Interested Party: Susan Bridges
IP Reference Number: [redacted]
Project: Sea Link EN020026
Submission Date: 22 October 2026
To: The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Subject: Final Representation to the Post-Examination Consultation 1 – Response to NGET's RFI Submission (Document 9.158) and Closing Statement (Document 9.145)

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1. Background

This is my final Interested Party representation to augment my previous submissions. It is necessitated by the fact that some of the environmental and spatial assurances provided by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) in their 18 September 2026 Request for Information (RFI) replies (Document 9.158) and Deadline 7 Closing Summary Statement (Document 9.145) remain fundamentally challengeable. Failing to contest these assurances will result in the Sea Link DCO application operating on a baseline that is procedurally unfair to the residents of East Suffolk.

Furthermore, consumers are actively bearing the financial burden of a systemic failure to invest and plan strategically since Contracts for Difference (CfD) were first auctioned—a key driver behind the UK's electricity prices being among the highest in the world. As an economist, the Secretary of State is uniquely qualified to identify and address the profound market failure, planning negligence and structural inefficiency within Sea Link's DCO application.

2. Environmental Assessment Failures

In Document 9.145 (the Applicant's Closing Summary Statement), NGET asserts that its Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was robust and fully scoped. This assertion is contradicted by NGET's submissions before, during, and after the Examinations. NGET only marginally adjusted the narrow study area originally agreed for the East Anglia ONE North (EA1N) and East Anglia TWO (EA2) DCOs. The study areas were agreed with District and County Councils that were massively overworked and undermanned, having to navigate ten NSIP projects since 2014. They will face a peak disruption window between 2027 and 2032 when 7 NSIPs will be under simultaneous construction within a 15km radius. Critically, no widening adjustment was made to the Sea Link study area to account for the additional physical height and significantly larger infrastructure footprint of the Sea Link converter station.

2.1 Consequently, NGET's Environmental Statement for Sea Link fails to capture all environmental, cultural, and historic receptors immediately adjacent to and south of the study area boundary, including the Alde River, public coast paths, the Iken

promontory, and the Martello Tower at Slaughden. Although this issue was repeatedly raised in 2025 written relevant representations, at Open Floor Hearings, and during Issue Specific Hearings, the Applicant stonewalled requests to properly assess the theoretical visibility of the project or produce representative viewpoints for these receptor locations on and south of the boundary of the study area, despite their location within the designated landscapes of the Heritage Coast and the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape (SECHNL).

2.2 To compound this error, the PEIR Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) differs greatly from the formal DCO application's ZTV (APP-208:6.4.2.1 L&V Part 1 of 7). The latter shows far less visibility than the PEIR plan. In addition, the CAD models of the co-located converter stations (3 stations) exclude a 3.5m height platform.

2.3 Included with NGET's cover letter dated 29 April 2026 sent to Examiner Sarah Holmes, accompanying their final Deadline 7 submission [REP7-113], was submission document 6.4.2.1 (B) (*ES Figures Suffolk Landscape and Visual Part 1 of 7 - Clean and Tracked*). The stated reason for submission was *"Updated version provided at Deadline 7."* This revised the Applicant's DCO ZTV application to match the PEIR ZTV, reinstating the theoretical visibility across the River Alde and the previously scoped-out receptor locations. By "updating" this critical plan on the final day of the Examination, NGET tacitly admitted their environmental baseline was wrong from the outset. NGET's baseline for the Environmental Assessment remains incomplete, inconsistent, and factually erroneous (See Appendix 1).

2.4 At this juncture, the Examination hasn't confirmed whether the converter station will stand at 26m or 29.5m in height if positioned on the 3.5m platform. This material uncertainty was never discussed or assessed during the DCO Examinations, undermining the legal integrity of the LVIA study area. This cannot be brushed aside under the guise of the Rochdale Envelope. Under the circumstances, the Secretary of State possesses clear justification to refuse Sea Link's DCO on the grounds that NGET has cut corners in its statutory environmental assessments.

3. Cumulative Impact Assessment

NGET maintains throughout Document 9.158 that its onshoring and converter station configurations are the logical result of a robust, contemporary and fully considered optioneering process. However, a historical audit of the 2015/16 East Anglia ONE (EA ONE) modifications reveals a profound procedural injustice that invalidates this assertion.

