Karen McKenzie
[redacted]
09/08/2026

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to draw your attention to growing concerns surrounding National Grid's Sea Link project, not only because of its potentially devastating environmental impacts, but also because of the substantial public expenditure involved and the serious questions that remain regarding value for money, transparency and due process.

OFGEM is currently consulting on NGs requested funding of **£3,197 million** through the ASTI mechanism for the SeaLink project. Paragraph 2.3 sets out the overall cost breakdown for the requested funding package. As you know, this is ultimately public money. [1]

**Transparency and costs**

OFGEM states in paragraph 2.5 (Ibid) that the contract for the HVDC cable element of the project, awarded to SUMITOMO, was based on "market-tested pricing and current supply chain conditions". Yet meaningful public scrutiny is impossible because the contract remains confidential, while the full project cost has not been made available and has not been updated from 2018 prices.

For a project of this scale, where billions of pounds of public funding are being requested, transparency is essential. Without it, public confidence that the project represents good value for money is inevitably undermined.

OFGEM further notes in paragraph 2.7 (Ibid) that **46%** of the agreed cabling costs remain subject to market price adjustment under PAMS arrangements. This means that almost half of the cabling contract remains exposed to future cost escalation, creating a significant risk that the eventual burden on consumers and taxpayers will be substantially higher than current estimates.

**Foreseeable additional costs**

Paragraph 2.9 (Ibid) notes **£170.8 million** of project costs arising from issues that were not originally identified, including unexploded ordnance, extensive archaeological investigations, wastewater licences, diversion and supplies.

These are not obscure or unforeseeable risks. The project is proposed on marshland adjacent to a river, in an area internationally recognised for its Roman archaeological significance and the bay and surrounding farmland is known to have been used for wartime bomb disposal. Local residents repeatedly raised these issues throughout the consultation process. It is therefore difficult to understand why these matters were not fully identified and costed at the outset. See also photographic evidence in Attachments from Tony Ovenden from 4th September 2026.

OFGEM is still minded to allow **£2,891.5 million funding.**

The question for taxpayers is simple: if such significant and predictable costs were overlooked during project development, what confidence can there be that further cost increases will not follow?

**Work commencing before consent**

We are now faced with an even more troubling development.

After obtaining permission from Thanet District Council to strip land for further archaeological investigations. From what local residents can see, substantial activity appears to be taking place before the Secretary of State for DESNZ has made a final consent decision, since heavy plant has been brought onto the site and activity appears consistent with preparations

[1] https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-08/Sea-Link-minded-to-decision-FINAL-redacted.pdf

for either stabilising the marsh or discovering unexploded ordnance (photographic evidence attached). Neither of these activities have been given permission for by TDC, who allowed passive ground investigation works, not earth moving.

If work is effectively progressing before consent is granted, it is creating a perception that the outcome of the planning process has already been decided. Public trust in that process depends on decisions being made before major works commence, not after.

**The questions**

Against this background, I would welcome your consideration of the following issues:

**1. Public spending priorities**

OFGEM's assessment places the overall SeaLink project cost at close to **£3.2 billion.** At a time when Defence, Environment, Welfare, Education, Health and other budgets are under unprecedented pressure, is this truly the best use of public resources?

**2. Public subsidy for a profitable private company**

Is it right that taxpayers should be asked to fund a project promoted by a privatised company that reported **statutory earnings (profit after tax) of £3.241 billion**?[2]

Based on the company's earnings per share and weighted average share data, it is possible to calculate that approximately **£2,398,635,400** was paid to private investors. These figures raise legitimate questions about where the balance should lie between public risk and private reward.

**3. Re-examination of the need case**

The Save Minster Marshes (SMM) group, working alongside Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS), has undertaken extensive work examining the project's need case and has identified significant concerns regarding its rationale.

Throughout four years of consultation and examination, we were not permitted to discuss this evidence with the Examining Authority. We would welcome the opportunity to present our findings.

**4. Alternative locations**

Even if Government concludes that the project's underlying rationale remains valid, SMM and SEAS can demonstrate that alternative locations exist which would be both less environmentally damaging and less expensive.

The Minster Marshes, Pegwell Bay and associated SSSI, including the vital wildlife corridor linking Minster Stream and the River Stour, support **203 species**, including **35 red-listed species** and **40 amber-listed species**.

These include critically endangered European eels, turtle doves, small heath butterflies, beavers, water voles and significant colonies of grey and common seals.

The destruction of this habitat would be irreversible.

**Conclusion**

For local people and the population of the UK, this is not simply an infrastructure project on brownfield land. It is the potential loss of a unique landscape that has been sensitively farmed in harmony with nature for generations, together with unpredictable and rising costs that benefit private shareholders at the expense of the public purse.

To witness work beginning in advance of the DESNZ Secretary of State's decision, while serious questions remain regarding both need and value for money, is profoundly concerning. Indeed DESNZ Secretary of State has asked for further clarification of some of the project details with a deadline of 18 September 2026. Please note the date of this letter to you.

As Sir Roger Gale MP observed during Prime Minister's Questions on 1 September, this situation risks making a mockery of the planning process.

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[2] https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/576636/download

I therefore urge you to call for an immediate halt to works that should not have commenced prior to consent, and for a thorough review of the project's rationale, affordability and environmental consequences before further public funds are committed.

Members of Save Minster Marshes and SEAS would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, together with Sir Roger Gale MP and Polly Billington MP, to discuss both the need case and alternative options.

I leave you with the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, spoken on 23 June 2026:

"The fate of nature and the fate of humanity are one and the same. Nature is more than something to protect – it is our greatest ally."[3]

Those words capture the choice before us. Protecting nature is not a barrier to prosperity. It is an investment in our future. Once this landscape is destroyed, it cannot be recreated. The decisions you make today will be felt for generations.

[redacted]

**Karen McKenzie**
Member, Save Minster M[redacted]Group

CC: [redacted]

3 [redacted]

**Attachments**



Unexploded ordnance uncovered at low tide by [redacted] 04 September 2026

[redacted]

The work that is being done on the marsh is not archaeological top soil stripping and there are no archaeologists present as far as we can work out. Images from [redacted] with telephoto lens, outside the site.








ARMAEX