From: Chris Harrington [redacted]>
Sent: 15 September 2026 18:03
To: Secretary of State (Miatta Fahnbulleh) <[redacted]>
Cc: SouthEastAngliaLink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
Subject: Sea Link (EN020026) – Request for Information – IP ref. no. [redacted]

Dear Secretary of State,

SEA LINK, LIONLINK AND VALUE FOR MONEY FOR CONSUMERS

I am writing following your letter of 28 August 2026 requesting further information from several parties in relation to the Sea Link DCO. Although I am not a listed recipient, I feel compelled to write in light of two recent and significant reports from Ofgem and the National Audit Office, which raise serious questions about the cost, deliverability and value for money of Sea Link and, more widely, the effectiveness of the current regulatory approach in protecting consumers.

I welcome the Government's commitment to reducing household energy costs. With billions of pounds being invested in energy infrastructure, it is essential that projects are necessary, proportionate and provide genuine value for money for consumers.

I note the recent National Audit Office (NAO) report, "Value for Money – Upgrading the Electricity Transmission Network" (dated 11/09/26). The NAO highlights weaknesses in the existing system which need to be addressed if the Great Grid Upgrade is to provide value for money, including the need for stronger oversight, transparent monitoring and sufficient regulatory capability to scrutinise costs. Importantly, the NAO recommends that Ofgem assess the effectiveness of its regulatory approach in protecting consumers while supporting rapid delivery of network upgrades.

These concerns are particularly relevant to Sea Link, the proposed 2GW transmission project through East Suffolk.

Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately £3.2 billion – around three times the cost presented during the DCO examination!

This raises serious concerns about the reliability and transparency of the information presented during that Examination. National Grid presented an estimated project cost of approximately £1.1 billion, despite SEAS challenging that figure and presenting evidence that the true cost was likely to be around £3.2 billion. Ofgem has now assessed Sea Link at approximately £3.2 billion, broadly confirming the figure put forward by SEAS. The £1.1 billion figure presented during the Examination therefore proved wholly unrealistic. It is deeply concerning that a project of this scale was examined without decision-makers and affected communities being given a realistic assessment of its likely cost.

The circumstances underpinning Sea Link's original need have also changed. Sea Link was developed around an assumed 1,852MW export deficit at Friston, associated with the proposed Nautilus interconnector. Nautilus was

subsequently relocated away from Friston before the Sea Link application was submitted, reducing the apparent deficit to approximately 352MW.

Ofgem has also identified unresolved harmonic issues which may require additional works elsewhere on the transmission network before Sea Link can operate compliantly at its intended 2GW capacity. The precise scope and location of these works have yet to be determined. In addition, identified reinforcement between Richborough and Canterbury in Kent is excluded from NGET's current £3.2 billion Project Assessment submission.

This raises a fundamental question: what is the true need and total cost to consumers of delivering Sea Link?

During the DCO examination, Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) identified an alternative based on upgrading and reconductoring existing pylon corridors, estimated to cost under £300 million, potentially saving consumers approaching £3 billion.

The NAO's concerns about consumer protection must also prompt renewed scrutiny of LionLink, National Grid Ventures' proposed commercial multi-purpose interconnector affecting the Suffolk coast. LionLink is not part of the Great Grid Upgrade. Ofgem expects LionLink to operate predominantly as an export route from Great Britain to the Netherlands, increasing GB wholesale electricity prices compared with the position without LionLink.

The proposed landfall location of LionLink at Walberswick is tantamount to environmental vandalism. Walberswick is one of Suffolk's most valued coastal landscapes and is recognised for its environmental significance, landscape quality, biodiversity, recreational value and tranquillity. The introduction of a major construction site and associated infrastructure in such a sensitive location raises substantial concerns. Walberswick is a highly protected landscape, has a nature-based tourist economy and lies both within and near multiple designated habitats.

LionLink has not yet provided sufficient, reliable evidence to demonstrate that its proposed Walberswick landfall, cable corridor and converter-station proposals can proceed without an adverse effect on the integrity of the relevant Habitats Regulations sites. The preliminary HRA and supporting ecological material contain material deficiencies in baseline survey coverage, data, assessment of likely significant effects and the treatment of construction-related impacts, including those arising from noise, vibration, lighting, access, hydrological change and disturbance.

The mitigation advanced to date is insufficiently developed, secured or evidenced to show that it would avoid or adequately reduce impacts on protected habitats and species adjacent to the landfall works, onshore cable route and converter-station site. In those circumstances, the competent authority could not lawfully conclude, on the information presently available, that there would be no adverse effect on site integrity.

LionLink should therefore revisit its strategic alternatives. It should assess seriously whether a landfall and grid connection at a previously developed or already industrialised location, with a shorter and less environmentally damaging onshore connection to an appropriate point of demand or grid infrastructure, would represent a feasible less-damaging alternative to Walberswick.

Given the NAO's recommendations, I urge the Government to require an independent and transparent reassessment of the economic need and consumer case for LionLink against current 2026 evidence, rather than continuing to regard that case as established by the 2024 regulatory decision.

I support offshore wind and the transition to Net Zero. However, achieving Net Zero should not mean accepting unnecessary expenditure or successive major infrastructure projects without establishing whether there are cheaper, better coordinated and less environmentally damaging alternatives.

The energy transition needs public support. That support will be much stronger if people can see that Government is challenging unnecessary expenditure, protecting consumers and ensuring that the infrastructure being built is genuinely needed.

Before consumers and communities are committed to these projects, I therefore ask the Government to ensure that:

• Sea Link's cheaper alternative is properly and independently assessed;

• LionLink's economic and consumer case is reassessed using current evidence; and

• coordinated offshore solutions and better use of existing infrastructure are fully considered.

I would urge you to liaise closely with Jenny Riddell-Carpenter, Labour MP for Suffolk Coastal, and visit the area to see first-hand the scale of development being proposed and the cumulative effects this is all having on the area, its valuable farming land, its residents, its wildlife and the adverse effects on its thriving tourism industry. Seeing the landscape, communities and environmentally important sites in person would provide valuable context for the important decisions that lie ahead.

Last month, the new Prime Minister made the fair point that the current asylum-dispersal system places a disproportionate burden on poorer areas because the Home Office tends to procure accommodation where housing is cheapest. He said that it was not right for those lower-income communities to carry that burden disproportionately, and that wealthier or middle-class areas should "play their part" in housing asylum seekers. Suffolk is already having to deal with the disruption being caused by the building of Sizewell C and all the associated infrastructure for the nuclear power station (e.g. construction sites, park & ride sites etc) which has led to the desecration of vast areas of the countryside with over 30,000 trees felled and miles of hedgerows pulled up. There are frequent road closures in the area leading to lengthy diversions for residents, local businesses and visitors. (Trips to Ipswich Hospital down the A12 can be a nightmare!). The area's thriving tourism sector is suffering. In addition, there are the EA1N and EA2 windfarms, Helios Energy Park and Essex and Suffolk Water NSIP, not to mention preparatory works on Sea Link and Lion Link projects.

Suffolk is certainly doing more than its fair share of shouldering the burden of energy projects and infrastructure for the rest of the country. Suffolk is also dealing with the impact of the awful fire at Dunwich Heath at the end of July. Given the number of energy projects planned for the area, Suffolk deserves a balanced, transparent process – one that respects residents, businesses and the environment, rather than imposing inappropriate infrastructure without proper scrutiny.

The Sea Link project needs a fundamental re-think while the LionLink project is simply one project too far for the area.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Harrington

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]