3.1 In 2016, fundamental structural changes to the EA ONE DCO were inappropriately processed as non-material amendments. Because a DCO operates as a Statutory Instrument (SI), a major technical change, changing the grid connection cables from High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) to High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC),

represented a material alteration of the project's cumulative onshore footprint. By processing these fundamental changes as piecemeal, non-material amendments, NGET and Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) successfully bypassed the statutory requirement to conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to evaluate the consequential cumulative impacts of downgrading HVDC capacity and, by default, HVAC capacity to Bramford.

3.2 Under NPS EN-1 Section 4.4 (Assessment of Alternatives) and Section 5.10 (Land Use), and former iterations of the NPPF, NGET and NESO were required to demonstrate a robust assessment of alternative *"previously developed land"* (brownfield sites) for the EA1N, EA2 and Sea Link infrastructure.

3.3 What other alternatives did NGET consider? What was their assessment for routing Sea Link directly to Bramford (the central hub of the East Anglian transmission grid and an industrialised site) rather than expanding the Friston site in the setting of the SECHNL? The answer to this question is a black hole in the Sea Link DCO application. Screening options for Sea Link and Lion Link have not been publicly scrutinised. Was PINS involved in the screening options for Sea Link and Lion Link? Why wasn't Bradwell-on-Sea chosen for Sea Link and Lion Link, given the landscape designation constraints at Saxmundham? Bradwell-on-Sea is an existing industrialised site, on the North Sea, which would by-passing Bramford and connect to the London area.

3.4 Given the significant financial cost to consumers paying towards renewable infrastructure, this failure of transparency is legally and democratically unjustified. The absence of a transparent, alternative site assessment leaves an unacceptable gap as to why the Sizewell area was ever selected for massive cumulative onshoring following the 2016 EA ONE amendments. To date, the choice of the Sizewell Area has never been legally or spatially justified. Any expansion of the Friston hub now needs to be assessed against the Bramford and Bradwell-on Sea options before Sea Link's DCO is granted.

4. Raeshaw Farms Ltd v Scottish Ministers [CSIH 10]

During the previous EA1N and EA2 legal challenges brought by SASES, the courts focused on the specific facts of the applications, bypassing the broader legality of the historic non-material amendments and the resulting unassessed cumulative environmental impact. However, the domestic legal landscape has since fundamentally shifted. Under the ruling *Raeshaw Farms Ltd v Scottish Ministers*, The Inner House established that project framing (splitting) by developers cannot artificially sever the individual project from the environmental effects of the whole development.

4.1 The Secretary of State cannot rely on the limitations of historic court decisions to perpetuate this ongoing evasion of cumulative impact assessment. The current situation shows that EA1N, EA2, and Sea Link are functionally linked, interdependent

components of a single energy hub design originating directly from the flawed EA ONE technical changes. To approve Sea Link under an isolated, standalone DCO without a comprehensive, combined environmental assessment of the cumulative Friston hub represents a clear, challengeable error of law under the *Raeshaw Farms* decision.

4.2 Because NGET's RFI responses persist in treating Sea Link as an isolated, standalone application, the Secretary of State is being steered into an error of law. A decision maker commits a material error of law if they fail to conduct a cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on functionally interdependent parts of what clearly constitutes the "whole project."

4.3 The urgent timeline of the 2030 Net Zero deadline does not grant the Executive the right to bypass mandatory statutory duties, ignore systemic procedural unfairness, or make decisions on demonstrably incorrect environmental baselines.

5. Statutory Duties under LURA 2023 and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Granting DCO consent for Sea Link on its environmental baseline conflicts with statutory landscape protections. Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amended the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by replacing the weak requirement to "have regard to" protected areas with a strict statutory duty. Relevant authorities, including NGET, NESO and the Secretary of State, *"must seek to further the purposes"* of National Landscapes and National Parks.

5.1 This statutory duty is not restricted to infrastructure located within a designated boundary. It also applies to developments and NSIPs within the "setting" of national landscapes where the project causes harm. Both Friston and Saxmundham sit outside the formal national landscape boundary line, and form part of the immediate setting. NGET “must seek to further the purposes” of the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape. Sea Link and Lion Link will not further this statutory obligation.

5.2 By NGET and NESO not complying with the statutory requirement to "seek to further" the purposes of protected landscapes and their settings, they undermine the economic and environmental value of these areas, contrary to the national interest. If Sea Link’s DCO is approved, it will subvert the statutory protections intended by LURA 2023, establishing a precedent which will compromise the integrity of designated landscapes across England and Wales.

