



Objection to the LionLink Interconnector
Submission from a Suffolk Energy Action Solutions

10 March 2026

Introduction

1. Suffolk Energy Action Solutions Ltd (SEAS) is a community campaign group promoting offshore grid solutions and representing residents, local businesses, visitors and supporters who value the Suffolk coast and its surrounding countryside. Our members include people who have lived and worked in this area for many years and others who have chosen this part of Suffolk because of its landscape, wildlife and quality of life. While we strongly support the transition to renewable energy and the expansion of offshore wind, we believe that the current outmoded radial, point to point approach to grid connections along the Suffolk coast is poorly coordinated and increasingly damaging. LionLink is not an isolated project but part of a growing concentration of nationally significant infrastructure that is placing an unsustainable burden on this area.
2. The issue is not simply the number of projects proposed for the Suffolk coast, but the absence of any strategic framework governing their location. Projects such as Sea Link, LionLink and the East Anglia offshore wind connections are being promoted individually, yet their combined effects amount to the creation of a major electricity infrastructure cluster. No assessment has been undertaken of whether East Suffolk is an appropriate location for such a concentration of grid infrastructure.
3. Our objection is therefore not to renewable energy itself, but to the way in which projects like LionLink are being planned and located. National infrastructure must be delivered strategically, transparently and fairly. At present, that standard has not been met.

Key questions remain unresolved:

- National Grid Ventures has not demonstrated that LionLink must come ashore on the Suffolk coast and not be taken further south where the power is needed
 - No robust assessment of brownfield or industrial alternatives has been provided.
 - Coordinated offshore grid solutions have not been meaningfully assessed.
 - There has been no clear whole-system analysis demonstrating that LionLink represents the lowest-impact or most efficient option.
4. EN-1 and the NPPF both require that infrastructure proposals demonstrate that reasonable alternatives have been considered and that the chosen approach represents the most appropriate solution.
 5. At present, the evidence provided for LionLink does not appear to meet that standard.

Weakness of the LionLink Needs Case

6. The case for LionLink has not been convincingly demonstrated.
7. Interconnector flows are determined primarily by market price rather than national need. Experience during the European energy crisis of 2022 demonstrated that electricity flows across interconnectors respond to price signals rather than energy security considerations. As a result, the claim that LionLink will necessarily enhance UK energy security or reduce household energy bills requires much stronger evidence than has been presented in the consultation materials.
8. LionLink is being promoted by National Grid Ventures (NGV), the commercial and competitive division of National Grid plc. While the company describes the project as “critical” or “essential”, it has not demonstrated that LionLink is necessary in its proposed form or location. LionLink is not a part of The Great Grid Upgrade therefore cannot be considered ‘critical’ or ‘essential’
9. NGV calls LionLink a “hybrid” interconnector, but this is misleading. It is only hybrid at the Dutch end; on the UK side, it is a purely commercial, for-profit interconnector with no power generation and none of the benefits of a true integrated offshore grid landing at brownfield or pre-industrial sites.
10. While LionLink is described as a “hybrid” interconnector combining interconnection with offshore wind integration, this characterisation does not reflect the practical impacts on the UK side of the project. The proposal still introduces a new landfall, cable corridor and converter station on the Suffolk coast.
11. In practice LionLink perpetuates the radial piecemeal model and pattern already placing significant pressure on the Suffolk coast — repeated landfalls, multiple cable corridors, and clusters of major infrastructure — instead of adopting the strategic, coordinated approach that policy and industry now recognise as best practice.
12. It is also notable that on the Dutch side of the interconnector the connection is proposed within an existing industrial energy complex at Geertruidenberg, where major electricity infrastructure already exists. In contrast, the UK proposal introduces large-scale converter station infrastructure into open countryside and sensitive coastal landscapes. This contrast raises serious questions about the consistency and transparency of the site selection process.

Cumulative Impacts on the Suffolk Coast (EN-1 and EN-5)

13. The Suffolk coast is already accommodating an unprecedented concentration of nationally significant energy projects.
14. These projects include:
 - Sizewell C nuclear power station
 - Sea Link transmission line
 - EA1N and EA2 offshore wind farm connection
 - Friston (Kiln Lane) substation hub
 - Helios and other solar developments.

- Suffolk Water Recycling

15. Taken together, these projects risk creating a major concentration of electricity transmission infrastructure in East Suffolk. This raises an important strategic planning question: whether East Suffolk is being incrementally transformed into a national energy infrastructure hub without any overarching assessment of whether such a hub is appropriate for this landscape or community.
16. Together these developments will result in **many years of overlapping construction activity**, with significant impacts on communities, roads, landscapes and local services.
17. EN-1 requires decision-makers to consider cumulative impacts where several projects affect the same area. Similarly, EN-5 (Electricity Networks Infrastructure) highlights the need to minimise environmental and community impacts arising from network infrastructure.
18. Yet LionLink has not provided a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative impacts of these overlapping projects, particularly in relation to construction traffic, noise, landscape change and long-term disruption to local communities.
19. From the perspective of residents, LionLink is not an isolated proposal but another major addition to a growing concentration of infrastructure that is fundamentally transforming the Suffolk coast.
20. The Examining Authority for the EA1N and EA2 wind farms' onshore connection also warned that the Friston substation could become a "de facto connection hub" for multiple projects if additional infrastructure were subsequently connected at this location. The use of the Kiln Lane substation for LionLink therefore raises the possibility that this warning is now becoming reality, with significant infrastructure being concentrated in an area that has never been strategically assessed as a suitable national grid hub.

