

Date: 17 December 2023
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Freepost SEALINK

Dear NGET,

Sea Link Statutory Consultation

Suffolk County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) proposal for grid reinforcement between Suffolk and Kent, known as Sea Link, which is offered by this consultation.

The response has been developed by Suffolk County Council technical officers, who have identified significant issues which will need to be acted upon. The proposals as they stand will cause significant impacts to host communities who are already under considerable strain due to the multiple NSIPs which have been proposed for the Suffolk Coast.

On 12 December 2023, this response was discussed and approved for submission at the County Council's Cabinet meeting. The paper and recording of the meeting are available on the County Council website.¹

The principal concerns of the Council are set out in detail in its full response and are also summarised as follows.

Coordination between Sea Link and emerging proposals for LionLink

Suffolk County Council maintains its stance that coordination between projects, including the utilisation of immediately adjacent parallel onshore cable routing, should be a top priority in order to minimise the impacts upon the Suffolk coastline.

While the Sea Link proposals allow for coordination, LionLink, in its recent supplementary consultation, continue to consider landfall options at Southwold and Walberswick where coordination with Sea Link would not be possible on landfall and subsequent cable routing to the converter station site.

The County Council expects the fullest possible coordination and co-location of the cable corridors and infrastructure between Sea Link and LionLink, in order to minimise the combined impacts of the two projects. Any proposals that reduce the level of coordination would require robust justification as to why greater coordination is not achievable, including a full assessment of increased levels of impacts across both projects.

¹ Suffolk County Council Cabinet Meeting 12 December 2023
[https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=\(12-12-2023\),%20The%20Cabinet](https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=(12-12-2023),%20The%20Cabinet)

Coordinated Consenting Approach

Given the spatial interdependences of Sea Link and LionLink and the expectation in the National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-5 for coordinated approaches, the County Council considers it essential for National Grid Group to fully align the projects both spatially and in the timing of the development of their consenting, in order to minimise the impacts of their projects on the communities and environment of the area. Such an approach would also be consistent with National Grid's own 'Responsible Business Charter'.

The alignment of project development and consenting by National Grid Group would potentially allow the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) to consider both projects simultaneously using a single panel of examiners to achieve coordinated consenting. This approach would allow for a more efficient examination of the issues and reduce the impact of the consenting process on the communities.

Tourism

Suffolk offers a rich and varied tourist offer and is known for its heritage assets such as the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Heritage Coast.

The County Council urges the applicant to fully assess the direct and indirect impacts of onshore construction activities on visitor perception and experience and also identify and engage with businesses, in particular those which are associated with recreation and tourism, to discuss these impacts.

Cumulative Impacts

Current timelines suggest that Sea Link will be under construction alongside several other NSIPs in the same area, including Sizewell C, LionLink and those being developed by Scottish Power Renewables (SPR).

Significant impacts are expected regarding traffic on the routes leading to and in the proximity of the Suffolk coast, local housing, service, and labour supply.

National Grid ESO Review of East Anglian Connections

In light of the announcement by National Grid Electricity System Operator on 11 December 2023 regarding the launch of a review of East Anglian Connections, I will be writing to National Grid ESO setting out a range of options that Suffolk County Council wishes to see considered as part of this review, in particular those proposals which have been developed by Dr Thérèse Coffey MP and Suffolk's communities for the coordination of offshore wind and interconnectors, connection to the onshore transmission network via Bradwell and the Isle of Grain.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Richard Rout
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Environment