6. Conclusions

Because of assessment failures, alongside the transparency concerns highlighted by Ofgem and the National Audit Office (NAO) regarding grid delivery, the Sea Link DCO cannot be approved in its current state. The Secretary of State should refuse the Development Consent Order, or alternatively, delay the decision. A delay would allow the study area, the cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment, harmonics, and need-case issues to revert to the Examining Authority (ExA) or be reviewed by DESNZ when considering the Ofgem and NAO reports.

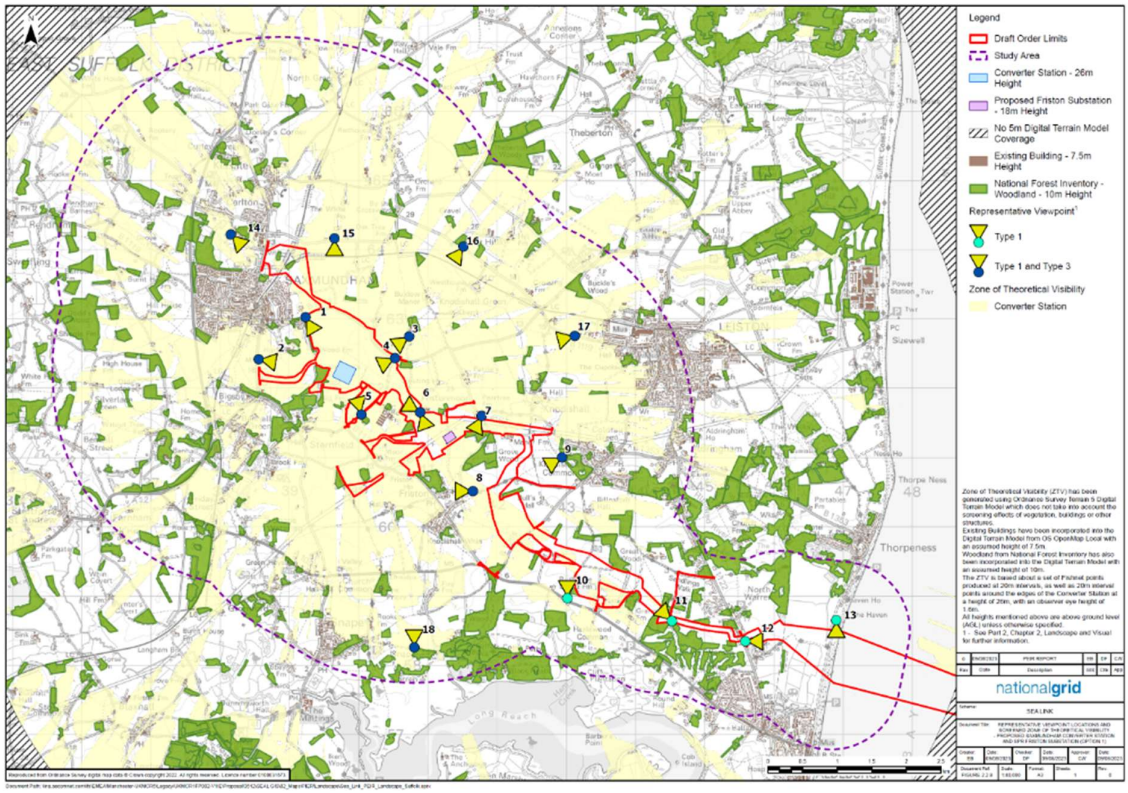
6.1 Alternatively, the Secretary of State could issue a split decision—approving the offshore cabling network but refusing consent for the onshore elements at Saxmundham and Friston. This would require NGET to identify a less damaging onshore layout or an offshore configuration while waiting for the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) report.

6.2 In the meantime, NGET could accelerate the upgrading of the existing onshore overhead lines and infrastructure (e.g., Sizewell to Bramford and Canterbury to Kemsley) as advocated by SEAS. This approach resolves local grid and boundary deficits for £200 million to £300 million at 2025 values. By comparison, Sea Link's costs have reached £3.2 billion at 2025/26 values according to Ofgem's project assessment.

Appendix 1 follows on pages 7, 8 and 9.

