be accessible [eg parts of the old Hoverport] or destroyed in the process [eg large swathes of Pegwell Bay, the Minster Marshes and SSSI's etc.]. As I've said in my previous submissions, this area is used both locally and nationally. The impact will be far reaching, not just confined to the site itself. Has there actually been a full, detailed and independent assessment of the impact?

55. Noise limits are of great concern and is an aspect of the works which could negatively impact in so many ways, affecting the environment, wildlife and human life. I support KWT's call for monitoring and mitigation if noise limits are breached. Also are noise limitation provisions going to be offered by NG to the local community, for example triple glazing in nearby homes?

Kind regards,

Stephanie Harrison