Sarah Bailey
[redacted]

31st August 2026

Dear Ms Fahnbulleh,

National Grid's Sea Link – Minster Marshes: Concerns regarding works taking place before Development Consent Order (DCO) decision

Congratulations on your new role as Secretary of State for Net Zero and Energy Security.

I am writing as a concerned local resident regarding National Grid's proposed Sea Link project and, in particular, the proposed converter station at Minster Marshes.

I understand that the examination of the Sea Link DCO has now concluded and that the Examining Authority submitted its recommendation to the Secretary of State on 30 July 2026. You are now considering whether development consent should be granted, with a decision expected by 30 October 2026. I am also aware that John Wheadon, Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery & Innovation, has been in touch with several parties involved to request further information by 18th September in support of that decision-making process.

With that in mind, I am very concerned about the extent of activity now taking place on and around the proposed converter station site at Minster Marshes before that decision has been made.

National Grid have publicly stated that archaeological excavation works and ground investigation works are currently taking place at the proposed converter station site. These investigations include machinery, soil removal and archaeological examination, as well as ground investigations using specialist equipment.

I fully appreciate that some preparatory surveys may be permitted before a final DCO is granted and am aware that National Grid have carried out surveys and works as part of their submission. However, the scale and nature of the current activity raise an important question about how the Government is ensuring that the final decision remains completely open and has not, either practically or psychologically, become a foregone conclusion.

I would therefore be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions:

- What specific works are currently being undertaken at the proposed Minster converter-station site?
- Under what permissions, consents or statutory powers are these works being carried out?

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- Are any of the current works dependent upon the eventual granting of the Sea Link DCO?
- Is National Grid currently undertaking land acquisition or compulsory acquisition activity in relation to land required for the proposed converter station?
- What safeguards are in place to ensure that the Secretary of State's decision remains entirely open and is not prejudiced by preparatory works, land acquisition activity or other actions undertaken by the applicant before the decision?
- If development consent were ultimately refused, what would happen to the land, works and expenditure already undertaken by National Grid?
- Can you confirm whether the Government has given National Grid any indication, formally or informally, of the likely outcome of the Sea Link DCO decision?

I am not suggesting that the current surveys or investigations themselves demonstrate that approval has already been granted. I am asking for transparency about what is happening on the ground and reassurance that the statutory decision-making process is genuinely still open.

Minster Marshes is an important landscape and wildlife area, and many local residents remain deeply concerned about the potential environmental consequences of the proposed development.

I would therefore appreciate a substantive response to these questions rather than a general statement about the Sea Link project.

I would also be grateful if you could confirm that this correspondence has been passed to the relevant officials dealing with the Sea Link DCO.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Sarah Bailey

[redacted]

Copied to my MP, Polly Billington