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Appendix 1

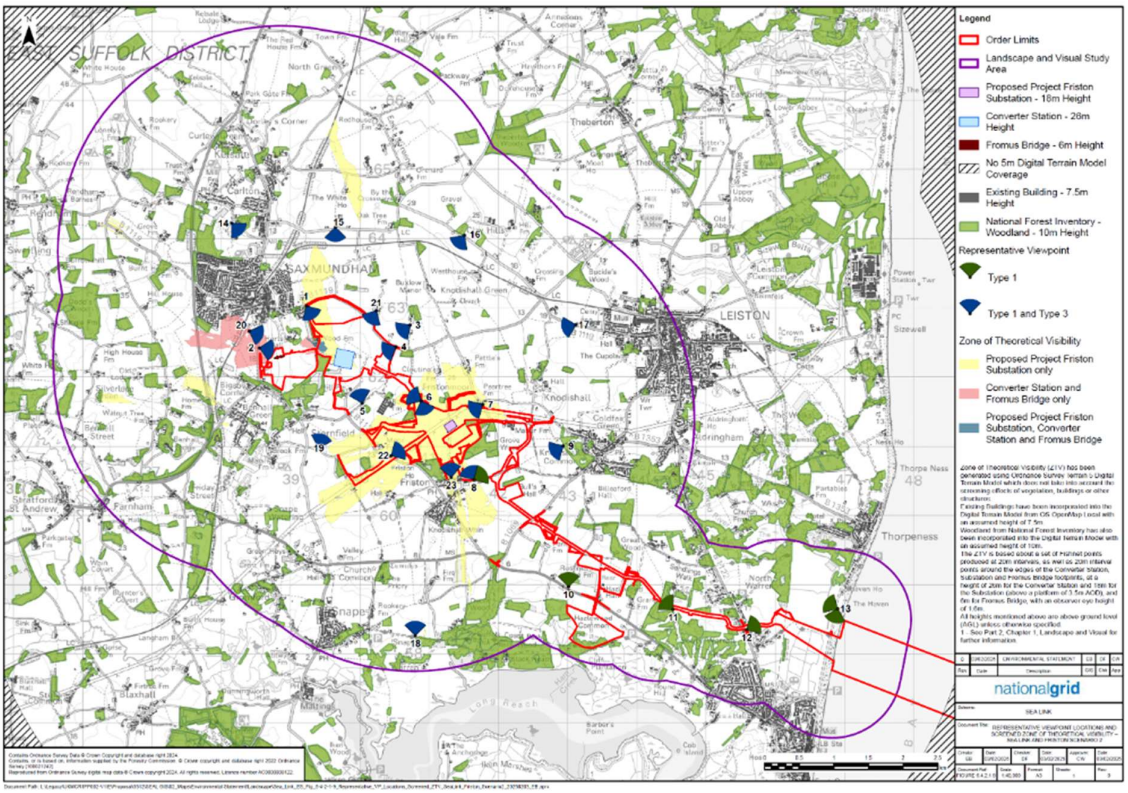


Plan 1 of 3

Source: Sea Link 2023-10 PEIR Volume 3 Part 2 Chapter 2, Figures 1 of 6 vA (page 8 of 11)

Description: NGET Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) ZTV

Analysis: The original baseline modelling correctly identified theoretical visibility extending well outside the southern study area boundary to highly sensitive receptors. These include the River Alde, public coastal paths, the Iken promontory, and the Martello Tower at Slaughden. This original ZTV explicitly states it was modelled based on a converter station height of 26m using the site's raw OS ground level, with no platform height factored in. The total AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) at the top of the converter station is unstated; assuming a baseline ground level of approximately 25m AOD, this equates to 51m AOD.