Walberswick as a Landfall Location

21. The proposed landfall at Walberswick is particularly concerning.
22. Walberswick is widely recognised as one of the most sensitive and valued landscapes on the Suffolk coast. It is characterised by its tranquillity, dark skies, wildlife habitats and nature-based recreation. The surrounding area includes internationally protected habitats designated as SSSI, SPA and Ramsar sites.
23. The proposal to construct a major cable landfall in this environment raises significant concerns about environmental impact and compatibility with the character of the area.
24. Walberswick is served primarily by a single narrow access road, raising additional concerns about construction traffic, emergency access and the resilience of the local transport network during the construction period. These risks have not been fully explored within the consultation materials.
25. Construction activities would involve prolonged industrial operations, including heavy equipment, vehicle movements and potentially 24-hour horizontal directional drilling.

26. Such activity would introduce significant disruption into a small village served by a single access road and surrounded by sensitive coastal habitats. The compatibility of this proposal with the environmental protection principles set out in EN-1 and the NPPF is therefore highly questionable.

Traffic and Transport Impacts

27. Traffic impacts are another major concern.

28. The road network connecting Walberswick, Saxmundham and the A12 corridor consists largely of narrow rural roads that were never designed to accommodate sustained heavy construction traffic.

29. Key routes such as the B1387 and surrounding rural lanes are constrained, and the A12 corridor already experiences congestion during peak periods and the tourist season.

30. In practice, construction traffic impacts would not be confined to the immediate project area. Diversions and congestion on primary routes are likely to push traffic onto surrounding rural roads and villages across the wider East Suffolk network.

31. Despite these obvious limitations and issues, there has been no comprehensive traffic modelling or robust assessment of cumulative traffic impacts (including wider network effects) alongside other infrastructure projects.

32. Without such analysis, it is impossible to conclude that the transport impacts of LionLink can be managed safely or acceptably.

Converter Stations and Landscape Impact

33. The proposed converter station at Saxmundham would represent a substantial industrial development within open countryside.

34. Converter stations associated with HVDC interconnectors are extremely large structures. The LionLink facility is expected to include two buildings exceeding 26 metres in height with a footprint comparable to two large warehouse complexes.

35. This scale of infrastructure would fundamentally alter the character of the surrounding agricultural landscape.

36. The issue is compounded by the potential for two converter stations — LionLink and Sea Link — to be located in the same area with the potential of a third converter station. This would effectively create a cluster of major electricity infrastructure in rural countryside, and the cumulative visual and landscape impact of several large industrial energy structures within open countryside would represent a profound and permanent change to the character of the local landscape.

37. EN-5 requires that network infrastructure should minimise adverse impacts on landscapes and communities wherever possible. The NPPF similarly emphasises the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

38. It is difficult to see how the introduction of multiple large industrial structures in this location is consistent with those principles.

Community and Environmental Impacts

39. LionLink would also introduce significant construction impacts, including noise, vibration, dust and artificial lighting.
40. Construction activities — particularly when proposed on a 24-hour basis — would be highly disruptive to rural communities and will affect both residents and wildlife.
41. Construction activities of this scale typically involve extended working hours, including evening and weekend operations. When combined with other major infrastructure projects in the area, the cumulative effect of prolonged construction activity raises serious concerns for community wellbeing, environmental quality and local tourism.
42. The Suffolk coast and surrounding countryside are valued not only for their natural habitats but also for their tranquillity and recreational landscape serving a tourism economy.
43. Planning policy requires that development should protect both environmental quality and community wellbeing. The cumulative effect of prolonged construction activity across multiple infrastructure projects raises serious concerns in this regard.

The Need for a More Strategic Approach

44. The central issue is not whether the UK requires new energy infrastructure. Rather, it is whether LionLink represents the most appropriate way of delivering that infrastructure.
45. A more strategic approach should include:
 46. greater coordination of offshore transmission networks resulting in fewer onshore landing points
 47. directing infrastructure towards appropriate brownfield or industrial locations rather than sensitive rural landscapes.
48. Until such alternatives are properly assessed, the case for imposing further infrastructure on the Suffolk coast remains unconvincing.

Adequacy of the Consultation

49. The consultation materials raise concerns regarding the adequacy of the information provided to consultees. A significant proportion of the data required to assess the environmental and transport impacts of the project — including detailed traffic modelling, ecological surveys and cumulative impact assessments — appears to be deferred to the Environmental Statement that will accompany the future DCO application.
50. The statutory consultation stage is intended to enable meaningful public engagement before proposals are finalised. Where key information is unavailable until later stages

of the planning process, communities are effectively prevented from forming a fully informed view of the likely impacts of the development.

Conclusion

51. LionLink raises serious planning concerns.
52. The project appears to rely on an outdated radial point to point connection model, lacks a convincing strategic justification, adds to an already exceptional concentration of infrastructure along the Suffolk coast, and risks causing significant harm to landscapes, communities and protected environments.
53. SEAS believes that the transition to a low-carbon energy system must be achieved in a way that respects both people and place. Communities that host national infrastructure deserve careful planning, genuine consultation and a fair distribution of impacts.
54. The Suffolk coast has already taken on an extraordinary share of the infrastructure required for the UK's energy transition. Adding further large-scale projects without proper coordination, alternatives or cumulative assessment risks undermining both public trust and the landscapes that make this region so distinctive.
55. A successful energy transition should strengthen communities, not overwhelm them.

For the reasons set out in this submission, SEAS objects to LionLink.

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