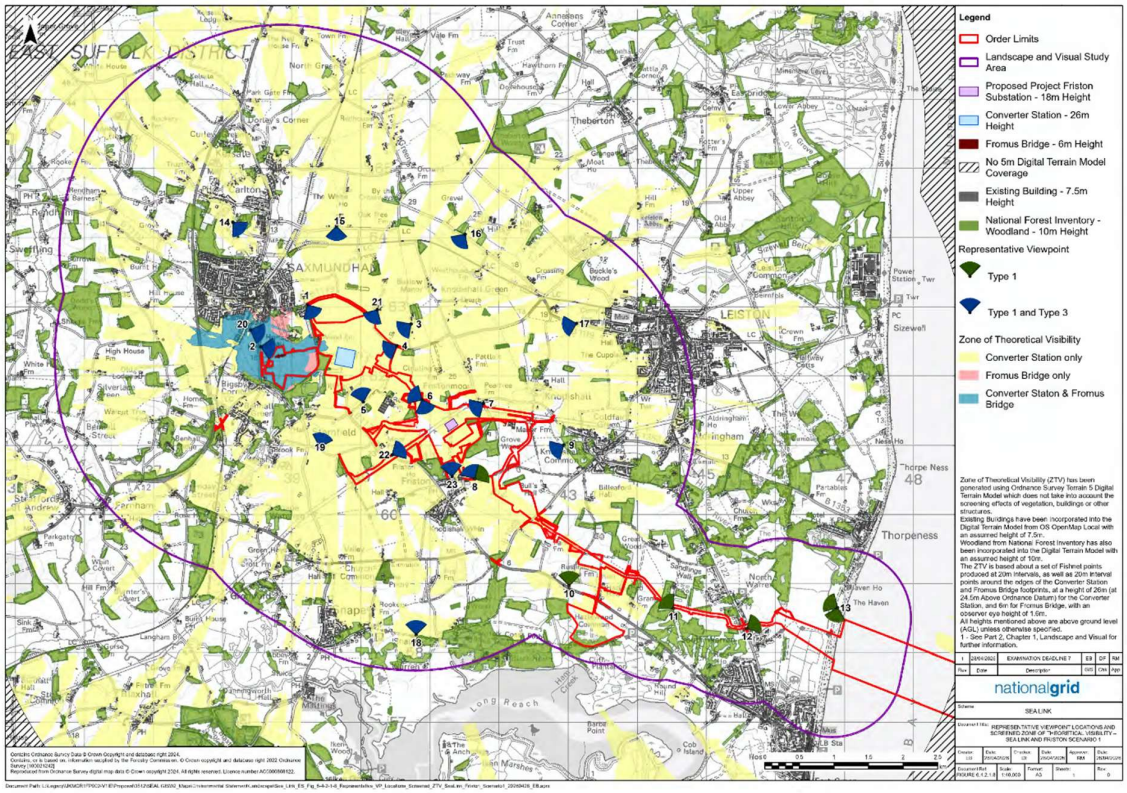
Plan 2 of 3

Source: [APP-208] EN020026-000339-6.4.2.1 ES Figures Suffolk Landscape and Visual Part 1 of 7 (page 15 of 23)

Description: DCO Application Submission ZTV

Analysis: This plan represents the flawed application baseline that local communities challenged. By artificially constraining the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) inputs, NGET scoped out the visibility profiles across the River Alde and adjacent historic/designated landscapes, using these compressed results to deny requests for representative viewpoints along the Heritage Coast and within the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape (SECHNL).

Note: The legend on this plan states the converter station was modelled at 26m height (above a platform of 3.5m AOD) and 6m for the Fromus Bridge, with an observer height of 1.6m. All heights mentioned above are above ground level (AGL) unless otherwise specified. The top of the converter station is modelled at 54.5m AOD, calculated using the PEIR ground level of 25m AOD.



Plan 3 of 3

Source: [REP7-113] EN020026-003484-6.4.2.1 (B) ES Figures Suffolk Landscape and Visual Part 1 of 7 (Clean) (page 14 of 23)

Description: NGET Deadline 7 Updated ZTV

Analysis: Submitted on the final day of the Examination without formal disclosure or notification to Interested Parties, this late-stage correction effectively reinstates the theoretical visibility profiles across the River Alde and the previously scoped-out receptor locations originally identified in the PEIR (Plan 1).
This eleventh-hour submission acts as a de facto admission by NGET that their primary application baseline was incorrect. Despite this correction proving visibility within designated landscapes, no viewpoint modelling, photomontages, or formal landscape impact assessments have been conducted for receptors intersecting or lying just beyond the southern study area boundary.

Note: The legend on this plan states the converter station was modelled at 26m high on a ground level of 24.5m AOD, completely excluding the 3.5m platform structure. This yields an incomplete top-of-structure calculation of 50.5m AOD. If the 3.5m platform is properly included, the true height rises to 54m AOD, further invalidating the narrow confines of the current Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) study area.